

# PEACEKEEPING AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

## Abstract

Peacekeeping is *the preserving of peace* (Merriam-Webster). In its simplicity, peacekeeping is a positive action for promoting peace after wars and protecting civilians from post-war conflict. While this is the United Nation's intentions, many negative factors have become an outcome of peacekeeping. One of the main catastrophes scholars focus on is the recurrence of armed conflict briefly after the end of a peacekeeping mission. Conflict recurrence is a concern of many, however, there is not a large amount of literature concerning a major human rights violation that peacekeeping has promoted in the past: sexual violence. Data collected by the UN for exploitation and abuse allegations did not begin until 2006, "over a decade after indications of an endemic problem arose" (Karim and Beardsley 2016). The stem of sexual violence has yet to be pin-pointed to one certain cause, being that there are so many different forms of violence that have occurred. The different forms range from allegations of both military and police staff, data variation, peacekeepers' nationalities and cultures, differences in norms, and some allegations are transactional sex. Despite the UN's "zero-tolerance policy," scholars are trying to develop sounder solutions to the problem: increasing female peacekeepers, recruiting peacekeepers with gender equality beliefs, reducing transactional sex, and structuring new norms for peacekeeping operations and all of their contributing officers. Being that this is such a large issue, perhaps many of these solutions could work together to reduce future abuse.

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### Peacekeeping and Sexual Exploitation

Throughout the semester, we have covered a variety of topics such as interstate war, civil war, terrorism, and human rights. Under the broad umbrella of Peace Studies in civil and interstate war, one important aspect is peacekeeping. As defined in class, peacekeeping “involves the deployment of international personnel to monitor a cease-fire or peace agreement to keep peace after war” and are “typically conducted by the United Nations” (Johnson). When it comes to peacekeeping in general, scholars have come to many conclusions determining its effectiveness. Virginia Fortna (2004) argues that “peacekeeping helps maintain peace,” (285) and since the Cold War, “fighting [has] drop[ped] by almost 70%” (282) in the presence of peacekeepers. Along with this, Lisa Hultman et al. (2013) found that “UN peacekeepers prevent civilian killings,” (888) and it is “seemingly better at reducing human suffering than more biased forms of intervention” (889). Fortna (2004) and Hultman et al. (2013) provide an empirical analysis on peacekeeping as a whole, as we have discussed in class.

### **Background**

Peacekeeping may be successful at reducing armed conflict, but does it impact the lives of civilians in other ways? A vast amount of research introduces that peacekeeping may cause higher numbers of sexual violence in the regions where peacekeepers are present. Sabrina Karim, Kyle Beardsley, Bernd Beber, and Stephen Moncrief provide insight to the issue in three differ-

ent articles. From a narrower - and negative - perspective, peacekeeping operations have been found to generate sexual exploitation and abuse; while we may not be able to eliminate the origin of sexual violence in peacekeeping operations, many scholars have considered the causes and solutions to it.

### **Gender Equality**

Karim's and Beardsley's (2016) article, "Explaining sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions: The role of female peacekeepers and gender equality in contributing countries," is centralized on exactly what it sounds like. Karim and Beardsley (2016) focus on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) committed by peacekeepers, and they consider two possible mechanisms to prevent future abuse. To begin, Karim and Beardsley (2016) draw from the United Nation's definition of sexual exploitation<sup>1</sup> and sexual abuse<sup>2</sup>. SEA is a human rights violation in almost every culture, however, SEA committed by peacekeepers creates even larger issues for countries that are already subjected to oppression. Peacekeeping operations (PKOs) involving SEA allegations create "a gross human rights violation, physical and psychological trauma, damage[e] to human security, [and] a source of mistrust between local populations and the peacekeeping missions," therefore, making "the peacekeeping mission less beneficial and less legitimate" (Karim and Beardsley 2016: 101). In an attempt to contribute to the very small portion of research concerning SEA in PKOs, Karim and Beardsley (2016) begin their study.

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<sup>1</sup> Sexual Exploitation is "any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another" (UN-Secretary General's Bulletin on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, ST/SGB/2003/13), cited by Karim and Beardsley (2016: 100).

<sup>2</sup> Sexual Violence is "actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal coercive conditions" (UN-Secretary General's Bulletin on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, ST/SGB/2003/13), cited by Karim and Beardsley (2016: 100).

