

## **War, Peacekeeping, and the Trade in Women**

### **Abstract**

Whether in the midst of war or after it, women and young girls continue to be abused on a large scale. Women are trafficked due to demand from both the combatants on the frontlines and by the peacekeepers present to maintain the peace. This paper uses the case studies of UN Peacekeepers in Bosnia and Kosovo to highlight the increased demand for women and in the trade in women itself. These cases highlight the need for a comprehensive evaluation of peacekeeping and call for training and education on gender issues and gender violence.

**Krasimira Shapkarova**

**Josef Korbel School of International Studies**

**University of Denver**

**MA, International Human Rights**

A universal characteristic of any society, tribe, or nation is its ability and apparent willingness to wage wars. Whether to conquer, to colonize, to defend, to expand, or to simply establish a symbolic superiority, a nation's use of military actions plays an important role in the definition of that nation's identity. Regardless of the advertised purpose of a war, however, it is ultimately a social event that continuously allows for the death and suffering of both combatants and civilians and for the exploitation of millions of men and women, children and adults on a grand scale. While wars have never been in short supply in human history, some have noted a disturbing trend in the armed conflicts of the last several decades: the number of civilians killed surpasses, in some instances by much, the number of combatants killed (d'Estree, class lecture, 2012; Arbuckle, 2006). In addition, even though several international documents focus on the protection of civilians, an examination of any armed conflict reveals the worrying extent of gender-based and sexual violence committed on both sides of the conflict. That trend does not end when the conflict has been declared finished. Whether in the midst of war or after it, women and young girls continue to be abused on a large scale. This is clearly supported by the increase in the number of trafficked women in areas of conflict. These women are in demand both by the combatants on the frontlines and by the peacekeepers present to maintain the peace. Such are the examples of Bosnia and Kosovo and the involvement of UN Peacekeepers in the increased demand for women and in the trade in women itself. These specific events highlight the need for a comprehensive evaluation of missions deployed to maintain the peace and demand for training and education on gender issues and gender violence.

### War and Its Impact on Civilians

In an article published in the *University of St. Thomas Law Journal*, Kirby and d'Estree (2008) highlight that a major tenet of the laws of war is that "civilians, and women and children in particular, are to be protected from the trials and suffering of war to the fullest extent possible" (p.224). Therefore, it is ultimately the task of each military and its members to make sure their behaviors are consistent with the specifications in International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Even though the complete avoidance of civilian deaths and suffering is not realistic, it is

the responsibility of an armed force to not intentionally target civilians and to consider operations in terms of the concepts of distinction, military necessity and proportionality. By their very nature and status, civilians are vulnerable to the atrocities of war, but that vulnerability should never be taken advantage of by offering as an excuse the argument that in times of conflict, no one is safe and suffering must be expected. Suffering and death in war are certainly anticipated; unnecessary violence and the targeted abuse of vulnerable populations with the purposes of exhibiting control or claiming entitlements are war crimes.

Even though civilians are a protected population according to IHL, the military conflicts of the last several decades reveal that while the war zone has become much safer for combatants, the number of civilian lives lost is at a high. What is truly ironic is that the focus on protections for civilians first appeared in discussions after the end of the Second World War (Bouchet-Saulnier, 2007) and it is since then that the number of civilians injured, killed, and violently abused in armed conflicts has significantly increased as compared to combatants lost. Really telling and really worrisome are the statistics on deaths in military conflicts that reveal that the numbers of civilians killed in recent wars far exceeds the numbers of combatants killed, a major difference from the wars in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, Arbuckle (2006) identifies that 90% of the casualties in conflicts following the end of the Cold War have been civilians. Likewise, Barstow (2000) analyzes the changes in the culture of war and stresses that it is no longer “a tragedy for which old men do the planning and young men do the dying” (p.3). She further identifies that the ratio of combatants killed to civilians killed in World War I is 8:1, but in the armed conflicts since World War II, that ratio has been reversed. What is even more alarming is the fact that a nation’s major focus of military operations is making sure that its own combatants are not killed. Civilian losses take a second place to that major goal. No example represents this disturbing fact more clearly than the Kosovo conflict of the late 1990s. As Coicaud (2000) highlights, the main concern of NATO and the United States in particular was the zero-casualty purpose of the air strike. This zero-casualty policy of course applied only when it came to NATO personnel. Civilians on the ground did not have the luxury to enjoy such a policy. While the U.S. engaged in air strikes that significantly reduced the danger for NATO

employees, the Albanian civilian population on the ground remained vulnerable and even more exposed to danger. In addition, the lack of ground forces allowed the Serb army to purge Kosovo of close to two million ethnic Albanians. The air strikes themselves resulted in some severe civilian losses due to the high altitude the planes were flying at and the increased likelihood of misguided missiles hitting civilian and refugee populations (Coicaud, 2000).

