

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Resonating, Rejecting, Reinterpreting: Mapping the Stabilization Discourse in the United Nations Security Council, 2000–14

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This article charts the evolution of the conceptualisation of stabilization in the UN Security Council (UNSC) during the period 2001–2014. UNSC open meetings provide an important dataset for a critical review of stabilization discourse and an opportunity to chart the positions of permanent Members, rotating Members and the UN Secretariat towards this concept. This article is the first to conduct an analysis of this material to map the evolution of stabilization in this critical chamber of the UN. This dataset of official statements will be complemented by a review of open source reporting on UNSC meetings and national stabilization doctrines of the 'P3' – France, the UK and the US. These countries have developed national stabilization doctrines predominantly to deal with cross-governmental approaches to counterinsurgency operations conducted during the 2000s. The article therefore presents a genealogy of the concept of stabilization in the UNSC to help understand implications for its future development in this multi-lateral setting.

This article begins by examining efforts by the P3 to 'upload' their conceptualisations of stabilization into UN intervention frameworks. Secondly, the article uses a content analysis of UNSC debates during 2000–2014 to explore the extent to which the conceptualisation of stabilization resonated with other Council members, were rejected in specific contexts or in general, or were re-interpreted by member states to suit alternative security agendas and interests. Therefore, the article not only examines the UNSC debates surrounding existing UN 'stabilization operations' (MONUSCO, MINUSTAH, MINUSCA, MINUSMA), which could be regarded as evidence that this 'western' concept has resonated with other UNSC members and relevant UN agencies, but also documents the appearance of stabilization in other contexts too. The article opens new avenues of research into concepts of stabilization within the UN, and seeks to provide a thorough accounting of the origins, spread, and potential trajectories for the concept and practice of stabilization in UN contexts.

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Introduction

The 2015 Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations examined a vast array of issues connected with peacekeeping operations. The Panel noted the strong link between peacekeeping and stabilization within the UN debates, stressing that the term has a 'wide range of interpretations', and that the 'usage of this term by the United Nations requires clarification' (UN 2015: 30). This article represents the first attempt to respond to this request. It seeks to identify the level to which stabilization has permeated United Nations (UN) activities, through the examination of data from open meetings of the UN Security Council (UNSC). This article addresses two objectives. Firstly, it provides an account of the use of stabilization in open UNSC meetings at the beginning of the twenty-first century (2000–2014); and secondly, it determines the extent to which western conceptualization(s) of stabilization resonate with UN member states from other regional groups, or if they reinterpret or reject such conceptualization(s).

We chose to analyse the UNSC as it provides an anchor point where concepts of peace and security are operationalized through the mandating of UN operations. It is also an arena where 'divergent views and interest confront each other and seek accommodation' (Teixeria 2003). The study includes records of UNSC meetings where all members have the opportunity to outline their approach to pressing issues, as well as records from open meetings where the wider UN membership are invited to present their opinions on pressing matters. Moreover, the UNSC has been identified as a useful arena for 'extending one's influence across the range of UN activities', where it is the 'powerful states' in the council who 'will be more easily able to enhance that power through the machinery of the United Nations' (Cunliffe 2013: 236). This has logically created inquiry about the extent to which the five permanent members of the Council (P5) – but in particular the so-called

P3 of France, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (US) – expand their security concerns, at the cost of the UN itself (Durch 2010: 45).

Reflections on stabilization in the UNSC address important policy and academic concerns. This is important at a time when the UN's wider peace and security architecture is under review (UN News Centre 2015). Moreover, with the goal of increasing European contributors to UN operations (Karlsrud and Smith 2015), those member states with greater experience of counter-insurgency and stabilization operations in Iraq and Afghanistan may become key contributors to UN field missions. That the US is leading this push is also important, as the US has been at the centre of both the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns (Power 2014; 2015). On an academic level, this article offers an exploratory approach to understanding the diffusion of norms in the UN, as well as seeking to understand national approaches. It does not claim to offer solid 'answers' to the acceptance of western conceptualizations of stabilization in the UN. Rather, it raises questions about the use and interpretation of language in the UNSC, especially when the term in use – stabilization – is in itself critiqued for being a vague concept.

The article consists of four sections. The first section offers an overview of stabilization, and how, even without a formal policy shift, concepts of stabilization have impacted UN peacekeeping operations. This also provides the rationale for focusing attention on the UNSC. Second, it offers a brief introduction to the method of data collection. Third, the article provides an overview of the frequency of the use of stabilization in UNSC meetings during 2000–2014, charting the number of meetings in which stabilization featured and how often it was used. The final section looks in greater depth at the use of stabilization in the UNSC, and seeks to determine whether the conceptualization resonated or was reinterpreted, or rejected by UN member states.

Conceptualizing Stabilization

It is difficult to provide a single conception of the term 'stabilization' in the context of international interventions. Rob Muggah has noted that the term 'means different things to different people' (Muggah 2014: 3). Roger McGinty has more forcefully criticized the adoption of the term 'stabilization' as being a 'hodge podge' of words 'carelessly' merging with other 'terms that have distinct definitions' in existing areas of peacebuilding, security and development (McGinty 2012: 24). Nevertheless, as this section demonstrates, a shared understanding of the concept of 'stabilization' has emerged amongst a range of NATO member states, as well as Australia and New Zealand (which we define as Western States, with most of these States included in the UN regional group 'Western Europe and Other Group').

