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Mr. Stephen Fuhr

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● (1100)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)): Good late morning and early afternoon to our guests and witnesses today on our study on Canada's contribution to international peacekeeping. Thank you for joining us.

Today we have, from United Nations University in New York, Dr. Adam Day, head of programs, Centre for Policy Research. We also have Dr. Richard Gowan, senior fellow, Centre for Policy Research.

As an individual, from New York as well, we have Ameerah Haq, former under-secretary-general, department of field support, United Nations.

From Tufts University, we have Dr. Ian Johnstone. He is in Brussels, Belgium.

Thank you all very much for appearing. It is important that we have outside perspectives on what we're talking about today.

It is a bit difficult to manage a video conference with three or four people on screens, so if you see me make this gesture, it means I am asking you to wind down your comments in 30 seconds so we can have a nice, graceful exit, we can move on, and I can manage everyone's time.

Having said that, I will turn the floor over to Dr. Adam Day.

I would appreciate it if you would please stick to 10 minutes for your remarks and then we can get into the discussion.

Dr. Day.

Mr. Adam Day (Head of Programmes, Centre for Policy Research, United Nations University): Thanks, for this opportunity to brief this committee. I'll be under 10 minutes, so no worries there.

Today I'll speak from my experience as the former political adviser to the UN peace operation in Congo, and from sometimes serving in other large peacekeeping operations.

I'll try to cover three issues. The first is on current trends in peacekeeping. The second is on key gaps and entry points into missions that are created by these trends. The third is on some considerations and maybe some questions for Canada's re-engagement and contribution.

On current trends, in the past 15 years conflict has become more complex in three ways that have impacted peacekeeping. First, there has been a rise in intrastate civil wars, where civilians are increasingly the target of violence. Second, there has been a trend of regional involvement in these internal wars. Mali is one example, but Congo, Syria and Yemen are others. Third, the rise in importance of so-called jihadi groups has complicated traditional peacekeeping in several ways, which we can get into in the question and answer period.

One point to really flag is that across all conflict settings the risk to civilians has grown dramatically in recent years. Since the end of the Cold War, 2015 was the most dangerous year worldwide for civilians, and protection of civilians has become, really, the overriding priority of many UN peacekeeping operations today.

To meet some of these challenges, UN peacekeeping has increasingly entered into a range of partnerships with other actors and entities. There's the hybrid UN–AU mission in Darfur, UNAMID; the use of the G5 Sahel force in Mali; AMISOM's AU soldiers, who are deployed alongside the UN mission in Somalia; and the regional protection force in South Sudan, which is another example of a partnership that the UN has entered into. This does create new opportunities for troop-contributing countries to gain experience alongside other troops, but it also creates new challenges.

A final trend to note is the downward pressure on budgets. MONUSCO has undergone significant cuts in Congo three years running. UNAMID in Darfur is closing down within the next year or so. MINUJUSTH in Haiti is phasing out. Across the board, key member states are looking for cost savings and reductions. These trends combine to create concrete needs for UN peacekeeping today and opportunities for member state engagement. I'll list a few of them that may be interesting for this committee.

In MONUSCO, the reduction of the static footprint of the military component over the last few years has created a “protection through projection” concept, which requires greater airlift capacities and longer-range use of drones. That is a very concrete need that the mission has because of these reductions in static footprint.

In many of the more complex environments, including Mali, increased use of peacekeeping intelligence, as it's called, is also a premium, and new capacities have been created in missions like MINUSMA and MONUSCO to build this intelligence capacity.

Many of you may be aware of the action for peacekeeping initiative that was signed last week. There is a clear need articulated in that commitment for renewed commitment to training and equipping troops who deploy to ensure they're capable of responding quickly and effectively to protection threats. I would flag that the Elsie initiative is something worth discussing later on training as well.

All three of these—air capacities, peacekeeping intelligence, and training and equipment—are areas where demand outstrips supply today. This raises a set of questions for Canada's potential re-engagement in peacekeeping. The first question is, what kind of experience is Canada hoping to achieve through re-engagement? Is it to contribute directly to the robust protection activities of today's peacekeeping in places like Central African Republic, or is it more to gain important joint experience with European partners in the Sahel? Is Canada planning to contribute a long-term capacity to peacekeeping or a shorter one-off deployment, which you see in some contributing countries, in Mali and elsewhere? Is Canada interested in deploying only troops, or would it consider the deployment of something like formed police units, which might be more effective in some of the settings where there are large-scale urban risks as well?

Another question is how well the commitments made last year in Vancouver match the needs that I've just described. In my view they're an excellent match. The air task force in Mali is filling a crucial gap of the kind I just mentioned, air capacity. Strategic air lift in Entebbe would be a major asset to the missions in that area. A quick reaction force would almost certainly boost the protection capacities of the UN, which is exactly the set of needs I've described. The offer of training is exactly what the action for peacekeeping had in mind. I think that following through on the Vancouver commitments would be a great contribution to peacekeeping, as I've described it.

● (1105)

I'd add that, across the board, everybody I talk to in and around peacekeeping considers the Elsie project for increasing the role of women in peacekeeping to be a vital initiative that requires further support.

The final question I have is this: Where is Canada's value-added in peacekeeping? I work directly with Canadian officers in a range of settings and I think they're some of the best, if not the best, that I've seen in peacekeeping. I think specifically Canada can offer a combination of linguistic capabilities and excellence in military training that almost no other country in the world has today, and it's much needed in some of the bigger missions that I've listed here.

At a time when the bulk of today's peacekeeping requires both the ability to engage with the local population and the experience to develop complex strategic plans, true contributors like Canada are needed more than ever.

I will stop there and turn it back over to the committee.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Since he's sitting right beside you, I think I'll give the floor to Dr. Gowan.

Mr. Richard Gowan (Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Research, United Nations University): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you to the committee for the invitation to address you.

Thank you also, Chair, for promoting both Adam and me to the status of doctor. I think we must be honest and admit we are both actually mere misters.

The Chair: That is noted.

Mr. Richard Gowan: I would like to focus my remarks on three issues, building on Adam's statement. I will look at the strategic effect of current UN peace operations, peacekeeping's place in Canada's broader strategic relationships and the need for strategic innovation in UN operations.

To turn first to strategic effects, I think we must admit that the effects of peacekeeping are currently in question. The UN is going through a difficult period, with missions from Congo to the Golan Heights under a high level of pressure. We have seen the end of a series of largely successful UN state-building operations in places such as Liberia, Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire, and I think all those cases, despite many problems such as the cholera scandal in Haiti, showed that the UN can build states and can stabilize very weak countries.

But today, three-quarters of UN peacekeepers are deployed in five big missions in Africa—in Mali, Central African Republic, the Congo, Sudan and South Sudan—where they face even greater challenges and the chances of an easy win are essentially nil. UN forces in Lebanon and the Golan Heights also face heightened risks due to the insecure situation in the Middle East.

Nonetheless, I think we should emphasize that peacekeeping operations today do still have positive strategic effects. Even if they cannot deliver easy stability, they limit and contain violence in fragile states such as Mali, ensuring that jihadi groups and other non-state groups do not overthrow governments and create regional instability. They protect and facilitate vital humanitarian aid, saving many lives. Most importantly, they provide frameworks for long-term political peacemaking processes.

They do not do these things perfectly. The UN is honest about its failures. We have seen a series of UN reports, including the HIPPO report, which Ameerah Haq led, being very straight about the challenges that the blue helmets face. There is considerable space for improvement. UN peace operations are not always the right tools for dealing with weak states—cases such as Somalia.

Nonetheless, peacekeeping has proven to be resilient. We have not seen a collapse of the peacekeeping mission as we did in the 1990s in cases such as Bosnia and Somalia. I think peacekeeping is continuing to prove its strategic worth.

This relates to peacekeeping's place in Canada's broader strategic relationships. In addition to their immediate impact, peace operations are a rare source of consensus among states in a period where there is very little consensus about international security. The vast majority of UN members continue to support blue helmet operations. Adam referred to the action for peacekeeping initiative. It's worth noting that 149 nations and four regional organizations have endorsed that initiative, showing that this is an area where the international community can still find common ground. It's also worth noting that all members of the P5, including China and Russia, have signed up for that initiative.

More specifically, I would argue that peacekeeping operations contribute to Canada's strategic relationships in three ways.

First, UN peacekeeping is part of your transatlantic burden sharing. You sometimes hear analysts draw a sharp dichotomy between NATO contributions and UN contributions, but for many European governments, especially France and the Mediterranean governments, the UN mission in Mali is a very important part of the regional security architecture, just as the missions in the Baltic run by NATO are an important part of European security. By contributing to UN peacekeeping in the Sahel, you are contributing to the security of your NATO allies, even if not under a NATO flag, and that is appreciated in Europe.