The two solutions Karim and Beardsley (2016) test are “the representation of women in missions and the norms and practices related to gender equality in the force contributing countries” (101). After examining cases from 2009-2013, they found that the “inclusion of higher proportions of female peacekeepers does have an association with fewer SEA allegations, as does the inclusion of more personnel from countries with better records of gender equality” (Karim and Beardsley 2016: 101). Including more women as peacekeepers and making sure peacekeepers do not have patriarchal beliefs appear as basic and easy solutions to the issue. However, these results are not quite as simple as they sound. The UN has been aware of SEA allegations for years and has tried to take measures to prevent them. Despite their efforts, allegations are slightly declining but still are a serious issue.

In measuring the number of women involved in PKOs, they simply look at the UN DPKO data. When determining the level to which peacekeepers respect gender equality, Karim and Beardsley (2016) examine the countries the peacekeepers come from to determine “the extent to which the societies from which the peacekeepers originate practice and value gender equality” (106). To determine the level of gender equality in each country, they look for the “visible presence of women and girls in society” and the extent of “legal institutional protections for women” (106). They discover that PKOs with military personnel who come from countries that have more gender equality, specifically “better records on primary school education for girls<sup>3</sup> and women’s la-

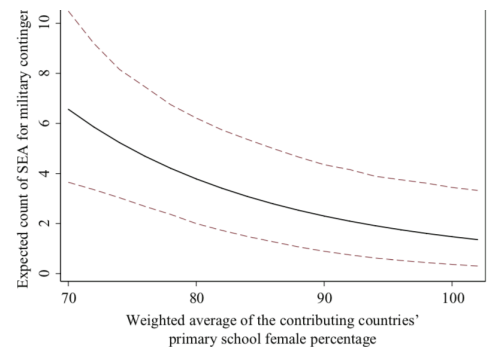


Figure 4. Expected SEA allegations in military contingents, by ratio of girls to boys in primary school in contributing countries

<sup>3</sup> See Figure 4. Karim and Beardsley (2016: 110).

bor force participation<sup>4</sup>” (Karim and Beardsley 2016: 112), will have fewer SEA allegations. Secondly, missions with higher ratios of female representation lead to fewer SEA allegations<sup>5</sup>, however, this is “not a robust finding,” and rather than being a true solution, this will only “mitigate the dominance of patriarchy” while avoiding the “fundamental roots of the problem” (Karim and Beardsley 2016: 113). The figures presented illustrate the findings and show the extent of the issue. While both of the proposed tactics may reduce the number of SEA allegations, clearly more needs to be done than just recruiting peacekeepers with gender-equality values or bearing the weight of the issue among female peacekeepers.

### Transactional Sex

Thankfully, research concerning peacekeeping and sexual violence extends further than Karim and Beardsley (2016). The next study we can build on is “Peacekeeping, Compliance with International Norms, and Transactional Sex in Monrovia, Liberia.” Along with Bernd Beber, the main author, Sabrina Karim (from the article above), also helped write this study. Their

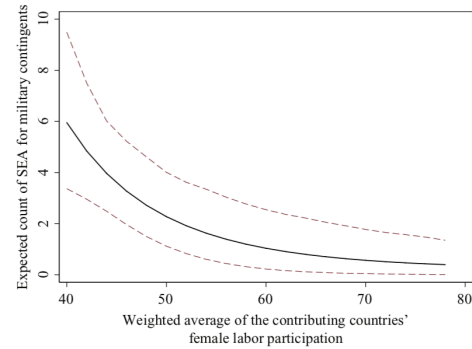


Figure 5. Expected SEA allegations in military contingents, by female labor force participation rate in contributing countries  $p = 0.023$  in a two-tailed test.

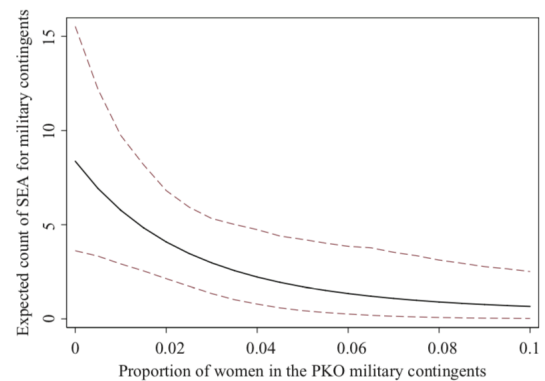


Figure 2. Expected SEA allegations in military contingents, by representation of women in contributing countries  $p = 0.039$  in a two-tailed test.

