Peace through Knowledge

Understanding the last decade of United Nations Peacekeeping Intelligence

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I. Introduction

Over 50 years ago, then Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) U Thant wrote in a letter that one of the two "insuperable obstacles" he had to face in his function was "the lack of authoritative information".[1] As an institution operating worldwide and undertaking massive projects and responsibilities, the UN is in dire need of up-to-date, actionable, and trustworthy information on its operating environment. The most important revolution in this field was kickstarted about a decade ago, as Security Council Resolution 2100 initiated the UN intervention in Mali, paving the way for one of the most radical evolutions in the field of peacekeeping intelligence, and, in the past years, the first elements of a fully standardized doctrine of UN intelligence.

a. Presentation of the research

With this dissertation, my aim was to describe and understand the last decade of Peacekeeping Intelligence for the United Nations. To achieve this, I sought to address the following research question: What are the main features of contemporary intelligence processes for UN Peacekeeping Operations?

Answers to this question were obtained in two main ways. The first focused on the field realities of peacekeeping intelligence, concentrating on the field case study of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which in 2013. Although other contemporary missions were also briefly covered through secondary reviews, the purpose of this case focus was to deepen the analysis through available internal documents or communications as primary sources, highlighting the context and realities of intelligence processes for UN operations. The second approach addressed the theoretical aspect of peacekeeping intelligence, studied through the doctrinal publications of handbooks, manuals and guidelines seeking to standardize intelligence practices for UN-engaged personnel. In essence, it asked two distinct questions of the past decade: what happened in practice on the field, and which lessons were learned from this experience?

This work has willingly adopted a purely open-source approach to the study of intelligence. Parallel to its aim of understanding the stakes of intelligence work in the unique case of UN

[1] Thant (1971), *Letter to Ambassador Samar Sen of India*.

operations, it thus also sought to explore the methodological implications of approaching such a traditionally elusive topic without privileged insider access. The specific focus on standardized manuals is also a novel tentative addition to the roster of tools available to researchers in this field.

b. Structure of the thesis

As illustrated in the Table of Contents above, this thesis is divided into six main Chapters. After the present introduction (Chapter I), Chapter II lays the ground foundation for the concepts that are mobilized in the further research, as well as an overview of the development and current state of existing literature on the topic. Chapter III presents the research design and methodology that guided the subsequent analyses. These analyses are found in Chapter IV, which covers the field-centric case study of MINUSMA, and Chapter V, which focuses on the later doctrinal element, found in the recently produced UN handbooks, guidelines, and field manuals. Finally, Chapter VI draws a concluding summary of the research and considers some important discussion points for the present and future of United Nations peacekeeping intelligence. The bibliography and some reference visuals can be found in the Annexes.

II. Theory and background

This Chapter presents the general background surrounding the topic of intelligence analysis and UN peacekeeping operations. It starts by giving an overview of the core concepts of intelligence (Section a) as well as of peacekeeping as a historical pursuit of the United Nations (Section b), then bridges the gap between the two by tackling the specific question of peacekeeping intelligence (Section c). It then goes on to a literature review of peacekeeping intelligence research, with a focus on the MINUSMA operation (Section d).

a. Cycles, stakes, and processes: the core concepts of intelligence

i. The notion of intelligence

Over three millennia ago, Ramesses II was deceived by captured spies into a direct march to the Levantine city of Kadesh, where his unaware troops were ambushed by the opposing Hittite forces, potentially preventing the pharaoh from claiming a decisive victory.[2] At all times in history, information flows have played a determinant part in supporting belligerents and achieving victory.[3] As both technology and military organisation evolved, loosely organised spies and reconnaissance units became ever more complex and integrated institutions, to the point that they have become intimately incorporated into most contemporary leadership structures, military or otherwise.[4]

In spite of this remarkable ubiquity, there is no unitary definition of "intelligence".[5] Even in its basic semantic assumption, the very word comes with a specific tension, as it also used to refer to the cerebral and intellectual capacities of living beings – in a sense, it may be understood as the same functional motor of decision-making, but for associations of humans rather than

[2] As read in Klengel (2002), "From war to eternal peace: Ramesses II and Khattushili III". This is more than a mere random historical example, as the Battle of Kadesh is one of the first known battles of recorded history, and the resulting peace treaty the first of its kind known to historians – and is displayed in that quality at the Headquarters of the United Nations – see "Replica of Peace Treaty between Hattusilis and Ramses II", https://www.un.org/ungifts/replica-peace-treaty-between-hattusilis-and-ramses-ii (last accessed 20 July 2023).
[3] Kahn (2008), "An historical theory of intelligence".
[4] Finnegan (1998), *Military Intelligence*.
[5] Johnson, L.K. (2007b), "The meanings of intelligence" and Warner (2002), "Wanted: A Definition of 'Intelligence'".

individuals.[6] But for the sake of this thesis, the starting point will be one of the more neutral definitions existing in academia, as proposed by Diaz:

"Intelligence is any process producing knowledge that might be used in making a decision OR influencing the processes, knowledge, or decisions of competitors AND in the face of competitors' efforts to affect one's own processes, knowledge or decisions."[7]

Yet whether in everyday use or in the scholarly field, words are never truly neutral and should not be dissociated from their powerful baggage. When it comes to intelligence, it is essential to understand that it is most often conceived "as a tool of state power".[8] Resultantly, terminological debate often takes this specific assumption as a starting point.[9] When Adda Bozeman famously argued against the possibility that there "*could* be one theory that would do justice to the world's varieties of intelligence",[10] it was because she understood them as intimately linked to a given regime's norms, aims and structure. In most ways, intelligence is thus essentially conceptualized, and researched, as a national pursuit,[11] although a difference can be drawn between two institutional contexts: the general state apparatus, and the military one.[12]

These fundamental dynamics play in important role in the drafting of a research project on the topic of intelligence, as will become apparent in the coming Sections. Nevertheless, this thesis chose to define intelligence not through a finite set of concepts but through its ongoing practice.

ii. The process of intelligence

Indeed, there are many ways to understand and study intelligence: through what it serves, through what it does, through what it creates, or through what it means. It may be classified via its methods, via its failure and/or success rate, or via its historical context. Research may analyse collection methods, technological means, analytical results, or sharing patterns.[13] In

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[6] Kahn (2008).
[7] Diaz (2010), "Forming a Definitional Framework for 'Intelligence'", p. 62.
[8] Warner (2013), "Theories of intelligence: The state of play**",** p. 26.
[9] Hastedt (1991), "Towards the Comparative Study of Intelligence".
[10] Bozeman (1988), "Political Intelligence in Non-Western Societies: Suggestions for Comparative Research".
[11] Phythian (2013b), "Cultures of national intelligence".
[12] Pecht & Tishler (2015), "The value of military intelligence".
[13] Johnson (2013), "The Development of Intelligence Studies".

this instance, and as stated in the research question, this thesis chose to approach intelligence first through "its processes". It is this element which now needs to be defined and specified.

At the core of this approach is a desire to focus not on the external definition, but on the internal structure of intelligence, a principle rooted in the very way Sherman Kent himself decomposed it: intelligence is both knowledge, organization, and activity.[14] Ontologically, this is about considering the very nature of intelligence through its *active* properties and not a fixed, immutable, and definable essence.[15] If, as John F. Fox philosophically argues, intelligence is "for something, not as something",[16] then it should be understood through the core features of this activity, which is what the term of "processes" seeks to achieve in the context of this thesis' research question. Below are some of the main ways intelligence processes can be categorized and approached, ways which are also relevant in the context of the United Nations' practice.

To an extent, the lack of unitary definitions has translated to an analogous lack of universal analytical concepts.[17] Indeed, if intelligence is only a national practice, it might make more sense to be studied only through its specific national-institutional context. For this reason, even contemporary scholars consider the realm of "intelligence studies" as "a mixture of history and the study of intelligence institutions", a definition which might leave it little room to expand beyond casuistic analyses.[18] This focus is compounded by the shadowy nature of intelligence, which operates to a large if not complete extent under some sort of confidentiality or outright secrecy, often to protect the very national interests at stake. At every step, actions are covert, documents are confidential, and names are obfuscated, meaning that access to primary sources is limited and often reserved to privileged insiders.[19] Consequently, comprehensive studies of critical missions may at times only happen decades after their conclusion, once national archives have declassified most of the relevant documents.[20] However, as the academic field developed throughout the second half of the XXth century, and cumulative decades of practice led to ever more public visibility, some seminal frameworks did manage to emerge and take hold in the literature.

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[14] Kent (1949), *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*.
[15] Stout & Warner (2018), "Intelligence is as intelligence does".
[16] Fox (2018), "Intelligence in the Socratic philosophers", p. 499.
[17] Warner (2013).
[18] Warner (2007), "Sources and methods for the study of intelligence".
[19] Leigh (2007), "The accountability of security and intelligence agencies".
[20] Scott & Jackson (2004), "The Study of Intelligence in Theory and Practice".

One of the most widely recognized such concepts is David Omand's intelligence cycle.[21] Emerged directly from the practical doctrines, it is a generic description of the work of intelligence workers as "the process of developing unrefined data into polished intelligence"[22] for decisionmakers. In its basic iteration, it features five core steps:

1. Planning
2. Collection
3. Processing and exploitation
4. Analysis and production
5. Dissemination

The core idea behind this framing is to simply conceptualize the process of intelligence through a successive sequence of steps, starting with the formulation of a need or information gap, and ending with the spreading of the finished product among stakeholders. This model is rather ubiquitous in the intelligence world, although it has attracted many variants and critics across the decades in which it has been in use.[23] Some related frameworks may choose to highlight four steps, others six, but the notion of such a cycle process has become a basic feature of field manuals across the western world, as well as a starting point for many analytical methodologies in the academic literature.[24]

The cyclical element in this model is also worth underlining. Intelligence being in this context a continuous process, reaching the final step is not an end *per se*, but also a contribution to the setting and planning of the next iteration of the cycle. In a practical sense, it means that all experiences made by a given mission are fundamentally expected to shape the frame and reality of the next one.

Another commonly standardized way to conceptualize intelligence processes focuses on the collection step, by differentiating the different methods it engages. Lowenthal & Clark highlight five main disciplines:[25] Open Source (OSINT), Human (HUMINT), Signals (SIGINT), Geospatial (GEOINT) and Measurement and Signature (MASINT) Intelligence,

[21] Omand (2013), "The cycle of intelligence".
[22] Idem, p. 59.
[23] See the various commentaries collated by Phythian (2013a), *Understanding the intelligence cycle* – particularly A.S. Hulnick's contributions.
[24] See the "core functions" of Davies & Gustafson (2013), *Intelligence elsewhere: Spies and espionage outside the Anglosphere*.
[25] Lowenthal & Clark (2015), *The five disciplines of intelligence collection*.

although this is but one division. In another work, one can find as many as fifteen distinct sources, including radar (RADINT), electronic (ELINT), and communications (COMINT) intellligence.[26] Of these, OSINT is perhaps the widest-ranging, as it extends to all forms of unclassified information and is typically used as "a very robust foundation for other intelligence disciplines",[27] such as triangulating information – today most evidently thanks to the explosion in Internet sourcing.[28] HUMINT, intelligence obtained from other personal contacts, is perhaps the oldest and most emblematic form of intelligence, invoking images of old-fashioned spying,[29] although in reality it has many aspects ranging from basic street questionnaires to clandestine interrogations.[30] In more technologically-dependent categories, SIGINT typically includes both COMINT and ELINT as the general interception of all signals (in a mathematical sense),[31] whereas GEOINT relies primarily on imagery which is today obtained via satellites and aircrafts.[32]

Finally, while the concept of intelligence as will be studied in this thesis evidently goes beyond traditional national frames, it does nevertheless resemble some state institutions – particularly in a military sense – and most of the intelligence covered will be labelled "military intelligence", although this concept lacks a clear definition beyond government publications.[33] Although the main historical developments of intelligence took place alongside the great wars of the modern era,[34] intelligence today is not implicitly linked to the military apparatus. When it is, it explicitly takes on some of its reference frames, notably in the three main levels of command – this gives rise to the concepts of tactical, operational, and strategic intelligence, who in turn refer to intelligence useful to commanders at a frontline, theatre, or national and international level respectively.[35]

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[26] Clark (2014), *Intelligence Collection.*
[27] Steele (2007), "Open source intelligence", p. 129.
[28] Jardines (2015), "Open Source Intelligence".
[29] Hitz (2007), "Human source intelligence".
[30] Clark (2014), Chap. 4.
[31] Nolte (2015), "Signals Intelligence".
[32] Murdock & Clark (2015), "Geospatial Intelligence".
[33] Scheffler & Dietrich (2023), "Military Intelligence: Ill-Defined and Understudied".
[34] Clark (2007), *Intelligence and National Security: A Reference Handbook*.
[35] Jensen III et al. (2017), p. 259, see also the US DoD (2017), *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.

b. Keeping peace in a fractured world: the complex legacy of the United Nations

i. The notion of peacekeeping

As the western world stood amidst the ashes of the First World War, it had become clear that its traditional model of multipolar, state-based alliances was not sufficient to safeguard humanity in the modern industrial world. This translated into one of the founding principles for the budding League of Nations: the idea of true, global collective security.[36] As US President Woodrow Wilson envisioned it, "all the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest […] that the world be made fit and safe to live in and […] that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us."[37] The League however lacked any real ability to enforce such principles, and in the span of two decades, the world had slid back into a major conflict that would prove even deadlier than the last.[38]

Consequently, when the modern United Nations were established, they sought to perpetuate the same ideal, only this time with much more credible resources and political support.[39] As they drafted what would become the UN Charter, the allies sought to ascertain clear legal bases for intervention and enforcement. The Security Council (UNSC), established as the foremost decision body responsible for "the maintenance of international peace and security",[40] was notably granted powers to investigate disputes between member states, and call on settlement and propose peaceful resolution procedures.[41] Moreover, in case such pacific means were not enough, it could call on economic measures and even "action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary".[42] In this last instance, it was up to the member states to provide troop contributions, which would be temporarily subordinated to a united military command.[43] In time, these provisions were understood to give the UNSC (and, at times, the General Assembly and Secretary-General) the legitimacy to construct one of its most potent enforcement tools to pursue the stated goal of collective security: Peacekeeping operations.[44]

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[36] Although the term itself was retroactive, for more detail see Birn (1974), "The League of Nations Union and Collective Security".
[37] Wilson (1919), "Fourteen Points Speech".
[38] Eloranta (2011), "Why did the League of Nations fail?".
[39] Goodrich (1947), "From League of Nations to United Nations".
[40] United Nations (1945), *Charter of the United Nations, Art. 24*.
[41] Goodrich (1965), "The Maintenance of International Peace and Security".
[42] United Nations (1945), Art. 42.
[43] Idem, Art. 43.
[44] Klein (2006), "Peacekeeping operations: from the birth of the United Nations onward", p. 4.

While the UN itself refer to their missions under the umbrella term of "peacekeeping", dedicated literature also uses a wide variety of definitions, and terminology can be the source of some ontological debates. For the rest of this dissertation, aside from generic mentions of "peacekeeping", operations will be commonly referred to as "PKOs" (Peacekeeping Operations), as likely the most common and neutrally used catch-all.[45]

This issue of nomenclature stems from a fundamental struggle to define peacekeeping as a concept.[46] Some typologies focus on the characteristics of the operations themselves, as they might be defined through their size, the amount of force and nature of means engaged, the nature of their mandate – for instance by sorting them according to their time of intervention in the "conflict cycle" and giving rise to the concepts of peacebuilding, peace enforcement, stabilization, etc. – or any combination of these.[47] One other way is to focus on the origin and actors at the source of the operation: while peacekeeping is most commonly linked to the UN, and UN-led operations are the topic of this dissertation, it can also be undertaken by other international or regional organizations, or even by single states or state-led alliances.[48]

One of the most recent and holistic definitions, and the one that will serve as a starting point in this dissertation, comes from Bellamy & Williams under the term of "peace operations". They characterize them as (i) "collective endeavours" whose purpose goes beyond the interests of any individual actor, (ii) "stemming from a desire […] to limit the scourge of war" realized as (iii) "ad hoc responses to particular problems" and (iv) "principally political instruments with an admixture of military force".[49] These four core elements are present in every UN PKO, and help identify them through both their purpose (the reduction of war and violence) and their form (ad hoc, collective missions using some form of force).

