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## **Political Economies of Peacekeeping, Local Gender Relations and Sex Trafficking Victimization: Peacekeepers As Patrons?**

*This article explores some ramifications and lasting implications of peacekeeping economies, and is particularly concerned with the interplay between the peacekeeping economy and the sex industry, including the risks for victimisation of women due to sex trafficking. First, we examine some of the characteristics and impacts of peacekeeping economies arguing that these are highly gendered—but that the “normalisation” of peacekeeping economies allows these to be overlooked or obscured. Drawing on the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo, we further contend that the gender relations contained in, and gendered effects of, peacekeeping economies have been (or are likely to be) carried over into the post-peacekeeping period with broad and lasting consequences. Finally, we consider peacekeeping economies in light of the UN’s ongoing efforts to “mainstream” gender and promote gender equality in and through peacekeeping operations. We suggest that the existence and potential long-term perpetuation of a highly gendered peacekeeping economy threatens to undermine, if not actively contradict, the goals and objectives related to gender roles and relations, including measures for protection of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation that are generally an implicit or explicit component of most contemporary peace operations.*

‘Peacekeeping economies’ have not been subject to much analysis of either their political economic or socio-cultural political impacts. The relative dearth of analytical or policy attention to peacekeeping economies is to some degree understandable. Peacekeeping economies share some of the characteristics of temporary economic bubbles. Lack of scrutiny may also owe to the perception that peacekeeping economies are incidental to the mandated priorities and activities of a peace operation, and thereby unworthy of dedicated examination; or that they are inevitable and unavoidable, and thus unremarkable. Yet the peacekeeping economy is the context in which most local residents have their main (or only) contact with civilian and military personnel in peace operations. The distortions and excesses of peacekeeping economies, and the services and activities they encompass, help shape local

perceptions of the mission (and vice versa), and of the roles, relations and status of local citizens vis-à-vis international personnel. We argue that they also affect relations between women and men, and create risks for male victimisation of women through sex industry .

This article uses a gendered lens to explore some ramifications and lasting implications of peacekeeping economies. The analysis is informed by our work in post-conflict countries with past or ongoing United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions, notably Bosnia-Herzegovina (UNMIBH) and Kosovo (UNMIK), as well as Liberia (UNMIL), Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).<sup>i</sup> We are particularly concerned with the interplay between the peacekeeping economy and the sex industry, including domestic sex work, trafficking for sexual exploitation (hereafter ‘trafficking’) and sex tourism. First, we examine some of the characteristics and impacts of peacekeeping economies, arguing that these are highly gendered – but that the ‘normalisation’ of peacekeeping economies allows these gendered effects to be overlooked or obscured. Drawing on the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo, we further contend that the gender relations contained in, and gendered effects of, peacekeeping economies – including the accompanying expansion of the sex industry<sup>ii</sup> – have been (or are likely to be) carried over into the post-peacekeeping period, with broad and lasting consequences. Finally, we consider peacekeeping economies in light of the UN’s ongoing efforts to ‘mainstream’ gender and promote gender equality in and through peacekeeping operations. With respect to these efforts, we suggest that the existence and potential long-term perpetuation of a highly gendered peacekeeping economy threatens to undermine, if not actively contradict, the goals and objectives related to gender roles and relations, including measures for protection of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, that are generally an implicit or explicit component of most contemporary peace operations.

## WHAT IS THE PEACEKEEPING ECONOMY?

Despite the prevalence of peacekeeping economies in post-conflict countries – they generally appear wherever a mission does, if not uniformly in terms of size or complexity – there is relatively little literature dealing with them. A literature review of peacekeeping economies conducted in 2005 found very few examples that invoked the term or specific phenomenon, compared to a much larger literature on the economic dimensions of conflict, the economic effects of aid flows, and post-conflict development (Carnahan, Gilmore and Rahman 2005). There is no generally agreed definition of a peacekeeping economy.<sup>iii</sup> Indeed, a 2006 report on the economic impact of peacekeeping missions (Carnahan, Durch and Gilmore 2006) never refers to ‘peacekeeping economies’, much less tries to define them, focusing instead on analyzing procurement data and financial flows from various peacekeeping missions into the local economies.

