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Citation: Di Salvatore, J., Oksamytna, K. & Coleman, K. P. (2025). Introducing the UNCIPPO (UN Civilian Posts in Peacekeeping Operations) Dataset. *International Studies Quarterly*, 69(2), sqaf021. doi: 10.1093/isq/sqaf021

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Link to published version: <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqaf021>

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Introducing the UNCIPPO (UN Civilian Posts in Peacekeeping Operations) Dataset

Jessica Di Salvatore, University of Florence

Kseniya Oksamytna, City St George's, University of London

Katharina Coleman, University of British Columbia

Abstract

This research note presents a dataset on budgeted civilian personnel posts in UN peacekeeping operations by mission, unit, rank, and staff category in the 1991-2020 period: the UNCIPPO (UN Civilian Posts in Peacekeeping Operations) Dataset. Civilian staff in UN peacekeeping operations include specialists in political affairs, human rights, gender, child protection, electoral support, security sector reform, strategic communications, and information analysis, among others. Our coding of almost three hundred UN budget documents reveals what kinds of civilian posts members states agree to fund. UNCIPPO data also permit more nuanced analyses of the impact of civilian personnel on mission effectiveness. We illustrate this by re-examining Blair, Di Salvatore, and Smidt's (2023) study of the effect of civilian staff on host country democratization, showing that the observed effect is driven by international staff – countering a surprising negative national staff effect – and that staff in units with democracy-related tasks contribute more significantly to this effect than staff in other units. The dataset opens new avenues for research on peacekeeping operations (for example, on peacekeeping resourcing and effectiveness) and IOs more generally (for instance, on the politics of budgeting, the growth of transnational expertise, and the profiles of international bureaucrats).

Keywords: Peacekeeping; United Nations; Expertise; International Bureaucracy

Data statement: The data underlying this article are available on the ISQ Dataverse, at <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/isq>.

Introduction

UN peacekeeping operations employ just short of 10,000 civilian staff and some 1,250 UN Volunteers. Civilian peacekeepers make a significant contribution to UN peacekeeping operations' efforts to fulfil their tasks. Contemporary multidimensional operations are mandated to protect civilians, reform police forces, help organize elections, improve prison management, strengthen judicial institutions, educate voters, promote the political participation of women and youth, support national and local reconciliation, and disseminate messages of peace and civic consciousness. Many of these areas are the sole responsibility of civilian peacekeepers, while in others, civilian personnel work in partnership with – but typically independently from – military or police peacekeepers. There is unambiguous evidence that civilian staff play important roles in implementing peacekeeping mandates, including restoring the rule of law (Blair 2020) and supporting democratization (Blair, Di Salvatore, and Smidt 2023). However, we have so far lacked systematic data on civilian staff in UN peacekeeping operations. In this research note, we present detailed, disaggregated, and comprehensive data on the number, category, and rank of budgeted civilian posts in different units of UN peacekeeping operations over three decades, 1991-2020. The data is being updated to include more recent budget years.

This research note has four parts and a conclusion. We begin with an overview of civilian personnel in UN peacekeeping operations, including a discussion of how posts are established and financed. We then describe the coverage, coding, and format of our dataset. In the third part, we establish the dataset's importance by outlining two main research avenues that it opens. The data allow researchers to examine the effects of the growth and differentiation of UN civilian expertise on peacekeeping outcomes, with implications for civilian staff in other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. UNCIPPO data also enable research into the politics of budgeting in international organizations (IOs), the growth of transnational expertise, and profiles of international bureaucrats. In the fourth part, we highlight the insights the dataset provides into the growth and differentiation of budgeted civilian posts in UN peacekeeping missions, such as the predominance of national staff over international staff and of support personnel over those in substantive units; the small proportion of national staff in units with political sensitive portfolios; and the general (albeit imperfect and subject-dependent) co-trending between the expanding number of tasks in peacekeeping operations and the number of budgeted civilian posts. We also re-examine a recent study (Blair, Di

Salvatore, and Smidt 2023) that investigates, among other things, the role of civilian peacekeeping staff in democracy promotion. Due to its fine-grained nature, the UNCIPPO data elucidates the role of different types of civilian peacekeeping staff in driving the positive findings on the association between peacekeeping and democratization: first, the relationship between the numbers of civilian peacekeepers and democratization is driven by international rather than national staff, and second, staff in units with democracy-related expertise, such as electoral affairs and political affairs, contribute more significantly than staff in all other units. In the conclusion, we summarize the dataset's main features and potential uses.

Civilian Personnel in UN Peacekeeping Operations: An Overview

Contemporary UN peacekeeping operations include three main types of personnel: military, police, and civilian. While military and police personnel are voluntarily provided by member states – with the UN reimbursing some deployment costs (Coleman and Nyblade 2018) – civilian personnel are hired and paid directly by the UN Secretariat.¹ Their salaries and deployment costs are part of the budget of the peacekeeping operation in which they serve.

Civilian peacekeepers were already present in some Cold War UN missions. In the UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC, 1960-1964), for example, civilian experts assisted with the provision of essential public services and capacity-building in education, natural resources management, and public administration (Gledhill, Caplan, and Meiske 2021). However, this was an exception rather than the rule: in the so-called traditional peacekeeping operations, civilian capacity was limited. The importance of civilian personnel increased after the Cold War. In the UN Transition Assistance Group in Namibia (UNTAG, 1989-1990), civilian staff monitored political rallies, thus contributing to their peacefulness (Howard 2008). In the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC, 1992-1993), the Electoral Component and the Information and Education Division facilitated the smooth organization of elections (Findlay 1995).

In contemporary UN peacekeeping operations, civilian personnel perform a variety of crucial tasks. Those working in 'support' units enable their mission's functioning by taking care of

¹ The data also include a small number of professional posts filled by seconded police personnel (for example, Police Commissioners heading of police components) and top military officers such as Force Commanders who may be seconded by a national military or recruited by the Secretariat in a personal capacity.

procurement, mission security, transport, and human resources management. Civilian personnel in ‘substantive’ units work directly on mandate implementation, performing five types of tasks. First, they provide reporting on political, security, or human rights-related developments, for the UN Security Council, Secretariat, and other entities. Second, they promote reconciliation by mediating between warring factions; preventing deadlocks between national political institutions; and helping resolve intercommunal conflicts (Duursma 2022). Third, they build host state capacity and support reforms of the security, judicial, or correctional sectors. Fourth, they directly implement activities: electoral affairs officers undertake voter registration and civic education; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) specialists run disarmament campaigns; and child protection officers separate child soldiers from armed groups and reunite them with relatives. Finally, civilian staff manage funding streams provided through mission budgets or member states’ voluntary contributions.