These states can be identified in reports which seek to explore the concept of stabilization more broadly. For instance, a report by the Global Public Policy Institute identified and mapped eleven countries which possess a 'conceptual understanding of politically driven and primarily civilian stabilization efforts, the scope of their stabilization activities and the level of organizational integration in budgeting, decision-making and policy development' (Rotmann and Steinacker 2013: 7). The states identified in this group were Canada, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the UK, and the US. Moreover, a 2014 report by the Hague Institute of Security Studies identifies the following countries with noted approaches to stabilization: Canada; France; Germany; the Netherlands; New Zealand; United Kingdom; United States of America (as well as NATO) (De Spiegeleire et al 2014: 8). Academic studies of the stabilization phenomenon also highlight the role played by one or more of these states in developing 'government departments committed exclusively to its advancement' (Muggah 2014: 6).

The central theme in these national approaches to stabilization is that such

interventions are designed to bring support to the ability of a 'failed or failing state' to deliver key services. This support is expected to fulfil basic services and maintain security when the national authorities do not possess sufficient authority and resources to exercise control within their borders. For the past ten years (particularly since the events of 9/11), these states have been cast as 'sources of instability' in particular havens for terrorist organisations (Mazarr 2014). For instance, the Canadian approach to stabilization defines the 'unique challenges' posed by failed states as follows:

Confronting the unique challenges associated with fragile and conflict-affected states is in line with global and national security concerns, including terrorism and organized crime, as well foreign policy priorities related to promoting free and open societies; strengthening democracies and encouraging economic opportunity; and security for Canadians (FATDC n.d.).

Interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq – predominantly from NATO member states – were followed by efforts to establish new national institutional architectures to 'stabilize' the situation in these states (De Coning and Friis 2011: 250). This has led to an understanding of stabilization as an idea with its roots firmly planted in western states. Muggah has argued that this has led to western conceptualizations of stabilization being 'uncritically adopted' by policymakers and institutions (Muggah 2014: 3). Simone Haysom and Ashley Jackson have gone so far as to argue that the level of support for stabilization has been 'fanatical' (Haysom and Jackson 2013: 38; Jackson and Haysom 2013: 9).

The western 'comprehensive approach' to stabilization is based on civilian-led processes, supported by military actors. The UK – for some time considered the 'international role models of an inter-agency approach'

(Rotmann and Steinacker 2013: 15) – aligns itself ‘behind a model that focuses on support for state legitimacy, responsiveness, resilience and competence in service delivery’ (Gordon 2010: 383). This, in the view of Stuart Gordon, is based on the following pillars: focussing on the state’s ‘survival functions’, in particular leadership, structures and institutions; building ‘social capital’ through reinforcing sub-national governance structures to connect with the population (including a vibrant civil society); and delivery of essential services and ‘some iconic reconstruction projects’ (Gordon, 2010: 370). The UK’s approach has been spearheaded by the ‘Stabilization Unit’, established in 2007 to replace the ‘Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit’. The Stabilization Unit is funded by the UK Government’s Conflict Stability and Security Fund, which is directly governed through the National Security Council (Stabilization Unit n.d.). It develops policy ‘to protect and promote legitimate political authority, using a combination of integrated civilian and military actions to reduce violence, re-establish security and prepare for longer-term recovery by building an enabling environment for structural stability’ (Stabilization Unit 2014: 1). The unit allows the UK to ‘rapidly provide integrated teams with military and civilian experts for fragile states’ (Rotmann and Steinacker 2013: 12).

A narrower western stabilization approach consists of one led by the military, rather than civilians. It is characterized as ‘hot stabilization’, and defines the role of outsiders as enforcing ‘aspects of a settlement through the defeat of an insurgency while simultaneously cementing support for a domestically owned process of “transition” towards peace as well as building societal capacities to resist conflict drivers’ (Gordon 2010: 372). The ‘hot’ approach has been identified in Afghanistan where there has been a prioritization of counterinsurgency activities aligned with creating support for the host nation government. This has seen an ‘overlap of military force and what have traditionally been aspects of civilian-led reconstruction’ (Barakat and Larson

2014: 32–3). Doctrinally, the ‘hot’ approach can best be identified in the United States’ *Joint Publication 3-07 Stability Operations* of September 2011 (Joint Chiefs of Staff (USA) 2011). The US military identifies its role in stabilization operations as follows:

The establishment of security fundamentally requires a monopoly on the use of force by a single entity. In stabilization efforts, the goal is normally to support a legitimate HN [Host Nation] governmental authority that holds this monopoly, using it to protect the population, or to help that authority attain the monopoly. Toward this goal, joint forces take action to support efforts to end ongoing conflict, build HN security force capacity, and disarm adversary forces (Joint Chiefs of Staff (USA) 2011: xvi).

