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Peace building and public administration: a framework for assessing the role of UN peacekeeping

J. Soeters and A. K. Bardalai

ABSTRACT

This article aims to connect peacekeeping practices with public administration. Public administration is about creating and implementing public values, i.e., principles that aim to bring justice and to produce legitimate, useful government policies for all people involved. Building on the strong tradition of program evaluation in public administration, this article seeks to formulate notions to develop a more comprehensive framework for assessing the impact of everyday operations on the ground in UN peace missions. This framework intends to account for local legitimacy and credibility; the peace organization's learning capabilities; differing levels and networks of operations and analysis; unintended consequences of peace policies; and the period of assessment. These notions aim to bring greater pluralism to the steering and running of today's UN peace operations, likely to make such missions more in sync with the variety of challenges in conflict-affected areas.

KEYWORDS

Peacekeeping; public administration; impact assessment; United Nations; pluralism

Introduction

UN Peace missions either intend to prevent the outbreak of hostilities within or between nations or to control and calm the violence once it occurs. Quite often, too, peace missions play a role in rebuilding the state apparatus after the conflict ends. This is crucial because failing institutions and improper government will raise the odds of the conflicts flaring up again. This is a difficult but not impossible challenge. Although peace operations have ostensibly failed in several cases in the 1990s (Rwanda, Somalia, Srebrenica), their overall results over decades have been quite noteworthy.

High-quality data-based cross-sectional evaluations have demonstrated that UN peace operations have contributed to the end of violence and hostilities in many local conflicts, resulting in longer-lasting peace (Walter et al., 2021). Such research has also shown that a more sizable peacekeeping presence can help improve security and boost economic activity (Bove et al., 2022). Perhaps even more importantly, once peacekeepers have withdrawn from the area, local economic development continues to emerge after the conflict ends. "The lights stay on", as the researchers put it (Cil et al., 2025). Peace operations, hence, have a more or less lasting effect, making such war-torn areas better places to live and work than before. Thus, despite pessimistic analyses here and there

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(e.g., Berdal, 2025), one can be confident that UN peace operations indeed make a difference in the many places where they are deployed.

However, despite valuable exceptions using case studies (e.g., Morjé Howard, 2008), such academic projects do not say much about what happens on the ground in each mission. Nor do they reveal much about how one can improve results in day-to-day operations. True, information and data on everyday operations are available to the force commander. However, these are not always reliable and/or valid enough to satisfactorily provide "the big picture" regarding the progress and dynamics in the area of operations. Here is the connection with public administration.

Public administration is about creating and implementing public value (Moore, 1995). Taking it broadly, public values are ideals and principles that guide the creation and maintenance of social justice, social equity, cooperation, community engagement, safety, public hygiene, fairness, an effective government and a strong democracy based on decent arguments (e.g., Shields & Soeters, 2017). Creating public value consists of three steps: envisioning public value, gaining support and legitimacy for ideas to (re)-build society, and implementing those ideas. Each step has its own dynamics requiring different approaches for politicians and public managers.

Creating public value is important in peacekeeping as well. Peacekeeping in conflict areas aims to end the violence, but in doing so, it must prevent grievances and dissatisfaction from recurring, as ongoing or new perceived injustices would endanger the peace process. Peacekeeping needs to produce the conditions and atmosphere in society that make living worthwhile again. However, to do so, force commanders need information and instruments to help them reach that situation. This is not to say there are no such systems in place. On the contrary, the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS) is a formidable instrument that helps UN force commanders and HQs gain a clear understanding of advancements in the area of operations (Forti, 2022). However, public administration, as a broader field of theory and praxis, may help improve such assessment procedures by providing the highly needed lateral and bottom-up perspectives.

This article aims to formulate notions and ideas that may contribute to the development of a framework for assessing peace missions. In particular, practices in the field of public administration will be examined to assess how they can contribute to the proper steering of peace operations.

Public administration and peace operations

Peace operations are initiated to prevent, restore and control peace in conflict-ridden societies. Over the last decades, there have been many peace missions, but the number is shrinking, also because today's conflict areas – Ukraine, Syria, Gaza, Iran – are seen as too problematic and violence-ridden to deal with. Today, peace missions are operational in several regions in Africa (Congo, Sudan, Mali, Central African Republic, Western Sahara), in Europe (Kosovo, Cyprus), the Middle East (Lebanon, Israel), and in the border area between India and Pakistan. Huge numbers of personnel – some 80,000 – and sizable budgets are needed to keep these missions sustainable.

