

Peacekeeping Missions and Sex Trafficking:  
An Analysis of a Seemingly Contradictory Correlation

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Peacekeeping forces are dispatched with the goals of bringing about stability and re-establishing rule of law to war-torn and traumatized areas of the world. Effective peacekeeping allows for people to return to their homes and for communities to rebuild and recover from past atrocities. However, in 2004, several international agencies submitted high-profile reports discussing a disturbing correlation between the rates of human trafficking and the deployment of peacekeeping forces (United Nations, NATO, or other international coalitions). Following the deployment of peacekeepers into post-conflict regions, the rates of trafficking in women dramatically increased. For example, during the period of the United Nation's peacekeeping mission in Cambodia, from February 1992 to September 1993, the city of Phnom Penh witnessed the number of women and girls in prostitution exploded from an estimated 6,000 to 20,000, more than a 300% increase.<sup>1</sup> Similar statistical increases exist in other peacekeeping regions, thus giving validation to the following observation by Ekberg (2004: 1197): "Anywhere there is a military base, pimps, striptease, nightclub, and brothel owners see a potential market."

Such comments bring to light the essential question of this paper: what can explain this seemingly incongruous correlation between peacekeeping and sex trafficking? The basic economic principle that "supply follows demand" appears to be far too simplistic of an approach for understanding this relationship; the same can be said for another offered explanation infamously given by the chief commander of the UN's Cambodian peacekeeping mission when confronted by complaints about his male peacekeepers' inappropriate behavior. Commander Yasushi Akashi explained that "Boys will be boys! Eighteen-year-old hot-blooded soldiers have a right to chase young beautiful beings of the opposite sex" (Ekberg 2004: 1198; Martin 2005: 3). Clearly, this "boys will be boys" mentality seeks to dismiss the weightier issue of sexual exploitation and abuse. Additionally, some may argue that most incidents of alleged sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers mainly concerns the purchasing of prostitutes, which may be "inappropriate" behavior but not necessarily deserving of the

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<sup>1</sup> By late 1994, the number of prostitutes increased to an estimated 25,000, according to the Women's Development Association (Enloe 2000: 99).

label of “abuse” or “exploitation.” One common introduction to the topic of prostitution is how “prostitution is the world’s oldest profession” (an assertion that obviously does not consider “hunter/gatherer” as a job category). It would then follow that this demand for prostitution is the world’s oldest demand, rooted in a *human* desire for sexual release/reproduction. A lusty libido is *natural*, and most men cannot endure for considerable lengths of time before seeking some form of sexual release; it would be *unnatural* for men not to act on—or have—this basic need for sex. Prostitution, therefore, exists because of human nature.<sup>2</sup>

Plainly speaking, if human nature is responsible for such an exploitative relationship then this paper would have little more to say. Fortunately, the issue is much more complex. These initial arguments serve as superficial explanations to a multi-faceted phenomenon, complicated by the contentious and nebulous concepts of gender, masculinity, sexuality, and security. As Higate (2004) observes, this troubling correlation between peacekeepers and sex trafficking has been acknowledged for some time. In addition to the criticism of the UN peacekeeping behavior in Cambodia, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees presented guidelines in 1995 aimed at thwarting the propositioning of female refugees for sexual favors in exchange for money and/or goods (9). In early 2004, persistent allegations of sexual abuse by United Nations peacekeepers in the Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of Congo sparked an extensive investigation and revealed that the problem of sexual abuse and exploitation was more rampant than formerly thought (Shotton 2004)—this investigation will be a primary focus of this paper. Similar reports began emerging in other regions where a long-standing presence of peacekeepers existed (Sierra Leone<sup>3</sup>, Haiti, and the Balkans) (Zeid al-Hussein 2005). Returning to Ekberg’s comment about the sex industry viewing military bases as prime markets, it appears that this observation is rooted in considerable literature to support the claim

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Holbrooke, a former United States Ambassador to the United Nations, once remarked how “Human nature is human nature. Where peacekeepers go they attract prostitutes” (Mazurana 2005: 34).

<sup>3</sup> It should also be noted that in a 2002 “Save the Children UK-UNHCR” report assessing the situations in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone documents similar allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse (Zeid al-Hussein 2005).

that high rates of prostitution coincide with the presence of a foreign military. Therefore, case studies of both a peacekeeping operation and a military-base and their interactions with the local populations will provide fodder for analysis.

This paper will first present the primary case study of the United Nations Permanent Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo. The UN's official month-long inquiry in the summer of 2004 [hereinafter referred to as the Bunia Rapid Response Team's Report] and the subsequent actions hopefully will afford a substantial analysis of the connection between peacekeeping and sex trafficking. Camp LeMonier, a United States military base outside the capital city of Djibouti, the small nation located in the Horn of Africa, is proposed as the military-base case study. One advantage with these two choices is how both the UN peacekeeping mission and the U.S. military presence exist on a relatively similar time scale: the peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo commenced in February 2000, and Camp LeMonier was taken over by the United States military in late 2001; both remain active at the writing of this paper.<sup>4</sup> As will be discussed below, the study of trafficking, in general, is hampered by its lack of quantitative sources and documentation, which can be attributed to definitional problems and the lack of policing mechanisms. Already this lack of information presents a sizeable obstacle in assessing the military-base case study (and other case studies); however, this dearth does not automatically prove that sex trafficking and cases of sexual exploitation and abuse are *not* occurring. While several explanations for this problem will be offered, this paper acknowledges that such a statistically-scant premise could lead to over-speculation at the paper's end.

There is a tendency to hold all peacekeepers—"shorthand for soldiers"—responsible for all allegations of abuses<sup>5</sup> (Vandenburg 2005). Therefore, there is one point that cannot be emphasized

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<sup>4</sup> As will be discussed below, Camp LeMonier was previously under French control for numerous years, used primarily as a barracks for French Foreign Legionnaire troops.

<sup>5</sup> Military troops are not the only group accused of involvement in human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Allegations have been levied against civilian contractors and other non-military personnel. "In 2000, U.S.

enough: the peacekeepers who are accused of sexual abuses are in the minority. While most peacekeepers perform their duties admirably and provide much-needed security and services, these allegations tend to have a blanketing effect of guilt. And it is certain that no international body (United Nations, NATO, or other coalitions) or country remains untainted by these allegations—reports reveal that all major contingents have some involvement in the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (Shotton 2004). In other words, this paper does not seek to scapegoat any one particular group or country; rather in choosing a United Nations’ peacekeeping mission, this paper hopes to demonstrate how this is an international problem. As Martin (2005) notes, “While recent reports focus on charges of sexual exploitation and abuse within UN peacekeeping missions, it is important to recognize that most national militaries around the world have had to address the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse” (3)—both abroad and on their own soil. The majority of peacekeepers leave their homes for lengthy periods and risk their lives to ensure peace and stability in regions that are recovering from devastating conflicts and civil wars.<sup>6</sup> In most cases, the situations necessitating the presence of peacekeeping forces have little or no connection to the national security interests of the peacekeeping contingents’ own countries.<sup>7</sup> This point should be kept in mind for a

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civilians contracted to serve in the UN mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina by Dyncorp, a private U.S. military contracting firm, were investigated for trafficking in young women in Bosnia” (Martin 2005: 5). Therefore, as Vandenburg (2005) points out, the overall makeup of the peacekeeping mission “is far more complex. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Stabilization Force, the follow-on to a peacekeeping force created by the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995, includes approximately twenty-thousand soldiers from NATO as well as fifteen non-NATO countries. Other institutions such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Office of High Representative, the United Nations’ Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and a myriad of other intergovernmental and nongovernmental agencies employ thousands of expatriate personnel in the country. In addition, the United States military employs a large number of civilian contractors to provide logistical support for troops in the field” (151-152).

<sup>6</sup> According to the United Nations’ website for the Mission of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as of 1 September 2006, there have been 96 fatalities recorded (68 military personnel; 9 military observers; 1 UN police officer; 9 international civilian employees; and 9 local civilian employees) (United Nations 2006a).

<sup>7</sup> This may or may not pertain to peacekeeping contingents sent by neighboring countries in the interest of regional security.

later discussion of motivations behind the international community's decision to launch peacekeeping missions and individual countries' abilities to establish military bases on foreign soils.

