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# The Politics of Global Governance in UN Peacekeeping

PHILIP CUNLIFFE

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This article examines the allocation of roles and responsibilities in the construction of UN peacekeeping. The case is made that decision making in UN peacekeeping is not only fragmented between various states and institutional actors, but also critically lopsided, with an uneven distribution of responsibilities and the majority of political, military and strategic risks falling upon those countries least able to bear them – poor and weak states. States that hold decision-making power are not the states that have to implement those decisions. The article concludes by arguing that this governance structure is not a symptom of organizational dysfunction, but that it serves a political function by allowing influence to be wielded without risk.

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This article identifies some of the political problems arising from the disjointed governance structure of UN peacekeeping. The aim is to explore and to help conceptualize the governance of global conflict management as manifested in UN peacekeeping, and in particular the uneven distribution between the positions of power, and the distribution of roles and responsibilities in the construction of UN peacekeeping. As Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore have observed, most scholarship on international organization proceeds by way of analytical constructs intended to retrospectively capture why particular organizations and institutions are established. This focus comes at the expense of capturing how such institutions function.<sup>1</sup> In line with their approach, this article focuses on the political functioning of UN peacekeeping.

The collective decision making whereby the collective UN decision to deploy peacekeepers can be made independently of the national commitment of personnel, introduces a peculiar dynamic into peacekeeping: a perverse set of incentives and skewed balance of risk and reward, where no single actor bears the brunt of political and strategic responsibility for any single field operation. This state of affairs has important political benefits for peacekeeping actors – what David Chandler has called the attraction of ‘rhetoric without responsibility’.<sup>2</sup> Moral authority can be claimed without having to be burdened with the responsibility for decisions that have to be implemented by others. Taking a cue from Mats Berdal’s analysis of the surge in UN peacekeeping since the turn of the century, I argue that the way to analytically resolve these contradictions in UN peacekeeping is to be cognizant of the UN’s ‘unacknowledged functions’: those activities that the UN successfully performs when it appears to be achieving very little.<sup>3</sup> As such, the focus of the article shifts the object of inquiry from the conduct, performance and outcome of UN field operations (the object of most peacekeeping

scholarship), to help conceptualize the ways in which peacekeeping operations are put together.

The argument proceeds as follows: after reviewing the process of ‘force generation’ before a peacekeeping operation is deployed, I discuss the Security Council and its role in peacekeeping. It is argued that Council control of peacekeeping is not a given, but the result of a protracted diplomatic struggle and a direct consequence of the harmony that has prevailed on the Council since the end of the cold war. I then briefly examine how the struggle for the control of peacekeeping is reflected in the make-up and institutional organization of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). In the following section, I turn to examine that other crucial aspect of peacekeeping contribution: finance. In the penultimate section of the article, I suggest that the institutionally fragmented nature of UN decision making and burden sharing means that uneven policy development is possible. This means that political risks are unevenly distributed throughout the UN structure and skewed in favour of wealthier and more powerful states. This is not simply a case of flawed organization, weak administrative reforms or a poorly designed institution: it is an organizational trait that is reproduced by the political interests it serves. This is one of the ‘unacknowledged functions’ of the UN. I place the establishment of the new UN Peacebuilding Commission in this context of attempts to rectify those institutional deadlocks. By way of conclusion, I argue that the problem hinges around the fact that those who control the direction of UN peacekeeping (principally the dominant powers of the Security Council) are able to displace the military, political and strategic risks and personnel costs of labour-intensive peacekeeping onto the poorer and weaker states of the global South. This is a system of governance, in so far as it ‘encompasses the activities of governments [and] the many other channels through which “commands” flow in the form of goals framed, directives issued and policies pursued’.<sup>4</sup> But in the case of peacekeeping, it is a system of governance whose lack of efficiency and effectiveness is a result of its exclusion and inequity, which in turn reflect the underlying inequality of the international order.

### Force Generation in Peacekeeping

Stephen Kinloch-Pichat observes that the picture for the deployment of UN military personnel is almost the inverse of that for nation-states:

While the main problem for a nation-state resides in using non-integrated ‘non-national’ (foreign) elements to fight its wars, the main risk for an international organization is to rely exclusively on ‘national’ – that is, not truly integrated and international – contingents to carry out its operations.<sup>5</sup>

The Brahimi Report identified an ideal pathway for the formation of peacekeeping operations ‘involving three sequential stages’: first, forging a political basis for peace in the country or region of deployment. Second, a suitable mandate is crafted in the Security Council, and third, the appropriate resources are mobilized and calibrated

to the scale of the task as specified in the mandate.<sup>6</sup> Simon Chesterman says that the ‘accepted reality is that this [process of force generation] usually happens in reverse order’: ‘member states determine what resources they are prepared to commit to a problem and a mandate is cobbled together around these resources – often in the hope that a political solution will be forthcoming’.<sup>7</sup> Berdal is less pessimistic, arguing that the Brahimi Report has had a ‘noticeable’ impact on field missions and the workings of the DPKO, which has succeeded in implementing as many as two-thirds of the Panel’s recommendation. Evidence of these changes can be seen in the dramatic ‘surge’ in peacekeeping since the turn of the century.<sup>8</sup>