Therefore, although the concept of ‘stabilization’ can be quite messy, it is possible to discern key elements of western conceptualisations in this approach: a combination of civilian and military approaches with a focus on re-establishing state authority in ‘failed states’; this includes provision of ‘legitimate’ state authority, institution-building, and delivery of key state services. It is supported by the use of military force, bordering on counterinsurgency, and predominantly aimed against non-state actors who challenge the state’s monopoly on violence.

From UN Peacekeeping Operations to UN Stabilization Missions

For followers of UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, there is a sense that the approaches outlined above increasingly influence the mandates and activities of UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations. This may not be a ‘headline’ change, but something more diffuse. It could be argued that UN peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and political missions have been undertaking tasks akin to stabilization for some time. The UN Transitional Administrations

in East Timor and Kosovo have incorporated elements of the stabilization agenda, with a focus on military, legal, democratic, economic and social capacity-building. They have also been linked in part to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan (Bellamy and Williams 2010: 266). Moreover, those taking a critical perspective towards concepts of stabilization, argue that the 'success' of UN-led multilateral peacekeeping operations in the 1990s, 'in some ways laid the conceptual and institutional groundwork for the next generation of stabilization that emerged following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001' (Barakat, Deely and Zyck 2010: 308).

Now it appears that the diffusion is returning to UN operations. Most notably, there has been a steady rise in UN 'stabilization missions' – i.e. missions that have 'stabilization' in their title:

- MINUSTAH: Mission des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en Haïti (2004–)
- MONUSCO: Mission de l'Organisation des Nations unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo (2010–)
- MINUSMA: The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (2013–)
- MINUSCA: United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (2014–)

These missions have been linked to the broader re-envisioning of UN peacekeeping operations and how they have developed methods to reflect the 'growing recognition of intrastate conflicts as a new frontier for intervention' (Carter 2013: 3). They have also been linked to wider, more formal, strategies such as the protection of civilians. In 2013, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon stated that:

The establishment of the new mandate for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

and the strengthening of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have offered opportunities to enhance our ability to protect civilians. At the same time, the evolving nature of our protection role also poses significant challenges for the Council to consider. In particular, we must beware of the risk of being seen as a party to conflict and diminishing our ability to provide impartial and timely humanitarian assistance' (UN 2013h: 4).

However, the emergence of these stabilization missions, and their linkages with concepts of stabilization, have brought challenges for the missions themselves, as well as for the broader conceptualisation of peacekeeping in the United Nations.

Activities undertaken by the MONUSCO operation have introduced a range of questions regarding the development of stabilization strategies in the mission's make-up. The authorization of the 'Force Intervention Brigade' (FIB) in March 2013 arguably took UN peacekeeping to uncharted territory regarding the use of robust force by a peacekeeping operation. The FIB, as outlined by UNSC Resolution 2098 (2013), is comprised of three infantry battalions: artillery, special force and reconnaissance. It is mandated to carry out 'targeted operations to "neutralize and disarm" the notorious 23 March Movement (M23), and other Congolese rebels and foreign armed groups' in the east of the country (UN 2013c), as part of a wider drive by MONUSCO to 'proactively protect civilians'. The actions of MONUSCO and the FIB have largely supported the *International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy*, which aims in particular to support 'the establishment of sustainable security forces and the consolidation of state authority in eastern Congo' (United Nations MONUSCO n.d.). Part of the operationalization of this strategy has been to use the FIB to build 'islands of stability' throughout the east of the country where the operation has undertaken a 'shape,

clear, and hold' strategy, linked to similar approaches seen in 'hot stabilization contexts' in Afghanistan and Iraq (Cooper 2014). In this case, the operation seeks to gain a tactical military victory – shape and clear – before maintaining a secure environment and linking the population to the host government (Cordesman 2009). The idea behind this is to avoid an 'immediate relapse of the communities concerned into a cycle of violence after armed groups have freed an area' (Vogel 2014: 5). However, the approach has led to concern that only certain, strategically important areas will be considered relevant, while those areas not deemed a priority will receive little support (Vogel 2014: 5). Signs of this concern have been identified in a bilateral context where, in an attempt to consolidate the peace process, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) moved its health provision efforts from more stable areas with 'little or no healthcare' towards more unstable areas (Gordon 2010).

In the case of MINUSTAH, the push for stabilization has brought difficulties of a more strategic nature. Nicolas Lemay-Herbert argues that the discourse identifying Haiti as a 'failed state', requiring stabilization has 'legitimized all forms of international intervention', providing something of an 'open season' on the country (Lemay-Hébert 2014: 199). This focus on the need for international actors to provide stabilization in Haiti has taken the focus away from the negative impact that international factors have played on Haiti's instability. This effectively perpetuates structural violence in the country, and decreases the chance of introducing a 'comprehensive perspective' that aims to bring positive change to the country (Lemay-Hébert 2014: 199). Likewise, in the case of Mali (MINUSMA), Isaline Bergamaschi mirrors the concerns of Lemay Herbert by asking to what extent international efforts to 'build a state' have actually fed into the instability that Mali has suffered (Bergamaschi 2013: 10).

