

Militarized Masculinity and the Legitimacy of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (2005-1988)

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Abstract

The expansion of United Nations peacekeeping operations after the Cold War transformed the scope and nature of international interventions in conflict-affected societies. While multidimensional peacekeeping missions were designed to support peacebuilding, state reconstruction and civilian protection, numerous allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeeping personnel raised concerns regarding the gendered dynamics embedded within these operations. This article examines the impact of militarized masculinity on United Nations peacekeeping missions between 1988 and 2005. Drawing upon feminist security studies and critical gender perspectives, the study argues that institutional cultures shaped by militarized forms of masculinity contributed to unequal power relations, normalized certain forms of violence, and undermined the legitimacy of peacekeeping efforts. Through an explanatory analysis of United Nations reports, Security Council resolutions, policy documents and selected mission experiences, the article explores the relationship between gendered institutional practices and operational outcomes. The findings suggest that gender mainstreaming initiatives, including Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), represented an important normative shift; however, their implementation was constrained by persistent structural inequalities, limited accountability mechanisms and the underrepresentation of women within peacekeeping institutions. The article concludes that strengthening women's participation and addressing militarized institutional cultures remain essential for enhancing the effectiveness, legitimacy and accountability of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Keywords: UN Peacekeeping Operations; Militarized Masculinity; Women, Peace and Security; Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Gender Mainstreaming.

1. Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations have undergone a profound transformation in both scale and function. Originally designed as a mechanism for monitoring ceasefires and preventing the resumption of hostilities between states, peacekeeping gradually evolved into a multidimensional enterprise encompassing peacebuilding, state-building, electoral assistance, human rights monitoring, civilian protection, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), and security sector reform.

The dramatic increase in intra-state conflicts after 1989, combined with growing expectations regarding the United Nations' role in maintaining international peace and security, expanded the geographical reach and operational responsibilities of peacekeeping missions. Between 1988 and 2005, the number, size, and complexity of UN peacekeeping operations increased significantly, making peacekeeping one of the most visible instruments of global governance in conflict-affected societies. The post-Cold War expansion of peacekeeping was accompanied by a broader redefinition of security. Traditional understandings of security, which had focused primarily on interstate military threats, increasingly gave way to multidimensional approaches emphasizing human security, civilian protection, governance, and sustainable peace. Consequently, peacekeepers were no longer deployed merely as neutral observers positioned between armed actors; they became active participants in post-conflict reconstruction processes and were expected to engage directly with local communities. While this transformation enhanced the relevance of peacekeeping operations, it also exposed peacekeepers to new social, political, and ethical challenges that traditional peacekeeping doctrines had not anticipated. One of the most significant challenges emerged in the form of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) committed by peacekeeping personnel. Beginning in the early 1990s, reports from several peacekeeping missions, including Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, Mozambique, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, revealed instances in which peacekeepers became involved in prostitution networks, transactional sex, sexual exploitation of vulnerable populations, and, in some cases, acts constituting serious violations of international human rights standards.

These incidents generated widespread criticism of the United Nations and raised fundamental questions regarding the legitimacy, accountability, and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. The significance of these allegations extended beyond individual cases of misconduct. Scholars increasingly argued that sexual exploitation and abuse should not be understood solely as the result of personal moral failure or isolated disciplinary violations. Rather, such behavior was understood as reflecting broader institutional cultures, structural inequalities, and gendered power relations embedded within military and security organizations. Consequently, analytical attention shifted from individual perpetrators to the organizational environments within which misconduct occurs. This reorientation contributed to the growing influence of feminist security studies and gender-sensitive analyses of peacekeeping operations.

Within this literature, the concept of militarized masculinity holds a central place. Militarized masculinity denotes a cluster of social norms, institutional practices, and cultural expectations that associate military effectiveness with traits such as aggression, dominance, emotional control, physical strength, and hierarchical authority. Scholars have argued that military institutions frequently reproduce particular forms of masculinity that privilege coercive power and reinforce unequal gender

relations.