To see more precisely how UN peacekeeping works, it is important to distinguish between so-called negative and positive peace, as the late Norwegian sociologist and

peace theorist Johan Galtung (1969) observed (also: Shields, 2017; Shields & Soeters, 2017).

Negative peace essentially refers to the absence of physical or personal violence. The idea is that when hostilities end, peace emerges. Traditionally, physical violence is what warfighting is about. One side wins, and the other side bows her head and accepts what has become inevitable. The end of physical violence may, of course, also result from a peace agreement both sides endorse.

However, the end of violence does not necessarily mean that living conditions are good enough. Think, for instance, of the Gaza area, where the cessation of the violation in no way signifies that people will soon have a proper and decent life again. The devastation of infrastructure and the destruction of institutions in health care, education, trade and production have been too large. In such conditions, people cannot realize their full potential, as Galtung would say. In such a situation, there is no more physical, personal violence, but structural or indirect violence still dominates the area, to use Galtung's words (1969: 170 ff.).

Therefore, Galtung has introduced the idea of positive peace. Positive peace, the end of what Galtung calls structural violence, is a concept well-suited to public administration. Positive peace incorporates the ideal of positive relationships between or within members of families, tribes, cities or nations. It stresses the notions of social justice, fairness, safety and security, freedom of speech, opportunities to realize one's professional and wage-earning potential, cooperation between people, and democratic decision-making in public affairs. Positive peace contributes to people's opportunities to realize their full potential. More than negative peace, positive peace is a long-term affair. Negative and positive peace are analytically connected but practically distinct concepts; one can have negative peace without a climate conducive to positive peace (Shields, 2017, p. 9).

Clearly, the idea of positive peace is, at least implicitly, related to the historical foundations of public administration, with famous figures such as Jane Addams. Although public administration essentially refers to the implementation of government policy, its definition and scope may be broadened to encompass democratic values (Shields, 2023, 307 ff.). In public administration, too, politicians and public managers have the ambition to create conditions that are conducive to citizens' opportunities in life; think of democratic decision-making, social justice and equity, safety and crime prevention, poverty reduction, public hygiene and proper education for all (Shields & Soeters, 2017, 2023).

In particular, it seems important to achieve good governance, or what may be called 'just' public administration, an ideal that links to the concept of positive peace. 'Just' public administration can be seen as derived from 'just' war theory that identifies conditions through which wars can be identified as being either 'unjust' or 'just'. 'Just' wars and military actions originate for good, legally based reasons (self-defence; peace building and, if needed, peace enforcing), and they consist of ethical ways of conduct in action – in particular targeting combatants only, minimizing collateral damage and keeping military action to a minimum, both in time and impact.

Similarly, ethical and organizational theorists have developed the idea of a 'just' work culture, which stresses the full participation of all people in decision-making and implementation processes. A 'just' work culture also fosters an atmosphere that does not immediately blame a particular group when things go wrong. Instead, it

creates space to understand what people feel and think and why they act the way they do (Khatri et al., 2009). In such a 'just' work culture, perplexity and sympathetic understanding can flourish as much as rigid moralism or moral chauvinism can be avoided in encounters with others (Shields, 2017, p. 9; 2023). 'Just War' theory, 'just' work culture, 'just' public administration and positive peace are all closely related ideas. 'Just' peacekeeping certainly belongs to this list.

In this context, it is crucial to realize that results in public administration emerge from collaboration between people and institutions at different levels. In today's societies, public administration and its effects must be understood as consequences of people and institutions acting within network relations (Provan & Milward, 2001). Public administration and the pursuit of positive peace are always multi-stakeholder endeavors. In such engagements, so-called principals, agents and clients constitute networks that produce results 1) at the levels of individual people and participating organizations, 2) at the level of the networks of collaborating organizations, and 3) at the level of the community or society-at-large. Therefore, evaluation or assessment in public administration always needs to distinguish between networks of people and institutions at these different levels of analysis.

However, how to realize positive peace, 'just' public administration and 'just' peacekeeping? Over the decades, peace operations have helped end hostilities and violence, which, as we said, is equivalent to creating negative peace. In an attempt to produce positive peace and a proper system of public administration, the missions have sought to bring rapid democracy and marketization to those war-torn societies (Paris, 2004). This "liberal peace process" has not always been a suitable way of building peace after civil conflict, however. It has been argued that, in particular, the transition toward democratization and marketization may undermine a fragile peace (Paris, 2004, p. 7). This is a matter of timing, not of direction per se. Quick elections and economic "shock" therapies are harmful, not elections and business transformations by themselves. Therefore, peacebuilding or peace weaving will be more successful when time is given for institutions to grow, mature and learn to interact, and for local people to get used to these new developments (e.g., Hellmüller & Badache, 2025).