Significantly for this article, the 2015 Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations noted that 'the Security

Council and the Secretariat have used the term "stabilization" for a number of missions that support the extension or restoration of state authority and, in at least one case, during ongoing armed conflict' (UN 2015: 30). Therefore, the High-Level Panel recognized that UN stabilization missions bear the hallmarks of the western comprehensive approach outlined above.

The concept of stabilization has also had a noted effect on the UN's regional partners in peacekeeping operations and stabilization missions. Yvonne Akpasom and Walter Lotze's survey of African Union (AU) operations has noted that AU operations in Somalia, Mali, and the Central African Republic have sought 'to support the stabilization of countries as they transition from war to peace' (Akpasom and Lotze 2014: 19–20). This has led to wider reflection on the AU's peace and security architecture (Gomes Porto and Engel 2010), in particular the establishment of the African Standby Force (ASF), a structure based on five rapidly deployable military brigades which are equipped to deploy into post-conflict environments at short notice. Akpasom and Lotze note that as the ASF was developed in 2006, significant attention was paid to 'prevention, peacekeeping operations, peace enforcement, peacemaking and peacebuilding'. In contrast, the 'concept of stabilization operations and tasks did not feature explicitly or prominently', signifying that there was little guidance on stabilization operations. This, in the view of Akpasom and Lotze, is contrary to the interventions that AU forces are currently undertaking in increasingly complex environments 'involving the need to take on open and direct resistance from belligerent groups, whilst at the same time supporting tasks related to governance and nation-building' (Akpasom and Lotze 2014: 19–20).

Therefore, it can be argued that approaches similar to stabilization have introduced challenges to particular UN missions. However, the guiding principles of UN peacekeeping make little mention of the concept. The UN's Principles and Guidelines make little reference

to this principle, and as mentioned above, there is no UN-wide stabilization strategy (De Coning 2014: 31–2). Muggah has argued that ‘a thorough accounting of the origins, spread, and implications of stabilization in United Nations circles has yet to be written’ (Muggah 2014). This article represents a tentative first step in this direction, by mapping the stabilization discourse in the UNSC over a critical fifteen-year period in an attempt to understand how the concept has developed within the UN.

Method

In order to achieve the two key objectives of this article – (a) charting the use of stabilization in the UNSC and (b) determining the resonance of the western conceptualizations of stabilization with other UN member states – one of the first key steps in the research for this article was to construct a dataset that captured every instance when ‘stabilization’¹ was mentioned in open UNSC meetings between 2000–2014. At a minimum, the dataset needed to provide the following elements for each entry:

- the meeting in which stabilization was used;
- the speaker and the UN member state, UN agency or regional organization that they represented; and
- the context in which stabilization was used.

The final element was to determine whether the speaker’s use of stabilization could be classified as:

- resonating with the western conceptualizations presented above;
- a reinterpretation of stabilization; or
- a rejection of the western conceptualization of stabilization.

To construct this dataset, we collated all of the transcripts of open UNSC meetings that took place between 2000 and 2014. During this period the UNSC held 3,087 meetings, of which 2,757 were ‘open meetings’. Transcripts of the open meetings, and communiqués for

the closed meetings, are published on the ‘Meetings records’ page of the UNSC website (UN n.d.). The communiqués and transcripts for these meetings yielded a dataset of 3,332 documents; the large number was due to the fact that meetings are sometimes split into separate sessions, with a transcript for each session. PDF copies of the open UNSC meeting records were uploaded to QDA data miner, and then the Wordstat package was used to extract all instances in which ‘stabilization’ or ‘stabilization’ featured in a UNSC meeting. This yielded 4,464 instances in which the word ‘stabilization’ was used, and noted the paragraph in the meeting transcript for each instance. We could therefore identify the meeting record, speaker and UN member state, and the UN agency or regional organization that they represented for each entry in our dataset. However, this process also presented entries that do not relate to the concept of stabilization discussed above. Therefore, as a first step to aid in our analysis, we removed all entries in which stabilization appeared in the following ways:

- When the speaker announced that they were speaking on behalf of the EU and ‘the countries of the stabilization and association process’;
- When the speaker referred to the stabilization and association process or agreement in South-Eastern Europe; or
- When the UNSC meeting document referred to a UN Stabilization Mission in the title of the meeting or transcript.

As a result of this process, we identified 724 open UNSC meetings and a total of 3,666 times during 2000–2014 in which a speaker uttered the word ‘stabilization’. This represents the dataset that we used for analysis. As will be shown below, the data provided a solid basis on which to carry out a quantitative analysis of the frequency of the use of stabilization in UNSC meetings. However, it presented challenges for a qualitative analysis and categorization of speakers and their states, and agencies’ or organizations’ attitudes towards stabilization.