Second, there is a link between peacekeeping and your trans-Pacific security relationships. We're seeing a lot of Asia-Pacific countries investing more in peace operations, and most notably, we're seeing China really investing in peacekeeping as part of its global footprint. In an era where we face growing strategic competition with China, peacekeeping is an area of co-operation.

● (1110)

Although China still only has roughly, I think, 3,000 troops in UN missions, that number is likely to rise very dramatically in coming years. I think it is worth seeing working in peacekeeping as a way of developing relationships with the PLA.

It's sometimes said that China spies on other peacekeepers in UN operations. That is true. It is also worth saying that other countries spy on Chinese units in UN peacekeeping operations. This is a fact of life. More generally, I would emphasize that peacekeeping is a platform for co-operation with a number of Pacific partners.

Finally, peacekeeping can contribute to global counter-terror efforts. Peacekeeping operations should not become counterterrorism missions, and there are dangers where peacekeepers come into contact with jihadi groups. Nonetheless, in a case such as Mali, the presence of a UN force does help provide broad security and relief and a framework for political and economic work with communities recovering from jihadi rule. I think we should understand that peacekeeping can be an element, although only an element, in challenging terrorist organizations, especially in Africa.

I have one last very brief point about strategic innovation. I think it's important to recognize that the current peacekeeping system centring on the five big missions in Africa that I've mentioned is not permanent. UN peacekeeping often goes through periods of rapid change. We saw that in the 1990s and again in the 2000s. In recent years we've seen the UN take on new operational challenges, including the removal of chemical weapons from Syria and containing Ebola in west Africa, and we're seeing the UN at least considering new missions in new regions such as potentially patrolling the eastern Ukraine to end the Russian-Ukranian standoff.

As Adam has noted, the UN is also developing a new range of modalities for working with partners such as the African Union in places like Somalia. Peace operations are a flexible tool, and they're a tool that evolved often in response to crises.

Canada has long played an important role in guiding the evolution of peacekeeping. After all, essentially Canada made up peacekeeping in the 1950s. I think it is important that, not only the Canadian government, but also Canadian research institutes and think tanks continue to contribute to fresh thinking about the future of peacekeeping in an increasingly complex international security environment.

Thank you.

● (1115)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Haq, the floor is yours.

Ms. Ameerah Haq (Former Under-Secretary-General, Department of Field Support, United Nations, As an Individual): Thank you very much for inviting me.

A lot has already been said by Adam and Richard, so I'm going to try my best not to repeat but perhaps to emphasize different facets of what they said.

First of all, I want to set the context of where we are and how we define terms. Even though we're talking about peacekeeping, I think we see ourselves moving more and more into arenas of conflict resolution. This we recognized in the HIPPO report. Even though it's been four years since that report was written, I think much of what was said there remains quite current.

With the shift in thinking, and putting into context peace operations as opposed to peacekeeping per se—and even from four years ago, as I said—we find ourselves much more in an arena of conflict resolution. Within conflict resolution, of course, we see that regional and international competition among powerful states is influencing these conflict resolution efforts around the world.

I think the UN's role as a peacekeeper is now seen in an environment of great power politics, and therefore special envoys and SRSGs are facing and having to deal with increasing regional tensions, much more deepening geopolitical fissures, and we must also recognize, in an environment of growing skepticism towards multilateralism.

That, I hope, will frame some of what you take to New York. We certainly see—at least I do—Canada performing a very important role against this tide of skepticism towards multilateralism. I think that initial broadening support and reiteration of multilateralism is very important.

Richard also mentioned, and I want to make the point, that we cannot relabel peacekeeping as countering violent extremism. The question is, how are we going to operate in these theatres where we find ourselves in these situations?

As we said in the HIPPO report, in terms of making and resourcing the missions that we are and we have, I still recall the intense debates we had internally within the UN before going into Mali, as to whether the UN was actually equipped to be in Mali with the kinds of resources we have.

We need to understand that it is a tough time for peacekeeping, particularly when expectations of the population are high, but also expectations of the member state. There are very easy and dismissive comments about the inability of the UN, when the UN in fact is not resourced.

I think the push to make sure that the UN and its troops are adequately resourced.... This does not just mean with more technology and sophisticated equipment and intelligence and all of those things, but it also means things like training, which both Adam and Richard referred to.

We also need to be cognizant of the fact that this notion of an international community is also disappearing. We tend to use that in terms of understanding there's a world out there that thinks as one, but I think that is also eroding slowly.

Again, I think Canada's role is very important in countering that kind of thinking and attitude of powerful states in terms of “might is right”.

● (1120)

The whole validity of the UN is being questioned.

In this context, you probably have very specific questions about your own involvement in peacekeeping, based on the experience of what your troops are encountering in Mali. That's important, but the fundamental positioning of where the UN should be on this notion of how we can rebuild the concept of the international community and fight against this attitude toward multilateralism that's being questioned is very important.

Specifics that I have are that training, of course, remains very important. In the kinds of operations we've seen, whether it was in Congo, or where we have partnerships in Somalia with the African Union and all of that, training is very important and Canada can play a very important role in that.

Adam mentioned formed police units, but I would also say that Canada has a stellar record and reputation in terms of community policing. That kind of training and embedding of those who are sensitive to community policing is important, particularly when we look at inherent cases of domestic violence and abuse.

Last, the whole issue of sexual exploitation and abuse is still very much at the fore. Canada can play a very important role there, too, in assisting in the training of those countries that are deploying troops to the United Nations. As much as we have all the pre-deployment training, we have seen through experience that even that is not enough. Canada can bring a lot to bear on that whole issue of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Haq.

Professor Johnstone, the floor is yours.

Mr. Ian Johnstone (Dean ad interim and Professor of International Law, Fletcher School, Tufts University): Thank you very much.

I apologize for doing this from a hotel room in Brussels and I hope the link is fine. Wave at me if you are not hearing me clearly.

● (1125)

The Chair: We know you made your bed.

Mr. Ian Johnstone: If someone comes in and puts a chocolate on my pillow, you'll know why.

Also, I'll be with you for a little more than an hour. I have to leave a little past noon your time. Please forgive me for that.

In my opening remarks, like my colleagues, I'm going to start by highlighting what I see as two broad trends in peace operations in the last 20 years or so, and then present four propositions on how to make peacekeeping more effective.

Before doing that, I want to begin by emphasizing that while the record for peacekeeping since the end of the Cold War is mixed, it has had its fair share of successes. Various academic studies have concluded that, on balance, peacekeeping works. Measuring or even defining success is difficult, but there's a broad consensus in the academic literature that deployment of a peace operation substantially reduces the chance of a relapse into full-scale conflict. In that sense, it has a preventative effect.

Some of the more widely touted success stories are in Namibia, El Salvador and Mozambique in the early 1990s, Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone in the early 2000s, and Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire more recently.

That being said, as my colleagues have pointed out, the enterprise is not getting any easier. The environment into which peacekeepers are being deployed is getting more dangerous and the ability to get at the underlying causes of conflict more difficult.

There are two broad trends. This won't be new to you, but I think it's worth summarizing in order to put some of the contemporary challenges into perspective. The first trend is that operations have become more robust, with force being used for a wider range of purposes. The second is that civilian functions of peace operations have become more expansive, getting deeply involved in certain aspects of governance. The progress has not been linear, but the trend lines are clear.

What is also clear is percolating concern about the implications of both. Some worry that the growing robustness of peace operations is at the expense of political strategies and solutions. Others worry that expansive state building is both impossible to achieve and ideologically suspect. I understand both sets of concerns, but I believe that they are exaggerated.

I will be turning first to robustness. Originally, as you all know, peacekeepers were deployed on the basis of chapter VI of the UN charter and used force only in self-defence. Today many peace operations use force not only in self-defence, but also to protect civilians and to counter spoilers, typically with a mandate under chapter VII of the UN charter.

The protection of civilians goes back to 1999 in Sierra Leone. It has been included in the mandates of most peace operations since then.

How to protect civilians with limited resources is a major challenge, and the UN has had to innovate in recent years through devices like the Force Intervention Brigade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and opening its bases to 180,000 displaced persons in South Sudan.

As regards spoilers, the Brahimi report of 2001 said that peace operations must have bigger and better equipped forces in order to deal effectively with groups that seem to undermine the peace process via violence. That, plus the protection of civilian mandates, was the basis for giving the Force Intervention Brigade the mandate to carry out, and here I'm quoting from the resolution, “targeted offensive operations” to “neutralize and disarm” armed groups in the east.

The protection challenge in Mali is how to do it without engaging in counterterrorism, which most agree UN peace operations should not do. MINUSMA does not have a proper counterterrorism mandate, but it does have the authority, and here again I'm quoting from the resolution, where it says, “to take robust and active steps” to counter asymmetric threats against civilians, and to prevent a return of armed elements to areas where civilians are at risk. In Mali, the line between protecting civilians and countering terrorism has become fine, indeed.