Given these challenges, it seems important to take a closer look at how peace missions are conducted during and at the end of a conflict. How are peace operations steered in relation to their aims to produce proper public administration policies that align with the ideal of positive peace and democratic public administration?

The steering of programs in public administration

Wherever there are organizations, there are questions of planning, evaluation, and control that are important to ensure the organization does what it intends to do. This is about goal attainment, well known in organizational theory as organizational effectiveness, as well as about cost efficiency. In business organizations, management control theory is most advanced as matters of costs and profits are essential to the survival of these companies (e.g., Merchant and van der Stede, 2007). Notwithstanding the stress of financial concerns, profit organizations are increasingly aware of non-financial matters, such as corporate ethics, which influence their reputation and, ultimately, their ability to survive. In public administration, similar concerns arise, but the

emphasis is generally more on organizational and policy effectiveness (i.e., goal attainment) than on cost efficiency, which is often a source of critique from outside. Public organizations are often accused of spending too much money, not effectively enough. This criticism certainly also applies to UN peace missions (e.g., Hellmüller and Badache, 2025, p. 179).

To ensure that organizations in public administration accomplish what they intend, management control and its practice have long been a source of debate and study. Herman Van Gunsteren (1976, 150 ff.) pointed out the traditional dominance of the so-called rational-central-rule approach, criticizing its weaknesses as he sees them. A central steering center, such as in the former Soviet Union but certainly also in many parts of the Western hemisphere, lacks sufficient intrinsic variety and is too far removed from everyday practice to cope with ongoing events. Following Hannah Arendt, Van Gunsteren claims that this approach is based on an illusion, namely that citizens can entrust the defence of their interests to one or a few men, who, isolated from others, are the masters of their own and all other citizens' doings. This approach, in his view, denies the importance of politics, democracy, human diversity and the idea of public affairs itself.

This approach, he continues, is based on the idea of scientific rationality in the hands of a few specialists (151). Of course, Van Gunsteren does not deny the value of scientific policy analyses, but, more often than not, he says, they are not good enough in today's modern societies. Instead, he proposes restoring the primacy of politics, stressing learning as a response to change, taking traditions and customs seriously, and encouraging citizens to act with political responsibility and participation.

With these insights, Van Gunsteren comes close to the insights brought forward by the American anthropologist James Scott. Scott critiqued centralized non-democratic, top-down state interventions legitimized by state-created abstract knowledge and technical rationality of presumed universal use (Scott, 1998; Soeters, 2026, pp. 68–82). Think of the "scientific taming" of nature by the plantation of large-scale forests, compulsory villagization on the African continent, or industrial farming, such as in the former Soviet empire. UN missions' approach, until not so long ago, of rapidly bringing liberal peace (democratization in combination with marketization) in war-torn areas may also be seen as such an imposed solution of presumed universality (see Hellmüller & Badache, 2025, pp. 180–181; Paris, 2004).

Such projects usually fail or come with tremendous costs for the people who have been part of such transformations. Therefore, it makes sense in public administration, says Scott, to take small instead of large steps, favor reversibility as there may be a reason to move back, plan on surprises as nothing can be planned with certainty and assume that people are smart enough to improve original plans (Scott, 1998, p. 345). These are wise lessons that should inform the use of planning, implementation, control, and evaluation procedures in public administration – and, for that matter, in peace missions as well.

Public administration, as a domain of practice and scholarly work, has seen a significant rise in planning, control, and evaluation methods and procedures – in the Western world, at least, but surely also elsewhere. Since half a century or so ago, a tradition has evolved in which public administration endeavors are accompanied by planning, control, and program evaluation (e.g., Morehouse, 1972). Such evaluation is

usually done pre- and post-implementation of the planned policies. Ex-ante evaluations clarify what one expects to accomplish when the intended approach and policy are in place; ex-post, obviously, refers to the inventory of results obtained after the plans and programs have been implemented.

A good example of ex-ante evaluations related to the possible rise in violent conflicts can be found in the domain of environmental policies and climate change (e.g., Beaumont & De Coning, 2022). Measures to mitigate climate change and its consequences are based on scientific expectations of what may occur on the planet if no limits are set on the use of fossil fuels and other forms of pollution. Calculations based on different sets of measures indicate probable future effects on the climate and, correspondingly, on economic developments, social relations, and tensions in international relations. In fact, such ex-ante valuations are indispensable for making sound decisions supported by as many stakeholders as possible.