Contribution of personnel is not evenly distributed from around the world, however, with the majority of peacekeepers coming from poor and developing countries, principally from South Asia, Western and Eastern Africa (although of course the global South includes some countries that aspire to major power status, such as China, India and Brazil).<sup>9</sup> It is important to stress that at each of these moments of the force generation process, Southern countries do not merely key into passive bureaucratic structures. When Southern states contribute peacekeeping forces, their involvement keys into a politically active, dynamic organization that is in flux and subject to numerous pressures from both within and without.<sup>10</sup> In terms of peacekeeping, the influence of the major powers is most apparent in the delegation of authority from the Security Council, and in the financing of peacekeeping operations.

### The Global Governance of UN Peacekeeping

Viewing the UN as an institutional site of struggle rather than a static bureaucratic structure clarifies the institutional evolution of peacekeeping in the UN. The authority to deploy UN forces has been battled over both openly and covertly, explicitly and informally, since the founding of the organization. In this time, political authority over peacekeeping has passed from the Security Council to the General Assembly and back again. Since the end of the UN Security Force in West New Guinea in 1963 that transferred West Iran to Indonesian sovereignty from Dutch colonial rule, authority over peacekeeping has been firmly in the grip of the Security Council. The so-called ‘classical peacekeeping’ of the cold war emerged in the context of Soviet–American rivalries on the Council: it was the General Assembly that authorized the 1956 UN Emergency Force (UNEF), under the ‘Uniting for Peace’ procedure first used by the United States to outflank the Soviet veto in the Security Council during the 1950–53 Korean War.<sup>11</sup> Today by contrast, peacekeeping has boomed in the context of unprecedented harmony and cooperation. The changing political character of relations on the Council has changed the nature of Council involvement with the providers of peacekeeping personnel.

As the strictures of the cold war set limits on the interventions that great powers could carry out outside their spheres of influence, the UN mobilized smaller powers to resolve this impasse. This was a policy consciously promoted by UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who flagged up the rhetoric of national independence as a way of mobilizing the newly decolonized and

smaller powers as a political constituency for his own expanding role. Building the UN as a haven for smaller powers amidst the gales of cold war rivalry gave himself and the Secretariat greater room for manoeuvre in respect of Moscow and Washington.<sup>12</sup> Due in no small part to Hammarskjöld's efforts, UN influence was thus not seen as contradicting national independence in the Third World. Indeed, Hammarskjöld flagged up the multinational composition of the 1960–64 mission in the Congo to parry Soviet charges of UN imperialism.<sup>13</sup>

The point here is that when it emerged, peacekeeping represented the *enfranchisement* of the small powers in the context of a UN system paralysed by cold war. In the context of the early cold war peacekeeping operations, the mobilization of the small powers was contingent on the restraint of the super-powers enforced by their mutual confrontation. Today, the opposite relationship holds, as the political character of the Security Council is very different: harmony prevails on the Council, and yet peacekeeping has boomed.

As Malone points out, 'the ability and disposition of the five permanent members ... to cooperate with each other seriously diminished the margin for manoeuvre of other Council members'.<sup>14</sup> This was enhanced due to US control of the Security Council agenda, which can be traced back to the signing of the Dayton Accords that ended the war in Bosnia in 1995.<sup>15</sup> This has 'enhanced the standing of the Security Council'.<sup>16</sup> As regards peacekeeping contributions, the Council has indeed expanded consultation with contributing countries.<sup>17</sup> The expanded possibilities for consultation with the Council represent one means for troop contributing countries to secure access to major powers and obtain influence within the Council. This is one important potential boon of being a peacekeeping contributor. However, if this is a special privilege conferred on contributors, it also reflects the enhanced authority of the conferring body. In other words, the Council's expanded consultation procedures since the end of the cold war reflect the extension of Council authority, which now draws on a broad variety of 'constituents': the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) committee, the Secretariat, NGOs, and the wider UN membership.<sup>18</sup> In other words, this signals not the uplifting of poor contributing states as much as their being locked into a new means by which the Council has consolidated its control over UN procedure and institutional politics.<sup>19</sup>

