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Peacebuilding and Authoritarianism

THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF UN ENGAGEMENT IN POST-CONFLICT SETTINGS

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Introduction

Many UN peacebuilding interventions take place in settings governed by authoritarian regimes and are often overtly designed to overcome deeply entrenched patterns of autocratic rule. Whether large multidimensional peacekeeping operations like those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mali, and Central African Republic (CAR), smaller peacebuilding missions in places like Guinea-Bissau and Haiti, or peacebuilding projects in non-mission settings like Kyrgyzstan and Cameroon, the legacies of autocratic rule present some of the most direct and immediate challenges for international intervenors. In fact, peacebuilding has seldom resulted in a complete transformation from an authoritarian system to an open democratic one. Instead, most systems retain some form of authoritarianism via a continuation of a particular ruler, ruling party, or consolidation of power in a small elite.[1] More worryingly, many post-conflict settings experience a further concentration of power and even greater repression as regimes take advantage of new forms of economic development and international support.[2] In some cases, there is evidence that peacebuilding support may have contributed to increasing levels of authoritarianism, even while advancing other important goals.[3]

This project explores the ways in which peacebuilding may unintentionally enable authoritarian tendencies, despite its stated goal of more inclusive forms of governance. We build on scholarship that has analysed the impacts of democratization efforts in post-conflict settings,[4] and the substantial literature describing how authoritarian systems may prove resilient to external efforts to transform them, including by instrumentalizing democratic institutions, controlling resources, and emplacing political structures that tend to centralize authority in a small elite.[5] While helpful in understanding the politics of authoritarian rule, this literature seldom offers an analysis of the causal relationships between peacebuilding and authoritarianism, leaving policymakers and practitioners without a clear framework to understand the impact of their interventions. The fact that peacebuilding is one amongst many factors influencing authoritarianism means that its possible contribution to tendencies of centralization and political repression often go unnoticed.

The principal argument of this project is that peacebuilding support may enable authoritarian forms of governance in two ways: (1) by providing material and other resources to the central State,

thereby allowing it to consolidate control over key institutions and levers of power, and (2) by signalling in ways that lower the perceived costs of autocratic, non-democratic forms of rule and may help to shield leaders from accountability for their actions.[6] Together, these operate as a causal mechanism through which international peacebuilders may bolster authoritarian tendencies within political systems even while ostensibly promoting democratic forms of rule. In contrast, where peacebuilding support diversifies its resources to a broader range of stakeholders and sends signals that the political costs of non-democratic forms of governance may be high, it should contribute to reductions in authoritarian tendencies. While these impacts may be difficult to isolate – especially given that the UN is often a small player in the broader peacebuilding landscape – an examination of international peacebuilding support more generally across a range of settings will facilitate a better understanding of these dynamics at play. This approach will also help us understand the dilemmas facing peacebuilders who must often choose between supporting State institutions as key actors in conflict prevention, while also recognizing that authoritarian governments may instrumentalize the same institutions to consolidate power. Moreover, it offers an evidence base for policymakers and major donors hoping to understand how to translate elite bargains into more sustainable forms of peace.[7]

This project not only explores the relationship between peacebuilding and authoritarianism, but also aims to provide a usable framework and set of recommendations for policymakers and practitioners to avoid some of the common pitfalls and ensure that peacebuilding support is not distorted or co-opted. To that end, this paper is organized as follows: **Part One** reviews the literature on post-conflict peacebuilding and authoritarian governance, noting that the bulk of scholarship on peacebuilding provides few causal explanations for the prevalence and resilience of highly centralized forms of governance. It then lays out the research design and the use of the two-part causal mechanism described above. **Part Two** illustrates how these dynamics play out in a range of country settings where the UN has invested significantly in peacebuilding support. The analysis compares across in-depth country case studies on DRC, Haiti, and Cambodia (see case studies below), and draws on an assessment of peacebuilding funding flows in eight other countries.[8] **Part Three** builds on the country comparison and provides a framework for policymakers and practitioners involved in peacebuilding, offering key considerations and suggested approaches to planning future interventions.

It should be noted at the outset that this paper is primarily focused on UN-led peacebuilding efforts, though it analyses a broad range of international peacebuilding support and provides recommendations that can be applied to bilateral donors and international financial institutions (IFIs) as well as the UN.

CHAPTER 1

How Peacebuilding Enables Authoritarianism

What is authoritarianism?

This paper defines authoritarianism as a political system in which power and resources have been centralized in a person or elite group in a manner that limits meaningful political and economic inclusion and instrumentalizes key State institutions towards concentrations of power.[9] This aligns with much of the scholarship defining authoritarianism largely on the basis of a combination of a lack of political space for elections and the consolidation of power in a small elite.[10] For example, Bartusevičius and Skaaning have proposed that political systems be classified in terms of their relationship to the electoral process, suggesting five types ranging from non-electoral to "polyarchies."[11] Larry Diamond, following well-known sources like Polity and others, has categorized political systems on the basis of levels of repression and political space.[12] Hadenius and Teorell have created a typology based on the structures and processes leaders use to concentrate and retain power.[13] And leading expert Barbara Geddes has demonstrated that authoritarianism can range from highly personalist regimes to those where power is located in a military group, a small elite, or in multiple parties; in simplified terms, the greater the concentration of power in an individual, the more authoritarian the regime.[14]

Common across these approaches is an understanding that authoritarianism is the result of concentrations of power in a small elite, limitations on the political space available for differences of views, and often opaque, patrimonial systems for distribution of wealth. There is also a strong consensus that highly authoritarian regimes can present the outward trappings of democracy, maintaining State institutions that appear to foster open political space, while in fact instrumentalizing such institutions to consolidate power in a small central elite.[15] The presence of parliaments, elections, ministries, and courts does not necessarily indicate an open system, but may in fact point to deeply entrenched forms of authoritarianism.[16]

Authoritarian systems have proven extraordinarily resilient, often outlasting predictions of their demise by decades and resisting external efforts to transform them. To persist, such regimes must overcome significant challenges, including the need to maintain elite constellations of power in the face of external threats, suppress social mobilization by disenfranchised groups, escape sanctions and other external pressure points, and control a public narrative of stability and progress.[17] Autocratic rulers require domestic leverage – often in the form of political and economic capital, which can be achieved through the tools of repression, propaganda, and instrumentalization of State institutions. But they also frequently rely on a range of external sources of support, including direct help from powerful States that may provide financial assistance and/or advice on co-opting opponents. What are often termed "linkages" between authoritarian regimes allow two or more political elites to subvert sanctions regimes and bolster respective economies, while sharing lessons on repressive forms of rule.[18] Equally important are forms of "diffusion," by which one authoritarian regime may influence the trajectory or practices of another in largely unintentional ways, such as where one leader mimics the strategy of another that has proven particularly effective in a different setting.[19]

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While linkage and diffusion are often studied with reference to connections between authoritarian regimes in different countries, this paper examines how international peacebuilding can create distinct forms of linkage and diffusion between international peacebuilders and host countries. One unintended consequence of these kinds of connections can involve international enabling of authoritarian rule. This requires an understanding of what peacebuilding is, and how it interacts with authoritarian systems.

What is peacebuilding?

The term "peacebuilding" emerged roughly 40 years ago via the work of Johan Galtung who emphasized that sustainable peace should be achieved by addressing "root causes" of violent conflict and supporting indigenous capacities for conflict resolution.[20] Peacebuilding became a central concept for the UN in Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's 1992 Agenda for Peace, and then again in the 2000 Brahimi Report that defined it as "activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war."[21] In 2005, the concept came to the fore with the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), all intended to fill what former Secretary-General Annan called a "gaping hole" in the UN's capacity to support countries' transitions from violent conflict to peace.[22] Subsequent policy processes, such as the Secretary-General's 2007 Policy Committee decision and a series of UN reports starting in 2009, gradually evolved the concept of peacebuilding away from an overriding focus on intervention *after* conflict to a broader range of engagements to prevent lapse or relapse into large-scale violence.[23]

In 2015 a high-ranking UN Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) defined peacebuilding as synonymous with "sustaining peace," understood as "not only efforts to prevent relapse into conflict but also to prevent lapse into conflict in the first place."[24] Its definition became the basis for the 2016 twin Security Council/General Assembly resolutions, which broadly defined sustaining peace as:

> **"A goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development."**[25]

As such, there is no strict definition of peacebuilding in the UN system, at least in terms of listing activities, but it is understood broadly as cross-cutting efforts to reduce the risks of large-scale violence by promoting inclusive forms of conflict resolution and governance; identifying and helping to address the root causes of conflict; and building sustainable financing models to help societies achieve long-term stability.[26] As the 2018 UN reform process highlighted, peacebuilding is not a specific set of activities or owned by a particular set of actors, but is more of a "hinge" that brings the security, human rights, and development pillars together around the common objective of conflict prevention. As such, a range of activities can ultimately be understood as always-already containing peacebuilding objectives, such as security sector reforms (SSR), disarmament, community dialogue, and human rights advocacy etc.,[27] while yet other more routine development and humanitarian activities also can help reduce the stakes of conflict and thereby reduce the risks of violence.[28]

It is worth highlighting here the relationship between peacekeeping and peacebuilding. While traditional forms of peacekeeping were fairly restricted to the security arrangements of peace agreements, multidimensional peacekeeping has increasingly concerned itself with a broader array of tasks, creating a heavy overlap with peacebuilding. Operations as diverse as those in Cambodia, Haiti, and DRC all have peacekeeping mandates with substantial peacebuilding tasks, including support to rule of law institutions, addressing root causes, local conflict mediation, and supporting broader transformations in the relationship between State and citizenry. This project does not draw bright lines between peacebuilding and peacekeeping and instead focuses on the dilemmas that arise when the UN and its partners are asked to support democratic transformations in a range of settings. The authors do, however, acknowledge that settings involving large peacekeeping operations tend to include different dynamics around issues like host State consent and use of force, which are addressed below.

Peacebuilding in authoritarian settings

International peacebuilding frequently must address systems of authoritarianism. Civil conflicts tend to break out in authoritarian systems, which in turn create fertile conditions for conflict relapse and recurrence.[29] Civil wars erode State institutions, destroy public confidence in the State, damage economic development, and tend to exacerbate underlying socioeconomic inequalities.[30] Instead of transitions to democratic forms of rule, the immediate aftermath of civil conflict tends to offer opportunities for further concentrations of power as moderates are marginalized and violent, oppressive groups take advantage of temporary power vacuums.[31]

On its face, peacebuilding tends to be directly opposed to authoritarianism, focused instead on inclusive forms of governance, free elections, and power-sharing arrangements. UN peacebuilding interventions typically include electoral assistance, capacity-building for State institutions, civic education, mediation focused on bringing political parties together, and other efforts broadly emphasizing democratization.[32] As von Billerbeck and Tansey point out, peacebuilding "rests on a set of overtly normative foundations related to institutional reform and the desirability of democracy."[33]

However, the success of UN peacebuilding to date is at best mixed, especially in terms of its goal of improving democratic processes and reducing authoritarian forms of rule. Some scholarship has found that democratization tends to improve in settings where a UN peacebuilding mission is deployed,[34] whereas others are more sceptical about the direct causal impact of peacebuilding on democratization.[35] Indeed, a growing body of literature has highlighted the potential negative side effects of international peacebuilding, including the tendency for international interventions to strengthen elite concentrations of power, especially where leaders promise democratic reforms without delivering.[36] In a direct critique of peacebuilding, Richard Gowan has noted: "The UN, having aspired to instil democracy and good governance in countries

like the DRC and South Sudan, has ended up propping up unreliable and even autocratic leaders in the absence of better alternatives."[37]

Scholarship to date, however, has not investigated this unintended consequence of peacebuilding empirically, instead focusing almost exclusively on the positive links between peacebuilding and democratization. For example, authors like Fortna and Huang explicitly examine the extent to which peace operations lead to greater democratization, without investigating the potential converse: their contribution to concentrations of authority in an elite.[38] The result is that authoritarianism is considered as the absence of democratization and/or the lack of good governance, rather than a set of mechanisms that enable leaders to maintain concentrated and illiberal forms of power. This has led to an artificial separation between the literatures on peacebuilding and studies of authoritarianism, despite the clear value in examining the issues together. The present project aims to fill that gap in understanding of the links between peacebuilding and authoritarianism.

Two ways peacebuilding enables authoritarianism

Peacebuilding may unintentionally enable authoritarianism in two related ways: (1) by providing **material support** to governments in ways that strengthen centralized regimes, and (2) by sending **political signals** to leaderships about the costs of authoritarian behaviour.[39] In some cases, one form of support may take place without the other, but most often the two operate together to, directly and indirectly, enable authoritarian leadership.

Material support to host governments is often the stated goal of peacebuilding. Indeed, UN interventions most typically take the form of capacity-building to State institutions like the judiciary, security services, and electoral bodies, or technical/advisory support to governance institutions.[40] While such capacity-building aims to promote inclusive forms of governance, it can contribute to more authoritarian tendencies if the elite is able to co-opt and manipulate the assistance in pursuit of repressive and/or exclusionary policies.[41] The elite are often in a good position to control the distribution of international support by influencing the administration of funding, constraining the distribution of resources, and using State institutions as instruments of coercion rather than civilian protection. In the case of UN peacekeeping, this tendency may be even stronger, as UN peacekeepers tend to operate jointly with host government security services, providing a military boost and logistical support to the State.

International peacebuilders are not ignorant of these risks, but are placed in a dilemma, needing to achieve their overarching goal of strengthening governance capacities in fragile settings while also promoting open, transparent State institutions. The UN, as a fundamentally State-centric organization, has thus far tended to resolve this dilemma in favour of the State, following top-down approaches that tend to strengthen elites even while aiming to promote equitable access to resources across societies.[42] One reason for this may be that UN field presences are expected to deliver on programmatic goals – such as improved institutional capacities, short-term stability, reduction of fighting – and may find themselves needing to prioritize activities that will deliver measurable outputs in favour of broader objectives such as improved transparency and more inclusive forms of governance.

Secondly, UN peacebuilders may send explicit or implicit signals to the political leadership of a country about the costs of authoritarian behaviour. One of the most common examples is election fraud and/or repressive tactics around election cycles. Here, international actors may play a key role in shaping the behaviour of political elites, leveraging the threat of international condemnation or refusing to recognize an outcome that does not meet widely agreed standards. As incumbent regimes weigh the risks of political repression or outright vote manipulation, peacebuilders can play a vital role in providing information about the likely response by the international community, including the risks that may arise if elections are not free and fair.

Research has shown that some external signals of support can enable authoritarian outcomes by bolstering the perceived strength of the incumbent regime and minimizing the perceived costs of repressive tactics.[43] If, for example, it is clear that international development support will continue even in the face of relatively high levels of political repression, or if major powers demonstrate over time that their peacebuilding support is not conditional on open democratic processes, incumbents may be emboldened to cling on to power via authoritarian techniques. Given that peacebuilders must often prioritize their ability to access the host country (e.g. by not taking public lines that might have them expelled, or by pursuing weak forms of advocacy to ensure continued access to powerbrokers), the signals to ruling regimes can often be an implicit condonation of repression.[44] The UN, bound by the principle of host State consent, is especially susceptible to this form of acquiescence, especially when faced with strong pressures to deliver programmatic outcomes in partnership with host governments. These forms of tacit toleration and silence in the face of human rights abuses may lower the perceived repercussions of authoritarian behaviour and embolden repressive regimes.

Methodology and case selection

The core hypothesis behind this project is that peacebuilding support may inadvertently contribute to greater centralization of resources and power in a small elite, combining with political signalling to enable authoritarian tendencies in governance. Conversely, where resources are well distributed across a range of stakeholders (especially those representing marginalized groups) and where the signalling clearly articulates the costs of autocratic behaviour, interventions may contribute to less authoritarian outcomes. Of course, international actors are rarely in a position to determine regime types or transitional outcomes and should be humble about the results they can achieve. But in general, there are ways in which the UN and its partners can tilt the playing field in ways that can be consequential to citizens.

To test this claim, the authors chose case studies where the international peacebuilding investment was significant, and where the UN's contribution constituted a relatively large share of the overall investment. These cases are thus "most likely crucial" examples of the authors' hypothesis, where the explanatory variable is more likely to influence the outcome. In simple terms, countries with comparatively large peacebuilding interventions are more likely to be influenced by those interventions. This does not mean that peacebuilding can be isolated as the sole cause of authoritarianism – indeed the UN is often a very small player in the overall peacebuilding donor landscape, and national governments may rely very little on international peacebuilding support to finance State-led activities – but it offers a stronger basis for suggesting that UN engagement plays a role.

Here, the investments of the Secretary-General's PBF offer one proxy for UN investments in peacebuilding more broadly. Though the PBF is not the only source of UN funding for peacebuilding, its stated aim of catalyzing larger investments provides a general indication of the UN's overall investment in peacebuilding in a given country setting. And by comparing the UN's investments as a portion of the overall international investment by bilateral and multilateral actors, cases can be selected where the UN contribution is relatively high. The authors also selected cases where the peacebuilding investment is significant when compared to overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP), eliminating those cases where peacebuilding is dwarfed by other sources of revenue. In cases where a large multi-dimensional peacekeeping mission was present, the authors also considered its possible role in supporting peacebuilding, especially where international peacebuilding support was significantly channelled through the UN.