Some attempt at clarification is therefore necessary. In this article, ‘peacekeeping economy’ encompasses: the jobs available to local staff in UN offices or NGOs that accompany the UN presence (occasionally professional but usually administrative, as well as subcontracted work such as maintenance and security); unskilled and mainly informal work that locals do for individual internationals (e.g. cleaning, guarding); service jobs in the establishments that cater primarily to internationals; and participation in the sex industry. Essentially, the peacekeeping economy refers to economic activity that either would not occur, or would occur at a much lower scale and pay-rate, without the international presence; hence, the necessity of including those whose livelihoods depend on the presence of a large cadre of international personnel, but who are not directly employed or (sub-) contracted by any organisation. However, the inclusion of informal or illicit work makes it difficult to

assess the size of a peacekeeping economy. It is similarly difficult to determine with much precision how much of the peacekeeping economy is captured by local or national elites, foreign businessmen, or organised crime interests, or the extent of capital flight – except to observe that these are prevalent characteristics in the organisation and functioning of peacekeeping economies. Peacekeeping economies are not nationwide in scope. They are most evident in urban areas (especially capital cities) where international personnel are most concentrated, as well as those places in rural areas where a military and/or civilian UN presence is located (Carnahan, Durch and Gilmore 2006). They are also not constructed or taken advantage of by the UN exclusively: representatives of NGOs, other international organisations or military forces, private military contractors, international and local business interests, and local elites (including local professional staff of peacekeeping missions) are also implicated in them. Peacekeeping economies are also integrally related to the spatial dimensions of peacekeeping, as manifested in bunkering, compounding, and enclavism (Duffield 2010; Higate and Henry 2009; Smirl 2008). A typical entertainment establishment in the peacekeeping economy is the restaurant or club whose security protocol, expensive prices, central location, and built environment ensures a ‘safe’ and segregated evening for international and select local guests (Jennings 2012).

Before proceeding, it is necessary to acknowledge the difficulty of talking about ‘the UN’, ‘peacekeeper’, or indeed, ‘locals’ as if these are unitary or homogenous agents. The UN presence in a mission site comprises mission personnel, UN agencies and programmes, and UN volunteers; the UN also hires host country nationals either directly, on a consultancy/ contractor basis, or through sub-contractors. International peacekeepers can be civilians, police or military personnel. They can be UN ‘lifers’ or entirely new to mission life; they can have experience from combat zones in their own or other countries; they can be from rich or poor countries, from elite or humble backgrounds; they can be from

a country in the neighbouring region or half a world away. Religious, linguistic, cultural and racial diversity abounds; and while the sex balance on the military side remains heavily lopsided towards men, women occupy approximately thirty percent of civilian peacekeeping jobs globally.<sup>iv</sup> While the relations between the civilian and military sides of the mission are often considered to be a source of friction, there are also rivalries between military contingents with different military cultures, as well as between different civilian offices or between the mission and the agencies and programmes. In other words, in addition to individual differences among peacekeepers, peacekeeping operations are also sites of diverse institutional cultures. While peacekeeping operations are, as Higate and Henry (2009: 137) contend, generally 'masculine spaces', there is space for a range of masculinities and femininities to co-exist, including within the military contingents (Higate 2007). Similarly, 'local' is an unsatisfyingly broad term, which risks conflating different constituencies of actors (Pouligny 2006), and which also – when used synonymously with 'national' (as in, 'national actors') – prompts a misunderstanding of the dynamics, interests and players involved in a given situation. A paper of this length cannot attempt to do justice to all of this complexity. It should be noted, however, that the research upon which the paper is based is comprised of over 100 interviews with UN informants of all types and jobs, as well as local informants ranging from the political and economic elite, to middle class professionals and civil society, to informants among the most vulnerable and disenfranchised in their societies. Finally, use of the term 'peacekeeping economy/-ies' should not be read narrowly, e.g. as excluding peacebuilding missions or components of missions. Relatedly, the terms 'UN personnel' or 'peacekeepers' are generally used to refer to all UN mission staff and personnel, whether civilian, military or police. The use of 'peacekeepers' should not, therefore, be read as referring only to military personnel, nor should it be understood to imply that only military personnel are implicated in some of the activities described herein (e.g. use of prostitutes, other forms of sexual exploitation and abuse of local residents). UN agency staff are also generally included under the broader remit of UN personnel (if not as 'peacekeepers'), unless otherwise

specified. Lastly, use of the term 'local' or 'locals' applies generically to the men and women living in the countries hosting peacekeeping operations, without implying a specific group or constituency unless otherwise noted.

