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Parades, Parties and Pests: Contradictions of Everyday Life in Peacekeeping Economies

Based on research studies conducted in the UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia in 2006, 2012 and 2013, this article argues that peacekeepers' everyday experiences reflect a series of contradictory identities and performances with regards to nation, work and gender. Peacekeepers straddle paradoxical worlds simultaneously and manage oppositional demands and obligations, although it is often assumed that they inhabit peacekeeping economies in homogenous ways. Importantly, the experiences provide opportunities for peacekeepers to invest in, accumulate and deploy military capital; to consolidate their military identities; and to favourably and tactically position themselves as deserving and useful subjects within the peacekeeping landscape.

Keywords: Peacekeeping, gender, everyday, performance, peacekeeping economy

Introduction

Despite a growing number of studies examining the social conditions and experiences of military and humanitarian workers in development and conflict zones (Autesserre 2014; Baker 2010, 2011; Higate and Henry 2009, 2010; Higate 2011, 2012; Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Pouligny 2006; Rubenstein 1989, 1993, 2008; Smirl 2009; Simic 2009; Sion 2006), little is known about the everyday lives of United Nations (UN) peacekeepers. This group of individuals comprise a considerable number in many post-conflict contexts, for example at their height numbering as many as 15,000 in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Such a concentration of military and civilian UN workers in small capital cities such as

Monrovia has a significant impact, not only on the local and global financial economies and markets, but on the moral, cultural and social economies that form the basis of post-conflict and peacekeeping everyday life. However, peacekeepers are a challenging group to study. Within this mixed and eclectic group, in any given peacekeeping setting, there is both a rapid and gradual turnover of personnel, who tend to rotate every six to twelve months (military) and up to three years (police), or on an undetermined intermittent basis (civilian). Many peacekeepers return to missions several times over a career lifetime to work in various capacities. Because of this, the demographic patterns of international workers in longstanding peacekeeping operations are difficult to map. This study instead provides a qualitative snap-shot of peacekeepers' experiences, with particular attention to the peacekeeping economy and the concept of 'military' capital inspired by the work of Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1983; 1986; 1987).

I focus on non-traditional aspects of the peacekeeping economy. While most studies of peacekeeping economies concentrate on the ramifying social and economic effects of peacekeeping operations, this article centres on the ways in which peacekeepers talk about peacekeeping as forms of labouring. In particular, they strive to accumulate and deploy forms of martial or military capital through everyday praxis. Accordingly, the peacekeeping economy concept takes on new dimensions in my understanding. The concept (as elucidated in this special issue) is generally preoccupied with the question of how the international and local interact with and affect each other; the peacekeeping economy itself is understood as a site (or series of sites) where these everyday interactions and transactions occur, and thus a fruitful avenue of study. In this paper, I shift the referent, from – how does what peacekeepers do in their everyday lives affect 'the local', to – how does what the peacekeepers do in their everyday lives affect peacekeeping, the mission environment, and the peacekeepers themselves? And how do peacekeepers justify their own, sometimes privileged positions in these missions? I use the peacekeeping economy concept to refer to

those social, cultural, moral and everyday worlds that peacekeepers are embedded within and co-construct, and that are created through narrating experiences of living and working as a peacekeeper.

This research also forefronts the unique context of peacekeeping life, and the push and pull factors many peacekeepers face regarding taking up employment within the peacekeeping industry. This context and these factors can be seen in my findings from Liberia, where this research was carried out over the course of several fieldwork trips in 2006, 2012 and 2013. While this study draws especially on data collected in the most recent fieldwork, some important and illustrative observations about the two tranches of fieldwork are made. In 2006, it was evident that peacekeepers and the mission enjoyed a secure and elevated position, and this was confirmed in Krasno's (2006) study that demonstrated widespread positive perceptions of UN peacekeepers in the aftermath of war. In this research period, peacekeepers emphasised their desire to 'make a difference' and to contribute to the humanitarian project in the earlier period of the mission (Higate and Henry 2009). Conversely, peacekeepers talked in muted ways of financial gains from living and working in peacekeeping missions, although often very conspicuous economic differences between international aid workers, including peacekeepers, and the local population could be seen on the peacekeeping landscape (Henry, Higate and Sanghera 2010). Instead, the resources that peacekeepers sought out and invested in from the militarised peacekeeping economy were broad in scope: economic, social and cultural forms of capital were amassed, utilised and deployed where necessary. This was in marked contrast to the narratives of peacekeepers (primarily police, security, or military) from the Global South and former Eastern Bloc during the 2012 and 2013 fieldwork: many of these peacekeepers insisted that they were there *primarily* to make money and create a better life for their families at home. In particular, debt-ridden and struggling economies in Eastern Europe meant that

peacekeepers continually narrated a sense of desperation and dependence on the economic rewards of peacekeeping for their own survival and capital accumulation.