Data on the frequency of the use of stabilization

Table 1 presents the annual frequency of the use of the word 'stabilization' in the open UNSC meetings held during 2000–2014. The number of meetings in which 'stabilization' is mentioned each year – expressed as either a total number of meetings in which stabilization is used or as a percentage of total open meetings – fluctuated between 2000 and 2009. For example, stabilization is mentioned in 26 meetings in 2000 (16 per cent of total open meetings), but decreased to 19 meetings in 2001 (10 per cent of open meetings). It subsequently increased to 46 meetings in 2002 (26 per cent of open meetings) and then decreased again to 43 meetings in 2003 (23 per cent of open meetings). Since 2009, the total number of meetings in which stabilization features has increased year-on-year from 52 meetings in 2009 (30 per cent of total open meetings) to 102 meetings in 2014 (44 per cent of total open meetings). The data shows that stabilization is used in a greater number of open UNSC meetings today than at the turn of the millennium.

The annual trend in the number of times that stabilization is utilised in open UNSC meetings fluctuated significantly between 2001 and 2007. The main 'outlier' for these years is 2004, when 'stabilization' featured 247 times in 43 open UNSC meetings. A key factor for the relatively high number of instances of stabilization in 2004 is because of a special session of the UNSC on *Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in stabilization processes*. This session was organized when Romania served as the chair of the Security Council, in which the term was used 84 times (UN 2004c). Since 2007, there has been a year-on-year increase in the total number of times that stabilization is uttered in an open UNSC meeting, rising from 146 times in 2007 to 671 times in 2014. The last year in this sample reported a significant increase over the 443 times that stabilization was used in 2013.

As **Table 2** shows, the usage of stabilization features most prominently in meetings on:

- The situation in a state that hosts a UN or NATO-led peacekeeping operation;
- UN peacekeeping;
- Post-conflict peacebuilding; or
- Cooperation with regional and sub-regional organizations.

During 2001–2014, the ten topics listed in **Table 2** accounted for 51 per cent of the open UNSC meetings in which stabilization was used. The use of stabilization in these 367 meetings accounted for 75 per cent of the times that stabilization was used in an open UNSC meeting. The dataset records 39 meetings on Haiti in which stabilization was mentioned 834 times – in most cases in reference to the title of MINUSTAH. It is perhaps unsurprising that the state in which the UN's longest serving stabilization mission operates should represent the topic in which we find the most instances of stabilization being used. However, stabilization is used in the Haiti meetings 500 times more than in the topic recording the second highest frequency of stabilization use: peacekeeping operations.

While it is not remarkable that meetings on peacekeeping operations represent the second-most frequent occasions in which stabilization is used, it is still striking on two counts. First, that despite ranking second, there were only 17 meetings on peacekeeping operations during 2000–2014 in which stabilization was used, and mainly from 2009 onwards. Second, exactly half of the instances of the use of stabilization occurred in three meetings in 2014. This is in large part due to the maturing of stabilization missions in Haiti and DRC, and the introduction of stabilization missions in Mali in 2013 and the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2014. These last two missions are not included in **Table 2** below, but also contributed to the increased frequency of the use of stabilization in the UNSC in 2013 and 2014. For example, stabilization featured 45 times in the 12 meetings on the Central African Republic held

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Total number of open UNSC meetings	159	183	178	189	200	224	170	218	174	182	214	191	242	233	2757
Total number of open UNSC meetings in which Stabilization is mentioned	26 (16%)	19 (10%)	46 (26%)	43 (23%)	41 (21%)	44 (19%)	38 (22%)	55 (25%)	52 (30%)	60 (33%)	62 (29%)	64 (34%)	73 (30%)	102 (44%)	724
Total number of times Stabilization is mentioned in open UNSC meetings	59	51	97	247	194	171	146	243	270	309	377	388	443	671	3666

Table 1: Frequency of the use of 'Stabilization' in the United Nations Security Council open meetings, 2000–2014.

Notes: The total number excludes the following instances: when the speaker was making an intervention on behalf of the EU and 'the countries of the stabilization and association process'; when the speaker refers to the 'stabilization and association process' in South-Eastern Europe; when 'stabilization' appears in the title for the meeting.

(...) Share of open UNSC meetings in which the word stabilization is used.

Topic	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Haiti	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	9 (3)	76 (4)	55 (6)	3 (2)	5 (2)	140 (4)	91 (6)	108 (3)	105 (3)	114 (3)	128 (3)	834 (39)
Peacekeeping operations	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	14 (3)	38 (2)	24 (2)	31 (3)	36 (2)	148 (4)	296 (17)
DRC	3 (2)	0 (0)	4 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1)	3 (2)	17 (4)	17 (5)	82 (5)	48 (6)	40 (5)	62 (7)	278 (40)
Cooperation with regional organizations*	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	85 (2)	35 (1)	7 (2)	16 (3)	1 (1)	1 (1)	19 (3)	1 (1)	2 (2)	18 (3)	39 (2)	224 (21)
Afghanistan	3 (1)	6 (4)	4 (4)	11 (2)	4 (1)	11 (2)	16 (3)	23 (4)	13 (3)	30 (6)	26 (4)	19 (4)	22 (4)	27 (5)	215 (47)
Somalia	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (1)	1 (1)	4 (2)	8 (2)	42 (8)	16 (6)	17 (6)	19 (7)	77 (5)	19 (5)	5 (5)	215 (47)
African regions**	1 (1)	7 (4)	15 (5)	20 (5)	4 (3)	11 (4)	10 (4)	9 (2)	7 (3)	5 (3)	7 (1)	25 (11)	40 (10)	18 (7)	179 (63)
Post-conflict peacebuilding	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	9 (1)	0 (0)	8 (2)	74 (2)	11 (1)	17 (2)	20 (4)	4 (1)	0 (0)	11 (2)	154 (15)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	21 (3)	25 (5)	5 (1)	38 (2)	25 (2)	7 (2)	2 (1)	6 (2)	5 (2)	7 (2)	4 (2)	1 (1)	5 (2)	1 (1)	152 (28)
Kosovo	13 (8)	10 (5)	24 (8)	15 (4)	6 (3)	13 (4)	0 (0)	1 (1)	5 (3)	4 (2)	3 (2)	4 (3)	8 (4)	4 (4)	110 (50)