One means by which smaller powers may be given some control over the direction of the Council agenda is through the election of non-permanent members to the Council. The powers of such a position are already limited, as 'effective decision-making ... is monopolized by the Permanent Five'. Rather, non-permanent membership offers 'the ability to raise points of interest in discussions; to learn about the views of others and about the leanings of the Council on given issues; and to *appear to be* at the center of important things'.<sup>20</sup> Requirements on equitable geographic representation limit the extent to which the major peacekeeping powers can shape the Council agenda. For Council elections, Asia and Africa count as one geographic region, thereby limiting the number of Southern peacekeepers that can be elected to the Council (as most peacekeeping powers hail from these two continents). The list of countries elected to the Council across the last decade shows no correlation with patterns of Southern

peacekeeping contribution: from 1996 to 2009 only Kenya, Ghana, Bangladesh and South Africa are represented as large peacekeeping powers.<sup>21</sup>

This revitalization of the Security Council at the end of the cold war changed the pattern of political calculation on the part of states within the UN system, as noted by Thomas Weiss: 'Excluded countries wanted a part of the action, to defend their own viewpoints from the risk of being ignored by a new sort of P-5 [Permanent Five members'] condominium'.<sup>22</sup> According to Malone there is ample evidence of this in the Council's working, with growing high-handedness on the part of the P5 and changes in working procedure that has consolidated the dominance of the P5 and in particular the United States.<sup>23</sup> Another barometer of this consolidation of Council authority is the declining use of the veto, the 1991–2000 period seeing only seven vetoes cast, the lowest for any decade of the UN's history.<sup>24</sup> Fewer vetoes cast mean fewer fissures in great power diplomacy for other powers to exploit.

Peter Wallensteen and Patrik Johansson make clear that the predominance of the Security Council has beaten back the role of the General Assembly in the field of international peace and security.<sup>25</sup> If peacekeeping may enfranchise small states, according to Wallensteen and Johansson the benefit has been off-set by the collaboration of the Security Council in the post-cold war era.<sup>26</sup> The changed context of power relations forces states to behave in different ways. Of course, no period of great power 'concert' lasts indefinitely and as the international environment evolves the benefits of collaboration and consensus are eventually eroded by the centrifugal forces of self-interest. Yet despite this, the diplomatic controversy before the 2003 American invasion of Iraq has failed to dent the Council's penchant for peacekeeping. As Mats Berdal noted of the 2003 diplomatic crisis in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq:

Notwithstanding the deep divisions among member states that emerged over Iraq in 2003, and which many predicted would have a lasting and paralysing effect on the Security Council, new [peacekeeping] missions have been authorised and existing ones substantially expanded ... at an unprecedented rate.<sup>27</sup>

This included Euro-American cooperation over interventions in both Haiti and Eastern Congo.<sup>28</sup> It is clear then, that against expectations, the greatest and most divisive crisis on the Council since the end of the cold war did not impede the conduct of peacekeeping; indeed, peacekeeping continued to grow. What is striking here is the political effort involved in ensuring that peacekeeping continued unabated.<sup>29</sup> The extent of cooperation on the Council in this instance is important because it draws attention to the fact that political effort is required to manage the unanimity of the Council. This is also stressed by Wallensteen and Johansson: 'the Council is *not* an independent body that *by itself* selects which concerns it will attend to. It acts under the *joint authorisation of the capitals of member states*'.<sup>30</sup>

The other component of Security Council change is the greater willingness to use its coercive power, safe in the knowledge that it will not be vetoed. Great power harmony correlates directly with the wielding of greater coercive power.



The Council has flexed its muscles much more, invoking the sweeping range of powers granted the Council under the terms of the UN Charter. According to Wallensteen and Johansson, across the 1946–2002 period, 93 per cent of all Chapter VII resolutions have been adopted since the end of the cold war.<sup>31</sup> This panoply of sanctions, embargoes, international criminal prosecution and use of force includes the coupling of the realm of international peace and security with economic, social dimensions and ideas of sustainable development.<sup>32</sup>

There are several elements that are important here. While formally all peacekeeping operates at the behest of the Security Council, there is a more distinctive pattern at work since the end of the cold war: the growth of Southern contribution to peacekeeping has taken place alongside unprecedented Security Council cooperation and extension of Council power. The extended power of the Security Council, including the tighter control that it exercises over the scope of UN activity, indicates that the growth of the Southern peacekeeping has been *at the behest* of the major powers on the Council. Southern peacekeeping is not a product of divisions on the Council or its paralysis, but has coincided with the most active, harmonious period in its history.