Based on this research, I argue that peacekeepers are continually dependent on militarised (especially embodied) resources (or forms of capital), and that this is both a cause and consequence of the everyday contradictions and paradoxes that they experience. Militarised capital refers to the cumulative social resources that a soldier acquires through formal and informal training and education in a security industry. The accounts of peacekeepers reveal the ways in which the contradictory experiences of professionalism and patriotism, endurance and enjoyment, and the feminine and masculine proliferate in their labouring practices, and provide the rationale for their continued investment in martiality as a resource. It is important to pay attention to peacekeeping spaces as contradictory sites of everyday experiences because they are also productive. In these sites, peacekeepers are able to amass and/or deploy military capital and to beneficially position themselves as 'ideal' peacekeepers: as best suited, most worthy and perfectly placed to take up peacekeeping duties amongst their peers back home and globally.

I suggest that we need to pay attention to the everyday practices not only of the peace-kept, but also of the peace providers. By making visible the experiences of everyday soldiering and its global marketability in post-conflict settings, and illustrating 'the micro-details of empire' that Lutz suggests are so crucial to understanding the deep and often subtle impacts of militarisation more generally (Lutz 2006), this article thus makes a contribution to the fields of critical military studies and peace and conflict studies. The research also complements studies that examine militarisation as the sum of economic policies and practices, with little attention to the lived experiences that are intimately woven with neoliberal agendas of international governance institutions and multinational corporations. As such, it provides insights into the often invisible effects of socio-spatial and imperial power as it is played out in the form of humanitarian intervention, international aid

and peacekeeping (Paris 2003; Higate and Henry 2009; Razack 2004; Duffield 2010; Smirl 2009; Zanotti 2007, 2011). Finally, and more implicitly, the article challenges homogenising tendencies within recent literature that caricature military masculinity by their focus on the 'exceptional' gendered actions and effects of militaries in regards to torture (Razack 2005; Puar 2004, 2005) and sexual exploitation and abuse (Martin 2005). Rather, this study examines the ordinary ways in which peacekeepers contribute to the social, cultural and moral economies of peacekeeping operations and challenges the idea of peacekeeping as a purely privileged practice.

I begin by sketching the idea of military capital, which is key to understanding how peacekeepers perform themselves as military professionals. This is followed by an exploration of the ways in which peacekeepers fashion themselves as subjects of contradiction: people that work hard and play hard. The ensuing section examines how peacekeepers provide contradictory narratives of their martial capital along gender lines – specifically, they do not disavow feminine forms of labour, but instead 'martialise' these in order to present themselves continuously as the ideal peacekeepers. Finally, the conclusion summarises the need for examining multiple peacekeeping economies, and what this can tell us about other effects of peacekeepers everyday practices more generally.

A Note on Methodology and Conceptual Framework

As noted above, I take a different approach to the peacekeeping economy concept, using it to refer to those social, cultural, moral and everyday worlds that peacekeepers are embedded within and co-construct through narrating everyday experiences. While others are concerned with the fortified compound as a symbol of segregation, or as a place where a narrow band of locals (security guards, maids, caretakers) and internationals meet, I delve into the everyday lives, activities, and performances of peacekeepers within these

compounds; the (sometimes contradictory) pressures to which they are subject; and the meanings that peacekeepers assign to them. In other words, the peacekeeping economy in my understanding includes not just economic activity as an aggregate or macro product, nor the interaction between the international and the local, but also the insular and internal subjective experiences of peacekeepers that are characterised by seemingly contradictory social practices. This understanding also allows for consideration of peacekeepers as agents, not just in terms of their consumption or use of services, but also how their own (in many cases precarious) economic pressures and aspirations make them dependent upon martiality and the militarized nature of peacekeeping in order to materially survive, and sometimes thrive. Thus, the peacekeeping economy concept provides a framework for considering the multiple, oppositional worlds that peacekeepers navigate in the course of their daily lives, where the professional and personal, the military and civilian, and the disciplined and the imperial, continuously jostle, interlock and intersect. In understanding the experiences of peacekeepers – who are simultaneously subjects and agents of the ‘civilizing’ mission – I seek to assess how their social, cultural and moral capital accumulation functions in such contexts, and how this can be deployed within peacekeeping economies more generally.

This research is based on two studies of peacekeeping life that took place in 2006 and 2012-2013. The purpose of these two studies was different, but relied on qualitative inquiry in order to understand the everyday practices of peacekeepers in a variety of peacekeeping missions. This paper relies on qualitative data collected in the peacekeeping mission in Liberia, and on observation and interviews conducted with peacekeepers (approximately 46) from a variety of national backgrounds in the 2012-2013 period. The overall fieldwork was conducted on five separate fieldwork stints, and involved some peacekeepers who were stationed multiple times to the same mission. While the overall study includes peacekeepers from a range of occupational backgrounds, this particular

article draws primarily on the experiences of 'militarised' personnel working in the security sector (police, security or military), or who have had previous experience in national military service. As I have already mentioned, the two different time periods revealed significant change within the peacekeeping economy in Liberia, as the gradual mission drawdown and turnover of personnel meant a solidifying of the militarised aspects of peacekeeping work: fewer civilian workers were present, and an increased number of police (especially formed police units (FPUs)) were being brought in as the mandate of the mission underwent transformation. During 2012, there were heightened fears by both the public, and the peacekeepers from economically challenged countries, that the peacekeeping operation would be drawn down and that everyone would lose 'their piece of the pie', as one peacekeeper remarked.