These characteristics are essential to understanding PKOs and will be exemplified recurringly in the rest of this dissertation. The specific nature and context of the UN adds to this equation as well, with perhaps as it most important feature the fact that the organisation is not an independent authority but is dependent on accord of its member states has played a crucial role

[45] It is notably the one used by Bellamy & Williams (2021), *Understanding Peacekeeping*.
[46] Bures (2007), "Wanted: A Mid-Range Theory of International Peacekeeping".
[47] See for instance the 12 categories of Diehl et al. (1998), "International Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution: A Taxonomic Analysis with Implications".
[48] Bara & Hultman (2020), "Just different hats? Comparing UN and non-UN peacekeeping".
[49] Bellamy & Williams (2021), pp. 14-40.

in the history of its operations.[50] This history and its consequences are the topic of the next sub-Section.

ii. Historical development

Some of the earliest iterations of PKOs were the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) and UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) based in Israel, both established in 1948.[51] UNMOGIP in particular is exemplary of the characteristics of most of the Cold War-era operations: a limited-scope observation mission, based on the so-called "holy trinity" of peacekeeping – impartiality, limited to no use of force, and consent of the involved parties.[52] These would typically only intervene once a cease-fire had been reached between the main parties, which had officially been the case between the two South Asian countries in this instance. UNTSO is already reflective of a more complex reality as it was not dealing only with interstate conflict, but with what was essentially a civil war in Palestine. Somewhat infamously, both conflicts remain unresolved as of the writing of this thesis, and their respective missions are still nominally active today.[53]

Afraid to be on the same ineffective path as its predecessor, the UN soon started exploring more involved interventions that would send complete military detachments to fulfil its mandate. After a successful active mediation role by the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) during the Suez Crisis in 1956,[54] then-Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld set the first of what would become called "enforcement" or "Chapter VII-enabled" operations with the Operation in Congo (ONUC) between 1960 and 1964.[55] With as many as 20'000 peacekeepers fielded at its peak, it was for a long time the largest PKO in the history of the UN and is regarded as an important example of the tensions inherent to peacekeeping as a whole, for the complex relationship it had with the very peace it sought to impose. It was after it that the UNGA

[50] Bellamy & Williams (2013), *Providing Peacekeepers: The Politics, Challenges, and Future of United Nations Peacekeeping Contributions.*
[51] For the UN's own count, see the webpage "Past Peace Operations", https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/past-peacekeeping-operations (last accessed 19 July 2023).
[52] For an extensive description of the concept, see all of Part II of Levine (2013), *Morality of Peacekeeping.*
[53] See the webpage "Where We Operate", https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/where-we-operate (last accessed 20 July 2023).
[54] Bligh (2014), "The United Nations Emergency Forces (UNEF)".
[55] Segal (1995), "Five Phases of United Nations Peacekeeping".

established the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations which would become known as the C-34.[56]

The following decades saw a similar pattern of successive expansion and retraction in scope and capabilities.[57] Overall though, it is at the end of the Cold War, as the UN's role shifted from counterbalancing polarized factions to a more ambitious vision of international governance, that PKOs on average gradually expanded in scope and mandate.[58] An expanded role for the use of force, as well as interposition in internal conflicts without explicit consent from parties, has since then became significantly more commonplace.[59] And yet the high optimism that was felt in the early 90s was quickly replaced by disappointment and dismay, as high-profile failures tainted the reputation of the United Nations of the new world order.[60] Operations in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia all were high-profile failures for various reasons, such as rejection of the host country, impossibility to appropriately protect civilians, and embroilment in a difficult state of internal civil conflict.[61]

In 2000, the Brahimi Report, directly mandated by Secretary-General Kofi Annan after the horrors of the Tutsi genocide and Srebrenica massacre, set out to "identify and assess the weaknesses" of peacekeeping as a tool of the UN.[62] It notably called out for "early engagement" and the ability to "contribute to peace-building, both preventive and post-conflict, in a genuinely integrated manner".[63] As a result, the 21st century has seen an unprecedented quantitative rise in the number of missions, personnel, and budgets, which, crucially, always include Chapter VII-enabled use of force.[64] Contemporary peacekeeping operations take on "robust tasks" that include broad stabilization mandates, but also have more targeted focuses on elements such as counter-insurgency and protection of civilians.[65] In 2015, the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) came back on the new century's work to

[56] Hanrahan (2007), "The United Nations Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations: From 1965 to 2005".
[57] Goulding (1993), "The evolution of United Nations peacekeeping".
[58] See Lipson (2007), "A 'Garbage Can Model' of UN Peacekeeping" and the statistics of Daniel et al. (2008), *Peace operations: trends, progress, and prospects.*
[59] See Berdal & Ucko (2015), "The Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping Operations" and Laurence (2019), "An 'Impartial' Force? Normative Ambiguity and Practice Change in UN Peace Operations".
[60] Norberg (2003), "Challenges of Peace Operations".
[61] Howard (2008), *UN peacekeeping in civil wars.*
[62] Durch et al. (2003), *The Brahimi report and the future of UN peace operations*.
[63] United Nations (2000), *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, p. 1.
[64] Howard & Dayal (2018), "The Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping".
[65] Choedon (2020), "United Nations Peacekeeping in the 21st Century".

assess the progress made, reacting notably to a perceived militarization of PKOs.[66] In 2018, newly appointed Secretary-General Antonio Guterres launched the latest wide-ranging reform of UN peacekeeping with the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) project,[67] with the aim of revitalizing the function amid fears of dwindling support and financing.[68]

c. Knowledge in the pursuit of peace: the unique role of peacekeeping intelligence

i. The intersection of two concepts

Any careful reader of the two sections above may have noticed a clash between the nature of the UN and the traditional meaning of intelligence. If, by most accounts, intelligence exists in the service of national pursuits in a zero-sum game of international politics, it may well struggle to find a legitimate spot in the practices of the international United Nations, whose goal is to move beyond this very dilemma to establish a collective form of security. In fact, the word of intelligence has long been shunned by the UN, and some in the organization even sought to ban its use altogether.[69] Euphemisms, or simply less politically loaded notions such as "Information Management" and "analytical capabilities" were used as late as the HIPPO report as a shorthand for any intelligence-related work.[70]

And yet, being typically military-led operations operating in complex environments, PKOs require much of the same support more traditional army engagements do, something which naturally extends to intelligence, as the UN "needs intelligence assets".[71] While the term may not have been present, the capabilities certainly were, and for decades the question of how the UN should approach intelligence, particularly in the context of PKOs, has been hotly debated.[72] Expectedly, it was the scholarly field that thus first came up with the concept of "peacekeeping

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[66] Andersen (2018), "The HIPPO in the room".
[67] See the webpage "Action for Peacekeeping (A4P)", https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-for-peacekeeping-a4p (last accessed 21 July 2023).
[68] Donais & Tanguay (2020), "Doing less with less? Peacekeeping retrenchment and the UN's protection of civilians agenda".
[69] Dorn (1999), "The Cloak and the Blue Beret: Limitations on Intelligence in UN Peacekeeping".
[70] United Nations (2015), *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people*, pp. 69-70.
[71] Ekpe (2007), "The Intelligence Assets of the United nations: Sources, Methods, and Implications", p. 378.
[72] Dorn (1996), "Keeping Tabs on a Troubled World", or Johnston (1997), "No cloak and dagger required: Intelligence support to UN peacekeeping".

intelligence" (PKI, which will be the core term used in this dissertation) as a topic of study of its own, with the reference definition this thesis uses given by Nordli & Linboe:

"Peacekeeping intelligence is the acquisition and processing of information by a mission within a deliberate and directed intelligence cycle to meet the requirements of the head of mission and senior mission leadership for decision making related to the safe and effective implementation of the mandate."[73]

Although this is not inherent to the definition, the UN's unique nature and characteristics have naturally altered the fundamentals of PKI. As might be expected, the sheer volume of linguistic and cultural differences, as well as conflicting national interests, has been a constant challenge for the international organisation.[74] Throughout its history, the UN has famously struggled to develop unified practices in all of its fields of operation, let alone one as complex as intelligence.[75] This has meant that field units have historically been deployed without any specific guidance from UNHQ, leaving it "up to each mission to develop its own standard operating procedures".[76] The development of these characteristics alongside the general history of PKOs is the focus of the next section.

ii. Historical development

PKI did follow the gradual evolution of PKOs and has taken on many different facets throughout the UN's history, often through the same landmark missions that were evoked in Section b above. In the first decades of the UN's existence, PKI reflected the *ad hoc* and multinational design of the operations and was thus characterized by decentralized capabilities typically carried out by the forces on the field.[77] This was compounded by the nature of the mandates, which called in most cases for observation and cease-fire roles, and PKI at UN scale consisted mostly of HUMINT information flows from the local to HQ level, as well as laterally between countries or from other regional agencies.[78]

[73] Nordli & Lindboe (2017), *Intelligence in United Nations Peace Operations*, p. 7.
[74] Dorn (2010), "United Nations Peacekeeping Intelligence".
[75] For an example on the technological aspects of intelligence, see Dorn (2011), *Keeping watch: Monitoring, technology and innovation in UN peace operations*.
[76] Martin-Brûlé (2020), *Finding the UN Way on Peacekeeping Intelligence*, p. 6.
[77] Hennessy (2006), "Toward a framework for modern peacekeeping intelligence".
[78] Smith (1994), "Intelligence and UN Peacekeeping".

In 1960, Secretary-General Hammarskjöld refused to establish what would have been the first UN intelligence body, as member countries were still wary of giving too much power to the international organization.[79] The advent of UNOC, through its extensive mandate and means, thus became the first large-scale opportunity to have an "advanced intelligence component" in a UN PKO.[80] But it is in the post-Cold War era that PKI has taken a truly central role, as the force and scope of PKOs expanded. The creation of the DPKO in 1992 came with specific intelligence competencies while, at UN HQ, intelligence-oriented offices were developed.[81] Unfortunately, the high-profile failures of that era were also those of PKI. The disaster of UNAMIR, the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda, was notably a lack of properly handling the many early-warning signals, which resulted in the unprepared and undersupplied intervention troops being completely unable to stop the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of civilians.[82]

Both the 2000 Brahimi Report and 2015 HIPPO Report called for "more effective collection and assessment of information".[83] As the new millennium set on, the UN started focusing on strategic-level threat assessments and early, preventive crisis warning signs, with the creation in 2013 of the Operations and Crisis Centre (UNOCC), which sought to link the various intelligence-related capacities that many of the main UN offices had developed over the years.[84] As for capacities below UNHQ, the first instance of true PKI standardization came in 2005, with the first Joint Mission Analysis Centres (JMAC), set up for the Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUC).[85] Concurrently, Joint Operations Centres (JOC) also started being established for most missions, with tasks of communication and coordination, and responsibilities for constant situational awareness.[86] Today still, they are together the most established standard across UN PKOs, and are a centrepiece of the latest evolutions of the doctrine.

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[79] Barry (2012), "Bolstering United Nations Intelligence: Cultural and Structural Solutions".
[80] Dorn & Bell (1995), "Intelligence and peacekeeping: The UN operation in the Congo, 1960-64".
[81] See the webpage "Department of Peace Operations", https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/department-of-peace-operations (last accessed 22 July 2023).
[82] Dorn & Matloff (2000), "Preventing the Bloodbath: Could the UN have Predicted and Prevented the Rwandan Genocide?".
[83] United Nations (2000), p. 1.
[84] Martin-Brûlé (2020).
[85] Norheim-Martinsen & Ravndal (2011), "Towards Intelligence-Driven Peace Operations? The Evolution of UN and EU Intelligence Structures".
[86] Shetler-Jones (2008), "Intelligence in Integrated UN Peacekeeping Missions: The Joint Mission Analysis Centre".

These innovations all came to a head with the launch of MINUSMA which "increased [the UN's] intelligence capacity in an unprecedented manner".[87] As will be explored below, in addition to putting these newborn tools to use in one of the largest deployments and most complex environments of any UN PKO to date, it was also an experimentation field for unique, dedicated PKI units on the ground. The last phase of major changes for UN PKI started in 2017, with the publication of the first UN policy on PKI was developed, prompted by several reports from the C-34 committee on "the need to improve situational awareness" and to develop "a more cohesive and integrated United Nations system for situational awareness".[88] It was expanded and overhauled in 2019, under the new head of the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix, with a revision of the UN Policy and the release of the first standardized UN Handbook on PKI, which were drafted in close consultation with members states, although it fell short of a unified definition of the concept.[89]

d. State of research

i. General literature review

No two UN operations have ever presented the same profile – whether in actors, size, mandate, or difficulties.[90] Consequently, most generic research on UN PKOs has followed their own *ad hoc* perspective and consists of case-based analysis. The previously cited *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*[91] is a succession of case studies, and more general works, such as the 3rd edition of *Understanding Peacekeeping*[92] or *Peace operations: trends, progress, and prospects*[93] repeatedly refer to individual cases to illustrate the deeper trends and history of UN Peacekeeping. Some areas of research also focus on regional aspects,[94] with some authors

[87] Rietjens et al. (2017), "Employing Comprehensive Intelligence: The UN Experience in Mali", p. 315.
[88] United Nations General Assembly (2016), *Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations*.
[89] Martin-Brûlé (2020).
[90] Finlay (2002), *The use of force in UN peace operations*.
[91] Howard (2008).
[92] Bellamy & Williams (2021).
[93] Daniel et al. (2008).
[94] Askandar (2005), "A regional perspective of UN peace operations in Southeast Asia", or Paris (2002), "Peacebuilding in Central America.

specializing in certain areas,[95] but most of it is devoted to unique missions. Authors also rely on such cases to comment on the general features of UN Peacekeeping.[96] There are some examples of quantitative research, generally using custom datasets to draw conclusions on PKOs as a whole.[97] Overall, though, it is historical case research, based on various kinds of documentary and thematic analyses, which remains dominant in this research field.

When it comes to PKI, study is much sparser overall, although there are instances of specialized research, similarly case-based ones. A. Walter Dorn is likely the biggest reference in the domain, conducting research on the missions in Congo,[98] UNAMIR in Rwanda,[99] and MINUSTAH in Haiti.[100] There are some core reference books, particularly *Peacekeeping Intelligence: Emerging Concepts for the Future*[101] and *Peacekeeping Intelligence: New Players, Extended Boundaries*,[102] who also rely on case-based analysis and practitioner perspectives. Other prominent scholars would probably such as Allard Duursma and John Karlsrud have written further on cases such as Darfur[103] and the technological ramifications of PKI.[104]

Because the world of PKI differs in stakes and dynamics from the world of national intelligence, the fragmented specialized scholarship relies heavily on elementary models for its methodology. When presenting the concept of United Nations Peacekeeping Intelligence in the Oxford Handbook, Walter Dorn starts with the ways PKI "cover[s] the entire intelligence cycle" in four steps: planning/direction, information gathering, information analysis, and information dissemination.[105] Authors of the definition of PKI used in the Section above,

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[95] For instance, Adebajo & Landsberg (2000), "Back to the future: UN peacekeeping in Africa" and Adebajo (2011), *UN Peacekeeping in Africa: From the Suez Crisis to the Sudan Conflicts.*
[96] Karlsrud (2015a), "The UN at war: examining the consequences of peace-enforcement mandates for the UN peacekeeping operations in the CAR, the DRC and Mali", or Diehl & Druckman (2010), *Evaluating peace operations.*
[97] Howard and Dayal (2018) or Page Fortna (2004), "Interstate Peacekeeping: Causal Mechanisms and Empirical Effects".
[98] Dorn & Bell (1995) and also Dorn (2005), "Intelligence at UN Headquarters? The Information and Research Unit and the Intervention in Eastern Zaire 1996".
[99] Dorn & Matloff (2000).
[100] Dorn (2009), "Intelligence-led Peacekeeping: The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), 2006-07".
[101] de Jong et al. (2003).
[102] Carment & Rudner (2006).
[103] Duursma (2017), "An Assessment of the JMAC's Field Information and Analysis Capacity in Darfur".
[104] Karlsrud (2015b), *New Tools for Blue Helmets*.
[105] Dorn (2010), p. 277.