A crucial distinction concerns where international peacebuilding investments flow: the authors assume that investments distributed directly to the State are more likely to result in concentrations of power than those that are distributed to other actors, such as civil society, NGOs, or international NGOs (INGOs). By using

Cases	10Y PBF Expenditure (M USD)	PBF as % of PB ODA	CGF % of PB ODA	PBF as % of GDP	ODA to CGF as % of GDP	Change in Freedom House Score	Change in Transparency International Score	Change in Polity V Score
Madagascar	$ 8	2.0%	95%	0.006%	0.3%	26	-5	6
Comoros	$ 12	16.5%	74%	0.104%	0.467%	-11	-2	-12
Cote D'Ivoire	$ 36	4.9%	64%	0.01%	0.13%	17	-5	4
Sierra Leone	$ 37	6.1%	61%	0.099%	0.999%	-5	11	0
Guinea	$ 62	13.9%	58%	0.064%	0.27%	1	10	5
Guinea-Bissau	$ 17	11.0%	47%	0.152%	0.655%	16	0	0
Burundi	$ 45	6.0%	47%	0.174%	1.343%	-21	1	-7
Kyrgyzstan	$ 33	5.8%	36%	0.05%	0.309%	0	12	7
Somalia	$ 26	1.3%	29%	-	-	5	1	5

Data source: UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office and OECD.Stat

the Creditor Reporting System (CRS) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), development flows related to peacebuilding can be disaggregated and quantified. Following the methodology adopted by the PBSO,[45] four separate categories of CRS Purpose Codes related peacebuilding support can be clustered as: (a) political processes; (b) basic safety and security; (c) rule of law and human rights; and (d) core government functions. Of these four categories, the final category on core government functions (CGF) is the most likely to demonstrate a causal relationship between peacebuilding and authoritarianism, given that resources are most frequently flowing directly to the government (or through a UN agency to support a government capacity). In contrast, countries receiving relatively fewer resources to CGF and a greater share of financial flows to inclusive political processes should be more likely to result in less concentration in a small elite.

As such, the cases reflect the following criteria, to ensure that the cases being captured are where peacebuilding contribution to State capacity are most likely to be seen:

1. 10 years[46] of PBF investments that constitute a significant share of the overall peacebuilding portfolio in-country.
2. 10 years of international peacebuilding investments that are significantly directed towards CGF.
3. 10 years of PBF investments that constitute a significant share of the country's cumulative GDP.

Of course, the UN's PBF is only one source of peacebuilding support, and the authors also took into account overall Official Development Assistance (ODA) peacebuilding assistance, examining where international support constituted a significant share of a country's GDP. And in settings with UN peace operations, the authors also accounted for the role of the mission in both providing material support and acting as a strong signalling instrument for the international community.

On this basis, and in addition to the three in-depth cases (the DRC, Haiti, and Cambodia), the authors selected the following cases: Burundi, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Côte

d'Ivoire, Guinea, Somalia, and Kyrgyzstan for further analysis. Within this universe of cases, two groups can be distinguished: (a) in Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone, where between 58-74 per cent of the ten-year international peacebuilding portfolio was distributed to CGF, whereas (b) Kyrgyzstan and Somalia see less than 35 per cent of international assistance allocated to CGF. In addition, in Somalia, 34 per cent of all bilateral peacebuilding support is channelled through UN agencies – making it a unique case of UN peacebuilding, having a larger contribution to State capacity vis-à-vis other actors. This variation among cases allows for some comparison between cases having more or less tendency towards centralization.

Finally, the authors tracked the levels of authoritarianism using widely accepted metrics, including the Freedom House rankings, Transparency International and the Polity IV index (see above diagram). While not definitive, these tracking mechanisms allow for some indication of whether countries' levels of authoritarianism are increasing or decreasing during a ten-year period of peacebuilding support. One of the more striking findings from this research is that some settings with the most intensive peacebuilding support to CGF have had little to no improvements in governance scores and have, in fact, worsened (e.g. Burundi and Comoros). In some cases, such as Kyrgyzstan and Somalia, there were small improvements in governance indicators, though in those cases there was relatively little support to CGF (and, in the case of Somalia, a high rate of funding via UN agencies). These findings broadly support the authors' hypothesis that support to CGF may contribute to greater centralization of resources and a possible increase in authoritarian tendencies. Here, attribution is especially difficult, given the many factors influencing authoritarian tendencies in governance, but the authors adopt an approach now used by the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPPA) and others to describe the UN's contribution (alongside other actors) to change.[47] To be clear, the authors are making no claims that peacebuilding support is the only or even principal cause of authoritarian outcomes, only that certain kinds of programming and signalling may contribute – alongside a range of other factors – to authoritarian tendencies in different settings.

One of the more striking findings from this research is that some settings with the most intensive peacebuilding support to core government functions have had little to no improvements in governance scores and have, in fact, worsened.

CHAPTER 2

A Comparison Across Peacebuilding Settings

This section employs the two-part causal mechanism for enabling – material support and signalling – and draws from the case studies to explore the ways in which peacebuilding support may feed or combat authoritarian tendencies. It attempts to identify key moments and factors that may influence how and whether peacebuilding support results in its intended outcome of more inclusive, sustainable peace processes.

1. The gravitational pull of the State

International peacebuilding often channels funds or capacities directly to the State, even where its primary goal is to support inclusive political processes and broad-based approaches to peace. One proxy for this is the extent to which ODA related to peacebuilding assistance is directed towards CGF versus other activities like inclusive political processes or human rights. Activities in support of CGF are not only assumed to support the capacity of the State but are – more often than other types of peacebuilding – channelled directly through the recipient government.

Across a number of cases, the bulk of ODA to peacebuilding was directed to CGF, with comparatively less money going to UN agencies, civil society groups, or other organizations.[48] At the high end of the spectrum, countries like Madagascar and Comoros have well over 70 per cent of their peacebuilding funding directed at CGF, while more than 50 per cent is channelled directly through the government itself. Moreover, the authors tracked a tendency for the proportion of funding allocated to the State to increase over time. This is logical: as government capacities increase, their ability to absorb and spend resources also grows. However, this can contribute to a concentration of resources in the political elite, given their control of major institutional spending. In Guinea-Bissau, for example, roughly 13 per cent of ODA disbursements related to peacebuilding were channelled directly to the government in 2008, a number that had climbed to nearly 50 per cent by 2018. Similarly in Guinea, over the past ten years the proportion of ODA peacebuilding funding that has gone directly to the Guinean government has increased significantly, from roughly 8 per cent in 2008 to more than 40 per cent by 2018. This reflects the significant investment in SSR, but also large investments in public sector administration and institutional capacity-building. Overall, these numbers reflect a strong gravitational pull of the State as a recipient of ODA peacebuilding funding, particularly when they become eligible for grants and loans from IFIs.

However, peacebuilding funding also can be shifted away from the State in response to authoritarian tendencies, as was the case in Côte d'Ivoire's 2010-12 elections crisis. Beginning in 2010, international peacebuilding support was very much focused on support to the State in terms of public finance management, with nearly USD 95 million spent on CGF versus only USD 36 million on inclusive political processes. Immediately following the electoral crisis, however, this ratio changed dramatically: in 2012, spending on CGF had shrunk to well under USD 10 million, with only 12 per cent of international funds going to the Ivorian Government. In financial terms, this reflects a penalty being placed on the Ivorian Government

Figure 1 – ODA to Peacebuilding in Comoros, 2019: 49 per cent channeled through the government

Peacebuilding ODA - Comoros

Human Rights and the Rule of Law

Legal and judicial development	0.56
Human rights	0.36

Inclusive Political Processes

Anti-corruption organizations and institutions	0.75
Civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution	0.72
Democratic participation and civil society	0.53
Women's rights organizations and movements and government institutions	0.22

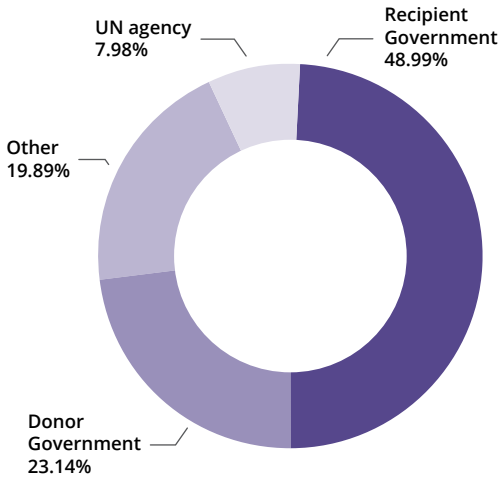
Basic Safety and Security

Ending violence against women and girls	0.08
Security system management and reform	0.00

Core Government Functions

Public sector policy and administrative management	11.46
Public finance management	1.61
Decentralization and support to subnational government	0.37
Domestic revenue mobilization	0.01

ODA Channel

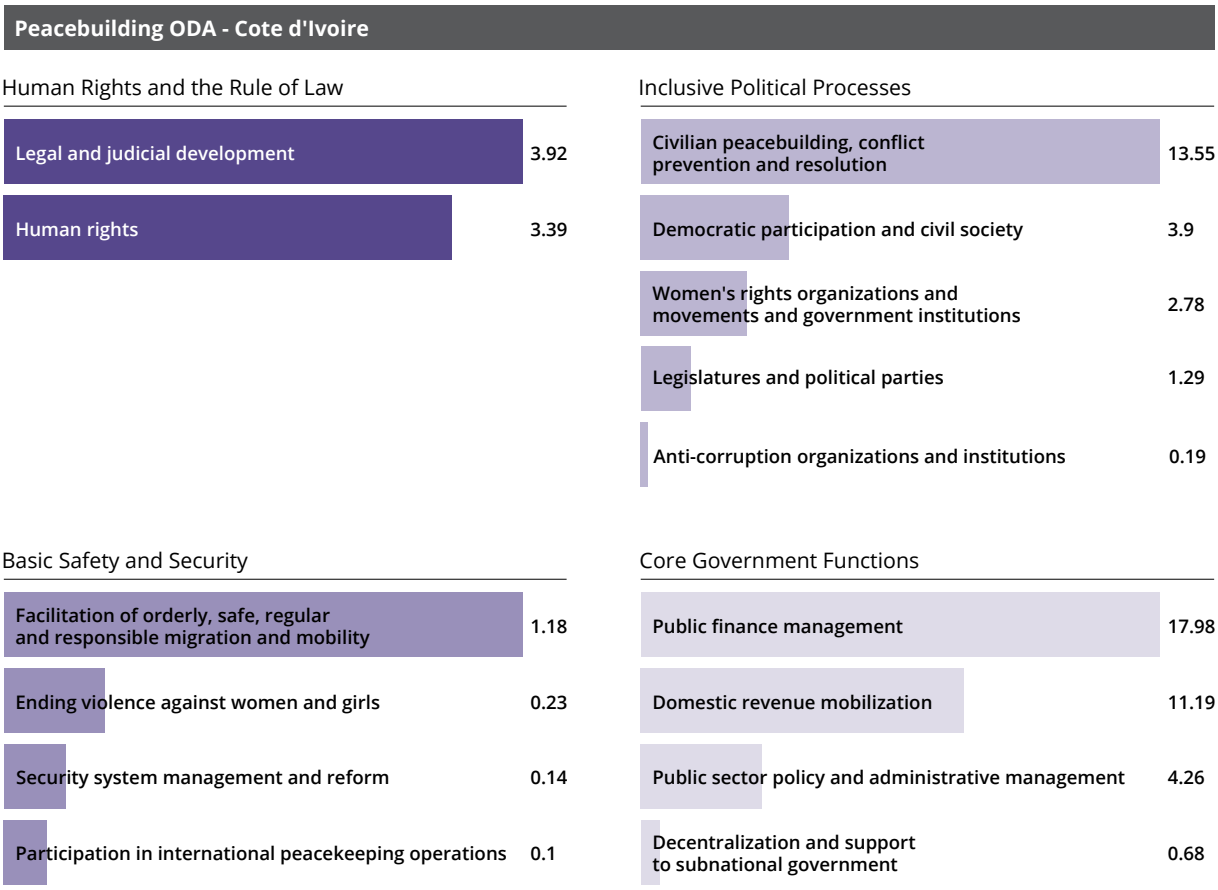


Top 5 UN Channels for ODA

Channel Name	Disbursement in (USD M)
UN Development Programme	13
UNICEF	4
ILO - Accessed contributions	1
ILO - Regular budget supplementary account	0
UN Industrial Development Organization	0

Data source: OECD.Stat.

Figure 2 – ODA to Peacebuilding in Côte d'Ivoire, 2018



Data source: OECD.Stat.

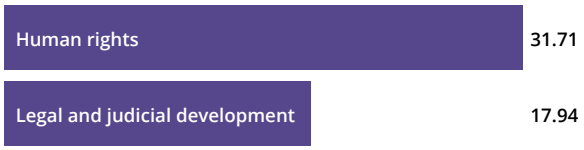
and it coincided with the imposition of targeted sanctions by many Member States and some regional organizations. By 2018 (see Figure 2) and reflecting the relative return of international support to Outtara's Government, roughly 37 per cent of international peacebuilding funds were directed to the Ivorian Government, and there was more or less parity between the funds going to CGF and inclusive political processes.

Here, it is worth noting that the PBF (unlike other international donors) allocates mainly through UN agencies and civil society organizations – making its direct material contributions to the government negligible. At the same time, analysing the PBF portfolio over a five-year period reveals that the PBF is much more focused on Inclusive Political Processes than other types of peacebuilding by international donors. In fact, there are only a few cases where PBF supported CGF at all.[49] In Burundi, for example, the PBF's stated goals are to strengthen the governance capacities of the State, help to reintegrate militias, support human rights processes, and brokering inclusive forms of political dialogue. Its principal areas of its investment are the rule of law, SSR, and reconciliation/social cohesion. 47 per cent of its funds are directed towards CGF and are thus likely to contribute to State capacity in authoritarian settings.[50] This investment (USD 80 million of investments since 2007) constitutes a substantial portion of overall international

Figure 3 – ODA to Peacebuilding in Burundi, 2016-18

Peacebuilding ODA - Burundi

Human Rights and the Rule of Law

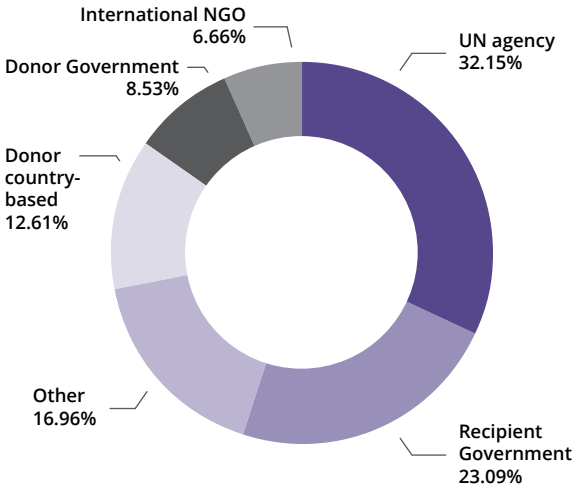


Inclusive Political Processes

Basic Safety and Security

Core Government Functions

ODA Channel



Top 5 UN Channels for ODA

Channel Name	Disbursement in (USD M)
UN High Commissioner for Refugees	385
World Food Programme	117
UNICEF	92
UN Development Programme	49
Food and Agriculture Organization	18

Data source: OECD.Stat.

support to CGF (roughly 13 per cent), reflecting more than 6 per cent of all foreign investment in the country, and is also one of the highest investments relative to the country's GDP (nearly 2 per cent), highlighting Burundi as a critical case in which substantial international funds have passed to State-owned enterprises.[51]

However, the PBF in Burundi has also directly attempted to support inclusive political processes, potentially offsetting the emphasis on other government functions by its support to elections, including during the 2015 crisis, reflecting a greater focus on inclusion over time. In February 2015, the PBF approved a USD 1.24 million project to support political dialogue in Burundi to facilitate a peaceful pre-electoral and post-electoral climate.[52] However, unlike several other country settings (see, e.g., the DRC case study), material support from the UN for the State to administer elections was relatively limited.[53] In 2015, the UN sent an elections observation mission (MENUB), which provided some limited logistical support to the electoral commission, but the bulk of the process was funded by the Government.[54] In fact, in both the 2015 and 2020 elections, the Burundian authorities collected funds directly from citizens to support elections, in large part to avoid external pressures by large donors.[55] On the one hand, this limitation on support may avoid capture by the State, but it also meant that the Burundian Government was able to control its election process with little oversight by the international community, potentially encouraging more repressive actions by the State.

Overall, the cases underscore the strong gravitational pull of the State when it comes to peacebuilding support by international donors. Across the cases (though with some exceptions) the proportion of funding directed towards the State tends to increase over time, even when countries exhibit worrying trends towards more authoritarian, repressive forms of rule. Here, the UN's tendency to channel support through non-government agencies, and its relative emphasis on inclusive political processes, may act as a counterbalance to the broader trends of State capture.