This is partly why I have turned to Bourdieu's notion of capital (1983; 1986; 1987) as a means for thinking about how peacekeepers narrate their everyday experiences in Liberia through reference to their social location within the economy. What Bourdieu suggests is that social subjects attempt to accumulate varied forms of 'capital' that hold value in a variety of 'fields'. Capital is a resource that an individual or community comes to trade or exchange within the economy, and takes the conventional forms of economic (money), social (education) and cultural (taste) (Bourdieu 1983; 1986; 1987). These resources or forms of capital are then convertible into material dividends. Scholars such as Lee Monaghan (2002) and Loic Wacquant (1995) have taken up Bourdieusian notions of capital and extended these to male-dominated practices (such as sport), where they have emphasised the body as a resource amongst those subjects socially denied access to other forms of easily convertible and legitimate capital (such as working-class/black men in the UK and US contexts, respectively). Using embodied or bodily capital, these scholars have explored the way in which men have utilised their bodies as a resource and a mode for social mobility. Drawing on this work, Beverley Skeggs extends the notion of capital further,

suggesting that working-class women (in the UK context) invest in and rely upon femininity as a form of capital that can be traded. Femininity is an embodied form of cultural capital that is invested in by young women, in the absence of opportunities to acquire meaningful educational and recognised qualifications. It is from these theorisations that I take inspiration, and suggest that peacekeepers draw upon an embodied and gendered form of capital that is drawn from their military training and experiences. Nevertheless, peacekeepers feel ambivalent about their martial past, partly because military capital (as embodied) is both disavowed and dismissed, at the same time that it is highly valued in the local and global peacekeeping economies and by the civilian public more generally. That is, peacekeepers rely upon their military past and training in order to acquire employment within the peacekeeping mission, and such occupational competencies also structure their everyday lives while in the mission. Yet, peacekeepers are also simultaneously trying to distance themselves from work that requires them to use their bodies as a sole source of income. This is especially the case for militarised workers who tend to retire earlier (age 55 on average) and see their work as largely manual and blue-collar – work that is often devalued both symbolically and remuneratively on a global scale. Many peacekeepers attempt to diversify the forms of capital available to them, for example by taking up further study, qualifications or placements. Amongst the peacekeepers as a whole, most shared a desire to acquire skills that would allow them to rely less on their martial and embodied skills, and more on skills that were not so age and ability-dependent..

The Symbolic Economy: Military Capital and Performing the Nation

Much of the formal work of everyday peacekeeping relies on following military ritualised forms of work. All peacekeepers, regardless of their formal connection to the military, are required to cooperate with the security mechanisms in and around various buildings. Upon

entering the headquarters of UNMIL on busy Tubman Boulevard, peacekeepers comply with security checks to enter into various parts of the compound. Like other military subjects, peacekeepers are used to such regulations and have grown accustomed to standard and varied routines. Nevertheless, peacekeepers are anxious about the possible consequences of infractions, such as the loss of reputation and remuneration, from not cooperating with the regimes that regulate life. Publicly, however, peacekeepers often scoffed at many of the disciplinary regimes of the institution; some peacekeepers tried to see how many security guards they could bluff by using another peacekeeper's identification. However, these rebuffs were often paired with a simultaneous compliance with 'Big Brother', as they sometimes referred to the UN. Many peacekeepers shared their disdain for the 'sanctimonious' UN interfering with their daily life, while 'chaos continues to reign in Liberia'. Yet the contradictions are managed well by most, and as such peacekeepers co-perform obedience as part of the implicit contract they enter into with the UN. This co-obedience and mimicry (Bhaba 1984) takes place within a symbolic economy, where military signs are produced and shared in order to mark peacekeepers as professional, useful and belonging national subjects. Working for the UN provides peacekeepers with prestige and economic dividends not generally associated with national security or military work.

Drawing on the work of scholars extending the capital metaphor, I suggest that peacekeepers continually invest in their acquired martial forms of embodied capital in order to justify their continued (preferential) existence within the 'peacekeeping-industrial complex' (Ottawa Citizen 1998). This form of capital is amassed through conventional military training where martial (embodied) skills are seen in the bodily hexis and martial practices of military peacekeepers (Diphooorn 2015; Mangingira, Gibson and Richters 2015), but is then utilised in somewhat contradictory or unexpected ways within the peacekeeping deployment. This is not social capital and does not come from military education, but from a manual and embodied form of training that is instead a form of cultural capital. While

peacekeepers occupied spaces marked explicitly by peace, their accounts show how they continually hone their martiality as a resource, and display it in the various 'fields' available to them (Bourdieu 1987). This is apparent in the ironic ways in which peacekeepers flaunt their conventional military habitus (Lande 2007) as distinct, and at the same time disavow that very disposition to present themselves as simple and ordinary citizens of the nation state. In order to do this, they rely upon signs and symbols of militarism and nationalism to situate themselves within specific narratives that consolidate the idea of the professional and patriotic peacekeeper. Demonstrating these ideal, but paradoxical identities, peacekeepers contribute to existing social, moral and cultural peacekeeping economies.