Civilian peacekeepers are recruited either internationally or in the country that hosts the peacekeeping operation, creating a division between ‘international’ and ‘national’ personnel (Coleman 2020b). International staff currently fall into two main categories, ‘Professional+’ and ‘Field Service’, each with internal ranks (Figure A.1 in the Codebook).² Professional+ (P+) staff serve largely in analytical and management roles. They are ranked from P1 (rarely present in peacekeeping missions) to P5 (highly experienced), above whom are Directors (D1 and D2). The most senior level is civilian mission leadership: a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) at the rank of Under-Secretary-General (USG), supported by one or two Deputy SRSGs at the rank of Assistant-Secretary-General (ASG).³ Field Service (FS) staff serve in peacekeeping and other field operations, often in technical areas such as IT or procurement. They are ranked from FS1 (most junior) to FS7 (most senior).

Among national staff, General Service (GS) staff work mostly in support and administrative roles,⁴ while National Professional Officers (NPOs, also called National Officers, NOs) work in professional roles requiring deep local expertise (e.g. jurists in justice support units). UN budget data – and therefore our dataset – combines these two categories into ‘GS+’ or simply

² Prior to 2009, some missions also included international General Service and Security Service staff, which our dataset captures.

³ The Force Commander also has the rank of ASG; the Police Commissioner usually holds the D2 rank. Some missions do not have a civilian Head of Mission, but those cases are very rare.

⁴ Some GS staff, including Community Liaison Assistants, perform substantive tasks (Coleman forthcoming).

‘National staff’. Finally, UN Volunteers (UNVs) are typically internationally recruited,⁵ but are not formally UN staff, receiving allowances and benefits but no salaries (Coleman 2014).

These seemingly arcane differences among civilian personnel matter. One reason is that they are associated with different levels of authority. A D1 official outranks most other civilian peacekeepers and can engage authoritatively with military and police peacekeepers and with member states representatives, such as Security Council diplomats.⁶ Senior Professional staff also have significant influence within missions: ‘P4s and P5s are the workhorses...[They] have the seniority to be leads on things, but [they] are also enough down in the chain that [they] are working well’.⁷ The seniority of a unit’s staff is an indicator of the priority – or lack of priority – accorded to its workstream. For example, in the UN mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) in 2021, all seven women protection advisers were UNVs or national staff, and thus held ‘less sway in the very hierarchical organization’ (Kullenberg 2021, 682). Similarly, the UN mission in Western Sahara (MINURSO) had only a UNV working on the environment in 2018 (Maertens and Shoshan 2018).

Staff categories and ranks differ in salaries, with significant cost implications. As of 2023, gross compensation for P+ staff ranged from \$47,471 (junior P1) to \$212,632 (USG). For FS staff, the range was \$41,742 (junior FS1) to \$126,640 (senior FS7).⁸ National staff salaries are set to be competitive within host countries and paid in the national currency; in Central African Republic, compensation in 2023 ranged from the equivalent of \$8,300 (junior GS1) to \$59,000 (senior GS7) and from \$46,800 (junior NO-A) to \$152,000 (senior NO-D).⁹

The number and type of budgeted civilian personnel posts in each unit is determined by yearly negotiations during which member states (meeting as the General Assembly’s Fifth Committee) establish an individual budget for each peacekeeping operation.¹⁰ These negotiations are anchored by budget proposals prepared by the UN Secretariat and scrutinized by the expert Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), which can recommend abolishing or reclassifying any proposed post (Coleman 2014). Both the total number of posts and their category and rank can become contested in the Fifth

⁵ Some missions have recruited local UNVs.

⁶ Interview with a UN official, 4 June 2020.

⁷ Interview with a UN official, 4 June 2020.

⁸ UN Secretariat *Information Circular* ST/IC/2023/5, 8 February 2023.

⁹ Data available at <https://onehr.un.org/salary-survey/#/viewdutystation/636b9e0899530c554d34b2c3>.

¹⁰ UNTSO and UNMOGIP are financed through the regular UN budget.

Committee for political or financial reasons. Line-by-line negotiations, which consume considerable energy and time of UN officials and diplomats, have been long criticized for their inefficiency and politicization (Benner, Mergenthaler, and Rotmann 2011).

Once adopted, budgets generate legal payment obligations for member states and delimit the human resources available to missions. UN peacekeeping operations receive few other resources for their civilian activities. Despite the small and recent exceptions for reinsertion payments for demobilized combatants, quick impact projects, and community violence reduction funds,¹¹ the 2015 High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) comment that most missions ‘are provided with a single tool to implement civilian tasks: staff posts’ (United Nations 2015, 52) remains largely accurate. This reinforces the importance of scrutinizing civilian personnel post allocations.¹²

The UNCIPPO Dataset: Coverage, Format, and Coding

To create the dataset, we have extracted the human resources data from the Secretary-General’s budget reports of all 46 newly established or renewed UN peacekeeping operations in the 1991-2020 period available through the ACABQ website or the UN Digital Library.¹³ The Secretary-General’s reports contain human resources tables, typically disaggregating proposed and approved staffing by unit and civilian staff category and rank (an example is in Table A.2 in the Appendix). We record all units performing substantive functions individually, but capture support units as one category, mission support.

It should be noted that the budget documents have become more standardized across mission in the 2000s.¹⁴ In the early 1990s, neither reporting cycles nor the format of budget reports

¹¹ Since 2018, some missions have also received a modest allocation from the peacekeeping budget to support activities like human rights and rule of law work.

¹² As we discuss below, at any one time some posts may remain unfilled, and vacancies diminish the human resources actually available to missions. However, allocated posts establish the intended structure of missions, create the baseline for recruitment, and represent the resources states are willing to accord each unit.