Despite the negative impact of war on all civilians involved, women, adolescent girls, and children hold a special place of vulnerability and regularly, without effort, find themselves in a position of extreme defenselessness and become exposed to abuse from both the adversary and those there to protect them. The realization that women might be at a particular risk during armed conflicts resulted in the Commission on the Status of Women and its investigation of the specific needs, if any, that should be afforded to women in conflict regions (Mazurana, Raven-Roberts, Parpart, and Lautze, 2005). The work of the commission consequently was instrumental in the United States General Assembly decision to adopt in 1974 the Declaration of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict. Even though the extreme vulnerability of women in armed conflict was recognized, the fact that gender-based violence has relevance to a variety of military and peacekeeping missions is yet to be acknowledged and analyzed.

Therefore, the particular importance of gender when it comes to violent acts needs to be investigated further. As Mazurana et al. (2005) argue, the role of gender both during a military conflict and a humanitarian or peacekeeping operation is important and must be examined before the dangers of ignoring the issue materialize. Mendelson (2005) examines the true costs of disregarding trafficking around peacekeeping deployments and concludes that similar to the wide-ranging harm incurred on the trafficked individual, the harm brought on the mission varies depending on the level of involvement on the side of peacekeepers. The most important observation is that there is harm to the individual trafficked, to the mission, and to the security of the whole region. The knowledge that peacekeepers not only abuse women but also control and protect the trade in women brings devastation on the whole mission and mars

every single peacekeeper, even the ones who are dedicated to do their job right. Mendelson (2005) further stresses that supporting one aspect of organized crime, human trafficking, peacekeeping operations inadvertently support the traffic in drugs and guns, thus increasing threats to security of the regions they are there to monitor and rebuild.

Sexual violence is increasingly used as a weapon of choice when it comes to an armed conflict, but it is only in recent years that crimes, such as rape and forced impregnation, have started to be regarded as war crimes. The relationship between wars and the commodification and abuse of women have long been studied and many have brought to light the regular use of women for the physical needs of soldiers on the frontlines. Farr (2005), for example, examines the connection between military conflicts and recreational prostitution in three wars: World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. She emphasizes that during all of these three conflicts the demand for women and sexual services increased drastically. For example, the author states, “in 1957, an estimated 20,000 prostitutes were working in Thailand ... and by 1972, when the United States withdrew its main combat troops from Vietnam, there were at least 500,000 prostitutes” (p.203). By emphasizing the patriarchal structure of the military, Farr acknowledges that the devaluation of the feminine and exultation of the masculine lead to wartime prostitution and rape. What she highlights is that “both rape and use of prostitutes are thought to be inevitable, if not normal, behaviors of warring soldiers” (p.165). From Japan’s comfort stations to Korean camptowns, male soldiers normalized the sexual abuse of women as necessary in times of armed conflicts and continuously took advantage of the thousands of women devastated by the war. Many women saw this as the only opportunity to survive and without the protection of country, community, or family, they found themselves under the abusive control of those who were purportedly there to protect them.

Farr (2005) further examines the concept that in war, there is no difference between prostitution and rape and that it is pretty clear that these are one and the same. In the words of Susan Brownmiller (as cited in Farr, 2005), “[because] access to women after a battle has been a traditional reward of war, it is impossible to discuss rape in warfare without touching also on

prostitution, since the two have been linked in history” (p.166). The difference between women forced to engage in sexual acts with soldiers and women in makeshift brothels who are seemingly volunteering for the job is nonexistent. In both cases, the women are victims to a system that encourages men to demand human flesh and normalizes the use of women to comfort the men who are sacrificing so much to defend justice and order. I am not dismissing the sacrifice soldiers endure in endangering their lives to protect their nation or, as is often the case, a bunch of strangers; I am simply pointing out that it is time to acknowledge the sacrifice women are forced to make so that those on the frontlines could receive what society says they are entitled to. In the first case, the choice for a sacrifice is made voluntarily; in the second case, making a choice is not even an option.

Sexual abuse against women in the time of war has been viewed simply as one of the unfortunate outcomes of a time of wide-spread violence (Mendelson, 2005). There is just something about war that brings out the worst in people and those most vulnerable, women and children, often suffer the most. This is reflected in the realization that sexual violence toward women has happened and continues to happen in every armed conflict and can be committed by any man regardless of culture, religion, or nation (Farr, 2005). However, as Morris (1998) points out, the instances of rape are also prevalent during times of established peace. Armed conflicts do not only contribute to wide-spread violence against women during the time of fighting; rather, such events also lead to destructive consequences after the war is over and the winning side has been announced. It is particularly unsettling that in many cases the liberating military forces disregard and abuse women worse than the dictator oppressing them before help arrived (Barstow, 2000). For women and children in war-torn regions the suffering never ends; for them, one dictator is simply replaced by a thousand more and because these are the offered succor, the victims lose all hope of ever living comfortable lives. Such realizations demand that gender becomes an important aspect of educating and training peacekeeping operations for further suffering to be avoided (Mazurana et al., 2005).