A classic example of the contradictory work that peacekeepers do is evident in the medal parade or ceremony (Rubenstein 2008). The medal parade, which is most often accompanied with a sharing of national-cultural practices, is something that enables peacekeepers to come together for official engagements and provides an opportunity to display disciplined martial bodies, 'advanced' military practices, as well as a civic commitment to both international and national projects. The peacekeepers I interviewed shared some of their enjoyment at attending these regular events (usually at least once a month). As employees they used these events as a way to, as one UNPOL officer put it, 'skip out of work', and 'get some tasty food for free'. While the medal parade is held to honour a particular national contingent and formally recognise the service that they have given on behalf of their nations, to the United Nations and the people of the host country, it is also a moment for peacekeepers to perform their national identity by sharing what they believe to be quintessential displays of their national culture(s). These are not done without a sense of cynicism, as the symbols and signs are continually read in contradictory, problematic and mocking ways.

The medal ceremony holds all the hallmarks of a conventional military parade, with high-ranking individuals stationed in succession across a large stage or platform, and ending

with the pinning of medals to the breast pocket of lower-ranking officers who have performed services as a matter of duty. Key here is that while many of the peacekeepers talked about the financial rewards involved in peacekeeping work, they also emphasised continuously their sense of obligation and duty to country, nation, government and peoples. As such, the peacekeepers oscillated in their performance of a dignified civil servant and humanitarian entrepreneur. They continually stressed their martial and national pride and viewed medal parades as an opportunity to show their modernity, but at the same time recognised the events as ironic, in lieu of the peaceful (post-conflict) context within which these martial displays were taking place.

The medal ceremonies provide an opportunity for peacekeepers to perform military masculinity (mostly) and display their martial capital through nationalist performance, by exhibiting a form of national and embodied competence (or not, where it apparently fails) and showing themselves to be national citizens with a very particular cultural, martial and geographic history. Peacekeepers in these military-civic spaces must therefore straddle the world of the warrior and the citizen – demonstrating to the varied audiences that they are indeed professional, serious and competent, as well as culturally developed, loyal and patriotic. Indeed, it could be argued that the bifurcated sense of themselves as citizen-warriors and national subjects is not in fact, contradictory, but part of a tactical rhetoric they actively deploy about which individuals are best suited to be sent on international duty.

One of the peacekeepers suggested that the ceremonies were too embarrassing and that he was glad he did not have to participate in that, as his contingent was small and 'disorganised'. Being a peacekeeper is a 'job' he claimed, not something done purely for the love of country. Yet by performing like the lame Golden Retriever who was dragged onstage at the Nepalese medal parade, peacekeepers consent to displaying themselves, knowing that their performances of obedience and acquiescence are helping to secure their place within the mission as model peacekeepers. Keeping mum about such contradictions is often

a deliberate tactic used to justify their pursuit of the neoliberal dream and the good life more generally. They perform their nationality and therefore the nation repeatedly, although these performances are almost always ambivalent ones. Peacekeepers enact martial and national identities in these forms in order to maintain international employment and to continue to accumulate financial rewards. Peacekeepers know that they can continue to aspire to the good life precisely because their militarised training and backgrounds give them the necessary earning capital in humanitarian, post-conflict and peace industries.

‘Work Hard, Play Hard’: Suffering Economies

Some of the contradictions peacekeepers experience can also be witnessed in the ‘work hard, play hard’ culture characteristic of many male-dominated and militarised settings (Razack 2004; Duffey 2000; Tallberg 2007; Higate 2012; Wadham 2013). Peacekeepers repetitiously emphasised themselves as ‘special’ workers. They narrated their working lives as excessively arduous and simultaneously boring. Peacekeeping labour, is heavily indebted to and structured by military influences. For example, peacekeepers are posted in single units (and families not allowed to stay), and the division between private and public life is often fused within the peacekeeping space. Without anyone to go home to (including a military camp in the case of police, military and security officers), peacekeepers tend to work longer hours voluntarily, as well as establish important friendships and manufacture surrogate families inside and outside their national communities. The relations made in the peacekeeping space are based on a sense of shared endurance or suffering that is familiar and bearable because they are ‘warriors’ as one female peacekeeper stated. The peacekeepers not only ‘sweat together’ like in many military bonding contexts, but they collectively invest in a particular militarised identity (Kylin 2012: Mangira, Gibson and Richters 2015). In particular, peacekeepers consolidate their occupational investments

through narrating an account of a typical soldier's life---difficult, demanding, and duty-bound.