2. Overriding focus on the executive

While ostensibly supporting inclusive political processes at every level, in practice UN peacebuilding support has a strong tendency to focus on the executive, particularly around transitions in leadership. In Haiti, for example, the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) insisted upon a recount of the presidential elections following reports of irregularities in the 2006 elections, but made no such request of parliamentary electoral vote despite the same concerns of fraud. This focus on support to the executive continued after the election, enabling the presidency to manipulate the electoral commission process and delay the appointment of new parliamentarians between 2014 and 2016. As the case study in this report lay out, the privileging of the executive inadvertently emboldened authoritarian tendencies by: (1) pushing for constitutional reforms that bolstered the presidency at the expense of parliament and local government; (2) treating the presidency as the guarantor of Haiti's stability; and (3) paying less attention to the building of electoral institutions and decentralization that might have acted as a check on the executive.

Even more visible was the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC)'s overriding focus on the presidency in the context of the 2006 elections in the DRC, where the UN and its partners supported a process that gave substantial powers to the executive, despite clear indications that institutions beyond the executive were crucial for peace (see case studies). As the Under-Secretary-General of Peacekeeping at the time, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, reflected: "At enormous and unsustainable cost, the international community consolidated the presidency through elections and largely ignored the other institutions of the State."[56] Here, the assumption appeared to be that a strong presidency was the most viable pathway to short-term stability, though little thought appeared to have gone into how that might lead to authoritarian forms of rule in the long term.

On one hand, this focus on the executive is logical: in moments of transition a strong, effective executive is crucial for guaranteeing stability and delivering on much-needed national reforms. Especially in the aftermath of conflict, the executive can provide a rallying point around which fragmented groups can cohere into an elite bargain, and often it is the most important interlocutor for the UN and major donors. However, the executive is also the branch that most readily slides towards authoritarianism, sometimes co-opting legislative and judicial branches of government in moments of transition, and often acting to marginalize political opposition to secure its role at the centre. The tendency for peacebuilding to focus on the executive branch can unintentionally bolster these trends.

3. Support to the security services

Similar to its focus on the executive, the UN's support to the State security services – most often the military but also the police – offers another pathway to enabling authoritarianism. This can take the form of material support (training, logistical support, joint operations, resources) or a more general empowering of the central elite that allows it to maintain a grip on power.

A prime example of this dynamic is MONUC/MONUSCO in the DRC, where the UN mission has provided significant support to the State security services over a 20-year period (see case studies). Here, the UN mission has regularly assisted the national army with training, logistical support, joint patrols, and direct firepower against the armed groups in eastern Congo.[57] The 2013 establishment of the UN Force Intervention Brigade provided a 3,000-strong unit, which has provided robust support in the form of long-range artillery, special forces, and drones to support Congolese ground operations. This support, overtly aimed at extending State authority and building State capacity to govern, also boosted the coercive capacity of security services that were also responsible for large-scale repression, violence, and human rights violations, including against the political opposition of President Kabila at the time.[58] While steps like the UN's human rights due diligence policy worked against some of these risks, the DRC case study below suggests that the overall impact was to bolster the authoritarian tendencies of the Kabila Government, including by aligning the UN with an army that was increasingly viewed as an extension of Kabila's repressive State apparatus. One UN expert suggested that the UN's support helped turn the army into "President Kabila's own private military company."[59]

While the DRC case offers the starkest example of the unintended effects of military support, it is worth noting that other forms of peacebuilding support may play into a similar dynamic. In particular, peacebuilding programming with strong SSR components, such as the 2012-2016 Second Peacebuilding Priority Plan agreed between the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Government of Guinea, required a significant investment in the State's security services.[60] The peacebuilding framework adopted for Guinea-Bissau in 2008 similarly emphasized the investment in SSR, contributing to the tendency of international peacebuilding to be channelled to the State.[61]

4. Preventing overthrow

The threat of coups can at times induce political leaders to cooperate with rival elites or make concessions to the wider public, especially if there is strong pressure from large constituencies. The presence of a UN mission – especially one with a use of force mandate – can provide overt and implicit protection to those leaders, reducing their willingness to reach out to other actors.[62] While ostensibly working to promote stability and prevent violent overthrows, the UN's protection of political leaders can have the unintended consequence of emboldening them and increasing their authoritarian tendencies.

Haiti offers an example of this dynamic, including during Michel Martelly's presidency following the 2010 earthquake. Martelly oversaw some of the worst democratic backsliding in recent history in Haiti, during which time he ruled exclusively by decree and oversaw a shambolic elections process that resulted in the appointment of Martelly's hand-picked successor (see Haiti case

study). Despite rapidly falling popularity, Martelly bragged that he could not be forcibly removed because MINUSTAH's presence rendered him "safe from coups."[63] A similar dynamic arose regarding President Préval who "did not have any incentive to be responsive to the fragmented population" while MINUSTAH was present and supporting the State.[64]

Protection of the executive from military overthrow can take many forms, from the fairly obvious presence of international troops in-country to the more subtle signalling the UN may offer (e.g. joint programming, public statements in support of the government). And while the UN may have strong incentives to prevent highly disruptive events like military coups, one outcome may be that a deeply entrenched leader has fewer incentives to accommodate a broader constituency while the UN remains engaged. Here, the risks are especially high where UN peace operations are deployed, but also exist in other peacebuilding settings where the need to collaborate with a small elite at the centre can be instrumentalized to thwart more inclusive forms of rule.

5. The dark side of "national ownership"

Peacebuilding is founded upon the principle of national ownership and aims to build buy-in from national and local authorities, and it is increasingly also seen as a way to empower local civil society groups as a way to more equitably distribute power in fragile settings. In principle, this should lead to jointly-agreed programmes and a gradual increase in the capacities of the host country to govern effectively, and with greater legitimacy with the broader population. In practice, turning responsibility over to already isolated repressive governments can send a message that they may act as they wish, enabling authoritarian tendencies in some settings.

Burundi offers one such example. Following the 2015 electoral violence, a UN Commission of Inquiry found grounds to believe that crimes against humanity had been perpetrated by the Burundian State, including acts of violence and repression against political opposition parties. When the International Criminal Court (ICC) subsequently opened an investigation into Burundi, President Nkurunziza promptly withdrew from the court, rejecting the claims as a form of neo-colonialism and calling for a drawdown of UN presence in-country.[65] This withdrawal from the international arena continued towards the 2020 elections, when the Government sent collectors out to communities to levy a tax that would pay for elections, avoiding any reliance on outside support and ensuring that the process could be internally controlled. With little leverage and few entry points, the UN's messaging fell back on the well-worn phrase of national ownership; for example, the Secretary-General announced in 2018: "it is ultimately the responsibility of the authorities to create a conducive environment in which the country can fulfil its potential and the people of Burundi enjoy their rights and freedoms, including participation in credible and inclusive elections."[66] While explicitly calling for a credible process, the UN's resort to national responsibility also appeared to send an implicit message that the penalties for fraudulent or repressive elections would be *de minimis*.

Cambodia offers another such example. Faced with widespread reports of repression and abuse during the 1993 elections, the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) proposed that the Cambodian court system take on responsibility for trying the perpetrators, the majority of whom were part of the ruling elite party. This notion that the national judiciary should own the accountability process, however, failed to account for the fact that Cambodia's justice system was underdeveloped and largely beholden to the ruling party. Unsurprisingly, the cases referred to the Cambodian courts by UNTAC were quickly dismissed or indefinitely postponed, meaning the UN's strong messaging on accountability were largely ignored (see Cambodia case study).

As noted in the expert roundtable held during this project, problematic tendencies within the State do not necessarily mean that the UN should pivot uncritically to civil society groups as a panacea to the challenges of corruption and elite control of power. Indeed, in many settings civil society groups may suffer from the same shortcomings

of mismanagement of funds, elite manipulation of resources, and exclusion of much of society. Instead, research for this project suggests that policies of national and/or local ownership may unintentionally enable authoritarian tendencies unless they are accompanied with a clear understanding of the risks and safeguards to prevent them.

6. Rhetoric, with and without teeth

When key international players and regional organizations are able to unite around common messaging holding leaders accountable – and indeed where those messages are backed up with tangible actions such as sanctions – the ability to constrain authoritarian behaviour is maximized. This was the case in Guinea-Bissau following the 2012 coup and subsequent political crisis, where the UN, European Union (EU), African Union (AU) and major powers aligned in support of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)'s mediation efforts and backed up their messaging with a strong sanctions regime.[67] The result was a relatively rapid agreement amongst the parties to a transition and power-sharing arrangement designed to provide a more inclusive basis for the subsequent elections.

In contrast, where the messaging is mixed or inconsistent, authoritarian tendencies may be reinforced, in part because of the ability of the leadership to forum shop. The 2018 crisis in Comoros offers one such example: In the context of a referendum that would extend the rule of the incumbent and overturn a long-standing power-sharing agreement, in July 2018 the UN Secretary-General expressed concern over "persisting restrictions of civil liberties and democratic rights" during the referendum.[68] This echoed the AU's statement on the need for an inclusive and transparent referendum and elections in 2018 and 2019.[69] In contrast, the South African Development Community (SADC) welcomed Comoros to its membership in the midst of the crisis around the referendum, sending a signal that Comoros would now be part of the most influential regional grouping (interestingly, this came on the heels of SADC's decision to exclude Burundi following Nkurunziza's third-term bid).[70] In fact, despite widespread reports of voting irregularities in the 2019 election, SADC welcomed the outcome, stressing that they had been peaceful.[71] This inconsistency in messaging meant that the Comorian leadership could essentially forum shop amongst regional entities, thus dramatically reducing the impact of the public positions of the AU and UN.

Across the cases, regional actors and immediate neighbours played an outsized role in influencing the domestic trajectories of peace processes, including in Guinea-Bissau, the DRC, Somalia, and Kyrgyzstan. Here, the concepts of linkage and diffusion are especially important (see Section I above). Where neighbours are part of a concerted, unified strategy in support of an inclusive process (such as ECOWAS' role in Guinea-Bissau), the checks on more repressive outcomes are maximized. Where the neighbourhood is fragmented and not aligned with international messaging (such as the role of regional actors in Somalia, or the above Comoros example), the risks of spoilers and so-called "black knights" supporting authoritarian outcomes is heightened.[72] This does not preclude the use of "good and bad cops," where the UN might deliver harder or softer messages than other actors, but it does point to the need for a coherent, strategic approach across the international community.

7. The hostage of electoral support

One of the most important entry points for the UN and international partners in authoritarian settings is electoral support, given that elections are often considered the best opportunity to transition from deeply entrenched forms of rule. Providing technical and advisory support to elections can position the UN well to positively influence the process, and to call attention to the kinds of repression and manipulation that might take place in autocratic settings. Conversely, the UN's need to maintain good relations with the political leadership, the fact that UN electoral support is based upon a request by the government (which can be withdrawn at any time), the built-in eagerness to demonstrate success in electoral support via credible outcomes, and the UN's tendency to

privilege stability over other goals all combine to make electoral support a fraught and potentially risky endeavour in terms of reducing the risks of authoritarianism.

The DRC offers several examples of the problematic aspects of UN support to elections, in particular the ways in which it may unintentionally advantage an increasingly authoritarian incumbent. In 2006, UN support to the Congolese electoral process took place at a time when the UN had established strong and positive relations with Joseph Kabila in the context of the peace process. This public relationship, according to one expert, "gave him a very good head start"[73] in the elections, while the UN's weaker relationship with the main opposition figure (Jean-Pierre Bemba) was far less advantageous to him. As an expert noted: "Kabila owe[d] his victory in no small part to…the longstanding support that he received from the international community," including MONUC.[74] Indeed, when the State employed various repressive tactics in the lead up to the elections (e.g. the murder of a journalist who had been critical of the State, which was widely reported to have been carried out by the stated security services), the UN only issued a broad condemnation and called on all sides to cooperate.[75] This pattern continued during the 2011 presidential elections, where Kabila's increasingly authoritarian behaviour – e.g. an amendment to the constitution that clearly benefited the incumbent, and violent repressive tactics by the security services – was met with little public resistance from the UN. In fact, the UN continued its support to the State throughout this period and, in fact, hailed "the positive cooperation between MONUSCO and DRC military and civilian justice authorities." Subsequently, when the elections were widely declared as fraudulent by independent observers, the UN again stuck to mild criticism and maintained its interaction with Kabila much as it had been.[76] As one UN official put it, the mission wanted "to continue business as usual."[77]

A similar example can be found in the Cambodia case study, where UNTAC's deep investment in the electoral process contributed to a relatively passive UN response to the ruling party's clear repressive tactics in 1993 (see Cambodia case study). Discussions within UNTAC at the time – which exposed a divide between the more pragmatic camp focused on good relations with the Government and a more human rights-focused camp demanding that issues of repression generate a strong response – underscored the extent to which UN electoral support tends to align with host government prerogatives. The result was a series of fairly mild statements by the UN at a time when the repression of the political opposition was growing impossible to ignore, sending a signal to the ruling elite that the costs of authoritarianism were relatively low.

The immediate post-electoral period can also present risks for the UN to inadvertently enable authoritarianism, as evidenced by the Guinea elections in 2010. After a hotly contested run-off election where both parties alleged widespread fraud, the Guinean Supreme Court issued a ruling in favour of Alpha Condé, ushering in a period of international approval, a resumption of more positive diplomatic relations, and a sense that the donor community had a viable partner in the State.[78] However, President Condé soon began reneging on many of the core commitments of the peace agreement that had preceded the elections, resisting more inclusive forms of rule and overtly arrogating power to the executive branch. Two years after the election, and in violation of the peace agreement, no national assembly had been formed, while the newly established Independent National Electoral Commission became stalled around issues of voter registration. And while the UN's regional envoy – Mohamed Ibn Chambas – warned of "dangerous cleavage" as a result of the failure of the peace process to meaningfully include opposition and marginalized groups, Condé faced few serious repercussions for failures to meet the commitments of the Ouagadougou process. When, in 2015, Condé won a second term amidst widespread reports of fraud and intimidation of the political opposition, the UN's message was a muted one about avoiding a return to violence.[79] The result was that the post-electoral honeymoon period for Condé appeared to give him ample opportunity to centralize power, withdraw from commitments to more inclusive forms of rule, and resume normal relations with donors without facing serious repercussions.

Ultimately, these cases demonstrate that even situations of serious electoral misconduct seldom result in more than a public slap on the wrist or public condemnation, almost never triggering the kinds of withdrawal of support or shift in position that might actually change behaviour. This can be explained in part by the UN's prerogative to maintain positive relations with the host government and to avoid rocking boats during moments of political instability, but an unintended outcome in some instances has been an emboldening of repressive actors.

8. Security Council mandates – a double-edged sword

On the one hand, settings in which the Security Council has issued a mandate and deployed a peace operation have a significant advantage in combatting authoritarian tendencies in peacebuilding. The attention of the Council may act as a spotlight on repressive behaviour, while often operations will have significant resources to gather information, monitor human rights violations, and even at times support democratic processes. This was the case in the three case studies of Haiti, Cambodia and the DRC, where in each the UN had a specific mandate related to supporting democratic transformation, credible elections, and protecting political space (see case studies). In contrast, settings without a peace operation may more easily fall below the international community's radar, providing the UN with less leverage to push back on domineering governments. The 2018 reform process, which ostensibly creates a more political role for UN Resident Coordinators across the UN system, has done little thus far to equip non-mission settings with more capacities or leverage to counter authoritarian regimes.

However, the mandates of peace operations also may constrain the UN's ability to resist authoritarian pushes by governments and may indeed position the UN even more as a service provider for the State. This is particularly the case where the UN operation is mandated to support a peace agreement that prioritizes SSR, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), or other activities that necessarily involve substantial support to the State. MONUC/MONUSCO, for example, has fairly consistently been mandated to support the State's SSR, DDR, and stabilization activities, the latter of which has involved large-scale State-led institutional development with UN funding. In fact, across a wide range of peace operations, there is a strong tendency for the mandates to prioritize the State, whether through capacity-building to State institutions, support to national reforms, or programmatic support to State-run projects.[80] Where the UN is mandated to use force, these tendencies are even stronger, given the UN's partnership with national security services (joint patrols, joint operations, etc.).

Figure 4 – ODA to Peacebuilding in Guinea Bissau, 2008-2018

Peacebuilding ODA - Guinea Bissau

Human Rights and the Rule of Law

Legal and judicial development	19.29
Human rights	6.06

Inclusive Political Processes

Democratic participation and civil society	25.39
Civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution	9.21
Women's rights organizations and movements and government institutions	5.39
Anti-corruption organizations and institutions	1.62
Legislatures and political parties	0.52
Media and free flow of information	0.37

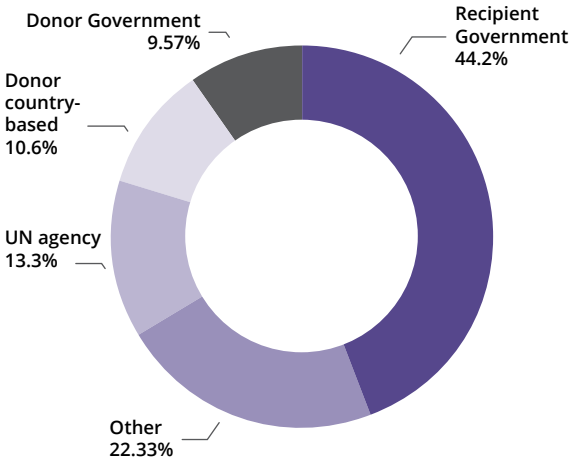
Basic Safety and Security

Security system management and reform	10.39
Removal of land mines and explosive remnants of war	3.57
Participation in international peacekeeping operations	1.67
Ending violence against women and girls	0.6

Core Government Functions

Public sector policy and administrative management	31.26
Public finance management	10.62
Decentralization and support to subnational government	9.01
Domestic revenue mobilization	0.92

ODA Channel



Top 5 UN Channels for ODA

Channel Name	Disbursement in (USD M)
UN Development Programme	71
World Food Programme	37
UNICEF	35
UN agency, fund or commission	8
UN Population Fund	5

Data source: OECD.Stat.