When a war ends, the suffering does not; instead, the region is devastated and people have lost all sense of civility and compassion. Women in war-torn and post-war regions lack the protection of a family, stable society and justice and fall prey to criminals searching for a profitable industry to succeed in (Konrad, 2002). Without any support from officials, women become easy targets to human traffickers. The loss of a strong economy and strict morals that follows any war allows for the transport of women from countries such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, Bulgaria and Ukraine (Corrin, 2005), and war-torn regions in Africa, Southeast Asia, and much of South America (Bales et. al., 2009; Skinner, 2008) to be frighteningly easy. These victims receive no assistance at home and often no support from outside sources. Therefore, an intervention in a conflict region should not be limited to only its military aspect. Deposing of a murderous regime and its leaders should not be the ultimate goal of international intervention; instead, many emphasize that the true work begins once the military engagement ends and the need to rebuild communities arises. At that moment, peacekeeping operations become of great value. As Dandeker and Gow (2004) point out, in recent years, the character of both the armed conflicts and the peacekeeping missions has had to change in response to the different situations emerging. The traditional way to fight wars is no longer an option and most conflicts are internal confrontations between a powerful majority and a vulnerable minority. As a consequence, the future of the armed forces will involve a lot more peacekeeping and a lot less fighting (Dandeker and Gow, 2004). This realization commands the need that the nature, role and goals of peacekeeping be clearly identified and laid out.

### UN Peacekeeping

On June 26, 1945, the Charter of the United Nation was signed and the main purpose to protect the world of “the scourge of war” (Preamble) was identified. Preserving peace and preventing threats to that peace is what the UN organization sets to do. In Chapter VII: Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression, the organization outlines specific measures that could be taken for a collective action against a threat to security and peace. As Bouchet-Saulnier (2007) notes, the original intention was to

establish a permanent army to be overseen and run by a Military Staff Committee, but the idea never came to fruition. Then, in 1956, the UN created and executed the first armed peacekeeping operation in response to the Suez Canal crisis (Bouchet-Saulnier, 2007; Sitkowski, 2006). Peacekeeping missions, however, have appeared much earlier, in 1948, with the UN Truce Supervision Organization and the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (United Nations, 2012). These first operations focused on providing unarmed personnel with the main goals to monitor and to observe. Peacekeeping operations (PKOs) are created by the Security Council and are thus under its authority. A characteristic of PKOs is that they could only be undertaken if the government of the country in which the operation will be deployed agrees to allow it. Since 1948, there have been 67 peacekeeping operations mandated by the UN, and 17 of these are currently still in progress. While their name might encourage the casual observer to accept UN peacekeepers as a group dedicated to the protection of civilians, the actions of many such members often lead one to wonder if we might be better off without them. Peacekeepers have in some cases indeed protected the civilian population, but the incidents of failure to do so, specifically in the 1990s in the Balkans, urge the immediate attention to this group of people and demand extended and comprehensive training on the issues of human trafficking.

When the first peacekeeping missions were deployed, there was lack of a clear and detailed definition of the character of these operations and their specific roles. Some contend that this fact was not necessarily a problem as it allowed the UN to tailor each mission to fit the particularities of the situation (Sitkowski, 2006). Even though Sitkowski (2006) mentions that the lack of definition should have allowed for flexibility in determining the nature of each mission, in most of the cases of the 1990s this lack of clarity led to issues with the execution of operations. Considering their title, one could assume that the purpose of peacekeepers is to maintain and secure the peace once the military conflict has ended. This was certainly the intention of the very first missions. However, the cases in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo rudely awakened all those idealistically believing that it is sufficient to name a group as peacekeeping for the peace to be kept. Sitkowski (2006) identifies the main problem of the Rwanda and



Bosnia missions as the failure to acknowledge that a lightly armed contingent is not an appropriate solution to regions in which armed clashes are highly likely. In other words, the situations demanded peace enforcement and armed contingents, not peace keeping. Similarly, Hillen (1995) evaluates the UN peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and concludes that the basis for such an operation was unstable and that hoping that the presence of a group referred to as “peacekeepers” does not automatically result in an environment in which peace is established.