During interviews and conversations with peacekeepers from both the Global North and South, many peacekeepers shared the pleasures and pains of being away from family, and that what kept them going was not only a hardiness obtained from military training, but a vision of a 'a better life' for their children. Civilian, police and military peacekeepers shared a predominant sadness of the countless losses they had amassed as a result of their multiple postings and thus many deployments away from the everyday experiences of marital and familial life. Many talked of missing intimacy, birthdays, first steps and teeth, as well as other key milestones in a family's life-cycle and children's development. Like they had done on so many previous military postings, peacekeepers tried to immerse themselves in the world of work: it was evident that the long working hours were often used to try to 'forget' the loss and grief of missing key moments in their families life. At the same time, creating an alternative universe filled with strenuous work was a narrative position that peacekeepers tactically utilised to emphasise a form of martyrdom. One peacekeeper said, 'I've been away from my family for almost 9 years and they suffer, a lot. My daughter asked me, the last time, "Daddy, come home now, it's enough". But my daughter is going to a new school this year, has tennis lessons and I've bought my wife a dishwasher, too' while another stated that his wife 'knew what she was in for when she married a man in the force'.

While I have previously suggested that working and living in Monrovia reflects a fairly privileged position for humanitarian aid workers (Henry, Higate and Sanghera 2010), I noticed some significant changes to the public face of privilege during the 2012 and 2013 fieldwork. Traffic conditions had altered considerably, and with the re-paving of some of the main routes through and out of the capital, the number of, and speed of, vehicles had increased dramatically. Traffic congestion was now a major hazard of living and working in Monrovia and had become quite heavy around the UN headquarters, as well as around the

port where at least two contingents had their bases (Philippines and Nigeria). No longer seen as the 'paradise mission', Liberia's urban landscape was becoming an increasing challenge for the peacekeepers—especially as the road conditions and traffic control authorities were not built to cope with 'first world' transportation situations. The further out peacekeepers lived, the less expensive rent prices were, and so many peacekeepers had extended working days because of commuting times lasting about forty-five minutes each way. During the rainy season this meant a great deal of time spent inside vehicles, offices and accommodations, with only the UN gym providing some much needed physical relief from an essentially sedentary life. Many of the peacekeepers I spoke with attended the gym (inside headquarters compound) and worked out, for the most part, before, in the middle or after the working day. As daily exercise is a part of most military training, peacekeepers were accustomed to such physical demands and used this time to maintain their martial and embodied investments.

Despite challenging working conditions, peacekeepers found ways to resist some of the power exercised over them by the UN as an employer. For example, although there is a strict security regime, it is not generally relied upon to discipline workers in terms of working hours. Thus, UN peacekeepers do not have formal clocking in/out mechanisms, and can regulate their hours somewhat independently and tactically. With open plan offices, it is never clear when a peacekeeper leaves the office if they are heading to a meeting, going for a break, or even leaving the office on official duty. Although wipe boards noted peacekeepers' holiday periods, the micro-details of everyday work were often not shared or known more publicly. Unlike in a traditional military context where individuals would be more closely monitored, peacekeepers had some of the freedoms that civilian workers might have. Peacekeepers actively took advantage of these freedoms, and would often use official working hours to check out new accommodation, take extended lunch breaks to return home for sleep, Skype with families, exercise or purchase various goods from nearby

shops. One peacekeeper said he was shocked when peacekeepers would return from their 1.5 hour lunch break with lines across their face, indicating to him that they had indulged in sleeping in the 'middle of the day!'. Thus they both relied upon martial routine to advantageously position themselves as participating in the 'dirty work' of the UN, as well as on the civilianisation of everyday life to talk back to imposition of the martial disciplinary regime.

Yet peacekeepers were well aware that much of their work appeared superficial in light of the peaceful context of post-conflict Liberia. When I periodically met with peacekeepers to ask them about their day, many would suggest that they had spent their days doing very little and had found it stressful to find a purpose. They problematically suggested that they did not possess any special skills and that their jobs were so ordinary that 'any Liberian could do them just as well'. Admissions of their work not requiring specialist skills or martial capital were done at moments of rest and relaxation – where they felt the compulsion to show me as a researcher that they were merely capitalising on the 'stupid UN'.

However, dwelling on the external demanding work culture, or the internal psychic suffering, were not the only themes to emerge. Peacekeepers also found a way to 'play hard' and thus compensate for their accounts of working hard and suffering. Indeed, the narratives of working hard were contrasted by an equally strong participation in leisure activities. At least once a week, there was a celebration of birthdays, awards, and leaving parties as well as general celebrations for national days, name days and any other globally recognised day of festivity. For some of the peacekeepers, the consumption of alcohol was both an antidote to a long working day and the celebratory fluids for a Friday and Saturday night (Mehlum 1995). One Friday I attended a leaving party for several peacekeepers from the Balkans. During the party, some peacekeepers were clearly inebriated, although a few peacekeepers did not drink alcohol. Norwegian peacekeepers shared their disappointment