It should be clear that this paper does not seek to confirm how the arrival of a military presence (be it peacekeepers or troops) coincides with an increase in sex trafficking. Many others authors can speak with greater authority and present statistical figures to this correlation (See Manzurana 2002; Higate 2004; Higate and Henry 2004; Martin 2005; Mendelson 2005—and the list continues). The goal of this paper is to unpack the complicated relationship between peacekeeping operations and sex trafficking: essentially, why is a foreign military presence seen as a large pool of consumers for sexual services? Rather than it being because soldiers are just missing their girlfriends at home<sup>8</sup>, the answer is rooted (and perhaps entangled) in several theoretical notions of the military, sexuality, masculinity, and power. The majority of available literature seems to gloss over these concepts right before diving into policy recommendations. Therefore, before any analysis of the two case studies can occur, these concepts need to be fleshed out. In doing so, a better understanding of the environment in which the correlation between peacekeeping and sex trafficking occurs can be attained and then applied to the case studies. The paper's operating assumption is that "demand for sex trafficking" (brothels, prostitution, clubs, etc.) responds to a socially-constructed notion of the peacekeeping environment as a "hyper-masculine" culture of the military—where else could better clients be found? The intricate interaction between peacekeepers and the local population—the differences in culture and economic conditions—is also extremely important to this analysis because, oftentimes, these factors complicate the constructed origins of "supply and demand."

In dealing with the highly theoretical concepts of masculinity, sexuality, power, and the militarization of gender, a constructivist approach will be most applicable. Because this paper must grapple with various factors (different cultures, attitudes, histories) involved in the case studies, constructivism is attuned to how their corresponding norms develop and evolve. While it is often

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<sup>8</sup> This is the sort of explanation that the author has come to refer to as the "waving hand of dismissal."

asserted that all politics are local, Enloe (1990) offers a palindromic idea that the *personal is political* and the *political/international is personal*, which means that relationships “once imagined private or merely social are in fact infused with power, usually unequal power backed up by public authority” (195). Following this thinking, sexual relationships and romantic liaisons in peacekeeping missions—between male peacekeepers and “local” persons—are anything but personal and could be considered political, writ-large.

As one final note, one exasperating aspect of discussing UN and NGO-related issues is the predilection for acronyms, where readers have to wade through an “alphabet soup” of abbreviations to discern valuable information. Therefore, this paper seeks to limit its usage of abbreviations. Thus, the primary case study of the Democratic Republic of Congo will herein be referred to as the **DRC**, and the United Nations’ Permanent Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo will be **MONUC**. The shorthand of SEA may occasionally substitute for the phrase “sexual exploitation and abuse” to cut down on overly-word sentences.

### **Definitional Framework for the Paper**

According the United Nations, “trafficking” is deemed a transnational organized crime; its definition is further elaborated on in the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Person, Especially Women and Children. Known as the Palermo Protocol (2000), this international document defines trafficking as:

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (Art. 3a).

While this paper adopts this as its operational definition for trafficking, it does so in acknowledging its accompanying criticisms, primarily how the Palermo Protocol fails to define “sexual exploitation” and “exploitation of prostitution” (Anderson and O’Connell Davidson 2003; Bedont 2005). Some

argue that the vagueness hampers clear delineation between who is a “trafficked” person and who is not. Tracking, analyzing, and policing trafficking is complicated by the various gray areas that emerge between what constitutes “trafficking” and what constitutes “migration” (Jõe-Cannon 2006). Therefore, “trafficking” can be framed as a “corrupted mode of migration,” oftentimes hoodwinking people who desire better jobs, education, and opportunities into believing that their traffickers will provide the dream of the proverbial “good life” but only deliver them into nightmarish conditions (Anderson and O’Connell Davidson 2003: 8).

It is estimated that approximately 80% of all trafficked persons—notably women and children—are trafficked for the purposes of prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation (O’Connor and Healy 2006). Again, the Palermo Protocol makes no clear distinction between sexual exploitation and prostitution, inevitably sparking debate over the issue of consent. The element of consent can be a sticky matter because a person may not be necessarily forced into their decision to be “trafficked.” They may do so willingly (although in most cases, they operate under false presumptions). However, the Palermo Protocol asserts that “consent of a victim<sup>9</sup> of trafficking in persons...shall be irrelevant” [Art. 3b]. By making consent a non-issue some commentators argue that the Palermo Protocol clumsily avoids becoming entangled by the highly polarizing debate specifically surrounding the rights and wrongs of prostitution (Jõe-Cannon 2006). In anti-trafficking circles, organizations like the Human Rights Caucus portray some forms of prostitution as legitimate labor (the “consenting prostitute”) that entails free choice, while other groups like the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women view all forms of prostitution as a violation of human rights (Doezema 2001).<sup>10</sup> Organizations that fall in line with the former argue “that anti-trafficking has instead become a

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<sup>9</sup> Prior to the Palermo Protocol, trafficked persons were generally treated as criminals. However, under Articles 6 and 7, trafficked persons, especially women in prostitution, are viewed as victims of crime, and the State Parties agree to provide assistance (medical, legal, housing, etc.) to the victims.

<sup>10</sup> O’Connor and Healy (2006) oppose this “consenting prostitute” argument, citing numerous studies which reveal how one’s entry into prostitution is most often triggered by previous incidents of sexual abuse, oftentimes as a child or young person—which is arguably not the same as “free choice.”



rallying cry for governments and activists who seek to slam the door on migrants [and] reduce women's autonomy and promote abstinence" (Doezema 2002: 1).

While acknowledging the controversial debate, this paper cannot afford to fully flesh out these two lines of thought. However, one could go further than only ruling "consent" irrelevant in cases of sex trafficking and prostitution. Essentially, there is no distinction between "voluntary" and "forced" prostitution.<sup>11</sup> Paying for sexual services reduces the people who perform them to commodities or objects—non-persons, essentially (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003; O'Connor and Healy 2006). As Barry (1995) describes, "When the human being is reduced to a body, objectified to sexually service another, whether or not there is consent, violation of the human being has taken place....[for] they are treated as lesser, as other, and thereby subordinated" (22-23).

The purchase and exploitation of "prostitutes"<sup>12</sup> is a dominant allegation against peacekeepers. Therefore, it is important to conceptualize prostitution as sexual exploitation and abuse in order to break down the constructed notions used to explain away the relationships between the local female population and foreign military personnel—usually by conjuring up stories of romantic liaisons between a male peacekeeper/soldier/civilian and a local woman. Another common explanation offered is how women are the principal instigators in these "relationships" (Higate and Henry 2004; Martin 2005). However, considering the economic conditions of the post-conflict society, "choosing"

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<sup>11</sup> It is a difficult decision to rule "consent" as an irrelevant issue because it also implies that women and children in the prostitution or sex industry are "passive victims" or "suffering bodies." One accusation against anti-trafficking campaigns is that they are fueled by feminist attachment to the "suffering bodies of Third World prostitutes" (Doezema 2001). However, as O'Connor and Healy (2006) observe, no one "who spends time in the sex industry is a passive victim. Each will endeavor to use whatever limited options and choices that are available to protect their physical and mental health, and they use their agency every day simply to survive. But their agency is severely limited by the conditions and context of their lives, whether this includes being controlled by a pimp, trafficker, violent partner or family member, and/or an addiction to drugs, alcohol or both. In many commentaries...very little discussion takes place about the difference between free choice/action and coping/survival strategies. Both involve individuals acting in relation to their own needs and circumstances—but the latter are actions taken in the context of already constraining circumstances" (20).

<sup>12</sup> During the "Rapid Response" team's investigation of MONUC, several accounts described how rape would be disguised as rape, in which the victim was raped and then given money or food to fabricate a consensual transaction" (Shotton 2004).

to offer sexual services may be motivated by necessity and livelihood than actual “free consent.” This paper will return to this point—and others like this—in a later section for further discussion.

Demand, in simple definitional terms, means to “to claim as just or due” or the “desire to possess something with the ability to purchase it.” The concept of “demand for sex trafficking” centers on a rather indisputable argument that without male demand, the prostitution market would almost cease to exist (Jõe-Cannon 2006: 14). While it may be the primary trend that men generate the demand and women generate the supply, it is harder to explain why this demand exists. It should be noted that there is no traditional “profile” of this demand market—numerous studies reveal that men of all ages, nationalities, races, socioeconomic backgrounds, and marital status<sup>13</sup> can be clients of prostitutes (16).

The demand-side aspect of prostitution and trafficking was previously ignored by the literature because prostitution was traditionally conceptualized as a “victimless” crime—thus, the targets of police raids and crackdowns were primarily the prostitutes and not the clients. In addition to classifying persons trafficked for the purpose of sexual services as victims, recent theoretical opinions of prostitution conceive the act as “ultimately the male sexual experience. It is he who enjoys the power of money, conquest, ego, and sexual gratification and who acts out his misogyny with impunity” (O’Connor and Healy 2006: 11). Thus, looking at the demand-side is significant not only to understand what social, political, economic or moral factors promulgate this “demand” but to also be able to combat against this type of environment in which sex trafficking proliferates. At this point, the focus can diverge between two perspectives of demand: the consumer-perspective or the employer-perspective. If the critical determinant of where trafficking is likely to occur is the activity of the “employers” or traffickers (Hughes 2000), then a follow-up question should be asked: why are traffickers and prostitution rings drawn to areas of long-standing military presence? As the next section will further elaborate, this “consumer-side demand” is engendered by a socially-constructed

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<sup>13</sup> Jõe-Cannon, however, notes that on average these men are married.

and over-hyped notions of gender—what it means to be masculine, what being a “man” in the military means, and how this translates into peacekeeping behavior.