An example of ex-post evaluation is the performance appraisal of counterterrorism policies in four different Western nations by Beatrice de Graaf (2013). Counterterrorism is a domain – like many other fields of practice - that is permeated by large degrees of uncertainty and risk. De Graaf demonstrated that, since the 1970s, considerable differences have emerged in the Netherlands, Italy, the USA, and Germany. Comparison of the different approaches of counterterrorism, however, revealed a general finding. "An increase in visible measures did not automatically lead to a more effective form of counterterrorism. (…) In the open democracies of the West, not transforming counterterrorism into a performance of power and repression is at least as important" (Graaf, 2013, p. 248). Like the studies on the general impact of peacekeeping that we saw earlier (Cil et al., 2025; Walter et al., 2021), this study is important because it provides general insights.

However, such studies do not produce concrete information on the daily steering and control of operations. There is a need for instruments that help managers in public administration, in general, and commanders in peacekeeping, specifically, guide operational actions toward reaching their goals. As much as possible, the lessons taught by Johan Galtung, Herman van Gunsteren and James Scott should be kept in mind.

Considerations regarding the impact assessment of peace operations

For sure, policy and impact evaluation procedures are not unknown in UN peacekeeping. Over the last period, the UN Department of Peace Operations at UN Headquarters has developed and implemented a so-called "Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System" (CPAS) across all UN peacekeeping missions (Forti, 2022). This system is multifaceted as it engages many parts of the mission's operations. It consists of both quantitative and qualitative data on short-term results and long-term trends, as perceived by the various responsible, specialized officers in operations, including, for instance, the Joint Military Assessment Cell (JMAC). The system is particularly strong at visualizing the results being obtained – it is built to produce output information and impact assessments. It goes much further than only providing throughput indicators, such as the number of patrols conducted in a given time period. The system is much less static than previous steering systems, as it is updated frequently. The information displayed can be used daily by the commanders

of operations on the ground, as well as by the principals and national representatives at the United Nations HQs. CPAS proves valuable because it provides essential information about how operations are going, helping determine whether intentions are being met and whether money is well spent.

A broad overview of how CPAS operates across all missions (Forti, 2022) revealed several cross-cutting themes. The system creates mission-wide integration, avoiding siloed work, narrow departmental perspectives and top-down management. At the same time, it particularly bridges the distance between the military and civilian parts of the mission. Bureaucratic fragmentation, in particular the difference between military and civilian contingents, has often been a source of concern in UN peace missions (Berdal, 2025). Even though there is variation among the missions, the impression is that the CPAS system strengthens a sense of mission-wide ownership and strategic orientation across all levels. A potential problem is that the system itself requires sufficient time and specific skills and capacities among its workforce, which are not always available. The system needs and will benefit from integration with other control systems for results-based budgeting. The system has the advantage of tracking progress on thematic priorities such as women, peace and security. Moreover, the system helps to bridge the distance between HQs, including the Security Council, and the fields of operation.

The overall impression is that CPAS is a huge step forward in assessing the progress and impact of peace missions in the areas of operation, given their task and mandate. However, there is more to say than this, as there is always room for improvement. Several points ask for attention to improve the assessment of the performance and impact of UN peace operations. While doing so, their performance and impact on operations are likely to improve (Bardalai, 2021; Shields & Soeters, 2023).

Local legitimacy and credibility rely on less distance to the host-national population

Despite CPAS's intrinsic qualities, force commanders still rely on formal or informal communication that they obtain from just a few, so-called strong 'ties' – people one trusts and feels at ease with. These informants are predominantly based inside or closely connected to the mission itself. Such people do not necessarily offer the complete picture, however, as they do not necessarily cover the whole range of formal and informal alliances and networks in the areas of operation. A more extensive and regular outreach to "stranger, weaker ties" and farther-away connections in society may prove more successful, but this is often not what military personnel prefer to do (Soeters, 2018, pp. 51-54).

Oftentimes, force commanders rely solely on military information, which may be insufficient to truly see developments in the area that constitute the root causes of the conflict. Statistics on the number of mines removed from a field do not indicate anything about the motivation in the host population to plant new ones. Arresting one terrorist removes one threatening person from the field but may trigger others to radicalize. *Infrapolitics*, hidden resistance among the host-nationals, is too important not to take into the equation, as anthropologist James Scott never ceased to make clear (e.g., Soeters, 2026, pp. 68–82). In peacekeeping, one always needs to reckon with the political dimension of what is and has been going on in the area of operations.