According to Jocelyn Coulon, in the early 1990s UN peacekeeping became ‘the focus of a bitter struggle for control between the UN and certain countries’.<sup>33</sup> In particular, Coulon describes the wrangling between French and ‘Anglo-Saxon’ forces in one of the first large post-cold war operations, the 1992–93 UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia operation.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, Coulon notes how the French diplomatic offensive to wrest institutional control of UN peacekeeping was justified by reference to the weight of French contribution to UN forces in the early 1990s: ‘If France captured this key position at UN headquarters, it would be in a position to wield considerable power in the political management of an army of Blue Helmets that numbered close to 80,000 soldiers in September 1994’.<sup>35</sup>

Yet if France’s heavy peacekeeping contributions in the early 1990s justified France securing the top position in the DPKO, it does not seem that heavy Southern contribution to peacekeeping today has introduced any significant shift to appointing Southern personnel in the Department. Indeed, quite the opposite: in 2005, just under two-thirds of the long-term personnel in the Department came from Northern states; in 2006, 38.5 per cent of the Department was composed of Northern personnel and in 2007 the figure stood at 44.3 per cent.<sup>36</sup> Kabilan Krishnasamy has argued that South Asian contributors fail to get their due recognition in the UN system, as the composition of the Secretariat is determined primarily by monetary contributions to the UN.<sup>37</sup> Rhetorical recognition of Southern peacekeeping is not matched by any forward advance of Southern peacekeepers becoming more deeply enmeshed within the functioning of the UN system:<sup>38</sup> ‘The pattern of appointing candidates mainly from Europe has led to claims from Third World countries that the UN’s DPK [sic] is dominated by NATO military planners at the higher levels of military planning and execution’.<sup>39</sup> This was addressed by the creation of the post of Deputy Military Adviser in 1994, yet it remains an open issue, particularly given the fact there is flux in terms of personnel contributions.<sup>40</sup>

Jockeying for control of key posts continues with the wave of institutional reform initiated in the wake of Ban Ki-Moon's appointment as the new UN Secretary-General, and his re-organization of the Secretariat. The retirement of Jean-Marie Guéhenno from the post of Under-Secretary General of the DPKO means that control over these peacekeeping forces moved up the agenda, with the United States expressing interest in the post in early 2007 when Ban initiated changes to the department's structure. In the end, while France retains leadership of DPKO, the United States received in exchange a head post of the Department of Political Affairs.<sup>41</sup> The continued wrangling is testimony to the perceived importance of the post, and the influence which can be wielded through it.<sup>42</sup>

Personnel are one component of a peacekeeping operation; the other is the financing – to pay for the troops, materiel and logistics. Interestingly, the pattern that financing shows is almost the inverse, mirror image, of personnel contribution: the rich countries dominate. I shall not reconstruct the Byzantine system of UN financing here – suffice to say that the assessment methods are based on individual member states' capacity to pay, so that the poorest states pay the least, while the P5 bear a surcharge given their constitutional responsibilities for international peace and security.<sup>43</sup> The largest financiers of UN peacekeeping are countries that are among the smallest contributors in terms of personnel, as Table 1 shows for the 1997–2007 period.<sup>44</sup> The percentage figures show the personnel contributions of these states as a proportion of total UN peacekeeping deployments for that year.

Ross Fetterly points out that the differential assessment rates effectively mean not only that a small group of rich countries support UN peacekeeping, but that this group of countries have an incentive 'in limiting the approval, size and duration of peacekeeping missions funded by UN peacekeeping assessments'.<sup>45</sup> Just as peacekeeping is dependent on the Security Council so too it is dependent on the willingness of wealthy states to finance this activity. The effectively institutionalized system of arrears in UN finances reminds us that payment to the UN is a political process rather than an automatic one – one that involves decision making: payments can be used to influence debates, operations, opinion.<sup>46</sup>

### The Unacknowledged Functions of UN Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping contribution is dependent on the willingness of the wealthy and the powerful states to support it politically and financially. UN peacekeeping is provided by a system of global governance rather than global government. It is this that lays the ground for what is commonly understood as the dysfunction or systematic weakness of the UN: collective policies can be established and mandates crafted with no regard to the question of whether the resources exist to fulfil them. This indeed was the bane of UN actions in the early post-cold war period, when UN peacekeeping efforts were expanding, while the commitment to that expansion began to shrivel. This process was dramatically exposed in the former Yugoslavia, as lamented by former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in relation to peacekeeping in Bosnia: 'The Council, I said, is

TABLE 1:  
PEACEKEEPER CONTRIBUTIONS AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL UN DEPLOYMENTS BY THE TOP 10 FINANCIERS OF UN PEACEKEEPING,  
1997–2007