Nordli & Linboe use a strongly analogous fourfold analytical framework: collection planning and management, information collection, intelligence analysis, and dissemination.[106] Some expanded models also exist: in his extensively technical work, Finnish Major Pasi Välimäki starts from a general theory of intelligence practice that covers seven aspects – linking to command functions, principles, processes, organization, products, methods, and architecture of intelligence work.[107] Ultimately, the intelligence cycle model provides a recognized and stable framework not only throughout intelligence scholarship, but for the specificities of PKI as well.

ii. MINUSMA literature review

The contemporary UN mission in Mali has become a particularly salient case in existing literature on Peacekeeping and has been a catalyst for a renewal of interest in the topic in the past decade. It has been called "the greatest expansion of PKI in the XXIst century"[108] and is also known as the first mission to explicitly include a counter-terrorism mandate.

In terms of PKI, MINUSMA's most unique and analysed unit was the All Sources Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU), a pilot project which accompanied the early years of the mission as a way to branch out beyond strictly military intelligence (although it was still run by personnel in uniform, unlike civilian structures such as the JMAC). Insider authors such as Nordli & Linboe (the latter of whom oversaw the original implementation of the ASIFU) wrote detailed overviews of the mission's intelligence structures and analytical frameworks. In their 2017 paper,[109] they detailed the 2014-2016 period of the ASIFU through five main angles: organisational structure, dialogue and information sharing, collection, analysis, and dissemination. They assert that the originally wider, operational-level plan of the ASIFU was progressively subdued into a more tactical-level, information gap-filling role by the succeeding Force Commanders. While their seven final recommendations aim at all steps of the intelligence cycle, their most striking commentary lingers not on what might be considered the

[106] Nordli & Linboe (2017).
[107] Välimäki (2000), *Intelligence in Peace Support Operations.*
[108] Rietjens & Dorn (2017), "The Evolution of Peacekeeping Intelligence: The UN's Laboratory in Mali", p. 200.
[109] Nordli & Linboe (2017).

"core" collection and analysis work, but rather on the matter of setting information requirements, disseminating products, and general structure.

Another author with field experience in Mali, Sebastiaan Rietjens contributed to several articles on the innovations of ASIFU and MINUSMA. Alongside A. Walter Dorn, the two authors took another intelligence cycle-based approach, which leads them to call the "intelligence laboratory" a "mixed success".[110] They also focused on the difficulty of information sharing, the clash between the centrality of NATO procedures with non-Western troops, and the disjunction between different intelligence units, particularly military and civilian ones. In Rietjens & de Waard, a deeper focus on the practice and outcomes of the ASIFU work was taken.[111] They contributed considerations on the complexity of the Malian environment, as well as a better integration of technological change – in a work that claims for an incorporation of the learnings of the ASIFU into future missions. With Floribert Baudet, they performed a deep dive on the first six months of MINUSMA from the specific point of view of information and intelligence sharing.[112] They outlined three types of dynamics impairing efficient information sharing within MINUSMA: technological, organizational, and political and policy related. Most of these relate to internal variance: competition between intelligence organizations and military units, unclear and formal command structures, domestic interests, and cultural barriers preventing full cooperation, etc. According to them, they were the result of an overall attempt to address typical bottlenecks and limitations in UN missions, which only met a very limited success – the ideal solution would be in this vein "mutual acculturation".

Some more specific approaches were attempted. For instance, de Waard et al. studied the "intelligence organization of MINUSMA" according to Complex Adaptive System (CAS) theory,[113] using five broad characteristics of complexity theory to assess the interplay between the structural properties of the intelligence system and the complexity of its surrounding environment. As key findings, they focus on the importance of bridging the gap between top-level, strategic thinking and field-level operational realities, as well as the importance of "minimum specs" (standardized process) to favour the interface between these two layers. Rietjens et al., on the other hand, applied a Situational Awareness (SA) model to the work and

[110] Rietjens & Dorn (2017).
[111] Rietjens & de Waard (2017), "UN Peacekeeping Intelligence: The ASIFU Experiment".
[112] Rietjens & Baudet (2016), "Stovepiping Within Multinational Military Operations: The Case of Mali".
[113] de Waard et al. (2023), "Learning in complex public systems: the case of MINUSMA's intelligence organization".

contributions of ASIFU.[114] Through a slew of empirical findings, they notably highlight the gap and interplay between what the raw pursuit of "comprehensive intelligence" versus its more supporting role in operations-driven reality.

Not all literature focused on the ASIFU - Allard Duursma considered more broadly the question information processing and the challenges it posed for intelligence collection.[115] He applied a 4-factor framework of problems to the work of MINUSMA's intelligence officers, who can face issues related to either a lack or over-abundance of information (respectively called "uncertainty" and "complexity") as well as a lack or over-abundance of overall frames of reference (respectively "ambiguity" and "equivocality"). According to the author, intelligence analysts in MINUSMA had significant issues in combating the entrenched nature of ambiguity and equivocality, particularly through the frame of the "fight against global terrorism" mindset, which did not reflect adequately the type of multipolar intensity seen in the Malian crisis. This initial frame of reference had to be progressively replaced by a more holistic view that aligned the fighting in the North to domestic factors *before* recognising its strong transnational links. Finally, Abilova & Novosseloff gave a thorough overview report on the organizational nature of PKI.[116] In it, they used the case of MINUSMA and its interactions with the DPKO and JMAC to show the current limitations of UN PKI in both information sharing, law, and ethics. They conclude on recommendations on the importance of awareness and analysis at all levels as well as the boon a new system of secure information sharing would prove for the organization as a whole.

Methodologically, the vast majority of relevant studies have relied primarily on collecting data from some form of human interviews, with the articles contributed by Sebastiaan Rietjens relying on the same body of interviewees – up to 93 military and civilian UN representatives. Additional data (at least on PKI), came from collection and analysis of "relevant documents" (intelligence reports, standard operating procedures, minute meetings), direct observation, etc. These were almost exclusively used as complementary sources of information to the interviews.

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[114] Rietjens et al. (2017).
[115] Duursma (2018), "Information Processing Challenges in Peacekeeping Operations".
[116] Abilova & Novosseloff (2016), *Demystifying Intelligence in UN Peace Operations: Toward an Organizational Doctrine.*

In terms of analysis, two broad categories can be drawn up. Some studies focused on general recollections of the events and provided a more historical overview of one or several of the elements of MINUSMA's PKI. Some, such as Rietjens & Baudet, did structure their findings according to clustering matrices, but always in an inductive fashion. A large portion of these uses the intelligence cycle model as a starting point for their structure. Other studies, on the other hand, were drawn up deductively with specific theoretical frameworks in mind, such as Duursma's four problem factors, or de Waard et al.'s CAS characteristics.

All of eight of studies mentioned provided the core secondary source groundwork for the case study on MINUSMA's PKI analysis of Chapter IV.

III. Methodology

This Chapter presents the methodology that was engaged to answer the research question. As was explored in Chapter II, the last decade has seen UN PKOs, particularly in the domain of PKI, radically evolve through several flagship missions, as well as, even more recently, a push for reform and the publication of a first official policy on intelligence. To accurately document all facets of this change, and to explore the ability for PKI research to happen with open-source methods, the core research design of this thesis thus sought to understand both the field reality of PKI, through a specific case study of the MINUSMA operations, and the new theory brought on by the doctrinal body of documentation at UN-level. These are the two methodological models in both following Sections a and b, and subsequently applied in Chapters IV and V respectively. Both analyses are subsequently compared and reconciled in Chapter VI.

a. Case study

As explored in the literature review, significant research had already been conducted on the case of MINUSMA, often with thorough insider contact – some authors even joined some of the mission's training or information sessions. Since this work sought to focus exclusively on open-source research, such access was simply not an option. The case study methodology therefore aimed to draw a general picture of MINUSMA's PKI according to an overview of the secondary sources as a groundwork, which would then be complemented and expanded on with first-source document research. To do so, it first required a framework to guide the extraction of the relevant elements.

The challenge here was to appropriately and exhaustively cover the concept of "intelligence processes" as formulated in the research question. In accordance with established intelligence nomenclature, and given the lack of a recognized unified methodology for UNPKI case study, this thesis chose to adopt a generic analytical framework founded on the intelligence cycle concept – as highlighted in Section II.a. This resulted in five "case questions", with the main research process consisting of parsing and splitting the analysed information alongside these five elements, progressively drawing a multi-faceted picture of concrete PKI practice.

The five questions were:

1. What was the architecture of PKI? This can be understood as the organisational framework of the intelligence apparatus, which entities were set up and how they related to one another.
2. What were the requirements for PKI? This can be understood as the first step of the intelligence cycle ("Direction"), where the needs of the intelligence consumers are transformed into tasks for the intelligence officers. These are essentially elements from the leadership *inbound* to the PKI entities described in case question 1.
3. What were the methods of PKI? This can be understood as steps 2 through 4 of the intelligence cycle ("Collection", "Processing", and "Analysis"), from the first captures of data to its final transformation into actionable intelligence. These are essentially the activities actually *performed* by the PKI entities described in case question 1.
4. How was PKI disseminated? This can be understood as the fifth and final step of the intelligence cycle ("Dissemination"), as the required products are transmitted to the consumers or to other elements of the operation. These are essentially communication *outbound* from the PKI entities described in case question 1.
5. What were the outcomes of PKI? This can be understood as the physical products and, when available, material consequences resulting from the PKI process.

This fivefold framework was first inspired by Välimäki,[117] and also covers all three facets of the classic Kent division.[118] Most important in the conception of this approach was the merging of a solid theoretical concept (the intelligence cycle) with the extended pragmatic approach from intelligence insiders such as the authors above, who include other descriptive elements – hence the merging of the five classical steps of the cycle into case questions 2 to 4, and the additional consideration of the base structure and external outcomes.

The case study proceeded in three general steps. In the first step, all available secondary research (as highlighted in Section II.d.ii) was parsed through and analysed, extracting and sorting the elements in the five case questions highlighted above. In the second step, a causal and chronological pathway of the main elements was established in order to identify gaps and needs for additional primary research. These needs could include either new elements, to be added as new pieces to the puzzle of the case study, or be looking for "convergence and

[117] As seen in Välimäki (2000), pp. 30-60.
[118] Kent (1949).

corroboration",[119] to solidify existing elements by the triangulating claims with extra sources. The third step consisted of a directed content analysis of the selected primary sources, according to the structure of the five case questions.[120]

b. Manual study

Methodologically addressing the question of manual analysis was a complex undertaking as, unlike for case studies, it is an uncommon approach on the topic. Given the unicity of PKI and the recency of the documents, only one academic author had made it a prominent feature of their research, giving general commentary and recommendations on the overall framework.[121] Furthermore, while policy analysis is an established discipline of social and security sciences, it extended only loosely to the military manual" nature of most of the subordinate documents.

This thesis thus opted to take the path of document analysis using a directed, qualitative content analysis approach of the texts. Once the documents were selected it used a mostly deductive, concept-driven categorization, based on the same five case questions highlighted for the case study analysis.[122] While it did stick to this framework with the intention of allowing easier parsing between the two main sources of analysis, there also was some additional attention given to the main dynamics highlighted in the case study. Indeed, this research was not a comparative study of two equivalent cases, but rather had a "potential lessons learned" approach by going first from the field experience and then to the subsequent policy documents.

All documents were obtained through the online portals of the United Nations.[123] The selection process parsed through all resources available and selected all the ones appearing directly related to intelligence, starting with the 2019 police. All are presented in detail in Chapter V.

[119] Warner (2007), pp. 23-25.
[120] Bowen (2009), "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method".
[121] Martin-Brûlé (2020).
[122] Bowen (2009).
[123] Webpage "Policy and Guidance", https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/policy (last accessed 22 July 2023).

IV. Analysis: MINUSMA

This Chapter explores the MINUSMA operation in Mali as the case study of an essential turning point for the development of UN PKI. After a general recap of the mission and its chronology (Section a), it follows the methodology outlined in Section III.a above, merging existing secondary source groundwork and primary source research into five main case questions (Sections b to f). Each of the case question is answered through basic descriptive data as well as more critical analysis and commentary, attempting to extract its main features and core dynamics.

a. An overview of MINUSMA

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the Malian government struggled with violence and pushes for independence in its Tuareg-dominated North, also known as Azawad.[124] In January 2012, the main separatist group of the MNLA managed to form alliances with several Islamist groups present in the region, despite historical differences and diverging political aims, leading to intensification of the fighting and several setbacks for the government forces. This prompted a military coup in March, causing instability in the capital of Bamako, weakening the central government's already tenuous hold on its peripheral territories, and allowing in turn the rebel groups to capture the largest towns of Azawad – such as Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal.[125] On April 6, the MNLA proclaimed the independence of Azawad, but started seeing increasing conflict with its Islamist allies, who sought mainly to impose sharia law, and the MNLA lost control of most of its gains to groups such as Ansar Dine, the Maghreb antenna of al-Qaeda, and others.[126]

Meanwhile, Bamako had somewhat stabilized into a transitional government, which petitioned the UN for support in the Autumn of 2012. This led to UNSCR 2085, which allowed French intervention in the region as well as an "African-led International Support Mission".[127] In about a month after its first deployment on 11 January 2013, the French Opération Serval had retaken the largest towns from the Islamists.[128] In the next months, the war transitioned to a more

[124] Boas & Torheim (2013), "The Trouble in Mali – corruption, collusion, resistance".
[125] Marchal (2012), *The Coup in Mali: The Result of a Long-term Crisis or Spillover from the Libyan Civil War.*
[126] BBC News (2012), "Mali: Islamists seize Gao from Tuareg rebels" and Nossiter (2012), "Jihadists' Fierce Justice Drives Thousands to Flee Mali".
[127] United Nations Security Council (2012), *Resolution 2085*, p. 4.
[128] Barrera (2015), *Opération Serval: notes de guerre, Mali 2013.*

asymmetric scenario characterised by guerrilla and suicide attacks, which prompted the evolution of Serval into Opération Barkhane, a counter-insurgency mission, in Summer 2014.[129] On the other hand, the African mission led by ECOWAS, AFISMA, had seen its deployment rushed to follow the start of Serval and encountered significant logistical and political issues. These prompted the promulgation on 25 April 2013 of UNSCR 2100, which formally established MINUSMA to transfer AFISMA's authority.[130]

As with most UN missions, the political head of the mission was a civilian one – the Special Representative to the Secretary-General (SRSG), typically based at UN Headquarters (UNHQ) in New York. The main military Force Commander (FC) answered directly to them from their Force Headquarters (FHQ) base, in this case in Bamako, the official capital city of Mali. The military subdivision of MINUSMA then extended to 3 Sector Headquarters (SHQ). SHQ-West was based in Timbouktou, SHQ-East in Gao, and SHQ-North (added in 2015) in Kidal.[131] Rietjens et al. attribute to UNHQ, FHQ, and SHQ the strategic, operational, and tactical levels respectively.[132] MINUSMA launched with a significant number of personnel, as both of the initial SHQs started with about 4000 soldiers each. African countries contributed the majority of ground troops, while European detachments made up the bulk of key positions such as command, communications and, most importantly, intelligence.[133]