There is still strong support for robust action by the UN, especially for force protection and to protect civilians. There's also concern that the militarization of peacekeeping is overshadowing, and may even be crowding out the search for political solutions. I'll come back to that in a moment.

What about the second trend, expansive state building? Multi-dimensional [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] since the Cold War [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and state-building functions for refugee repatriation and human rights monitoring, holding elections, and rebuilding justice [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

● (1130)

Conventional peacekeeping is to get at the root causes of conflicts, and you can only get at those root causes through a holistic approach, combining military, police and civilian elements. It starts with mediation among the parties but must go beyond that to supporting inclusive political processes, building legitimate institutions and providing a foundation for economic development.

The backlash against this expansive peace-building agenda stems from at least two sources. First, it's seen by some as a wish list that's impossible to fulfill. As Secretary-General Guterres said to the Security Council last year in a reference to the so-called Christmas tree mandates, “Christmas is over, and the [UN] Mission in South Sudan cannot possibly implement [its] 209 mandated tasks.”

Second, most governments are increasingly resistant to being tutored on how to govern. This is true in Sudan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It's tempting to respond by invoking the principle of national ownership and letting those governments call all the shots, but if that means helping them to impose their authority on wide swaths of a population that sees them as illegitimate, it's deeply problematic.

Those are the two big trends I see in peace operations and some of the operational complexities they raise now.

I'm going to turn now to the four propositions about how to manage those complexities.

First, as the HIPPO report and others have said, we must design more tailored, context appropriate and adaptable missions. The practical challenge is not to concoct some ideal end state and design a mission to achieve that, but rather to determine what is achievable in light of conditions on the ground. The prospects of achieving any outcome will depend heavily on local, regional and global political dynamics.

In some circumstances [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] state building may be possible. In others, reducing the level of violence and providing some protection to civilians may be all that's achievable. The point is that one size does not fit all. The trick is to figure out what is achievable in the circumstances, design a mission accordingly, and prepare to adapt as the circumstances require.

The second proposition as regards the [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] first steps.

Third [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

The Chair: Professor Johnstone, if you can hear me, the quality of your Internet has deteriorated to the point that we are only getting every third or fourth word, so they're going to work on that.

Mr. Ian Johnstone: All right.

The Chair: It seems that as soon as I intervened it worked itself out.

Let them work on that for a second. I'm going to open the floor to questions. We can circle back.

I want to remind members that we have Mr. Johnstone and Miss Haq only until the top of the hour, so if you want to direct your questions to them, you only have about 20 minutes to do so.

We're going to go to seven-minute questions. I'm going to give the floor to MP Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for being here.

Ms. Haq, I want to circle back on one thing you said. You said that international peacekeeping efforts are “eroding”. I don't think anybody around this table would disagree with you, but can you expand on why you think that's happening?

Ms. Ameerah Haq: What I talked about was the overall push against multilateralism, that this notion of international community is eroding. In other words, I think the positions of many of our member states, and then some of the key ones that are against, make it a kind of fight now, almost, for the UN.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Right.

Ms. Ameerah Haq: That's part of what I hope Canada and other like-minded countries.... As I said, when you go to New York, I hope you can push against that in terms of your unwavering support for multilateralism.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Ms. Haq, I'm limited in time.

My question is, why do you think that's happening? What are the underpinning social or cultural reasons that are driving this erosion?

● (1135)

Ms. Ameerah Haq: I think part of it is, as we see in many countries, is the rise of a sort of nationalism and tendencies towards more isolationist policies. I think the UN becomes a very useful scapegoat in the debates of politicians and leaders in this country. This kind of attack on the UN.... I don't at all quibble with efficiencies in the UN. I mean, I've worked there for many years, and I think those efficiencies are absolutely right at the core. Those efficiencies are right on, but I think—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I picked up on what you said about the UN being a scapegoat, and I wouldn't disagree with that. I think that quite often people look at the UN and use that narrative to almost push back against this elitist organization or something.

Would you say part of the problem is that people don't fully understand and appreciate what the UN contributes? When I talk about people, I don't mean the people sitting around this table, those who go to the UN, those who participate, those who are actively engaged, or academics. I'm talking about the people who are driving these populist movements that we're seeing in countries. Would you say that they don't fully appreciate and understand the need to have the peacekeeping efforts throughout the world and why they contribute to the security of their own nations?

Ms. Ameerah Haq: Yes, I think there is a lack of understanding.

I also want to say that, even from Canada's perspective, there are two ways to look at it. One is that you can put your own troops into the peacekeeping arena. However, there's also another very important element, which is to support the principles of peacekeeping without necessarily putting one's troops in theatre. That's where I feel that.... One would wish for both, but in the absence...or a reluctance in national parliaments to expose their own nationals to the theatres within which the UN operates, there is still the support.

There were efforts to get other countries to support and to provide troops. There can be efforts to provide training. There can be efforts to provide equipment. There can be budgetary support. There can be support at policy levels, crafting the right kinds of mandates that set up expectations where the UN is not set to fail because of these Christmas tree mandates.

There is a lot that can be done, but this, I think, is—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: The objective of this committee is to make recommendations to the government through our parliamentary system on what the government can do to improve upon its role in the peacekeeping community. What recommendation, given everything you've said, would you suggest that we make?

Ms. Ameerah Haq: First of all, as I said, I think the broader issue is your continued and steadfast support of multilateralism in general. However, specific things that all of the other colleagues have also said are your own involvement in peacekeeping operations, your own involvement in resourcing peacekeeping missions in the way that they need to be, and your own involvement in the training that you can provide to other countries so that they increase their capacity.

Part of it is just to continue a supportive tendency. I think peacekeeping is a very important part of the whole international response to conflict. In a sense, Canada needs to be sure that it's leading that supportive way to peacekeeping.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I had some questions for Mr. Day, as well, but I think I have only about 30 seconds left, so I'll end it there. Maybe if there's time afterwards, I'll circle back.

The Chair: That sounds good.

Professor Johnstone, can you hear me now?

● (1140)

Mr. Ian Johnstone: Yes, I can hear you.

Can you hear me?

The Chair: Yes, we can hear you now.

Committee members, he's here by telephone only, so you won't see him. However, he's still there.

What we'll probably do, given the time that we have left.... I know there are people here who are going to want to ask you some questions. We have, obviously, a portion of your testimony already. Would you be so kind as to submit to the committee what you were about to say but were unable to due to the poor connection? I'd like to continue on with questions if that's okay with you.

Mr. Ian Johnstone: I'd be happy to do that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, I will turn the floor over to MP Martel.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): My question is going to be in French. It's for Ms. Ameerah Haq.

[*Translation*]

You said earlier that training is very important.

What could we do to improve training? Is it simply a question of money?

You said that such training is very important. What would you suggest to improve it further?

[*English*]

Ms. Ameerah Haq: Thank you for that important question. It's something that I think all of us here who are appearing before you feel is a very important element. I want to give you two examples.

When we took over from the African Union, both in Darfur and in Mali, one of the things that struck us was the lack of training as we were moving to get those troops into UN peacekeeping. With regard to this transfer of troops and vetting of troops in terms of training, of those already in theatre in Darfur and in Mali, number one, we found a lot of child soldiers among those troops. Number two, also, was just the level of operations for those troops. It was a very difficult vetting process of letting troops go and then trying to find troops who would meet the UN standards.

One thing is that there are different bilateral and other international programs of bringing troops into many countries, where they are operating in these kinds of theatres, up to capacity. As we've talked more about partnerships with regional organizations, we want to make sure those troops have that capacity. One is operational and tactical, with all the kinds of training that goes along with those.

The second is that by participating in UN peacekeeping, the troops then need more training on the very important elements of understanding human rights and understanding issues related to gender and other things, which the United Nations provides for pre-deployment of troops. The United Nations obviously can't go to every single peacekeeping institute where troops are being prepared for United Nations deployment, so that kind of training, on a bilateral basis or with other partners from that context, is also important, to bring their capacities up.

When we talk with our force commanders, they tell us about certain deficiencies, which are sometimes quite basic. Even though we have standards and even though we feel we meet those standards, there is still a very important element for, as I said, tactical/operational, human rights, and gender sensitivity, and then also important elements like strategic planning. We talk over and over again since force commanders and contingent commanders are sometimes worlds apart in terms of bringing this whole deployment into one strategic plan. It is important for those officers to have these planning capabilities.

Let me say that all facets of planning are required, and there is absolutely a dearth, I think, of well-honed capacity in the troops we get in the United Nations. I saw that four years ago, and I can be quite confident that the world hasn't changed within those four years, so I think that need for training still exists.

● (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Thank you.

My question is for Mr. Adam Day.