In fact, even peacebuilding missions that do not have use of force mandates are susceptible to this tendency, such as in Guinea-Bissau. In 2008, the PBC adopted a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau that set key priorities as: strengthening law enforcement, SSR, and improving the government's public administration system.[81] These priorities were crucial in setting the direction of funding for the broader international peacebuilding support to the country over the subsequent ten years, during which nearly half of ODA went to the host government and well over half of the international peacebuilding funding by international donors was categorized as supporting CGF (see Figure 4).

Ultimately, where the Security Council has issued a mandate, the UN and its partners in the international community have a strong incentive to align resources behind it. As a State-centric organization that tends to see stability in terms of State monopoly of resources and legitimate violence, Council mandates exhibit a strong preference for support to the State. The result is that settings with Council mandates may be the most reliant on (and most likely to support) the State, even when the political leadership acts in authoritarian, undemocratic ways.

9. A corruption blind spot

Corruption is recognized as one of the most important aspects of authoritarian regimes. Autocratic governments often misuse public funds to enrich their inner circle and support a patronage network, while organizations that track governance indicators have consistently found significant correlations between the levels of corruption and those of repression, misrule, and centralization of power.[82] Corruption represents one of the greatest threats to international support, particularly in weak or fragile States where the international community has placed a premium on building up State capacity. In Somalia, for example, the international community spends billions annually in support of extension of State authority and building State capacity, up to 80 per cent of which is reportedly misappropriated via corruption.[83]

Despite this widespread recognition of the links between non-democratic forms of rule and corruption, international peacebuilding has a recurrent blindspot when it comes to corruption as a factor in its programming. In the cases reviewed, ODA for peacebuilding rose consistently in places like Guinea-Bissau, the DRC, and Somalia, despite a steady decline in those countries' governance ratings over a period of several years. One expert offered the following rationale for this dynamic: "We understand that we are pouring funding into corrupt systems, but it is our funding that gives us leverage to try to change them."[84] The authors' findings for this report suggest that the leverage provided solely by fairly unconditional funding streams is at best extremely limited.

Perhaps most importantly, corruption rarely features in the UN's public reporting on peacebuilding in any detail and is almost never central to a Council-mandated operation. This is, in part, because corruption tends to be treated as a domestic issue below the Council's radar, or a politically sensitive topic that is difficult to raise with host governments. In some instances, UN leaders must choose between pressing on corruption (which may align with internal analysis about the causes of instability but could result in a loss of consent by the host government) or maintaining good relations by avoiding the subject altogether. In most cases, the tendency appears to be in favour of maintaining positive relations with the host government.

The net result is that the UN and international donors may come up with a shorthand for corruption – frequently it is referred to as "underperformance" in programming when funds go missing or are not accounted for properly – but the links between misuse of funds and authoritarian tendencies are rarely, if ever, focused upon. "We never talk about corruption publicly," one UN expert noted, "only proxy words like 'lack of political will' or 'lack of implementation' of some programmes." This shortcoming creates a serious problem when it comes to tracking the material support that the UN and others may unintentionally provide to authoritarian leaders: misappropriation of funds, misuse of resources, or opaque reporting allows

political elites to pursue centralizing, repressive policies without risk that they will be reported on directly. Instead, the UN is consigned to reporting on the effects of authoritarianism – human rights violations, violent repression, unlawful attempts to change constitutional provisions – rather than the largely unseen financial forces that enable leaders to manipulate power.

CHAPTER 3

A Framework for Peacebuilders

The previous section outlined the various ways in which peacebuilding support may unintentionally enable authoritarian tendencies in a range of settings. To be clear, the stated intention of peacebuilding is specifically the opposite – to facilitate inclusive, sustainable peace processes that distribute power equitably across societies. And in some instances, peacebuilding has achieved progress towards those ends. However, as the above cases demonstrate, the success of peacebuilding is at best uneven, and there is some evidence that international interventions have at times enabled autocratic leaders to concentrate power, marginalize the opposition, and undermine democratic institutions.

The following section builds on the case comparison above to offer peacebuilding policymakers and practitioners a framework to "authoritarian-proof" future interventions, to mitigate the risks that peacebuilding support will be distorted, co-opted or otherwise directed towards authoritarian forms of rule. In some respects, this framework builds off existing practice of the PBSO, which has already put in place some important safeguards and approaches to limit unintended consequences, and it should also provide a simple, easy-to-use approach for UN and bilateral approaches to peacebuilding more generally.

1 Map how power is distributed in the system – a political economy approach

UN analysis of conflict and post-conflict settings tends to cover the political process, humanitarian issues, human rights, and economic development, often in quite discrete sections of a Secretary-General's report or a thematic report by one of the lead UN agencies. Similarly, major donor reporting on peacebuilding settings tends to identify major political and development trends as context for tracking its programmatic activities. These analyses can be helpful, but they fail to provide the crucial understanding of how power and resources are distributed in a given system, which would be better achieved via a political economy approach.

In the DRC, for example, the UN's reports (whether MONUSCO's or via the UN Country Team) frequently identified "lack of political will" as a major impediment to progress on peacebuilding programming but seldom, if ever, described the entrenched system of patronage that drove this apparent lack of will. If peacebuilding is to avoid the unintended outcomes of feeding authoritarian tendencies, the first step is to accurately and coherently map out how power and resources are distributed within a given system, including in the informal and/or "corrupt" sectors.[85] This becomes doubly important when countries regain access to IFIs that finance directly through State coffers – often by capacitating core government functions in support of an entrenched elite. According to a range of experts, the presence of Peace and Development Advisors (PDA) in-country has been a major step forward in building the analytic capacities of the UN. Expanding and further capacitating the PDA programme would be a very helpful way to bolster this kind of analysis and tie it to UN programming. Other tangible steps that the UN and its partners could take in this regard could include: (1) more rigorous political-economy training for UN staff in field

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and Headquarters; (2) inclusion of a political economy lens in the UN's Common Country Assessments and Secretary-General reports; and (3) a stakeholder mapping provided to the Security Council, PBC, and donor forums (such mapping should identify issues of linkage and diffusion described above for donors to understand the alternate sources of support that host governments may maintain). This political economy mapping will additionally help to address another endemic challenge to UN engagement in fragile settings: the tendency to try to preserve the status quo in transitional moments.

As discussed above, the UN builds its programming on the basis of host State consent and good working relations with the government, which can often result in activities that tend to protect incumbents and ensure continuity of programmes. However, in post-conflict settings, the status quo is never fixed and indeed consists of an evolving and shifting bargain or set of bargains that is continually being renegotiated among elites. Analysing those shifting relations and the power dynamics behind them will help the UN avoid interventions that may bolster central elites at the expense of more inclusive forms of rule.

2 Track resources from start to finish

Both the UN and major donors have developed extremely useful tracking systems for peacebuilding, whether through the OECD Development Assistance Committee snapshots or the Secretary-General's dashboard systems. These have allowed for a broad understanding of whether peacebuilding resources are allocated to thematic areas like CGF or Inclusive Political Processes, and to understand if funds are initially disbursed to the State or other agencies. However, these broad tracking systems do not necessarily tell a complete story about the final destination of funds, or indeed the changes that the resources brought about. Here, PBSO's practice offers a helpful starting point that could be built upon: PBSO demands that every peacebuilding project meet certain criteria, such as having less than 20 per cent of funds going to salaries, ensuring that at least 30 per cent is dedicated to gender inclusion, and demanding that gender/youth initiatives disburse at least 40 per cent of funding to local organizations.

This approach could be expanded to ensure that UN and international resources across the board are being equitably distributed, and that the UN and major donors are able to track the extent to which their funding might become concentrated in a small elite at the centre. Indeed, within

the requirement to spend 5-7 per cent of PBF funding on monitoring and evaluation, part of that monitoring could be geared more specifically at analysing potential capture of resources by the State. Finally, this research suggests that even greater granularity could be brought to the question of what constitutes "Core Government Functions" or indeed "the State." As described above, proxies are often used to help understand the broad direction of resource flows, but it was essentially impossible to track exactly where support landed or how it worked to enable certain elites to maintain power. PBSO's and the OECD's tracking mechanisms are vital first steps that could be substantially built upon to give peacebuilders a more exact sense of how support might be funnelled into different coffers.

3 Condition peacebuilding support more directly on inclusion, especially women

Under the UN's current approach, peacebuilding resources are distributed in tranches (between two and four over the course of a given project), and disbursements beyond the initial tranche require a showing that the funds are being spent and broad programmatic goals met. For example, a PBF programme will need to demonstrate that at least 75 per cent of the initial funds have been spent before a second tranche will be disbursed. This approach usefully demands that programming show technical progress, but it does not condition peacebuilding on other important criteria (for example, showing that certain stakeholders had been meaningfully supported by a project). A tangible step that could be included – by the UN and major donors – to condition tranches of funding on showing that resources were distributed across a range of actors, at least 30 per cent of which should be identified as contributing to inclusive political processes, including specific markers for gender inclusion across programming. This would require international donors and the host government to identify from the outset the ways in which they would guarantee equitable disbursement of funds and give donors a visible way to condition support. Additionally, lessons could be learned from the PBC's practice of bringing more diverse groups of interlocutors to international forums making decisions on peacebuilding priorities – including civil society groups, women's groups, and youth representatives in the processes that determine how and whether peacebuilding support is provided. This approach should be considered as PBSO launches a review on the links between local and national peacebuilding in 2021.

4 Build a coherent signalling strategy with teeth attached

A wide range of cases demonstrate that robust and coherent political signalling can have a strong impact on the decisions of leaders, often helping to shape their behaviour towards more inclusive approaches to governance. In contrast, where messaging is incoherent and/or not backed up with concrete actions, it may implicitly indicate that the costs of authoritarian behaviour are outweighed by its immediate benefits. When developing a strategy for engagement in a country with high risks of authoritarianism, the UN and international partners should explicitly identify how signalling and messaging will be developed, including by: (1) identifying common messaging that can be delivered by a range of actors (e.g. regional organizations, the Security Council, IFIs, neighbouring countries, major donors); (2) identifying clear common red lines that will trigger a change in stance (e.g. shifts in an electoral timeframe, failure to implement certain reforms, repressive behaviour by security services); and (3) agreeing ahead of time on concrete actions that will result from crossing a red line (e.g. imposition of sanctions, cutting diplomatic ties, a shift in UN programming in-country). These steps should not be done in secret but should be developed in the open for the incumbent elite to have clear public signals of the costs of authoritarian backsliding. Some specific steps that could be taken in this context include:

a. **Revisit the Secretary-General's 2009 Policy Committee decision on unconstitutional transfers of power.** This decision usefully creates a triggering mechanism for the UN to respond when there is a transfer of power (or indeed the perpetuation of leadership) beyond constitutional term

limits. This policy could be expanded based on an identification of other red lines around authoritarian backsliding, requiring the UN to escalate its decision-making process in a broader range of settings.

b. **Apply the present framework to the UN/World Bank partnership.** Over recent years, the UN/World Bank partnership has deepened significantly, based in part on the joint analysis in the 2018 *Pathways for Peace* report. The research for this report suggests that the role of IFIs is especially important, in part because they offer far larger resources than many other institutions, potentially enabling even greater capture by elites if the necessary safeguards are not put in place. Indeed, IFIs tend to be quite reserved when conditioning support on some of the issues raised in this report focusing mainly on the expenditure of funds. The UN/World Bank partnership could therefore be a forum where the issue of authoritarianism – and the ways in which it negatively impacts inequalities and marginalization – are taken forward.

c. **Require a theory of change in peacebuilding programming.** The PBF's practice of requiring that recipient entities develop a theory of change in order to receive funding is an important one that could be expanded across peacebuilding more generally. Specifically, incorporating a theory of change into the monitoring and evaluation aspects of peacebuilding could help build greater conditionality into support, holding recipients to account for developing inclusive, impactful programmes rather than only measuring programmes by expenditures.

5 Engage the neighbourhood

The 2018 UN reform has placed a premium on the Organization's development of regional strategies, which are now in place for West Africa/Sahel, Central Africa, the Horn of Africa, and Western Asia. These strategies, however, have largely stayed at a quite high level, articulating broad regional goals and dynamics without meaningfully driving programming to date (the exception may be the Sahel Development Plan). As described above, issues of regional diffusion and linkage mean that regional players are fundamentally important to checking or enabling authoritarian tendencies within a given country. For example, having President Museveni in charge of mediating the 2015 electoral crisis in Burundi may provide important regional leverage, but it also suggests that combatting authoritarianism may not be a key priority, given Museveni's deep entrenchment in Uganda's political system.[86] In future iterations of these regional strategies, DPPA should explore how the concepts of linkage and diffusion might affect programming, and should connect regional approaches explicitly with an analysis of the risks of authoritarian backsliding.

6 Consider risks of authoritarianism in transitional moments

The transition from a UN peacekeeping mission to a smaller peacebuilding or Country Team-led presence offers an opportunity to change the narrative around a country, signalling that it has turned a positive corner and no longer requires more intrusive, forceful forms of intervention. These transitions are often accompanied by a concerted effort by the UN and partners to increase funding streams, open up new lines of credit with IFIs, and eliminate constraints like sanctions or other impediments to aid. Here, the UN has a built-in tendency to promote positive narratives about a country's leadership, even when there are worrying signs that international support may be captured or distorted by the political elite. Indeed, the risks may be highest in these transitional moments, given the likelihood that national leaders must also consolidate power and at times deal with restless opposition groups.

Based on the research presented here, the result is often that the transition to peacebuilding is accompanied by more concentrated flows of resources and political attention to CGF, including by IFIs which have a strong tendency to support State institutions. Importantly, as governments graduate from IMF-monitored programmes, achieve debt relief and reengage

with IFIs, conditionality on the loans should take into consideration how support to the central executive might enable exclusionary politics. As UN presences are reconfigured, special attention should be paid to these dynamics, and the UN should look to generate leverage through conditionality and clear messaging around its peacebuilding support during these periods.[87]

7 Support UN leadership in-country to push back on authoritarianism

The UN system (rightly, in the view of the authors) delegates much of the decision-making about peacebuilding to its leadership in-country. Resident Coordinators and mission leaders develop priorities and programming proposals for PBF funding, and these actors are also responsible for maintaining relations with the host authorities. This often places UN leadership in a difficult position, needing to maintain positive relations (and indeed consent) with the host government but also having to implement programmes geared at inclusion. As the Cambodia, Haiti, and DRC case studies demonstrate, there is a strong tendency within the UN system to privilege the relationship with the host government, adopting pragmatic approaches that may undercut the UN's ability to counter the forces of repression and centralization of resources typical of authoritarian settings. Indeed, even the 2018 reform process, which ostensibly gave Resident Coordinators a more political role, has not provided UN leaders with a clear set of tools or overt top-cover to empower them to push back on authoritarian backsliding. When, for example, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) of the UN Mission in Somalia was declared *persona non grata* in 2019 based on the mission's human rights statements, the UN's response was muted, sending an unambiguous signal to the Somali Government that the political and economic costs of flouting human rights were relatively low. Some concrete steps that could be taken within the UN system (and indeed potentially emulated within bilateral systems) would include: (1) clear messaging in the compacts between the Secretary-General and in-country UN leadership on the expectations that leadership will uphold human rights standards even at the cost of *persona non grata* (including commitments by the Secretary-General to respond robustly in support of in-country representatives); (2) include in reports to the Security Council, PBC and other forums an analysis of the risks of authoritarianism, with recommendations for mandates that will explicitly address those risks; and (3) development of a joint approach across the UN, IFIs and donors involving financial penalties (e.g. sanctions or reductions in aid) in cases where host governments expel UN leadership.

Taken together, this framework proposes a re-examination of the elite bargain at the heart of much of the UN's conflict prevention and peacebuilding paradigm. It suggests that the tendency of the UN to identify solutions based on a core group of powerful elites may appear necessary to mitigate the immediate risks of escalation, but that it also carries significant risks of longer-term drift into the kind of deeply unequal, highly centralized rule that the Sustaining Peace resolutions and the UN/World Bank Pathways report have identified as the major drivers of instability globally. Implementation of this framework will not necessarily mean jettisoning the elite bargain, but it will require that peacebuilders strike a balance between the exigencies of day-to-day conflict prevention and the ways in which international interventions might unintentionally bolster authoritarianism in the longer term.