<sup>4</sup> See Figure 5. Karim and Beardsley (2016: 111).

<sup>5</sup> See Figure 2. Karim and Beardsley (2016: 109).

research is the “first to provide a rigorous population estimate of the incidence of transactional sex with foreign military personnel of any kind” (Beber et al. 2016: 2). The authors conducted a survey amongst women from Monrovia, Liberia in 2012. While it may seem as if transactional sex has nothing to do with SEA, UN policy defines “transactional sex as a form of sexual exploitation and abuse” (Beber et al. 2016: 6). These parameters confirm that transactional sex is indeed relevant to SEA.

Monrovia is a particular point of interest because it hosts a significant amount of peacekeepers<sup>6</sup> and has experienced a variety of conflicts. Beber et al. (2016) predict that “more than half of eighteen- to thirty-year-old women in greater Monrovia have engaged in transactional sex and that most of them have done so with UN personnel, typically in exchange for money” (3). The authors examine whether women who are engaging in transactional sex are doing so due to the “presence of UN peacekeepers,” and they conclude “peacekeepers [have] been associated with a substantial and statistically significant increase in the rate of entry into the transactional sex market, that is, the probability that a woman engages in her first transactional sex” (Beber et al. 2016: 3). Why is this the case?

It is important to note that transactional sex in Monrovia is a literal industry. The numbers are very concerning, especially from an American’s perspective, considering prostitution is illegal in most countries located in the Global North. Liberia’s economy is a highly distorted one where “more than half of Monrovia’s young women will have been making, or at least augmenting, their livelihoods by selling sex” (Beber et al. 2016: 4). The percentage of women engaging

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<sup>6</sup> “Liberia has hosted an average of about 12,000 peacekeepers of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) at any given point in time since 2003, with usually about one-fifth of them stationed in Monrovia” (Beber et al. 2-3).

make this appear to be a consensual agreement in which no human rights are being violated. However, when UN peacekeepers become involved, a stagnant effect is created where the UN's goals, specifically "gender equality and economic development goals" (Beber et al. 2016: 4), for PKOs are being diminished. In a "post-conflict environment such as Monrovia, [women] 'are not only victims but also survivors who have agency to make consensual decisions<sup>7</sup>, ' but in terms of public health, transactional sex is associated with a heightened risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases<sup>8</sup>" (Beber et al. 2016: 4). However, some women choose to participate to increase their finances, and another study concluded that "young women are less likely to report sex with 'sugar daddies' when they receive informations about health risks," and "improved economic circumstances make it possible for young women to opt out of remunerative sexual relationships" (Beber et al. 2016: 4). The data collected from the study explains this perfectly.

With a specific focus on "peacekeeping effectiveness an international norm diffusion" (5), Beber et al. (2016) argue "host countries should fully understand the implications of a peacekeeping presence," and "front-line personnel flout the norm against transactional sex" (5). The UN has a long history of unsuccessful attempts at ending SEA. Beginning in 2003, the UN "adopted a strict 'zero-tolerance' policy that forbids its peacekeepers from exchanging anything of value for sex. In 2005, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations established a Conduct and Discipline Team to train peacekeepers about the new policy and process allegations of misconduct. In 2007, the policy was extended to all UN personnel" (Beber et al. 2016: 6). Be-

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<sup>7</sup> Simic 2009: 294, cited by Beber et al. (2016: 4).

<sup>8</sup> "LISGIS et al. 2008, although the report notes that condom usage is relatively common, and UNAIDS 2013 shows low prevalence of HIV in Liberia compared to other sub-Saharan African countries. See also Luke and Kurz 2002," cited by Beber et al. (2016: 4).

ber et al. (2016) suggests two solutions for the UN: “instill the relevant norms in on-the-ground personnel” (5) and create a “system of incentives, monitoring, and punishment” (6).