A first ceasefire agreement was signed on 18 June 2013 in Ouagadougou between the government and the MNLA and other movements from Azawad, but it was dropped within months, ostensibly because of government forces maintaining exactions on Tuareg populations.[134] When the new Malian Prime Minister visited Kidal in May 2014, it triggered violent protests from Tuareg groups, leading in the government forces losing the city and its surrounding region.[135] At this stage, neither the French operations, whose focus was on the terrorist groups, nor MINUSMA, whose mandate did not allow it, chose to meddle in the internal affairs of the country, although the MNLA would eventually relinquish control of Kidal to "the international community" – MINUSMA in this instance.[136] This deadlock

[129] Guisnel (2014), "Le Drian et Hollande installent l'opération Barkhane".
[130] United Nations Security Council (2013), *Resolution 2100.*
[131] See the map of MINUSMA forces in Annex 2.
[132] Rietjens et al. (2017), p. 321.
[133] Lotze (2015), "United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)".
[134] Al Jazeera (2013), "Mali's Tuareg fighters end ceasefire".
[135] RFI (2014), "Moussa Mara à Kidal: retour sur une visite mouvementée".
[136] Boutellis (2015), "Can the UN Stabilize Mali? Towards a UN Stabilization Doctrine?".

between the different factions on the ground would become emblematic of the next years. In 2015, another peace agreement, the Algiers Accord, was signed between the government and a wider umbrella coalition of Tuareg and Islamist groups.[137] Yet this similarly failed to coalesce some of the more violent or contesting elements of the rebels, and several violent attacks undermined the peace process in the months following, such as a bombing in Gao, or the hostage crisis at a hotel in Bamako on 20 November 2015.[138] This would not improve later either, with some of the deadliest terrorist attacks happening in the past years – such as the Gao suicide bombing of 18 January 2017, the deadliest in the country's history.[139]

As the situation perdured, the scope of MINUSMA did evolve from an essentially terrorist-fighting mission to one addressing the more general frame of political grievances existing throughout the country. On 25 June 2014, UNSCR 2164 expanded the mission's mandate towards Protection of Civilians (POC), stabilization and dialogue support.[140] This would be further expanded by UNSCR 2295 in June 2016, which established a more proactive measure on Protection of Civilians.[141] While it never escalated to a full "Chapter VII" enabled, enforcement-focused mission, as it always operated with full consent of the internationally recognized government, it has been one of the PKOs to include historically the widest array of means – being notably the first UN mission to fully integrate air support.[142]

In the following years, the mandate and situation evolved little from the point of view of the intervening forces, as the local population became increasingly disillusioned with the foreign troops. MINUSMA saw no further mandate expansion, the UNSCR simply extending its mandate every year, while French domestic interest waned. When the military under Assimi Goïta staged back-to-back coups in 2020 and 2021, Paris saw the writing on the wall, and by Summer 2022, the French army had completely left the country.[143] At the same time, Russian Private Military Company Wagner had started taking over some of the "terrorist-fighting" capabilities that the Western-led forces had retracted themselves from.[144] On MINUSMA's side, by June 2023 it had reached, according to the DPO figures, a total of almost 15'000

[137] Le Point (2015), "Mali : un 'accord de paix et de réconciliation' signé à Alger".
[138] Baché (2015), "À Bamako, les djihadistes frappent un hôtel international".
[139] Associated Press (2017), "Suicide Attack at Military Camp in Mali Kills Scores".
[140] United Nations Security Council (2014), *Resolution 2164.*
[141] United Nations Security Council (2016), *Resolution 2295.*
[142] Lotze (2015).
[143] Schofield (2022), "La France met officiellement fin à l'opération Barkhane au Sahel".
[144] Thompson et al. (2022), "Tracking the Arrival of Russia's Wagner Group in Mali".

personnel, of which 1792 civilians (with the rest mostly military troops but also a significant police contingent).[145] It has statistically become the most expensive UN PKO in history, costing over 1.2 billion dollars, and second most lethal one for its own personnel (behind only the 45-years old UNIFIL), with an official tally of 303 fatalities, most of which isolated incidents of rogue shooting, IED explosions and terrorist attacks targeting a few soldiers.[146]

b. The architecture of PKI

The PKI structure supporting MINUSMA was a large, multifaceted web of units of varying scope, composition, and background. In an exhaustive sense, there were as many as eight potentially distinct producers of intelligence. From the start of the operation, however, three were particularly central.

First, there was the standard intelligence structure integrated into the bulk military components of the mission, i.e. military intelligence cells following typical NATO structures.[147] These are directly integrated into the military hierarchy equivalents, with the head of intelligence linked to FHQ and the FC (the U2), intermediaries at the 3 SHQs (the G2), and appropriate subalterns at battalion level (the S2).

Second is the previously mentioned Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC), an established institution at strategic level answering directly to the SRSG.[148] While not directly determined by at mission-level, its makeup is essentially constituted of a JMAC and several ranks of analysts, that is "an integrated structure […] composed of civilian, military and police personnel".[149]

Third was MINUSMA's original ad hoc contribution: the All-Sources Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU). Its headquarters were based in Bamako alongside FHQ from March 2014 onwards,

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[145] Webpage "Personnel", https://minusma.unmissions.org/en/personnel (last accessed 20 July 2023).
[146] Webpage "MINUSMA Fact Sheet", https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minusma (last accessed 20 July 2023).
[147] As outlined in NATO (2019). *NATO Standard – Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations,* p. A-3.
[148] United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support (2018), *Joint Mission Analysis Centre Field Handbook*.
[149] United Nations Department of Peace Operations (2020d), *Policy – Joint Mission Analysis Centres (JMAC)*, p. 23 – see also the previous policy that first outlined the structure: United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support (2015), *Policy on Joint Mission Analysis Centres (JMAC).*

with a staff of originally about 30 military officers, although it expanded significantly to a high of 70. It had however two main subsections in the forms of Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) units. The first was a company of originally about 65 Dutch personnel, although they were later reinforced by other nationalities, stationed at SHQ-East. It included HUMINT teams, Civil-Military Interaction (CMI) personnel with specialized knowledge, a cover and support team (CST) for reconnaissance, and an All Sources Intelligence Cell (ASIC) for the core analytical work, in addition to various civilian advisors and liaison officers. The second was a Swedish Taskforce of about 200 people, located at SHQ-West. With a focus on more traditional military intelligence, the core analysis being performed by a Military Sources Intelligence Cell (MSIC), it also had a long-range recon platoon and a weapons intelligence team. In spite of the higher number of personnel, it trailed a large logistical support component, unlike its counterpart to the East. There were other essential component to ASIFU, notably a Collection Coordination Intelligence Requirements Management section (CCIRM), responsible for coordinating the information requirements made of ASIFU, and an All Fusion Centre (AFC) of about 15 analysts, meant to fuse the information from the ISR units into the outcomes. Both were based at ASIFU HQ, and essentially were respectively responsible for the entry and exit of intelligence requirements and products.[150]

ASIFU was at its inception viewed as a mission-integrated asset that was to complement the requirements as set by the FC with non-military intelligence.[151] In its own words, it was to provide "fused, predictive, actionable and timely" intelligence, notably through predictive scenarios on Malian social dynamics.[152] It is in fact one of the first modern attempts to an integrated and broad approach to intelligence in a military setting, and has been characterised by some scholars as borderline experimental.[153]

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[150] A visual representation of ASIFU (and the other elements of MINUSMA's PKI), can be found in Annex 3. This entire paragraph is collated from all sources, but the most detailed accounts come from Rietjens & Dorn (2017), Nordli & Linboe (2017), and de Waard et al. (2023).

[151] From a presentation made by the first ASIFU Chief in 2014, as relayed by Karlsrud & Smith (2015), *Europe's Return to UN Peacekeeping in Africa? Lessons from Mali*, p. 11.

[152] United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Office of Military Affairs (2013), *Statement of Unit Requirement for All Sources Information Fusion Unit*.

[153] In reference to the NATO sense of Experimentation in the Concept Development & Experimentation principle (see NATO (2021), *NATO CD&E Handbook*), as asserted by Rietjens & de Waard (2017), p. 549.

The other five intelligence contributors took on a minor or supporting role. On the military side, these included a task group of Dutch special forces (SOLTG)[154] and a detachment of helicopters (Helidet).[155]As for civilian structures answering more promptly to the SRSG, we can consider the UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS), tasked with the immediate security of UN staff,[156] the UN Police (UNPOL),[157] and the Joint Operations Centre (JOC).[158]

This picture is additionally complexified by its evolutions over time. By early 2015, a Joint Coordination Board (JCB) chaired by the mission management had been introduced to favour intelligence dialogue across agencies. In 2016, ASIFU was restructured, with among others, the CCIRM being dissociated from the AFC, to help the former implement intelligence requirements in an intelligence collection plan (ICP). Additional support staff, such as liaison officers or a Chief of Staff to ASIFU Commander were also introduced.[159]

In 2017, ASIFU was to be replaced by the Military All Sources Information Cell (MASIC) as a way to open it to different country contributions. By the end of the year however, the FC had instead merged it into the U2 structure, effectively ending its independent status as a contributor of extra-military intelligence.[160] It had thus been formally integrated into the regular structure of the mission. It is worth mentioning that this had been a long-standing suggestion by field officers for operational reasons, but had been delayed by national interests at political level, seeking to perpetuate the privileged access that a dedicated cell allowed its specific contributors.[161]

Relationships between these multiple actors were complex and sometimes strained. In a general sense, they struggled to come together, either because of their overlap or the "mutually exclusive" manner in which the architecture had been conceived. As a result, MINUSMA's PKI struggled to self-regulate in adaptation to its changing environment both because its organizational boundaries could be both too harsh or too fuzzy.[162] This dichotomy is well

[154] Rietjens & Zomer (2017), "In search of intelligence: The Dutch Special Forces in Mali".
[155] Accounted for by Rietjens & de Waard (2017), p. 538.
[156] Webpage "Threat Analysis", https://www.un.org/en/safety-and-security/threat-analysis (last accessed 20 July 2023).
[157] Webpage "The Mission of UN Police", https://police.un.org/en/mission-of-un-police (last accessed 20 July 2023).
[158] Dorn (2009).
[159] Changes explored in Nordli & Linboe (2017), pp. 14-15.
[160] Duursma (2018), p. 465.
[161] Nordli & Linboe (2017), p. 19.
[162] de Waard et al. (2023), p. 1046.

exemplified by the place attributed to ASIFU and its functional boundaries with the other two main components of the architecture. ASIFU initially struggled to communicate with the U2 structure, as the former was intended for long-term outlook and planning, whereas the latter was meant to handle more direct operational concerns. On the other hand, this made the unit conflict with JMAC, whose very purpose had been strategic level analysis.[163] ASIFU, despite being tasked with a central role to the mission's information flows, also lacked authority over assets such as the SOLTG and Helidet, for instance to assign intelligence collection missions.[164]

A final source of conflict resided in the role of the "strategic apex" (essentially the FC and its immediate staff). They appeared to view their task to be about strategic "orchestration", a role in which they would attempt to balance political considerations and operational realities, such as accepting that nationally contributed assets came with irreducible caveats. The point of view from the field however highlights an expectation of strategic "facilitation", that their higher-ups were meant to support bottom-up initiatives through appropriate resource allocation, shielding them from the realities above.[165]

c. The requirements for PKI

At the request of the Secretariat, MINUSMA was to have a clear "intelligence capacity".[166] This would not necessarily impact the general purpose of intelligence within the operation. As a rule, the core consideration should "simply" be the direct needs of the Force Commander. The FC's primary role is in turn to align the force's outright military operations with the political objectives set by the SRSG, but he is also responsible for maintaining mission-level Situational Awareness by setting his information requirements and define the resources and means necessary to do so.[167]

This becomes complexified when considering the concept of frames of references. Before the islamist-influenced insurrections Mali has been called a "security blind spot" for the eyes of Western nations.[168] The sudden onset of a large, multi-stakeholder operation in 2013, with

[163] Rietjens & Baudet (2016).
[164] Rietjens & Dorn (2017), p. 209.
[165] These elements an analysis from de Waard et al. (2023), pp. 1051-1052.
[166] Rietjens & Dorn (2017), p. 201.
[167] Nordli & Linboe (2017), p. 8.
[168] de Waard et al. (2023), p. 1049.

strong anti-terrorist aims meant that the many NATO members wishing to take part looked in large part to one of their more important previous experiences for reference, namely Afghanistan and the learnings of ISAF.[169] In many ways this was a compromise drawn iteratively from the bottom-up. The importance of NATO-led doctrine is also visible the very terminology of a unit such as ASIFU – ISR, CCIRM or else are all direct heritages of the NATO handbook.[170]

This basic framework relies on a hierarchy of requirement settings, with at the very top Priority Information Requirements (PIR), to be determined by the Force Commander. These are followed by Secondary Information Requirements (SIR), which are in turn translated into Essential Elements of Information (EEI), which is what the intelligence cells are expected to initially parse.[171] There are indications however that this basic structure was not well put together initially in FHQ's operational orders.

The singular importance of the leadership element can be striking. Commentaries highlight the difference caused by the change from the first FC (Rwandan Major-General Kazura), who only set broad and unclear requirements, to, in May 2015, the second one (Danish Major-General Lollesgaard), who attempted to streamline the process and produce better PIR – although these still failed to be translated for the frontline intelligence workers.[172] As a whole, the top management of MINUSMA struggled to establish "minimum specs" and standards for the Mali operations.[173] This was compounded by the rotational system in place in UN operations, which saw that PIRs would be periodically rebuilt and revised.

One of the chief consequences of this dynamic was the gradual prompting of an "inverted" approach. Instead of awaiting requirement setting from above, intelligence officers started determining their own (and thus those of the FC) information requirements.[174] This created a clear conflict of interest where the priorities of the units would be auto determined.

[169] As argued by Duursma (2018), pp. 459-461.
[170] NATO (2016), *NATO Standard – Allied Joint Doctrine for Intelligence, Counter-Intelligence and Security*.
[171] Rietjens et al. (2017), p. 322.
[172] Rietjens & Dorn (2017), p. 204.
[173] de Waard et al. (2023), p. 1049.
[174] Rietjens & Dorn (2017), p. 204.

The issue of division of labour raised in the Chapter above surfaces here as well. ASIFU was set up as a cell meant to "complement" the PIR with non-military intelligence,[175] yet this did not translate into the tasks they were given. At the start of the mission, the lack of a frame of reference and the blind spot Mali represented meant that there was a very strong initial intelligence demand for a comprehensive understanding of the country's complex societal and security patterns, which actually gave the unit and its general PMESII approach (see next Section for more details) an essential role. As the mission evolved, their task shifted to an overly tactical-level focus prompted by the successive FCs, as notably conservative force protection became an ever-growing priority.[176] The initial aim would have been to segregate traditional intelligence as led by the U2 for operational matters from the more long-term, holistic perspective of ASIFU. In reality, the basic military personnel of the standardized cells were not experienced enough to properly support the day-to-day needs of the FC. When stricter requirements such as the need to lower fatalities within the force arose, it was ASIFU who had to fill the gap to provide more actionable intelligence, further muddying tasks and processes.[177]

d. The methods of PKI

The establishment of ASIFU was the first time in any UN PKO where a dedicated unit was fully performing intelligence-*led* activities. Instead of having military troops performing their operational tasks while *additionally* gathering relevant intelligence, the personnel's first task purpose *was* intelligence collection.[178] This led to a much larger body of data being gathered.

As far as the general guidance for these activities, they would also follow a typical NATO structure, with the U2 first to align the FC's information requirements to the rest of the force by drawing up an information collection plan (ICP).[179] ASIFU would also typically produce an ICP through its CCIRM – although, as was covered in the Chapter above, this ICP would go on to determine some of the information requirements itself, something it was way too detailed and unworkable to achieve in the first place.[180] The collection plans were in general determined

[175] From an ASIFU information brief related by Rietjens & de Waard (2017), p. 535.
[176] Nordli & Linboe (2017), pp. 19-20.
[177] Rietjens & de Waard (2017), p. 541.
[178] Duursma (2018), p. 450.
[179] Nordli & Linboe (2017), p. 8.
[180] Abilova & Novosseloff (2016), p. 14.