that they found senior members of their own contingent present and therefore felt they need to perform drink responsibly. A couple of Swedish peacekeepers teased the Norwegians, claiming that since they (the Swedes) lived on site, they did not face the same expectations. I noticed a few Balkan peacekeepers driving away in their vehicles and returning with more alcohol and other guests. The next day, when I asked one of the peacekeepers how confident they felt about driving after drinking alcohol, he claimed, 'I've only ever been too drunk to drive once in my life, and that was at my best friend's wedding!'. Another peacekeeper stated, 'I can drink a lot of alcohol and get little sleep and still function at work perfectly fine. If I feel bad, I just get up and get a coffee and I feel better'. Another US peacekeeper recounted partying with a 'hardy Balkan' peacekeeper all night. The next day, the US peacekeeper said he could not go into work as he was too sick, too hung over. According to his US colleagues the Balkan peacekeeper appeared at work as 'normal' and carried on working throughout the day in a routine fashion, exhibiting no signs of a hangover. Although problematic stereotypes of peacekeepers based on nationality and ethnicity were rife (Higate and Henry 2009: Chp 7), it was nevertheless clear that many peacekeepers were indulging in leisure activities that might potentially compromise their ability to work. A few Balkan peacekeepers suggested that the excesses were not just specific to the UN spaces, but were a compensation for their 'hard' militarised pasts, current working conditions and difficult economic times back home. Where these defences were employed, it suggests that taking up a 'conventional' position of masculine/husband as bread-winner reflects their desire to be seen, not as irresponsible national subjects, but as 'reliable' and 'committed' fathers and workers.

Leisure and pleasure were used to both forget and remember home. The drinking and togetherness often brought back painful memories for Balkan peacekeepers of the Yugoslav war and its continued legacy within their communities. Alcohol and festivity helped to numb them from thinking too long and hard about what they were missing. As one

peacekeeper confided: 'From the moment I arrived here, I knew it was a mistake. I'm just waiting for check out. In the meanwhile, I want to forget'. Yet alcohol was not the only way in which peacekeepers escaped thinking about their family struggles.

Many peacekeepers pursued local relationships sometimes of a transactional nature (Henry 2014; Jennings 2014). In accounts, peacekeepers tactically emphasised their loneliness and suffering, and their 'need' for intimacy. Although these examples demonstrate that some peacekeepers are clearly indulging in the excessive 'bad-boy' culture that many studies of militaries are concerned with, the peacekeepers I studied did not generally engage in activities that they thought would seriously jeopardize their employment conditions – or if they did, they did so covertly. Thus, while peacekeepers were prepared to drive while under the influence, they would speed home to make sure they did not violate curfew (especially as their vehicles are monitored in this regard).

Peacekeepers thus described their working lives as difficult both physically and psychologically. On the one hand, this arduous climate was completely conducive to their previous martial training and experience. At the same time, they wanted to emphasise their psycho-social suffering. By working hard and playing hard, peacekeepers ensured their future existence as peacekeepers. The apparently difficult and lengthy work, and compensatory activities of relief, provided a neat set of justifications for their continued existence and presence away from home, and in the post-conflict space of Liberia itself. After all, these peacekeepers complained---but they had the physical and mental training and stamina to do the job.

Finally, peacekeepers' long working hours, frequently expressed worries over their personal economy, and aspirations to secure a better life for themselves and their families through their participation in peacekeeping, actually work to dissolve some of the differences between the peacekeepers and the peace-kept in the peacekeeping economy. Taking this perspective, the peacekeeping economy no longer looks to be one of polar

opposites between international consumers and local providers or service workers. Instead, by virtue of having to play the field (in the Bourdieusian sense), peacekeepers were sometimes positioned precariously, and often shared the insecurity as to their economic futures – regardless of their investments and their disciplined approaches to work.

Gender and the Domestic Economy of Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping spaces are male-dominated, and not just in terms of the peacekeepers themselves. In Liberia, for example, many of the supermarkets, restaurants and bars are owned and operated by Lebanese businessmen and Indian male migrant workers, who tend to live away from their female spouses and families for long periods of time. The concentration of *male* merchant and labouring classes, alongside the predominantly *male* peacekeeping personnel gives rise to hyper-masculine spaces. In contrast to accounts of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions, which give the impression of an abundance of foreign military men alongside that of an equally large group of young local women (Martin 2004; Higate and Henry 2004; Higate, 2007; Whitworth 2004), the mission in Liberia appears gender-imbalanced in the everyday international spaces, too. While many women are represented from the Global North, this is a small number in comparison to the number of male civilian workers. These spaces are thus also gender lopsided.

While contingents (both military and militarised police) have accommodation and subsistence taken care of by their national governments via the UN, civilian peacekeepers, civilian police and military staff officers are required to make their own arrangements, per the guidance of the welfare and security offices of the mission. Accommodation costs can be exorbitant, with accommodation in Liberia generally tallying up at no less than 1200 USD per month in rent. As one peacekeeper argued, 'I can get an apartment in central Paris, for the

price I am paying for nothing in Liberia'. The quality of the accommodation varies, and as such individuals make a multitude of decisions about how much 'work' they wish to put into making their living space 'liveable' – clean, private and homely being some of the key characteristics desired. Peacekeepers can spend a considerable amount of time and money on obtaining a certain level of independence, for example by purchasing washing machines so as to be able to launder their own clothing, or choosing the dearest accommodation that is directly next to their place of work so that they do not need to rely on anyone else for transportation to and from the main offices. Some purchase house plants, paintings, locally-made furniture, and subscribe to international satellite and cable television channels and internet packages in order to make their living spaces as desirable as possible.