The results indicate that 78 percent of the total women surveyed have “engaged in transactional sex,” but 44 percent of these women had “engaged in transactional sex with UN personnel” (Beber et al. 2016: 11). The large percentage of those engaging with UN personnel is likely because “[a]mong subjects who reported the value of that they received in their last transaction with UN personnel, 74 percent received fifty US dollars or more, compared to 42 percent among subjects with non-UN men” (Beber et al. 2016: 14). The graph below<sup>10</sup> shows the substantial increase of compensation with UN personnel.

Along with this, the probability that a “woman would live to the age of twenty-five without engaging in transactional sex would be about 72 percent in the absence of UNMIL

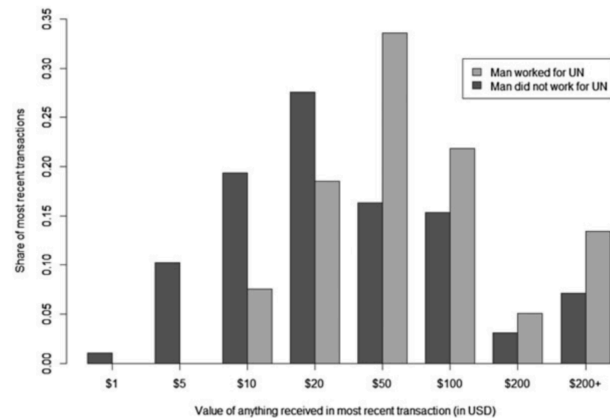


FIGURE 1. Compensation received in most recent transaction, by UN status of transactional sex partner

[United Nations Mission in Liberia], but only 49 percent when mission strength is close to its long-term average of about 12,000” (Beber et al. 2016: 17). The results suggest that the “behaviors catalog[ued] here are as much failures of states to enforce international norms to which they have putatively subscribed as they are a failure of individual soldiers to comply with those norms,” due to a “lack of effective monitoring resulting in widespread non-compliance in the

<sup>9</sup> See Table 2: *Total incidence of transactional sex with UN personnel and in general*. Beber et al. (2016: 10).

<sup>10</sup> Figure 1: *Compensation received in most recent transaction, by UN status of transactional sex partner*. Beber et al. (2016: 15).

form of transactional sex” (Beber et al. 2016: 24). While the authors recognize that Liberia is an unusual case, they recommend a variety of short-term solutions because it is obviously still a problem. As suggested by Karim and Beardsley (2016), Beber et al. (2016) suggests the UN “staff missions with personnel where gender-equality norms are already widely held throughout society, include more women in peacekeeping contingents” (26), and develop an “alternative monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to increase compliance with SEA rules” (27). Being that these solutions are almost exactly what Karim and Beardsley (2016) suggest, we will examine another research article that explores more possible solutions.

### **Socialization**

Stephen Moncrief (2017) aims to connect SEA with different types of socialization in PKOs. In his article, “Military socialization, disciplinary culture, and sexual violence in UN peacekeeping operations,” Moncrief’s (2017) main point of interest is distinguishing the variations of SEA across different peacekeeping missions. In determining the variation, he offers “an initial test of whether the socialization experiences of troops in two environments - (1) the contributing state military and/or (2) the peacekeeping mission itself” (Moncrief 2017: 715). The evidence suggests that SEA is “associated with breakdown in the peacekeeping mission’s disciplinary structures, and the lower levels of command are the most likely sites of this breakdown” (716). Moncrief (2017) argues that the variation throughout SEA matters for four reasons: “the magnitude of SEA is potentially enormous,<sup>11</sup> the problem has prompted high-level

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<sup>11</sup> “Beber et. al (2017) find that nearly one-fourth of adult women under 30 surveyed in Monrovia have had transactional sex with peacekeepers (see also Karim & Beardsley, 2016: 102),” Moncrief (2017: 716).

personnel changes,<sup>12</sup> a UN report identifies SEA as the ‘most significant risk’ to the public legitimacy of UN peacekeeping operations, and the fact that SEA varies by mission indicates that it is not an inevitable byproduct of multinational peacekeeping” (716). From analyzing his research, the concept of military socialization in SEA binds logical reasoning as to why this is an issue.