	1997		1998		1999		2000		2001	
1	US	0.2	US	3	US	0.3	US	0.1	US	0.1
2	Japan	0.2	Japan	0.3	Japan	0.5	Japan	0.09	Japan	0.08
3	Germany	1	Germany	0.2	Germany	0.2	Germany	0.07	Germany	0.07
4	France	2	France	4.2	France	3.4	France	1	France	0.6
5	UK	2	Italy	0.6	Italy	0.4	Italy	0.2	UK	1.2
6	Italy	0.3	UK	2.8	UK	3.8	UK	1.1	Italy	0.6
7	Russia	4.9	Russia	2.1	Canada	2.7	Canada	0.7	Canada	0.6
8	Canada	4.5	Canada	2	Spain	0	Spain	0	Spain	0.01
9	Spain	0.3	Spain	0	Neth.	1.3	Neth.	0.3	Brazil	0.2
10	Brazil	2.1	Neth.	1	Russia	1.3	Australia	5.4	Neth.	0.05
	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
1	US	0.08	US	0.03	US	0.03	US	0.03	US	0.03
2	Japan	1.9	Japan	1.6	Japan	0.77	Japan	0.04	Japan	0.04
3	Germany	0.06	Germany	0.15	Germany	0.05	Germany	0.06	Germany	0.06
4	France	0.7	UK	1.5	UK	0.8	UK	0.5	UK	0.46
5	UK	1.2	France	0.7	France	0.8	France	0.79	France	0.74
6	Italy	0.77	Italy	0.3	Italy	0.22	Italy	0.46	Italy	0.11
7	Canada	0.5	Canada	0.7	Canada	0.4	Canada	0.36	Canada	0.65
8	Spain	0.01	Spain	0.02	Spain	0.01	Spain	0.34	Spain	0.31
9	Brazil	0.23	China	0.75	China	1.6	China	1.4	China	1.33
10	Neth.	0.04	Mexico	0	Mexico	0	Mexico	0	Mexico	0
	2007									
1	US	0.03								
2	Japan	0.04								
3	Germany	1.4								
4	UK	0.39								
5	France	2.5								
6	Italy	2.1								
7	Canada	0.07								
8	Spain	1.9								
9	China	2								
10	Mexico	0								

Source: Global Policy Forum, International Institute for Strategic Studies.

becoming like the General Assembly: it is using phrases and making demands that it knows cannot be implemented in order to please public opinion'.<sup>47</sup>

The precondition for such behaviour is the institutional fragmentation of the UN, whereby no single actor bears the full costs of any UN decision on peacekeeping. It is for this reason that policy can be enacted with no regard or concern for the consequences on the ground, or even any understanding of the context on the ground. Another example of where such tensions rose to a head is the Indian withdrawal from UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone, five years after the clashes described by Boutros-Ghali over Bosnia, and related by Guéhenno when two of the major troop contributing countries

announced their intention to withdraw their personnel from the mission, threatening its complete collapse. They argued, not without some merit, that they had not signed up to engage in an enforcement operation, and moreover, that it was untenable that they would have to pay in blood while members of the Security Council and western nations were only willing to pay in dollars at best, or through lip-service at worst.<sup>48</sup>

This was a classic case of UN overreach: the Council extended the mandate of the operation, thereby inviting the fury of contributing nations (India in particular), as their troops were now expected to perform functions for which they were not originally deployed.<sup>49</sup> It was in response to such problems that the UN established a new Peacebuilding Commission: a body that would help to streamline the new peacekeeping tasks. The Commission is an advisory body composed of 31 states that brings together the permanent members of the Council, the leading financiers and personnel contributors to peacekeeping. The Commission works through country-specific committees focused on states that have ceased hostilities. Designed to facilitate the later stages of peacekeeping operations, the Commission also inadvertently formalizes and institutionalizes the extant inequalities within peacekeeping provision. That is to say, the Commission's Organizing Committee, in embracing a variety of stakeholders in peacebuilding, institutionalizes the distinctions between the financiers and the personnel contributors to peacekeeping.

A number of scholars have tried to account for the UN's failings in peacekeeping by seeing these problems not as accidental or contingent, but as *systematic* outputs of the UN. There have been varying ways of analysing the sources of UN dysfunction, most often identified as lying in the gap between soaring UN rhetoric and the mundane reality of the lack of collective political will. Michael Lipson offers one distinctive perspective that reads a UN 'pathology' in the institutional fragmentation of the organization itself. In this way, his analysis is specifically tailored to the character of the UN as an organization. Using sociological theories of managerial dysfunction to account for the gap between rhetoric and action, Lipson calls this 'organised hypocrisy'.<sup>50</sup> Hypocrisy in the conventional sense, argues Lipson, presumes a coherent, unitary actor – an actor that is failing to live up to the ideals that it espouses. No such assumption can hold about the UN, which is, by contrast, a porous and necessarily flexible organization that must be ready to adapt to the contradictory pressures of international society.<sup>51</sup>

In Lipson's view, 'organized hypocrisy' provides a means of diffusing otherwise unbearable pressures that would tear the organization apart: by doing one thing and saying another the UN satisfies conflicting and contradictory demands placed on it by various 'stakeholders'.<sup>52</sup> Lipson identifies various examples of this in peacekeeping, including the symbolic commitment to neutrality and impartiality of classical peacekeeping (while the actuality is the increasingly robust use of force), and the 'sub-contracting' of operational elements to coalitions of the willing or regional forces (rather than relying on the UN).<sup>53</sup> Lipson's analysis is similar in important respects to an analysis offered by Inis L. Claude.<sup>54</sup> Claude's much over looked contribution to UN scholarship was to suggest that it was precisely in its moments of greatest weakness that the UN may be achieving the most. While Lipson also focuses on UN failures (or hypocrisy, as he puts it) as the systematic product of UN activity, the limitation of his analysis is that he makes the problem a functional one, whereby what appears as dysfunctional can be explained away as institutional adaptation to the pressures of the international environment. But this is less a question of institutional adaptation than a question of how such institutional incoherence serves particular political ends.

