UN PEACEKEEPING:
A FORCE FOR GLOBAL PEACE & STABILITY

With more than 90,000 personnel deployed to 14 missions on four continents, peacekeeping is one of the most visible activities undertaken by the UN in the field. The reasons for this are manifold: countries undergoing conflict provide fertile ground for the growth of extremist groups and organized crime, threatening U.S. national security and economic interests. By implementing a range of stabilization and protection measures, peacekeepers help avert the collapse of fragile states, prevent civil wars from metastasizing into full-blown regional conflicts, and decrease the likelihood that dormant conflicts will flare up again. Peacekeeping missions are authorized by the UN Security Council, and since the U.S. is a permanent, veto-wielding member of that body, no peacekeeping mission can be sent into the field without its support.

For decades, Republican and Democratic administrations have supported peacekeeping missions.

**ENHANCE CIVILIAN PROTECTION**
UN peacekeeping has been documented to promote civilian protection. A 2013 study by Swedish and American researchers found that deploying large numbers of UN peacekeepers “dramatically reduces civilian killings.” The paper concluded that ensuring peacekeepers “are appropriately tasked and deployed in large numbers” is a critical factor in their ability to protect civilians.

**REMAIN COST-EFFECTIVE**
UN peacekeeping operations are significantly less costly than other forms of military intervention. In 2018, using the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) as an example, the Government Accountability Office found that a U.S. operation of roughly the same size and duration would cost at least $5.7 billion—nearly eight times more than the $700 million the U.S. contributed to MINUSCA over the same time period.
PROMOTE MULTILATERAL BURDEN-SHARING

UN peacekeeping harnesses the collective resources of the entire international community, ensuring that neither American taxpayers, nor the U.S. military, will have to take on the responsibility of safeguarding international peace and security alone. While the U.S.’s permanent Security Council veto puts it in the driver’s seat on the decision to deploy peacekeepers in the first place, other UN Member States pay nearly three-quarters of the costs associated with these missions and contribute more than 99.9 percent of the troops and police who serve in them. In fact, the UN’s largest contributors of uniformed personnel—countries like Ethiopia, Rwanda, Bangladesh, Ghana, and Indonesia, which do not hold permanent seats on the Security Council—each provide thousands of troops, military observers, and police to UN missions, while the U.S. currently provides just several dozen.

Despite these benefits and a long-running history of bipartisan support in Washington, the current Administration has adopted an increasingly adversarial posture towards UN peacekeeping. In a speech in Brussels in early December 2018, for example, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo lambasted missions that “drag on for decades” and bring us “no closer to peace.” These types of statements are inaccurate.

Many missions have successfully completed their mandates and withdrawn over the years, leaving more stable societies in their wake. For example, UN missions in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d’Ivoire made significant contributions to stability in these West African countries, helping to ensure the safety of populations subject to the depredations of devastating civil wars, facilitating free and fair elections, overseeing peaceful transitions of power, disarming former combatants, and creating conditions that allowed hundreds of thousands of displaced civilians to return home. When it determined that their jobs were complete, the Security Council voted to close all three missions and withdraw peacekeeping forces: Sierra Leone in 2005; Côte d’Ivoire in 2017; and Liberia in 2018.
KEY UN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS CURRENTLY IN THE FIELD

MALI
In 2013, the Security Council voted to deploy peacekeepers to Mali, following a French military intervention targeting extremist groups that had taken over the country’s vast northern regions. The mission (known as MINUSMA) is working to stabilize population centers in northern Mali, help the government extend its authority to these areas, facilitate delivery of humanitarian aid to vulnerable populations, and investigate human rights abuses. MINUSMA has also played an important role in supporting successful efforts to restore democratic governance in Mali, which experienced a military coup in March 2012. Unfortunately, violent extremist groups, including organizations linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, continue to operate in the area and have increasingly targeted MINUSMA troops and bases. Since 2013, more than 100 UN personnel have been killed in deliberate attacks in Mali, making it the most dangerous peacekeeping mission in the world.

