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POLS 530-01: International Relations

Virginia Page Fortna: Does Peacekeeping Work?

Peacekeeping: More Success than Failure

United Nations peacekeeping has been around for the past 60 years. Since 1948, there has been 67 peacekeeping missions. It was used during the Cold War to prevent conflict from escalating. Peacekeeping uses multifaceted third-party military forces to accomplish several different goals. Traditionally, they address and contain interstate conflict by enforcing cease fires and separating forces. In these situations it is called observer missions and they are invited by the government. Complex peacekeeping uses military and civilian personnel and is much more dangerous for the peacekeepers because not all parties have consented to the peacekeepers being there. In this situation, force is usually used by the peacekeepers and that is considered a peace-enforcement mission. Peacekeeping has a global partnership between the United Nations, member states who contribute funds and recruits, international partners such as the World Bank, the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (Balasco 2014) (What is Peacekeeping 2008) (Spiegel 2004 pp. 464-465).

Fortna states in her work that there has been very little analysis on peacekeeping or lack of peacekeeping in countries. Some analysis has been done on countries that had peacekeeping implemented and whether or not it inhibited peace, but there has not been prevalent analyses on countries that were ravaged with civil war, but did not have intervening peacekeeper to help them. Does peacekeeping work? Does it not work? Are only certain kinds of peacekeeping effective? Fortna states that our current understanding of peacekeeping suffers from 3 gaps. The first is that we know too little about how much peacekeeping contributes to enduring peace. The second is that we lack a concrete understanding of the fundamental instruments through which peacekeepers affect the solidity of peace. The third is that we know little about the perspectives of the people in the countries that the peacekeepers are working in (Fortna 2008) (Balasco 2014).

According to Fortna's findings, peacekeepers generally deploy into regions where the probability of war recurring is much more likely. Peacekeepers do not just go to countries where peacekeeping would be the easiest, even though this is a UN policy. They choose hard cases; ones where neither side in the conflict won, suspicion and doubt among the people is high, and there are generally a large amount of refugee travel. Choosing easier cases would mean that there would be no "failures" for the peacekeepers and it would save the UN and others from embarrassment, but ultimately, it would not do any better than if the country was left alone. It is a good thing that peacekeepers avoid this policy and are sent to countries that need them (Fortna 2008) (Balasco 2014).

Does peacekeeping work? According to Fortna, the answer is "a clear and resounding yes". There is data and statistics that show that the risk of war resuming is much lower when peacekeeping is involved than when they are not and the country is left to their own devices. If peacekeepers are only given credit to keeping peace while they are deployed and not after, peacekeepers are said to reduce the risk of another war by 55%-60%. If peacekeepers are given credit for peace even after they leave, which is their main goal after all, then they reduce the risk of war by 75%-85%. (Fortna 2008) (Balasco 2014).

Peacekeeping is effective because they can change the incentives for the parties involved. They can raise the costs of recurring war and also increase benefits for peace. They prevent return to warfare, reduce uncertainty of the people, and stop political abuse. By merely existing and having a presence, people feel more secure and at ease. Peacekeeping is not a complete remedy though. Peacekeepers keep the peace, and they try to promote democracy, but the latter does not normally succeed. Peacekeeping may be effective in keeping the peace, but it has not necessarily left the societies building democracies (Fortna 2008) (Balasco 2014).

Through all of this talk that peacekeeping works and makes a big difference, all I can think about is Rwanda. If peacekeeping works, why didn't it work in Rwanda? Only the first and last chapter of Fortna's book was in our Essential Readings in World Politics book, so I don't know if she discussed the situation in Rwanda, but I would like to know her thoughts on the case. The United Nations failed to send more peacekeepers to Rwanda to aid the ones that were there. Their mission failed and they admitted this in the 1999 Independent Inquiry. Since the Rwandan

genocide has peacekeeping been more successful? Have they changed the ways that they have been peacekeeping since then? What has been improved? (UNAMIR) (Fortna 2008).

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