According to this perspective, military organizations are not gender-neutral institutions; rather, they are social environments in which specific understandings of masculinity are cultivated, rewarded, and normalized. These institutional dynamics may shape not only operational behavior but also interactions between peacekeepers and local populations. The relevance of militarized masculinity to peacekeeping operations has attracted increasing scholarly attention over the past two decades. Researchers such as J. Ann Tickner, Cynthia Enloe, Sandra Whitworth, Carol Cohn, Laura J. Shepherd, Gina Heathcote, and Sabrina Karim have demonstrated that gender is not merely an additional variable in peacekeeping but a constitutive element of security governance itself. Their work challenges conventional assumptions that peacekeeping operations can be analyzed independently of the gendered structures within which they operate. Instead, these scholars argue that gendered power relations influence institutional decision-making, operational priorities, accountability mechanisms, and patterns of interaction with conflict-affected communities. At the policy level, growing concern regarding gender inequality and sexual misconduct contributed to a series of important institutional reforms within the United Nations. The adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000 represented a landmark development in international security governance. The resolution recognized the importance of women's participation in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction, while also emphasizing the need to protect women and girls from gender-based violence. Subsequent initiatives, including gender mainstreaming policies, codes of conduct for peacekeeping personnel, the Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2003), and the Zeid Report (2005), sought to address persistent deficiencies in accountability and institutional culture. Despite these reforms, however, concerns regarding sexual exploitation, abuse, and gender inequality within peacekeeping missions persisted.

This persistence raises an important analytical question: why have formal reforms often failed to produce the transformative outcomes envisioned by United Nations policymakers? Existing explanations have emphasized several factors, including weak accountability mechanisms, jurisdictional limitations, insufficient training, inadequate reporting systems, and the socioeconomic vulnerabilities of local populations. While these explanations provide valuable insights, they do not fully address the role of gendered institutional cultures in shaping peacekeeping practices and outcomes.

A review of the existing literature reveals an important gap in this regard. Although substantial scholarship has examined sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations, and an equally extensive body of research has analyzed the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, relatively few studies have systematically investigated the relationship between militarized masculinity and the operational legitimacy of peacekeeping missions during the critical period between 1988 and 2005. This period is particularly significant because it encompasses the post-Cold War expansion of peacekeeping, the emergence of large multidimensional missions, the adoption of Resolution 1325, and the development of the United Nations' first comprehensive responses to allegations of misconduct. Examining this period, therefore, provides valuable insights into the structural conditions that shaped both the successes and shortcomings of peacekeeping reform efforts.

This article seeks to address that gap by examining the impact of militarized masculinity on United Nations peacekeeping operations between 1988 and 2005. Rather than treating misconduct as a se-

ries of isolated incidents, the study examines how gendered institutional practices contributed to unequal power relations, patterns of impunity, and challenges to the mission legitimacy. The analysis draws upon feminist security studies, critical gender perspectives, United Nations policy documents, Security Council resolutions, and selected peacekeeping experiences to investigate the relationship between militarized organizational cultures and peacekeeping effectiveness.

The central research question guiding this study is: How did militarized masculinity influence the legitimacy, accountability, and effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping operations between 1988 and 2005? The article advances the argument that militarized forms of masculinity contributed to the reproduction of hierarchical power relations and institutional practices that undermined the implementation of gender-sensitive peacekeeping reforms. While militarized masculinity should not be regarded as the sole explanation for peacekeeping failures, it constituted an important structural factor that interacted with weak accountability mechanisms, limited oversight, and persistent gender inequalities. The article proceeds in six sections. The first section reviews the relevant literature and theoretical debates concerning militarized masculinity, feminist security studies, and peacekeeping governance. The second section outlines the methodological framework and research design. The third section examines the evolution of United Nations peacekeeping operations after the Cold War. The fourth section analyzes the relationship between militarized masculinity and patterns of sexual exploitation and abuse within selected peacekeeping missions. The fifth section evaluates institutional responses undertaken by the United Nations between 1998 and 2005. Finally, the article discusses the implications of these findings for contemporary debates on gender, accountability, and the future of peacekeeping operations before presenting concluding observations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Peacekeeping and the Transformation of International Security

The end of the Cold War marked a turning point in the evolution of United Nations peacekeeping operations. While traditional peacekeeping missions were primarily designed to monitor ceasefires and maintain buffer zones between states, post-Cold War missions became increasingly multidimensional. Peacekeepers were tasked not only with maintaining security but also with supporting democratic governance, monitoring human rights, facilitating elections, disarming former combatants, promoting the rule of law, and assisting in post-conflict reconstruction (Karim & Beardsley, 2017). As a result, peacekeeping operations became deeply embedded within the social and political structures of host societies.