CASE STUDY 1

Cambodia Case Study

The UN peacekeeping mission in Cambodia (UNTAC) followed a period of over twenty years of civil conflict and had an ambitious mandate to oversee a complicated transition to peace and a new era of electoral politics. At the time it was deployed in March 1992, the mission was one of the largest and most authoritative operations in the UN's history, with authorization for 15,900 peacekeeping troops, 3,600 civilian police, 3,000 administration staff, and a wide-ranging set of political objectives.

UNTAC's mandate was included as an annex to the Paris Peace Agreement that brought an end to the Cambodia conflict, signed in October 1991.[88] The mission was given several distinct tasks, including monitoring the ceasefire between the parties, overseeing demobilization and cantonment, the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and, crucially, ensuring a 'neutral political environment' for free and fair elections.

To ensure help create the conditions for free and fair elections, UNTAC was also authorized to 'supervise and control' several key elements of Cambodia's civil administration. UNTAC was, thus, charged not only with creating the conditions for peace, but also with engaging in ambitious State-building activities to lay the foundations for a durable democracy in a country that had experienced decades of violence and political polarization.

UNTAC was deployed for 18 months and after its withdrawal was widely hailed as a success story of multi-dimensional UN peacekeeping. In particular, the peaceful conduct of the May 1993 election in the context of sustained non-compliance by the Khmer Rouge and obstructionist policies of the Cambodian Government was heralded as a major achievement, and UNTAC terminated its mission in September of 1993, having delivered a core element of its mandate in the face of significant challenges.[89]

However, the positive story of UNTAC's impact was qualified in important ways. First, the mission conspicuously failed to achieve some of its other central objectives, including the disarmament of all the parties to the conflict and the proper control and supervision over the civil administration of the State. Second, although the organization of peaceful elections was a major accomplishment, UNTAC's wider contribution to Cambodia's democratic transition was not always consistent and at times fell considerably below the democratic standards it set out to promote.

This case study focuses on the historical impact of UNTAC in the period in which it was deployed in 1992-93, with particular reference to events before and after the 1993 elections. Cambodia's subsequent political trajectory under the leadership of Hun Sen, and especially its descent into a form of closed (rather than competitive) authoritarianism in recent years, lies outside the scope of this study.

Challenges of Implementation

Part of the explanation for the early glowing reviews of UNTAC related to the fact that it had achieved key elements of its mandate in the face of significant challenges. The legacies of over two decades of conflict in Cambodia had created a very inhospitable environment for political reconciliation and democratic transformation.

Over two million people are estimated to have been killed during the conflict of the 1970s and Cambodia's society and economy had been scarred by the brutality of the conflict and the years of international isolation that Cambodia had experienced. As UNTAC's Human Rights component noted: "Cambodian society was singularly lacking in the basic institutions and structures upon which the safeguarding of fundamental human rights depends an independent judiciary, an effective and non-political bureaucracy, a professional police force, a free press, and human rights and other non-governmental organizations representing popular interests."[90] Cambodia also had a limited history of democracy, and when UNTAC arrived most of the preconditions that usually associated democracy (economic development, a middle class, civil society) were absent.

UNTAC also faced two immediate challenges from local parties to the peace agreement who sought to obstruct the mission from carrying out its full mandate. The Khmer Rouge quickly made clear that they would not cooperate with the demobilization process that UNTAC was tasked with overseeing and refused to give up weapons or allow for the cantonment of their troops. They also blocked the UN from deploying staff into the territory they controlled and began a violent campaign against the Cambodian Government and the UNTAC operation itself. In the face of increasing violence, the mission considered postponing the elections scheduled for May 1993, but ultimately decided to reorient its security deployment to the goal of ensuring a peaceful and secure political environment for the registration and polling process.[91]

The mission also faced obstruction from the Cambodian authorities led by Hun Sen and the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), particularly in the area of civil administration. According to its mandate, UNTAC had the authority to control and supervise civil administration within Cambodia, and to take executive decisions in a range of policy areas. In reality, the administrative structures of the State had been controlled by the CPP and its predecessor party for many years, and CPP leadership systematically sought to prevent UNTAC from exercising its full powers. The challenge faced by UNTAC in this arena is illustrated by the disparity in personnel between the mission and the governing authorities on the ground. The Cambodian State administration had an estimated 200,000 staff compared to 800 UN civil administration staff, creating a systematic imbalance of authority on the ground that undermined a key element of the mission's mandate.[92] The Hun Sen-led Government, thus, had a structural advantage over both the UN operation and the other political factions that allowed it to set its own terms in key areas of the peace implementation process.

Enabling in Cambodia

The peaceful elections of May 1993 led many to conclude that the UN mission had been largely successful in promoting democracy in Cambodia. There had been genuine fears that the elections would have to be cancelled or would be marred by serious violence, so the peaceful nature of the vote was a significant achievement. However, the CPP-led authorities in Cambodia, under the leadership of Hun Sen, showed little genuine commitment to democracy and took blatant, and often violent, measures to ensure they would not lose power. Hun Sen showed no willingness to relinquish power, even after coming second in the elections, and many observers considered the power-sharing agreement that followed to be a betrayal of the election process in which the opposition party, the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC), had emerged victorious.

As outlined earlier, authoritarian enabling comes in two principal forms: capacity-building and signalling. In Cambodia, the enabling dynamics associated with UNTAC relate primarily to the latter category and focus in particular on how the mission reacted (or failed to react) to efforts by the CPP to undermine the electoral process and maintain its position in power through non-democratic means. While UNTAC did try to constrain and condemn the CPP's behaviour, at various points it responded weakly to the political abuses carried by the CPP and it failed to fully confront Hun Sen and his party for their actions. The following sections focus on two key areas where these dynamics can be most clearly seen: the election campaign and the process of post-election coalition formation.

Enabling through Signalling: Election Campaign

The UN oversaw all aspects of the electoral process, including voter registration, voter education and polling. While the technical elements of the process such as registration and polling went well, the campaign period itself was marred by serious irregularities, including political intimidation, violence, and a skewed information environment. Each of the parties engaged in intensive propaganda efforts to discredit and delegitimize their opponents, portraying the other as genocidal agents who posed a fundamental threat to Cambodia's very existence.[93] The campaign also featured extensive use of coercion to intimidate and threaten voters, and violence became a common feature of the election process. The Khmer Rouge initiated a series of attacks on the general public as well as UNTAC personnel in March 1993, raising serious questions over the security of polling.

While the Khmer Rouge sought to frustrate the overall electoral process, the CPP authorities were implicated in violations of political rights designed to affect the outcome of the election in their own favour. The CPP effectively ran a dual campaign, split between its public efforts and a clandestine campaign of violence and intimidation. The party repeatedly declared that FUNCINPEC was secretly aligned with, and even controlled by, the Khmer Rouge and sought to brand FUNCINPEC as criminals who threatened the basic security of Cambodians.[94] Behind the public campaign, the party also orchestrated a ruthless project designed to suppress opposition mobilization and instil fear within the general public. The party sought to systematically collect the registration cards that UNTAC was distributing to voters in an effort to exert control over them, and only reversed the policy after intense UNTAC criticism. The CPP also forced local villagers to come to party offices and sign up to the party *en masse*, informing them that they now had to vote for the CPP.

More troublingly, the CPP was implicated in a campaign of political violence against opposition parties in the months preceding the elections, most of which targeted FUNCINPEC. Party offices were attacked with grenades and rockets, and several FUNCNIPEC activists were killed in politically-motivated attacks. UN investigations often implicated members of the State's security forces, including police and military members. An internal UNTAC investigation also concluded that the CPP was coordinating a network of secret security units that were being used to tilt the electoral playing field away from opposition parties, using methods including assassinations of key figures, attacks on party offices and voter intimidation.[95] During the transitional period,

UNTAC's Human Rights Component tracked these various forms of human rights violation and logged over 450 killings in total, which included 159 summary executions of political opponents. The CPP was found responsible for the overwhelming majority of cases of politically-motivated harassment and intimidation.[96]

UNTAC RESPONSE

The UN mission took several steps to address the increasing levels of political violence and intimidation in the months before the election, but it struggled to offer a forceful response that exacted any real costs on the perpetrators. In the face of a sustained campaign of political violence, it offered several signals that continued violations would not be seriously punished and continued to work closely with the main perpetrators within the CPP leadership.

The first strategy that UNTAC pursued rested on persuasion and involved a series of public and private efforts to encourage and cajole the various factions to pursue peaceful campaign strategies and to respect each other's right to exist and compete in the elections. UNTAC's SRSG, Yasushi Akashi, made public statements calling for a stop to the violence and various mission officials wrote letters to their counterparts within the political parties urging them to respect democratic norms and procedures. For example, in March 1993, the SRSG issued a public statement to the Supreme National Council, the principal national-level consultative body during the transition period, declaring that politically-motivated violence was unacceptable.[97] UNTAC also helped forge agreement on a new Code of Conduct to be used by all parties in the campaign period.

However, UNTAC struggled to back up this rhetorical condemnation with meaningful enforcement measures, and thus sent very weak signals of its commitment to upholding democratic standards. This not only reflected the lack of enforcement power the mission had to compel the parties to change their behaviour, but also divisions within the mission about how best to proceed. UNTAC senior leadership was divided between a pragmatic camp, which wished to maintain good relations with the main political parties in order to secure the best outcome possible to the peace process, and a more hardline camp that advocated a more confrontational stance against the CPP.[98] SRSG Akashi was in the former camp – though he often spoke out in favour of a credible elections process – and the mission's actions largely reflected his non-confrontational approach.

UNTAC's mandate, as set out in the Paris Agreement, included provisions that the mission could investigate complaints concerning human rights and election irregularities and take "appropriate corrective action."[99] However, the mandate was silent on what this meant in practice, and did not specify the specific powers that the mission could use in order to take corrective action in the event that the mission's investigations found clear evidence of abuse. This contributed to a lack of direct or effective action by the mission in the face of the CPP's intense campaign of violence and intimidation. The mission did attempt to sanction individual CPP officials under its 'control' mandate (e.g. by removing them from their positions), but these efforts were limited and were met with stiff resistance. UNTAC's lack of robust enforcement in the face of CPP intransigence is a central and recurring feature of the mission's tenure.

UNTAC did attempt several forms of 'corrective action'. These efforts began with attempts to have individuals tried within Cambodia's own courts, but this approach was undermined by the twin challenge of the weakness of Cambodia's judicial system and the obstructionist policies of the CPP. Capacity for trials was limited and even when individual cases came before a judge, the politicization of the judiciary effectively eliminated the prospects of a fair trial. In one case, the Ministry of Justice simply instructed a judge not to hear a case brought by UNTAC and threatened to punish the judge if he continued.[100] Unsurprisingly, the case was dropped.

An important test-case of UNTAC's resolve concerned the actions of the Governor of the Province of Battambang, located in the north-west of Cambodia on the border with Thailand. Battambang was a frontline province in the civil conflict during the 1980s, home to the Khmer

Rouge's leadership base and armed forces from the other wings of the resistance movement. As a result, the province had become heavily securitized and the provincial authorities were dominated by the military.[101] UNTAC identified the provincial Governor, Ung Samy, as a key figure behind the political violence in the region and decided to take the unusual step of using the powers granted in the Paris Peace Agreement to order his dismissal. However, the CPP responded in defiant fashion, and stated that they would cease cooperation with UNTAC if the Governor was removed.[102] In the face of open resistance, UNTAC backed down. No sanctions were levied against the Battambang Governor and violence continued in the weeks leading up to the elections.

In January 1993, the SRSG responded to mounting pressure to act more forcefully and established a Special Prosecutor's Office to pursue perpetrators of human rights violations. However, the new office only oversaw the arrest of a small number of suspects, and the government frustrated any efforts to bring the suspects to trial. Troop-contributing countries to the mission also placed restrictions on the use of their troops in executing warrants and arresting suspects, arguing that these activities went beyond UNTAC's peacekeeping mandate and entailing peacemaking activities.[103] Consequently, the new and innovative Prosecutor's Office was more imposing on paper than it was in reality.

The combined approach of forceful rhetorical condemnation but limited follow-through in the face of sustained political violence and intimidation led to significant criticism of the mission. Human Rights Watch argued that: "UNTAC too often subordinated human rights protection to keeping the peace process on track' and criticized the repeated lack of action against CPP officials."[104] UNTAC's own officials offered similar criticisms, citing a 'don't rock the boat' mentality within the mission.[105] UNTAC's Human Rights Component issued an unusually frank Final Report in 1993, which identified a number of points of disagreement within the mission and lamented the lack of a "pro-active and at times protagonist role needed to fulfil UNTAC's human rights mandate."[106] In particular, the report highlighted the ways in which the different components of the mission had sometimes competing priorities and outlooks, and that this clash of interests and ideas led at times to a weak commitment to human rights protection. Citing a "lack of enforcement philosophy" within UNTAC, the report echoed the criticisms of Human Right Watch and argued that too much priority was given to ensuring cooperation of all parties to the conflict. The SRSG Akashi later returned fire, dismissing the Human Rights Components proposals as "radical" and based on unrealistically high standards in the context of Cambodian reality.[107]

These tensions over how to respond to the CPP resurfaced after the elections were complete. While observers were united in welcoming the peaceful nature of the elections given the fear of a surge of violence as polling approached, criticisms quickly emerged again regarding the outcome of the May 1993 elections.

Enabling through Signalling: Post-Election Power-sharing Deal

The May elections went off largely peacefully and the fears of a violent attack were not realized. Over four and a half million Cambodians had registered for the elections, and the final turnout was 89.5 per cent. In early June, the Secretary-General declared the result free and fair.[108] The peaceful nature of the vote and the high levels of enthusiastic participation of the Cambodian public jointly account for much of UNTAC's reputation as a successful mission.[109]

Twenty political parties had registered for the elections, but in practice the vote was largely split between the two most well-established parties prior to the arrival of UNTAC. FUNCINPEC was the largest party with 45.5 per cent of the vote, and the CPP was second with 38.2 per cent. The results came as a surprise, as many had assumed the CPP's intimidation campaign would seriously suppress the vote for FUNCINPEC. Instead, it appeared to have had the reverse effect and created a backlash against the CPP and its campaign of violence.

The Paris Agreement stipulated that the elections would lead to the creation of an interim Constituent Assembly that would draft and approve a constitution and then transform itself into a legislature, which in turn would create a new government. However, the agreement was vague on how the Assembly would be structured and where authority would lie during the three-month constitution-writing process. As a result, the post-election period quickly involved efforts to arrange some form of political agreement that would lead to shared authority within the Constituent Assembly. The logic of the constitution drafting process demanded some form of cooperation, as the constitution could only be ratified with two-thirds majority of the Assembly. Either of the two major parties could thus veto the constitution if they were excluded from the process.

In the weeks that followed the release of the election results, the Cambodian parties and assorted international officials (both from the UN and individual embassies) engaged in a series of manoeuvres that culminated in a deal between FUNCINPEC and the CPP in June 1993. The process was fraught and UNTAC was widely criticized for endorsing the outcome, which left the CPP in power after elections that many felt should be interpreted as an outright rejection of CPP rule.

The power-sharing efforts were marked by continuation of the CPP's obstructionist tendencies through different means. First, the party objected to the election results. Even before the counting was finished, the CPP began to claim that the elections were marked by irregularities, and the party demanded a re-run in several provinces.[110] The CPP also engaged in 'intensive politicking' to protect their control on power during the power-sharing talks.[111] This initially entailed efforts to lobby the elder statesman (and former King of Cambodia) Prince Sihanouk over the shape of a potential government in which the CPP would retain a major share of power. Military generals and senior CPP politicians sought to meet with Sihanouk and promote arrangements that would keep the CPP in power.

When these efforts were initially unsuccessful, sectors of the CPP further destabilized the political landscape by launching a putative secessionist campaign in several eastern provinces with Cambodia. Although it was a short-lived effort that soon fizzled out, it was widely attributed to a CPP pressure campaign to ensure movement on power-sharing and it was not without consequences.[112]

These developments initially seemed to seriously damage the prospects for a power-sharing deal. However, relations between the parties improved as UNTAC and key States sought to mediate an

agreement, and talks intensified in mid-June. On 16 June, Prince Sihanouk announced a deal, with the FUNCINPEC leader Prince Ranariddh and Hun Sen sharing power as co-premiers and Prince Sihanouk acting as Head of State. The deal included a division of portfolios that ensured the non-CPP parties had a majority. UNTAC and Akashi in particular were reported to have supported the negotiation efforts and threw their weight behind the deal.[113]

The agreement, however, was very controversial and was in many ways a product of the CPP's entrenched power and intransigence. Prince Sihanouk acknowledged that the CPP had effectively bribed their way into the power-sharing coalition, observing that the CPP had given FUNCINPEC the ultimatum that 'if you don't share power, there will be secession and civil war'.[114]

The SRSG acknowledged that 'one can question the legitimacy and stability' of a deal that gave equal weight to the two main parties, but he argued that "we have to admit the practical wisdom of combining the 'new wind', represented by the victorious FUNCINPEC, consisting mostly of upper and upper-middle class intellectuals aspiring to the restoration of the monarchy, with the experience and power of CPP, which is authoritarian but has 14 years of administrative experience, with much of the army and the police under its control."[115] As with the UN's thinking behind the decision not to postpone the elections, Akashi's comments reflect a preference for pragmatic and practical outcomes that allow for political progress rather than the prioritization and enforcement of democratic principles that would alienate parties to the peace process.

