



## King's Research Portal

DOI:

[10.1080/13533312.2019.1600637](https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2019.1600637)

*Document Version*

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Karlsrud, J., & Oksamytna, K. (2019). Norms and Practices in UN Peacekeeping: Evolution and Contestation. *International Peacekeeping*, 26(3), 253–254. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2019.1600637>

### **Citing this paper**

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact [librarypure@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:librarypure@kcl.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

## Norms and Practices in UN Peacekeeping: Evolution and Contestation

John Karlsrud and Kseniya Oksamytna

In spite of being multi-billion-dollar undertakings fundamentally reshaping the lives of people around the world, UN peacekeeping has only recently started to attract scholarly attention among a broader audience. While the evolution of norms and practices in other international organisations, such as the World Bank, the IMF, or the UNHCR, has been extensively analysed, the transformation of peacekeeping operations has been no less significant.

This journal has, of course, been at the spear tip of publishing scholarly investigations into UN peacekeeping, and has in recent years received more competition from other journals covering international relations more generally. We think this is a good thing, as it reflects the importance of peacekeeping as a central instrument in the international peace and security toolbox, and a useful empirical starting point to tease out a more fine-grained theoretical understanding of continuity and change in international relations.

The four articles in this special section focus on norms in UN peacekeeping (gender, impartiality, human rights, and environmentalism) and how they are implemented in practice. They look at the evolution of these norms over time, take an explicit theoretical perspective (feminist institutionalism, norm contestation, and securitisation), and report the results of original field research in Rwanda, South Sudan, and New York UN headquarters. The articles present a coherent narrative because they all look at practices either explicitly or implicitly, often at the mundane everyday level among troops or UN staff. But the focus on everyday experiences should not betray their theoretical importance: each of the articles uses this empirical material to better understand and theorise international relations. Georgina Holmes provides us with micro-study of norm implementation on the individual level with her bottom-up study of training of female military peacekeepers.<sup>1</sup> Marion Laurence reveals how legitimating practices are changing in tandem with the changing understanding of the impartiality norm.<sup>2</sup> Emily Paddon Rhoads analyses impartiality as a composite norm and unpacks its procedural and substantive dimensions to reveal how human rights and protection are being privileged to the detriment of a more political understanding of impartiality.<sup>3</sup> Lucile Maertens is forcing us to examine the causal chain of securitisation theory by showing how security is shaped by environmentalisation.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, the articles also have significant policy implications: questioning the need for more female peacekeepers if they are trained according to militarised gender protection norms and relegated to spaces and tasks that are perceived safe; contemplating the consequences of reframing or even moving away from impartiality; assessing the impact of the human rights agenda on the UN's ability to provide good offices and play a central and impartial mediation role; and considering the tendency of the environmentalisation of security which also leads to the securitisation of the environment. Together, the articles contribute to the literature on the evolution of international organisations; on

---

<sup>1</sup> Holmes, "Situating Agency."

<sup>2</sup> Laurence, "An 'Impartial' Force?"

<sup>3</sup> Paddon Rhoads, "Putting Human Rights up Front."

<sup>4</sup> Maertens, "From Blue to Green?"

norms and their contestation, institutionalisation, and implementation; and on the role of practices in giving meaning to norms.

### **Bibliography**

Holmes, Georgina. "Situating Agency, Embodied Practices and Norm Implementation in Peacekeeping Training." *International Peacekeeping* 26, no. 3 (2019).

Laurence, Marion. "An 'Impartial' Force? Normative Ambiguity and Practice Change in UN Peace Operations." *International Peacekeeping* 26, no. 3 (2019).

Maertens, Lucile. "From Blue to Green? Environmentalization and Securitization in UN Peacekeeping Practices." *International Peacekeeping* 26, no. 3 (2019).

Paddon Rhoads, Emily. "Putting Human Rights up Front: Implications for Impartiality and the Politics of UN Peacekeeping." *International Peacekeeping* 26, no. 3 (2019).