The expansion of peacekeeping generated a substantial body of scholarship examining the effectiveness, legitimacy, and accountability of UN missions (Shepherd 2008). Early studies focused primarily on operational effectiveness, mandate implementation, and institutional learning. Scholars generally assessed success in terms of conflict management, conflict termination, and the prevention of renewed violence. However, these approaches often treated peacekeeping institutions as gender-neutral actors and paid limited attention to the social relations through which peacekeeping was practiced.

By the late 1990s, growing evidence of sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking networks, and unequal interactions between peacekeepers and local populations challenged these assumptions. Researchers increasingly argued that peacekeeping operations could not be fully understood without

examining the social and gendered dimensions of security governance (Tickner, 2001). Consequently, questions concerning gender, power, and institutional culture gradually moved from the margins to the center of peacekeeping scholarship.

2.2. Feminist Security Studies and the Gendered Nature of Security

The emergence of Feminist Security Studies (FSS) represented one of the most significant developments in contemporary security scholarship. Feminist scholars challenged conventional approaches that conceptualized security primarily in military and state-centric terms. Instead, they argued that security institutions are embedded within social structures characterized by unequal power relations, including gender hierarchies.

Cynthia Enloe's pioneering work demonstrated that international politics and military institutions depend upon gendered assumptions that frequently remain invisible within mainstream security analyses (2000). Enloe argued that militarization is not merely a process of military expansion but a broader social phenomenon through which military values become normalized within political and social life (2014). In this way, military institutions are shown to rely upon particular constructions of masculinity and femininity.

Similarly, Carol Cohn emphasized the importance of language, discourse, and institutional practices in reproducing gendered understandings of security (2013). Her work illustrated how dominant security narratives privilege forms of knowledge associated with masculinity while marginalizing alternative perspectives. Feminist scholars were thus led to interrogate whether military institutions designed around masculine norms could adequately address the needs and vulnerabilities of diverse civilian populations.

Building upon these insights, feminist security studies increasingly focused on peacekeeping operations as sites where global security governance intersects with local gender relations. Rather than viewing gender as an additional variable, feminist scholars conceptualized gender as a constitutive element of security itself. This reconceptualization established a foundation for analyzing the gendered dynamics of peacekeeping operations and their consequences for mission legitimacy and effectiveness.

2.3. Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peacekeeping Operations

The issue of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) has become one of the most extensively studied aspects of contemporary peacekeeping. Reports emerging from Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo revealed persistent concerns regarding the conduct of some peacekeeping personnel. These incidents generated considerable debate regarding accountability, institutional responsibility, and the effectiveness of existing oversight mechanisms.

One strand of scholarship attributes SEA primarily to deficiencies in accountability systems. According to this perspective, peacekeepers often operate within legal environments characterized by fragmented jurisdictional arrangements. Since criminal prosecution generally remains the responsibility of troop-contributing countries, disciplinary responses have frequently been inconsistent. Weak enforcement mechanisms, insufficient reporting systems, and difficulties in gathering evidence have contributed to persistent challenges in addressing misconduct.

A second body of literature emphasizes socioeconomic inequalities between peacekeepers and local

populations. Researchers have demonstrated that post-conflict societies often exhibit high levels of poverty, displacement, and social vulnerability. In such environments, significant disparities in income and authority may create conditions that facilitate exploitative relationships, even when overt coercion is absent.

A third perspective highlights institutional culture as a critical explanatory factor. Scholars such as Whitworth (2004), Jennings (2015), Westendorf (2013), and Simm (2020) argue that patterns of misconduct cannot be understood solely through individual-level explanations. Instead, they contend that organizational norms, military socialization, and gendered power relations contribute to environments in which exploitation becomes more likely. This literature provides an important bridge between studies of peacekeeping misconduct and broader debates concerning militarized masculinity.

2.4. Women, Peace and Security: Progress and Limitations

The adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 marked a significant normative shift within international security governance. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda challenged the traditional marginalization of women within peace processes and emphasized the importance of participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery.