For some observers, both inside and outside of UNTAC, the UN's willingness to endorse the deal represented a betrayal of its commitment to democracy. One longstanding observer of human rights issues in the country identified it as the 'original sin' that contributed to Hun Sen's enduring authoritarian rule.[116] Separately, a human rights officer within UNTAC suggested the UN had "sold out" the Cambodian people and caved into the CPP, describing it as a "horrible sacrifice of values and a repudiation of values and principles" by the UN.[117] Some UNTAC officials argue that the UN leadership should have shown more resolve in facing down the CPP rather than seeking to ensure their participation in the peace process at all costs.[118]

Conclusion

UNTAC's key political challenge came down to a balancing act between, on one hand, enforcing its full mandate in the face of flagrant non-compliance and political violence, and on the other hand prioritizing the peace process and ensuring the continued participation of the main parties. As one long-standing Cambodia specialist (and senior member of UNTAC's Information and Education Component) concluded, UNTAC ultimately engaged in "calculated appeasement" of the CPP authorities, working to curb their worst excesses but acquiescing to their blatant and repeated violations of the political provisions of the Paris Agreement in order to maintain their participation in the electoral and peace processes.[119] The balancing act was performed in favour of pragmatism rather than principle, and there is clear evidence that UNTAC played a role in enabling the authoritarianism of Hun Sen and the CPP.

A variety of factors contributed to the mission's inability, or unwillingness, to directly confront the CPP authorities and enabling their ongoing rule:

- **Mandate:** UNTAC's mandate reflected the political compromises that were necessary to secure all parties' acceptance of the Paris Peace Agreement. The necessity for compromise resulted in relatively weak enforcement powers (a Chapter VI rather than Chapter VII resolution) compared to the ambition of the mandate in other areas. The stipulation that UNTAC would 'control' parts of the Cambodian administration was undefined and lacking in enforcement powers.
- **Power imbalance:** The CPP controlled almost 200,000 State officials compared to just a few hundred staff in the Civil Administration Component and, in practice, UNTAC thus depended on the very people it was supposed to be 'controlling' to implement much of its peacebuilding work.

- **Deployment and Resources:** Painfully slow deployment and limited resources meant that UNTAC took a long time to come to full strength and lost the opportunity to establish its authority early on. Several key components of the mission, including the Civil Administration component charged with overseeing local government departments, lacked staff with crucial local knowledge and expertise.
- **Competing Priorities:** The mission had to balance competing objectives, especially with respect to ensuring cooperation of all the parties in the peace process while also promoting human rights and democracy. The UN itself was also occupied with competing crises, especially in Yugoslavia, and UNTAC did not always get the full attention and support from New York that it required. There was immense pressure, in one of the most expensive peacebuilding missions to date, to have a short timetable and to leave quickly after the elections.
- **Leadership:** The Cambodia case also highlights the important role that Special Representatives can play in shaping UN responses on the ground. While some observers felt that SRSG Akashi struck the right balance in prioritizing the cooperation of the major parties over the enforcement of democratic norms, others criticized what they perceived as a passive leadership style in the face of blatant violations of the Paris Accords.

Overall, the Cambodian case highlights some of the key trade-offs involved in divergent approached to enforcement action, and the risks that come with either confronting or enabling authoritarian elites in post-conflict settings.

CASE STUDY 2

Haiti Case Study

This case study was written in collaboration with Dr Birte Gippert and Dr Kseniya Oksamytna, members of the UK Economic and Social Research Council-funded project on *Democratization and UN Peacebuilding.*

In contrast to some of the other countries explored in this report, the role of the UN in shaping Haiti's political trajectory is somewhat less clear-cut. Haiti has seen both periods of democratic consolidation and authoritarian backsliding over the past three decades, along with the strong and intrusive role of international actors other than the UN, most notably the US. The country has experienced coups, violence, and rule by decree, interspersed with periods of relatively stable governance and free and fair elections. These phases tend to be short-lived, however, usually giving way to deadlock, unrest, and political turmoil – most recently, there have been widespread violent protests against the current president Jovenel Moïse in February 2021.

The UN has been involved in Haiti since 1993, initially through a series of relatively short capacity-building and peacekeeping missions: UNMIH (1993-96 – effectively suspended from 1993-95), UNSMIH (1996-97), UNTMIH (1997), and MIPONUH (1997-2000). These missions were generally aimed at supporting and consolidating democratic governance and enhancing the capacity of the Haitian National Police (HNP), sometimes alongside or following Security Council-authorized US-led military interventions. These operations experienced some successes, but were often obstructed by national actors or overtaken by outbreaks of violence, and the last of these shorter missions withdrew in 2000.

Subsequently, in 2004, the Security Council authorized and deployed MINUSTAH after the removal of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from power by a coalition of opposition forces and the hasty installation of a transitional government in February that year.[120] In comparison with the short missions of the 1990s, which had limited and specific objectives, MINUSTAH's was wide-ranging and included the restoration of security and stability, promotion of a democratic political process, institutional development, electoral assistance, and promotion of the rule of law and human rights.[121] After the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti in January 2010, it also played a crucial role in coordinating relief efforts, providing logistical, administrative, and security support for humanitarian operations; support to the HNP; technical advice; reconstruction support; and a public information campaign.[122] The mission was of course also well known for the numerous scandals that marked its tenure, including sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by troops and the cholera epidemic caused by poor sanitation in one of its camps. The mission remained in Haiti until 2017, when it was succeeded by MINUJUSTH, which was mandated to support rule of law, the justice sector, the HNP, and human rights. MINUJUSTH closed in 2019, ending 15 years of consecutive UN peace operations in the country.

This report will focus on MINUSTAH, which was the longest-lasting, largest, and most expansive mission in Haiti, with nearly 15,000 personnel at its peak and, as noted, a far-reaching mandate that emphasized the restoration of democracy. In addition, MINUSTAH was present both during

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periods of relative stability and during periods of significant political turmoil. Indeed, when it first deployed in 2004, the country was in the midst of a serious political crisis. Subsequently, the tenure of René Préval, though by no means without tension, mismanagement, and conflict, was relatively stable. By contrast, the rule of Michel Martelly, who took over after Préval left office in 2011, was again marked by serious moves toward authoritarianism, including rule by decree for a period of one year. MINUSTAH's presence during these various changes to the political trajectory of the country therefore facilitates the identification of patterns of action and inaction on the part of the UN that may have inadvertently enabled authoritarian behaviour by the various regimes that held power at the time.

Enabling in Haiti

While Haiti has seen periods of democratic consolidation, and the UN's mandates have particularly emphasized the restoration and consolidation of nascent democratic processes in the country, it has also consistently experienced episodes of severe authoritarian backsliding, ranging from electoral malpractice to violent crackdowns on protesters and rule by decree. Throughout these episodes, there has been evidence of inadvertent enabling of authoritarianism by the UN, where it has prioritized stability, the retention of host country consent, and the rapid holding of elections above the quality of the political process and the establishment of oversight and accountability mechanisms for the security sector. As elsewhere, this was not the UN's intention – indeed, it has been the opposite, and the UN has both pushed strongly for elections that would not otherwise have happened and has often simply attempted to prevent a descent into violence. However, through capacity-building of both political institutions and the security sector, and signalling about the low costs of authoritarianism, the UN may have boosted the regime's ability to engage in – and opportunities for – authoritarian behaviour.

Enabling through Capacity-building

The first way in which the UN has unintentionally enabled authoritarianism in Haiti is through its efforts to build the capacity of the government. As elsewhere, a lack of capacity was seen as a major obstacle to the consolidation of stable, democratic rule in Haiti, the ability of various Presidents to ward off violent challenges to their power, and the routing of popular discontent through the ballot box. As a result,

enhancing the capacity of the government in terms of both institutions and security was seen as key to sustainable peace and democratic development.[123]

THE UN AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

MINUSTAH's initial mandate included support to State institutions[124] and fostering and promoting democratic change was seen as a priority. However, its efforts in this regard may have inadvertently enabled authoritarianism in two ways: a heavy emphasis on protecting and strengthening the executive and a focus on the holding of elections at the expense of other institutions.

The 1987 Haitian constitution established a semi-presidential system that included a strong executive, but also delegated a significant check-and-balances function to parliament and to local assemblies.[125] This was because it was adopted after three decades of dictatorship under François Duvalier, and was therefore specifically intended to be 'anti-dictatorial' and to prevent the emergence of new autocratic rulers.[126] However, the complex rules governing executive versus legislative authority frequently led to deadlock in Haiti's institutions and prevented the passage of legislation. In order to overcome this, MINUSTAH and other international partners pushed for constitutional reforms in 2012 that, in effect, removed some of the constraints on the presidency at the expense of parliament and local government.[127] For example, the reforms gave the president greater power in appointing the prime minister and provided for direct appointment of mayors.

The intention of these reforms was not specifically to strengthen the executive branch – instead, the aim was to demonstrate to Haitians that institutions of governance could function better than previously and they were viewed by the mission as a "promising political development."[128] The constitutional reforms also included other broadly liberal amendments, including the establishment of a Permanent Electoral Council (CEP), strengthening oversight of the police, and measures to promote women's political participation. Moreover, a strong executive is not necessarily authoritarian, as long as there are adequate accountability mechanisms and checks and balances in place. However, over time, the executive had begun to co-opt other institutions in order to extend its authority and tighten its grip on power. The reforms were thus undertaken in a context in which "Haiti… had a domineering presidency and a legislative branch of government that…function[ed] as an extension of the executive branch."[129] The overall effect of the reforms was, thus, to entrench the dominance of the presidency at the expense of other institutions of government that could have balanced out executive power. Moreover, the other proposed reforms have not since been implemented, most importantly the establishment of the CEP, which is discussed further below.

This emphasis on the office of the executive was compounded by MINUSTAH's disproportionate focus on presidential elections. Again, its intention here was not to demonstrate particular approval of or bias towards individual candidates; instead, the UN wanted to support the holding of elections that would likely otherwise not have taken place at all and to demonstrate to the population that they could make their voices heard at the ballot box,[130] as well as to lay the groundwork for a viable working relationship with the president and to ensure some degree of political stability and continuity. As a result, in the various elections that took place while the mission was deployed, the UN not only provided vast amounts of technical support and capacity-building, but also tended to focus on the presidential elections, but pay less attention to parliamentary or local ones, even where there were clear irregularities. For example, the 2006 elections, in which MINUSTAH played a major organizational role and which saw the election of René Préval as the first post-transition President, were marred by disputes over the electoral count.[131] In response, MINUSTAH pushed for a recount of the presidential poll, but not the parliamentary one, sparking discontent on the part of opposition politicians.[132]

Subsequently, the then US Ambassador to Haiti described Préval as "a challenge" but also as "Haiti's indispensable man."[133] While the UN's view may not have been quite as overt, the mission

worked extremely closely with, and indeed expressed specific support for, the Core Group – consisting of the US as well as Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, and the EU – and thus it is likely that it shared their view that Préval was important for stability.[134] Nevertheless, the mission's aim was not to unfairly support Préval, and indeed its actions in light of the polling irregularities can be construed as an attempt to uphold the integrity of the process. However, because of an eagerness to demonstrate success in the conduct of the elections and concerns about security, the UN may have inadvertently helped to shore up a single candidate and signalled a particular interest in the President.

This pattern continued under the next President, Michel Martelly, who took power in 2011, following a flawed electoral process (see below). Martelly subsequently failed to hold elections between 2011 and 2015, despite the fact that the constitution calls for frequent elections for a proportion of the seats in the legislative. Instead, in late 2011, he dissolved the provisional CEP and only began forming a new one the following summer. By doing so, he was able to wait out the terms of one-third of senators, meaning that the senate was no longer quorate and therefore could not pass the necessary electoral laws.[135] Later in 2014, Martelly signed the El Rancho Accord with opposition politicians, according to which the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary would each appoint three representatives to the CEP. However, this proposal violated the 1987 Constitution, which requires that civil society also name representatives to the CEP. That, combined with the fact that the judiciary was regarded as largely controlled by the executive, led to the refusal of some senators to ratify the Accord.[136] This rendered the holding of elections impossible, and the terms of most Members of Parliament eventually lapsed. Parliament was subsequently dissolved in January 2015, and Martelly ruled by decree until the end of his term in 2016.[137]

However, even in the face of such overt authoritarian moves, the UN failed to sanction Martelly explicitly and instead continued to work with him as usual, therefore inadvertently buttressing his rule. Indeed, MINUSTAH, joined by the Organization of American States (OAS), blamed opposition politicians for blocking the passage of the new electoral law and thereby preventing the holding of elections, and MINUSTAH commended Martelly for "ensur[ing] the regular functioning of institutions and the continuity of the State."[138] While this conciliatory approach may have been intended to avoid a complete breakdown of the political system and instead to "create some power and authority in a country where the State [was] extremely weak,"[139] it also had the unintended side effect of signalling to Martelly that the costs of his behaviour were low and that the UN would likely put up with a high degree of authoritarianism in the interests of stability. While working with a fragmented and ever-changing parliament would of course have been problematic in many ways, the UN's clear emphasis both on the office of the executive and on the individuals occupying it suggest that it valued stability and maintaining a steady working relationship with government above the quality of democratic processes. Ultimately, this led to a situation in which Presidents understood "that normal standards of behaviour [did] not apply to [them]."[140]

MINUSTAH's focus on shoring up the executive and ensuring that elections ran smoothly came at the expense of building the capacity of other institutions of government that could have counterbalanced presidential power, and it particularly struggled to reform the judiciary.[141] As already discussed, MINUSTAH often prioritized the presidency over parliament, and the same was true of the CEP, the opposition, and local assemblies. Active support for the establishment of a permanent CEP, as mandated by the constitution, was one of the benchmarks in MINUSTAH's 2013-2016 Consolidation Plan, but it was never implemented.[142] While, of course, this is not only the result of MINUSTAH's actions or inactions, and the UN's influence with regards to institution-building was limited,[143] the UN itself admitted that "the focus was on ensuring that the electoral events took place, while the other cycle elements, such as capacity-building, fell largely by the wayside."[144] Similarly, the mission interacted less with opposition and other political parties than it did with the presidency, thus failing to build the capacity of actors that could hold to account the executive, even if in the shorter

term this would have led to a more fragmented political environment.[145] Finally, the mission also neglected regional and local assemblies. While MINUSTAH's Civil Affairs Division had developed plans to engage with and strengthen ten regional governments, these plans were never implemented due to insufficient funding.[146]

In this way, MINUSTAH focused its attention on national elites associated with the executive, rather than with a broader set of actors who could have contributed to more open and democratic forms of governance in the country.[147] Importantly, the UN's intentions were not to encourage or sanction authoritarian behaviour or the concentration of power in single individuals or a single office. Indeed, it is likely that its actions prevented the electoral calendar from being jettisoned altogether and helped to avoid a descent into full political turmoil and widespread violence. However, because of its approval of constitutional reforms in favour of the presidency, its relative neglect of other institutions of government, and its relative disregard for decentralization, the mission contributed to the dominance of the executive, even one that was losing its legitimacy fast due to the failure to engage with parliament and the opposition,[148] inadvertently signalling a high tolerance for authoritarian behaviour on the part of Haiti's Presidents.

THE UN AND SECURITY CAPACITY

In the field of security, MINUSTAH risked contributing to authoritarian outcomes in a number of ways. First, the very presence of the UN mission reduced internal political threats to the Government and reduced the incentive for compromise and inclusive politics. One of the hallmarks of weakly institutionalized countries is a propensity for the irregular removal of leaders outside the usual constitutional rules and procedures. In Haiti, MINUSTAH's strong security presence lowered the risk that incumbent Presidents would be ousted by force, and the operation consequently played a role in "insulat[ing] the political system from implosion."[149] Successive Presidents could rule in the knowledge that they were less likely to be ousted by their opponents through irregular means. For example, in 2012, President Martelly explicitly stated that MINUSTAH's presence reduced the odds of a successful coup against him, and that that mission acted as a discouragement to opposition to his Government.[150] This form of unintended consequence of the UN's presence effectively reduced the incentive for the kind of inclusive politics or compromise that can contribute to democratic progress, and allowed instead for the consolidation and solidification of authoritarian tendencies within the incumbent administration.