Claude stresses that the UN developed into its various roles in response to a specific set of circumstances, and thus 'this function has not been ... undertaken by the United Nations conceived as an independent institutional actor upon the global stage ... an answer not to the question of what the United Nations can *do* but to the question of how it can be *used*'.<sup>55</sup> Claude stresses that states remain the primary agents in controlling the various functions of the UN. While Claude intended his analysis to apply primarily to the question of the legitimating activities of the UN, the analysis can be applied more broadly. In other words, Lipson does not consider how this uneven organizational structure is also politically expedient. We must broaden the analysis to consider not only how the UN survives the pressures placed on it (the object of Lipson's analysis), but how the UN serves *political* purposes by being placed under such pressures.<sup>56</sup>

Berdal uses Claude's paradoxical observation to suggest that the UN might be performing its function precisely when it seems to be failing in some respect or other.<sup>57</sup> Drawing on Conor Cruise O'Brien, Berdal suggests that one major 'unacknowledged function' of the UN may be to serve as 'the scapegoat for the vanities and follies of statesmen', in O'Brien's words – 'a large part of [its] utility to national leaders'.<sup>58</sup> O'Brien offers an analysis similar to Lipson's, in so far as he sees UN failure as too systematic to simply be wistfully dismissed. But he sees this failure as a political service to states.<sup>59</sup> The problem is not a new one, but a recurring one of the peculiar relationship between the activities of the UN and its member states, as Larry L. Fabian points out:

The decentralism, the impermanence, the improvisation, and the unprofessionalism are all singularly ill adapted to the jobs occasionally *thrust upon* the UN by member states who suddenly, often reluctantly, find themselves left with nothing else to do but dump a problem, as the British say, in the lap of Aunt Sally.<sup>60</sup>

In a very substantive sense then, as O'Brien suggested, the 'UN's greatest successes are its failures'.<sup>61</sup>

The institutional fragmentation of the UN allows it to provide the means to diffuse and evade direct strategic commitments and political responsibilities for a variety of collective decisions. The fact that the decision to make resources available (peacekeepers, money) does not institutionally correlate with the mandating authority (the Security Council) changes the whole calculus of political and strategic goal formation, and that of means–ends analysis as well. As a result, peculiar dynamics are introduced to the operation of peacekeeping – not least the tendency to over-inflate rhetoric and to establish hugely ambitious mandates. The uneven distribution of the various aspects of peacekeeping formation means that a greater degree of activity is possible than if peacekeeping were left to one country alone. It is accepted that more resources can be mobilized by having more countries involved. But this also changes the very coordinates within which political calculation takes place. This is the problem of 'mercenary-ism': the fact that peacekeeping forces ultimately only exhibit a shallow, tenuous commitment to the goals of an operation.<sup>62</sup> But this applies equally, if not more so, to the wealthy and powerful states that control the UN. The accusation of mercenary-ism can be flipped around: if it is true that peacekeepers are cheap mercenaries from poor countries, it is equally true that they have callous and fickle paymasters.

## Conclusion

This article has explored the institutional infrastructure that undergirds and supports UN peacekeeping, and assessed what this tells us about the form of peacekeeping policy. If we look to the conflict management infrastructure that undergirds peacekeeping, we must remain cognizant of the political foundations on which this infrastructure itself, in turn, rests. As pointed out by Inis L. Claude:

International organizations are never simply the products of creative planning and institutional evolution; they find their sources deep in the context of national interests and the power configuration of the international setting out of which they arise.<sup>63</sup>

In this way, we have seen that international inequalities of wealth and power are refracted through the UN's conflict machinery.

Ross Fetterly acknowledges the importance of multinational cooperation in UN peacekeeping:

Multinational cooperation and support are essential requirements of success of peacekeeping operations. As a consequence, unlike at the national level where democratic governments have the authority and capacity to shift priorities and programs to meet the demands of their citizens, this flexibility is muted – and even restricted – at the international level.<sup>64</sup>

Fetterly is trying to account for the problematic functioning of UN peacekeeping – but his conclusion could easily be reversed: the problems of peacekeeping can be

attributed to the *flexibility* rather than rigidity of the UN. The institutional structure of the UN – the division between the decision making and the implementation of those decisions – means that decisions can be made, policies implemented, without having to bear the full political risks, and consequences of particular policies. The institutional structure of the UN means that the political risks of peacekeeping involvement can be displaced on to those forces on the ground. No single actor bears the full political responsibility for any decision reached – the result being a radically disjointed structure of varying incentives and goals.