### **The impact of peacekeeping economies: taking a broader view**

While peacekeeping economies prompt the development or regeneration of a certain degree of services and infrastructure – including housing stock and the restaurants, hotels, bars, clubs and brothels that comprise an 'entertainment infrastructure' (Carter and Clift 2000: 11) – it is debatable how much they contribute to wider and lasting economic transformation. Insofar as peacekeeping economies are discussed as something separable from peace operations' broader activities of 'development' or 'economic reform', they are often seen as problematic, owing to their inflationary impact on the cost of living and the local housing market, and the distortive effects of the hiring locals at hugely inflated salaries (Rubinstein *et al.* 2008; Ammitzboell 2007).<sup>v</sup> However, they are also generally perceived of as temporary. The assumption is that the services, establishments, interests and impacts of the peacekeeping economy will not outlast the peacekeeping mission, or at least will revert to a more sustainable level.<sup>vi</sup> Taking this assumption at face value, the temporariness of peacekeeping economies would be both positive and negative. On the plus side, it implies that a peacekeeping economy's negative aspects, including the expansion of the local sex industry, are also temporary.<sup>vii</sup> On the minus side, the expectation that the enterprises, infrastructure and services established during the peacekeeping economy will eventually downsize or fold entails the loss of many livelihoods, and points to the unsustainability of this particular form of investment or employment provided by the peace operation.

However, there is another way of understanding impact beyond the narrowly economic, or beyond the consequences of formal activities and programs; and here, the assumption that peacekeeping economies are temporary phenomena is more questionable. In particular, we argue that gender relations in the local society are influenced by peacekeeping economies, and that the ramifications of this influence are felt beyond the life of the peace operation. This is the case even where the opportunities for informal (non-professional) interaction between peacekeepers and locals are restricted, or are primarily limited to a narrow range of sites and venues (expensive, international-oriented clubs and restaurants, hotels, etc.). The cumulative effects of these interactions – including also the employer-employee relationship, as when peacekeepers hire domestic workers or security staff – may feed into (or disrupt) existing social and economic hierarchies in the host society, whether or not peacekeepers are aware of it.

Here it is important to stress that the peacekeeping economy is not *de facto* problematic or damaging for the individuals involved. Many locals in peacekeeping environments tend to have a pragmatic view of the mission, and recognize that they should attempt to optimize the benefits they can receive at any given point, rather than put their faith in an improved situation down the line.<sup>viii</sup> This sentiment was also expressed by sex worker informants in various missions, many of whom indicated that they planned to quit sex work when the mission left, if they hadn't already. In other words, for most locals the concrete benefits of a livelihood over the duration of the mission – even an unreliable one – outweigh the drawback of its insecurity and impermanence. Thus, where a peace operation effectively distorts the local economy to create a peacekeeping economy, there may be increased opportunities for women's and men's participation, whether in the formal or informal sectors. That this paper focuses particularly

on the sex industry as a central component of peacekeeping economies means that the negative effects associated with these economies are more evident. But we do not deny that these negative effects can be counterbalanced by more positive outcomes associated with women's increased access to employment or economic independence, owing to the peacekeeping economy.<sup>ix</sup>

That said, it is nevertheless the case that peacekeeping economies do not affect everyone equally, benignly, or beneficially. Moreover, many of the activities encompassed by peacekeeping economies – particularly in the unskilled or service sectors – can be considered as comprising specifically 'women's work'.<sup>x</sup> This includes domestic work, administrative or secretarial work, hostessing and waitressing, and sex work. In the case of the sex industry, this is not to imply that men and boys are not also providing sexual services to peacekeepers, but rather that women and girls are generally more implicated in these activities, if not their organisation. Specifically, as the Bosnia and Kosovo cases indicate, positions of power, ownership and influence in these economies – especially those aspects controlled by organised crime – tend to be occupied by men, with women's participation concentrated in the middle or lowest levels. In short, peacekeeping economies, and women and men's participation in them, are structured along highly gendered lines, in a way that aligns closely with stereotypical or 'traditional' gender roles.<sup>xi</sup> Referring to the sex industry, Cockburn and Hubic (2002: 116) label this phenomenon 'dangerously gendered markets'.

Yet where the peacekeeping economy is considered as something marginal, incidental, or separate from the mandated activities and desired impact of the mission – and/or is 'normalised' by mission personnel as an inevitable and, therefore, unremarkable aspect of contemporary peace operations – its gendered division of labour and impact may be obscured or underplayed, and the gendered implications of this

are ignored. These moves – to marginalise, normalise, or simply overlook the peacekeeping economy – seem cognisant with the way most international personnel situate themselves as outsiders to the society in which they (temporarily) live, and thus not implicated in the workings of that society outside of their narrowly professional purview.<sup>xii</sup> The multifarious ramifications of their presence – including, for civilian peacekeepers, such seemingly mundane things as where they do their weekly shopping, how much they pay their cleaner, how much they pay in rent (and to whom), how much of their paycheck goes straight home and how they spend their free time<sup>xiii</sup> – is occluded when peacekeepers conceive ‘impact’ on the host society solely in terms of their professional activities.