Subsequent scholarship has generally recognized Resolution 1325 as a transformative development in international law and policy. Researchers have demonstrated that increased participation of women can enhance community engagement, improve communication with local populations, and strengthen reporting mechanisms relating to gender-based violence. Furthermore, gender mainstreaming initiatives have contributed to greater awareness of the differentiated impacts of conflict on women, men, girls, and boys (Shepherd, 2021).

Nevertheless, scholars have also identified significant limitations. Critics argue that implementation has often lagged behind normative commitments (Heathcote, 2021). In many peacekeeping missions, gender units remain under-resourced, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions, and gender perspectives are frequently treated as secondary considerations rather than core operational concerns. Consequently, a substantial gap persists between the normative aspirations of the WPS agenda and realities on the ground.

2.5. Research Gap

The existing literature provides valuable insights into peacekeeping effectiveness, sexual exploitation and abuse, and the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. However, these strands of scholarship have often developed in parallel rather than in dialogue with one another. Studies of SEA frequently focus on legal accountability and institutional reform, while research on WPS primarily examines participation and representation. Comparatively few studies have systematically investigated how militarized forms of masculinity influenced the legitimacy and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations during the critical period between 1988 and 2005.

This article addresses that gap by examining militarized masculinity not as an individual characteristic but as an institutional and structural phenomenon shaping peacekeeping practices. By connecting feminist security studies, peacekeeping scholarship, and analyses of accountability, the study advances a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges confronting United Nations peacekeeping operations during the formative years of post-Cold War interventionism.

3. Theoretical Framework: Militarized Masculinity and Gendered Security Institutions

The theoretical framework of this study draws upon the concept of militarized masculinity as developed within feminist security studies. The framework integrates three complementary perspectives: hegemonic masculinity, militarization, and gendered institutionalism.

3.1. Hegemonic Masculinity

The concept of hegemonic masculinity, developed by R.W. Connell, designates the culturally dominant form of masculinity that legitimizes unequal power relations and establishes standards against which alternative masculinities and femininities are measured. Hegemonic masculinity does not describe the behavior of all men; rather, it represents an idealized model associated with authority, control, strength, and dominance (2005).

Within military organizations, hegemonic masculinity is frequently reinforced through recruitment practices, training procedures, hierarchical structures, and organizational norms. Traits such as toughness, emotional restraint, competitiveness, and willingness to use force are often valued as indicators of professional competence. While these characteristics may contribute to military effectiveness in certain contexts, they may also normalize unequal power relations and reduce sensitivity to civilian vulnerabilities (Heathcote, 2021).

3.2. Militarization and Militarized Masculinity

Building on Enloe's work, militarization can be understood as a social process through which military values become embedded in political institutions and everyday life. Militarized masculinity emerges when ideals associated with military culture become linked to broader understandings of authority, legitimacy, and social status (2014).

Sandra Whitworth argues that military institutions frequently cultivate forms of masculinity that privilege dominance and control while marginalizing empathy, vulnerability, and cooperation. Importantly, this argument does not suggest that all military personnel engage in misconduct. Rather, it highlights how organizational cultures may create conditions that facilitate particular patterns of behavior and discourage critical reflection regarding power inequalities (2004).

In peacekeeping environments characterized by substantial disparities in economic resources, authority, and mobility, these dynamics may contribute to exploitative interactions between peacekeepers and local populations. Militarized masculinity therefore functions as a structural factor that shapes opportunities, perceptions, and institutional responses.

3.3. Gendered Security Institutions

Recent scholarship has moved beyond analyses of individual behavior to examine security institutions themselves as gendered organizations. According to this perspective, gender is embedded within formal rules, informal practices, leadership structures, and decision-making processes.