Since the start of the mission in Mali, do you think there has been any progress on peace or stability?

I would like to hear your thoughts on this as regards the mission in Mali.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Day: Thanks very much, Mr. Martel.

One quick note: I was never deployed in Mali, so these are observations from the outside.

I think the security situation in Mali tends to ebb and flow, and there have been some gains by the military component of MINUSMA in some of the areas where it's deployed around places like Tessalit, Kidal and some of those more eastern points.

I think one of the other gains is also in terms of regional involvement. The deployment of the G5 Sahel has brought key regional member states into the commitment to solve the issues in Mali. I think that, in and of itself, is an important development.

The UN Secretary-General's reports talk about gains on the civilian protection side as well over the last couple of years. I don't know how sustainable they are. Mali is a very big place.

In terms of the political process, that's a more difficult one. My understanding is that the political progress with the so-called compliant armed groups has reached a set of commitments that are gradually being implemented. One of the challenges of Mali is, obviously, that there are two different sets of groups. One set is involved in the political process and the other one is excluded from it by being called a terrorist armed group. I think one of the challenges for the mission going forward will be addressing those groups in a sustainable way.

It's possible that Richard may have some views on this as well.

Thanks very much.

The Chair: We'll have to circle back on that. If you have other things to add, maybe another member will pick up on that idea, but I'm going to give the floor to MP Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to go back to Ms. Haq on the question of training.

We often talk about training in very general terms. I risk asking you a question to which you'll answer, “all of the above”, but when we're talking about a Canadian contribution to training, are we talking about developing training materials? Are we talking about bilateral training missions? Are we talking about providing trainers to the UN? At what level do you see Canada's contribution in terms of training being most effective?

Ms. Ameerah Haq: I'm really going to have to say all of the above—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Ameerah Haq: —but let me tell you, on pre-deployment training, as I said, it's impossible for the UN to send trainers to every troop deployment. I talked about this when I was in DFS. If we could get trainers.... I think Canada has a very nice program where you utilize retired.... I forget the name of that program, but we've used it. We could send them out, particularly when we are entering into a partnership, as Adam said, with respect to Mali, and we know we're working in parallel with another troop deployment. That could be done through UN auspices. You'll have to speak to my colleagues now in DPKO and DFS and others. If we could send out more people to pre-deployment training, that would be of great value. That could be done.

The second is the training in theatre. The UN has a training unit in every single mission. There again, I think it's important that as we have specific courses, perhaps you can work closely with the training unit to see where Canada could have special input, as I said earlier, particularly in relation to community policing and things like protection of civilians. A number of troops coming from certain countries just do not have an inherent socialization toward those kinds of issues, but Canada does. When I worked in East Timor, we worked very closely with the Australian and New Zealand troops on those kinds of issues.

Those are specific skills which again, you could bring to bear in pre-deployment, in theatre and the reiteration of that. You have very high standards on sexual exploitation and abuse. Again, those need reinforcing. Then, of course, there is whatever is done on bilateral or other organizational ways. The EU provided a lot of training to the troops that were going into the UNOSOM operation in Somalia.

I think you could come in at many different levels.

There are training materials but, as I said, sometimes I feel we're a little behind. Again, things may have changed, but I always felt that.... Now so much is available. I think bringing in some kind of technological innovation and access of information to troops, and using better technology is also a potential area of support.

Thank you.

● (1150)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Okay.

I want to turn to our guests from the United Nations University and ask a question, without trying to make it very loaded, about the absence of the Pearson peacekeeping centre in Canada now. Has the closure of that centre left gaps that could be filled again in Canada, or are those functions of research and training being fulfilled elsewhere since the closure?

Mr. Richard Gowan: I do not think that Canada suffers from a shortage of researchers focusing on peacekeeping. You generate quite a lot of them. However, I think it is true to say that the Pearson centre, like other centres in Sweden and Germany, played an important role in linking research to policy-making, to training. It's value was precisely as an institute that brought together not merely researchers, but also practitioners, and could provide training.

I think for all the reasons we've already discussed, improving peacekeeping training is a very important task, and a centre like Pearson can add a great deal of value on that front, so we do miss it.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Day, do you have anything to add to Ms. Haq's comments on training? You emphasized training as part of your introductory remarks. Do you have anything to add to her remarks on that?

Mr. Adam Day: I think she certainly covered it. In my experience, interoperability is an important issue for new troops coming in. Often it's that moment when you have a troop-contributing country that isn't used to operating alongside some of the more developed countries. Having some training in interoperability and coordination with them has had a lot of impact. I think that is worth specifying.

I'll leave it there.

The Chair: I notice the clock is approaching noon here in Ottawa. I believe that Ms. Haq and Mr. Johnstone have to leave around now.

I just want to thank you. Stay as long as you like, but if you have to leave, I want to recognize your appearance here and thank you for your contribution.

Mr. Johnstone, I'd remind you to submit the remarks that you were unable to deliver today to the committee. We would appreciate that.

● (1155)

Mr. Ian Johnstone: Yes, I'll do that.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before we go to five minutes, we have one more seven-minute question.

We'll go to MP Robillard. The floor is yours.

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): My question was for Madam Haq.

A voice: She just left.

The Chair: You have a couple of other choices there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: I will still ask my question and perhaps someone can answer.

Earlier this year, at a conference on women in peacekeeping missions, you said you were proud to see that Bangladesh was sending all-female contingents.

Can you elaborate on this initiative and give us a bit of feedback on that experience?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Day: I'm afraid that because that was Ms. Haq's point, from her experience with the Bangladeshi troops, I actually don't have anything to add. I don't think Richard does, either. My apologies.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Okay. I'll try another one.

[*Translation*]

Last week at the United Nations, Donald Trump announced a huge cut to the U.S. contribution to peacekeeping missions around the world. What can Canada do in this regard? Do you see this as an opportunity for Canada to resume its role as a world leader in peacekeeping operations?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Day: We'll both take a stab at that one.

The short answer is yes. The cuts to peacekeeping are not happening right now. It had been happening over the past several years. Peacekeeping was at a high watermark of $8 billion, and is now under $7 billion. Big missions like MONUSCO have cut up to 20% of some aspects. I think it's absolutely creating new needs. Some of Canada's commitments made in Vancouver perfectly match those needs. The answer is yes, you can fill those gaps.

In terms of leadership, absolutely, some of the points Ameerah was making about standing by the principles are also very helpful with troops on the ground and being able to guide the strategic direction of the mission. Canada, for example, has very important roles within a mission like MONUSCO, with staff officers and planners. I think that is another place for Canada to lead even more in some of the other missions.

I do want to give Richard a chance to make a point also.

Mr. Richard Gowan: I would merely point out that although the U.S. has attempted to impose very severe cuts on the peacekeeping budget in the last two years, in fact, American officials have been willing to compromise on this issue. Despite the overall anti-multilateral rhetoric of this administration, the U.S. has recognized the value of peacekeeping forces in cases such as South Sudan and the Central African Republic. This is one case where I think the president's bark is a little worse than his bite.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you.

My other question is for Mr. Adam Day.

What are the challenges in conducting United Nations peacekeeping missions involving multinational tactical groups?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Day: I assume by that you mean the use of multiple different troop-contributing countries within a single.... Okay.

It differs from country to country. I think one of the main difficulties has been a wide variety of training and capacities across different kinds of peacekeepers. In some of the most important missions in terms of protection of civilians and those other key tasks, having a widely differentiated set of troop contributors has been a challenge.

I think that points to the need for countries like Canada to engage even more.

Linguistic challenges are obviously there, especially in a lot of the francophone missions and many of the troops from the region are francophone. Having anglophone staff officers creates a strange asymmetry, I've found, and having more francophone staff officers would obviously be helpful.

I think there is an underlying dynamic where the African Union still considers sometimes the UN to be a slightly western imposition, so those partnerships that I was talking about—bringing in the neighbouring states, partnering with the African Union, partnering with the ECCAS and others—have helped address some of those issues of multinational tensions. I think, actually, there's a lot of success there on the ground, despite not particularly good success in places like Darfur on the ground.

● (1200)

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you very much.

The Chair: The Liberal side still has two minutes if someone wants to take some time.

Mark Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Day, in an article titled “Political Solutions Must Drive the Design and Implementation of Peace Operations”, you mentioned that in cases such as that in South Sudan, “decisions by national leaders to pursue violent conflict rather than political reconciliation has left little room for the UN to broker political outcomes.”

Can you expand on that?

Mr. Adam Day: Sure. I think that was in the context of South Sudan. Is that correct?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That's correct.

Mr. Adam Day: When the mission in South Sudan was first set up in 2011, the impulse behind it was essentially to do a state-building project. In 2013, the civil war that broke out between the president and the vice-president essentially closed off a lot of the space for the kind of process we were doing. Then we had to change our posture to a certain extent away from the focusing on this state building and much more on reconciliation between these two sides and the protection of civilians.