A big problem then is the confusion between the different terms used in reference to peacekeeping operations (Sitkowski, 2006). The use of any of the following words - peacekeeping, peacemaking, peacebuilding, and peace enforcement - lead to confusion as to whether these are completely different concepts or if they could be used interchangeably. The United Nations identifies peacekeeping as the umbrella term and distinguishes between the three sections under peacekeeping: peacemaking, peacebuilding, and peace enforcement. The first refers to the role of a negotiator that peacekeepers play; the main purposes of the mission are to monitor and observe. Peace enforcement allows for the use of force as necessary to prevent serious breaches of the peace. The peacebuilding aspect refers to the purpose of preventing a return to conflict and developing conditions to sustain the fragile peace. Mazurana et al. (2005) also identify three different types of missions but emphasize that the three aspects are not strictly divided and often overlap. They certainly pinpoint the flexible nature of peacekeeping operations and make it clear that there is no one formula that would work in any situation. Rather, different circumstances would most likely require a different approach and it is often the case that a mission might start as one type but need to transition to another.

The United Nations currently acknowledges that “UN Peacekeepers provide security and the political and peacebuilding support to help countries make the difficult, early transition from conflict to peace.” Peacekeepers are guided by three important principles: consent of the parties, impartiality, and non-use of force except in self-defense. The role of peacekeepers has evolved to include not simply the obvious focus on maintaining peace and security, but also an involvement in assisting in a political process, protecting civilians, encouraging and facilitating

the disarmament of former combatants, enforcing the adherence to basic human rights and to the rule of law. Three generations of peacekeeping operations have been established (Bouchet-Saulnier, 2007). The first-generation peacekeeping operations, also referred to as traditional, focused mainly on buffering and monitoring. The second-generation peacekeeping operations focused on a more ambitious role by actively participating in the transition to peace in addition to simply monitoring. Finally, the third-generation peacekeeping operations evolved to include intervention and use of force when necessary to preserve the peace. As Bouchet-Saulnier (2007) clarifies, however, there are some people who insist on distinguishing between the traditional peacekeeping operations and the new form of using force, which is referred to as peace enforcement. Others (Sitkowski, 2006; Hillen, 1995) agree and discuss the incompatibility of peacekeeping and enforcement and identify the need for a more clear distinction. However, the debates have not resulted in policy changes and whatever seems clear on paper is often hard to act out on the field. With the trend of new intrastate conflicts, Sitkowski (2006) observes, the UN must make sure that its contingents are ready to defend themselves if necessary. Otherwise, they might as well stay home. Another obstacle in the success of peacekeeping, however, is the unwillingness of nations to contribute personnel to the missions if the likelihood of casualties on their side is high. It is clear that while the international community is adamant about preserving peace, it is not quite as determined when the implementation requires significant costs and sacrifices on their side.

An example of a peacekeeping operation that resulted in severe drawbacks is the Kosovo crisis of 1999. In their volume on the international intervention in Kosovo, editors Schnabel and Thakur critically emphasize that one of the issues with the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo was that there was no peace to keep. The label itself of the peacekeeping operations is often misleading. Correspondingly, the crisis in Bosnia in the 1990s identified that it is certainly hard to keep a peace that is not present. Unprepared for the military attack on the side of the Serbs, the Danish peacekeepers found themselves helpless in the face of a mass murder and were unable to prevent the killing of thousands of Bosnian Muslim men in Srebrenica. It seems that even though the peacekeepers are present to maintain peace, there

are certain circumstances where they also need to resort to the use or show of force. As UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan identifies, “the perfect peacekeeper shows force in order that he does not have to use it” (Butler, 2000, p.286). However, the lack of clarity when it comes to use of force continues to prevent any meaningful resolution and reform to the issue of peacekeeping (Sitkowski, 2006).

In her examination of what constitutes a nation that cares for the citizens of another nation (a Global Good Samaritan), Alison Brysk (2009) contends that one of the important characteristics of a Global Good Samaritan is the ability and willingness to send peacekeeping forces to areas of need. The true cost of peacekeeping is reflected in the statistic that a total of 2,994 UN peacekeepers have lost their lives in the execution of their duty to protect. Despite the dangerous conditions in many of the regions peacekeepers are sent to, thousands of men and women from all over the world regularly come together under the Blue Flag to promote peace (Sitkowski, 2006). The expectations for peacekeeping forces are certainly high and the need for them in the many internal conflicts around the world is significant, but too often the outcome has been a disappointment and the mission a failure, as far as the protected civilians are concerned. Further, as a consequence of lack of proper training on human rights and a misunderstanding of the role of peacekeepers, many of the operations, specifically those in Bosnia and later Kosovo in the 1990s, were marred by the involvement of the Blue Helmets in cases of sexual violence against women and their active participation in human trafficking.

### Peacekeepers and the Trade in Women

Even though many peacekeeping officers have lived up to their name and contributed to the establishment of peace and protection of vulnerable populations, Mendelson (2005) reveals that there are many others who have instead been complicit in the abuse of those they are there to protect. By presenting information obtained from various human rights organization, Mendelson further establishes that around regions in which peacekeeping operations are deployed, the numbers of trafficked women significantly increases. This has specifically been shown to be the case in two of the major Balkan catastrophes of the 1990s: Bosnia and Kosovo.