Table 2: Frequency of the use of ‘Stabilization’ in the United Nations Security Council open meetings, by topic, 2000–2014 (top 10?)

Notes: The total number excludes instances when the speaker was making an intervention on behalf of the EU and ‘the countries of the stabilization and association process’ or the intervention referred to the ‘stabilization and association process’ in South-Eastern Europe.

(..) Number of meetings on the topic in which ‘stabilization’ is used by at least one speaker.

*Includes the following UNSC open meetings: *Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security; The role of regional and subregional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security; Briefing by the Chair-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; Regional organizations-African Union.*

**Includes the following UNSC open meetings: *Africa; Central African region; Peace consolidation in West Africa; West Africa; Chad, the Central African Republic and the subregion; Great Lakes region; Security Council missions to Africa.*

during 2013–2014, and 64 times during the 13 meetings on Mali during the same period. While there is a clear correlation between the frequency of the use of stabilization in open UNSC meetings regarding the situation in states, and the period during which the state in question hosts a UN stabilization mission, it is worth noting that stabilization was discussed in meetings on the Central African Republic in 2001, and 2008–2014. One therefore expects that the number of times in which stabilization is used in meetings considering the situation in CAR and Mali will be comparatively high in the coming years.

In contrast, one can clearly see the decline in the usage of stabilization to refer to meetings on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. Bosnia and Herzegovina hosted a NATO-led stabilization mission during 1999–2006 and Kosovo from 1999 until the present day, albeit in a significantly reduced capacity. Although not reflected in **Table 2**, the International Stabilisation Force in Timor Leste and its predecessor, the International Force East Timor (INTERFET), were discussed in 27 meetings on the situation in Timor during 2000–2014, with stabilization being used 100 times.

Stabilization is also used in a wide range of other UN meetings on topics such as *Children and Armed Conflict*, *Maintenance of International Peace and Security*, *Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, *Threats to International Peace and Security*, and *Women and Peace and Security*. However, in most of these cases the use of stabilization is in connection with a stabilization mission and its contribution to addressing the challenges discussed in the thematic debate. On the occasions that stabilization features in meetings on the situation in the Middle East, it is used to discuss 'stabilization and economic reform', stabilization of conflicts and the stabilization of post-conflict environments.

Resonate, Reinterpret or Reject?

As noted above, there is not a clearly identifiable western conceptualisation of stabilization. This represents the first challenge

for determining whether a western conceptualisation of stabilization resonates with UN member states, or is reinterpreted or rejected. Therefore, the analysis focuses on attitudes towards peacekeeping operations led by the UN, NATO, the AU or ECOWAS that have elements of western conceptualizations of stabilization in their mandate. Therefore, the analysis considers states in which stabilization appears to resonate or is reinterpreted altogether. The analysis did not reveal very strong rejections of stabilization missions, but there are several clear examples of scepticism.

A second challenge stems from the fact that this research only utilizes statements made in the performative space of the UNSC. In several cases, this source alone does not enable one to definitively conclude if a state accepts all or only elements of the western conceptualization of stabilization, or rejects stabilization missions. Therefore, the findings presented below are tentative and should be regarded as providing hypotheses for further investigation rather than a definitive categorization.

A third challenge is posed by the fact that several groups of states are supportive of stabilization missions in their own region but express scepticism about their adoption in other regions. The clearest example of this is provided by states located in Latin America that support and provide personnel for MINUSTAH but express concern with regards to MONUSCO. For example, in a June 2014 meeting on PKO, the representatives of Argentina, Chile, Guatemala and Uruguay expressed their concerns regarding the robust mandate of MONUSCO (UN 2014a: 6, 23, 35 and 43; see also UN 2013f: 21). As will be shown below, this research notes a division between states in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa on the use of force in stabilization missions.

Resonate and reinterpret

It is possible to clearly identify four groups of UN member states that support stabilization missions and for which it is possible to argue

that western conceptualizations resonate to some degree. These states are located in regions in which stabilization missions have been established.