¹³ More specifically, financial years for these budgets often entail a period across two different calendar years (e.g., from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001). Here, we use the earliest year in the interval to assign the budgeted posts (in the previous example, that would be 2000). Hence, the latest budget period in the dataset is 2020/2021. The data will be updated to include more recent years.

¹⁴ Notably, datasets on UN peacekeeping that rely on UN reports or resolutions deal with similar harmonization problems, mostly due to how these documents have changed since the 1990s. For example, as noted in the codebook of the data, the PEMA dataset had to include the coding of Secretary General’s reports to retrieve precise information on tasks to which UNSC resolutions indirectly referred to in the 1990s.

were standardized: especially during start-up periods, some missions issued multiple reports a year, and these reports varied in format and did not always disaggregate total staff positions by type, rank, or even unit. Coding decisions (see Codebook) allowed us to capture basic comparable data as far back as 1991; for previous years, publicly available documentation does not provide sufficiently reliable data.¹⁵ In December 1994, General Assembly resolution 49/233 introduced a uniform peacekeeping budget year (1 July to 30 June) and specified budget reporting requirements, leading to more detailed and consistent reporting from the mid-1990s. In 2003, the General Assembly mandated results-based budgeting for peacekeeping operations (A/RES/57/290). In subsequent years, missions' budget proposals took on an increasingly standardized format. From the mid-2000s, this included a table with an overview of human resources, separate human resources tables for each mission component specifying actually budgeted and proposed posts (including staff category and rank) by unit, and organigrams of proposed staffing. Importantly, the main differences in the sample are over time rather than in the consistency of reporting across units' types. Most expertise areas we code are listed in budget documents since the 1990s. The full version of the dataset includes unit names the way they are presented in the UN budget documents, allowing researchers to recode expertise areas according to their own criteria.

Our dataset codes 277 budget reports and contains 11,341 unique observations of annual staffing decisions (proposed and approved) for more than 1,000 unique substantive units and more than 400 unique support units. A full list of unit names is in the Appendix (Table A.1), representing 21 areas of expertise. Observations in the UNCIPPO dataset include the following information: mission name, budget document number, year, unit name, a dummy for units that are part of mission support, a dummy for units that are part of a transitional administration, and the number of budgeted posts per unit disaggregated by staff category and rank.¹⁶ For substantive units, we assign a code for their area of expertise. Where available, we code both posts that were approved for the reporting year as well as those proposed for the following year,¹⁷ but the visualizations in this note focus on approved posts.¹⁸

¹⁵ Most peacekeeping datasets also cover only the post-Cold War period, such as the IPI Peacekeeping Database on troop and police numbers and the PEMA dataset on mandates.

¹⁶ Units that are part of transitional administrations, a rare type of UN peacekeeping operations, are shaped by the structure of the host state rather than UN budget negotiations, and therefore we record such units collectively.

¹⁷ Since the budget year runs from July until June, the budget data for the year 2020-2021 is recorded as 2021 because it gives us a better approximation of the expertise that was likely to be present in the UN peacekeeping field-based bureaucracy that year, considering the time it takes to recruit staff.

¹⁸ Blair (2020, 95) found a correlation of 0.97 between proposed and approved staff numbers.

We have additionally recorded the data on the following units, even where they are only listed in the staffing organigram or under the support component: public information and strategic communications; safety and security; conduct and discipline; HIV/AIDS; Joint Mission Analysis Centres (JMAC); and Joint Operations Centres (JOC). These units play important roles in the implementation of peacekeeping mandates: public information or strategic communications are often among the largest civilian units, conducting human rights promotion and electoral education (Smidt 2020); safety and security units regulate peacekeepers' access to the local environment and movement outside the base; conduct and discipline units help the UN to meet its commitment to preventing sexual exploitation and other forms of corruption and abuse; HIV/AIDS units ensure the integration of HIV/AIDS-related concerns in all mission activities, from disarmament to corrections reform; environmental management units help operations reduce their ecological footprint; and JMACs and JOCs provide strategic and threat analysis, informing mission planning and efforts to prevent attacks against peacekeepers and civilians.

The dataset covers budgeted posts, capturing the resources that states choose to allocate to particular units. A post that is funded will appear in the dataset, regardless of whether it is filled. For researchers seeking to investigate the politics of UN resourcing, data on funded civilian posts is crucial. For researchers interested in missions' effectiveness, funded post data is the best proxy for civilian capacity, since no publicly available documents record the number of recruited civilian staff at the level of detail we provide. Indeed, researchers interested in civilian staff's effect on missions' effectiveness have relied on the same type of documents that we collect in UNCIPPO (e.g. Blair 2021, Blair et al 2023). However, to further refine this proxy, UNCIPPO includes a variable coding the vacancy rate for a given mission-year for international, national, and UN Volunteers posts. These vacancy rates are extracted from annual Secretary-General's reports on *Overview of the Financing on the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* available from 2004 onwards. While these vacancy rates are not available at the unit level, they can be used to estimate a more accurate figure for UN civilian staff working in the field.

The Significance of the Data

The UNCIPPO dataset opens several new research avenues in and beyond the scholarship on UN peacekeeping. We illustrate two.

First, the data enable scholars to investigate the effects of the growth and differentiation of UN civilian expertise on peacekeeping outcomes. Such analyses are largely lacking in the rich and vibrant literature on peacekeeping effectiveness, which has explored the impact of the type and number of military and police personnel on peacekeeping outcomes (e.g. Belgioioso, Di Salvatore, and Pinckney 2021; Bove, Ruffa, and Ruggeri 2020; Di Salvatore 2019; Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon 2019). Civilian personnel has not received comparable attention (see Blair 2020; 2021; Blair, Di Salvatore, and Smidt 2023; Duursma and Smidt 2023 for recent exceptions), especially beyond the civilian leadership level (e.g. Bove, Ruffa, and Ruggeri 2020; Lundgren, Oksamytna, and Bove 2022; Oksamytna, Bove, and Lundgren 2021). This neglect is striking considering the increasing number of tasks in multidimensional mandates that require a civilian workforce, including core tasks related to peace processes, civilian protection, and democratization. Civilian expertise is also likely to impact non-security outcomes such as on household well-being (Bove, Di Salvatore, and Elia 2022) or environmental quality (Bakaki and Böhmelt 2021). Yet attempts to isolate the impacts of civilian personnel below the mission leadership level have thus far been hampered by insufficiently fine-grained data. For example, Kirschner and Miller (2019) found that larger numbers of UNMIL civilian personnel were associated with a lower prevalence of sexual violence, but they did not differentiate between substantive and support staff and were unable to isolate the effect of civilian staff working specifically on gender. Blair (2020; 2021) discovered that both overall civilian posts and rule of law component posts positively impacted rule of law outcomes, yet he did not differentiate between police and civilian rule of law specialists or assess the effects of civilian specialists' seniority. By contrast, UNCIPPO data are both specific (covering only civilian peacekeepers) and precise (recording staff types and ranks). As we illustrate below in the case of democracy, findings related to mission impacts can become more nuanced if analyses are based on precise data on the number and seniority of staff working in relevant units.