### **Concepts of Masculinity, Sexuality, and the Military**

Men are warriors; women are pacifists. Men are life-takers; women are life-givers. Men are naturally more violent than women; high testosterone begets aggression and dominance.<sup>14</sup> While these conventional sayings illustrate a dichotomous relationship between masculinity and femininity, both are also treated as natural, innately guiding a person’s behavior down certain biological paths, or so the argument goes (Enloe 1990). As Goldstein (2002) explains, the reality of biology is that it “provides diverse potential, and *cultures* limit, select, and channel them” (cited in Evangelista 2003: 329, emphasis added). In other words, it is perhaps too simple and improbable that all those possessing the XY-chromosome will become fierce, strong beasts of men.

Perhaps then the prevalent belief that men are more prone to violence is reinforced by societal contrivances rather than biological impulses<sup>15</sup> (Connell 2002; Evangelista 2003). Because a predominant tendency is to equate masculinity with aggression, men are constantly pressed to validate their manhood in aggressive manners. It should be noted that if gender norms are socially constructed, then one should anticipate plenty of variation across time and cultures in how masculinity is defined. Therefore, in multicultural societies one can anticipate what Connell (2002) describes as “multiple masculinities” where, in general, there is a “dominant or ‘hegemonic’ form of masculinity, the center of the system of gendered power” (35). Therefore, the forms of masculinity

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<sup>14</sup> Testosterone often is the catch-all explanation for what *makes* men (and some women) aggressive and competitive (e.g., high levels of testosterone cause aggressive, violent or competitive behavior). However, several studies have questioned this common assumption. Participants with similar testosterone levels are subjected to status-hierarchy competitions. All participants are then tested after the competition, and the “winners”—the dominant subjects—had higher levels in the end. Evangelista (2003) writes that “Testosterone levels appear to *reflect* rather than *cause* changes in status” (330, emphasis added).

<sup>15</sup> While statistics may side with the notion that men are more violent, Connell (2002) cautions not to take these numbers and interpret that all men are violent. He explains, “Almost all soldiers are men, but most men are not soldiers. Though most killers are men, most men do not kill. Though an appalling number of men do rape, most men do not” (34).

may be inexhaustible, but this notion is less important than the idea of a dominant masculinity dictating the “system of gendered power.” In the military, a dominant form of masculinity—one perhaps superior in defense and security—emerges through the process of militarization, creating an institution of hyper-masculine modes of behavior.

While civil societies regulate and police which forms of violence are unacceptable (murder, assault, abuse), some argue that most societies offer an institution where Betts-Fetherson’s “legitimate discharge of violence” can occur and even be rewarded: the military (Peterson and Runyan 1999; Higate and Henry 2004). In general, the military is chiefly described as an institute of hyper-masculinity, one where the sense of “being a man” is heightened by gender imbalances and certain notions of power, aggression, and sexual behavior. First, while the male-to-female ratio has decreased over the decades, the military is a predominantly male institution in numbers alone. Second, the military operates as a total institution, molding this diverse set of men (and women) by certain principles that are fundamental to its unique mandate—to wage war and be prepared to wage war even in times of peace—and producing soldiers trained in lethal modes of action and defense (Kovitz 2003).<sup>16</sup> A prolific writer of gender issues and the military, Enloe (1990; 2000; 2002) describes this as militarization, a “sociopolitical process...by which the roots of militarism are driven deep into the soil of a society” (2002: 24). Enloe continues, expressing how “[the] more militarization transforms an individual or society, the more that the individual or society comes to imagine military needs and militaristic presumptions to be not only valuable but also normal” (2000: 3). Thus, the hyper-masculine environment, over time, is considered instrumental—normal—for the military to be efficient. As Enloe explains, militarism involves a number of presumptions: how both conflict and adversaries are part of the human condition; that “armed force is the ultimate resolver of tensions” and provides protection for those in need—those considered to be “feminine”; and, finally,

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<sup>16</sup> It may be argued that such perspective ignores how societies without militaries can be defenseless to outside forces. While this may be an accurate statement, nonetheless it also reinforces the notion that likens protection, power, and strength to the masculine, and a state without a military as “naïve” or “effeminate” and beholden to an outside protector (Evangelista 2003).

how times of crises separate those “who are men” (e.g., those who engage in violent action) from those who are not (e.g., those who refuse to fight) (2002: 23-24). To reiterate Goldstein’s concept of the diverse potential of the human species, the military is not entirely made up of highly “masculine” and violent men—biology declares this not possible. As Kovitz (2003) writes, “Military masculinity has less to do with men’s essential characteristics than it does with the characteristics and assigned meanings of the different world—the military world—that soldiers inhabit” (10). In other words, perhaps, men (and women) do not make the military; instead militaries make the “man.” Considering these militaristic notions, the military environment is considered hyper-masculine because there is a conscious effort to remove anything that may be associated with the feminine—that which is equated with weakness and, therefore, considered a potential danger to the overall strength of the group.

While an exploration of sexuality and its various social constructions is not the primary subject of this paper, the interplay between sexuality and masculinity is decidedly important to the issue of peacekeeping, sex trafficking and prostitution. Sex, or sexual prowess, is not the sole determinant of masculinity, but it is important to the expression of masculinity (Enloe 1990; Barry 1995; Connell 2002; Hynes 2004). In most cultures, sexual intercourse is a marker for entering manhood through “bodily experiences, bodily pleasures, and the vulnerabilities of bodies” (Connell 2002: 36). While this focuses sex around the body, it should be noted that men are not usually turned into symbolic objects of sex, or the “sexed body” (Barry 1995). Rather the female body serves as the sexed body, the landscape—Hynes’ “battlefield” (2004)—for sex, comfort, control, and sense of homeland and identity, with the male body experiencing, using, conquering, protecting the sexed body.<sup>17</sup> As will be discussed further, this theoretical concept of male sexuality—the act of (protective) control over the

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<sup>17</sup> This paper does not seek to diminish the reality that men can be and are sexual victims and that women can equally be sexual predators. However, symbols arguably do not comment on reality but rather on the dominant perspectives of “reality.” Thus, women are symbolically seen as “sexed bodies,” with men enjoying them. In any case, a female sexual predator (*femme fatale*, at best; whore, at worst) is usually noted for her *unnaturalness*—an aberration of social norms.

female body—will come into play in the evaluation of peacekeepers’ relationships with the local female population.

Additionally, as many observe, discourses of male sexuality closely mirror discourses of the military and war. Whether it is war or sex “making boys into men,” both are framed to be instrumental to the definition of what “being a man” means (Connell 2002). The languages of war and sex are oftentimes interchangeable and sometimes meshed together. Prugl (2003) offers the example of a lewd chant heard during a basic training drill by United States’ soldiers: “This is my rifle [holding up the rifle]; this is my gun [pointing to the penis]; one’s for fighting, the other’s for fun” (339). While there are many other examples like these chants, none of them really incite soldiers to act aggressively or violent toward women. Male sexuality, in general, does not lead men to engage in rape or violence against women. (Rape and gender-based violence are rarely about sex itself and much more about power—sexualized violence rather than violent sex.) However, male sexuality and expressions of male sexuality—sexual identity—can encode social interactions and may create “relationships of domination” (336), especially where a disparity of power (can appear) to exist.

Evaluating relationships in terms of power—who has power over whom—can frame and even determine which forms of behavior are acceptable. Sexuality is not solely about power, and power is not only demonstrated or explained in sexual terms. However, it is important to note that militaristic notions of sexuality are more about power—and power-over—than the act of sex itself (Peterson and Runyan 1999). There is much to be said about relationships defined in terms of power and how this can be realized in the relationship between peacekeepers and members of the local community. As will be discussed further in the case study on the Democratic Republic of Congo, peacekeeping personnel are seen as figures of privilege and high power for several reasons—two reasons being the perspectives of the vulnerable locals viewing the peacekeepers as protectors and saviors in some cases and the drastic financial disparity between the two groups (Higate 2004).