Therefore, force commanders of peace missions must seek as much information as possible from the local population of the host state. This information needs to come from all sides in the region – not only from people one can connect easily with because they are fluent in English, for instance (!). Such information should be used to assess and improve the degree of local legitimacy and credibility (cf. Newby, 2018). Without credibility on the ground, it is unlikely that peace missions will easily realize cooperation with the host-national population in all its variety. Too often, some factions in society are given preferential treatment by the UN, which causes feelings of relative deprivation among others and may, hence, create hostilities in the area of operations that did not exist before.

Credibility among the local population is also at risk if too much emphasis is placed on force protection, such as building walls around the base and moving around in armored vehicles in full battle gear; this alienates UN troops from the local population by creating distance between them. The same applies if military peace forces refrain from protecting local people against imminent violence (Bardalai, 2025). Force protection often makes a lot of sense, but predominantly in the eyes of the peacekeepers themselves.

Learning capabilities are a prerequisite for improving peacebuilding's effectiveness

Lisa Morjé Howard (2008) has highlighted the importance of learning within and across peace missions (also: Shields and Soeters, 2023, pp. 452–453). Learning is all about making mistakes and learning from them to improve future actions. Learning may take the form of single-loop learning, which is simply correcting a standard procedure that has gone wrong. However, more importantly, there is the so-called second-loop learning, which results from the striving to examine grounded principles, norms, and practices in the organization before corrective action is taken (Soeters, 2020, pp. 64–77). Without a second loop, learning organizations will simply fail, particularly in challenging and rapidly changing environments. Organizations should always be prepared to face the unknown. This applies even more to UN peace missions.

Examining 10 UN peace missions, Lisa Morjé Howard (2008) came to the conclusion that such missions are more successful if they are flexible with respect to task prioritization and coordination, if they can communicate with the local population through the wide distribution of staff in the area of operations, and if they can use the mission's mandate as the baseline from where the commander may change the goals of the host-national elites and learn from the crisis. This is all about second-loop learning.

In addition to what has been said about the importance of local legitimacy and credibility, a lot of profit may be gained from learning from local knowledge – yet often such learning is meager as the UN missions often maintain an isolated position in the host-national society (Pouligny, 2014: 183 ff.; 249-251). Building on this, Gelot and Khada (2026) reported that local legitimacy is based on trust, which itself is conditional. On the other hand, militarization is counterproductive to trust-building. Therefore, it is important that peacekeepers exercise restraint in their operational activities. The most successful situation is when peacekeepers learn from host-nationals and host-nationals learn from the peacekeepers (Soeters, 2018, p. 71). Integration should therefore not only be mission-wide, which is already a major step forward since the introduction of the

CPAS system. Integration based on collaborative learning should ideally be regionwide. However, there must be limits to such dynamics, as the UN has an overarching authority that is not comparable to the position of host-national authorities. The UN mission should maintain a delicate connection between maintaining distance and engaging with the region's intricacies. For sure, UN peacekeepins is a real balancing act.

Levels and networks of analysis complicate the challenges, but understanding them brings solutions nearer

As we have seen earlier, results in public administration can only be achieved if one understands the different layers, relations, and networks in society. Such layers interact with one another, if not deliberately, then certainly in their latent, i.e., not-so-obvious, effects. This is certainly relevant to peace missions as well. Within the mission, multiple layers include several national military contingents (rotating in and out) on the one hand, and professional civilian experts and expats with longer contracts on the other. Outside the mission but with an immediate impact on it, there is a wide variety of host-national stakeholders – formal and informal politicians, formal and informal military personnel, contractors and businesspeople, and religious authorities. In peace missions, at least three types of relations are important: 1) military-political relations (with politicians in the parent societies, with UN politicians at HQs, and with political 'strongmen' in the area of operations), 2) military-NGO/business-networks stressing civil-military interaction, and 3) military-military networks, relating to the multinational composition of UN missions themselves but also of course to the interaction with military groups inside the conflict area (Raab & Soeters, 2009).