SOUTH SUDAN
Civil war broke out in South Sudan in December 2013, leaving tens of thousands of people dead, driving millions from their homes, and sparking rampant food insecurity. The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was immediately forced to shift its focus from post-independence state-building to civilian protection. In an unprecedented move, UNMISS opened the gates of its bases in the capital, Juba, to those fleeing from violence. As fighting spread to other parts of the country, several other UNMISS bases did the same. Currently, UNMISS is providing physical protection to more than 200,000 civilians at six sites around the country. This has saved the lives of many people who would have otherwise likely been directly targeted.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)
UN peacekeepers were dispatched to CAR in April 2014, following vicious political and sectarian strife that left thousands dead and sparked concerns of genocide. Tasked with a number of critical responsibilities, the mission (known as MINUSCA) has helped the country make some important strides. In 2016, for example, the government organized, with robust UN support, peaceful and credible presidential and legislative elections, replacing a previous administration that had been in office on an interim basis. While MINUSCA’s work has helped to preserve calm in some key areas of the country, the security situation has deteriorated in other parts of CAR, with a complex patchwork of armed groups fighting each other for control of resources and targeting civilians. This has led to sharp increases in displacement and humanitarian needs, necessitating a continued robust peacekeeping presence.
COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Terrorism and violent extremism pose a grave and persistent threat to international peace and security. As we've learned over the last two decades, terror networks operate in countries frequently beyond the reach of American access and influence, making a comprehensive, multilateral approach to this global problem absolutely necessary.

The UN is a critical partner in this challenge. The UN’s global efforts to stamp out violent extremism and address the root causes of terrorism help amplify and broaden the reach of our nation’s own counterterrorism initiatives.
BUILDING A STABLE POST-ISIS IRAQ
The UN’s vast humanitarian and development work has been essential in helping to rebuild and stabilize significant parts of Iraq that were devastated by ISIS over the last several years. During the 2016-2017 Battle of Mosul, the UN and its partners provided aid to 1.5 million Iraqis caught in harm’s way and helped nearly 1 million civilians evacuate the city. The operation was one of the largest managed civilian evacuations in modern history and featured widespread coordination between a range of UN agencies, including the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), World Health Organization (WHO), and UN Population Fund (UNFPA). With ISIS’s hold on Iraq relinquished, the UN has set about ensuring the investments made in pursuit of peace are not squandered. The UN Development Program (UNDP) in particular has been a major partner in pursuit of those efforts, funding projects to rebuild critical infrastructure and restore basic services in areas formerly under ISIS control. By mid-2018, UNDP reached a major milestone when it completed its thousandth local project in the country, helping address many of the underlying socio-economic factors that had allowed ISIS to gain such a prominent foothold in the first place.
THE UN OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

In February 2018, the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) formalized a Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact—an agreement between 36 UN entities, INTERPOL, and the World Customs Organization—to maximize each entity’s comparative advantage by delivering as one to help Member States address the following issues:

- Enhancing border management and law enforcement related to counter-terrorism;
- Countering terrorism financing and foreign terrorist fighters;
- Preventing and responding to terrorist attacks involving weapons of mass destruction;
- Promoting and protecting human rights and the rule of law while countering terrorism;
- Protecting critical infrastructure (including the Internet), vulnerable targets, and tourism; and
- Supporting victims of terrorism.
MULTILATERAL SANCTIONS
For more than 15 years, the UN Security Council has enforced robust, legally-binding sanctions, including asset freezes, travel bans, and arms embargoes, targeting individuals, groups, and entities associated with Al-Qaeda. UN sanctions imposed by the Security Council are considered the “gold standard” for coordinated international action. While the U.S. can impose unilateral sanctions, many countries will not adopt their own sanctions absent the important global legal imprimatur of a UN decision.

SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS ON FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS AND INTELLIGENCE SHARING
The rise of ISIS and other extremist groups in Iraq and Syria has pushed the issue of foreign fighters—and how to suppress the recruitment and travel of these individuals to conflict zones—to the forefront of global policy debates. In late 2014, the Security Council unanimously adopted a legally-binding resolution compelling all countries to put in place domestic laws to prosecute anyone who travels abroad to join a terrorist organization, including anyone who aids a potential terrorist by, for instance, helping raise funds for their trip. The Security Council followed up this action with a resolution in December 2017 urging Member States to strengthen their efforts to stem the threat of terrorism through enhanced border control and information sharing, including calling on Member States to employ evidence-based risk assessments, screening procedures, and the collection and analysis of travel data to identify individuals who pose a terrorist threat.
ADVANCING NON-PROLIFERATION

The UN serves as a key international platform for countries to work together to stem the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. The UN General Assembly, Security Council, and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) all provide venues for countries to share resources and information, address breaches of international agreements, and build unified fronts against rogue states. In recent months, there have been significant developments with regards to Iran’s nuclear program and Syria’s chemical weapons. The involvement of the UN and UN agencies in these issues is detailed below.

TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

July 2018 marked the 50th anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), a landmark international agreement aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. The Treaty, which has been joined by all but five UN Member States, includes three overarching commitments: (1) states without nuclear weapons shall not acquire them; (2) states with nuclear weapons (the NPT recognized the U.S., USSR, France, U.K., and China as nuclear weapons states) pledge to work towards eventual disarmament; and (3) all countries can access nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Article III of the NPT requires non-nuclear weapons states to conclude safeguard agreements with the IAEA to prevent the diversion of nuclear materials and technologies for weapons use. IAEA inspection and monitoring activities carried out under the auspices of these safeguard agreements are critical to global nuclear non-proliferation efforts, providing early warning of the misuse of nuclear material and providing a basis for enforcement actions by the Security Council.

VERIFYING IRAN IS STILL COMPLYING WITH THE JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION

Despite the Trump Administration’s decision to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (commonly known as the Iran nuclear agreement) and reimpose sanctions, IAEA continues to monitor and verify that Iran is abiding by its international commitments. In an August 2018 report, the agency said Iran has stayed within caps on uranium enrichment that were set out in the deal and that its inspectors were able to access all the sites and locations in Iran that it needed to inspect. However, earlier in 2018, IAEA issued a report rebuking Iran, saying the country’s government could do more to cooperate with inspectors that undertake inspections allowed under the agency’s Additional Protocol—inspections carried out on short notice.
CONFRONTING THE USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

In 1997, the Chemical Weapons Convention, a treaty that prohibits the development, production, and stockpiling of chemical weapons, came into force, effectively creating the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and charging it with ensuring their elimination. Under the terms of the Convention, OPCW inspectors have verified the destruction of more than 96 percent of the world's declared chemical weapons stockpiles.

OPCW is also empowered to investigate alleged instances of chemical weapons use. In this regard, the organization's fact-finding mission in Syria has been illustrative, confirming on multiple occasions the use of sarin, chlorine, and mustard gas during the Syrian civil war. While this investigative mechanism was previously only allowed to determine the facts regarding the use of chemical weapons, rather than call out guilty parties, in June 2018 OPCW Member States voted overwhelmingly to allow the organization to begin attributing responsibility for chemical attacks in the country. While Russia continues to use its veto on the Security Council to shield the Syrian government from punishment for its use of chemical weapons, such investigations nevertheless play an important role in isolating the Assad regime and its backers and potentially laying the groundwork for future accountability.
UN POLITICAL MISSIONS

In addition to peacekeeping operations, the UN operates special political missions (SPMs) engaged in conflict prevention, mediation, and post-conflict peacebuilding around the world. Authorized by the Security Council, SPMs are tasked with an array of responsibilities, including: supporting political dialogue and reconciliation processes; facilitating free and fair elections; monitoring human rights violations; and encouraging the development of effective rule of law institutions. Funded by Member State dues, SPMs account for nearly one-fifth of the UN regular budget. SPMs are deployed to a number of countries, with the largest currently operating in Iraq and Afghanistan. The work of several SPMs is highlighted below.