Over time, several years into this civil war, there wasn't a very clear political track or role for the UN to actually broker that. We kind of had to make it up. We had an office in Addis trying to broker a deal. My understanding there is that the traditional peacekeeping set-up—where you have an agreement and the peacekeepers are deployed to oversee the agreement—wasn't there. We were already there on the ground, and then the civil war broke out. It was a kind of non-traditional peacekeeping setting where there wasn't much of a political entry point for the UN at the time.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: What can be done to effectively prevent that kind of scenario from happening in the future in terms of the UN's relation?

Mr. Adam Day: I think one of the issues that Ian pointed to is the mandating, having a mandate that very clearly sets out from the beginning what the political objective is and not having 290 other tasks that also need to be done at the same time.

Also, there's some work that can be done in mandating a new mission or a mission that's in transition, in working with the parties to the conflict so that they have a better understanding of what the deployment is about from the outset and have expressed consent to it, rather than imposing mandates from the outside.

The HIPPO report proposed a two-step mandating process that would have done consultations ahead of mandating.

The Chair: Thank you. That's awesome.

We'll go to five-minute questions now.

The first five-minute question will go to MP Dzerowicz.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to continue that line of questioning. The question is for you, Richard, but, Adam, if you want to also comment, I'd be very grateful.

It sounds a little odd. Richard, as part of your presentation you talked about the missions in Africa. You talked about how a peacekeeping mission provides a framework for long-term peace, vital humanitarian aid, and you went through a list.

Does the UN have the right peacekeeping objectives? Every time the UN goes in, does it have the right things in mind as it is actually going into these peacekeeping initiatives, into the different countries? I'm assuming that we're working with the local governments to come up with those objectives.

Let me start off with that, and we'll go from there.

Mr. Richard Gowan: It's worth being honest that the Security Council often throws peacekeeping missions at crises without a completely clear strategy, and it is often incumbent on UN officials on the ground to work out what is possible once they are deployed. In the Central African Republic, or indeed in Mali, the UN went in with a sense of urgency, and then it took some time to develop a political plan.

The Security Council could be more responsive in asking for peace operations more flexibly than it currently does. The Security Council is a heavily overburdened organization running multiple missions.

As Ameerah Haq mentioned, there is also a strong recognition that the UN needs to invest more and get more help from friendly countries like Canada in terms of analysis and information about the countries it's going into. This would enable it to develop its political strategies more credibly and more rapidly.

● (1205)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: If I understood that correctly, you're saying that the UN Security Council will say, “We have a problem in Mali,” and deploy a group, but once they get there, they say, “Okay, what do we need to do to be able to create the conditions for peace?”

You're suggesting there could be some more advanced thinking and advanced strategic work, where they would say, “Let's set our objectives before we actually get on the ground, so that we have a better idea about how we're going to get to peace.” Have I understood you correctly?

Mr. Richard Gowan: Yes.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: How does the information on the ground get shared back with the UN? It seems we are into more complex initiatives. The work is long-term. It's not like we're in for a few weeks; we're there for years. How is there constant feedback, and how do adjustments happen as the operation continues to unfold and move its way toward peacekeeping?

Mr. Adam Day: There isn't a lack of information flow from the field to headquarters. In fact, there is probably sometimes too much information, and it's a matter of culling it. There are daily reports, cables, and an entire centre set up to receive information and flash reports and other things.

The more interesting part is how you shift gears and make changes over time. There is a process of strategic reviews that goes on which is increasingly independently led. It assesses what the direction of the mission is, how well it is meeting its objectives and whether changes need to happen. That can be driven by a crisis, as happened in 2013 with the civil war in South Sudan. It can be driven on a regular basis; it can be mandated by the Security Council, and it can also be mandated by the UN Secretary-General. That's the traditional way of shifting gears.

What you also see in some missions now is a lot of innovation on the ground that is being fed back. The creation of intelligence capacities in places like Mali and Congo was largely an innovation which arose out of a need on the ground. That filters back into new policies that are now driving other missions as well, so there is also quite a lot that happens on the ground that feeds back in and creates a loop.

Then there is obviously annual mandating, where a mission can shift gears based on the UN Secretary-General's report. That is fed from the ground as well.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Do you think that's going well for the most part, in terms of the intelligence that's going back and forth, or is there something that needs to be improved in that area?

Mr. Adam Day: I only have 20 seconds for my answer.

It can always be improved. The strategic review initiative is a very good one, and the more we can make it independent and transparent, the better it will be.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

MP Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Chairman, through you, my first question is for Richard Gowan.

You mentioned the evolution of artificial intelligence as a force that traditional diplomacy struggles to deal with effectively. Could you elaborate on the problem artificial intelligence poses to international peace and security, and why traditional methods of diplomacy cannot deal with it?

Mr. Richard Gowan: Artificial intelligence also presents a problem to me because I am a deeply untechnical person, so this is a generalist's comment.

We are seeing developments in terms of artificial intelligence, in terms of cyberwarfare, that the UN and other multinational institutions do not have frameworks to govern. The UN does not yet have the architecture that is necessary to manage, prevent or respond to any of the new forms of warfare that we are likely to see in the coming decades. This set of problems is separate from those related to peacekeeping and other parts of the UN system that may develop to deal with that.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is seized of precisely these issues and has launched an initiative, which our centre here in New York is supporting, to grapple with the challenges of new technologies. I would recommend that you visit our website to see some of our early work on that. But the politics around this and especially the politics, I think, between China and the U.S. mean that it will be a highly sensitive process for the UN to advance.

● (1210)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What should be done in the meantime when there's a gap? Is there another entity that can fill that need?

Mr. Richard Gowan: I think the UN is the natural framework for multilateral agreements around artificial intelligence and other forms of technology. What is interesting is that my colleagues who work on this here say that companies in Silicon Valley, companies developing new forms of technology, are actually increasingly interested in talking to the UN, so I think the UN is the best place to manage this. As you know well, however, the UN has many virtues, but speed is not one of them, and we're still at a very tentative stage, frankly, in working out not merely the politics of managing and governing artificial intelligence but actually what is possible in this very rapid field. It is a huge mountain to climb.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

You've been quoted as saying it's reasonable to ask why on earth the Security Council thinks that a UN force can do any better in Mali, even with the European reinforcements. Does the UN peacekeeping force have a chance of succeeding in Mali?

Mr. Richard Gowan: I believe it does. Although MINUSMA has many challenges, it is worth saying that it is a singular improvement over the African force that was briefly there before-hand. That is also true in the Central African Republic, if you compare the UN and African force.

I think it is worth saying, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, that the UN force has contained the conflict, but what will success look like? Success will look like a process of reconciliation between the different armed groups in Mali. Ultimately, that must be driven by the government in Bamako and by its opponents. The UN cannot create peace on its own. In that case what it can do is provide a security framework for the political process, and I believe that is possible over time.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Your analysis of the big five UN peacekeeping missions, including the Mali mission, shows that the missions will face worsening security and humanitarian situations, and peacekeepers will be facing worsening challenges. Can you elaborate on what these situations and challenges are, and what threats they pose to Canadian Armed Forces serving in Mali?

Mr. Richard Gowan: The challenges vary case by case, but in Mali, clearly the primary threats to the peacekeeping force come from asymmetric attacks carried out by non-state armed groups, including al Qaeda in the Maghreb. What we have seen in fact is that the western nations in Mali have been able to deal with these threats reasonably well. The experience of Afghanistan has prepared European and Canadian forces for this environment. The majority of casualties are among African contingents in Mali, which lack the equipment and the experience to operate in that environment. There has been good work in supporting those African contingents by giving them counter-IED training, for example, and I think Canada should involve itself in that too.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next is MP Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for remaining. I'll gear this question toward Mr. Day, but I'm interested in both of your opinions.

Are UN peacekeeping forces adapting quickly enough to the changing role of peacekeeping, and is the changing role of UN peacekeeping creating any issues for political engagement or diplomatic efforts?

Mr. Adam Day: I think there have been some important adaptations in the last few years in terms of building intelligence capacities and understanding the conflict better. I think some other innovations, such as through the use of aerial drones to survey areas where we're not deployed in places, have made our geographics go much better than before. In some respects, then, the adaptations are actually quite good for a large organization. Obviously, it could be faster.

I think one of the interesting things I'll point to, when you talk about the link with the more political objectives, is that these huge missions have an enormous logistics lift and an enormous amount going on when it comes to the deployment and maintenance of troops and police and others. In my experience, that has made it harder to have enough attention span across the mission to focus on some of the political processes. I think some of the smaller, leaner, more politically oriented missions sometimes do a better job in finding political entry points.