The importance of civilian expertise in UN peace operations will likely increase given the recent decline in the numbers of military and police peacekeepers and the shift to flexible instruments to promote peace, security, and reconciliation – the so-called 'light footprint' approach (Coleman and Williams 2021). Moreover, UNCIPPO data on national staff posts can

be mobilized to investigate patterns of international exposure and socialization of national staff, which are important positive byproducts of peacekeeping operations. The data also permit the investigation of negative unintended consequences that may arise from the increasing specialization of civilian peacekeeping staff, including fragmentation, loss of coherence, and dilution of responsibility. For instance, Protection of Civilians (POC) advisers or units were ‘sometimes wrongly perceive[d]... as bearing full responsibility for implementing POC mandates’ (Di Razza 2020, 10). The alternative of framing a task as the responsibility of several units may lead to shirking or competition, such as when MONUSCO civil affairs and human rights sections vied over being the lead on POC (Kullenberg 2021). Finally, examining the effects of civilian personnel posts in UN peacekeeping can generate potentially generalizable lessons on whether and when a civilian presence in conflict-affected settings is effective, and what kinds of expertise make a difference. The question is crucially important for Special Political Missions (SPMs), which rely overwhelmingly on civilian staff.¹⁹ Our dataset, in combination with the vacancy rates we have coded, can generate relevant insights.

The second type of research that the UNCIPPO dataset can advance is the scholarship on IO internal politics. Remarkably, ‘[f]ew IR analyses drill down into details of bureaucratic staffing’ (Finnemore 2021, 832), besides studies that treat the size of IO staff as a measure of their capacity for independent action (Dijkstra 2016; Heldt and Schmidtke 2017). There is an emerging literature on IO resourcing, which assesses IO budgeting processes in terms of their timeliness, stability, or transparency (Davies 2021; Moloney and Stoycheva 2018; Patz and Goetz 2019) or discusses the shift to voluntary – and especially earmarked – funding (e.g. Bayram and Graham 2017; Graham 2017; Reinsberg 2017). The UNCIPPO dataset helps illuminate the staffing dimension of IO resourcing debates.

In the General Assembly’s Fifth Committee, member states may refuse to fund specific posts because of ‘ideological and political positions against peacekeeping writ large, specific missions, or specific mandated tasks’ (Harju 2021, para. 6). Many civilian functions in UN peacekeeping – human rights, electoral affairs, or gender mainstreaming – are associated with the liberal agenda. China and Russia, its longstanding and increasingly assertive opponents, have advocated cutting the number of human rights posts in peacekeeping operations, albeit with little success so far (Coleman and Job 2021). While the UNCIPPO data alone cannot give

¹⁹ We do not code SPM staff as these missions are financed from the general Secretariat budget rather than the peacekeeping budget.

definitive answers about the underlying mechanisms driving negotiations on specific posts, they elucidate aggregate patterns illustrative of shifts in member states' preferences. The example of China's and Russia's attempts to defund human rights posts in peacekeeping suggests that there is a considerable disconnect between the Security Council, which authorizes peacekeeping mandates and where China and Russia have permanent seats, and the General Assembly, which apportions their budgets, meriting empirical investigation.

The data would also be of interest to scholars who study international bureaucracies from the perspectives of international political sociology or public administration. The types of experts that an IO employs influence its organizational culture (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Park and Vetterlein 2010; Sarfaty 2012; Weaver 2008). At a more disaggregated level, expertise shapes the ability of specific units to influence IO-wide policies (Hartlapp, Metz, and Rauh 2014). Differences in organizational sub-cultures between units in UN peacekeeping operations impact the behavior of the entire mission (Oksamytna et al. 2023). Whether and how diverse expertise among civilian peacekeepers affects the culture of the UN peacekeeping bureaucracy is an important question that the data can help answer.

In addition, since the dataset presents information on international and national peacekeeping posts, it can contribute to the emerging research agenda on inequalities in IOs (Coleman 2020a). While the separation of staff into the national and international categories has been criticized (Coleman 2020b; Eckhard and Parizek 2022; Oksamytna and von Billerbeck 2024), the UN's strategy of 'nationalization', entailing an increase in national as opposed to international posts, may use the rhetoric of 'local ownership' to mask dwindling budgetary resources. The data allow an assessment of how much the UN relies on national versus international posts in its peacekeeping operations.

Finally, the number and type of staff working on a particular issue reflects the institutionalization of various agendas in IOs. The creation of anti-poverty units at the IMF in the 1970s was a sign of this agenda's growing prominence at the Fund (Vetterlein 2012). Conversely, the dearth of posts devoted to the environment symbolized de-prioritization of the issue in UNHCR and UNDP (Hall 2016). The number of civilian peacekeeping staff working on public information and strategic communications has also been used as a measure of institutionalization (Oksamytna 2023). Our data can illustrate these processes in relation to all agendas reflected in UN peacekeeping, ranging from humanitarianism to children's rights. The

number, category, and rank of civilian staff in peacekeeping missions provide important insight into what the international community values – and, crucially, is willing to fund.

Empirical Illustrations

In the following sections, we highlight some patterns in the data and re-examine a recent prominent study that considers the impact of civilian staff on democratization (Blair, Di Salvatore, and Smidt 2023) to illustrate how the UNCIPPO dataset enables a more nuanced understanding of their role.