As previously discussed, the occurrence of rape during times of armed conflict is relatively common and is often perceived as one of the weapons of choice to humiliate and defeat an enemy. The cases of Bosnia and Kosovo, however, are particularly disturbing because of the involvement of peacekeepers who are supposed to be neutral and there to protect, monitor, and rebuild. The difficulty in clearly identifying the Blue Helmets' roles and purpose could often make their presence seem symbolic and serve as a smokescreen (Sitkowski, 2006) that offers the appearance of a meaningful mission while those most vulnerable continue to suffer. Hillen (1995) goes further and argues that the UN-led intervention in Bosnia simply offered a temporary life-support measure and further exacerbated the problem.

The UN emphasizes, "Protection of civilians is very often at the heart of our mandate and it is the Blue Helmets that are the key to providing this security." This statement is most probably true of some of those who join the peacekeeping missions. However, it is the ones who violate the rules that often grab the attention of the media and general public and demand closer look at the establishment. Investigating reports from a variety of organizations, Mendelson (2005) identifies that "in Kosovo, as in Bosnia, the brothels followed the deployments" (p.11). The peacekeepers were, however, not simply the target of traffickers; they also actively, by purchasing the services and participating in the trade, and passively, by knowing that colleagues take advantage of girls but say nothing, shape the demand for trafficked girls and women.

As mentioned earlier, Barstow (2000) and others have reported on the change in war victims from World War II to the horrific recent events in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. It used to be a common conviction that in war those who died and sacrificed themselves in the name of high values, such as liberty and equality, were the men at the frontlines. Events in Bosnia and Rwanda, and more recently in Kosovo, Darfur, and Congo, however, reveal that this belief is no longer supported by existing evidence. Instead, women and children have increasingly become the victims regardless of whose side they are on. Women and children do not rejoice when the terror of war is over; the peacekeepers would not allow them to. Those,

originally there to assist the victims and make a positive difference in their already shattered lives, consequently create rape camps and new traffic routes and commit a crime worse than the one they were sent or volunteered to stop. It has been reported that between 2004 and 2007, 200 UN Peacekeepers have been disciplined and 319 soldiers investigated, of which 180 have been repatriated, for engaging in sexual acts with local women (Mattar, 2007). In war, women and girls become commodities that enemies and allies alike can exploit for their own gratification.

Farr (2005) is definitely correct when she observes, “It is almost a truism that wherever sizable groups of men congregate away from their homes and families – whether to fight or to seek refuge from fighting, to keep the peace, to work, or to play – demand for prostitution increases” (p. 204). The entitlement men feel to be afforded access to women in times of armed conflict seems to also be present among some peacekeepers. Since they have to risk their lives and live away from family and friends, the least the women they protect could do is thank them by allowing themselves to be raped. The peacekeeping missions to Cambodia, Rwanda, Mozambique, and the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s are examples of the increase in the number of women trafficked to the regions once thousands of UN peacekeepers, mostly men, arrived. It is quite clear that trafficking became a wide-spread problem once the 50,000 peacekeepers made their presence in some of the most affected regions in the former Yugoslavia. Reports have identified that UN peacekeepers were some of the most regular visitors to bars and locales that offered women, as young as fifteen. As such, they are active participants in the increased demand for women around peacekeepers deployment areas.

Likewise, Kirby and d’Estree (2008) expose the relationship between peacekeeping troops and instances of human trafficking and stress the vital role these groups play in the continued commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls in conflict areas. A Human Rights Watch [HRW] 2002 report on trafficking in women to Bosnia identifies that even though reliable statistics are hard to come by, it is estimated that at least 2000 women from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe found themselves enslaved in Bosnian brothels. The report also

reveals that in exchange for tip-offs on upcoming raids, the bar and brothel owners forced women to perform free sexual services with police members or peacekeepers. The peacekeepers taking advantage of the services offered by the enslaved women certainly did not perceive them as victims and as Mendelson (2005) strikingly acknowledges, they might have even accepted this as simply one of the perks of being a peacekeeper.

Peacekeepers, however, did not contribute to the abuse of women simply by using the services the local bars offered; some were even actively involved in the trade itself and instead of protecting the vulnerable women, they protected those enslaving them and played a vital role in making sure girls and women do not escape their enslavement and participated in punishing those who make such attempts (Mendelson, 2005). The HRW report on Bosnia and Herzegovina published in 2002 reveals that when interviewed, trafficked women mentioned that the police officers appeared friendly with the bar owners and as such, the women would fear speaking with them. What is even worse is that even though prosecution of local police officers is dismal, peacekeepers engaging in the trade of women often do so with impunity. Members of the International Police Task Force [IPTF] are granted immunity from the U.N. secretary general and as such, they cannot be prosecuted in local Bosnian courts. Violations are supposed to be investigated by the respective country from which the peacekeeper comes, but as HRW highlights, this is rarely the case. The strictest sanction available to human rights violators among IPTF members is removal from service. As the highly contentious case of Kathryn Bolkovac reveals, those using the services of trafficked girls included members of SFOR, IPTF, local police, and international employees. The individual who was punished, however, was Kathryn Bolkovac, the person who tried to expose the problem and assist the trafficked girls and women.