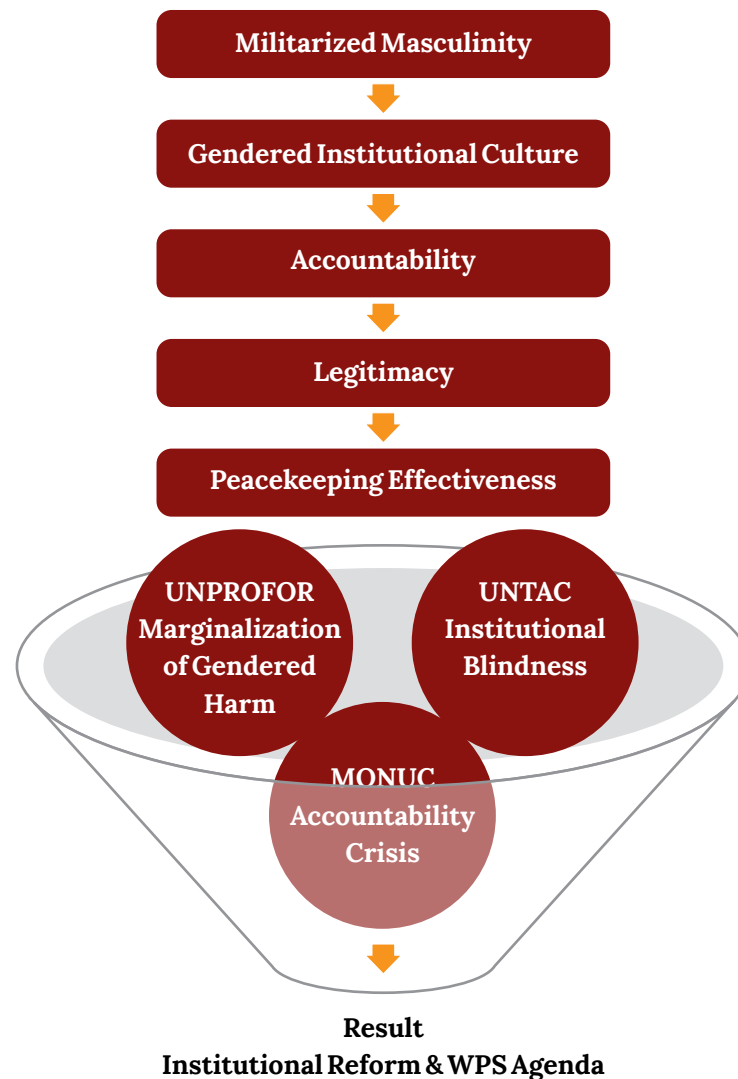
Gendered institutionalism suggests that organizations may reproduce inequalities even in the absence of explicitly discriminatory policies. Within peacekeeping operations, this may be reflected in the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, insufficient integration of gender expertise, limited responsiveness to allegations of abuse, and the prioritization of traditional security con-

cerns over community-based approaches to peacebuilding (Shepherd, 2008).

This study therefore conceptualizes militarized masculinity as an institutional phenomenon operating through organizational structures, professional norms, and patterns of authority rather than through individual attitudes alone.

3.4. Analytical Proposition

Based on the foregoing discussion, this article advances the proposition that militarized masculinity contributed to the reproduction of unequal power relations, institutional impunity, and limited accountability within peacekeeping operations between 1988 and 2005. These dynamics, in turn, undermined the legitimacy and effectiveness of peacekeeping missions and complicated the implementation of gender-sensitive reforms introduced through the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.



Figur 1. Peacekeeping Operations & Samples

Source: The authors

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative explanatory research design to investigate the relationship between militarized masculinity and the legitimacy of United Nations peacekeeping operations between 1988 and 2005. Given the complex and socially embedded nature of gendered institutional practices, a qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for examining the mechanisms through which organizational cultures influence peacekeeping outcomes. Rather than seeking to establish statistical correlations, the study identifies causal processes linking gendered institutional norms to patterns of misconduct, accountability failures, and challenges to mission legitimacy (Autesserre, 2014).

The research adopts a process-tracing methodology. Process tracing is especially useful for identifying intervening variables and causal mechanisms operating within institutional settings (Ackerly, Stern, & True, 2006). In the present study, militarized masculinity is conceptualized as a structural and institutional phenomenon that influences patterns of behavior through organizational norms, hierarchies, and professional socialization. The analysis therefore seeks to trace how these norms interacted with accountability structures and local power asymmetries within peacekeeping missions.

4.2. Case Selection

Three peacekeeping missions were selected through purposive case selection:

- UNTAC (Cambodia): Peacekeeping Economies, Gendered Power Relations and Institutional Blind Spots
- UNPROFOR (Bosnia): Neutrality, Trafficking Networks and the Marginalization of Gendered Harm
- MONUC (DRC): Sexual Exploitation, Accountability Failures and the Emergence of Institutional Reform

4.3. Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study relies primarily on documentary evidence, including United Nations reports, policy documents, investigative reports, and secondary academic literature. While these sources provide valuable insights into institutional practices and policy developments, they do not offer direct access to the perceptions and experiences of all actors involved in peacekeeping operations.