Unsurprisingly, given that UN peacekeeping operations and stabilization missions require the consent of the host state to deploy, the first group of states that positively view stabilization mandates consists of those states and entities that host multi-lateral peacekeeping operations with stabilization elements in their mandates, namely: Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Timor-Leste. For example, in a March 2004 open UNSC meeting on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, its representative stated, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina is a positive example of how intervention by the international community can be effective and of how a post-conflict country can become an active participant in the process of regional stabilization' (UN 2004a: 10). Representatives of the other states listed above also credit the role played by the stabilization mission located in their state as positively contributing towards stabilization. Representatives of Mali and Somalia explicitly requested the UNSC to deploy stabilization missions to address security challenges in their respective states (UN 2004e: 7; UN 2013d: 6–7). Of course, the actual mandates of the peacekeeping operations and stabilization missions listed above differ considerably. However, of particular interest in this regard is the request by the representative of Libya for the UN to support 'stabilization and institution- building initiatives' in Libya, but not 'a military intervention' (UN 2014b: 7).

The second group consists of Western European and other Group (WEOG) and Eastern European Group states that are members of the EU and/or NATO. These states have led or actively participated in stabilization missions in Europe and Asia since the 1990s. Two tendencies can be identified in their interventions in open

UNSC meetings. First, Eastern European Group States that are members of the EU and NATO have been particularly supportive of western conceptualizations of stabilization. The clearest example of this is demonstrated by the decision of Romania to declare that it made 'the relationship between global and regional organizations in stabilization processes a main thread of its mandate as an elected member of the Security Council' (UN 2004b: 7). Second, EU and NATO member states regard their experience of stabilization missions in Europe and Asia as very positive examples for addressing challenging security situations in fragile and conflict-affected states and territories. For example, the representative of the Netherlands declared in 2007 that the ISAF mission is 'a state-of-the-art stabilization mission' that yielded

valuable experience (. . .) that can be put to use in other fragile or failed States. ISAF is an Assistance Force, providing security and stability so that the legitimate Afghan Government, in cooperation with international organizations and other civilian development actors, can succeed (UN 2007: 27).

The third group consists of states in the Latin America and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) that have contributed personnel to MINUSTAH, in particular, the Friends of Haiti. These states seek to stabilize the situation in Haiti via a long-term commitment from the international community towards a comprehensive approach. In Chile, for example:

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) has been designed to rehabilitate a nation in political, economic and social terms, in order to achieve lasting peace and security. The operation's multi-dimensional mandate encompasses the essential elements of a strategy for managing the civilian aspects of

the crisis. It is a matter of priority to restore the capacities of the Haitian national police and the rule of law (UN 2004d: 9).

The fourth group consists of states in the Africa Group located in sub-Saharan Africa. An analysis of statements by these states and representatives of the AU in open UNSC meetings reveals support for a broad interpretation of stabilization as it applies not only to post-conflict periods but also to conflict-ridden periods. While sub-Saharan African states welcome the comprehensive nature of stabilization operations and push for 'multidimensional peacekeeping operations', these states are more open than GRULAC states to including the use of force in stabilization missions. For example, several African states have spoken in support of the deployment of the FIB under MONUSCO and its robust mandate, as well as the robust mandates of MINUSMA and UNOCI.²

Scepticism

Utilizing the dataset constructed for this project, it is difficult to clearly identify states that reject outright UN-mandated stabilization missions. However, in 2009 Costa Rica, Cuba and Venezuela all expressed strong negative comments on MINUSTAH. Cuba equated MINUSTAH with a 'military solution to the situation in Haiti', which it deemed unsuitable to address Haiti's security challenges (UN 2009a: 12; UN 2009b: 35). In contrast to the support for MINUSTAH expressed by the Friends of Haiti, representatives of Costa Rica and Venezuela highlighted 'major mistakes' in prioritising security sector reform over social, economic and political development (UN 2009b: 18–19). The representative of Costa Rica stated:

[. . .] we have to analyse what we are doing now and ask ourselves whether we really are moving in the right direction and if we are sure that within a reasonable time frame, the

United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) will be able to leave Haiti, leaving behind a strong State, a peaceful country and a prosperous people (UN 2009b: 18).

The dataset of open UNSC meetings clearly reveals Russian support for the stabilization of fragile and conflict-affected countries and regions around the world, but scepticism regarding the inclusion of stabilization elements in the mandate of a UN peacekeeping operation. Russian statements on stabilization consistently emphasize that national governments should be responsible for the stabilization of their own country, with UN peacekeeping operations playing a secondary and supportive role. For example, when discussing MINUSMA in April 2013, the Russian representative stressed that:

The primary responsibility for resolving the current problems belongs to Malians themselves. Every action and task of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), whose deployment was decided on today, must be directed exclusively at providing assistance to the Malian authorities (UN 2013e: 2).

To some degree, Russian scepticism on stabilization is connected with broader concerns regarding the expansion of peacekeeping operation mandates to cover protection of civilians and the use of force to intervene in internal conflicts on the side of governments (UN 2012: 15–16). For Russia, such mandates raise 'a number of unresolved legal, technical, staff and logistical issues for the Organization with the potential for adverse effects on the missions' effectiveness, the image of the United Nations and, most importantly, the peacekeepers' security' (UN 2014a: 25). To a degree, representatives from South Asia have echoed some of these concerns in open UNSC meetings (UN 2014a: 27). For example, in 2012 the Indian

representative noted that '[t]asks ranging from establishing law and order and the rule of law to national institution-building cannot be entrusted to military components alone' (UN 2012: 19).