It would be wrong to see this purely as a weakness or dysfunction, however, for it is also the enabling condition of the UN's functioning – and no amount of consultation, coordination, reform initiatives and administrative reorganization can resolve the fundamental political dilemma at the core of the institution and its peacekeeping activities. To the permanent powers on the Security Council, the constitutional powers granted to the Council by the Charter, combined with the conflict management machinery offered by the UN, grants the tantalizing opportunity to exercise power and influence over the direction of international affairs in excess of what would otherwise be possible if they relied purely on their own will and capacities.<sup>65</sup> It is often claimed that developing countries contribute to peacekeeping only for the financial benefits that they receive. But the poor countries can only gain in this way because rich countries are willing to financially support the poor countries' peacekeeping efforts in the first place. If it is reasonable to suppose that developing countries profit in some way (whether financially or politically) from their involvement in peacekeeping, it is reasonable to suppose that Northern countries profit from the former's involvement too, otherwise they would not support other countries' peacekeeping efforts. This benefit, I suggest, is that supporting other countries' peacekeeping efforts offers the opportunity to wield influence and direct policy while muting potential political risks and repercussions.

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#### NOTES

1. Cf., Michael N. Barnett and Martha Finnemore, 'The Power, Politics and Pathologies of International Organizations', *International Organization*, Vol.53, No.4, 1999, pp.699, 702.
2. David Chandler means this to apply to the 'ethical foreign policy' of New Labour's first term in office, 1997–2001. It applies equally well to the nature of decision making on the Security Council. David Chandler, 'Rhetoric Without Responsibility: The Attraction of "Ethical" Foreign Policy', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol.5, No.3, 2003, pp.295–322.
3. Mats Berdal, 'The UN Security Council: Ineffective but Indispensable', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, Vol.45, No.2, 2003, pp.7–30.
4. James N. Rosenau, 'Governance in a Globalizing World', in David Held and Anthony McGrew (eds), *The Global Transformations Reader: An Introduction to the Globalization Debate*, Oxford: Polity Press, 2002, p.181.
5. Stephen Kinloch-Pichat, *A UN 'Legion': Between Utopia and Reality*, Abingdon: Frank Cass, 2004, p.177.



6. Simon Chesterman, 'Virtual Trusteeship', in David Malone (ed.), *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2004, p.231.
7. Ibid.
8. Mats Berdal 'The UN after Iraq', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, Vol.46, No.3, 2004, pp.90–1.
9. For figures on personnel contribution in UN peacekeeping, see the DPKO website (at: [www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/factsfigs.shtml](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/factsfigs.shtml)).
10. In support of this view of international organization, see Barnett and Finnemore, 'The Power of Liberal International Organizations', in Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall (eds), *Power in Global Governance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp.161–2.
11. Alan James, *Peacekeeping in International Politics*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1990, p.212. In the case of UNEF, it was the Anglo-French veto that the US sought to outflank by going to the General Assembly.
12. Andrew Boyd, *United Nations: Piety, Myth, and Truth*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964, p.116.
13. Ibid., p.166. The United States, too, recognized that direct intervention in Congo was politically impossible, and that stabilization would have to be achieved through reliance on Third World forces. Inis L. Claude, *Swords into Plowshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization*, New York: Random House, 4th edn 1971, pp.329–30.
14. David M. Malone, 'Introduction', in Malone (ed.), (see n.6 above), p.7.
15. Ibid.
16. Peter Wallensteen and Patrik Johansson, 'Security Council Decisions in Perspective', in Malone (ed.), (see n.6 above), p.21.
17. Ian Hurd, 'Legitimacy, Power, and the Symbolic Life of the UN Security Council', *Global Governance*, Vol.8, No.1, 2002, p.42.
18. Susan C. Hulton, 'Council Working Methods and Procedures', in Malone (ed.), (see n.6 above), pp.240–41.
19. 'Almost every formal Council meeting now is a pro forma affairs, scripted in . . . advance informal consultations [among the Permanent Five]'. Hurd, (see n.17 above), p.43.
20. Ibid., p.42 (emphasis added). Hurd notes that these benefits of non-permanent membership have diminished in recent years. Despite the lack of real power, the fact that non-permanent membership is 'a source of authority *by association*' reflects the enhanced power of the Council itself. Ibid., p.43 (emphasis added).
21. For the list of non-permanent members of the Council across the last decade, see the data provided online by the Global Policy Forum (at: [www.globalpolicy.org/security/membership/mem2.htm](http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/membership/mem2.htm)).
22. Thomas G. Weiss, 'The Illusion of Security Council Reform', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.26, No.4, 2003, pp.47–161.
23. Malone, 'Introduction', (see n.6 above), pp.6–8.
24. Wallensteen and Johansson, (see n.16), p.20.
25. Ibid., p.21.
26. Ibid.
27. Berdal, (see n.8 above), p.88.
28. Ibid., pp.88–90.
29. Peter Hallward's analysis suggests that peacekeeping was used as a reconciliation tool between the United States and France in Haiti. Peter Hallward, 'Option Zero', *New Left Review*, Vol.27, 2004, *passim*.
30. Wallensteen and Johansson, (see n.16 above), p.30 (emphasis added).
31. Ibid., pp.19–20.
32. Cf. *ibid.*, p.29.
33. Jocelyn Coulon (Trans. Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott), *Soldiers of Diplomacy: The United Nations, Peacekeeping and the New World Order*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998, p.152.
34. Ibid., p.157.
35. Ibid., p.165.
36. Author calculations based on figures available in the 2006, 2007 and 2008 *Annual Review of Global Peace Operation*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. Here, 'Southern state' was defined as any country that is not a high-income member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
37. Kabilan Krishnasamy, "'Recognition" for Third World Peacekeepers', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.8, No.4, 2001, p.62.
38. Ibid., p.67.