### **Case-Study Primer: Gender-Related Policies of the United Nations**

Before delving into the allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation against MONUC, a brief discussion about the United Nations' overarching policies regarding gender-issues may be useful. Following the recommendations of a March 2000 report produced by an UN-authorized panel, led by the former Algerian foreign minister, Lakhdar Brahimi, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations initiated a Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, which would act a continual monitoring group of all peacekeeping activities conducted under the auspices of the United Nations. On 31 October 2000, the United Nations recognized the need to include a gender component into its peacekeeping operations with the Security Council's adoption of Resolution 1325, "Resolution on Women, Peace and Security."<sup>18</sup> Following its adoption, the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations opened so-called "gender offices" in the larger, multi-contingent operation zones, and instituted the creation of "gender focal points" in smaller missions (UNDPKO-Q&A: 19). The overall objection of these offices and positions was to foster a "gender" dimension to peacekeeping operations, by means of gender-focused seminars or promoting the new sections on gender issues in the peacekeeping training manuals, as well as increasing the number of women<sup>19</sup> in decision-making positions within peacekeeping missions—all efforts to counter the overarching hyper-masculine culture which, as Martin (2005) argues, "has produced a tolerance for extreme behaviors such as sexual exploitation and abuse" (6).

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<sup>18</sup> Recalling previous UN resolutions regarding women rights and security and expressing concern for armed conflict's adverse effects on civilians, especially women and children, this resolution encourages the Secretary-General to appoint more women as special representatives, requests that the Secretary-General provide training guidelines tailored particularly the particular needs of women in peacekeeping operation areas, and calls on all parties engaged in armed conflicts to "take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict" (UN-SC Res. 1325 2000: 1-4).

<sup>19</sup> Bolstering the ranks with female personnel, it should be noted, is not a guaranteed way to improve the situation. Martin (2005: 8) makes an astute observation that "...adding women personnel does not guarantee elimination of conditions that allow sexual exploitation and abuse to flourish. Sexual exploitation and abuse are primarily problems of abuse of power and only secondarily problems of sexual behavior. It is more akin to corruption. One's sex does not determine whether one will abuse power." Martin enhances this argument when she notes the recent Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse cases where female soldiers were active participants engaged in acts of sexual abuse and exploitation. Of course, the Abu Ghraib scandal alone is enough fodder for a lengthy discussion on sexual politics and the military.

Following a April 2003 report from the Department of Peacekeeping Operation's Office of Internal Oversight Services regarding allegation of SEA emerging out of West Africa peacekeeping missions, the UN Secretary-General issued an October 2003 Bulletin on "Special measures for protection from sexual abuse and abuse" (ST/SGB/2003/13), which was an extensive set of rules forbidding any form of sexual misconduct (Zeid al-Hussein 2005). These rules are clearly outlined in a series known as the "Ten Rules: Code for Personal Conduct for Blue Helmets" and "We Are United Nations Peacekeepers." All United Nations staff are subject to these rules.<sup>20</sup> Notably, the Blue Helmet Code of Conduct "calls for special constraint in the public and private lives of peacekeepers." In efforts to uphold the "highest standards of integrity and conduct ...[and help] the country to recover from the trauma of conflict," the Code outlines various "dos and don'ts" (Higate 2004: 23-24):

Peacekeepers should, at all times:

- Conduct themselves in a professional and disciplined manner;
- Respect the environment of the host country;
- Respect local customs and practices, religious traditions and cultural norms;
- Treat the local population with respect, courtesy, and consideration;
- Encourage proper conduct among fellow peacekeeping personnel

Peacekeepers should never:

- Bring disgrace upon the United Nations through inappropriate conduct or abuse of their peacekeeping positions;
- Perpetrate any act of harm—physical, sexual or psychological—on the local population, significantly women and children;
- Get involved in sexual relationship that could impair impartiality or the well-being of others

The UN also purports mission-specific codes that are adapted to the special cultural environment of each mission. For example, one explicit issue dealt with in the UN Code of Conduct for MONUC is sexual exploitation and misconduct. MONUC's Code of Conduct expands on the prohibition of "any act of sexual abuse and/or exploitation of members of the local community, including children" (Higate 2004: 25), defining sexual exploitation/abuse as:

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<sup>20</sup> However, as the 2005 Zeid-al Hussein report notes, the degree of application varies dependent on which component a UN "staff" member is categorized. The report explains that "A United Nations peacekeeping operation may have a civilian component, a military component and a civilian police component. The components are governed by different rules and disciplinary procedures because they each have a distinct legal status. The 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin does not, of its own force, apply to all three categories. This is a serious shortcoming" (Zeid al-Hussein 2005: 10).



- Any exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliation, degrading or exploitative behavior;
- Any sexual activity with a person under the age of eighteen;<sup>21</sup>
- Any other sexual misconduct which negatively affects the credibility and integrity of the United Nations' mission.

The Code of Conduct clearly prohibits any MONUC personnel from frequenting establishments where prostitution is available. Violation of these rules can lead to “summary dismissal and repatriation” (Higate 2004: 26). The United Nations also professes a zero-tolerance policy regarding any credible accusations of sexual exploitation and abuses, having recently initiated comprehensive reforms and methods to discipline the perpetrators (Zeid al-Hussein 2005).

### **UN Permanent Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo**

The Second Congo War (1998-2003), and its subsequent intraregional conflicts, sets the stage for this paper's peacekeeping case study. In response to the mounting devastation and atrocities committed during this time, the United Nations launched its Mission of the United Nations to the Democratic Republic of Congo [hereinafter **MONUC**].<sup>22</sup> In February 2000, the UN deployed approximately 5,500 peacekeeping troops with an initial mandate to monitor the Lusaka ceasefire agreement and the ongoing peace negotiations.<sup>23</sup> By the summer of 2003, the Rwandan and Ugandan governments had agreed to withdraw their forces from the DRC's eastern region; however, with the withdrawal of these militia forces, a power vacuum developed within the Ituri region (northeastern region), and civil conflict ensued, precipitating the UN's decision to create an emergency international force to provide security for the region's capital of Bunia.<sup>24</sup> By July 2003, the Pretoria Peace Agreement came to fruition, and a transitional government was installed. However, with the civil conflict still raging in the Ituri region, the United Nations has maintained its MONUC presence within this area, particularly

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<sup>21</sup> This provision highlights how the defense of “I thought he/she was older” is not acceptable.

<sup>22</sup> See UN Security Council Resolution 1279.

<sup>23</sup> See UN-SC Res. 1291.

<sup>24</sup> See UN-SC Res. 1484: this resolution led to the European Union's first military endeavor, known as Operation Artemis. Under French command, the EU provided approximately 1850 troops from nine countries to the region surrounding Bunia from 6 June 2003 to 1 September 2003.

to provide security for its refugee camps.<sup>25</sup> Unlike most UN peacekeeping missions, the MONUC mission has suffered significant casualties—ninety-six reported fatalities<sup>26</sup>—thus demonstrating the volatile environment in which the UN personnel operate. As of 31 August 2006, MONUC has over 18,500 uniformed personnel and is supported by a civilian/volunteer staff of approximately 3,500<sup>27</sup> (United Nations 2006a).

*Report of the Bunia Rapid Response Team*<sup>28</sup>

In January 2004, journalist Kate Holt began investigating the persistent allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by MONUC troops in Bunia. She reported that female minors at the nearby internally-displaced camp were repeatedly being raped by the Uruguayan peacekeeping contingent placed to monitor the camp. Accusations against other contingents began to surface in the months following. By mid-April, an advance copy of Holt's article came to the attention of the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations; MONUC's Senior Representative William Swing ordered an immediate investigation. After a week-long initial inquiry by a Senior External Affairs Office, which revealed that the problem of sexual abuse by MONUC peacekeeping personnel was much graver than anticipated (involving a significant number of under-aged victims and the perpetrators originating from almost any contingent, military observer or civilian staff), a month-long "emergency and rapid-response" project—the Bunia Rapid Response Team—was initiated.

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<sup>25</sup> See UN-SC Res. 1565: in addition to extending MONUC's mandate, the UN agreed to increase the troop's numbers. UN-SC Res. 1592 extended the mandate to 1 October 2005; and most recently, UN-SC Res. 1711 has extended MONUC's mandate 15 February 2007.

<sup>26</sup> On 25 February 2005, a UN convoy came under attack outside Bunia, and nine Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers were killed in the firefight. In late January, eight Guatemalan peacekeepers lost their lives during a reported conflict with Ugandan rebels in east DRC (<http://www.monuc.org/News.aspx?newsID=855&menuOpened=About%20MONUC>).

<sup>27</sup> The exact numbers are as follows: 18,536 total uniformed personnel (16,641 troops, 774 military observers, and 1,121 police), with a support staff of 959 international UN civilian personnel, 2,046 local UN civilian staff and 634 UN volunteers.

<sup>28</sup> This author received a copy of this draft report from Dr. Sarah E. Mendelson of the Center for Strategic & International Studies and is grateful for this insightful document. This report can be submitted for verification of its information.