In his examination of the Kosovo conflict, Coicaud (2000) asks, “can an air strike that leaves a space open, at least momentarily, for ethnic cleansing be called a “humanitarian intervention” (p.475)?” Likewise, one could ask of the UN peacekeeping operations in Bosnia, can a group of UN forces who actively participate in and reinforce the trafficking in women be

referred to as a peacekeeping operation? My answer is certainly negative. It is clear that peacekeeping missions have presented as problematic both when the peacekeepers failed to react and protect civilians from genocide (as in the case of Rwanda) and also when they intervened only to become complicit in the crime of human trafficking (as in the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo). The examples of UN peacekeepers participating in atrocities and engaging in gender-based human rights violations suggest that there is more to the issue than the presence of an armed conflict. Consequently, many have started to investigate the specific features of large groups of men deployed in regions of instability that are bursting with vulnerable girls and women.

For example, in her assessment of instances of rape committed by military personnel both in armed conflicts and in peacetime, Morris (1998) concludes that there are certain characteristics that define military culture and allow for greater opportunities to commit degrading acts. She actually also focuses on factors that should limit the instances of violent acts such as rape within groups of military nature. For example, she identifies that the highly structured and disciplined environment, the close-knit organization of each military unit, the exception of prior felons from the group as some of the factors that significantly limit the chances to commit crimes. However, the influence of the above factors is often minimized by certain “rape-conducive norms” (p.180) shared by members of the particular military group. These norms, according to Morris (1998), include specific attitudes toward masculinity, sexuality, and women. Ultimately, armed conflict is about being a man and exhibiting *maleness* which often seems to be translated as an opportunity to exert power over someone who is weaker. The above realization should be a sign of warning in a world in which conflict continues to persist and the demand for peacekeeping will only increase.

### Conclusion

There are several reasons why peacekeeping operations deserve the attention of the general public and its demand for a complete transformation. First, according to the report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, the three elements of the

responsibility to protect are the responsibility to prevent, the responsibility to react, and the responsibility to rebuild. The third element refers to the responsibility of the world community “to provide, particularly after a military intervention, full assistance with recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation, addressing the causes of the harm the intervention was designed to halt or avert” (p.11). When a nation is plagued by a military conflict, the civilian population is very vulnerable as the organization and systems that assure that laws are upheld are destroyed. A major purpose of peacekeeping forces is to ensure that peace is maintained and that the environment in which human rights for all are respected is established. In simple words, peacekeepers should live up to their title and protect the vulnerable, not take advantage of them.

Second, an important aspect of the armed conflicts of the last several years is that they are mostly intra-state conflicts and are the ones that are expected to persist (Kirby and d’Estree, 2008; Arbuckle, 2006; Mazurana et al., 2005). In addition, a disturbing characteristic of this new type of armed conflict is the participation of civilians, men, women, and children in the roles of “combatants, perpetrators, and intended targets of violence” (Mazurana et al., 2005, p.21). With the nature of armed conflicts around the world changing, peacekeeping operations will become even more relevant and necessary. In addition, the work the Blue Helmets do is valuable and needed and acknowledging the issues with women trafficking could serve to defend the name of all those peacekeepers who do their job honestly and honorably.

Third, the cost of peacekeeping operations has been shown to be quite high (Bouchet-Saulnier, 2007). For example, according to information obtained from the United Nations Peacekeeping site (2012), the budget for the period July 2011-June 2012 has been set at \$7.84 billion and the total cost since the first mission was deployed in 1948 has been estimated to be \$69 billion. Even though the UN notes that the one-year budget for peacekeeping equals less than half of one percent of the 2010 military world expenditures, the cost is still significant and as such, to make sure the budget is well-spent, better education and training of those involved is necessary for problems in terms of human trafficking involvement to be avoided.



Based on the reasons discussed above, it is clear that peacekeeping operations are here to stay as a vital part of modern armed conflicts. As such, actions need to be taken to evaluate the operations and demand changes. One action that needs to be undertaken for the issue of gender-based violence by peacekeepers to be targeted is a complete cultural shift in the military by specific training and education on issues of gender and culture. Kirby and d'Estree (2008) argue that it is ultimately the responsibility of individual states to actively seek and require a significant shift in military culture. A change in military culture seems to also be the solution proposed by Morris (1998). As she highlights, "[there] is reason to believe ... that change in the gender and sexual norms of military culture could contribute to a reduction in the rape incidence of military culture" (p.188). Further, she suggests that a transition from the machoistic character of the military is necessary, especially as this focus on masculinity as associated with effectiveness begins to be regarded as misplaced and misguided. She stresses the importance of taking into consideration rape incidences in war and in peace and gender norms in the making of policy decisions. Without the proper approach toward these issues, the impact will be tragic both on the future victims of rape but also on the future perpetrators of rape. Mendelson (2005) goes further and proposes "a substantial shift in the current organizational cultures of the DOD, NATO, and the UN" (p.69).