Another way in which the normalisation of peacekeeping economies occurs is when mission personnel (wrongly) consider the particular manifestation of, and constitution of gender relations within, peacekeeping economies to be the ‘natural’ expression of the local society and culture (Higate and Henry 2004; Jennings 2008).<sup>xiv</sup> This perception of a particular society’s ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ gender relations is evident in discussion with civilian and military UN informants, in which they state assertions and characteristics of locals that, without qualification or elaboration, amount to little more than racial- and gender-based stereotypes of local residents, particularly women, that make their victimisation by sexual violence and trafficking normal, i.e. justifiable: that they are promiscuous or ‘easy’; that they ‘think differently’ (for example, transactionally) about sex; that they are always mistreated by ‘bad’ local men, and so on.<sup>xv</sup> It is difficult to know where to ascribe these representations about local gender relations. Various UN informants have spoken of their in-mission initiation trainings as being important in influencing their views of local women and men, especially the ‘scare stories’ told in relation to the UN’s policy against sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). They also reference their own experiences and observations, oftentimes in explicit contrast to the way things work ‘back home’, or what they are

familiar with from other missions. Generally speaking, the peacekeepers' perceptions of gender relations in the host country are not particularly positive, although some informants ascribe more blame to local men (for how they treat 'their' women) while others focus on the perceived behaviour and attitudes of the women (Higate 2004; Jennings 2008). Regardless of the source, it is likely that, perceptions-wise, holding such opinions of local residents may make the existence of relatively large sex industries seem unexceptional and organic, rather than something created, organised and perpetually mobilised and re-supplied – and something in which international actors are collectively, if not individually, complicit.

Here it should be emphasised that the peacekeeping economy and local sex industries are not synonymous. While gendered, the peacekeeping economy does not require individual women's participation in it to be sexual in nature. That said, a significant aspect of peacekeeping economies – as observed in Bosnia, Kosovo, Haiti, Liberia and DRC, and as documented elsewhere<sup>xvi</sup> – does seem to feature (at least the promise of) the sexual availability of local women and men for international actors<sup>xvii</sup>: whether freely, for a contracted fee, or for some form of in-kind payment(s). Evidence exists of survival prostitution, trafficking and sexual slavery in peacekeeping economies.<sup>xviii</sup> But the types of sexual transactions occurring in peacekeeping economies are more diverse than these extremes indicate (Jennings 2010); they include – but are not limited to – the stereotypical sex worker-client exchange, as well as longer-term, but essentially transactional, relationships between local and international partners, wherein the partners are described as 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend' (Jennings 2008; Simic 2012). Indeed, there is no single paradigm for transactional sex in peacekeeping economies, where sex work can take forms more akin to that found in sex tourism sites – namely, as an open-ended exchange 'based on only a very general, implicit understanding that some form of payment (O'Connell Davidson

1998: 78)', monetary or otherwise, will be forthcoming. This does not exclude same-sex sex work, which, on the basis of observation and anecdotal information, does occur but is extremely hidden in peacekeeping environments. Ultimately, as Simic (2012) argues, there is a need to distinguish between various types of sexual activities and participants in considering the ethical and regulatory dimensions of sex in wartime, post-war, and peacekeeping situations. We do not argue that all sexual contact between locals and internationals in peacekeeping environments is necessarily harmful, exploitative, or problematic. Yet we also do not deny that harmful, exploitative, or otherwise problematic effects do sometimes accompany – indeed, may be part and parcel of – peacekeeping missions. In Bosnia and Kosovo, a significant effect was a surge in domestic sex work and trafficking, with lasting politico-economic, social and gendered effects that have been felt far beyond those directly implicated in the sex industry. The next section explores some of these effects.