I think the challenge there is that these capacities should be seen as leveraged on the political side. The extent to which you can develop strategies where the deployment of large numbers of troops and police and civilian assets then gets translated into political relevance and entry points is the big challenge for the UN. To be frank, in some settings we haven't gained enough political leverage. Mali may be one where we have slightly more. Overseeing the elections helped, as did participating in the political dialogue among the parties directly. Supporting the DDR process has helped fuse the operational and the political a bit, but it is a very difficult challenge.

Coming back to strategic reviews, it would be worth looking at the strategic review of MINUSMA. Ellen Loj led it, and she made some interesting recommendations for how to orient the missions I think more towards the political mandate of the mission.

● (1215)

Mr. Richard Gowan: On your question concerning adaptation, I think the UN is a more adaptive organization than we often recognize. Especially on the issue of intelligence, which five years ago was really a taboo subject, we've seen huge progress. A wide range of states are now strongly supporting UN intelligence gathering, so change is possible.

I think it is worth recognizing that UN forces are still in very, very difficult environments. Even a NATO force would struggle in a situation such as Darfur or South Sudan. The UN is still trying to manage those operational environments with fewer capabilities. So it is adapting, but it is also dealing with very daunting mission settings.

The Chair: You have a minute and a half, Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay.

Are Canadian peacekeepers being properly utilized in current peacekeeping operations? You have a minute and a half.

Mr. Adam Day: I would say that in my experience, the Canadians are at key points in the mission like, for example, MONUSCO, a francophone one. They are leading the liaison with the national army and doing it very capably. I couldn't imagine a better contributing country for that. They're leading G5 plans in the east for overseeing the operations. I couldn't imagine a better member state to lead that, in particular because it involves liaison with the other troops there.

From my experience, we're getting a lot out of the Canadians we have on the ground, even in the relatively small numbers. I can't really speak from experience on the other missions, but if you could have that kind of capacity linked up also with troops, it would be quite an enormous boost to any mission.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next is Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for being with us today. I appreciate all the comments.

I want to follow up on something you just said, Mr. Day, that you appreciate the Canadian contribution in the relatively low numbers. How is it received that Prime Minister Trudeau says we're going to send 600 troops and 150 police officers, and we show up with 250 and a rather specialized air task force?

Mr. Adam Day: It's worth pointing out that I don't work for the UN peacekeeping—

Mr. James Bezan: I know, but you are at the United Nations University. You study this stuff and you must get some feedback. You used to be there.

Mr. Adam Day: I think there's a certain level of wistfulness that the full commitment would be reached. There is a lot of excitement around the defence ministerial conferences that you've been leading and the commitment to a quick reaction force and others as well.

I wouldn't say there's disappointment, but there is a sense that if we could get the rest of that commitment, it would actually make a very tangible difference in the peacekeeping realm, especially because those are very big numbers in terms of what they can do for a peacekeeping mission.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you.

Mr. Gowan, you wrote last month that you called on the United Nations to go back to its post-Second World War roots and not try to innovate. What are you suggesting?

● (1220)

Mr. Richard Gowan: I wish I didn't write stuff that people then read.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. James Bezan: It intrigued me.

Mr. Richard Gowan: That was not in the context of peacekeeping. What I was arguing was that you have a lot of very fancy talk about the evolution of global governance today. I was emphasizing that the core of the UN remains the Security Council, and the core task of the Security Council is in fact to act as a clearing house for the big powers, including the U.S., Russia and China, to sort out their differences.

Over the last few years we've clearly seen a breakdown in Security Council diplomacy over Syria. That is a shame on the organization. Conversely, we've seen a surprisingly good level of co-operation between China and the U.S. over North Korea—not perfect but actually pretty impressive.

What I was arguing in the piece that you referred to is that in an era of growing great power competition, we will need the Security Council to play that big power deconfliction role much more than we have over the last 30 years where, in a sense, the UN has been relieved of its geostrategic purpose during the post-Cold War peace.

Mr. James Bezan: Actually, you're getting to the crux of the problem: the players that have the veto that sit on the UN Security Council. You mentioned possible peacekeeping in the Donbass region of Ukraine and Crimea. These are things this committee has also considered. Something that I personally support is having a peacekeeping force in Donbass to separate the sides and get the Russians back over the border. What's the likelihood of that ever happening with Russia holding the veto?

If you look at the big conflicts in the world today, such as Syria, the meltdowns we're seeing across the Middle East and the Russian aggression in eastern Europe, particularly Ukraine and Georgia and possibly Moldova, what role will the UN play if Russia keeps exercising a veto to any diplomacy or peacekeeping in the future in these regions? Are they just going to let us try to settle long-standing jihadist-type disputes in Africa?

Mr. Richard Gowan: There is a very real risk that if relations with Russia deteriorate further, the Security Council will become more blocked. However, it is worth noting that, for Russia, the seat on the Security Council is a standing source of prestige and Moscow does not want the organization to collapse completely.

In the specific case of the Donbass, this is something that I have worked on quite a lot over the last year. Russia is carrying quite a significant cost, frankly, for maintaining its forces in eastern Ukraine. I believe it is possible after the upcoming Ukrainian elections that Moscow might be willing to compromise on some type of peacekeeping settlement so as to extract itself from costly conflict.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you.

The Chair: Next is MP Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and gentlemen, thank you for being with us.

I want to take advantage of your presence as policy researchers to help us direct the thoughts towards the preparation of our report. I'm looking at our amazing analysts as I do that to maybe flag what you're about to tell us.

You're talking to a defence committee on the question of UN peacekeeping, which is incredibly complex and interdisciplinary. What I'd like to ask you about is the connection points, the tentacles that this committee has to be mindful of to make sure that we do peace operations well. I'm looking at the humanitarian agenda and also at the governance post-conflict reconstruction agenda.

In a lot of scenarios, we'll have chapter VII resolutions, peace operations presence on the ground, but at the same time, a need to rebuild a recently torn-down state. If we don't do that quickly and we don't do it well, we're going to have rogue elements come in and take over the distribution and provision of public goods and services and thereby gain legitimacy along the lines of ISIS. This is complex stuff. How can the committee identify those things that are strictly military operational in nature and all those things that we should, if we don't answer them ourselves, at least flag as questions for others to consider to look at the interdisciplinarity of this problem?

Mr. Adam Day: I think you've served in some of these places, too, so thank you for this perspective.

For me, there is nothing dividing the military from the other aspects of things. The starting point, I think, and what the Secretary-General has talked about when he designed these reforms for the UN, is to build an architecture where the immediate operational work is linked to the longer-term peace-building.

I think one of your entry points is going to be the new peace and security architecture here in New York, which is meant to have peace-building aligned with the political processes a bit more, and also with regional desks that sit above them looking at regional strategies. That's an important entry point for your understanding of how the UN may be responding to these things.

The UN development system reform, currently in the final stages, I suppose, is also meant to make non-mission settings and development-oriented agencies more oriented toward preventing conflicts before they break out. That's another one for your analysts to be thinking about: how we can, in the whole panoply of other development settings, be better at preventing the outbreak.

There has been a lot of work in connecting the UN and the World Bank more closely together around conflict prevention and management. There are some very good entry points we can flag for your analysts in terms of understanding how we can work better with those agencies, connecting the short-term with the long-term interventions.

Richard, do you have a follow-up?

● (1225)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you.

Perhaps I could take you more to the operational side, to the ground-level perspective, in terms of who is doing the peace operations. How do we do civ-mil planning and coordination? Co-operation is often raised, but it should really be coordination. You're going to have a plethora of UN agencies, each with different interests in the reconstruction agenda, all wanting to do good, all having various degrees of legitimacy or lack thereof in the country being assisted.

What kind of frameworks should we have on the ground for civ-mil planning, or are we already doing it well enough in your assessment?

Mr. Adam Day: There is a lot of inter-agency planning work done on the ground. In a place like eastern Congo, OCHA, UNDP and the missions sit together very regularly. I think there are tensions, though, that could be explored around the issue of humanitarian space and peace operations, and really understanding the extent to which a large peace operation is actually supporting humanitarian work, and not seen as interfering with it. That's one of the key questions in a deployment. Direct contact with OCHA on the ground is very important.

Another point to make is that a lot of member states have very good capacities in understanding how these dynamics are playing out on the ground. Connect with them, particularly in a place like Mali. They are some of our best sources of information as well.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: I have a very quick question with a yes or no answer. You probably don't have time to elaborate.

Is it fair to say that leaving gaps in the provision of goods and services, unaddressed gaps that rogue elements could walk into and take over, is a lesson learned that we have to take very seriously, if you look at Iraq and ISIS and that scenario?

Mr. Adam Day: Yes. It's not only tangible gaps, but political gaps as well, absolutely.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

The Chair: Thank you for being so disciplined at that end.