While peacekeeping spaces are visibly masculine in that they contain many men, they are also spaces that require the management and maintenance of the body and the domestic. Peacekeeping itself is often viewed as a 'soft' form of martial work (Sion 2008). It was interesting, however, that my peacekeeper sources did not outsource domestic labour to mainly women, as is common practice within expatriate and extractive industries in other global south contexts.. Individual peacekeepers rely to a certain degree on the abundance of local help for domestic and security services, but many claim that 'they can clean better', and do not wish to engage in contractual negotiations and conversations (Atherton 2009). Traditional military displays of self-sufficiency are manifested amongst many of the peacekeepers who display domestic proficiencies not while engaged in war, but rather while in the service of peace. Peacekeepers boasted not only about their sometimes newfound abilities to sweep, mop, dust, and deep clean, but their skills at cooking and preparing food from the 'homeland'. While undoubtedly of practical value, these are also performances in that the peacekeepers are keen to show that they have mastered domestic work. In some cases, domestic performances included hearty meals centred around meat, alcohol and the outdoors. Amongst the Balkan peacekeepers was a tradition of cooking soup (traditional

Serbian bean stew) after one of the peacekeepers returned from a trip home with a whole side of salted, barbequed pork. Amongst the Indian peacekeepers, cooking and cleaning together enabled individuals to make connections across linguistic and ethnic divides. Similarly, celebrating different religious festivals and events enabled peacekeepers to construct themselves as domestically superior to other peacekeepers – it was widely known that the hospitality at India House was exceptional. As one peacekeepers shared, ‘since visiting India House weekly, I’ve put on 10 pounds!’.

Peacekeepers invested considerable time in adapting their accommodations. To stave off boredom and to participate in a form of consumption and accumulation towards the good life, peacekeepers produced an alternative domestic economy. Here they did not contract in the services of local women, as might be expected. Instead, they spent spare time ‘improving’ their accommodation (if not seeking out ready-made accommodation of a higher quality). Kitchens were kitted out with a variety of conventionally feminine items--- pink sponges, washing-up gloves, floral patterned crockery and cutlery, and dishtowels with fringes. Sometimes paintings and other decorative items hung on the walls, either selected by peacekeepers or their landlords. In India House, the communal space for officers was filled with lace coasters and tablecloths, ornate cutlery, furnishings and net curtains. In this case, the space was dominated by female officers from the all-female squad (Henry 2012), yet there were also many officers from the all-male contingents that dined regularly in the space. Locally purchased plants, a highly cultivated and ornate garden, and modern African art hung in the hallways of India House, giving a distinctly domestic, homely and secure feeling to the accommodations.

In my observations, male peacekeepers did not appear to feel an intense pressure to display ‘conventional’ military masculinity in regard to the domestic space. Rather, they rearticulated their martial skills as well-adapted to domesticity. Instead of repudiating the domestic sphere, peacekeepers found themselves capitalising on domestic duties and

displaying their acquired military capital. Hours spare after a long working day were now spent mastering cooking, cleaning and laundry. One peacekeeper told me he had never before cooked in his life, and desperately wanted some advice on how to prepare simple things. He asked 'Marsha, you are a woman, do you know how to make cakes? If you give me a list of things you need, you can use my kitchen to make it and teach me'. In this regard, many peacekeepers were keen to show that they were 'new' men (Higate and Henry 2010) and were not 'typical' military men. Their performance of masculinity was indeed ambivalent, in that they demonstrated their extensive martial skills, their ability to work hard and play hard, and their ability to cross symbolic and material thresholds of labour. They could venture into the domestic sphere without much of a problem.

One of the more interesting themes that arose in discussions of domesticity and gender was in relation to insects and household pests. Several of the peacekeepers told me of their anxiety about health and hygiene in relation to mosquitoes and cockroaches. Many of the peacekeepers talked about their domestic battles with pests. One such example involved a Serbian peacekeeper 'being attacked while driving' after 'using an entire canister of repellent', and witnessing a small army of rats infest his working Portakabin. In this case, his narrative of fighting pests could be interpreted as a metaphor for how he felt about living and working in Liberia, and his prejudices against Liberians and Africans more generally. He recounted an incident where one of his flatmates had brought a sex worker home and had sent her into his room. He claimed that he was horrified about the presence of the woman who he believed was a sexual health threat, and that he had immediately asked her to leave. Another peacekeeper narrated the nightmares he had about all the cockroaches in his flat, and that he dreamt that he had opened his mouth while sleeping and that an infestation of cockroaches had made its home in his body. He shared how he had spent so many sleepless nights fearing and fighting bugs in his house. Peacekeepers took time off work to take on household chores that were often not attended to by 'negligent' landlords. A peacekeeper

from Romania told me that he could not be peaceful in Liberia because he was engaged in a war against both the pests and the local bureaucracies. He shared the constant battles he had against the local drycleaners who he claimed 'did not know how to clean', alongside the highly toxic traps he'd purchased where he would see cockroaches crawl onto large pieces of tape laced with poison and watch them slowly chemically burn and disintegrate.