"sur le tas" to try and streamline the PIR-SIR-EEI relationship, an act made radically more difficult by the plurality of stakes attempting to intervene in this dynamic.[181]

It is within UN basic guidelines to only perform overtly, for intelligence or otherwise – as the bright blue paint on mission material denotes.[182] Alongside basic surveillance and reconnaissance came thus first HUMINT and OSINT collection methods, although means also included IMINT and SIGINT.

OSINT was a significant consideration throughout the mission, and an important complement to more traditional methods in such conditions, although its exploitation remained peripheral and dependent on technological integration (such as basic internet connection or awareness of local media). OSINT are integrated parts of the workflows of both JMAC and JOC.[183] The ASIFU HQ based team relied heavily on social media and a specific program called Silobreaker and had dedicated officers as well. SOLTG contributed with some local media and Twitter collection.[184]

HUMINT collection may have been the most integrated element, as even the smallest military detachments are to an extent able to gather information from links with the population, but it was not without challenges.[185] The 6-months rotations system notably meant that it was non-military personnel that had a much better chance of building meaningful trust and rapport with people outside the mission.[186] Expectedly, cultural and language skills remained essential, but varied across individuals, with most of the intelligence officers being European, and thus having little interface in terms of language or culture with the Malian population.[187] SOLTG actually provided several HUMINT capability in remote areas, through contact with small communities and basic local telephone exchanges, although they struggled to be as integrated as typical patrols and observers might.[188]

[181] Rietjens & de Waard (2017), p. 540.
[182] See the policy documents referenced in Chapter V.
[183] UN DPO (2020d).
[184] Rietjens & Dorn (2017), pp. 207-208 - also Rietjens & Zomer (2017).
[185] Duursma (2018), p. 450.
[186] Abilova & Novosseloff (2016), pp. 19-20.
[187] Rietjens & Dorn (2017), p. 207.
[188] Abilova & Novosseloff (2016), p. 11, see Rietjens & Zomer (2017) for more detail.

Both of ASIFU's ISR units used unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) for imagery collection. These included ScanEagle drones, with a range of about 90 km,[189] as well as the hand-launched Ravens, with only 10 km of range.[190] They were very difficult to get online because of bureaucratic hurdles, but also struggled technically in the heat and dust of Mali. The Apache helicopters from Helidet were also a tool through their forward-looking infrared TADS sensors,[191] but similarly struggled with maintenance. An aerostat system was even tried, although it was lost in the February 2016 Kidal attack.[192] Satellite imagery was expectedly attempted, but the typical 150m resolution of images in the region gave them little use for actionable operational and tactical-level situational awareness.[193]

As for analysis, ASIFU's approach to intelligence relied on a holistic PMESII approach,[194] a heritage of the Afghanistan experience that sought to expand traditionally military-centric intelligence to consider more societal developments within the country.[195] The core idea is to understand the operating environment by parsing all bulk data and information into six main axes: Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure and Information.[196] This was then channelled into sets of predictive scenarios that would be the core feature of the unit's main products. The four main such scenarios were established using a dual system of opposing hypotheses: whether the security situation would be good or bad, and whether the preparedness to a situation change was low or high.[197]

Ultimately, and in spite of costs and other difficulties, technological and military capacities did give ASIFU an ability to collect and analyse information that would have been otherwise

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[189] See details on webpage "ScanEagle Unmanned Aircraft Systems – Backgrounder", https://www.boeing.com/farnborough2014/pdf/BDS/ScanEagle%20Backgrounder%200114.pdf (last accessed 15 June 2023).
[190] See details on webpage "RQ-11 Raven", https://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/systems/raven.htm (last accessed 15 June 2023).
[191] Capabilities on webpage "Arrowhead Modernized TADS/PNVS Receiver for the Apache", https://www.leonardodrs.com/media/3298/arrowhead_datasheet.pdf (last accessed 15 June 2023).
[192] United Nations Press (2016) "Security Council Press Statement on Mali", a video of the attack's aftermath can also be found on MINUSMA's Youtube channel, "Visite au camp de la MINUSMA à Kidal le lendemain de l'attaque du 12 février 2016", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vP5Dnm1s5L4 (last visited 18 June 2023).
[193] Rietjens & Dorn (2017), p. 207.
[194] Rietjens & de Waard (2017), p. 539.
[195] An approach pioneered by Flynn et al. (2010), *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan.*
[196] For more detail, see Hartley III, *Unconventional Conflict: A Modeling Perspective.*
[197] Rietjens & de Waard (2017), pp. 536-537.

unreachable for the regular structures of the U2 and JMAC.[198] Resource constraints nevertheless remained a constant feature of the intelligence work in that setting. Lack of redundancy and a general focus on efficiency at all costs meant that several key assets could not always be deployed when needed. One example comes in Fall 2015, as a sudden spike in requests from the SOLTG for elements such as UAVs, interprets and medevacs directly impaired ASIFU's ISR teams' ability to operate.[199] As a silver lining, this prompted a high level of flexibility at both team and individual level, with another story revealing for instance how military personnel privately bought GoPro cameras to be used for image-taking.[200] Assets also had to be creatively used and swapped in places, with combat support teams ending up integrated into the intelligence collection process.[201] This also happened in the other direction, as intelligence collectors and analysts, notably in the OSINT team, were regularly used as translators by the UN troops sharing their sector.[202]

In the core of the intelligence collection and analysis process, cultural boundaries emerged as well. The various Technologies, Techniques and Procedures on which the European teams had come to rely were often unknown to their African and Asian counterparts. While learning and process updates are a normal part of any military system however, this was harder to tackle, as these where typically originated from classified NATO systems, meaning that non-members did not only lack training, they were simply unable to be granted access to them.[203]

e. The dissemination of PKI

Information sharing was difficult across the complex network of intelligence work and the operation in general.[204] The first note, made by almost all observers, was on the difficulty of getting information to move across units. The competition between ASIFU and the JMAC was particularly fierce, as ASIFU at times sought to circumvent their issues with the FC by addressing the SRSG directly, conflicting with the immediate turf of the JMAC.[205] There was also competition within the units, such as ASIFU seeing tensions from its HQ when it felt

[198] Duursma (2018), p. 465.
[199] Rietjens & Zomer (2017).
[200] Example given in de Waard et al. (2023), p. 1051.
[201] Rietjens & Dorn (2017), p. 212.
[202] Nordli & Linboe (2017), p. 18.
[203] Abilova & Novosseloff (2016), p. 17.
[204] Office of Internal Oversight Service (2017), *Evaluation Report*, p. 20.
[205] Duursma (2018), p. 450.

unable to get full accessible information from its ISR units.[206] These are textbook examples of stovepipes: a focus on isolated, vertical communication channels, which disincentivize personnel from sharing information horizontally amidst colleagues or other units.[207] de Waard et al. attribute this reality to the "near decomposability" of the intelligence system (meaning that each unit was expected to retain the ability to work in a non-dependent manner), which clashed with the centrality of ASIFU's actual needs in mid- and long-term intelligence.[208]

While the incentive structure of the mission greatly favoured vertical instead of horizontal information transfers, vertical information pathways also had issues. The first of these is that they tended to be unidirectional - upwards. The New York HQ itself is infamous for constantly absorbing vast amounts of data, information and intelligence alike, without releasing much in the other direction.[209] ASIFU's basic work also targeted the FC with their reports, but saw they were hardly ever shared downwards. Ultimately, the biggest factor determining information sharing has been considered to be inter-personal relationships, which poses challenges for systematization, particularly in situations such as peacekeeping with frequently rolling personnel.[210]

It would appear that the general communication policy evolved from a "need to share" to a "need to know" basis over the first few years of the mission.[211] In short, instead of systematically attempting to broadcast products to a wider audience, they would be only transferred to the strictly required. Product release pathways were also unit-specific Standards of Procedure (SOP), putting the deciding authority firmly into the hands of the relevant agency chief – although this was different for ASIFU, whose authority was directly attributed to the FC.[212]

Information sharing was also heaving impacted by its technological aspect. IT capability was the first hurdle, as satellite connection was extremely slow and direct communications were limited. Furthermore, whereas the western troops had rather high standards for such capabilities, some detachments from the least wealthy of the contributing countries barely had

[206] Rietjens & de Waard (2017), p. 547.
[207] Rietjens & Baudet (2016), pp. 209-210.
[208] de Waard et al. (2023), pp. 1047-1048.
[209] Something remarked by Dorn (2010).
[210] Duursma (2018), p. 455.
[211] Rietjens & Dorn (2017), p. 216.
[212] Nordli & Linboe (2017), p. 18.

any IT capability at all.[213] But it is the variety in information systems used by the different actors that proved the more pervasive issue. ASIFU relied internally on the Dutch TITAAN information system. While it was quite efficient at parsing classified information within its network, which included other Dutch contingents SOLTG and Helidet, it struggled to allow out-of-network sharing, which included such as with the FC or SRSG.[214] It was also incompatible with and often a duplication of the entries of the standard UN database, the SAGE Ushahidi software platform, available only to HQ and high-ranking officers.[215] There were more technical concerns on security and confidentiality as well, as most personnel considered the general information system within the mission to lack any proper form of classification and basic data security. At times, this even impaired the use of some assets, such as the Apache helicopters' mounted cameras, whose operational security was seen as compromised.[216]

This was compounded by various types of trust issues. Theses could be on the personal side, such as trained ISR professionals harbouring doubts towards less intelligence-savvy UN personnel. Having a western-led system caused further compatibility issues with the core troops from other continents, who were not as reliable a source of actionable material as expected.[217] Basic cultural and national boundaries also led to a preference in in-group interaction over cross-unit collaboration. Such issues could also exist in a more systemic sense, as information sharing was impaired by national legislation, with internal policies often preventing basic information-sharing (notably outside of western networks), either because of domestic interest or basic operational security concerns.[218]

Beyond direct sharing of information, these dynamics also affected the deeper cycle of basic instruction and knowledge retention. These are already particularly difficult in the international rotational system of UN PKOs, which tend to multiply the need for basic instruction efforts in all areas.[219] In the particular realm of intelligence, it was particularly visible in the dissociation of the higher and lower echelons of the mission. Whereas the leadership would react to top-down strategic stimuli, such as international agreements, country-level political decisions and mandate changes, the troops were generally forced into adopting a basic learning-by-doing

[213] Rietjens & Baudet (2016), pp. 208-209.
[214] Rietjens & de Waard (2017), p. 547.
[215] Riejens & Dorn (2017), p. 211.
[216] Rietjens & Baudet (2016), p. 209.
[217] Abilova & Novosseloff (2016), pp. 17-18, 20-22.
[218] Rietjens & Baudet (2016), pp. 212-214.
[219] Rietjens & Dorn (2017), p. 205.

approach, motivated by immediate field realities. de Waard et al. call this a failure to reach second and especially third-loop types of learning in a CAS sense.[220]

f. The outcomes of PKI

Particularly at the onset of the mission, many of the products, in line with the ISAF heritage of its components, followed a basic counter-insurgency logic. Both JMAC and ASIFU produced maps to show armed clashes and troop sightings, which did see better success as they could be immediately identified as important by the FC to guide decisions such as troop deployment – such as during attacks in Mopti in January 2015, which prompted the deployment of an additional battalion.[221] This also had larger-picture implications, such as representing insurgent intentions (notably in the case of targeting the air assets). ASIFU even developed "targeting packs" on specific high-value targets, which were in fact shared with French officers from Opération Barkhane.[222] This did however clash once again with the basic expectations of the mission.[223]

But, as evoked in Section d, ASIFU's typical products were mid and long-term scenarios at national and sector levels.[224] Both ISR teams would send their reports to ASIFU HQ so they could be merged into more coherent narratives according to their fourfold analysis. This would be compiled by the AFC into a Quarterly Outlook (every 3 months) seeking to predict the country's future status.[225] These could often not be developed in full, as support was directed to FHQ's more direct operational planning.[226] In the very demanding setting of an operation such as MINUSMA, and depending on his own institutional background and procedures, even basic 2-page long reports may not be read by the FC.[227] The presence of "guidance" elements in these ASIFU reports also further indicates that they were used in direct planning. This could be considered a breach of its intended support role, as that would typically be the role of the

[220] de Waard et al. (2023), p. 1054.
[221] Duursma (2018), p. 453, the example is according to the Chief JMAC.
[222] A claim made by Karlsrud (2017), "Towards UN counter-terrorism operations?".
[223] Abilova & Novosseloff (2016), p. 20.
[224] Rietjens & de Waard (2017), p. 536.
[225] Rietjens & Dorn (2017), p. 211.
[226] Nordli & Linboe (2017), p. 16.
[227] Duurma (2018), p. 457 – he attributes this statement directly to a former MINUSMA commander.

U2 military structure integrated into FHQ. Conversely, some of the recipients of these reports may also at times have edited some of the intelligence products.[228]

Quarterly Outlooks would thus include information on armed groups, tribal tensions, smuggling routes and even perception of the Malian population, with assessments of violence or unrest potential as well as some scenario-building. Nevertheless, the reports often failed to reach higher levels of situational awareness, remaining within a direct perception of the elements.[229] Reasons invoked include little understanding of local complexity (such as the histories of conflict and ethnic tensions), lack of interpreters, difficulty of coordination and lack of supporting technical systems. More profoundly, the rolling system of detachment rotations hindered greatly the progression of situational awareness to higher levels, requiring each new batch of troops to restart assessing the situation at level one.[230]

In its first few years, MINUSMA struggled with obtaining appropriate and timely intelligence at mission-level, and fatalities kept mounting from between 2013 and 2015. This prompted an increased demand for actionable intelligence over holistic strategic evaluation, drawing ASIFU the change their general priorities.[231] Resultantly, its core Quarterly Outlooks gradually lost in importance, much as its contributions to the strategic part of decision-making. The one exception to that dynamic happened during the initial six months of their deployment, as the SRSG was Dutch and had personal ties with the also Dutch commander of ASIFU.[232] The results for the actual field requirements were mixed. The average troops, often African ones, struggled to implement the NATO-style intelligence to address their concrete needs.[233] At the same time, there still were regularly important and actionable contributions from the ISR units at sector-level, where they could be tailored to the immediate demands of both the civilian and military components of their immediate environment.[234] Related witnesses thus focus on specific contributions from specific units, such as an instance where the OSINT team could monitor a situation in real-time, bringing important updates during the November 2015 hotel

[228] These claims are made by Nordli & Linboe, pp. 17-19.
[229] Rietjens et al. (2017), pp. 327-328.
[230] de Waard et al. (2023), p. 1054.
[231] Riejens & Dorn (2017), p. 214.
[232] Rietjens & de Waard (2017), p. 543.
[233] Rietjens & Dorn (2017), pp. 210-211.
[234] OIOS (2017), p. 19.

attacks in Bamako, as well as the regular imagery obtention from Helidet that supported both the prevention of small-scale attacks and the peace negotiations at political level.[235]

[235] United Nations Security Council (2015), *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, p. 5.

V. Analysis: manuals

This Chapter explores the recent body of documents produced by the UN DPO from 2019 onwards, and the way in which they seek to (re)conceptualize PKI for the United Nations. After presenting the main documents (Section a), it goes on to follow the methodology of Section III.b, following the same five-fold structure used in the case study.

a. The documents and their context

Sweeping the UN Peacekeeping Resources platform resulted in a selection of several documents.