## **THE SEX INDUSTRY, GENDER RELATIONS AND TRAFFICKING VICTIMS IN (POST-) PEACEKEEPING ECONOMIES IN BOSNIA AND KOSOVO<sup>xix</sup>**

In Bosnia and Kosovo, domestic sex work and sex trafficking have become a seemingly permanent part of the post-war and post-peacekeeping economy. Although several factors have played a role in creating this situation, evidence from Bosnia in particular suggests that one of the most important contributing factors is the prostitution infrastructure that was developed during the peacekeeping period, in connection with the demand created by the large international presence and continued post-war militarisation.<sup>xx</sup> The peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Kosovo significantly affected the sex industry on both the supply and demand sides, effectively creating avenues for – or at least, greatly expanding – the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation into/through these areas. Increased demand was

created by both local and international customers, with the latter providing particularly lucrative trade (Kroeger 2002).<sup>xxi</sup> Since this newly created demand was impossible to meet using only local women, trafficking of foreign women from among the poorest (post-communist) countries provided additional supply; the influx of foreign women and girls, in turn, ‘changed the nature of local prostitution’ (Cockburn and Hubic 2002: 11). Both the Bosnian and Kosovo cases are thus particularly good examples of the confluence between organised crime, the sex industry, international actors and the entertainment infrastructure in peacekeeping and post-peacekeeping environments. Moreover, Bosnia, in particular, shows both the durability and elasticity of the sex market. The reduction of foreign forces has led to a reduction of rates, a shifting of custom from international to local customers, and a shifting of excess ‘supply’ to other countries (via trafficking) (Nikolić-Ristanovic 2003). Thus, even after the peacekeeping troops are downsized and withdrawn, the illicit organised crime economy – which is largely accepted as a complement to, or substitute for, the inefficient formal economy – continues to operate, if in a slightly modified form.

The development and evolution of the sex industries in wartime and post-war Bosnia and Kosovo cannot be extensively covered here.<sup>xxii</sup> Two important characteristics, mentioned above, are, however, worth reiterating. One is the close connection between the sex industry and organised crime (see e.g. Lalic 2007). Indeed, organised crime involvement in the domestic sex industries and sex trafficking into/through Bosnia and Kosovo is now considered extremely difficult to displace. This is primarily because the rapid expansion of the sex industry, in the context of stagnant post-conflict economies, has led to a sizable contingent of people – both men and women – earning livelihoods through jobs connected to organised crime. The other is the centrality of international civilian and military personnel to the local sex industries – in some cases, not just as users, but also as active participants in the

trafficking networks being run in and through Bosnia and Kosovo (Human Rights Watch 2002; Bolkovac and Lynn 2011; Picarelli 2002: 13).

Yet, just as we argue above that the impact of the peacekeeping economy should be understood in broader terms than the narrowly economic, so must the expansion and perpetuation of the local sex industries in Bosnia and Kosovo be related to forces beyond the 'merely' economic. In both cases, the interaction between gender relations and the sex industries are not unidirectional; that is to say, the dual trends of a normalisation of large sex industries and regressive changes in gender relations feed into each other. In both Bosnia and Kosovo, the wartime and post-war periods have seen a gradual evolution – or arguably, deterioration – in normative heterosexuality, such that both women and men are pushed, or attracted, to take jobs within the sex industry and/or to involve themselves in sex trafficking. Thus, economic incentives and social pressures reinforce each other: both women and men can secure economic survival, as well as social standing, for reaffirming their adherence to regressive gender identities (Messerschmidt 1993: 122). While this shift in gender identities, roles and relations cannot be attributed solely to the peacekeeping economy, the interrelation between the peacekeeping economy and the sex industry – and the implication of the former in the explosive growth of the latter – is crucial to the context in which the changes have occurred.

Here the recent retraditionalisation of cultural images about sexuality and gender identities, roles and relations is particularly important, in ways specifically connected to, but extending beyond, the sex industry. This retraditionalisation is more broadly associated with social and economic changes in post-communist countries, in conjunction with globalisation and militarisation (Nikolić-Ristanović 2002: 60).

Changes in popular perceptions of sexuality and gender are mirrored in the dual explosion of

beauty/fashion magazines and pornography. As Daskalova (2001: 249) notes, 'the message conveyed is that beauty is the most valuable female "asset" and that every woman should try to make herself sexually attractive to men and to become a source of men's pleasure'. Through popular media, the traditional opposition between men's sexual 'needs' and women's 'status' as passive sexual objects and men's property has been reconstructed. Such perceptions may affect women's participation in (or vulnerability to) the sex industry and trafficking. As a push factor, new images of sexuality influence women (perhaps especially young women) by widening the gap between cultural expectations and the possibilities for achieving them. At the same time, as a pull factor they operate through feeding the myth that working in the sex industry is an attractive job – the 'Pretty Woman syndrome' (Oleszczuk and Buchowska 1996: 27). Cultural images of women as sex objects have thus become a strong factor in neutralising, and even glorifying, the seaminess of trafficking and prostitution.