A July 2004 draft report evaluating the Bunia Rapid Response efforts reveals that sixty-eight allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were registered between May and June 2004 in the immediate Bunia area. One primary conclusion by this investigation team was that MONUC sexual exploitation and abuse, especially child prostitution, was a rampant problem in Bunia. These incidents were taking place on a regular basis—not only in the expected haunts of brothels and bars but also in private residences, abandoned buildings and classrooms, churchyards and open fields. The report contains the interview of the wife of a local pastor, who reports how “Coming back from the outhouse at night, we would find soldiers from MONUC having sexual intercourse. In the courtyard, in the garden next to it and even here in the church, we found used condoms everywhere. It is horrible.” Their property is adjacent to the Moroccan contingent’s camp. Interestingly, allegations of sexual misconduct were previously levied against this Moroccan UN contingent at its previous station near Kisangani. These charges were dropped due to insufficient evidence. Convinced of their validity, the Gender Advisor went to the Office of the Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping in attempt to prevent the Moroccan contingent from being transferred to the volatile Ituri region (where rates of prostitution and sexual violence were already high). These warnings were ignored, and the contingent was transferred to the Ituri region with an assurance from the Force Commander that “there would not be any problems of misconduct with the Moroccans in Bunia.” Of the 68 allegations investigated by the “Rapid Response” team from May to June 2004, 25 were attributed to members of the Moroccan contingent, more allegations than any other contingent implicated.<sup>29</sup>

However, no contingent present was untainted by accusations. Overall, the Rapid Response team identified four typical patterns of sexual exploitation and abuse:

- *Military Personnel Engaging in Prostitution of Female Minors* – During the team’s investigation, UN military peacekeepers outnumbered UN civilian personnel by a 32 to 1 ratio in the Ituri region, which

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<sup>29</sup> Of the 68 registered allegations, 25 were against members of the Moroccan contingent, 18 against the Pakistani contingent, 9 against the Nepalese contingent, and 9 against the Uruguayan contingent. One complaint was registered against the South African contingent, and one complaint was made against a Tunisian Senior Military Observer. The five remaining allegations were registered against “International Civilian Staff Members” or “Various MONUC Contingents.”

can explain the sheer number of accusations levied against military staff. Most allegations involved under-aged minors. The reasons offered for why under-age girls are the primary victims are threefold: a) young females tend to charge a “lower” rate; b) tend to be more “readily available” due to the fatal outcome of the lengthy war; and c) are believed to be “less contaminated” by the threat of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. There is also a common trend for local boys to act as “pimps,” providing UN personnel with young girls or locations. While many cases involved “consenting” minors, several allegations of rape were registered against UN peacekeepers.

- *UN Civilian Staff Exploiting Local Female Employees for Sexual Services* – As several reported, women were often threatened with dismissal or would not be hired if they refused to acquiesce to demands for sexual services. Such forms of exploitation prove to be decidedly effective and difficult to document because UN missions are often the “best employers” in town, offering the highest wages to people living in an economically ravaged region.
- *Military/Civilian Personnel Engaging in Prostitution in Adult Females* – Interestingly, the report noted how this allegation “was so common that [they] usually did not even try to record them”; only the most severe cases were investigated.
- *Military/Civilian Personnel Perpetrating Sexual Harassment of International Female Staff Members* – The Bunia Rapid Response Team indicated that this type was not an original concern. As more time was spent investigating various allegations of sexual exploitation, international female civilian personnel began to voice their complaints about the inappropriate and unwanted sexual advances made by their co-workers.<sup>30</sup>

The Bunia Rapid Response Team emphasized that these sixty-eight registered cases were, in reality, only a small sample size of the true number of incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN-associated personnel. While reasons for the low documentation of SEA will be discussed in the next section, the Bunia Report attributes the levels of extreme poverty and low status of women in the Ituri region as leading explanations. Because rape and gender-based violence was a common weapon during the war, sexual violence has become almost normalized in the community. The prostitution of young girls is rationalized because these girls are “probably not virgins anyway.” The report also discusses how sexual violence has become trivial to even the victims themselves, citing one women’s comment that “It only takes three minutes so what’s the big deal?”—“it” entailing the

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<sup>30</sup> Higate and Henry (2004) describe one conversation with a female civilian working with the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo. First, the female participant discussed how her male colleagues kept a tally of the people with whom they had sex—it was a distasteful competition amongst the men. She then admitted that she actually “preferred to work with a man who had a ‘sexual outlet,’ as he was more likely to be ‘controlled’ in the office environment” (490). It is not clear as to her feelings or thoughts regarding the nature of these “sexual outlets,” but it can be surmised that her comfort level took precedence over the general security and well-being of these “sexual outlets.” However, to be fair, another motivating factor for this women’s seemingly callous attitude could be a fear of stigmatization as a “whistle-blower” or “turncoat” if she were to report this sexual misconduct (Shotton 2004; Zeid al-Hussein 2005).

performance of a sexual service or perhaps even enduring a rape. In such an unstable, volatile environment like Ituri, where gender-based violence is rampant throughout the community, local women actually consider themselves lucky if they are solicited by UN personnel because “at least the peacekeepers pay...in most cases.”

### *Zeid al-Hussein Report*

In light of these alarming findings, it was clear that a month-long investigation of the eastern region of the DRC had only scratched the surface of this expansive problem. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in July 2004, commissioned Jordan’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Prince Zeid Ra’ad Zeid al-Hussein to lead a Special Investigation Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. Based on their resulting fieldwork, the committee submitted their report to the UN General Assembly in March 2005, which reemphasized how pervasive the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeeping personnel was in the DRC. The total number of allegations registered with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for 2004 was 105 allegations (80 allegations against military, 16 against civilian personnel, 9 against civilian police). In comparison, only 25 allegations were registered in 2003 with this department, although the Zeid al-Hussein report cites the improved reporting process for the significant increase (Zeid al-Hussein 2005: 3, 8).

Overall, the Zeid-al Hussein report is a considerable critique of the policies and levels of accountability within UN peacekeeping operations. Diplomatic jargon aside, it does not shy away from holding the perpetrating individuals and their commanding officers equally responsible, holding that “there is a justified perception that neither the [mission] nor its civilian managers and military commanders are held to account to make good-faith efforts to address the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations” (17). Shotton<sup>31</sup> (2004), in her summary report of the Special Committee’s field observations, specifies several internal factors that cultivate an “enabling environment for sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeeping personnel.” First, a

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<sup>31</sup> Anna Shotton served as the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations’s Focal Point on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, supporting the Zeid al-Hussein Special Committee.

number of peacekeeping personnel cite the insufficient amount of time spent on education and training regarding the UN Standards of Conduct.<sup>32</sup> The second and third factors involve the poor conduct of *all* UN peacekeeping staff members—there was a lack of discipline within several contingents, which was most likely exacerbated by the fact that several senior managers and commanders also took part in acts of sexual exploitation and abuse. Finally, this “no-clean-hands” appearance can promote an attitude of permissiveness within the system, thereby making any attempt in reporting the abuse seemingly futile and even jeopardizing for “whistle-blowers.” Although the Zeid al-Hussein report is highly critical of the UN’s own peacekeeping structure for engendering an environment ripe for sexual exploitation and abuse, the report also emphasizes factors external to the UN’s structure and mission. Shotton (2004) also summarizes these factors:

The significant income and power differentials between MONUC personnel and the host population is an important contributing factor to [sexual exploitation and abuse] ...[as well as] the erosion of the social fabric due to the war which results in high numbers of children with little or no parental support; high levels of extreme poverty; lack of income-generation possibilities; high levels of sexual violence against women and children during the civil conflict coupled with discrimination against women and children, leading to a degree of local acceptance of violence and/or exploitative behavior against women and children; lack of judicial structures/legal vacuum, which creates an environment of de facto impunity.

In short, all of these factors are key ingredients for “predatory war economies” in which sex trafficking is an integral and highly profitable industry (Mazurana 2005: 34).

### **Assessment of MONUC Case Study**

This paper presents the MONUC case study and the UN investigation reports to illustrate the normative approach taken by the United Nations (other international agencies can be easily substituted) in addressing the disturbing problem of sexual exploitation and abuse within peacekeeping missions. Investigations are conducted; policies are created, revamped and stressed; and resolutions emphasizing the need for gender-sensitivity and cultural awareness are passed—but

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<sup>32</sup> Higate’s fieldwork supports this assertion, describing how the Office of Gender Affairs, in March 2002, conducted a 3-hour training session during the eight-day orientation program. By the summer of 2004, this time allotment had decreased to forty minutes (Higate 2004: 18). Additionally, the distribution of condoms may have also sent “mixed signals” to the peacekeepers having gender-training and conduct lectures on how the solicitation of prostitution was strictly forbidden.

what comes of this? As the Zeid al-Hussein report professes, “Many important efforts are currently under way in peacekeeping operations to address sexual exploitation and abuse. But they are ad hoc and inadequate to deal with the problem. What is needed is a radical change in the way the problem is addressed in peacekeeping contexts” (Zeid al-Hussein 2005: 9). As other researchers have concluded, the external factors listed are perhaps the foremost indicators that sex trafficking will occur in a particular region because such transnational networks and exploitative systems thrive in post-conflict states. The government or community has little capacity to fight these shadow/war economies. Moreover, Hughes (2000), like other authors, asserts that the “most crucial factoring determining where trafficking will occur is the activity of traffickers” (Hughes 2000: 10), who survey the devastated landscape with a cruel, calculated eye toward making profit with human lives. There is a lack of research regarding the motivations and methods behind the sex traffickers themselves; however, returning to an introductory point, one readily known fact is that sex traffickers see the arrival of a military/peacekeeping presence as a promising pool of clients.