Another form of influence related to the mission's role in police reform. A crucial element of MINUSTAH's mandate related to "monitoring, restructuring and reforming the Haitian National Police" (set out in UN Security Council Resolution 1542), and police support had been a running theme of UN missions in Haiti from the mid-1990s. When President Aristide was returned to power with UN support in 1994 after a coup had toppled his rule in 1991, he disbanded the Haitian army in order to reduce the military threat to civilian rule. Aside from destabilizing the security situation in Haiti by creating a constituency of disgruntled and armed ex-soldiers, this move had the effect of placing the weak national police service in the position of Haiti's principal domestic security institution. UN support and capacity-building in the security realm therefore focused in particular on the police force, and successive UN missions in the 1990s were dedicated to police training and monitoring.[151]

When MINUSTAH was deployed, the HNP was lacking basic professional standards. Its officers and leadership were linked to corruption, Haiti's drug trade, and the pursuit of political rather than public service goals.[152] Political elites sought to use the State's security institutions to serve their own political ends, including by using the police to target anti-government protesters.[153] For example, Freedom House documented two instances when the HNP was used by the executive against political opponents: the arrest of a sitting Member of the Parliament, Arnel Bélizaire, who had clashed with Martelly but who should have been protected by parliamentary immunity; and house searches to intimidate the

head of the provisional election commission.[154] Between 2012 and 2017, anti-government demonstrations were increasingly met with police violence.[155]

MINUSTAH has been implicated in enabling some of these authoritarian practices through its relatively passive approach to police reform. Full-scale police reform was needed, including the vetting of HNP officers as many had been implicated in misconduct and mistreatment of the civilian population. Yet, MINUSTAH ultimately downgraded this ambitious goal, and no one was removed from the HNP due to misconduct.[156] It was also argued that the UN's programme of support for the police lent legitimacy to an institution that was acting as an agent of democratic decline rather than development. As the former head of MINUSTAH's police component lamented, the HNP, "while receiving important international assistance, contributed to the insecure environment…[and]…itself was fast becoming an illicit power structure."[157]

Finally, in its anti-gang activities, MINUSTAH also at times used levels of force that were criticized as excessive and that again set a problematic precedent for national elites who, as discussed above, were prone to using the security services for their own political ends. New operations led to the death of several gang leaders, leading to questions about the rules of engagement guiding these more forceful interventions. In a major anti-gang initiative in July 2005 (codenamed Operation Iron Fist), MINUSTAH peacekeeping troops went on the offensive in the notorious slum of Cité Soleil to target a key gang leader. Over the course of the operation, MINUSTAH troops fired over 20,000 rounds of ammunition, as well as grenades and mortars, in a high-density residential area with poor quality housing. Over 20 civilians are estimated to have been killed and the mission became a target of intense criticism and scrutiny in the aftermath.[158] The use of what several experts have referred to as excessive force,[159] in a setting where professionalization of the dysfunctional security services was a priority, not only risked undermining MINUSTAH's own mandate but also setting a precedent for domestic elites and enabling the Haitian Government's problematic use of political violence.

Enabling by Signalling a Permissive Environment

Aside from activities that helped bolster the security structures in Haiti and augmented the capacity of the State, MINUSTAH also reacted to episodes of electoral malpractice and political repression in ways that signalled a permissive environment for such practices. By offering muted concerns over the Government's repressive tendencies, it repeatedly signalled that such behaviour would be tolerated.

LAX RESPONSE TO ELECTORAL MALPRACTICE

After MINUSTAH was deployed in 2004, one of the major priorities, aside from the restoration of State authority, was the organization of new elections to replace President Aristide. When the vote was finally held in 2006 after several delays, René Préval won slightly under 50 per cent of the vote, which required a run-off. The results sparked violence by Préval's supporters, who feared a second round would be a ploy to steal the election from their favoured candidate.

The spike in unrest led to intense levels of international concern, including within the UN operation. Protesters had overrun the lobby of Hotel Montana, where the vote tabulation was taking place and which was used as accommodation by MINUSTAH officials and visiting dignitaries. Préval was claiming outright victory and refused to consider going forward to a run-off election against his nearest competitor, Leslie Manigat.

In a subsequent period of intense negotiations and international mediation, a key issue concerned the status of blank ballots that had been cast. To prevent further escalation, the Core Group recommended using the so-called Belgian Formula: blank votes were not treated as protest votes but instead allocated proportionally among the candidates based on the votes received by each of them.[160] The Provisional CEP duly implemented this recommendation, assigning 51 per cent of the vote to Préval and declaring him the winner in the first round. SRSG Juan Valdés (2004-2006) played the key role in this solution:

as Jean-Marie Guéhenno would later argue: "Valdés knew that a second round would just be an opportunity for an explosion of the violence he had managed to avoid. With the support of the Organization of American States and of the UN, wisdom prevailed, and a legal solution was found to avoid a second round of voting."[161]

Yet, local civil society organizations questioned whether it was indeed a legal solution: the National Human Rights Defense Network criticized the situation in which "politics took precedence over the law' and deplored that the CEP did not resist MINUSTAH's pressure."[162] Mirlande Manigat, the wife of second-place candidate Leslie Manigat (and a future presidential candidate herself in 2011), argued that the result illustrated the international community's willingness to accept unconstitutional outcomes for the sake of international interests:

> **"Whenever there is a constitutional crisis in Haiti, one realizes that the international community is rather tolerant of the constitutional manipulation or even violation. We have witnessed this kind of reaction, or absence of reactions, when the international community deems it necessary not to criticize too openly those deviations in the name of realism, because they back the Haitians who appear to serve their interests and, above all, because they claim the necessity to abide by the law, a principle that they eagerly defend in their own national system."[163]**

Similar questions were raised over the international involvement in the 2010/11 presidential elections that brought Michel Martelly to power. At the end of his term, Préval chose Jude Célestin, his son-in-law and Minister of Construction in his Government, as his successor and tried to stack the deck in his favour: Célestin was "the Government-backed candidate" although his campaign faced charges of fraud.[164] Furthermore, a major political party, Fanmi Lavalas (associated with Aristide), was excluded from the elections on a technicality. Although concerns were raised at a Core Group meeting where SRSG Hédi Annabi (2007-2010) was present, the international community essentially decided to look the other way. US diplomatic cables from the time illustrate the strategy of "expressing disappointment" while continuing business more or less as usual, despite a recognition that Préval's actions had "emasculated the opposition."[165]

MINUSTAH also responded weakly once Martelly took office and revealed his shallow commitment to democracy. Soon after taking the office, "Martelly exposed a dangerous trend toward presidential absolutism in his unwillingness to deal with criticism, even from within his own ranks."[166] After blocking a series of elections and allowing the legislature to dissolve in the final year of his term, Martelly effectively ruled by decree and passed controversial measures benefitting family and friends.[167] By not robustly criticizing electoral delays and manipulations, MINUSTAH helped signal the permissiveness of the international environment.

LAX RESPONSE TO REPRESSION

Besides the weak criticism of electoral delays and malpractice, MINUSTAH also offered only muted responses to a number of instances of political repression by Haitian authorities. This was recognized by the mission itself, and the former head of MINUSTAH's police component argued the mission "appeared tolerant of illegal or at the very least inappropriate GoH [Government of Haiti] and HNP behaviour."[168]

In 2014, Amnesty International concluded that despite multiple reports of excessive use of force by the police to disperse demonstrations, no officer faced criminal investigations, and stated that "both Haitian authorities and the MINUSTAH must show that they are committed to hold officers accountable for human rights violations and to prevent future abuses."[169] The HNP remained subject to political interference by political elites and, in 2011, the Inspector General resigned in protest of political pressure to stop investigating human rights abuses by the HNP.[170] Considering HNP's dependency on MINUSTAH, the leverage the mission had over the force was not used effectively to prevent politicization and co-optation. At the same time,

MINUSTAH was also dependent on the HNP for the progress of its capacity-building programme, and the HNP "often purposely evaded monitoring by MINUSTAH."[171]

The March 2013 Secretary-General's report on MINUSTAH acknowledged "allegations of anti-democratic practices', including 'alleged politicization of State institutions such as the judiciary and the Haitian National Police, in addition to repression of freedom of expression."[172] However, the report did not mention how MINUSTAH planned to address these issues and used very careful language referring to *alleged* wrongdoings, despite the mission's ability to observe such practices independently. This timidity was partly the result of the loss of popular support and withering host State's consent, as well as by the fears of destabilizing the executive.[173] Yet, it served the purpose of signalling a permissive environment for the political misuse of the security services.

CASE STUDY 3

Democratic Republic of Congo Case Study

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been one of the largest recipients of peacebuilding assistance from the international community over the past two decades. It is home to the largest peacekeeping mission in history, with over 22,000 authorized uniformed personnel at its peak in 2007,[174] and has seen billions of dollars of international aid over the past two decades.

The UN's involvement in Congo began in 1999, when the Security Council authorized and deployed the *Mission de l'Organization des Nations Unies en Congo* (MONUC) after the First Congo War (1996-97) and during the Second Congo War (1999-2002); the mission was rehatted as the *Mission de l'Organization des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en RD Congo* (MONUSCO) in 2010. The initial deployment was small and focused on ceasefire monitoring, planning for separation of forces, and liaison with parties to the conflict, and sometimes faced severe restrictions on movement and access under then President Laurent Kabila.[175] This changed in 2003, after the signing of the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement in Pretoria in December 2002 and the beginning of the formal transition period, which lasted until presidential and parliamentary elections in 2006. MONUC's authorized strength increased rapidly, and its mandate expanded to include a range of tasks, many of which entailed explicit and implicit efforts to build democratic governance and liberal political institutions. This included a focus on the rule of law, the strengthening of civil society, increasing the transparency and resilience of political institutions, expanding the inclusivity of decision-making, improving gender equality, and a range of other objectives that can be categorized as broadly liberal in nature.

The centrepiece of this democratic focus was the 2006 elections, which were the first multiparty elections in the country since independence. Altogether, the international community gave a massive USD 4 million to support these, and they were widely hailed a success. There was a very high turnout of 70.54 per cent in the first round and 65.36 per cent in the second and general agreement that they were conducted fairly and freely.[176] There was some electoral violence both before and after polling, but this was mostly localized in the capital, Kinshasa, and was quickly brought under control. The elections constituted a moment of great optimism in Congo, both for the Congolese and for the international community, and there was hope that they marked a concrete turning point for the country that would see it embark on a more peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, and democratic future.

Enabling in DRC

In spite of these high hopes for a more democratic future for Congo and the distinctly liberal objectives of the UN and its partners there, the country has seen increasingly autocratic behaviour on the part of the regime since 2006, in particular during the 13-year tenure of Joseph Kabila.[177] While the factors contributing to this 'authoritarian turn' are multiple and complex, and include both international and domestics ones, there is compelling evidence of enabling by the UN peace operation. The UN may not have been the only, or even the most important, factor in determining Congo's governance trajectory since 2003, but any understanding of that trajectory without accounting for the role of the UN is

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incomplete. As discussed below, enabling in DRC has taken place through both of the mechanisms identified by von Billerbeck and Tansey – capacity-building and signalling – as well as through the financial mechanisms discussed elsewhere in this report.[178] Three main reasons for enabling can be identified: ongoing concerns relating to security and stability, the need to maintain government consent to the UN's presence, and the desire to see a return on the international community's sizeable financial investment in peacebuilding in the country. Importantly, with all three of these, the UN's intention was not to *promote* authoritarianism – as noted, it was the exact opposite – but expanding the opportunity structures for authoritarian behaviour was an unintended consequence of UN action.

Enabling through Capacity-building

The first mechanism through which the UN may have inadvertently enabled authoritarianism in Congo involves building incumbent capacity. Capacity-building is central to nearly all contemporary peacebuilding efforts because the shift from an environment governed by informal institutions, *de facto* 'rules of the game,' and elite bargains based upon kinship, personal relationships, or patron-client networks to one of formal governance, *de jure* rules, and stable bureaucratic institutions is considered key to sustainable peace.[179] In Congo, capacity-building has occurred in two areas: institutions and security.[180]

THE UN AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

The UN's mandate in Congo included support to State institutions from the outset.[181] Congo had a long history of dictatorship and corrupt governance. As noted, building resilient and technocratic institutions of government was and is considered a key step on the way to sustainable peace and inclusive governance for Congo – where disputes are resolved through dialogue and debate, legislative processes and economic regulation are transparent, the rule of law and economic regulations are equitably enforced throughout the entirety of the country, and the opposition, civil society, the media, and citizens can access and participate in the policymaking process.

However, in Congo, actions on the part of the UN and the international community more broadly in this regard inadvertently enabled authoritarian behaviour as early as 2003, when the institutional structures of the transitional government incentivized continued elite bargaining and the personalization of politics. This occurred in two ways: through the specific institutional arrangements of the transition

period and through the personalization of those arrangements in the incumbent, Joseph Kabila.

First, the transitional arrangements put a heavy emphasis on the executive, through both the promulgation of a constitution that gave a high relative degree of power to the president, and through the structure of the transitional government known as the 1+4 arrangement, which consisted of one president and four vice-presidents, drawn from the president's party, the main opposition parties (MLC and RCD-G), and civil society respectively. This approach was taken because at the time the international community saw the president as critical to stability and to its own ability to remain deployed. Indeed, in spite of the great hope surrounding the 2006 elections, parts of the country, in particular eastern areas including Ituri District[182] and North and South Kivu Provinces, were still seeing significant violence and instability during the transition period; a strong presidency, whose authority could be extended throughout the entire country, was seen as a buffer against a return to full-scale war. A strong presidency is not in itself inherently authoritarian, but in the case of Congo, the UN's emphasis on the executive came at the expense of building other resilient, transparent institutions. As the Under-Secretary-General of Peacekeeping at the time, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, later reflected: "At enormous and unsustainable cost, the international community consolidated the presidency through elections and largely ignored the other institutions of the State."[183]

Moreover, the 1+4 arrangement meant that the power of the vice-presidents was significantly more diluted than that of the president and his party. This both entrenched Kabila's power, while also prompting other political actors to engage in deal-making and informal alliance-building with the dominant party in order to gain government positions or access rents in ways more typical of authoritarian regimes.[184] Indeed, three of the four Vice-Presidents were broadly aligned with the President, even the representative of the opposition, Z'Ahidi Ngoma: rather than installing Etienne Tshisekedi, the long-time leader of the opposition and a stark opponent of Kabila's, Ngoma was selected because he was considered a 'friendlier' figure. This was done deliberately because otherwise it 'would have meant that three of the four vice-presidents were not in the president's camp,' a situation that the international community worried might weaken Kabila and potentially destabilize the country.[185] In this way, these institutional arrangements were made with the best intentions – to prevent a return to violent conflict – but they had the unintended effect of consolidating the power of the incumbent and weakening institutions of State that could act as a counterbalance to the presidency.

Second, not only was the office of the President prioritized during the transition, Joseph Kabila in specific was a key interlocutor for MONUC, more so than other members of the transitional government, inadvertently encouraging the personalization of politics more characteristic of authoritarian regimes than of democracies. Indeed, from when he took over from his father in 2001 until the end of the transition in 2006, Kabila was the mission's main point of contact in the government. Subsequently, during the electoral campaign in 2006, though the mission was ostensibly neutral and dealt on equal terms with Kabila and his electoral rivals, numerous staff privately admitted that he was "the consensus candidate"[186] and the UN "had picked Kabila as the winner even before he won,"[187] leading to accusations of bias by some Congolese politicians.[188] MONUC's preference for Kabila sent a strong message that, first, a vibrant and capable opposition was not a priority for the mission, and second, that Kabila had the international community's strong support and that it therefore might tolerate diminished levels of transparency, political competition, and accountability in order to protect him. In other words, the personal political costs of authoritarian behaviour for Kabila were low, and his room for manoeuver in terms of taking actions that would further entrench his grip on power was wide.[189]

Importantly, the heavily personalized relationship of the mission with Kabila during the transition meant that later, when he won the 2006 elections and was inaugurated as President, the mission lost a significant amount of leverage with him. With the democratic seal of approval of an internationally-praised two-round electoral process, Kabila immediately made moves to assert his sovereignty, at times

cutting off or delaying contact or consultations and raising the possibility of the UN's withdrawal. Because the UN had worked so closely and even deferentially with Kabila up to that point, it was in a weak position to hold him to account or to push back on any undemocratic actions he took. Still, the mission generally preferred continuity over overt moves to pressure Kabila and its subsequent support for institutions entailed primarily efforts to turn over greater ownership and control to the Congolese, even where their non-democratic tendencies were growing. For example, in the 2011 and 2018 elections, as discussed below, MONUC took a backseat role, letting Congolese authorities drive and manage the process to a much greater extent than in 2006. Support to the *Commission Indépendente Nationale Electorale* (CENI) was thus specifically 'neutral'[190] and the UN, as one official argued: "[chose] not to do anything."[191] While this is partly a normal progression during peacebuilding, from heavier to lesser international influence, it took place against a backdrop of increasing assertive authoritarianism by the regime.

THE UN AND SECURITY CAPACITY

The UN's support to incumbent capacity also extended to the State security apparatus. This support has taken the form of trainings, logistical assistance, joint operations, and in particular the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), which was established in 2013. The overarching objective of this support has been to build the capacity of the armed forces to provide security to the population in an equitable and neutral way, a task seen as particularly important in light of the fact that the military is composed of a sometimes uneasy mix of former militias, rebel groups, and armed forces and the fact that the authority of the central Government in some parts of the country is weak to non-existent.[192] However, the UN's actions in this regard have also inadvertently enabled authoritarianism in two ways: by boosting the regime's repressive capabilities and by further strengthening Kabila's personal hold on power.