Masculinity is also affected by this retraditionalisation, and also in ways that can be linked to the perpetuation of the sex industry. There is an evident resurgence of 'traditional' masculinity among those men that have become rich or otherwise successful in the new society. These men tend to reflect or strive for a cultural image of the man as breadwinner, but also as combatant: a potent, tough and militarized maleness. Among these men one finds successful private businessmen, men in managerial positions, members of the new state elite and military men. One also finds criminals. These men tend to fit the new cultural ideal of hegemonic masculinity in different ways: from how they look, act and consume to the way they dominate in relation to women. Yet as evident above, the men able to embody this traditional masculinity – i.e. to be 'real' men – are relatively few, and occupy a narrow and particular space. In the public imagination, at least, they are the mafia men, criminals, foreigners, or the new political elite (Nikolić-Ristanović 2002).

The flip side of this is that the complementary notion of femininity – in which women occupy a more ‘traditional’ (dependent, subservient and ideally home-based) role in the gendered division of labour – is available to only a small number of women. The economic situation of most women in both Bosnia and Kosovo forces them to share the burden of breadwinning with their partners, or themselves be the sole breadwinners. Thus, women who achieve emphasized femininity, with its focus on the centrality of the home and motherhood, are mainly those whose partners belong to the small segment of rich ‘real’ men. In terms of sexuality, however, the phenomenon of ‘traditional’ femininity is much more widespread. Ironically, therefore, men's and women's attempts to achieve the ‘traditional’ cultural model of sexuality are most obvious in the rise of the sex industry and trafficking. Sex work, at least in a sanitised or idealised conceptualisation, can be seen as embodying the tropes of the dominant, masterful (but not ‘deviant’) man and submissive, beautiful and (above all) desirable woman. At the same time, economic hardship and the legacy of war (e.g. women-headed households) make it even more difficult for men and women to achieve ideal masculinity and femininity, except through participation in illegal or illicit activities – which, thanks in part to the peacekeeping economy, is more widely available.

Thus, once the sex industry was entrenched by organised crime interests, peacekeepers and local colluders, the foundation was there to continue the business. The Bosnia and Kosovo cases therefore demonstrate the fallacy of assuming that peacekeeping economies’ impacts are temporary, or confined to economic flows, booms and busts. Rather, the effects can be lasting, diverse and dispersed. The Bosnia and Kosovo cases show the tight interconnections between the peacekeeping economy and the sex industry, while the explosion of the latter has contributed to, and been intrinsic in, ongoing and regressive changes in gender, identities, roles and relations, as well as victimisation of women in sex

trafficking. The political, cultural and socioeconomic effects of these changes are not confined to those directly implicated in the sex industry, but are felt by men and women throughout society.

## **LEARNING THE LESSON? PEACEKEEPING ECONOMIES AND THE NEW GENDER AWARENESS**

The Bosnia and Kosovo missions predate, at least in their inception, a more recent emphasis on gender by the UN. This is epitomised by the passage in October 2000 of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and in June 2008 of Resolution 1820 (on sexual violence in armed conflict), as well as moves to reduce some negative impacts of peacekeeping economies – particularly through the zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by UN personnel.<sup>xxiii</sup> Post-1325, peace operations are supposed to ‘incorporate a gender perspective’ and ‘take into account gender considerations and the rights of women’ (UN 2000). The goal of mainstreaming gender and integrating gender perspectives within and through peacekeeping operations is a unifying principle (Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit 2004), even if the application of that goal to specific missions may vary.

These concerted institutional efforts might generate the expectation that the negative effects seen in Bosnia and Kosovo are less likely to be replicated. Specifically, is the link between peacekeeping economies and sex industries still valid in light of more dedicated efforts within the UN system and by (some) member states on gender awareness and equality? On the basis of anecdotal evidence and observation in Haiti, Liberia and the DRC, this link remains durable. Port-au-Prince, Monrovia, Goma and Kinshasa have developed robust entertainment infrastructures catering to peacekeepers and other international actors and local elites. Meanwhile, Port-au-Prince (pre-earthquake) has a highly visible

street prostitution market, including in Petionville, a district favoured by internationals; while the higher end of the market is seemingly concentrated in clubs, brothels and restaurants, where there seems to be greater or lesser degrees of control and coercion operating between the establishment owners and the women. In Liberia, trafficking has also occurred, including cases that seem explicitly linked to demand generated by the peacekeeping economy (UNMIL 2007, cited in Jennings 2008); while Eastern DRC, in particular, has been a focal point of accusations of SEA by UN peacekeepers, including with children. Furthermore, while the street prostitution market is less visible in Monrovia and Goma than Port-au-Prince or Kinshasa – at least in areas frequented by internationals – the market itself otherwise seems to share similar characteristics. The existence of peacekeeping economies with (seemingly robust) sex industries does not, of course, pre-ordain Haiti, Liberia or DRC to the path previously trodden by Bosnia and Kosovo. However, several factors seem to favour the post-peacekeeping perpetuation of their respective sex industries, if in modified form – including possibly in the direction of sex tourism (Jennings 2010).