The starting point is the UN PKI policy mentioned in Chapter II, which saw a slight revision in 2019.[236] Its main aim is to establish "a framework that articulates a consistent and principled approach to peacekeeping intelligence".[237] In the annex of this policy comes a further set of precise guidance on the PKI systems through "operational policies and standard operating procedures".[238]

Published on the same day, the central UN Military Peacekeeping-Intelligence Handbook (MPKI HB)[239] aims to "strengthen the MPKI capabilities of field operations by explaining MPKI best practices",[240] notably when it comes to the training of personnel – which remains the responsibility of TCCs before deployment. As a second pillar to the core of the PKI standardization, and published a year later, comes the Peacekeeping-Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (PKISR) Handbook.[241] PKISR is to be understood as both an expansion and a complement to MPKI at "Force and Sector levels".[242]

The three documents above form the core reference for the PKI structure as standardized by the DPO, but several more subordinate documents were produced and provide some additional insight. Some of the ones reference below include the additional guidelines on HUMINT

[236] United Nations Department of Peace Operations (2019a), *Policy – Peacekeeping-Intelligence*.
[237] Idem, p. 2.
[238] Idem, p. 3.
[239] United Nations Department of Peace Operations (2019b), *Military Peacekeeping-Intelligence Handbook (MPKI HB)*.
[240] Idem, p. 8.
[241] United Nations Department of Peace Operations (2020a), *Peacekeeping-Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Staff Handbook (PKISR HB)*.
[242] Idem, p. 36.

(HPKI 2020)[243] and OSINT (OPKI 2022)[244], a unit manual for PKISR (2022)[245], and "Reinforcement Training Packages" both for MPKI (2022)[246] and PKISR (2022).[247] These were also used for the following analysis, but are only marginally mentioned, as they typically go too in-depth on the specific guidelines at unit-level for the scope of this thesis.

b. The architecture of PKI

Starting at the base policy, significant foundations are made to the overall intelligence architecture of PKI. First of these is the setting of a "Mission Peacekeeping-Intelligence Coordination Mechanism" (MICM), which is meant to "direct and oversee the peacekeeping-intelligence cycle within the mission"[248] as an operational centre for PKI to connect the different members of the mission's architecture. Not only should it have no capabilities for analysis and be coordinated by the mission leadership, but there is also specific emphasis on its resources being distinct and dedicated to the sole purpose of coordination. The Coordination Mechanism is also expected to represent the various participating mission entities (in the realm of PKI), such as the U2 and head of UN Police, and its Chair ought to be a civilian, "preferably the Mission Chief of Staff",[249] reporting directly to the SRSG. The JMAC is reinforced in this structure as a direct subordinate of the MICM and a pivotal unit in drawing the main PKI plans at mission-level. In some instances, the MPKI Handbook states that the functions of the MICM may be attributed to the JMAC, as its exact structure and composition are expected to be mission specific.[250]

Another essential novelty is the entrenching of the DPO HQ as a source of strategic planning, general support and oversight, as well as in the role of an interface with the member states. To

[243] United Nations Department of Peace Operations (2020b), *Acquisition of Information from Human Sources for Peacekeeping-Intelligence (HPKI).*
[244] United Nations Department of Peace Operations (2022b), *Open-Source Peacekeeping-Intelligence (OPKI).*
[245] United Nations Department of Peace Operations (2022a), *United Nations Peacekeeping Missions Peacekeeping-Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance (PKISR) Unit Manual*.
[246] United Nations Department of Peace Operations (2020c), *Reinforcement Training Package for United Nations Military Peacekeeping-Intelligence Officers.*
[247] United Nations Department of Peace Operations (2022c), *Reinforcement Training Package for United Nations Peacekeeping-Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance.*
[248] UN DPO (2019a), p. 10.
[249] Idem, p. 14.
[250] UN DPO (2019b), pp. 10-11.

that end, it should also constitute a "Peacekeeping-intelligence Coordination Team" (PICT) and assign specific offices within the Department to oversee respective mission entities. The policy also outlines specific responsibilities for the Head of Mission (read SRSG, for comparison with the MINUSMA case), who's both "the primary client of the PKI cycle"[251] and directly accountable to the Secretary-General regarding its execution within the mission.

The division of the strategic, operational, and tactical echelons remains crucial. The MPKI Handbook puts UNHQ, as the sum of the department heads (of which the DPO as seen above, but also the Department of Safety and Security UNDSS and Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs DPPA), as the main element at region and country-level providing "strategic guidance to field missions".[252] The bulk of the entities is situated at the operational level, as responders to the FC instead of the HoM/SRSG. These include the JMAC as a mixed entity that "acquires and analyses multi-source information to prepare mid- to long-term integrated analysis and assessments",[253] the Joint Operations Centre (JOC), who's expected to take a coordination role also with the other military and police operations levels, the traditional U2 cell at FHQ, who collates tactical-level intelligence from below, as well as a slew of other head of mission units such as the police components, the Chief Security Advisor from UNDSS and other liaison personnel. All of these should participate in MICM, with the U2 being expected to also represent the FC. As for the tactical level, it is left to the Sector and Battalion echelons of the military intelligence, i.e. the G2 and S2. It is meant to serve both local commander's own requirements as well as to feed, through the U2, into the operational and strategic considerations whenever deemed necessary.[254]

The U2 / G2 / S2 link is the core focus of the MPKI Handbook, as the *explicit* tool of Military Intelligence. The U2 in this logic is responsible to "lead and direct the mission wide MPKI structure",[255] which extends to decision on capabilities and the development of SOPs, with the G2 and S2 applying the direction of the upper rank. Space is additionally made for a fourth, company-level intelligence team, but also for two types of dedicated units. These are of particular note as they are the "Peacekeeping-Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance Unit" (PKISR), to "support acquisition and intelligence production" and the "Military All-

[251] UN DPO (2019a), p. 13.
[252] UN DPO (2019b), p. 10.
[253] Ibidem.
[254] Idem, pp. 10-16.
[255] Idem, p. 14.

Source Information Cell" (MASIC), to "increase the thinking and analytical elements of an MPKI entity".[256] Both appear to be notably referring to the functions the ASIFU took up within MINUSMA, with MASIC even being the name of its planned evolution in 2017, before it was finally directly integrated into the U2. Any further extension to non-UN partners is left to the discretion of the SRSG.

The PKISR element is further developed in its respective Staff Handbook. There, it is outlined as "a means to achieve the acquisition step in the UN MPKI cycle",[257] which creates a clear subordination role: PKISR is *one of the ways* with which to achieve MPKI. While it means it will be developed further in Section d, suffice to say that it is currently focused chiefly on airborne units, whether UAS or manned, Field human teams, and so-called Long Range Recce Patrols (LRRP) to be deployed ahead of specific units. The Staff Manual also states that, while subordinated to the U2, there should be "a process to allow both the JMAC and UNPOL access"[258] to its abilities.

The MPKI Handbook also sets the concept of Areas of Peacekeeping-Intelligence Responsibility (APIR) and Interest (APII). These are meant to "deconflict and understand the focus areas"[259] for concurrent units, particularly within the military intelligence hierarchy. The APIR sets the sector of direct responsibility for a given Commander, whereas the APII typically extends to neighbouring APIR as an important sector for the Commander to be aware of (although it is explicitly not under their control).

Finally, the intelligence cycle remains an essential concept used across all documents. It is a driving frame in the policy itself, presented as the very basics of PKISR, and the MPKI Handbook further states that staff should "'own' the peacekeeping-intelligence cycle".[260] As a general rule, it is also what dictates the very structure of the manuals.

c. The requirements for PKI

According to the base policy, the fundamental purpose of PKI is to enable missions to take decisions on appropriate actions to enhance situational awareness, the safety of UN personnel,

[256] Idem, p. 15.
[257] UN DPO (2020a), p. 6.
[258] Idem, p. 36.
[259] UN DPO (2019b), p. 27.
[260] Idem, p. 23.

and guide activities related to protection of civilians. This comes with three specific expectations: supporting a common operational picture, providing early warning of imminent threats, and identifying "risks and opportunities" in an operational sense.[261]

In a more precise sense, the core Intelligences Requirements, (IRs) are supposed to be set by the Head of Mission and their leadership team. These are expected to be directly handled by the Coordination Mechanism, translating the needs of the leadership into mission-level IRs, and "phrased as questions"[262] to answer gaps in knowledge in relation to specific problems or situations. The Intelligence Requirements use the base hierarchy of Priority IR (PIR), Specific IR (SIR) and Essential Elements of Information (EEI). While the MICM produces mission-level PIRs as explained above, each cell should in turn set their own PIRs at their relevant levels, whereas it is up to the linked intelligence chief to decompose them into SIRs for their intelligence sensors.

The MPKI Handbook adds the concept of Requests For Information (RFI), which supplant IRs, "when the MPKI entity does not own the assets required"[263] and thus relies on an external request. It also sets prioritization guidelines in terms of both importance ("Mission Critical, Essential or Desirable") and time. Surprisingly, the PKISR Handbook also adds a concept, in the form of Critical Commander IRs (CCIR), something which is not covered by the other core documents.[264] This is directly integrated into the IR hierarchy by being a fourth rank above even PIRs, being "anything that the Force leadership determines as information that is required to make timely and effective decisions".[265] The decisive distinction is that, unlike PIRs, these are not exclusive to PKI issues.

It is specified that "clear direction from the Commander, at all levels, is the start point"[266] when it comes to intelligence. Direction work implies in all cases to come up with IRs (relevant to that level), prioritizing and breaking them down into SIR and/or EEIs for the sensors, and ensuring proper resource allocation. At Sector level and lower, it is expected that the direction and responsibility of the intelligence work might rest in staff members who have other

[261] UN DPO (2019a), p. 3.
[262] Idem, p. 12.
[263] UN DPO (2019b), p. 24.
[264] The MPKI Handbook does mention CCIRs a handful of times, but never includes it in its explanations of the basic requirement or direction elements of MPKI.
[265] UN DPO (2020a), p. 8 – see also p. 12.
[266] UN DPO (2019b), p. 24.

concurrent portfolios because of cell size, but the MPKI Handbook sets clearly that one individual is at all times to be responsible for directly linking the intelligence work with the needs of the echelon above. Provision is made for the intelligence elements themselves to "produce direction for the commander to endorse", as it further specifies that "often commanders are not trained in MPKI techniques and procedures".[267] For this reason, commanders may not be expected to systematically set PIRs, and would thus rely on the PKI leaders to help draw them – the Handbook even provides question templates for them to ask their superiors. The PKISR Handbook likewise expects that even for CCIRs, "the U2 will need to define [them] on behalf of the leadership".[268]

d. The methods of PKI

The base policy refers most of the parameters for "effective and efficient"[269] intelligence collection and analysis to the specifics of the mission, either through its requirements or its ad hoc mission-level Plans. These include an Information Acquisition Plan (IAP), a translation of the IRs expected to be translated into unit-level plans further down the hierarchy, and an Intelligence Support Plan (ISP) to set "the boundaries within which the peacekeeping-intelligence cycle will be executed",[270] which includes specific methods, ethics consideration and security measures. At mission-level, both are to be drawn by the JMAC in close contact with the Coordination Mechanism and mission leadership. The MPKI Handbook, expands on this, with the U2 being tasked with providing similar plans for the military side and "each military component"[271] expected to develop an IAP at its own level. The PKISR Handbook further differentiates the management of requirements, which includes the IAP and its respective manager, with the management of acquisition proper, left to short and mid-term planning, including translating the IAP into a daily Information Acquisition List (IAL).[272]

The IAP is expected to be a constantly evolving document that relies on the PIRs to become the "most important tool and catalyst"[273] for the PKI cycle. It also relies on an assessment of

[267] Idem, pp. 26-27.
[268] UN DPO (2020a), p.8.
[269] UN DPO (2019a), p. 5.
[270] Idem, p. 12.
[271] UN DPO (2019b), p. 28.
[272] UN DPO (2020a), pp. 14-16.
[273] UN DPO (2019b), p. 28.

the environment, to identify important areas and limits. Once these two elements have been combined, the IAP is expected to determine what information is to be acquired, by whom, when, where, how and why, and then be directly communicated to the acquisition sensors. Its most essential function is thus to break down the IRs into specific EEIs, or Indicators & Warnings (I&W) - meaning observable behaviours, signals or events for the asset expected to be reading the plan. Beyond tasking the units however, the IAP is also expected to help monitor progress and productivity, although it is unclear by which means this should happen.[274]

In MPKI, there is a dual reliance on the basic military personnel ("every soldier is a sensor") in combination with the "technical acquisition assets" - specialist units and technologies.[275] With the increase in sophistication and ever-more complex systems being implemented, a focus is given to putting them together in a holistic and complementary manner. The different assets, with their own procedures and methods, should be balanced together for the acquisition strategy of the intelligence cell. In addition, it should identify all potential sources of information in its APIR and collate them into a Source Register to help with evaluation and duplication identification. These sources are most typically "controlled", meaning they are typically assets directly subordinated to the unit, although this designation can extend to other entities within the UN umbrella. There are however "uncontrolled" sources, typically local sources, media and records, or scientific and technical literature, as well as "casual" sources, which are considered to be local population and refugees/IDPs.[276] Interestingly, these categories apply essentially to OSINT and HUMINT methods respectively.

OSINT and HUMINT get a particular a particular attention in the UN-produced documents as they both have their own set of guidelines produced – where they become referred to as Open-Source Peacekeeping-Intelligence (OPKI)[277] and Human Peacekeeping-Intelligence (HPKI)[278]. These are shorter, summary documents that essentially outline principles in data acquisition: no payment in exchange for information, all HPKI must be non-clandestine, information must be timely and relevant, etc. Nevertheless, they do offer some standardized procedures, notably in rating tables for source and information credibility. More importantly, the very existence of these separate guidelines, subordinated directly to the chief PKI policy

[274] Idem, pp. 28-32.
[275] Idem, pp. 39-40.
[276] Ibidem.
[277] UN DPO (2022b).
[278] UN DPO (2020b).

rather than to the MPKI guidelines, highlights the importance given to these two methods of intelligence. Indeed, these are some of the most expansive and least technologically limited methods of collection, which are also relevant to potential civilian elements of the PKI system.

The MPKI Handbook, accessorily remaining with the traditional terms, puts its OSINT cell as its essential acquisition method, in the sense that it is the only one implemented systematically. Other components are mentioned but are dependant "on the available sensors and units in the mission".[279] In the rest of the hierarchy, and particularly in the lower, closer-to-field levels, the focus is delegated to the ISR, complemented by various capabilities. These include OSINT, as an easy-access method (although dedicated specialists can also be used), HUMINT as a feature of general contact made by the troops, IMINT and GEOINT as the product of ground patrols, or – when available – UAS, and, in a more technically-dependent way, SIGINT (including COMINT and ELINT) and TECHINT.

The PKISR Handbook, on the other hand, chooses to put OPKI and HPKI on par with two other disciplines: Geospatial Peacekeeping-Intelligence (GPKI) and Signals Peacekeeping-Intelligence (SPKI) - reformulations of GEOINT and SIGINT. GPKI (which contains as a subset the equivalent to IMINT: Imagery Peacekeeping-Intelligence, or IPKI) concerns PKI gained through "geographic imagery and geospatial data".[280] As for the sensors, it focuses mainly on UAS and satellites, although it also considers ground-based cameras, whether fixed (CCTV) or mobile (human-operated). These appear considered a baseline capacity, whereas SPKI is to first "engage with the host nation's judicial system"[281] and develop and ad hoc policy with each deployment.