How do the notions of (hyper)masculinity, sexuality and power translate into the case of the MONUC mission? To begin, they were initially conceptualized at the military level writ-large—in very general terms, in other words. Therefore, these concepts need to be evaluated within the context of peacekeeping operation zones in order to address the different environments and situations peacekeepers may encounter in the field. First, one must be mindful of the environment into which peacekeeping operations are launched: the post-conflict environment is fraught with complications: economic devastation, the fragile condition of the peace, internally displaced persons and refugee camps. Second, characteristics of peacekeeping operations themselves must also be addressed before one can fully analyze the correlation between peacekeeping and sex trafficking. This includes the gender-ratios of peacekeeping missions and essentially how this gender disparity translates into the peacekeeper culture. While gender-minded policies may be easily written and discussed, the precise implementation of these policies prove to be much more difficult. Finally, analyzing the correlation

between peacekeeping forces and sex trafficking rates requires an assessment of how the local community and the international presence interact. Contingents of various nationalities taking part in peacekeeping operations bring their own cultural norms and values to the post-conflict region and must negotiate within the boundaries of the local customs and values, which can occasionally confuse what might be “acceptable” forms of behavior and interaction by the peacekeepers. As will be discussed further, some envision this interaction as the “political economy of peacekeeping” (Higate and Henry 2004). This perspective will be crucial as the paper transitions to hypothesizing its implications on foreign military presence not in the form of peacekeeping forces but as longstanding foreign military bases.

To be clear, the arrival of peacekeepers is not the sole factor for an increase in sex trafficking and prostitution rates. While the focus of this paper is an analysis of the “demand” created by a peacekeeping/military presence, the environment into which the peacekeepers enter should not be discounted. In a conflict that precipitates the arrival of peacekeeping troops, crimes of violence and sexual abuse against women can hardly be described as a minimal phenomenon. Armed conflict provides a heightened atmosphere in which violent crimes against women escalate and often become a war technique (Hynes 2004). In other words, acts of rape, torture, mutilation, mass killings, and genocide are not only physically launched against women but also become symbolic acts against the enemy: destroy the female body, destroy the enemy (and in cases of genocidal campaigns, destroy the enemy race) (Mazurana et al. 2005).

A sustained period of armed conflict not only displaces thousands from their communities, in turn creating refugee situations and internally displaced camps, but it also destroys the economy of the region or state, state or region. In the aftermath of a civil war, a ruined economy can be a primary contributor to continuing instability and feelings of unrest within the population. Unexpectedly, many unsavory and illicit activities can flourish in these impoverished areas because the rule of law is weak or non-existent. Additionally, the post-conflict period may witness increased rates of violence,



domestic abuse, and rape against women, as “returning soldiers, who are overwhelming male, redirect their aggression to their households, demanding a return to prewar societal patterns of interaction and responsibilities” (Fitzsimmons 2005: 188). A return to these more traditional or patriarchal norms can be further enhanced by the destruction of schools, hospitals and shops—a consequence of war—which shifts responsibilities back into the home and onto women (Mazurana et al. 2005: 5). Thus, economic opportunities for women are limited in the economically-devastated region. Considering these effects, as many observe, “the end of war does not mean the advent of security” (Fitzsimmons 2005: 185).

Two additional phenomena should be noted: first, males have higher causality rates during war as they are the primary combatants; second, women and children make up the majority in refugee and internally-displaced camps. The resulting outcome is that women become the primary caregiver in their households, and in such hostile, economically-stressed environments, may resort to undesirable means for income, including prostitution, in order to take care of their families (Martin 2005; Mendelson 2005). That women in post-conflict areas may enter prostitution “willingly” and actively pursue clients—peacekeepers<sup>33</sup>—is an oft-used counterargument to accusations of SEA by peacekeepers. What is obscured by this phenomenon is that these women are engaging in prostitution as a last-resort option to provide for their families. In other words, “destabilization of regions due to warfare and economic collapse may leave women and girls with few options for obtaining much-needed income, making them targets of regional and transnational human traffickers who at times sell them back to the very forces sent to resolve the violence in the region” (Mazurana 2005: 36). Can one really call this a “willful” act? Additionally, can it not be said that this last-resort turn to prostitution would not be as prevalent if the demand for these types of service not be present? This food-for-thought reiterates the notion of supply-and-demand—that supply follows demand—and,

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<sup>33</sup> As reported in an *Atlantic Monthly* article, some mission commanders or political representatives have referred to significant groups of local females around peacekeeping barracks as “camp followers” (Crosette 2003), essentially reducing this phenomenon to that of a rock band and its die-hard groupies.

while it does not fully explain why prostitution and military forces seem to “go together,” it does put into question the conceived notion of active prostitutes/passive peacekeepers (Vandenburg 1998; Hughes 2000).

The peacekeeping environment itself also should be assessed for this equation (peacekeepers and prostitution) to be fully appreciated. Like in the military, one contributing factor to the typical hyper-masculine environment is the pure statistics. While the ubiquitous gender imbalances throughout the United Nations, over the years, have been improved, peacekeeping operations fall into one area where female participation remains significantly low. According to one estimate, in all missions launched since 2001, women have not exceeded six percent of military personnel (Mazurana et al. 2005). Women also make up less than five percent of the United Nations civilian police force currently deployed to peacekeeping missions. Female presence tends to be at its highest with nonprofessional civilian positions—secretaries and low-ranked office administrators—within peacekeeping operations (14). A more recent estimate reveals that “as of July 2004, women represented 4.4% of civilian and one percent of military personnel working in peacekeeping operations. ...[Overall] women constituted 27.5% of international civilian personnel service in peacekeeping operations” (Martin 2005: 5), a 3.5% increase from 2002 estimates.

One might question how this hyper-masculine culture—described previously as an overall military phenomenon—translates to the more environment-specific realm of peacekeeping operations zones. While one might accept the notion that engaging in war maneuvers and fighting the enemy can produce extreme or aggressive behaviors, they may be hard-pressed to come to terms with peacekeepers being similarly prone to such aggression—the word *peace* being the operating word. Traditionally, the UN peacekeeping operation’s mandate is not to win a war but to keep the peace. Fighting has ceased, and peacekeeping forces ideally are not supposed to be engaging in combat maneuvers. Instead, peacekeepers should operate as impartial observers, arriving to monitor the peace negotiations or perhaps the demilitarization of the warring parties. Overall, peacekeepers “[are]

not expected to fight fire with fire” (United Nations 2006b: 4). However, in post-conflict areas where the “peace” is fragile or, in the case of the DRC, a non-reality, it is necessary for the peacekeeping missions to have a large military presence. Because such environments call for more “muscular forms of peacekeeping or peace enforcement” (Mazurana 2005: 8), the mission is comprised of more militarized—thus, masculinized—notions of behavior. Subsequently, as the bulk of peacekeepers come from a military background, Higate and Henry (2004) reason that “...there is no switch inside the blue helmet [traditionally worn by a UN peacekeeper] that automatically turns a soldier trained for war fighting into an individual prepared to work non-violently and with cultural sensitivity in a highly militarized environment” (484).

Ideally, this “switch inside the blue helmet” would be developed by the recently incorporated training measures detailed in the UN Gender Resource Package, and through the continuous inclusion of gender issues into the peacekeeping/military culture, the factors enabling such exploitative behaviors may be curtailed. This is, again, easier said than done. In general, policies like the ones entailed in the Code of Conduct are much easier to write than they are implemented. As the fieldwork conducted by Higate (2004) demonstrates, putting words into action is difficult, especially when they are regarding subjects found to be “uncomfortable” to the wary group responsible for initiating them. Higate found that:

Most [peacekeeping personnel] were aware of its existence, and were able to cite the “under eighteen rule.” This tended to be the only detail that they had retained from the Code, through few identified with its intention of significantly curtailing the use of prostitutes by UN personnel. Both male and female participants considered that [the Code’s] aims were “unrealistic” and that prostitution was “unavoidable.” One male peacekeeper pointed out that because the age of consent was 14 years in the DRC, the Code of Conduct was ‘going against local culture’. It was clear that whilst the Code of Conduct was a serious document with important goals, nonetheless, it tended not to constitute a set of guidelines uppermost in the minds of personnel informing their day-to-day practice. Rather, despite the serious intention of the Code, it remained, as one male peacekeeper participant states, “another thing to put in your pocket” (26).