Given these network relations, several points of attention emerge. First, it is important to have all stakeholders on board in strategic decision-making and implementation. This particularly pertains to the host-national people outside the UN organization itself. One should avoid situations in which there is a lack of host-national ownership and authorship, which, regrettably, often occurs (Pouligny, 2014, 102 ff.). This ambition comes with dilemmas: having everyone on board (inclusiveness: getting along) may come at the cost of efficiency (getting things done). Having everyone on board may slow things to a standstill (Pouligny, 2014, p. 106). Despite this drawback, intra-mission coordination should align with extra-mission coordination. The people responsible should manage both the mission's external and internal credibility and legitimacy. The way to control the mission's actions must supersede bureaucratic controls; it preferably entails cultural and reputational control, encouraging stakeholders to act in line with the mission's ideals of operating and working together. Force commanders are likely to play a role in this, but this depends on their own personal qualifications and actions.

Unintended consequences require deeper comprehension

In an often-quoted volume, peacekeeping scholars Aoi, de Coning and Thakur (2007) have shown how UN peacekeepers' behavior may produce harmful consequences that are not intended. Examples can be seen mainly in the domain of gender relations – think of prostitution, trafficking, sexual harassment by UN personnel, the spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and local women and children being left behind by UN soldiers who have related to them. Other unintended consequences include the

emergence of a dual economy due to rising general price levels. Some people can benefit more from the UN's presence than others, leading to salary disparities and inequalities in living standards in the area of operations. Also, there may be a brain drain from the local population into the UN workforce. Interestingly, the presence of UN troops may end conflict but increase criminal violence that is initiated by demobilized combatants - although the latter may be contained ssomewhatby UN police (Di Salvatore, 2019). Finally, women may face greater resentment among host-national men because they are given preferential treatment under UN policies.

A recent insight concerns the unintended impact of UN peace missions on autocratic tendencies in conflict regions, such as in Congo. Von Billerbeck and Tansey (2019) have shown how UN peace missions may inadvertently enable autocratic tendencies in the regions of operation, even as they officially promote democracy. That is because they consolidate the position of autocratic powerholders and are permissive of their behavior, as they do not feel there is room to overtly criticize them. This shows how delicate the balance in UN peace missions is between involving all people and being unable to change the situation on the ground. Following up on this analysis, Billerbeck et al. (2025) studied UN peacekeeping missions in Cambodia, the DRC, Haiti, and Mali. They reported a direct correlation between the need to respect state sovereignty and the host state's consent to the performance of the peace operations. The UN Charter's emphasis on sovereignty implies that host-state consent is a must—even under Chapter VII—to remain deployed. While missions aim to promote democracy through institution-building, their slow progress might clash with states' priorities of supporting security forces. Because a strong security force helps rulers consolidate power and suppress dissent. Therefore, host governments leverage consent to force the mission to change its inter-se priorities and objectives, thereby undermining democratization goals. It results in peace missions either overlooking abuse by the host state or softening their stance to avoid expulsion. Thereby, the missions indirectly enable authoritarian regimes. The success of UN peacekeeping is hostage to consent.

As such, UN peace missions with their large footprint in an area of operations are often said to be part of the problem instead of being the solution (e.g., Berdal, 2025, p. 6). This, of course, is a negative and pessimistic view that nonetheless opens avenues for improvement.

Assessment period

A final aspect relates to timing. Assessment results will vary depending on the period selected. If the assessment period spans from the peak of violence to the ceasefire, it is likely to indicate success. On the other hand, if the period is from the ceasefire to the end of the mission, it is likely to indicate a low success rate. To make an appropriate judgment of a mission's results, one should be clear about the temporal aspect.

Conclusions

In this article, we have sought to bring together the concepts of peacekeeping, positive peace, and 'just' public administration. We have emphasized the importance of conducting proper evaluation and assessment in peacekeeping, as in public administration. Although

considerable progress has already been made in this area, there is still a need to improve current practices in impact assessment during and within UN peace missions.

This relates to an important debate about UN peacekeeping today. For sure, peace missions are here to stay, but they need to adapt. Several scholars and practitioners in peacekeeping studies have argued that UN peace missions should change course (De Coning, 2018; Hellmüller & Badache, 2025; Paris, 2024). They argue that a universalistic, top-down and overly ambitious approach is no longer adequate. They advocate an approach that is less all-encompassing and maximalist, more supportive instead of leading locally driven peace operations, and more pragmatic and pluralist. The latter means that more attention should be given to participation by all, and to the fact that "a just peace is one that permits societal actors to express and pursue their individual and collective interests, in both their private and public lives" (Paris, 2024, p. 2171). Our article aimed to provide several notions that correspond to these advocated changes.

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