Moreover, and speaking more generally, there is little expectation among most local informants of *positive* change to gender roles and relations – at least in the arena of sexual behaviour – evolving from the presence of UN missions.<sup>xxiv</sup> To the contrary, local informants in the various mission sites often express resentment at how peacekeepers treat local women – a sentiment that seems influenced more by the extracurricular activities of peacekeepers than by the mission’s official policies, projects, or national hiring practices, which are often considered by locals to favour women. This is a significant point, as it suggests that the informal and purportedly ‘private’ affairs of peacekeepers are in fact highly visible and, perhaps disproportionately, important in generating local perceptions of mission integrity and effectiveness. The charge often levelled at MINUSTAH – that MINUSTAH are ‘turista’, only

interested in Haiti's beaches and women<sup>xxv</sup> – is typical. Arguably, therefore, the more progressive official 'line' on gender taken by the UN is undermined by the actions of some of its peacekeepers. This may be because the mission's gender policies are primarily visible to a more select population group (those familiar with, or with personal experience of, the mission), while the social activities of (some) peacekeepers are directly observable by occupants of the capital city and other mission sites.

More to the point, there seems to be a fundamental mismatch between the organisation's goals of mainstreaming gender and promoting gender equality, and its participation in and perpetuation of a peacekeeping economy that has concrete and often negative impacts on the local women and men it encompasses, as well as on the gender relations being negotiated and renegotiated within the wider society. This is not to say that the UN should not attempt to further gender equality in or through peacekeeping missions. It is nevertheless important to note that the context in which these efforts are being made matters; and, in the regressive changes that the peacekeeping economy can entail, it has the potential to undermine more positive changes being attempted in specific sectors within or outside the mission.

## **CONCLUSION**

The UN acknowledges that what mission personnel do in their free time can tarnish the mission's reputation and undermine its work (UN 2005a). Yet the UN primarily deals with this issue by treating the political-economic and social problems associated with peacekeeping as problems caused by aberrant

individual peacekeepers, rather than recognizing these as symptoms of a larger political economy in which the organisation is complicit (Jennings and Nikolić-Ristanović 2009).

This suggests that UN and other international actors need to start taking the issue of peacekeeping economies as generators of victimisation of women seriously. Existing UN policy that focuses primarily on operational aspects of peacekeeping (i.e. Resolution 1325), or that approaches negative aspects of the UN presence as a problem of a few ‘bad apples’ (e.g. the zero-tolerance policy), is unlikely to change the fundamentals of the gendered peacekeeping economy, which – along with positive trends, such as expanded formal and informal employment opportunities for local women and men – also encompasses extreme income inequality, a largely informal and potentially exploitable labour force, victimisation by trafficking for sexual exploitation, corruption, other forms of criminality and a lack of accountability or sustained investment on the part of those associated with the peacekeeping boom. The UN’s prevailing approach of ignoring the direct socioeconomic impacts of its presence – either because they are not seen, or are considered outside the mandated priorities of the mission, or are considered ‘normal’ and temporary – is neither a sustainable nor desirable option. The failure of international actors to think critically, and act responsibly, about the multifarious implications of their presence – both in terms of the overall political economy but also, more directly, in terms of human lives, victim protection and welfare in peacekeeping areas – implicates them in the negative effects of that presence, in the same way that they are associated with the positive outcomes of peacekeeping. At the least, the possible negative (and positive) ramifications of those economies should be addressed early, openly and directly, and factored in to eventual decision-making on the part of both the mission and national authorities.

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<sup>i</sup> This article draws upon fieldwork conducted (by Jennings) in Monrovia, Liberia (December 2011; November-December 2007; November 2005); Goma and Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (March and July 2012); and Port-au-Prince, Haiti (October 2007); and upon Nikolić-Ristanović's extensive work in and on the Balkans.

<sup>ii</sup> On the connection between the presence of peace operations and the expansion of local sex industries, see: Carnahan, Durch and Gilmore (2006: 21); Whitworth (2004); Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf (2002); Kent (2007: 45); Cockburn and Hubic (2002).