Overall, Higate’s observations and interviews provide insight to a general consensus within the peacekeeping community regarding gender issues (or more specifically, issues of sexual relationships, exploitation and abuse): while the issues addressed in the Code of Conduct are arguably important,

“[both] male and female participants considered that its aims were ‘unrealistic’ and that prostitution was ‘unavoidable’” (26). It is conceivable that this belief is partially fueled by the age-old adage that “prostitution is the world’s oldest profession,” as well as the interesting notion that prostitution prevents gender-based violence and rape. Therefore, some military/peacekeeping leaders may conceivably prefer that sexual activities be pursued via solicitation of prostitutes rather than take place as acts of rape and sexual abuse. Such a premise operates under a guise that prostitution is a “legitimate outlet for their troops” with rules and norms. At the very least, this line of thought allows for this “unavoidable” problem to appear “manageable” (27) and helps perpetuate the hypermasculine culture of (militarized) peacekeeping missions. Here, it would be beneficial to recall the previously-discussed connection between masculinity and sexuality: how sexual activity is an important expression of masculinity and, of course, power. At the very worst, if peacekeeping missions “tolerate” prostitution or other sexual liaisons between peacekeepers and locals (because the “alternatives”<sup>34</sup> could be worse), it first condones certain behaviors that would be classified criminal in the peacekeeper’s home country (e.g., having a sexual relationship with a minor under eighteen years). It is rationalized that these are “red-blooded” men, thrown into an environment where women (and girls) flaunt themselves and their sexual wiles, can only resist for so long (Mendelson 2005). Second, this complicity may pave the way for a dangerous slippery slope: where sidestepping the issue of prostitution can slide into the organizing of prostitution, and then further into the establishment of militarized “sex camps” and the creation of “comfort women” for peacekeeping personnel. While the latter idea may seem radical and/or improbable, one could flip through the history pages and read stories from the Korean “comfort women” conscripted into sexual slavery for the Japanese military camps during World War II—and these practices continued into the Korean War (See Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1992; Hicks 1995; Moon 1997; Barstow 2000).

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<sup>34</sup> As Enloe (2000) explains, “...organized prostitution to male soldiers is imagined to be a means of preventing those same soldiers from engaging in rape (111).”

A final, although more complicating, factor is the interesting and multi-layered dynamic between the peacekeeping community and the local population, spawning from the interaction between the various groups with their different values, customs and economic backgrounds. Obviously, peacekeeping missions and military forces do not arrive with their own belief systems properly vacuum-sealed so as to not mix with the local population and stir up trouble. However, “All [UN] personnel must embrace a ‘duty of care’ for the host populations, and management—both military and civilian—must be held accountable for the conduct of all those who serve” (United Nations 2006b: 9). To reiterate, peacekeepers, operating under an international mandate, provide security to the local populace or refugee camps, can help with the delivery of humanitarian supplies (food, medicines, etc.), and aid the overall stability of the region. While these activities fall in line with the United Nations’ “duty to care” without much argument, ironically some may extend this notion of “duty to care” to justify their sexual liaisons with locals: for example, a peacekeeper may rationalize paying local women in money or food rations in exchange for various sexual services because the women’s situations are actually “improved” by this interaction with the peacekeeper. Such relationships are “benevolent” rather than exploitative because these women (the majority of the cases) now have the money or food to take care of their families (Higate and Henry 2004: 491). What people often fail to grasp is how these relationships are based not on romantic premises but more on a vast power differential between the two, more or less exploited for only one’s sexual gain.

In July 2004, the UN’s Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit published its “Gender Resource Package for Peacekeeping Operations,” an extensive manual which would be used during the planning stages and actual implementation of peacekeeping missions and throughout the mission’s existence. Amidst the numerous appendices is a reference chart of “Scenarios Covering Prohibited Acts of Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse for the Various Categories of United Nations Personnel, which contains an example of when the “duty to care” is inappropriately overextended:

“Betty” is a sixteen-year old girl living in a small village. She has four younger brothers and sisters. Her parents do not have very much money and find it very difficult to provide the

costs for education, clothing and food for all of the children. There had even been some discussion about Betty dropping out of school to assist her mother working at the market. However, all the problems have been solved as Betty has started a sexual relationship with “Johnson,” a senior [UN High Commissioner for Refugees] officer. He has promised to pay for her school fees and help to pay for her brothers and sisters to continue with their education. Betty’s parents are very relieved that this opportunity has come and encourage Betty to maintain the relationship. It has really helped the family and now all the children can continue in school (United Nations 2004: 225).

The Annex describes how “Johnson” is in violation of Section 3.2(b) of the UN Secretary-General’s Bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13, which forbids peacekeepers from engaging in a sexual relationship with any person under the age of eighteen (Betty is a sixteen-year-old local). Johnson’s behavior is also deemed to be a case of sexual exploitation because he “has abused a position of differential power for sexual purposes, by exchanging money for sexual access” (225)—because he promises to pay for Betty’s education as a result of their sexual relationship.<sup>35</sup> While the annex uses this example to demonstrate the clear inappropriateness of the peacekeeper’s actions, it also can illustrate the complicating role played by the parents of “Betty” encouraging her to pursue a sexual relationship with the peacekeeper. In the classic sense of upward mobility, such liaisons can be economically beneficial and socially elevating. But the reality is almost all of these “relationships” last for the length of the peacekeeper’s tour of duty—six months is most common—and the local is left to start over, her situation unimproved and, in some cases, pregnant<sup>36</sup> (Higate and Henry 2004). That local women pursue and, in some cases, are encouraged to pursue sexual relationships with international peacekeepers is only one aspect of the intriguing dynamic between the local population and the foreign peacekeeping presence. Peacekeepers occupy “a powerful and privileged position,

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<sup>35</sup> It should be noted that the Annex does not specify what disciplinary action Johnson would face for these actions.

<sup>36</sup> No literature provided an exact statistics of “peace babies,” the term for pregnancies resulting from a sexual relationship with a peacekeeping staff member. In many cases, the father often will have returned to his home country before the baby is borne, complicating paternity tests (Higate and Henry 2004). The Bunia Rapid Response Team’s report (2004) describes a case where an American civilian employee was the alleged father of a two-year-old Congolese child; the mother stated that this civilian paid for the delivery fees and gave her some additional money, but she had had no contact with him for the past year. An investigation revealed that this particular civilian had another Congolese girlfriend, with whom he was financing a restaurant/brothel, using MONUC materials to partially refurbish the establishment. Other accusations arose that he had fathered children in two other UN peacekeeping missions—in Haiti and East Timor.

particularly when considering the vulnerabilities of a large number of the populace. ...Moreover, the issue of sharp financial disparity between peacekeepers and host populations<sup>37</sup> provides peacekeepers with an opportunity to exert power and authority over those weakened by conflict and thus vulnerable to exploitation and abuse” (Higate 2004: 7). The arrival of the “blue helmets” creates job opportunities and, ideally, has the ability to pay local employees a wage greater than they could hope to make within their own economy, thus becoming the best employer in the region—the *only* employer, in some cases.

Again, one goal of the peacekeeping mandate is aid in the recovery of the region’s government and economy. An overall approach for post-conflict reconstruction is to contract or create small businesses run by the local community to help supply the peacekeeping troops, engendering somewhat of a symbiotic, albeit uneven, relationship between the two groups. While the economic impact of peacekeeping is believed to be more beneficial than harmful (Carnahan et al 2006), missions should be mindful of the potential insidious effects. As Higate and Henry (2004) assert:

Unfortunately, in response to the presence of exceptionally well-remunerated UN staff, local suppliers of food and accommodation may raise their prices to levels that are out of the reach of local people. And the economic security of those employed by the wealthy incoming institutions is limited, because missions are finite. Paradoxically, economic security may be contingent on the continued instability of the environment in which the intervention takes place, requiring an extended presence for the mission and its resources (485).

### **Implications and Conclusions: A Future Case Study of Camp LeMonier**

As a preface, the choice of Camp LeMonier in Djibouti has obviously transitioned (or regressed) from a case study to something more comparable to a “projected case study.” The small nation of Djibouti, located in the Horn of Africa, gained its complete independence from French colonial rule in 1977. The country owes much to its location as a popular crossroads in the Red Sea for shipping lanes and the oil-rich Middle Eastern countries (Saint Veran 1981)—it has established itself as a free-trade zone (DiManno 2000). In comparison with its volatile neighbors of Ethiopia, Somalia and

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<sup>37</sup> For example, the salary of UN civilian observers equals between “500 and 1,000 times the average per capita income of the Congolese population” (Higate and Henry 2004: 485). The income of a member of a peacekeeping contingent is significantly less than these observers but still far outpaces the majority of the local populace.