The last formal question, round two, will go to MP Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Canada faces, obviously, limited resources. We have the choice to make of how much we put into regional organizations or alliances like NATO, how much we put into United Nations peacekeeping and how much we do independently or bilaterally. Mr. Gowan raised this tangentially in his talks about the benefit of the UN over regional intervention. In terms of the interests of peacekeeping, can you talk about which of those are the most effective strategies?

Mr. Adam Day: That's you, Richard.

Mr. Richard Gowan: The first thing I would say is that, clearly, there is a difference between comparing NATO and UN missions for Canada, but we're also talking about comparing UN and African Union missions, for example, in Africa.

I think the development of the African Union peace and security architecture over the last decade has been impressive and is something to celebrate, but when you're looking at running big, multi-dimensional missions, the UN is still better at managing a lot of the technicalities and the administration of those. For the time being, in Africa, the UN remains best placed to run large-scale multi-dimensional peace operations. What's very notable is that African countries themselves have massively expanded their contributions to UN peace operations. That is another positive development.

I think you can support both the AU and the UN, but in operational terms, the UN is still the market leader on the African continent. In terms of the balance between UN missions and NATO missions for a country like Canada, clearly there are a lot of complex choices there that go beyond peacekeeping policy.

What we do see in Mali is a positive development of a number of NATO countries coming together to work through the UN, and despite some friction, discovering that the UN framework is one they're comfortable in. As I said in my opening remarks, for the French and a number of other European countries, having an effective mission in Mali is an important national security interest, so perhaps the NATO-UN dichotomy is not quite as extreme as it once was.

● (1230)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you.

The Chair: You'll get another opportunity.

There's a significant amount of interest in more questions. We have about 25 minutes left on the clock. We can hear from members again. It will be four minutes each.

I'll give the first question to MP Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Day, in your comments earlier you talked about the need for more interoperability.

Mr. Gowan, you talked about the challenges of working beside Chinese military peacekeepers, as they are potential spies and their reputation so far in peacekeeping hasn't been great.

I have a bit of a concern, as many do in Canada, about who we serve alongside when we're on UN missions. Despite the issue of needing to break down some of those barriers between us and other countries, I'm not sure I'd want to have our troops serving side by side with the Chinese or other countries that have had a history of sexual violence while they're serving on UN missions.

Despite the need for more interoperability, wouldn't we be better off serving alongside those who show up and are trusted versus some of the other players sitting on these UN missions?

Mr. Adam Day: We can both take a stab at that one.

Just to address the Chinese question, they actually came with very well-prepared and equipped troops to do the tasks that I saw them doing. That was in Darfur. My experience with them has been relatively positive.

There is an obvious concern about who is going to have your back in some of these settings. I think the set-up they have in Mali is probably one in which most of the European troops are very comfortable with who has their back. That would be something you would have to decide among yourselves.

As Richard pointed out, the vast majority of casualties are of the troops that aren't coming from Europe. I think they've had 99 in MINUSMA and a very small number were western troops. I think the set-up there isn't exactly serving immediately alongside troops that you'd be worried about.

On the SEA front, I'll just make one point. The more we can get troops like yours closer to troops that are higher risk, hopefully the better they will behave. I think there's a lot to be gained from high-quality, well-trained troops in setting a good example and in having extra eyes out there. To be frank and very pragmatic from a peacekeeping perspective, there's a huge value to be added with Canadian deployment on that issue.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Gowan.

Mr. Richard Gowan: I understand these concerns. I would simply respond with one anecdote.

I was talking to a Swedish counterpart about the Nordic experience in Mali, and he said that initially they had gone in feeling very arrogant toward the non-western troops because they don't meet all NATO standards. He said that by the end, a lot of respect had emerged and it was actually the Swedes who recognized that troops —I think they were Mauritanian, although I'm not sure of that— alongside them had a vastly better understanding of what was going on and vastly better local intelligence because of their cultural affinity with the Malians.

We have a lot to teach the UN, but I think we also sometimes have something to learn from people we're not used to serving alongside.

Mr. James Bezan: I just want to follow up on one of your opening comments, Mr. Gowan.

You've written about this in the past, about how successful you've had it in Liberia and other countries, but we're not going to see that same success. You actually said all of the big five...today, I think, you actually said the chances of success on these UN missions is nil. What's the long game here? How do we get to a successful resolution, or is this all for naught?

● (1235)

Mr. Richard Gowan: It's not all for naught, but I think we have to recognize that we're not going to turn the Congo or South Sudan into Quebec or Ontario anytime soon.

We are going to be leaving behind countries that, at best, will achieve a minimum of stability and will take a long time to develop further, but that is better than having them in a state of complete conflict or regional wars, as we saw in central Africa in the 1990s.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next is MP Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you very much.

Mr. Day, when I last asked you a question, I asked you a question about an article that you were quoted in, "Political Solutions Must Drive the Design and Implementation of Peace Operations". In that same article, you quoted an observation from 2015 from the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, which stated the following:

> Lasting peace is achieved not through military and technical engagements but through political solutions. Political solutions should always guide the design and deployment of UN peace operations. When the momentum behind peace falters, the United Nations, and particularly Member States, must help to mobilize renewed political efforts to keep peace processes on track.

Can you expand on that observation?

Mr. Adam Day: Yes.

I think what you tend to have in a mission mandate is a broad political agenda that talks about national level reforms building on a peace agreement, the kind of things you see in Congo in 2002 or in the peace agreement that was signed after the election in Mali. Then you have a series of operational tasks that the mission tends to do: neutralizing armed groups, DDR, a whole range of support to humanitarian aid and all of these other things.

What can happen in missions is that those two issues can become bifurcated, and you can think about these operational issues as ends in themselves and keep turning the wheel. But the point is that what we need to do is think about how they contribute to that political objective. Why are you doing DDR with armed groups? It's because that's the outcome of the peace agreement you're looking for.

I think where the UN hasn't necessarily done strategic-level planning in the way that aligns with the HIPPO report is the political tends to sit very high up and often the operational doesn't tend to lead towards it, and you get stuck in situations like Congo, where we have a neutralization of armed groups mandate but I don't see that directly contributing to the political objectives of the mission, per se.

You have a follow-up question; I can tell.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I do.

What specific recommendations can you give Canada with respect to this? What role can the Government of Canada play in addressing this issue?

Mr. Adam Day: I think pushing for a Security Council mandating process that is driven from the ground and not driven from New York, advocating that council members send a small team to settings ahead of time and identifying what the meaningful and realistic political objectives are in the short term and medium term, and then informing the mandate with that analysis. Essentially a two-step mandating process, is a really important one. It will avoid these kinds of broad, 40-year horizon Christmas tree mandates where essentially you're not going to get the kinds of reforms you want within the time frame that you ask for.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Is that practical? Do you think it's practical to send that group in advance to determine exactly what that is? You've researched this a lot, what's your take on it? Will it happen?

Mr. Adam Day: Not only is it practical, but it's actually been done. Ian Martin went to the head of the formal formation of the mission and wrote a report that essentially informed headquarters as to what the viable outcomes could be. Libya fell apart, but that isn't a shortcoming of that process. Actually, that is an example of a relatively low-cost light touch but very effective way to write a mandate.

I think if you would have done a different mandate on Libya without that, there would have been a very different sense of where the political entry points were in the periphery.

Sorry, I see the paper again. I seem to get to the paper fast.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You're much more obedient than most witnesses who come before the committee.

The Chair: That's a 30-second wind-down. It's almost like a hard stop.

Mr. Adam Day: Okay.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds to gracefully wind down, but I will appreciate that this has come to a close.

I'll yield the floor to MP Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank our witnesses, for whom our somewhat arcane procedures must seem strange, particularly if you're appearing by video conference, because you can't see who sits on the government side and who sits on the opposition side.

I want to go back to the questions I was asking Mr. Gowan about choices of how Canada participates, and the fourth choice we didn't really get to, and that's participating in coalitions of the willing.

I wonder if you have some comments on the relative merits of UN missions versus coalitions of the willing. We heard from some witnesses that coalitions of the willing often don't focus well on reconstruction and the peace process, and that the UN might be better at that. Do you have comments on that?

● (1240)

Mr. Richard Gowan: Look, multinational forces and coalitions of the willing are probably the best way to go if you're going into a situation where you want to proactively kill people. You see that in a counterterrorism situation or a situation such as Somalia. It tends to make sense to get together coalitions of countries that are willing to take the risk of high intensity operations and aggressive operations. I think that most UN officials would say that when you're going on the offensive militarily, that is not a job for blue helmets; that is a job for coalitions of the type you describe. In Mali we see the G5 countries setting up a coalition to more proactively pursue jihadis alongside MINUSMA.

Where I think the UN has an advantage is in, as I say, running multi-dimensional robust missions over time, which may use force and may indeed sometimes have to go tactically on the offensive, but have an overall strategic goal of peace-building. That's where I think the blue helmets have an advantage.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Day, do you have any comments on this question of coalitions of the willing versus the UN operations?