<sup>iii</sup> Early use of the term 'peacekeeping economies' is traceable to the 2002 UNIFEM report *Women, War and Peace* (Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf 2002).

<sup>iv</sup> See: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/gender.shtml> (accessed 13 November 2012).

<sup>v</sup> Carnahan, Durch and Gilmore (2006) somewhat dispute this negative perception, arguing that the restoration of security provided by missions is the single most important contributor to development in host countries.

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<sup>vi</sup> Confidential sources, Personal interviews, Monrovia, 8 and 14 December 2011; and Goma, 25 March 2012.

<sup>vii</sup> Although this could arguably be viewed as a negative by those whose livelihoods depend on sex work, especially those who feel that they don't have any other obvious means of supporting themselves.

<sup>viii</sup> Confidential sources, Personal interviews, Monrovia, 10 and 11 December 2011; and Goma, 25 March 2012; and Kinshasa, 21 and 23 July 2012. See also Pouligny (2006).

<sup>ix</sup> Indeed, these positive outcomes may also be claimed by sex workers themselves, even in the context of work generally considered (and that they themselves admit to being) dangerous and exploitative. Confidential sources, Personal Interviews with sex workers, Monrovia, 10 and 11 December 2011; Goma, 24 and 25 March 2012; Kinshasa, 21 July 2012.

<sup>x</sup> An important exception is private security.

<sup>xi</sup> On the organization of peacekeeping space and its ramifications for gender, see Higate and Henry (2009). On the situation of women in conflict and post-conflict societies and economies more generally, see: Higate (2007, 2003); Cockburn and Zarkov (2002); Pankhurst (2008, 2003); Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2010, 2009, 2008); Elstain ([1987] 1995); MacKenzie (2009); Meintjes (2001); Meintjes et al (2001); Turshen (2001, 1998); Cockburn (2004, 2001); Coulter (2009); Whitworth (2004); El Bushra (2004); Sjoberg with Gentry (2007).

<sup>xii</sup> This observation was a recurring theme in tens of interviews with UN informants conducted in Haiti (October 2007), Liberia (December 2011), and the DRC (March and July 2012).

<sup>xiii</sup> On the importance of the 'mundane' to global politics, see Enloe (2011).

<sup>xiv</sup> Gendered relations can be defined as 'interactions between and among women and men that are characterized by negotiation, bargaining and exchange between different actors with different access to economic and social power (Higate and Henry 2004: 482)'.

<sup>xv</sup> See the discussion in Jennings (2008: 61-64); see also Higate and Henry (2009: 118-136).

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<sup>xvi</sup> See e.g. Cockburn and Hubic (2002); Whitworth (2004); Higate and Henry (2004); MacKenzie (2009); Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf (2002); Martin (2005).

<sup>xvii</sup> Afghanistan seems to be the most obvious exception to this generalization.

<sup>xviii</sup> Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf (2002); see also Save the Children (2008); BBC (2006a, 2006b); Whitworth (2004).

<sup>xix</sup> UNMIBH was active from 1995 to 2002; UNMIK began in 1999 and is still active, although experiencing a rapid drawdown since 2008.

<sup>xx</sup> On connections between militarism and sex industries, see Enloe (1983, 1989); Truong (1990); Carter and Clift (2000); Leheny (1995); Whitworth (2004); Euler and Welzer-Lang (2000). On the Bosnian case in particular, see: Hajdinjak (2002); Pallen (2003); Pugh (2004); Long (2005).

<sup>xxi</sup> Internationals were more lucrative customers because they paid higher rates and often spent more on drinks than local customers. This phenomenon is not limited to the Balkans: having differential rates for local versus international sex-buyers, and potentially for different certain groups of internationals (e.g. European versus African UN personnel), is common. Confidential sources, Personal Interviews with sex workers, Monrovia, 10 and 11 December 2011; Goma, 24 and 25 March 2012; Kinshasa, 21 July 2012.

<sup>xxii</sup> See e.g. DeBusschere (2007); Human Rights Watch (2002); Picarelli (2002); Lalic (2007), Feher (1995); Jennings and Nikolić-Ristanović (2009).

<sup>xxiii</sup> On the zero-tolerance policy, see UN (2003; 2005a; 2005b).

<sup>xxiv</sup> Confidential sources, Personal interviews, Port-au-Prince, 18, 19 and 23 October 2007; and Monrovia, 28 November and 30 November 2007; and Goma, 24 and 25 March 2012.

<sup>xxv</sup> Jennings (2008).