39. *Ibid.*, p.71.
40. See, for example, *Nigeria Tribune* (Lagos) 'Nigeria Demands for More Appointments in the UN', 20 Mar. 2008, accessed at: [www.tribune.com.ng/20032008/news/news13.html](http://www.tribune.com.ng/20032008/news/news13.html).
41. According to this report: UN Elections, 'Head of UN Peacekeeping to Resign in June', 21 Mar. 2008 (at: [www.unelections.org/?q=node/572](http://www.unelections.org/?q=node/572)). Of course, like other international civil servants, in the EU for example, UN officials are expected to take an oath of loyalty to the organization. This notwithstanding, national appointments are seen as a means of capturing the UN apparatus by particular states. Cf. Krishnasamy, (see n.37 above), *passim*.
42. The current head of the Department, Alain Le Roy, is also French (at: [www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/info/page1.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/info/page1.htm)).
43. See 'Implementation of General Assembly Resolutions 55/235 and 55/236' Report of the Secretary-General, UN doc. A/61/139, 13 July 2006, para. 1.
44. Cf. further the calculations in William J. Durch with Tobias C. Berkman, 'Restoring and Maintaining Peace: What We Know So Far', in Durch (ed.), *Twenty-First-Century Peace Operations*, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace/Henry L. Stimson Center, 2006, p.38.
45. Ross Fetterly, 'A Review of Peacekeeping Financing Methods', *Defence and Peace Economics*, Vol.17, No.5, 2006, p.400.
46. Cf. Victoria Holt, 'Reforming UN Peacekeeping: The U.S. Role and the UN Financial Crisis', *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol.3, No.1, 1996, pp.125–34.
47. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished: A U.S.–U.N. Saga*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1999, pp.235–6.
48. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, 'On the Challenges and Achievements of Reforming UN Peace Operations', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.9, No.2, 2002, p.76.
49. *Ibid.*, *passim*
50. Michael Lipson, 'Peacekeeping: Organized Hypocrisy?' *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol.13, No.1, 2007, pp.5–34.
51. *Ibid.*, p.9.
52. *Ibid.*, p.12.
53. *Ibid.*, pp.19–23. Of course, by leaving out questions of contribution Lipson misses the fact that there are more UN than regional peacekeeping operations.
54. See especially, Berdal, 'The UN Security Council' (see n.3 above), *passim*.
55. Claude, (see n.13 above), p.373.
56. A point emphasized by Erik Voeten in contradistinction to the view of international organizations merely as bureaucracies and international courts, but as political arenas: 'Political Origins of the UN Security Council's Ability to Legitimize the Use of Force', *International Organization*, Vol.59, No.3, p.552.
57. Inis L. Claude, Jr., 'Collective Legitimization as a Political Function of the United Nations', *International Organization*, Vol.20, No.3, 1996, p.379.
58. O'Brien, cited in Berdal, (see n.3 above), p.9.
59. *Ibid.*
60. Larry L. Fabian, *Soldiers Without Enemies: Preparing the United Nations for Peacekeeping*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1971, pp.35–6.
61. Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'Faithful Scapegoat to the World', *Independent* [London], 1 Oct. 1993.
62. See Edward Luttwak, 'Give War a Chance', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.78, No.4, 1999, *passim*, pp.36–44.
63. Claude, (see n.57 above), p.48.
64. Fetterly, (see n.45 above), p.399.
65. As F.H. Hinsley argued, the UN was set up as an organization that was always conceived of as more than the sum of its constituent parts. While the League was conceived as just that (a league), the UN was envisaged as a *construct*. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the Relations Between States*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967, p.335.