Temporal Trends in Civilian Expertise

Figure 1 shows how the number of budgeted civilian posts in UN peacekeeping missions started to increase rapidly just before 2000, peaked in 2010, and then contracted back to 2005 levels. The two panels in Figure 1 disaggregate this overall trend by focusing separately on, first, international and national posts (left panel) and second, substantive and support posts (right panel). National posts outnumbered international ones throughout the period of observation, with the gap widening in the mid-2000s and narrowing with the post-2010 downsizing. A similar but more pronounced pattern is observable for support posts, which consistently outnumbered substantive ones from 2000 onwards, vastly exceeding them by the middle of that decade, though again the gap narrowed with downsizing.

Figure 1 here

Figure 1. Types and categories of budgeted civilian posts over time.

A deeper look at substantive posts provides a window into how the resourcing of various kinds of expertise in UN peacekeeping has changed over time, and in which areas. As noted above, UN peacekeeping has become increasingly multidimensional. UN missions in Africa, for example, recorded, on average, 10 tasks in 2000 and more than doubled that number (22) by 2017 (Di Salvatore et al. 2022). UNCIPPO data provide insight into whether these increasingly demanding and specialized mandates are matched with the human resources needed to implement them successfully. Figure 2 juxtaposes trends in the average number of budgeted

civilian posts in substantive units and the average number of mandated tasks per UN peacekeeping mission in a given year. This includes only substantive units that are clearly linked to a specific task, based on the coding of the Peacekeeping Mandates (PEMA) dataset (Di Salvatore et al., 2022).²⁰

Figure 2 here

Figure 2. Trends in average substantive budgeted civilian posts and mandated tasks over time.

Figure 2 suggests that the number of mandated tasks and the number of budgeted civilian posts in substantive units have generally co-trended, though posts increased more rapidly than mandated tasks in the early 2000s and shrank faster during the downsizing of the early 2010s. While this does not guarantee that missions were always sufficiently resourced to carry out specific tasks, the data indicate that, overall, the growing number of tasks given to peacekeeping operations was supported by larger in-mission civilian expertise on substantive issues.

Figure 3 further disaggregates these trends for four substantive issues: gender, humanitarian coordination, elections, and human rights. Each plot shows the average number of civilian posts budgeted in relevant units and the average number of issue-related tasks mandated per mission in a given year. Gender and human rights seem to exhibit a clear pattern of growth over time in terms of prominence in mandates and posts. While this holds for human rights for the entire time period, the trends for gender posts and mandates diverge after 2010: on average, mandated gender-related tasks grow, but posts decrease. The co-evolution between mandates and budgeted posts is markedly less pronounced for the humanitarian and electoral affairs.

Figure 3 here

Figure 3. Trends in budgeted posts and mandates in four key domains.²¹

UNCIPPO data allow further investigation of the discrepancies observed in Figure 3. For example, Figure 3 shows that election-related tasks appeared in peacekeeping mandates since the 1990s, but the numbers of corresponding budgeted civilian posts only picked up around

²⁰ This means that Internal Management, Senior Leadership Offices, and Information Collection and Analysis are not excluded.

²¹ Election-related posts exclude the unusually large “Additional Electoral Support” unit for UNTAC in 1992 (more than 60,000 posts) that would have skewed the trend.

2004. Figure 4 shows the evolution of electoral tasks and civilian posts within four prominent missions, illustrating the variation in mandates and budgeted posts. More specifically, the plot shows whether the presence of an election-related task in a mandate (ticks at the bottom of each graph) corresponded to the budgeting of electoral posts (circles). This was the case for MONUC, and we see the same pattern for some other missions, including MINUSCA and MINUSMA. In other cases, however, missions had an election-related mandate but no budgeted electoral staff. We illustrate this here with UNAMID but observe the same pattern in UNAMSIL and MINURSO. In UNMIL, electoral staff was budgeted for only around the time of the first two elections taking place during UNMIL's deployment. Finally, the case of UNMOT shows that budgeted posts can be delayed compared to the mandating of tasks.

Figure 4 here

Figure 4. Election-focused tasks and budgeted posts in four prominent missions.

As a final illustration of the match between mandates and budgeted posts, Figure 5 shows the evolution of both for MONUC/MONUSCO up to 2017, the last year covered by PEMA. Overall, while most mandated tasks are eventually matched with budgeted posts, it is more likely for mission to be under-resourced (i.e., having mandated tasks without specific civilian units being budgeted). This is the case for the protection of civilians task, which only started having its own unit after 2017 even though it has been in the mandate from the outset. Conversely, HIV/AIDS unit has been budgeted for from the start without being explicitly mandated.

Figure 5 here

Figure 5. Matches between mandated and budgeted posts in MONUC and MONUSCO

Trends in the Categories and Seniority of Civilian Staff

UNCIPPO can also support research focusing on the categories and ranks of civilian peacekeeping staff. For example, the top graph in Figure 6 shows that the share of professional (P+) posts has been quite stable since 2001, while national posts have fluctuated between 48% and 62% in the same time period. International General Service posts have been phased out, and UN Volunteers posts been shrinking since 2006. If we look at bottom Figure 6, we can see

how the P rank represents the largest share of professional (P+) civilian posts; the relative share of D and ASG/USG posts has not changed significantly over time. As expected, ASG/USG posts – the most expensive ones in salary terms – remain relatively rare.

Figure 6 here

Figure 6. Budgeted civilian posts by category. Top graph includes all posts; bottom graph unpacks Professional (P+) posts.

Furthermore, in Figure 7, we see how unit composition in terms of staff categories varies by the area of expertise. Electoral Affairs units, for example, have historically featured the most significant proportion of UN Volunteers, contrasting with most other areas of expertise, where UNVs usually constitute less than 20% of total posts. Sanctions, Demining, and Information Collection and Analysis units, meanwhile, typically have the largest proportions of Professional staff. Figure 7 also indicates significant variation in the proportion of national staff employed in units with different areas of expertise, which we explore further below.

Figure 7 here

Figure 7. Budgeted civilian posts categories by area of expertise (sorted by percentage of P+ posts).