First, MONUC and later MONUSCO have regularly assisted the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC) with training, logistical support, and joint patrols. While these activities are partly an ongoing task, support has been particularly extensive in the context of joint operations. For example, in 2009 the FARDC launched *Kimia II*, an operation targeting the *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR) in eastern DRC, and MONUC's support included transportation, fuel, rations, and limited firepower.[193] In 2013, the UN went even further, with the establishment of the FIB, which took on peace enforcement measures and was tasked with 'neutralizing non-State groups employing violence against civilians,' in particular the M23, which was posing an existential threat to Kabila's regime in North Kivu province at the time.[194] The 3,000-strong unit provided a variety of robust forms of material support, including long-range artillery, special forces, snipers, and drones to support ground operations carried out by the FARDC, and it resoundingly defeated the M23.

Such operations, as well as the ongoing training and logistical support provided by the UN (and other bilateral partners), while aimed at extending State authority, restoring the rule of law, and building neutral, transparent security institutions, had two unintended effects that enabled authoritarian behaviour by the regime. First, the FARDC is responsible for widespread human rights abuses against the civilian population, including extrajudicial executions, rape, lootings, and abduction.[195] By supporting these forces, the UN not only boosted the State's legitimate coercive capacity as intended, but also its capacity to engage in repression against the civilian population. Some have argued that it thus became, in essence, complicit in these actions.[196] To be fair, the UN recognized this risk and in 2009 instituted a vetting process whereby it would not cooperate with or provide support to FARDC commanders with records of human rights abuses. However, this strained relations with Kabila, something the UN was keen to avoid out of fear that the Government would impose restrictions on its movement or even withdraw consent to its presence. In addition, the Government quickly found ways around the conditionality policy, in particular by appointing black-listed commanders to lead operations where it wanted to avoid UN scrutiny or, as feared, restricting the movement of blue helmets.[197] In many cases, the UN actually was

said to have lost oversight, thus potentially imperilling rather than protecting human rights, and often backed down in the face of the regime's protests.[198] Ultimately, the conditionality policy failed to deliver much benefit to the security of the Congolese population and the military support to the FARDC therefore contributed to forms of repression typical of authoritarian regimes, even though the mission's intention was, in fact, just the opposite.

Second, support to the FARDC helped to consolidate Kabila's personal grip on power. By supporting the FARDC, the UN supplemented Kabila's ability to coerce or eliminate actors challenging his power (or simply did it for him, as in the case of the M23) and to repress the domestic population if it became restive or demanded change, particularly in light of authoritarian actions on his part. This was not, of course, the UN's intention, and the mission did not *directly* support such operations or activities. Indeed, weakening and in some cases eliminating non-State groups challenging the State's authority, in particular in the east, was considered part of the UN's mandate to restore and extend State authority throughout the country. However, because the State had become increasingly personalized in Kabila, the mission's efforts in this regard were tantamount to individual support to him. The UN's material support to the FARDC in essence turned it into "President Kabila's own private military company,"[199] and equipped him with the coercive capacity that authoritarian leaders need to ward off challenges and stay in power. Importantly, this support was not only material, but also constituted a strong signal of international support to Kabila, even in the face of his increasingly authoritarian moves, suggesting again that the UN would tolerate a high degree of 'misbehaviour' by the regime in the interests of maintaining stability and workable relations with the government.

In its institutional and security support then, the UN inadvertently concentrated both political and coercive power in a personalized and repressive State. Where it faced trade-offs in this regard, as with the FARDC conditionality policy, it often backed down for fear that the Government would cease cooperation altogether, or even make good on threats to withdraw consent and expel the mission from the country. The UN did not intentionally support authoritarian behaviour by Kabila, but through its continued support to him and to State security forces, it shifted the balance of power in favour of Kabila and increased his power relative to political and military rivals.

Enabling through Signalling and Expanding Opportunity Structure

The second mechanism through which the UN inadvertently enabled authoritarian behaviour by the regime was an informational one. More specifically, through lax enforcement of democratic standards, mild responses to repression, exclusion, and misconduct, and discretionary inaction in the face of explicit authoritarian behaviour, the mission signalled to Kabila that the costs of authoritarian conduct were low and that any repercussions were likely to be minimal or non-existent. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, as mentioned above, the UN had strongly associated continuity of leadership with stability and feared that punitive measures against the Government for less-than-democratic behaviour could open the doors to political instability and violence. Second, almost immediately after his election, Kabila began asking for the withdrawal of the mission or at least a diminution in its size. The UN was therefore seriously concerned about the imposition of restrictions on its movement and operations and the withdrawal of consent to its deployment by the regime. In the interests of avoiding either of these eventualities, the UN responded mildly – first to instances of electoral misconduct and intimidation and second to instances of violent repression of citizens. Together, these indicated to Kabila that he had considerable leverage with the mission, and they created a permissive environment for authoritarianism.

ELECTORAL MISCONDUCT

As noted above, the 2006 elections were widely hailed as a success by the international community, but while the UN was officially neutral, there was a widely acknowledged bias in favour of Kabila. Not only was he seen as

important for stability, but he was also a familiar interlocutor for the UN – a kind of 'devil we know' – because of the extensive interaction between him and the mission during the transition period. As one UN official noted, the existing relationship between Kabila and the mission, even if at times tumultuous, "gave him a very good head start" in the elections.[200] By contrast, the mission's relationship with Kabila's electoral rival, Jean-Pierre Bemba, was more tumultuous and antagonistic, and establishing a working relationship with him if he were to win was seen as both time-consuming and risky for a smooth changeover between the transitional government and the permanent one. Because of the immense investment in the elections made by the international community, the UN was eager to claim success, and Kabila was seen as more likely to enable the UN to do that.

Furthermore, the UN's implicit preference for Kabila remained in spite of the fact that he employed a number of repressive authoritarian tactics to increase his chances of winning. For example, a number of opposition politicians were detained for spurious reasons prior to the campaign period, and there were several incidents of intimidation of or violence against the press, including most egregiously, the murder of a Congolese journalist, Mwamba Bapuwa, shortly after he published articles critical of the State security forces.[201] While the UN condemned such incidents in general terms, it never pointed fingers explicitly, and instead issued calls for all parties to cooperate. Taken together, MONUC's unspoken preference for a Kabila electoral victory and for mediation and negotiation rather than robust sanctioning of electoral misconduct formed a discursive pattern that signalled the mission's willingness to accept behaviour from Kabila that diverged from its own liberal goals. In this way, as Weiss contends: "Kabila owe[d] his victory in no small part to…the longstanding support that he received from the international community," including MONUC.[202]

This discursive pattern became even more extreme during the 2011 presidential elections, with a marked lack of action by the UN in the face of increasingly authoritarian behaviour. Early that year, the Government amended the constitution in favour of a first-past-the-post system, eliminating the second-round requirement and making it easier for the incumbent to win.[203] The mission (renamed MONUSCO by then) was staunchly against this move, but ultimately "there was no resistance to it"[204] and the UN did nothing to sanction Kabila explicitly when the change was confirmed. More seriously, in response to reports of killings, disappearances, and arbitrary arrests during the electoral period, the mission issued some discursive denunciations, but did not alter its support to or interaction with the regime, and instead hailed the positive cooperation between MONUSCO and DRC military and civilian justice authorities. Indeed, because Kabila had become increasingly uncooperative towards the mission and had indicated on several occasions that he wanted it to withdraw, MONUSCO was focused largely on maintaining a minimally workable relationship with him. It therefore often issued only muted criticism of the regime in the interests of retaining consent and preventing a subsequent likely degeneration of the security situation. This loss of leverage was compounded by the fact that, as mentioned, the UN played a much smaller logistical role in the 2011 elections, and it therefore had less oversight of the conduct of State electoral officials and that of the candidates. Subsequently, when the elections were widely declared as fraudulent by independent observers, the UN again stuck to mild criticism and maintained its interaction with Kabila much as it had been.[205] As one UN official put it, the mission wanted "to continue business as usual."[206]

Finally, this pattern of discursive leniency and discretionary inaction largely remained in place during the build-up to and subsequent two-year delay in the 2016 elections (eventually held in 2018). In spite of being constitutionally barred from running for a third term, Kabila made a range of attempts to circumvent this and to delay the elections. These included trying to change the constitution; a reformed electoral law in 2015 that attempted to push through a census prior to any elections (which would have delayed polling and allowed Kabila to stay in office); and the elimination of electoral rivals, including the arrest of Moise Katumbi, the popular then Governor of Katanga Province, who was widely seen as having good chances nationally. These efforts, and in particular the proposed changes to the electoral

law, sparked widespread protest among donors and large public demonstrations, which were violently suppressed by the regime, resulting in extensive arrests and civilian deaths.[207] While the UN was of course against these moves by Kabila, strongly condemned the violence and intimidation, and indeed lobbied successfully, if quietly, for him to give up his attempts to amend the constitution, the mission also continued its interaction with the Government largely as usual and its public condemnations were muted. As previously, the mission remained concerned both about losing Government consent to its presence and the potential for insecurity that might accompany restrictions on its operations or its withdrawal should State consent falter. Yet, while these were indeed valid concerns and their realization could have spelled the collapse of years of material and operational investment in peacebuilding, MONUSCO's failure to sanction the regime in more forceful or public ways was symptomatic of its greatly reduced leverage with the regime and signalled a high level of tolerance for authoritarian behaviour and an interest in continuity and stability above democratic development.

Ultimately, the elections in 2018 ended up with a political arrangement made between Kabila and members of the opposition. Finally persuaded not to run, Kabila's party put forward Emmanuel Shadary, a Kabila loyalist widely viewed as a puppet candidate so that Kabila could retain control. Shadary was, however, roundly defeated, and Martin Fayulu, an opponent of Kabila's, largely acknowledged as the legitimate winner.[208] Faced with a much greater loss of power, Kabila quickly proceeded to make a deal with second-place Felix Tshisekedi, son of Etienne Tshisekedi and the 'least objectionable' candidate for Kabila, that manipulated the results to install Tshisekedi as President in exchange for Kabila loyalists retaining most important Government posts.[209] An appeal was lodged with the Constitutional Court, but the court confirmed Tshisekedi's victory. International and national observers, analysts, and the press forcefully declared the elections a "huge fraud"[210] and "a defeat for democracy."[211] By contrast, the mission 'wanted to be neutral,' and so rather than issue forceful statements demanding open disclosure of the results, it took the stance that it "should not interfere" and should "respect…the result as given by the CENI."[212] This noncommittal stance can again be attributed to its concern for the security situation. Even if the outcome did not represent the democratic will of the people, from the UN's perspective, peacefully conducted elections without widespread violence constituted a success. As one official noted: "it was better compared to what we had expected."[213] Another UN official similarly recalled that "instead of saying that we do not recognize the results of the elections, the international

community recognized the fact that it was a *peaceful* election."[214] While, of course, free and fair elections were a priority for the UN, when faced with a perceived choice between that and potential violence and instability – an eventuality that was indeed likely should Kabila have lost – the UN opted to for a course of nonaction that it thought would least 'rock the boat.'

FRAUD, AUTHORITARIAN POLITICS, AND REPRESSION

UN enabling of authoritarian behaviour did not just emerge during electoral periods in Congo, but has also persisted between them, in particular with regards to repression against challenges to or criticism of Kabila's rule by the opposition and others. The same rationale existed as during elections – that too much political competition could weaken Kabila to such an extent that it could trigger renewed fighting and that extensive condemnation of the regime could result in the withdrawal of consent for the mission. Accordingly, when the Government engaged in opaque or corrupt political deal-making or violent repression of the population, the UN's response was muted, signalling a permissive environment for authoritarianism.

This dynamic emerged as soon as Kabila was formally installed as President following the 2006 elections. In early 2007, there were widespread allegations of fraud and vote-buying in gubernatorial elections, but this resulted in no censure and indeed little reaction at all from MONUC. Kabila also took liberties in appointments to key Government posts in order to ensure that key decisions were kept within the executive. For example, Adolphe Muzito, the second Prime Minister after the 2006 elections, was instructed not to take any important spending decisions without the President's consent. Decision-making authority in other important Government portfolios, in particular relating to mining, defence, and border control were also retained by Kabila in "a system of decision-making that [ran] parallel to the formal structures of government."[215] Later, in 2013, Abbé Apollinaire Malu Malu was appointed head of the CENI, but was seen by many as too close to Kabila, resulting in protests and discontent by opposition politicians. However, the UN remained mostly silent in the face of these kinds of actions, taking the view that it must defer to the Government, now sovereign and democratically elected and able to pull its support for the mission.[216] Again, this is partly the 'normal' trajectory for a mission – that it becomes gradually less involved in national politics – but in this case, the UN's inaction took place in the face of sometimes blatant democratically questionable moves by the Government and reflected its own loss of leverage with Kabila.

Kabila's increasingly authoritarian behaviour over the course of his tenure as President extended well beyond political horse-trading into human rights abuses and violent repression of challengers. In 2007, Kabila launched punitive military offensives against Bemba and members of his party in Kinshasa, which resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths. To its credit, MONUC played a key role in helping civilians to safety, protecting *Mouvement de Liberation Congolais* (MLC) security guards, and monitoring the situation; however, it subsequently delayed the publication of its reports about the incident to avoid angering Kabila and risking a withdrawal of consent. Similarly, the Government launched particularly brutal operations against Bundu Dia Kongo, a politico-religious group based in the west of the country, in 2007 and in 2008, with over 100 deaths each time. While MONUC investigated the incidents, it did not penalize the Government in any particular way, limiting its condemnations and accepting at face value Kabila's promises that he would hold perpetrators of extrajudicial killings and torture accountable – promises that he did not keep.[217] More recently, between 2013-14, the Congolese National Police (PNC) launched Operation Likofi, a brutal crackdown on violent organized criminal gangs known as *kuluna* in Kinshasa, which included extrajudicial executions and forced disappearances. When the UN Joint Human Rights Office published a report on these operations, its director, Scott Campbell, was declared *persona non grata* and expelled from the country.[218] While the UN in-country, as well as in New York, forcefully and publicly condemned Campbell's expulsion, it did not substantially change its interactions with the Government or its other operations in the

country, for fear that doing so would further imperil its ability to monitor the human rights situation in the country.

More recently, Kabila has targeted political opponents and cracked down on civil society organizations critical of or lobbying against the Government. In 2015, for example, students printing flyers in support of Vital Kamerhe's *Union pour la Nation Congolaise* (UNC) party were arrested; Kamerhe was a long-time ally of Kabila's who subsequently broke with him and ran against the President in the 2011 elections.[219] Jean-Claude Muyambo, former Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and later of Social Affairs and President of the SCODÉ party, and Ernest Kyaviro, head of the opposition RCD/K-ML party, were also arrested shortly after calling for protests against the reforms to the electoral law discussed above, though the Government denied that that was the reason.[220] Outside of political circles, prominent civil society organizations, such as Filimbi and LUCHA, have found themselves in the government's line of fire as well, with harassment and detention of their members by the authorities and their peaceful protests brutally dispersed by the security forces.[221] In 2018, Luc Nkulula, one of LUCHA's leaders and an ardent pro-democracy activist in Congo, died in a suspicious fire at his home in eastern Congo, though the authorities reject allegations of foul play.[222] The press has also been targeted, in particular when covering stories relating to the elections and popular protests against the electoral law.[223]

In the face of all of these incidents, the UN's reactions entailed mostly standard condemnations and calls for restraint and respect for the rule of law, but did not result in strong censure of the regime or any major reconfiguration in the way it interacted with the Government. While in private, the UN has applied pressure on Kabila, it has curbed public forms of naming and shaming for fear that doing so would result in restrictions on the UN's movements and operations, a weakening of consent, and a deterioration of working relations with the Government, which would ultimately inhibit its ability to promote security and monitor the human rights situation at all.

Conclusion

This case study presents only a sampling of the evidence of Congo's slide towards authoritarianism; however, it shows a clear trajectory over time, starting during the 2003-06 transition and continuing throughout Kabila's tenure as President until 2018. While there are multiple reasons explaining this trajectory, the role of the UN in enabling it is notable. MONUC and later MONUSCO did not of course intend to abet authoritarian behaviour by Kabila – indeed, to the contrary, its mandated tasks were broadly liberal and its intentions were to open up political space, reduce abuses and repression, and extend equitable State authority. Yet, its efforts to achieve these objectives, including both material and rhetorical support to the Government, also had unintended effects that increased regime capacity for authoritarian behaviour and signalled that such behaviour would be tolerated. Broadly speaking, these unintentional effects were the result of the conflicting obligations the UN faced in Congo: on the one hand, it was tasked with promoting democratic governance; on the other, it was tasked with maintaining security, retaining consent to its presence, and demonstrating successes to its international donors, particularly with regards to elections. Where these two sets of objectives conflicted, the UN usually selected – advertently or inadvertently – to prioritize security and consent.

Since the inauguration of Tshisekedi in 2018, there are some indications that the situation may be changing. Though at first constrained by Kabila's behind-the-scenes control and the many Kabila loyalists in top posts, Tshisekedi is gradually pushing back and starting to eliminate the latter from Government. It remains to be seen if this will significantly alter the current governance path of the country, but there do seem to be somewhat improved relations between the Government and MONUSCO, suggesting that there may be a slight opening up of room to manoeuver for the UN.

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