The data should ultimately be processed into "all-source, fused" intelligence. Analysis should "strive to be predictive"[282] and is standardized through specific procedures that are meant to help human officers parse the data. The two core standardization approaches rely on the PMERSCHII-PT and ASCOPE matrix, direct expansions of the PMESII framework that was notably used by ASIFU. The Handbook further divides the Analytical processes into four steps: collation (of all acquired data), evaluation (of data and source credibility), analysis/integration (application of the structured process to the data and identification of patterns), and

[279] UN DPO (2019b), p. 17.
[280] UN DPO (2020a), p. 25.
[281] Idem, p. 27.
[282] UN DPO (2019b), p. 47.

interpretation (making sense of the results). On the PKISR side, analysis is only briefly mentioned as a 4-phase structure that takes place within 72 hours of the "capture" of information in order to come out with an advanced product.[283]

But the most significant body of contribution may in the large consideration given to the procedures supporting both the analysis and the general direction of PKI – procedures which in fact go beyond strict intelligence, to support the "UN Mission Decision-Making Process" (MDMP) as a whole.[284] This is summed up by the MPKI Handbook as the Analysis of the Operating Environment (AOE). In short, it is a way to apprehend the APIR and APII through an evaluation of the specific circumstances of the geophysical, human and information dimensions on one hand, and of the relevant actors on the other, to do a pre-assessment of potential ways these two elements interact in ways that might affect the commander's mission. These various analyses can be conducted in a range of ways, including mapping, link analysis and relational matrices, SWOT tables, situation overlays, and many other concepts and acronyms which are outlined in detail. While they might at first glance appear a part of the analysis step, these do not however fit so simply in a linear process, as they are explicitly linked to several parts of the intelligence cycle, from the setting of IRs to the final moments of production. In fact, the MPKI Handbook, which dedicates one chapter to each step of the Cycle, puts the AOE on a completely separate section.[285] Its conduct is to be "continuous", and its main expected outcomes include setting IRs, identifying I&Ws and generally updating the IAP, as well as producing Peacekeeping-Intelligence Estimates (PIE) - the latter being a basic structuring of outcomes into easily digestible conclusions rather than raw facts or information. This indicates that the AOE process interacts on a large spectrum of the intelligence cycle.

e. The dissemination of PKI

One of the core principles of the base policy is the secure storage and sharing of PKI, whose specifics it nonetheless opts to leave to the mission. It does devote a particularly large element[286] of its base text to these stakes, both to link it with the broader body of UN policy on Information Sensitivity and classification rules, but also to put forward the "need to know" and

[283] UN DPO (2020a), p. 19.
[284] UN DPO (2019b), p. 104.
[285] Idem, pp. 74-103.
[286] UN DPO (2019a), pp. 7-9.

"need to share" principles inside of the mission. Information Security remains the most addressed concern, with extensive lists of sensitive information types that ought to be protected, and clear guidelines for handling, storing, or dispatching documents.

As for the specifics of dissemination, it mostly puts the responsibility of determining it on the Head of Mission, although the policy also provides space for a registry of classified documents as well as a standardized access matrix. Provisions are also made for sharing outside of the mission or UN but are left to the discretion of the HoM/SRSG. The PKISR Handbook further adds that the dissemination requirements for a specific IR or RFI should include the dissemination requirements, and that dissemination should be updated on the IAP to "reflect open and complete IRs".[287]

Many words can be found on the importance of the fluidity of information and of collaboration between entities. At times, rather than propose structural measures or procedures, these address the potential recipient through concepts and principles, for instance in labelling PKI "a 'Team Sport'" or comments such as "always remember, peacekeeping-intelligence is not a competition among UN entities, it is a team effort".[288] The MPKI Handbook also dedicates a chapter to Information Management (IM), in an effort to collate and record gathered knowledge, notably across units on rotation periods. It provides some basis to do so, such as standards for labelling, recording and archiving files and documents, but remains overall vague. The topic of a database is particularly summarily addressed, with the main takeaway being that "MPKI staff should start one as soon as an operation commences".[289]

f. The outcomes of PKI

According to the MPKI Handbook, the types of final outcomes expected should be determined by a Senior Analyst through a Production Plan. The include periodic products as well as ad hoc ones, along with the details of their format and responsibility. Fundamentally, "analysts are required to provide predictive analysis and scenarios on the evolving tactical and operational situation".[290] This means that at the end of the analytical process, there should be "a predictive

[287] UN DPO (2020a), pp. 19-20.
[288] UN DPO (2019b), pp. 23-24.
[289] Idem, p. 112.
[290] Idem, p. 49.

peacekeeping-intelligence assessment relating to one of the Commander's PIRs"[291] that includes considerations on probability of occurrence.

Three types of standard reporting formats are proposed by the MPKI Handbook: Peacekeeping-Intelligence Reports (INTREP, for non-routine elements requiring urgent attention), Peacekeeping-Intelligence Summaries (INTSUM, periodic updates regarding the relevant APIR) and Thematic Reports. These also come with format examples, and some further guidelines are provided on language and general formatting. The ultimate goal of MPKI being to support the military decision-making process (MDMP), this process is also explained in the Handbook, to ensure that staff understands "what peacekeeping-intelligence support is required at each step".[292] Some mention is also given to the importance of establishing an intelligence dialogue, not just for information exchange but also for feedback and performance evaluation, but few specific guidelines are given.

Finally, The PKISR Handbook adds the creation of a Management Board (PKIMB), which is to "provide a monthly summary of activity".[293] This seems intended to be a separate organ targeted more towards the upper echelon, as it is meant to "increase the visibility of the use of PKISR across the Mission", but it also has responsibilities towards day-to-day PKI, as it should also reflect on the planning and execution of the PKI process as well as confirm periodically "that the PIRs remain valid".[294] The potential overlap of this last function with the MICM appears to be evident, as the text already accounts for the possibility that the PKIMB could be incorporated into the JMAC-led Coordination Mechanism.

[291] Idem, p. 62.
[292] Idem, p. 104.
[293] UN DPO (2020a), p. 20.
[294] Ibidem.

VI. Discussion

The goal of this final Chapter is to gather the elements of the previous two analyses into a tentative understanding of the modern notion of PKI for the United Nations. It does so in Section a by collating the main dynamics of the MINUSMA case study, with a focus on the gaps and issues it encountered, then evaluating to what extent the new body of doctrine produced at UN-level addresses them, and finally considering the general implications of the current state for the UN and its PKOs. It also covers the shortcomings and methodological limits this thesis encountered (Section b) and proposes a final summary of the findings (Section c).

a. From practice to doctrine: the features of contemporary Peacekeeping Intelligence

i. Identifying the core issues

As a direct result of the analysis of Chapter IV, a total of five key points may be highlighted as some of the core issues that the UN PKI apparatus faced in the context of the MINUSMA operation. These are naturally co-related elements that may be causally related to one another, but they all represent an important and distinct enough facet of the case study to be considered separately.

One of the most important elements to highlight is the ubiquity of national and cultural boundaries. The diversity of composition that characterizes most UN PKOs has the potential for being an incredible asset for PKI. Troops contributed by countries neighbouring the zone of operation would on average have a better ability for cultural and human understanding, notably increasing capacity for HUMINT and OSINT collection. In reality however, these possibilities do not seem to have been taken into account at a structural level. Since units are designed according to national belonging, this impairs easy and streamlined collaboration, which has adverse effect on all steps of the intelligence process, from goal setting to effective data sharing and the dissemination of products. It is particularly salient in the interaction the various intelligence bodies had on vertical lines, both with their leadership above and the rank-and-file that could be considered to be below them. If these did not share their basic referential, the intelligence professionally could be in effect prevented from either clear direction or effective sensors, respectively.

These cultural differences are compounded by a second element that was determinant to the fate of PKI for MINUSMA, which is the heavy reliance on NATO systems, procedures, and terminologies. While not a negative *a priori*, as it could provide a solid standard of reference that has historically lacked in UN PKOs, in practice it appears to have widened already problematic cultural gaps, creating an almost binary divide between those *in* and those *out* of the alliance. The historical link to the ISAF experience in particular, visible in the exportation of its methods and its resulting products (and, admittedly, in the mission's early mandate as well), further contributed to skewing the conception of PKI and potentially enclosing it into a frame of reference that was everything but appropriate to some of the mission's partakers.

Third comes the lack of clarity and reliability in structure, resulting in overlapping mandates as well as a confusion in the role of the leadership. This resulted in conflicts on the vertical chain of command, whether through decision makers ignoring the products of their intelligence officers, or through these officers setting their own requirements. It also produced conflicts horizontally, with typical turf wars over the proper division of labours between the respective units. Most exemplary of this issue is probably the rapid evolution of both the architecture and the requirements around ASIFU. In the span of a few years, the unit confronted all manners of expectations from the strategic to the tactical level and ended up disappearing completely into the U2 structure. This general issue also posed further problems when interacting with another reality of PKOs: the rotational system applied to virtually all military units. This ensured that a great level of variance would occur both in the practice of PKI, with SOPs and information networks requiring constant re-imagining, and in its requirement-setting, with different FCs having wildly diverging expectations.

The fourth issue one can look at is the general absence of proper dissemination protocols. Although the aforementioned cultural boundaries and internal competition certainly contributed to it, this certainly contributed to the constant reported "stovepiping" that took place in the mission. The clash in information systems, classification standards, and above all the fact that product release pathways were unit-specific and internally determined all also impaired an effective flow of both inbound data or information and outbound products. Much like with the architecture of the mission, the general logic of dissemination also evolved throughout the first years of the mission, going to the strict "need-to-know" principle and revealing crucial flaws in its fundamental design.

The fifth and final consideration should go to the various material obstacles PKI encountered. These included limitations of resources, both financial and material, the complexity of the operational environment and of the resulting demands in information and intelligence, as well as the physical dispersion of the various parts of MINUSMA in the wideness of the Sahel. These could be considered to be more specific to the mandate and mission that characterized this specific mission and may therefore not be as characterizing of PKI as a whole.

ii. Potential lessons learned

While the previous sub-Section remains an overview which lack the data to fully explore the gaps in MINUSMA's PKI and their root causes, many of the core points cited above can be linked to a general lack of standardization and unification in the practice of PKI. It would be hard to claim that the new body of DPO documentation does not seek such a standardization. With some training packages reaching over 800 pages of instruction, and hundreds of ones of manual guidelines, they come in the direct line of modern military manuals. In its current form, it seems particularly powerful in addressing the first and third issues, namely the lack of a general culture of intelligence, and the unclarity and reliability of the structure. Indeed, some points appear to have been drafted almost specifically to answer some of the more common criticisms levelled at MINUSMA's experience. The very existence of the MICM, the multiple specific provisions targeting potential overlaps, and the emphasis given to responsibility distribution, all show a clear will to have a unified structure that works together.

At the same time, the sheer volume of unique roles and acronyms may not always serve to clarify the situation, particularly if it is to be adapted to units with no intelligence background. Several interactions, including between some of the main concepts, remain unclear without further context. The reliance on the intelligence cycle rhythm, for instance, clashes with the emphasis put on AOE, as it is not clearly integrated into the former concept. PKISR is said to be subordinated to MPKI, yet brings in new concepts, such as the IAL, CCIRs and PKIMB, while some others change across the documents – HUMINT and OSINT becoming HPKI and OPKI for instance. This can also likely be attributed to the ongoing refinement of the concepts, which have additional details in the handbooks published later, but it is still an impairment to the clarity of the PKI process.

To achieve this massive standardization, the manuals also lean in even deeper in the terminology and procedures developed by the US and NATO experiences.[295] While this could have some of the same adverse effects as in Mali, pushing and alienating non-Western nations by imposing a completely distinct conception of intelligence onto their units, it also comes with the crucial difference that, this time, it is laid out and developed into an intentionally accessible, written standard. Since the burden of training remains with the TCCs, it is hard to know if this will suffice to not alienate them. Still, it can be reasonably expected that it might lead to at least marginally better results than an ad hoc adaptation brought up by specific units instead of being carefully implemented from the top.

It must be said that not every element is covered with the same exhaustive rigor. At times, the guidelines defer from properly standardizes processes to rather loose and general principles. This is particularly apparent when it comes to information sharing and dissemination. Most of the mentions appear summary at best, or even wishful at worst. While it stands to reason that specific would be left to the mission leadership, it may reflect a broader inability to address some of the most complex and pervasive issues of PKI (or indeed of intelligence as a whole). Some specific assumptions seem even directly countered by the MINUSMA experience, such as the claim that, at the beginning of a new mission, "analysts are likely to deploy with a good analytical start point regarding the OE and actors"[296] thanks to previous UNHQ analysis – something which was identified as a severe impairment to the launch of the entire mission in Mali. The fact that specific provisions are also made for PKI higher-ups to draft the IRs themselves in replacement of their leadership is also striking. Although such practice might be (and has been) an open door to conflicts of interests and closed-loop intelligence processes, having its quasi-inevitability acknowledged by the standardized manual may be a first step in pragmatically addressing it.

iii. Further implications

There is no doubt that intelligence will always be a difficult and flawed practice, particularly in the exponential complexity of both the UN as an institution and the operating environments of its peacekeeping operations. Ultimately, while it can legitimately be argued that "the model

[295] An extremely high number of terms can be found *verbatim* in NATO (2016).
[296] UN DPO (2019b), p. 47.

of the ASIFU was not optimal for MINUSMA"[297], it was nevertheless an important milestone in the development of PKI, which demonstrated and even catalysed a real will among UN partners to develop it into a tentatively exhaustive mechanism to support the organization's activities. More than anything perhaps, this last decade of UN PKI was one of radical changes, the result of a decades-long pursuit for a unique translation of what have become normal national means into the international security system.

Whether these changes meaningfully affect the ability of the United Nations to pursue its mandate of collective security, only the coming missions, and the next decade of peacekeeping, will be able to tell. Although the current documents may be a valuable starting point, challenges do remain, both old and new. Standardization is an essential foundation for every link of the intelligence chain, including the top leadership elements who may struggle to understand which capabilities even exist at their disposal. At the same time, it could prove to be a limiting, stifling framework that excludes differing non-Western practices or all but formalizes ties with external entities at the cost of the principle of impartiality. It is also a tendency that speaks to the overall trend of militarization that has been observed with UN PKOs altogether. The guidelines, through both their inspiration and current form, are no exception, and this may also conflict with the centrality of civilian institutions of the UN, to which military force was only ever a tool to support extreme cases under Chapters VI and VII of the Charter. As the Action For Peacekeeping plan rolls on, the role of PKI in the UN's peace operations is likely to grow in importance, but its future remains fraught with uncertainty.

Little would more elegantly illustrate this uncertainty than the final developments of the UN operation in Mali, which came as I was writing the very last words of this thesis. On 16 June 2023, the country's Foreign Minister requested "the withdrawal, without delay, of MINUSMA", amid growing distrust and fatigue of the local population toward Western presence.[298] In respect of the principle of consent, on 30 June, the UNSC unanimously passed Resolution 2690, formally ending MINUSMA's existence by the end of the year.[299] While there is no way to have sufficient perspective at this time, the Bamako's military government's turn to less scrupulous players such as the Wagner group are unlikely to be positive to the already tenuous internal accords and worsening humanitarian situation in the country.[300] This

[297] Abilova & Novosseloff (2016), p. 18.
[298] Nichols (2023), "Mali asks United Nations to withdraw peacekeeping force".
[299] United Nations Security Council (2023), *Resolution 2690 (2023).*
[300] Mohamed (2023), "Analysis: What's next for Mali after MINUSMA's withdrawal?".

is likely to mean that the final legacy of MINUSMA, one of the UN's most expensive, exhaustive and deadly missions in history, will be that of another failure. The role of PKI in this will have to be determined *post mortem*, but it leaves little doubt to the realization that recent counter-insurgency approaches will struggle to constructively support the UN's goals of peace in the coming years.

b. Limits, sources, and ethics: the way(s) to study PKI

i. Limits of the research

For this thesis, I chose to analyse its more theoretical elements (the manuals) *after* the more practical ones (the field case), which might appear counter-intuitive. This was directly informed by the general dynamic of PKI in the past decade, with MINUSMA being by far the most covered and influential mission, and the manuals only being subsequently published. While this approach was certainly the most representative way to reflect the actual evolution that characterized the field, it also suffered from a lack of existent theoretical background. Field manual study in particular is already a niche topic of research, with little to no pre-existing concepts, and they were treated in a way that was ultimately rather similar to another case study.

The broad approach to intelligence this work took combined with the scope of this assignment also had consequences on the representativity of the research. Whether through the MINUSMA coverage or the selection of the main manuals, a disproportionate focus was given to the military intelligence side of PKI, leaving civilian aspects such as the JMAC on the side in favour of structures such as the ASIFU and U2. This was notably important for continuity purposes, as the newer tenants of the doctrine of MPKI are clearly inherited from the ASIFU experience in particular, which is what previous research has also focused on. It would however be inaccurate to claim that the summary given in this Chapter is an absolutely exhaustive representation of the UN framework for intelligence.