Table 1 reports the percentage of national posts within each substantive area of expertise. High concentrations of national staff occur not only in relatively small offices of senior uniformed mission leaders (where national staff may provide executive personal assistance) but also in areas that require local access and expertise, including Justice and Rule of Law (79% national posts), Public Information (59%), and Humanitarian Coordination (58%). By contrast, national staff posts are rare not only in typically very small Ceasefire and Demining units (on average, 2 and 3 posts, respectively) but also in units with sensitive tasks, including Security Sector Reform (SSR), Information Collection and Analysis, Electoral Affairs, and Political Affairs.

Table 1. Budgeted national posts by area of expertise

	% National Posts	Average Unit Size
Senior Uniformed Leadership Office	91%	64
Justice and Rule of Law	79%	136
Public Information	59%	59

Humanitarian Coordination	58%	38
Gender	49%	9
HIV/AIDS	49%	6
Stabilization	47%	21
Child Protection	45%	17
Civil Affairs	44%	89
Internal Management	43%	22
DDR(RR)	41%	49
Protection of Civilians	39%	30
Human Rights	39%	47
Political Affairs	34%	28
Senior Civilian Leadership Office	32%	21
Electoral Affairs	30%	61
Corrections	26%	16
Info Collection & Analysis	20%	7
SSR	13%	18
Demining	5%	2
Sanctions	0	5
Ceasefire	0	3

Finally, we use the vacancy rates included in UNCIPPO to illustrate differences in budgeted and filled posts of international and national staff and UNVs in MONUC/MONUSCO. Figure 8 shows that international posts have taken longer to fill, and eventually the vacancy rate stabilized around 11-12% (top-left panel). National posts have, on average, lower vacancy rates and may be initially easier to fill, but the rate fluctuates more than international posts (top-right panel). Finally, UNV posts (bottom panel) have the highest average vacancy rate (around 16.5%), peaking at almost 47% in 2016.

Figure 8 here

Figure 8. Budgeted vs filled posts in MONUC/MONUSCO.

Having provided an overview of the patterns in the data, we turn to the re-examination of a prominent study that has found a link between civilian peacekeeping staff and host country democratization.

Re-Examining Civilian Peacekeeping Staff's Role in Democratization

To illustrate how the UNCIPPO dataset can provide a more nuanced insight into how civilian posts contribute to peacebuilding success, we use the data to re-examine a recent prominent study that investigates the role of civilian staff in supporting democratization, finding an important effect of total numbers of civilian staff (Blair, Di Salvatore, and Smidt 2023). The level of detail in the UNCIPPO dataset permits a separate consideration of the role of staff in democracy-focussed units as well as international vs. national staff and professional staff vs. staff in other categories. Before moving to the results, we highlight that these should not be interpreted causally. Yet, the correlations we find illustrate how the understanding of peacekeeping can be advanced by the use of this novel data on civilian posts.

Blair, Di Salvatore and Smidt (2023) show that UN peacekeeping operations promote democratization in host countries if missions have a democracy-related mandate, perform democracy-related activities, and deploy a significant number of military and civilian staff. The latter is argued to be crucial in overcoming capacity gaps in host countries. More specifically, civilian staff “provide technical and material assistance to host state officials; restructure host state institutions; educate citizens; train political parties...[and] observe elections in coordination with host state” (Blair, Di Salvatore and Smidt 2023, p. 7). Their analysis operationalizes civilian support as the total number of civilian staff budgeted for in a mission in a given year.

We use UNCIPPO to evaluate whether the association is driven by all staff or staff specifically with democracy and governance expertise, international or national staff, and P+ staff or staff in other categories.²² First, we replicate Blair et al.’s main finding on the full sample, showing that the total number of civilian personnel is associated with a higher democracy score based on the Varieties of Democracy measure of polyarchy — their main dependent variable. The left panel in Figure 8 shows this result, which is unsurprising as our variable highly correlates with Blair et al.’s variable (0.81, hence they are not significantly different from each other). However, the right panel in Figure 9 shows that only international posts are positively linked to democracy, while national posts surprisingly display an opposite, negative association. The comparison of these two results suggests that the positive effect of civilian staff is the net effect of two countering effects.

²² In line with Blair et al.’s coding, that post numbers are in thousands, and we also use 2-year lags for the civilian staff variables.

Figure 9 here

Figure 9. Estimated coefficients of the relationship between civilian posts and polyarchy; left panel is disaggregated in international and national posts.

The observed positive coefficient for international staff could simply reflect the fact that international personnel are more likely than national staff to work in units with democracy-related tasks. Therefore, as a next step, we focus only on civilian personnel with democracy-related tasks to assess their specific contribution. We identify electoral affairs units and political affairs units as having democracy-related tasks. Democracy-related posts are the sum of the total number of posts within these units.

The left panel in Figure 10 shows the results of two models. In the first one, we simply include a dummy coding whether the mission has a democracy-related unit. This is not uncommon, as 64% of country-year observations in the Blair et al. sample have such a unit. Figure 10 shows that the presence of democracy-related units has a positive association with democratization, as we would expect. Next, we leverage the rich detail of the UNCIPPO dataset to examine the sizes of democracy-related units and thus calculate the total number of democracy-related posts, which are included as another specification along with all other non-democracy-related posts. The larger the number of posts devoted to democracy-related activities, the more positive the association with democracy. Overall, non-democracy-related posts also have a positive coefficient but it does not reach standard statistical significance. In the right panel in Figure 10, we further unpack democracy-related posts as international and national and find that the positive coefficient is fully driven by international staff.

Figure 10 here

Figure 10. Estimated coefficients for presence of democracy-related unit (dummy), the number of democracy-related posts, and the number of non-democracy-related posts.

UNCIPPO also allows us to account for the category of posts. For this test, we differentiate between P+ staff posts in democracy-related units and all other international posts (non-P+). Notice that P+ posts are Professional categories for staff with significant years of experience (from 2 for P2 to more than 15 for D1 and D2). These positions are always filled by international staff, hence we can further unpack the positive effect in Figure 10 to see if categories make a difference. We find that they do: the positive coefficient in Figure 11 for international staff in democracy-related posts seem to be significantly associated with a larger number of P+ posts, which likely drive the positive coefficient we found in Figure 10.

Figure 11 here

Figure 11. Estimated coefficients for the number of democracy-related posts by category (P+ vs all others).