These everyday and somewhat banal stories of pests were not merely innocent stories narrated by peacekeepers, but instead were used in tactical ways to advantageously position peacekeepers within the social, cultural and moral economies of the peacekeeping mission. Several peacekeepers continually told their spouses that they were suffering immensely. One peacekeeper told his wife, 'you don't know what we have to go through here. Every night is a battle with mosquitos' and 'I'm also going for another malaria test later'. The health clinic in the UN headquarters building was constantly busy testing peacekeepers for suspected cases of malaria. Like domestic competence and expertise, admissions of vulnerability seemed to contradict other macho narratives circulating. Admitting that they were knowledgeable experts in the domestic space and that they were afraid of insects did not undermine their masculine or martial authority. Instead, they used the gendered and domestic knowledge (acquired from their military training) within which they were embedded in order to present themselves as 'better than the local women at cleaning' and as defenseless individuals in a 'backward' land of pests, vampire insects and urban ineptitude (Razack 2004). Here peacekeepers often deflected gendered comments by tactically positioning themselves as hailing from superior lands and cultures. In their perspective, their unconventional and martial domestic skills were key to their continued employment within the mission and beyond.

Conclusion

'[T]he soldier often believes that civilians perceive him as a man who has somehow failed in the occupational competition of the larger society (Janowitz 1998: 43)'.

I have attempted to show the many points of paradox that peacekeepers either produce or experience in their everyday lives. Although much of what they experience may be seen as common to the expatriate or international aid worker more generally, peacekeepers are engaged in layers of social and labouring practice that have effects inside and outside the peacekeeping economy. Military peacekeepers, unlike other humanitarian aid workers, are directly bound to the nation through their contract with the military. Similar to many military contexts, contemporary peacekeeping work can be precarious, and peacekeepers from Eastern Europe in particular view their employment with the UN as a means to economic mobility in a way that those peacekeepers from Scandinavia do not. While Norwegian UNPOL officers are encouraged to visit home as often as possible with the provision of six flights (two of which are business class), most other peacekeepers are attempting to accrue wealth that, one peacekeeper said, he 'could never amass in a lifetime of working in the Ukraine'.

Because of the unique ways in which peacekeepers are situated in the economic milieu of peacekeeping space, peacekeepers, as social subjects, require a distinct and deep examination by researchers in an attempt to understand hybrid formations of subjectivity as they exist within the context of new global orders. Of course the ways in which peacekeepers' subjectivities are formed, and the way in which they situate themselves within national narratives and the peacekeeping mission more generally, are subject to wide variation. Even so, deploying a methodology that pays attention to the ordinary, mundane micro-details of peacekeeping life facilitates an understanding of the utility of martial capital in peacekeepers' performances, and tactical positioning of themselves as ideal peacekeeping workers. These micro-details include an examination of the performance of formal and

informal rituals, humanitarian policing, consumption of food and drink, hosting and attending parties and other celebrations, maintaining and adapting accommodation – and even fighting an infestation of cockroaches – and they demonstrate the multiple examples of everyday activities that involve negotiations across seemingly oppositional orders. Importantly, these sites of paradox provide opportunities for peacekeepers to deploy martial capital and tactically position themselves in a number of advantageous ways as ideal peacekeeping workers. Circumstances within 'home' economies drive the activities and everyday experiences of peacekeepers, who often reluctantly invest in their martial portfolios and display manual forms of occupational competency. In managing the real or imagined contradictions, peacekeepers fall back on their military skills and capitals in order to present themselves sympathetically to a number of audiences. To the UN and other global actors, they show themselves to be martially capable; to their families back home they tow the line between suffering and despair and endurance and fortitude; to their peers they show themselves as jovial and hardy; and to the peacekept they conjure up an imagined soldier of independence and domesticity. In essence, peacekeepers use their everyday lives, contradictory or not, to tell the world why they are doing the peacekeeping work and why they should continue to do so.

What the findings from this study further suggest is that conventional studies of militarised contexts, which either focus on the ways in which individuals are disciplined and made docile by institutions such as the military, or the ways in which they indulge in anti-social or 'bad boy' behaviour such excessive drinking, smuggling and trafficking, looting and embezzling, sexual exploitation, abuse and assault, do not provide insights into the ways in which peacekeepers actively utilise their military capital and the peacekeeping economies within which they are embedded. This paper attempts to look at their experiences as evidence of ambivalent and paradoxical practice and experience, and perhaps point to the less visible ways in which the peacekeeping economy is produced and reproduced..

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that peacekeeping economies contract and stretch across a range of spaces. Peacekeepers enact various identities while in missions in order to perform their professional worth, and as such also engage themselves directly in the global peacekeeping economy more generally. In contrast to Krasno's study in 2006, peacekeepers seemed to make very little effort to present themselves to local people as deserving subjects. Instead, the peace-kept were continually and actively eclipsed in the peacekeepers accounts, and the peacekeepers continually showed themselves to be from 'superior' military histories (Razack 2003, 2007). And as such, this study demonstrates that a better understanding of the ways in which peacekeepers as individuals are positioned in and make use of peacekeeping economies might provide an opportunity for examining the impact of such economies on a wider range of actors.

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