Kathryn Farr (2005) is another academic who stresses the inherent problematic nature of military organizations whose major purpose is to make men out of boys. Providing several thought-provoking examples, she successfully shines a light on the troubling character of military socialization which might be helpful in combat but is quite damaging in any other situation. For example, men are taught that exhibiting care and respect for the enemy, especially their women, or disgust and distress at the sight of mutilated bodies is a sign of weakness and cowardice. Becoming a soldier is the ultimate achievement for any male and possessing the appropriate characteristics, such as aggression, violence, and physical force, is what makes one a perfect soldier. As Paul K. Chappell, a 2002 West Point graduate, an Iraq veteran, and the author of *The Art of Waging Peace*, emphasizes, however, war is not the answer to peace; people cannot be naturally inclined to violence if war and violence have

severe negative impact on soldiers and civilians alike. Considering Captain Chappell's statement, I could conclude that the goal of proper training and education should not be to encourage soldiers to be real men by exhibiting violent behavior and showing no mercy; rather, the ultimate purpose should be to train all soldiers to be real human beings who show strength and courage by standing up for human rights and protecting those in true need.

According to Arbuckle (2006), the crux of the matter lies in the prejudice toward the so-called military culture and this is what contributes to the problems of peacekeeping operations. Assisting in post-conflict management is not a traditional role for the military, but many of the situations of the last couple of decades reveal that the use of force is often necessary to maintain peace and assist transitions. However, the tension between civil and military units requires that the military explain itself better and know itself better. The focus of military-based organizations should be, as Walzer (2004) simply observes, to acknowledge and embed the idea that "The best soldiers, the best fighting men do not ... rape do not wantonly kill civilians." As things stand currently, such beliefs and attitudes are still far from becoming mainstream. Instead, human rights violations committed by combatants and peacekeepers alike continue to be dismissed as a consequence of a few bad apples and cases of such violations are often swept under the rug, a very big and a very expensive rug at that.

In interviewing uniformed serve members, civilian contractors, and civil servants for her report on the peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, Mendelson (2005) found that most of them denied a connection between peacekeepers and trafficking and lacked understanding of the negative implications of human rights abuses and the "unwitting support of organized crime" (p.4). Further, it becomes clear that many peacekeepers hold believes that the ability to purchase sexual services is necessary for the success of the mission and everyone had the right to do so if they wanted. Mendelson's findings shine a light on the profound problem and serve as proof for the desperate need for proper education and training on issues of human trafficking. Education, however, should also target those in leadership positions as they are the ones who actually influence and shape policy. However, when she discussed the

issue with senior officials at NATO, instead of acknowledgement, she was faced with “eye rolling, raised brows, and embarrassed snickering” (p.19). The most common misconceptions include: trafficking and abuse of women is a Balkan problem and has nothing to do with peacekeepers; abuse of women is just one of the unfortunate negative effects of war; mistaking trafficking for voluntary engagement in prostitution; or the trade in women is horrible, but the U.S. troops are not responsible for what other nations’ militaries engage in. If those who have the power to bring about change lack knowledge or completely misunderstand the issue, it is not surprising that those down the chain of command engage in egregious crimes without even realizing it.

In addition, public opinion is very important in determining what the military that serves to protect and that represents them in faraway nations should behave like. Cases, such as the trials of My Lai killers and the marine who killed four Iraqis, seem to point that the public opinion does not view its military as potential criminals. In addition, according to Barstow (2000), the armed conflicts of the last decades are wars without heroes and with an increasing numbers of new victims. As such, she demands that the attention of NGOs and the media shift from reports on how many combatants were killed to analysis of gender-based violence and sexual crimes such as rape. Counting killed soldiers is easier and is what grabs the public’s attention. Counting the women and girls raped and left to fend for themselves is not such an easy task. This is especially the case when the rape has been committed by those there to protect the women. Hillen (1995), however, warns of the impact of the “CNN factor” and the danger of focusing on having some kind of operation to satisfy the public’s demands for justice without properly acknowledging the needs of the local population and the harm that could be done by the peacekeepers themselves. It is quite normal for people in Western nations to watch the suffering of Bosnians and demand that an action be taken. However, the public should not simply be content with the fact that a peacekeeping mission is on the ground. The impact of the mission as well as any violations committed by its members must be taken into account for a proper recourse. After all, if humanitarian intervention does not ease the

suffering of the thousands of women and young girls, one could conclude that nonintervention might have been a better choice of action.