This re-examination of Blair et al.'s (2023) study produces important insights into the nature of civilian posts that are most likely to produce the effects that UN peacekeeping operations strive to achieve (in this particular case, democratization). Since different types and categories of staff posts carry different budgetary implications, the UNCIPPO dataset sheds light on the relative effectiveness of different staffing strategies, which has become an important consideration for the organization in the era of resource constraints.

Conclusion

The research note presents a novel dataset on budgeted posts in UN peacekeeping operations, 1991-2020 by mission, unit, rank, and staff category. The UNCIPPO dataset provides unprecedented insight into the types of civilian expertise that UN member states have been willing to fund for the organization's peacekeeping operations. The dataset documents the considerable breadth of civilian expertise with 21 distinct areas in which civilian peacekeepers work, as well as staff category and seniority in UN missions. It fills an urgent gap in our understanding of the UN civilian peacekeeping bureaucracy, at one point the world's second-largest international civil service.

We observe interesting patterns in the staffing of UN peacekeeping operations over the three decades under study. For example, national posts outnumbered international posts consistently, although units varied in the extent to which it was the case. The units with the largest share of

national staff were those supporting Force Commanders or working on public information and strategic communications, while electoral affairs had an unusually high reliance on UN Volunteers. We also present preliminary tests of whether mandated tasks have been matched with the relevant civilian expertise, finding this match in some missions but not others. Finally, we have re-examined a prominent recent study (Blair, Di Salvatore, and Smidt 2023) that discovered that overall numbers of civilian peacekeepers had a positive effect on democratization in host countries. The UNCIPPO data suggests, first, that this relationship is driven by international rather than national staff, and second, that staff in units with democracy-related expertise, such as electoral affairs and political affairs, contribute more significantly than staff in all other units.

The UNCIPPO dataset opens new research avenues in the literature on UN peacekeeping as well as on IOs more generally. First, the data is one of the elements that can enable scholars to understand the effects of different categories of civilian staff in UN missions on peacekeeping outcomes, with implications for civilian staff in international development and peacebuilding sectors more broadly. Second, the data provides an insight into the politics of IO resourcing and expertise by illuminating whether UN member states are willing to provide the necessary resources to implement ambitious multidimensional peacekeeping mandates, and how expertise in the UN peacekeeping bureaucracy shapes its organizational culture.

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Appendix

Introducing the UNCIPPO (UN Civilian Posts in Peacekeeping Operations) Dataset

Table 1 is a list of units' names and the corresponding areas of expertise we coded for them.²³

The list excludes units whose main function is support. We identify a total of 21 areas of expertise.²⁴

Table A.2. List of substantive units' names and areas of expertise (in alphabetical order).

UNIT NAME	AREA OF EXPERTISE
Joint Commission	Ceasefire
Joint Monitoring Commission Secretariat	Ceasefire
Child Protection	Child Protection
Area Administration Liaison	Civil Affairs
Civil Affairs	Civil Affairs
Community Liaison	Civil Affairs
Country Offices	Civil Affairs
Director of Administration	Civil Affairs
Local Governance	Civil Affairs
Peace Consolidation Service	Civil Affairs
Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework	Civil Affairs
Reconciliation and Peace Consolidation	Civil Affairs
Correction and Prison Advisory	Corrections
DDR	DDR(RR)
Mine Action	Demining
Electoral Affairs	Electoral Affairs
Gender Affairs	Gender & SGBV
Sexual and Gender-based Violence	Gender & SGBV
HIV/AIDS	HIV/AIDS
Human Rights	Human Rights

²³ In cases where units have slightly different names (for example, Political Affairs Unit and Political Affairs Division) we use the generic label 'Political Affairs'.

²⁴ Ceasefire, child protection, corrections, DDR(RR), demining, electoral affairs, gender and sexual and gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS, human rights, humanitarian coordination, information collection and analysis, justice and rule of law, protection of civilians, political affairs, public information and strategic communication, security sector reform, sanctions, senior civilian leadership, senior uniformed leadership, stabilization (including early recovery), and internal management. Units that do not fall under any of the above are either Support or Transitional Administration units, which are flagged separately in the dataset.

Development Coordination	Humanitarian Coordination
Economic/Humanitarian Adviser	Humanitarian Coordination
Humanitarian Coordination	Humanitarian Coordination
Humanitarian and Development Affairs	Humanitarian Coordination
Humanitarian Early Recovery and Reintegration	Humanitarian Coordination
Humanitarian Relief and Rehabilitation	Humanitarian Coordination
Integrated Humanitarian Coordination and NGO Liaison	Humanitarian Coordination
Return, Recovery and Reintegration	Humanitarian Coordination
Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator)	Humanitarian Coordination
Command Operations	Information Collection and Analysis
JMAC/JOC	Information Collection and Analysis
Joint Analysis and Operations Centre	Information Collection and Analysis
Joint Mission Analysis Cell	Information Collection and Analysis
Conduct and Discipline	Internal Management
Contingent Support	Internal Management
Coordination Office	Internal Management
Environment Unit	Internal Management
Executive Director	Internal Management
Field Coordination and Inter-mission Cooperation	Internal Management
Field Support	Internal Management
Information Management	Internal Management
Principal Legal Adviser	Internal Management
Regional/Inter-mission Cooperation Support	Internal Management
Security Coordination	Internal Management
Security Section	Internal Management
Special Projects Services	Internal Management
Best Practices	Internal Management
Board of Inquiry	Internal Management
Chairman (of Identification Commission)	Internal Management
Head of Service	Internal Management
Legal Adviser	Internal Management
Resident Auditor	Internal Management
Resident Internal Oversight	Internal Management
International Judicial Support	Justice and Rule of Law
Rule of Law	Justice and Rule of Law
Rule of Law, Judicial System and Prison Advisory	Justice and Rule of Law
Serious Crimes Investigations	Justice and Rule of Law
Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (Rule of Law)	Justice and Rule of Law
Accountability, Institutional Support and Law Reform	Justice Support and Rule of Law
Administration of Justice Support	Justice Support and Rule of Law
Institutional Support and Law Reform	Justice Support and Rule of Law
Judicial Advisory	Justice Support and Rule of Law