Second, the analysis is affected by the well-documented problem of underreporting in cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. Existing evidence suggests that many incidents remain unreported due to fear of retaliation, social stigma, lack of access to reporting mechanisms, or limited confidence in accountability processes. Consequently, documented cases should be understood as potentially representing only a portion of the broader phenomenon.

Third, institutional culture, and particularly militarized masculinity, is inherently difficult to measure directly. As a result, the study does not attempt to quantify organizational culture; it examines instead how institutional priorities, policy responses, and accountability practices reflect underlying gendered assumptions and organizational logics.

Fourth, the research adopts a retrospective comparative approach focused on three historical peacekeeping missions between 1988 and 2005. While this design is appropriate for theory building and process tracing, caution is warranted when generalizing findings to all contemporary peacekeeping

operations. Subsequent reforms, particularly those implemented after the Zeid Report and the consolidation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, may have altered some institutional dynamics. Despite these limitations, the comparative analysis of UNTAC, UNPROFOR, and MONUC provides a robust basis for identifying recurring institutional patterns and developing a theoretically informed explanation of the relationship between militarized institutional culture, accountability, legitimacy, and peacekeeping effectiveness.

5. Findings and Analysis

5.1. From Traditional Peacekeeping to Social Intervention

The transformation of peacekeeping after the Cold War fundamentally altered the relationship between peacekeepers and host societies. Traditional missions generally maintained limited interaction with civilian populations. By contrast, multidimensional operations placed thousands of military personnel, police officers, and civilian staff within fragile post-conflict environments for prolonged periods.

This transformation created new opportunities for peacebuilding and civilian protection. At the same time, it generated unprecedented asymmetries of power. Peacekeepers possessed financial resources, mobility, political authority, and institutional protection that were unavailable to most members of local communities. These asymmetries constituted a critical contextual condition through which gendered institutional practices acquired practical significance.

Viewed through the lens of feminist security studies, the expansion of peacekeeping did not simply enlarge the scope of international intervention; it also expanded the spaces within which militarized forms of authority operated.

5.2. UNTAC and the Gendered Consequences of Peacekeeping Presence

The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) represented one of the earliest and most ambitious multidimensional peacekeeping operations. Deploying approximately 22,000 personnel, UNTAC was tasked with supporting political transition, supervising elections, and facilitating national reconstruction.

Although the mission achieved several of its formal objectives, it also generated significant controversy. Contemporary reports documented a dramatic expansion of prostitution in areas surrounding peacekeeping deployments. While direct participation by all peacekeepers was neither alleged nor demonstrated, the mission became associated with increased demand for commercial sexual services and the growth of exploitative economic relationships.

From a conventional perspective, these developments might be explained solely through market dynamics. However, a gendered institutional analysis reveals deeper structural factors. Peacekeepers occupied positions of authority, mobility, and economic privilege relative to local populations emerging from years of conflict and poverty. Militarized organizational cultures often failed to recognize these asymmetries as matters of institutional concern (Simm, 2013).

The significance of the Cambodian case therefore lies less in individual acts of misconduct than in the normalization of power relations that rendered exploitation difficult to identify, regulate, or challenge. The case illustrates how militarized masculinity may operate indirectly through institutional indifference toward gendered vulnerabilities (Jennings, 2015).

5.3. UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Neutrality, Trafficking Networks, and the Marginalization of Gendered Harm

The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), deployed in the former Yugoslavia between 1992 and 1995, occupied a distinctive position in the evolution of post-Cold War peacekeeping. Unlike Cambodia, where debates primarily concerned the social consequences of peacekeeping presence, Bosnia confronted the international community with systematic campaigns of ethnic cleansing, mass displacement, detention camps, and widespread sexual violence. The Bosnian conflict fundamentally challenged prevailing assumptions regarding the nature of contemporary warfare and exposed significant limitations in traditional peacekeeping doctrines.

One of the most important legacies of the Bosnian war was the international recognition of conflict-related sexual violence as a matter of international peace and security. Investigations conducted by international organizations, human rights groups, and later international tribunals documented extensive patterns of rape, sexual enslavement, forced pregnancy, and other forms of gender-based violence. These practices were not isolated incidents but formed part of broader strategies of terror, displacement, and ethnic domination (Ní Aoláin et al., 2011).