Another proposed action targeted at the eradication of human rights abuses committed by peacekeepers is to include more women as peacekeepers and as the ones who make decision on the roles and missions of peacekeepers (Morris, 1998). In addition, Mazurana and colleagues (2005) observe that despite the strong impact of armed conflicts on women, they are rarely present during peace talks and discussions on major issues to be acknowledged. This is one area that the UN should consider to target the issue of human trafficking and its peacekeepers. According to most recent statistics published on the UN Peacekeeping site, only 2.4% of UN military personnel by the end of 2010 were female. Even though the UN highlights that it is “a top priority” to increase the number of female peacekeepers in the military, there is no mention on how this would be achieved or if any efforts are made to do it. In terms of UN Police members, 10% in 2010 were female and the goal is to reach 20% by the end of 2014. To achieve this goal, the UN International Network of Female Police Peacekeepers was established to encourage women’s involvement and provide mentoring. This is certainly a step in the right direction, but only time would tell how successful such undertakings are. What concerned advocates do not want to see is increased mistreatment toward the female peacekeepers instead of improved treatment toward the vulnerable population of females in areas of conflict.

A third proposed action is openness and transparency and increased levels of prosecution of those found to violate the rights of the local population they are there to protect. The various reports on the issue make it clear that what makes the human rights violation committed by peacekeepers even more egregious, if that could be possible, is the attempts to brush off the cases as not typical and only attributed to a small number of service members who behaved contrary to organizational mores. The lack of distinction between prostitution and trafficking contributes to the continued misunderstanding of trafficking as a serious crime against women. As HRW emphasizes, investigations are either not carried out or if carried out, the report usually becomes lost along the chain of command and it is not clear what happens to

those accused of violations. Often, these people seem to be pulled by their respective nations and allowed to return home without any action taken against them. No family, no organization, no country wants to admit that its members are criminals; however, trying to cover up and disperse the situation is just one of the ways to show disrespect toward the many women and girls who can never seem to find salvation.

An example of an effort undertaken by a country in the direction of transforming its peacekeeping troops is Sweden (Brysk, 2009). As a member of the U.N. Security Council, in 1996, Sweden encouraged the Council “to investigate trafficking in women and peacekeeping,” (p.47) and in 2006, it focused on a plan to highlight the relationship between gender and peacekeeping and set up “training of personnel in international operations to increase security for women and girls” (Brysk, 2009, p. 47). A very important initiative seems to be the inclusion of a greater numbers of women in the peacekeeping operations sent by Sweden. Such efforts by a country are admirable, but a lot more is needed before a significant change is achieved. UN peacekeeping contingents usually involve service members from a variety of nations and backgrounds and therefore, there must be a systematic way of approaching training and education of future and current peacekeepers. Willingness to contribute forces to UN peacekeeping missions should not be the only measure of a country interested in defending human rights; rather, a shared understanding of the importance of gender and cultural considerations, as well as a shift in definitions of masculinity and bravery, and proper behavior as a result of these should be sought, rewarded, and acknowledged for a peacekeeping mission not contributing to violence to be established.

It should be noted that the U.N. is taking action to target the problem and achieve a transformation. For instance, in 2000, the United Nations set on a major goal to reform its peacekeeping operations and educate and train them to be able to adapt to the various conditions under which they might find themselves. The focus of the reform, however, seems to be the safety and effectiveness of the peacekeepers. For example, in the Bahrimi report, the organization mentions as a major downfall in the 1990s the fact that UN peacekeepers could

not distinguish between a victim and an aggressor. This is hard to believe when reports have shown that many UN peacekeepers were complicit in the abuse of women and girls. I have no idea how one would not be able to distinguish between the women and girls abused and the men keeping and selling them. The UN certainly has a right to acknowledge that peacekeepers cannot always be able to protect every single civilian. However, peacekeepers must never be involved in the abuse of those they are there to protect and that should be a relatively easy undertaking.

With a reference to Jane Austin's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, Arbuckle (2006) stresses that peacekeeping missions do not get a second chance to make a first impression and should not focus simply on knowing more but also on understanding better for a lasting transformation to be accomplished. Even though Sitkowski (2006) is pessimistic in his conclusion that peacekeeping has proved to be a not very useful tool in the arsenal of strategies to approach the promotion and maintenance of peace in conflict regions, there is still hope for the future. Certain actions have already been taken by the U.N. and a transformation, even though seemingly moving at a glacial pace, is in the works. Before any significant leaps of improvement are achieved, however, we all need to learn to not simply require intervention in far-away and torn by violence lands but to demand that intervention at the least does not add to the suffering.