There are a limited number of statements from states located in the Middle East and North Africa that can be utilized to discern clear positions on stabilization missions. There is support for stabilization to ensure peace and prosperity, but Arab states have addressed questions regarding stabilization to the UNSC. In July 2004, Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, asked:

Is stabilization an objective in itself? Is the purpose to cool down conflicts that are growing? Sometimes we find that, even when a situation is calm and when concerns are allayed, danger will remain if the status quo continues. The notion that stability will lead to peace and reconstruction has yet to be confirmed. It is in fact possible to take the opposite course: first to establish peace in order to ensure the success of peacekeeping operations, and then to pursue security, reconstruction, reconciliation and stability (UN 2004c: 14).

Given the situation in the region since 2011, further examination of attitudes to stabilization are warranted, beyond the UNSC dataset utilised for this paper.

Conclusion

This article presents preliminary findings from a comprehensive content analysis of the use of the term stabilization in open UNSC meetings between 2001 and 2014. The paper sought to address two objectives:

- Provide an account of the use of stabilization in open UNSC meetings at the beginning of the twenty-first century; and

- Determine the extent to which western conceptualization(s) of stabilization resonated with UN member states from other regional groups, or if they reinterpreted or rejected such conceptualization(s)

With regards to the first objective, the research clearly demonstrates a significant increase in the frequency of the use of stabilization in open UNSC meetings between 2001 and 2014, with its appearance in 40 per cent of open UNSC meetings in 2014 compared to ten per cent in 2002. This is not surprising given the expansion of mandates that contain stabilization goals from countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and East Timor at the turn of the millennium to Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Timor-Leste by 2013–2014. Proposals for peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions led by the UN or regional organizations focussing on stabilization and longer-term measures to prevent conflict and support political and socio-economic development have become firmly embedded in UNSC discourse. UN agencies themselves, in particular the DPKO, have further reinforced this tendency.

Yet when it comes to utilizing the dataset to determine whether UN member states accepted or rejected the P3 conceptualizations of stabilization, there are significant challenges. The lack of a clear conceptualization of stabilization in the P3 provides the first challenge. However, this is further compounded by the fact that utilizing the UNSC meeting dataset alone does not permit one to definitively determine whether a state supports or rejects or seeks to utilize just some elements of the stabilization agenda. It is clear that host states welcome elements of the stabilization doctrine, along with EU and NATO states. GRULAC and sub-Saharan African states tend to favour different forms of stabilization in their regions. For most of the GRULAC states that spoke in the UNSC

during the period covered, the experience of MINUSTAH in Haiti was regarded as having provided a comprehensive approach for security and stability. Costa Rica, Cuba and Venezuela were the exceptions. They questioned whether the 'military solution' that they perceived MINUSTAH to represent could deliver stabilization and socio-economic development. Sub-Saharan African states generally support more robust peacekeeping mandates for stabilization missions in their region, while the use of force to support government forces engaged in conflict with armed groups is welcomed. Indian and Russian scepticism appeared to be connected with state sovereignty primacy for resolving security challenges, and concerns regarding the expansion of the mandates of peacekeeping operations.

There are several groups of states for which the dataset constructed for this article lacks information. First, it has not been able to determine from Chinese interventions a definitive position with regards to stabilization missions. However, in 2014, China's representative in the UNSC announced that China was providing a security team to MINUSMA and its first peacekeeping infantry battalion to a UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UN 2014c: 19). This would appear to signal an important avenue for further enquiry beyond this dataset both within UN meetings and beyond. Second, the voices of some of the most significant contributors to UN peacekeeping missions only made limited statements on stabilization in open UNSC meetings. This is obviously connected with the nature of UNSC membership, but opportunities were granted to such states in debates on peacekeeping operations and related themes. It is therefore an avenue to potentially pursue further by applying this method to an analysis of General Assembly records, in particular the Fourth Committee which deals with peacekeeping operations.

This article is intended as an initial contribution to the study of national views

on stabilization, in particular as expressed within the UN system. Greater analysis of the linkages between regional organizations and the UN in this sphere is certainly a potentially rich avenue for exploration. Moreover, the paper looks to open avenues to greater study of the dynamics of the UNSC. By utilising methods of data extraction of open meetings, a significant quantitative contribution can be made to this discussion. To take this form of research further, it can be combined with data gathered from interviews with diplomats, policymakers, academics and journalists that pay particular attention to the UNSC's role in the framing of multi-lateral solutions for international peace and security challenges. Such a mixed-method approach could offer a holistic view of how policies such as stabilization are introduced, confronted and accommodated.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Notes

¹ UNSC meeting records tend to use 'stabilization' spelling, but there are 28 entries in which 'stabilisation' is used – in particular with regards to the International Stabilisation Force in Timor Leste. This article includes both spellings when discussing 'stabilization'.

² See for example: Malawi (UN 2014a: 56); Mozambique (UN 2013g: 2); Nigeria (UN 2014a: 15); Rwanda (UN 2013b: 2); and Tanzania (UN 2013a: 38).

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