Eritrea, Djibouti has the most stable government in the region. Despite this geographical advantage and relative stability, upon its independence, Djibouti lacked any substantial industry or business foundation for a self-sufficient economy, which has resulted in soaring rates of poverty, unemployment, food shortages and a high dependency on international humanitarian aid. The small country has an estimated population of 700,000, which does not include approximately 10,000 refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia (USAID 2006). The country also remained considerably dependent on outside military protection, and until recently, the main provider was France (Saint Veran 1981),<sup>38</sup> whose military presence steadily decreased from 15,000 to 2,800 troops (Reuters 2000; Mongalvy 2003). The recent agreement with the United States government has continued the tradition of a foreign military presence on Djiboutian soil. In late 2001, the United States negotiated to take control of Camp LeMonier, the former barracks of the French Foreign Legion (Reuters 2000). Per the guidelines of the Djibouti-U.S. agreement<sup>39</sup>, this base is primarily used for de-mining, humanitarian and counter-terrorism efforts throughout the Horn of Africa (and presumably parts of the Middle East) (USAID 2006). Its grounds house approximately 1,300 Marine Corp troops, as well as several Air Force and Army units, and the 13e Demi-Brigade de la Legion Etrangere [Half-Bridge of the French Foreign Legion]. Camp LeMonier is also home to the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa and a facility site for the Defense Energy Support Center – Middle East (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/djibouti.htm>).

Camp LeMonier is located just outside the capital city limits of Djibouti City, which has been described as a “one-industry town and its business is pleasure” (DiManno 2000)—foreigners can prowl its bars, club, and streets, and select from the vast numbers of prostitutes at work. Several news articles point to the long-standing presence of French troops and Foreign Legionnaires as the leading facilitator of the booming sex industry throughout Djibouti, a country that is ninety percent

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<sup>38</sup> It should be noted that this paper can only offer a cursory discussion on the history of Djibouti.

<sup>39</sup> This lease agreement, which will last for ten years, also grants permission to the United States to use the nearby airport and port facilities in addition to the use of the camp.



Muslim. One article accounts how the Djiboutian government, in late 1999, shut down forty bars for illicit behavior: “prostitution, drugs, drunkenness, fighting and pedophilia.” Raids on the city’s brothels are ineffective—regulations are ignored, and if one establishment is closed down, three new places are opened to compete for its clientele (Reuters 2000). As DiManno (2000) reports, the clientele can comprise of sailors newly-arrived to port, expatriates, wealthy Middle Eastern businessmen, and most significantly soldiers [Legionnaires], who “know the girls by name, have their favorites.” In most cases, these “girls” are of Ethiopian, Somali or Eritrean nationalities, working prostitutes to send their meager earnings back to their families. One telltale sign of the high prevalence of trafficked women and children from Ethiopia can be found in the name of the most infamous location for prostitutes: Rue d’Ethiopie<sup>40</sup> (Protection Project 2005b).

According to a recent report issued by the US Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, Djibouti is ranked as a “Tier Two Watch List,” which signifies that its government “has not fully complied with the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act but is making significant efforts to bring its standards into compliance.” This is the same criteria for a “Tier Two” ranking; where the “Tier Two Watch List” differs is the additional three-pronged criteria, including that the country’s absolute number of victims of trafficking is very significant and/or drastically increasing (Protection Project 2006).<sup>41</sup> Djibouti is classified as a country of destination for trafficked women and children, with rates of child prostitution on the rise. The ongoing conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea has incited waves of forced migration; a large majority

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<sup>40</sup> According to several watch-groups, child prostitutes from ages eleven to sixteen years have been documented in this location (Protection Project 2005b).

<sup>41</sup> The full criteria of Tier Two Watch List is as follows: Countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act but making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards, and:

- a) The absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or significantly increasing; or
- b) There is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year; or
- c) The determination that a country is making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with minimum standards was based on commitments by the country to take additional future steps over the next year.

of these displaced women and children slip through the porous borders and arrive in Djibouti, fated to most likely end up in prostitution<sup>42</sup> (Protection Project 2005b).

Despite Djibouti's ranking as a "Tier Two Watch List" country, and considerable evidence that sex trafficking is occurring, there is little information or statistics regarding any cases or allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by the foreign military presence against the local population. Other than the accusation that the French military presence is the primary reason for the booming red-light areas of Djibouti City, there appears to be no cause for a repeat-scandal like the MONUC peacekeeping scandal. However, to assume that a lack of information proves that this region is free from incidents of SEA would most likely be an erroneous assessment. First, prostitution, sex trafficking and rape all are underreported crimes (Mendelson 2005). This lack of statistics in Djibouti could be more attributed to poor documentation—perhaps a lack of government capacity—rather than low occurrences (Protection Project 2005b). While it is clear that Djibouti has an environment ripe for sex trafficking and prostitution—high rates of poverty and unemployment, stagnant economy, a significant population of refugees, and regional instability—it is these expressed problems that occupy a good deal of the government's time and attention, leaving little manpower to police and prevent sex trafficking and prostitution (especially when these illicit venues "generate" revenue). Add in low media coverage or NGO attention, and this becomes the perfect recipe for the phenomenon of "a problem unseen does not exist" (Mendelson 2005: 22-23).

However, "a problem *undefined* does not exist," a closely-related phenomenon, may also serve as a second explanation. If sexual liaisons between foreign military personnel and locals are not considered "problems," one could anticipate a relatively low number of accusations or complaints of inappropriate behavior. Enloe (2000) raises the following interesting point: "Prostitution can seem comforting to some. They imagine it to be the 'oldest profession.' Around a military camp,

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<sup>42</sup> One UNICEF study reports that 73.3% of "street children" in Djibouti are of Ethiopian descent—over 25% of this group would end up in the commercial sex industry. The lack of uniform birth registration processes, where the child officially acquires a nationality, is offered as an explanation for the ease in which children are moved from country to country (Protection Project 2005b).

prostitutes connote tradition, not rupture; leisure, not horror; ordinariness, not mayhem. To many, militarized prostitution thus becomes *unnewsworthy*” (109). With cases like Djibouti and its pre-existing problems of sex trafficking and prostitution, an attitude of resignation may be adopted by the U.S. military commanders: if the problem of prostitution continues regardless of American military presence, then what can be done?

Oftentimes, such attitudes deemphasize the exploitative nature of sex trafficking and prostitution, and this issue slips down the list of concerns. In the context of peacekeeping missions, personnel must juggle a number of priorities, including providing security, infrastructure and humanitarian aid and monitoring transnational crime networks involved in drugs or guns, which also flourish in such volatile regions. Peacekeeping missions are deployed after an international mandate has been issued, and countries deploy their troops to areas where, more than likely, there is little strategic interest at play, aside from the international goal of ending the atrocities that are occurring in the region.

With regard to Camp LeMonier, it is not so simple of a case. The importance of continued U.S. military usage of Camp LeMonier is quite clear. Djibouti is one of two African countries<sup>43</sup> with strategic importance to the United States and the U.S.-led Global War on Terrorism, due to its “relative stability and political climate, its geographical location and the economic impact it has in the region as a transport hub” (USAID 2006: 3-4). While the activities of a foreign military base can resemble those of a peacekeeping mission, one unique difference needs to be kept in mind: the strategic interests of the foreign military power will take priority in most cases. Counter-terrorism is the current trump card; all other concerns could be deemed secondary to the overarching fight against terrorism.

The UN Department of Peacekeeping was established in 1992 to reflect the new era of “multilateralism” after the end of the Cold War. Unlike the previous peacekeeping missions launched to dispel tensions and observe peace negotiations, the peacekeeping missions of the post-Cold War

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<sup>43</sup> Nigeria is identified as the second nation.

era have been markedly different. Deployment, as in the case of the DRC, has occurred before the conflict has concluded and before all fighting parties have consented to the deployment. These dangerous environments and volatile situations have required extra caution and enhanced military preparedness on the part of the UN forces (United Nations 2006b). In other words, peacekeeping missions have become *less* pacific and *more* militarized, deployed to regions like the DRC, the Balkans (and soon perhaps Sudan), “where ‘victory’ will be elusive” (Enloe 2000: 100-101), and the environment necessitates the usage of force to ensure the safety of peacekeepers. Thus, there appears to be a Catch-22 phenomenon: volatile situations call for “muscular” peacekeeping, otherwise the mission itself may be jeopardized (and when peacekeepers arrive home in body bags, the nation’s constituents begin to ask why their men and women are even in that region); but these “muscular” hypermasculine modes of peacekeeping, while perhaps leading to a more “successful” mission, often diminish the likelihood of incorporating gender-sensitive perspective that promote an understanding that behavior previously deemed as “red-blooded” male behavior is in fact explicit forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. As Betts-Fetherson declares, “[If] we only train people for war it is far more likely that is what we will get” (cited in Mazurana 2002: 47).

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