Mr. Adam Day: To be honest, I don't have any direct experience with this on the ground, and so I think Richard's points cover it.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Dzerowicz is next.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Haq mentioned something about trade being very important in African countries, and Canada can play an important role, and so with respect to.... Sorry, I said trade, yes. Trade is very important. I could read your lips there. I know there was a question there.

I wanted to see whether you agreed with that, and if so, as we think about our own objectives about going in, how do we incorporate that as we move forward?

Either one of you can start.

Mr. Adam Day: That's quite a difficult question, teed up by Ameerah's point.

One of the things that the UN has tried to do particularly in the Horn of Africa is work with the AU so that the political agreements are tied to the economic subagreements. I think there has been some success on that. The AU support office in Addis has worked on that. Tying it to the regional commissions that actually deal with the economics is the key thing, and the UN has built capacities linking to the economic commissions, particularly in East Africa. I don't know as much about the one in West Africa, but my understanding is that some of the work with ECOWAS around some of the conflicts there has actually been directly tied to the economic processes that underlie their community. So I think tying directly into those institutions, maybe placing staff there—the UN has done that kind of partnering directly with them—is the way to tie that together.

One thing I would say is an underutilized resource overall for the UN, and that's the regional economic commissions the UN has. Some of the best analysts about the risks in Syria were actually individuals within ESCWA in Beirut, but it was always individual and I don't think it was tapped. That's underutilized, I think, across the UN system. It could be brought out a bit by member states.

Richard, do you have anything to add?

Mr. Richard Gowan: Yes, I would actually link this also to Mr. Garrison's comments.

I think it's very important that Canada, when it's putting peacekeepers on the ground, make sure that its bilateral policy fits with its multilateral policy. We quite often see countries deploy peacekeepers but actually take very little interest in the country to which the peacekeepers are deployed. I think one way that you can both promote political processes and also perhaps promote trade is if you ensure that your bilateral embassy in Bamako, if you have one, and other diplomatic missions in the region are clearly tasked with giving as much support as they can to the work of the peacekeeping mission, whether that's through political engagement or through trade promotion, so that Canada is a real presence, not just through its helicopters and personnel, but across the spectrum of engagement.

● (1245)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you.

I think I have less than a minute left. We don't have a lot of time.

Mr. Day, you mentioned in one of your initial comments that jihadi is complicating the peacekeeping process. I want to give you 30 to 45 seconds to talk a little bit about that.

Mr. Adam Day: I think I put it "so-called jihadis".

There are a couple of ways. One is they tend to be isolated from the political process. In Mali, for example, there are the compliant armed groups and so-called terrorist armed groups, so it's difficult as a political entry point. The second difficulty that has made it more complex is the asymmetric use of force against civilian populations. You see a lot of use of IEDs and other things that you don't see in a lot of other conflict settings. The third one is, obviously, that the broader international condemnation of these groups makes it much more difficult for the UN to have an entry point for engagement.

I have 30 seconds, so I will add that, even with the most proscribed individuals and groups, the UN tends to find a way to engage with them. When I was in Sudan, Bashir was facing an ICC indictment. We were the only entity that would meet and engage with him. I think that actual engagement is a key value-added for the UN, despite the risks.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you.

The Chair: MP Martel is next.

Mr. Richard Martel: Mr. Bezan, asked you an interesting question about our troops.

I will continue in French.

[*Translation*]

While our Canadian blue helmets have good credibility and can be leaders in missions, do you think they can trust our allies as regards protection?

My next question is along the same lines. If our blue helmets are better trained than the others, can we trust our allies to protect us? What do you think?

Could Canada communicate with its allies for the training to be the same?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Day: There are different levels to that question.

Taking your last point, I think that Canada is uniquely placed to communicate well with the allies in part on linguistic grounds but also because of a long history in peacekeeping. Where I do see a problem with communication across different types of troops, it tends to be a linguistic one, so I would say that Canada is very well placed.

In terms of your level of trust with your allies, I don't think I can answer that. That's a question about your national policy and theirs. But—

Mr. Richard Martel: —and the protection, too.

Mr. Adam Day: My understanding is that most troops, when they are deployed, have a self-protection aspect to them. You run a team site, and that team site is patrolled by Canadian troops. My understanding is that most of the time you don't tend to rely on other troops for the immediate physical protection of your own.

Where I've seen that in action, troops have protected each other fairly well. In eastern Congo there have been deployments of one nationality towards the team site of another, and those are usually the highest priority to the mission. When you're talking about triage and decisions to deploy troops to protect each other, in my experience, the decision to protect the other UN entities almost always comes first.

Mr. Richard Martel: I'll share my time.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you. He's sharing his time with me.

Mr. Gowan, you've written that the UN peacekeeping force in Mali is not properly equipped or trained to deal with the terrorist threats faced in Mali. Shouldn't the anti-terrorism aspect of the mission have been left to an organization that does have the proper training and experience in anti-terrorism operations?

Mr. Richard Gowan: I think that, in the piece you referred to, I was citing a study by the Danish Institute for International Studies of African units in MINUSMA and, certainly, that study did find very, very significant gaps in some of the African units' equipment. We have, as I say, seen African peacekeepers in Mali be particularly vulnerable to various forms of asymmetric attack. I would also say, though, that the UN has been working very hard to make those units more robust and especially to make convoys in Mali less vulnerable to attack.

● (1250)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, MP Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks again, gentlemen.

I'm going to take advantage of the fact that we've got an abundance of riches here, with you sitting in front of us, and ask a question that I asked last Tuesday.

If we encourage and recruit more women to take part in peacekeeping operations through strategies like—I think, Mr. Day, you mentioned the Elsie Initiative—would the mission stand a greater chance of countering violent extremism?

Mr. Adam Day: I can answer that very briefly with almost certainly yes. There are a number of reasons to increase the role of women in peacekeeping. There's a principled reason, but I'll stick with the effectiveness.

In many of these settings, access to communities, understanding of communities and engagement with communities by the troops are key elements of success. There's an article I can pull up for you. Over time, there is evidence that women are more effective peacekeepers on a range of things, including that. In my experience, one of the key aspects that needs to be fostered is a better, more analytically driven deployment of troops.

The principle is a clear one. Obviously, there are other ways in which UN peacekeepers can engage, for which women are uniquely well placed to do that. When I was working in South Sudan, there was a lot of sexual violence that had taken place in the communities. Having women peacekeepers present there sent a really important message and made the communities more open and receptive to the UN.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Specifically, what roles can or should women be taking in PKOs?

Mr. Adam Day: All of them and from the top down, including leadership of the mission. I think there's a relatively small number now but, absolutely, political, military and police leadership, across the board.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Gowan, do you want to chime in? I have a question for you as well, if I have time.

The Chair: You do. You have two minutes.

Mr. Richard Gowan: Ask away.

Mr. Darren Fisher: In one of your articles, you said, “the UN also needs to maintain a last-resort option of administering more robust stabilization missions where necessary, though with a focus on securing the space for non-military peacekeeping.” Could you elaborate on that?

Mr. Richard Gowan: Yes. Although, as I say, in most high-risk environments, multinational forces may be the best option. We should be conscious that, down the road, the UN could be asked to go into somewhere like Yemen. If Mali is tough, Yemen would be a thousand times tougher. If the Security Council, in its wisdom, wanted to put a multilateral force into Yemen, I think it would be necessary for Secretary-General Guterres to say that we cannot do this using standard blue helmet procedures, that we need to have a tougher multinational force. I was envisaging the possibility, which has been discussed on and off over the last decade, of UN forces in Yemen, Libya, or possibly Syria, although I think that is no longer a real option at all.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Day, when it comes to Canada's contribution—I was trying to scribble this down—you talked about reductions in static footprint, which shows the suitability of our contributions. I don't want to put words in your mouth. Could you just touch on that? I was scribbling very quickly when you said it.

Mr. Adam Day: In the context of broad budgetary cuts, what you see in a lot of missions—and I have 30 seconds to do this—is that the static sites in the deep field are being taken away and are being replaced by quick reaction forces, air assets and unmanned aerial surveillance. When I look at your list of commitments in Vancouver, you're talking about airlift, air task force and quick reaction force. All of those are exactly the kind of capacities that—

Mr. Darren Fisher: —exactly what we need. Yes.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'd like to thank you both for your contribution to this very important subject matter. It's very much appreciated as is your time as well.

Before we adjourn, I want to recognize that one of our analysts is leaving, so bear with me.

I'd like to recognize Stéphanie for her hard work on this committee and wish her well in her future endeavours.

Thanks, gentlemen.

● (1255)

Mr. Adam Day: Thank you.

Mr. Richard Gowan: Thank you.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.