IRAQ

The UN Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) works to promote political dialogue, human rights, and the creation of stable and democratic governing institutions. UNAMI also helps coordinate humanitarian and development assistance to the Iraqi people. For instance, UN humanitarian agencies led the international response to the Battle of Mosul, providing food, shelter, and medical care to hundreds of thousands of civilians displaced by fighting. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) has financed more than 1,500 projects across five provinces to restore infrastructure and basic services destroyed during the fight against ISIS. These projects include: rebuilding hospitals in Ramadi and Fallujah that will serve more than 1 million people in Anbar Province; repairing a hospital in Hamdaniya which serves a community of 350,000, many of whom are religious minorities; rebuilding and removing explosive hazards from major bridges in Anbar; and building housing for civilians returning to western Mosul, much of which was levelled in the fighting.
AFGHANISTAN

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) carries out a number of activities critical to the country’s stability and development, a key U.S. priority. In 2014, when the second round of Afghanistan’s presidential election was marred by accusations of fraud, UN election experts coordinated international supervision of a full audit of the results. This process and international mediation efforts helped bring about a power-sharing agreement allowing Ashraf Ghani to be sworn in as President. In 2018, UNAMA worked to support parliamentary elections in October and geared up to assist presidential elections scheduled for spring 2019.

The UN is also supporting efforts to build up and professionalize the Afghan National Police, address opium production, and provide humanitarian assistance to Afghans in need. UNDP administers a trust fund that helps provide salaries to more than 150,000 police personnel and finances efforts to improve the force’s infrastructure and administrative systems, provide training to officers, and improve gender parity within the force. Given Afghanistan’s role in the global opium trade, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime works to strengthen police capacity to enforce the rule of law, enhance border control management to prevent smuggling, increase institutional integrity of the justice system to combat impunity, and help Afghan government oversight bodies fight corruption. In 2018, UNAMA worked to coordinate UN humanitarian agencies that helped to provide food to hundreds of thousands of people affected by a severe drought, facilitate the reintegration of Afghan refugees returning from abroad, and assist in vaccinating millions of children against polio.

SOMALIA

For more than two decades, Somalia has been in a protracted state of political and humanitarian crisis, a situation further complicated by the presence of Al-Shabaab, a terrorist group linked to Al-Qaeda. In order to help stabilize the country and facilitate the formation of an effective central government, the U.S. has supported the work of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) since 2013. UNSOM provides policy advice and technical assistance to Somali authorities on a number of critical state-building issues, including: aiding efforts to create a new federal constitution; building the government’s capacity to carry out security sector reform and strengthen the criminal justice system; helping Somali authorities institute a nationwide disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program for ex-combatants; and helping the country’s nascent electoral commission prepare for national elections slated for 2020.

UNSOM coordinates its efforts closely with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), a regional peacekeeping operation that by working alongside Somali forces has scored major territorial gains against Al-Shabaab in recent years. The UN Support Office for Somalia, which works with UNSOM, provides crucial equipment and logistical support to AMISOM as it seeks to weaken Al-Shabaab and extend the Somali government’s authority throughout areas formerly controlled by the group.
IMPACT OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN 2019

Each year, the UN:

- Provides food aid to 91 million people in 83 countries
- Supplies vaccines to 45 percent of the world’s children
- Assists over 68.5 million refugees and people fleeing war, famine, or persecution
- Works with 195 countries to combat climate change and make development sustainable
- Keeps the peace with 91,000 peacekeepers in 14 operations on 4 continents
- Fights extreme poverty, helping improve the lives of more than 1.1 billion people
- Supports maternal health, helping over 1 million women a month overcome pregnancy risks

And through all of the good that the UN does, it is a resoundingly good bargain for the U.S.:

0.2%
Funding for the UN amounts to 0.2 percent of the total FY ‘18 federal budget

1,740,000,000
U.S. companies were awarded more than one billion dollars in contracts with the UN in 2017