While developing his research, Moncrief (2017) measures the number of UN peacekeepers who come from militaries that have a history of sexual abuse from 1997-2006. His reports are measuring the number of SEA allegations in relationship to alleged non-SEA disciplinary violations by UN personnel. The findings represent that the “size of the mission in terms of military personnel is significantly and positively related to the number of SEA allegations against military personnel serving under that mission” (Moncrief 2017: 723). Also, “if low GDP per capita also proxies for the absence of viable police and judicial institutions in post-conflict environments, then the mechanisms to deter rape are unlikely to be visible and credible” (Moncrief 2017: 723). It becomes clear that not only the “prior use of sexual violence by contributing militaries” can explain the number of allegations. (Moncrief 2017: 724) This is because fifteen national militaries had allegations from their personnel, yet only four of the nations had histories of sexual abuse.

The main empirical finding here is that for each allegation of “non-sexual indiscipline, we expect between a 0.7% and 1.2% increase in the expected count of SEA allegations” (Moncrief 2017: 725). More significantly, “one standard deviation increase in non-SEA misconduct increases the expected count of SEA allegations by 26.3%,” and the “magnitude of the reported

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<sup>12</sup> “the head of the UN’s peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic was recently sacked over allegations that the troops were working under the auspices of the mission had sexually victimized civilian minors in Bangui (*Associated Press*, 2015)” Moncrief (2017: 716).

relationship is likely to represent an extremely conservative estimate” (725). To prevent more allegations of SEA, Moncrief (2017) suggests a variety of reasons as to why abuse is still occurring and also solutions to the issues. He insists that “individual units and their commanders develop their own norms and patterns of sexual behavior that deviate from these preferences in missions that are plagued by other types of indiscipline, indicating the inability or unwillingness to constrain the behavior of mission personnel (see also Beber et al. 2017)” (725). Along with this, the “breakdown of disciplinary structures meant to constrain harmful opportunism among individuals and units is positively associated with the perpetration of sexual exploitation and abuse of civilians, then resources should be devoted to building credible and consistent institutions for building and maintaining the discipline among existing personnel” (Moncrief 2017: 726). Despite the negative actions taken by the UN and contingent nations, Moncrief (2017) does point out some of the positive things the UN has done thus far.

Moncrief (2017) acknowledges steps taken by the UN and recommends three valuable pieces of advice for new policy. The UN has “taken a valuable initial step by publishing the TCC affiliations of alleged abusers, and this practice should continue. Naming and shaming may prompt contributing states to investigate and prosecute” (726). Secondly, one of the UN Resolutions, 2272 (UNSC 2916), “found to have perpetrated SEA should be repatriated along with their commanders, and additional resources should be devoted to socializing incoming troops and commanders through mandatory training and education that emphasizes both the harm of SEA and the potential for naming and repatriation” (Moncrief 2017: 727). Finally, the UN should “recognize the heterogeneity of the state militaries from which it draws peacekeepers, and extensively vet units prior to deployment” (Moncrief 2017: 727). Moncrief (2017) incorporates ideas

suggested by Karim and Beardsley (2016) and Beber et al. (2016), while making his own realizations and recommendations regarding SEA in PKOs.

## **Conclusion**

Gender equality, transactional sex, and military socialization... oh my! While the topics may seem so broad and confusing, the concept is simple. Whether it be the increase of female peacekeepers, recruiting peacekeepers with strong gender equality values, creating more rules to prevent transactional sex, or structuring military contingents to believe *sexual exploitation or abuse is a human rights violation*, something obviously needs to be done. As Karim and Beardsley (2016) argued, increasing the ratio of female peacekeepers is not enough. As Beber et al. (2016) found, the peacekeeper's home country is not the only contributor to the problem. Finally, as Moncrief (2017) explained, any one solution is going to be ineffective. Peacekeeping operations must be structured to where peacekeepers are in an environment where SEA is completely unacceptable.

Through a combination of increasing the role of women in PKOs, recruiting peacekeepers who promote gender equality, straying away from peacekeepers who come from sexual violent militaries, and creating new structures and socialization patterns in PKOs, we can hope for a positive outcome. The UN has already taken a few of the right steps into eliminating sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations, yet this has not been enough. Action to pursue justice for victims of SEA and prevent further instances is necessary. As research concerning SEA in PKOs is growing, we can expect to see an increase in concern from not only the UN, but also contingent countries and citizens worldwide.

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