

UN Peace Operations: Racist Peacekeeping?

Global order is undergoing the historical changes right now. World has moved much beyond the Fukuyama's slogan 'end of history'. History remains there and it is committed to remain while repeating itself again and again. There is a continuous change taking place in the global world order. Power balance is shifting in a dynamic way. The new century is witnessing the rebalancing of power between Global North and Global South. World is no more a bipolar or unipolar, rather it has entered into a real multipolar stage. World politics has active participants from the Global South who are contributing to its functioning in many ways.

Peace keeping and global policing is not an exception to this changing scenario of world politics. The increasing number of conflicts globally has made the International Community pay more concentration to these types of conflicts and in certain cases take steps with different tools of intervention and conflict management. The United Nations (UN) in specific, whose mission is to keep peace and security globally has employed several Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) in various regions across the world. PKOs include the deployment of, usually, United Nations personnel, known as Peacekeepers, with the consent of the parties involved and with a peace agreement in place, in order to maintain a ceasefire and prevent the resumption of hostilities. The Peacekeepers remain neutral to the conflict and they do not intervene and only engage in cases of self-defense (David, 2006; ONU, 2008). [\[i\]](#)

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United Nations has been on the forefront of peacekeeping missions. But the situation is drastically changing. UN is facing an unparalleled competition in maintaining the world peace and security. UN needs to adapt new ways in its peacekeeping missions to remain relevant. States from the Global South are actively taking part into the peacekeeping and global policing. Among the major troop contributors to peacekeeping missions top ten are from the Global South. Since the late 1990s the traditional peacekeeping has become more dangerous. The West has been unwilling to send their own personnel where the risks are high and their national interests minimal. The West makes exploit hired help from developing countries. David Malone and Ramesh Thakur have named this Western exploitative attitude as "racism in peacekeeping. (Malone and Thakur, 2000) [\[ii\]](#)

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Though major Western powers in 1990's were active in the operations in Cambodia, Somalia, the Balkans, and Latin America, where their interests were at stake. Following the misfortune in Somalia and the withdrawal of US forces after "Blackhawk Down," the troop contributions of West to UN peace operations diminished. Western states as a part of the explanation to this increasing decrease in peace operations was the raise in number of coalition operations outside the UN, like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the Kosovo Force (KFOR).

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"Decisions about UN peace operations, however, remained under the authority of the Security Council in which the P-3 were the usual penholders for resolutions. Their contributions totaled 1.6 percent of uniformed personnel but 40.52 percent of the peacekeeping budget, while China totaled, respectively, 2.8 percent and 10.25 percent." (Weiss and Kuele, 2019) [\[iii\]](#)

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Despite the fact that there is a clear mismatch between the policy making and implementation contributions of Global South and North countries, the situation is transforming gradually. Global North is controlling the decision and policy making positions of the process where Global South is merely acting as

implementers in the process.

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“The top ten troop and police contributing countries are all from the Global South, with Ethiopia, Bangladesh, India, Rwanda and Pakistan topping the list. Throughout the history of UN peace operations, the role of these states in the field has not been matched by their participation in decision and policy making, with experts calling this division of work between the North and the South “a blue helmet caste system,” (Lynch, 2013) “apartheid,” (Chesterman, 2013), and “imperial multilateralism” (Cunliffe, 2013).” (Peter, 2019) [iv]

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The situation is now changing. Contributors from the Global South are not only active participants of this process, but also vocal about the decision and policy making processes in peacekeeping.

Another important dimension of this reemerging structure is the concept of regional organizations as providers of security. This striking feature of the emergence of the Global South has changed the notion that UN peacekeeping is the only viable and legitimate actor managing the conflicts across the globe. Regional peacekeeping forces and the contributors from the Global South are now the trend setters in this field. Many regional organizations in past two decades have become the first responders to such crisis. The most determining factor which makes regional organizations relevant is their ability to deal efficiently with the internal problems of conflicted areas. We may say that it's the relevance of regional organizations which makes them preferable over UN peacekeeping missions in different regions of the world.

“The host states are often not seeking an impartial actor, but one that can deal with their internal problems efficiently. Responses to contemporary conflicts are increasingly robust and regional organizations are better equipped than the UN to execute them. But more and more it is not just the efficiency but also the legitimacy of the regional organization over the UN that plays the role in determination of an intervening actor.” (Peter, 2019) [v]

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The efficient relevance and legitimacy to intervene has become a challenge for UN to evolve among regional organizations and a changing global pattern. UN needs to adapt the changes in a way to continue its relevance as a key stakeholder in peacekeeping affairs of world. The revolution in information technology combined with widespread awareness about human rights have necessitated that UN must respond with much flexibility to remain relevant in maintaining international peace and security.

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“Humanitarian interventions occur in response to what now we call ‘humanitarian crises’, but who is ‘human’ worthy of protection, and what constitutes a ‘crisis’ requiring response are both matters of perception.”(Finnemore, 2017) [vi]

It is not only the shift in global power, but also the new types of conflicts that demand evolved response from UN. It is evident from many conflicts all over the world that UN peace operations will remain relevant only if UN could successfully respond to the expectations of the people. The successful response and effective partnership and competition with regional organizations will help UN to participate in the international peace and security. The scholars and practitioners of the discipline strongly advocate the changes that UN would need to implement if it wants to remain relevant in responding to contemporary conflicts. Scholars put emphasis on increasing the diversity in approaches UN is employing in responses to international conflicts.

“In sum, global order is facing four key transformations, collectively presenting unique challenges to UN peace operations: (1) the rebalancing of relations between states of the global North and the global South; (2) the rise of regional organizations as providers of peace; (3) the rise of violent extremism and fundamentalist non-state actors; and (4) increasing demands from non-state actors for greater emphasis on human security.” (Peter, 2019) [vii]

Last but not least is the motivation to contribute troops in peace operations, which vary across the Global South. Most seek to improve their international image, and emerging powers often also have local and regional interests in their neighbors, while others have used these peace keeping operations to materialize financial benefits. Though some Western states have criticized the inadequate training and equipment of many current peacekeeping forces but these states themselves are unwilling to install their best soldiers to the most dangerous assignments under the UN flag. If UN peacekeeping missions continue to be deployed to dangerous and complex places, the challenges will only become more demanding and politically difficult.

Bibliography:

[i] [David, Charles-Philippe, La guerre et la paix : Approches contemporaines de la sécurité et de la stratégie, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2006, p. 306.](#)

[ii] [The Global South and UN Peace Operations](#)
https://www.e-ir.info/2019/02/03/the-global-south-and-un-peace-operations/#_ftn2

[iii] [The Global South and UN Peace Operations](#)
https://www.e-ir.info/2019/02/03/the-global-south-and-un-peace-operations/#_ftn2

[iv] [De Coning, Cedric & Peter, Mateja. \(2019\). United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order, https://www.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-99106-1_1](#)

[v] ibid

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[vi] Finnemore, M. (2008). Paradoxes in humanitarian intervention. In R. Price (Ed.), *Moral Limit and Possibility in World Politics* (Cambridge Studies in International Relations, pp. 197-224). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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[vii] De Coning, Cedric & Peter, Mateja. (2019). United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order, https://www.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-99106-1_1