Justice Support Section (formerly Justice and Corrections Section)	Justice Support and Rule of Law
Legal and Judicial System Support	Justice Support and Rule of Law
Military Justice Advisory	Justice Support and Rule of Law
Organized Crime Support	Justice Support and Rule of Law
Police and Justice Liaison Office	Justice Support and Rule of Law
Special Representative to the Secretary-General (Operations and Rule of Law)	Justice Support and Rule of Law
Access to Justice and Security	Justice Support and Rule of Law
Chief of Mission	Political Affairs
Civil Administration	Political Affairs
Consolidation of Democratic Governance	Political Affairs
Democratic Governance Support	Political Affairs
Governance Section	Political Affairs
Head of Mission	Political Affairs
Institutional Support	Political Affairs
Joint Mediation Support Team	Political Affairs
Joint Support and Coordination Mechanism	Political Affairs
Liaison	Political Affairs
Neutral Facilitator	Political Affairs
Policy and Planning	Political Affairs
Political Adviser	Political Affairs
Political Affairs	Political Affairs
Political Analysis and Reporting Unit	Political Affairs
Political and Civil Affairs Unit	Political Affairs
Political Outreach Section	Political Affairs
Principal Officer	Political Affairs
Senior Political Adviser	Political Affairs
Special Coordinator	Political Affairs
Special Envoy of the Secretary-General	Political Affairs
Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Political)	Political Affairs
Strategic Planning	Political Affairs
Protection of Civilians	Protection of Civilians
Rehabilitation	Protection of Civilians
Relief, Recovery and Rehabilitation Section Director and Sectors	Protection of Civilians
Relief, Reintegration and Protection	Protection of Civilians
Communication and Public Information	Public Information and Strategic Communications
Information Officer	Public Information and Strategic Communications
Press and Information	Public Information and Strategic Communications
Public Information	Public Information and Strategic Communications
Spokesman	Public Information and Strategic Communications
Strategic Communication and Public Information Section	Public Information and Strategic Communications
Embargo Cell	Sanctions

Chief of Staff	Senior Civilian Leadership
Joint Special Representative	Senior Civilian Leadership
Principal Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General	Senior Civilian Leadership
Senior Representative of the Secretary-General	Senior Civilian Leadership
Special Assistant to the Special Representative	Senior Civilian Leadership
Special Representative of the Secretary-General	Senior Civilian Leadership
Chief Civilian Police Monitor	Senior Uniformed Leadership
Chief Military Liaison Officer	Senior Uniformed Leadership
Chief Military Observer	Senior Uniformed Leadership
Civil/Military Coordination	Senior Uniformed Leadership
Civilian Police	Senior Uniformed Leadership
CIVPOL Commissioner	Senior Uniformed Leadership
Division Headquarters	Senior Uniformed Leadership
Force Commander	Senior Uniformed Leadership
Forward Headquarters	Senior Uniformed Leadership
Military Liaison	Senior Uniformed Leadership
Military Observer	Senior Uniformed Leadership
Police Commissioner	Senior Uniformed Leadership
Police Division	Senior Uniformed Leadership
Senior Police Adviser	Senior Uniformed Leadership
Advisory Unit on Security	SSR
Border Management	SSR
Border Monitoring	SSR
Security Sector Reform	SSR
Community Stabilization	Stabilization (incl Early Recovery)
Community Violence Reduction	Stabilization (incl Early Recovery)
Economic Adviser	Stabilization (incl Early Recovery)
Governance and Community Stabilization	Stabilization (incl Early Recovery)
Quick-impact Projects	Stabilization (incl Early Recovery)
Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reintegration	Stabilization (incl Early Recovery)
Resource Mobilization and Trust Fund Programme Quick-Impact Projects	Stabilization (incl Early Recovery)
Stabilization Unit	Stabilization (incl Early Recovery)

Table A.2. Example of a raw human resources table used as the basis for our coding.²⁵

Civilian staff	International staff						National staff ^a	United Nations Volunteers	Total
	USG-ASG	D-2-D-1	P-5-P-4	P-3-P-2	Field Service	Subtotal			
Political Affairs Division									
Approved posts 2015/16	–	2	12	14	3	31	3	22	56
Proposed posts 2016/17	–	2	12	14	3	31	3	22	56
Net change	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Electoral Affairs Section ^c									
Approved posts 2015/16	–	1	9	3	1	14	1	42	57
Proposed posts 2016/17	–	1	9	3	1	14	1	–	15
Net change	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	(42)	(42)
Approved temporary positions ^b 2015/16	–	–	4	23	1	28	2	–	30
Proposed temporary positions ^b 2016/17	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Net change	–	–	(4)	(23)	(1)	(28)	(2)	–	(30)
Subtotal									
Approved 2015/16	–	1	13	26	2	42	3	42	87
Proposed 2016/17	–	1	9	3	1	14	1	–	15
Net change (see table 10)	–	–	(4)	(23)	(1)	(28)	(2)	(42)	(72)
Security Sector Reform Unit									
Approved posts 2015/16	–	–	3	1	–	4	2	1	7
Proposed posts 2016/17	–	1	3	1	–	5	2	1	8
Net change (see table 11)	–	1	–	–	–	1	–	–	1
Total									
Approved posts 2015/16	–	3	24	18	4	49	6	65	120
Proposed posts 2016/17	–	4	24	18	4	50	6	23	79
Net change	–	1	–	–	–	1	–	(42)	(41)
Approved temporary positions ^b 2015/16	–	–	4	23	1	28	–	–	30
Proposed temporary positions ^b 2016/17	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Net change	–	–	(4)	(23)	(1)	(28)	(2)	–	(30)
Total									
Approved 2015/16	–	3	28	41	5	77	8	65	150
Proposed 2016/17	–	4	24	18	4	50	6	23	79
Net change	–	1	(4)	(23)	(1)	(27)	(2)	(42)	(71)

Abbreviations: USG, Under-Secretary-General; ASG, Assistant Secretary-General.

^aIncludes National Professional Officers and national General Service staff.

^bFunded under general temporary assistance.

^cComprises 42 United Nations Volunteer positions.

²⁵ From “Budget for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017”, A/70/712, Table “Human resources: component 2, support to the political process, reconciliation and elections”.