This dissertation could thus be conceived as a first basis from which further research could deepen or widen understanding of UN PKI. Either by looking at the other entities, chief of which the JMAC, by taking more guided analytical lenses focusing on specific aspects of PKI, or even by simply extending on other case studies, this field still struggles with adequate coverage and should welcome extended coverage on almost any front.

ii. The choice of full open-access methodology

The main obstacle to research that I encountered was, expectedly, the choice to remain on the fully open-access side of documentation regarding PKI, as deep analysis on intelligence processes remains limited without direct internal access. Although a limiting factor to answer the research question, this was also an integral, intentional part of the design and purpose of the thesis.

One avenue that had been explored in the early iterations of the dissertation had been to focus on multiple case studies across the history of the UN, with a view on the potential comparative power of the analytical framework between different operations. As research progressed, it became clear that most older PKOs had not seen sufficient coverage, particularly on the rather niche topic of intelligence, to warrant a full case study process. While it was initially expected that this could be compensated by a better access on potentially declassified primary sources, these were also particularly tough to reach, with most pre-90s documents only physically accessible at the library of the New York UNHQ.

As the research settled on its present form, the hurdles of source access remain visible. While the MINUSMA case study aimed to balance both primary and secondary sources, the latter ended up taking on a particularly heavy role. Primary sources ranging from media coverage, UN reports and statistics, and even MINUSMA's YouTube channel all were heavily mobilized, but their role was almost exclusively confined to confirmation and very few actually new elements could be brought up for the case study. While this extra treatment and the general extensiveness of the coverage should elevate Chapter IV beyond a glorified literature review, it is undoubtable that many of its core elements would not exist without the content of pre-existing research, which *comes precisely from* the privileged access enjoyed by their authors. Chapter V suffers less from this, as it is all direct summary from

Considering this research journey is particularly important as a general methodological consideration for research on peacekeeping intelligence. Can research on UN PKI be done using fully open-access methods? While, for the reasons mentioned just above, this thesis could not honestly claim to present a fully autonomous model, I believe it is an important tentative step towards open coverage of a field that is infamous for its shadowy and covert nature. Currently, the DPO's digital resources remain a largely untapped and continuously growing potential for further research, and it is my hope that that potential was made clear by this present work. Furthermore, continuing to refine and develop such approaches is particularly important

for an institution such as the UN, whose very struggle with intelligence and the reputation it carries would be particularly alleviated by increased transparency and accessibility.

iii. The ethical blindspot

Finally, it must be considered that, for reasons of both scope and direction, I undertook with this thesis a work that was essentially descriptive, an approach which comes at the expense of the critical. As more juridically-minded scholars rightfully remind us, peacekeeping operations "do not exist in a legal vacuum".[301] And yet, most studies on MINUSMA's PKI (this one included), although they go to great lengths in considering ways to improve intelligence processes, whether they truly achieve their goals and how efficient they are, very rarely question the *legitimacy* of these practices in the first place – even though this is a crucial question in peacekeeping matters. As the local disgruntlement in Mali should remind us, the perception of local populations, and the ability of UN missions to create *ownership* of the places where it seeks to build lasting peace and stability, should never be taken for granted.

While the framework chosen in this research did not permit to highlight it sufficiently, ethical considerations were present in the DPO handbooks. Concerns on respect of the UN Charter and gender warning elements were particularly prevalent, and the base PKI policy does set some core principles which are reiterated throughout the rest of the guidelines.[302] But some glaring omissions remain. To give but one example, although the UN's own version of geospatial intelligence, GPKI, is established, absolutely no standard to UAV engagement is considered, despite them being a particularly salient topic of controversy.[303] More extensive critical research is certainly essential to the healthy development of PKI.

[301] Kondoch (2017), *International Peacekeeping*, p. 17.
[302] UN DPO (2019a), pp. 4-5.
[303] For just 2 examples, refer to Johnson et al. (2017), "An INS Special Forum: intelligence and drones" and Rosén & Karlsrud (2014), "The MONUSCO unmanned aerial vehicle: opportunities and challenges".

c. Conclusion

This thesis attempted to understand the last decade of Peacekeeping Intelligence through a pragmatic descriptive approach of its processes, using the field case study of the MINUSMA operation as well as the standardized theoretical products recently published by the Department of Peace Operations. It found that contemporary PKI was still struggling with the nature of UN peacekeeping, such as cultural differences, unclear structures, lack of communication protocols and insufficient means. The recent push towards standardized practices and procedures started by the DPO in the past years shows a marked improvement towards clarity and common references, but raises concerns on dependency with institutions such as NATO and rising militarization of UN PKOs. While it still cannot fully escape the importance of primary internal contacts for the study of intelligence, this research has also demonstrated the value of openly accessible digital resources and the potential for study of such manuals in the field of PKI research.

Annex 1: List of acronyms

General

A4P	Action For Peacekeeping
CAS	Complex Adaptive System
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
DPO/DPKO	Department of Peace Operations (new) / Peacekeeping Operations (old)
DPPA	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
FC	Force Commander
FHQ	Force Headquarters
HoM	Head of Mission
HIPPO	High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JMAC	Joint Mission Analysis Centre
JOC	Joint Operations Centre
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MINUSTAH	UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MONUC	UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ONUC	UN Operation in Congo
PKI	Peacekeeping Intelligence
PKO	Peacekeeping Operation
POC	Protection of Civilians
SG	Secretary-General (of the UN)
SHQ	Sector Headquarters
SOLTG	Special Operations Land Task Group
SOP	Standard of Procedure
SRSG	Special Representative to the Secretary-General

TADS	Target Acquisition and Designation Sights
TCC	Troop-Contributing Country
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UN	United Nations
UNAMIR	UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNDSS	UN Department for Safety and Security
UNEF	UN Emergency Force
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNHQ	UN Headquarters
UNIFIL	UN Interim Force in Lebanon
UNMOGIP	UN Military Observer Group in India
UNOCC	UN Operations and Crisis Centre
UNPOL	UN Police
UNSC	UN Security Council
UNSCR	UNSC Resolution
UNTSO	UN Truce Supervision Organization

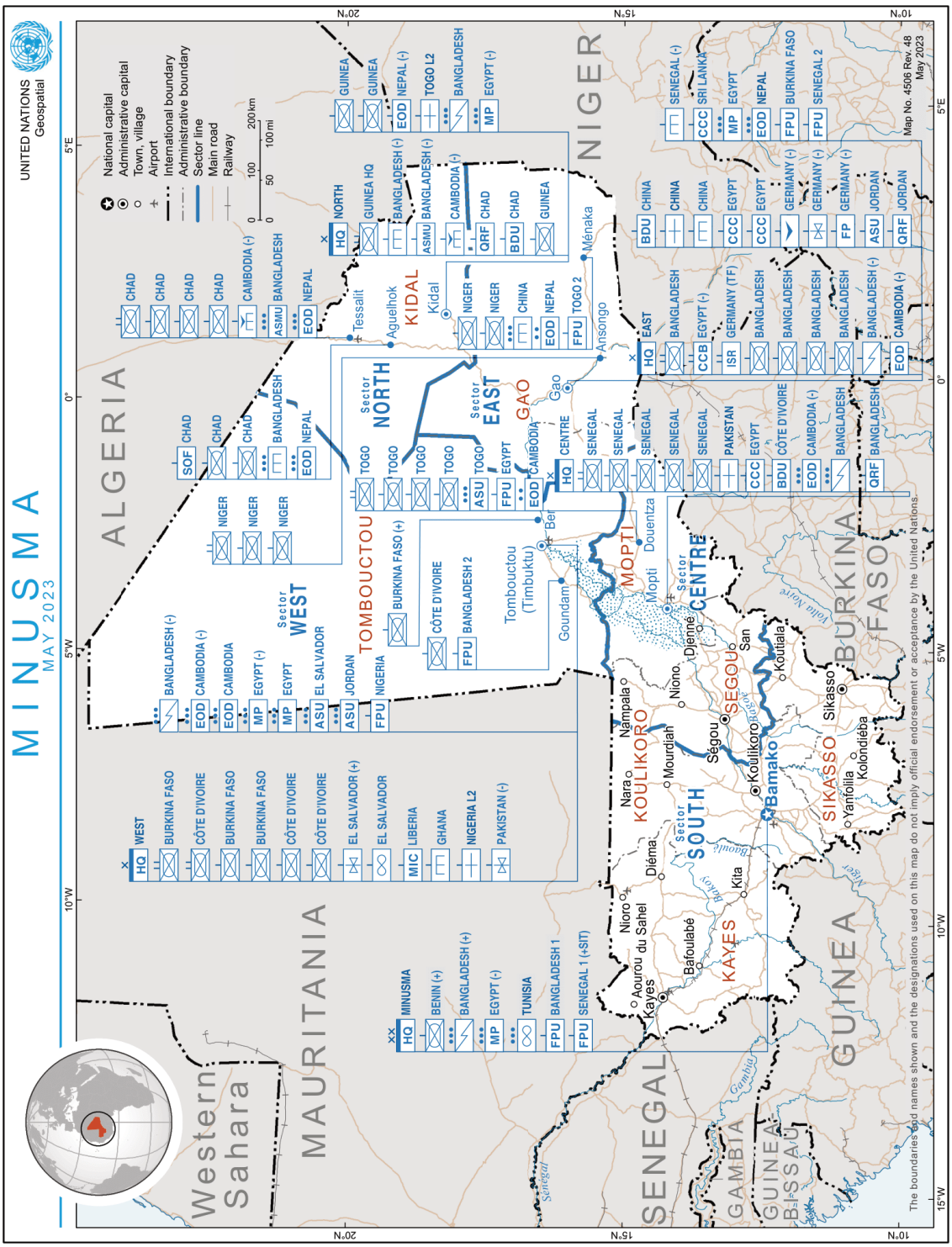
Specifics of intelligence

AFC	All Fusion Centre
AOE	Analysis of the Operating Environment
APII	Area of Peacekeeping-Intelligence Interest
APIR	Area of Peacekeeping-Intelligence Responsibility
ASIC	All Sources Intelligence Cell
ASIFU	All Sources Information Fusion Unit
CCIR	Critical Commander Information Requirement
CCIRM	Collection Coordination Intelligence Requirements Management
COMINT	Communications Intelligence
CMI	Civil-Military Interaction
CST	Cover and Support Team

EEI	Essential Element of Information
ELINT	Electronic Intelligence
G2	Intelligence chief at sector level
GEOINT	Geospatial Intelligence
GPKI	Geospatial Peacekeeping-Intelligence
HPKI	Human Peacekeeping-Intellligence
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
IAL	Information Acquisition List
IAP	Information Acquisition Plan
ICP	Information Collection Plan
IM	Information Management
IMINT	Imagery Intelligence
INTREP	Peacekeeping-Intelligence Report
INTSUM	Peacekeeping-Intelligence Summary
IPKI	Imagery Peacekeeping-Intelligence
IR	Information Requirement
ISP	Intelligence Support Plan
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
I&W	Indicators & Warnings
JCB	Joint Coordination Board
LRRC	Long Range Recce Patrol
MASIC	Military All Sources Information Cell
MASINT	Measurement and Signature Intelligence
MDMP	Mission Decision-Making Process
MICM	Mission Peacekeeping-Intelligence Coordination Mechanism
MPKI	Military Peacekeeping-Intelligence
MSIC	Military Sources Intelligence Cell
OPKI	Open Source Peacekeeping-Intelligence
OSINT	Open Source Intelligence
PKIMB	Peacekeeping-Intelligence Management Board

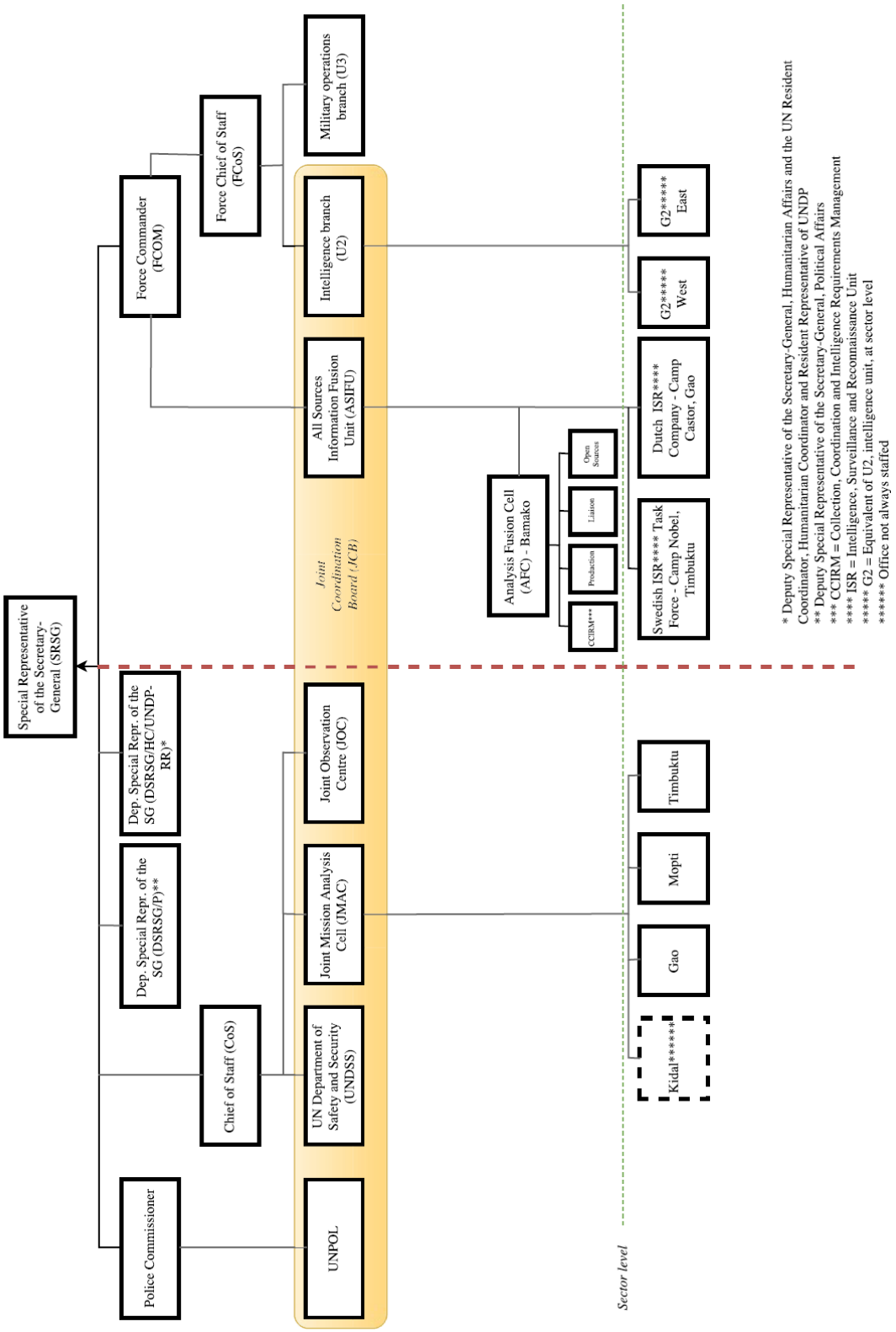
PKISR	Peacekeeping-Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
PICT	Peacekeeping-Intelligence Coordination Team
PIE	Peacekeeping-Intelligence Estimate
PIR	Priority Information Requirement
PMESII	Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, Infrastructure
RADINT	Radar Intelligence
RFI	Request For Information
S2	Intelligence chief at battalion level
SA	Situational Awareness
SIR	Secondary Information Requirement
SIGINT	Signals Intelligence
SPKI	Signals Peacekeeping-Intelligence
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
U2	Intelligence chief at force level

Annex 2: Map



Map of MINUSMA forces and operations, as of May 2023. From United Nations Geospatial Information Section (2023), *MINUSMA May 2023 [cartographic material]*.

Annex 3: PKI structure diagram



From Abilova & Novosseloff (2016), p. 16.

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