The emergence of such evidence challenged longstanding assumptions embedded within traditional security thinking. For decades, dominant approaches to international security had prioritized military confrontation, territorial control, and interstate violence, and gender-based violence was routinely treated as a secondary humanitarian concern rather than a core security issue. The Bosnian conflict exposed the inadequacy of this distinction, as sexual violence emerged not as a by-product of war but as a strategic instrument of conflict itself.

Within this context, UNPROFOR operated under significant institutional constraints. Established as a peacekeeping mission rather than an enforcement operation, the mission was guided by principles of consent, impartiality, and limited use of force. These principles had been developed during an era in which peacekeeping was primarily conceived as a mechanism for monitoring ceasefires between states. Bosnia, however, presented a markedly different environment characterized by fragmented authority structures, deliberate targeting of civilians, and systematic violations of international humanitarian law.

A growing body of scholarship has argued that traditional interpretations of neutrality created significant challenges for responding to gendered harms during the conflict. In practice, institutional priorities frequently focused on ceasefire monitoring, humanitarian access, and negotiations among political and military elites. Violence experienced primarily by women often received less sustained institutional attention despite its scale and strategic significance (Shepherd, 2008).

This dynamic is particularly important for understanding the relationship between militarized masculinity and peacekeeping governance. Militarized organizational cultures tend to prioritize threats that correspond to conventional understandings of security, including armed attacks, territorial control, and military capabilities. Harms that disproportionately affect women and girls may be perceived as humanitarian or social concerns rather than central security issues. As a consequence, institutional resources and political attention are often allocated unevenly.

The Bosnian case therefore illustrates how gendered assumptions can shape organizational perceptions of security. Feminist security scholars have long argued that security institutions do not merely respond to threats; they also participate in defining which threats are considered significant.

Through this process, certain forms of violence become highly visible while others remain marginalized. The treatment of conflict-related sexual violence during the Bosnian war provides a powerful example of this phenomenon.

The issue became even more complex in the post-conflict period. Following the Dayton Peace Agreement, a range of international organizations, military contingents, humanitarian agencies, and private contractors became involved in reconstruction efforts throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. Subsequent investigations revealed the expansion of trafficking networks and the exploitation of women through prostitution and organized criminal activities operating across parts of the region.

Although responsibility varied significantly among actors, and many international personnel fulfilled their duties with professionalism and integrity, evidence emerged indicating that some members of the international presence, including individuals associated with peace support and stabilization efforts, were linked to environments in which trafficking and sexual exploitation flourished (Simm 2013). These revelations generated profound concerns regarding accountability and institutional responsibility.

Importantly, feminist analyses caution against reducing these developments to questions of individual criminality alone. The more significant issue concerns the broader institutional environment within which exploitation occurred. International personnel enjoyed considerable economic resources, legal protections, and mobility relative to local populations struggling to rebuild their lives after years of conflict. Such asymmetries created conditions in which exploitative relationships could emerge and persist.

The concept of militarized masculinity helps illuminate why institutions frequently struggle to recognize these dynamics as matters requiring systematic intervention. Military and security organizations often emphasize operational effectiveness, hierarchy, discipline, and mission accomplishment. While these attributes may contribute to organizational cohesion, they may also discourage critical reflection on informal power relations that extend beyond formal mission mandates.

In Bosnia, the prioritization of political stabilization and security sector concerns sometimes overshadowed attention to gendered forms of insecurity. Issues such as trafficking, sexual exploitation, and the long-term consequences of conflict-related sexual violence frequently occupied a secondary position within broader peacebuilding agendas (True 2012). Consequently, institutional responses often remained reactive rather than preventive.

The Bosnian experience also reveals important limitations in the concept of impartiality itself. Prominent scholars in this field have argued that impartiality should not be confused with indifference. Treating all forms of violence as equivalent can inadvertently obscure the specific vulnerabilities experienced by particular groups. In situations where women are disproportionately affected by systematic forms of abuse, neutrality may unintentionally reinforce existing inequalities if institutions fail to recognize the gendered nature of violence (Puechguirbal, 2010).

From this perspective, the challenge confronting UNPROFOR was not simply operational but epistemological. The mission was shaped by security frameworks that had not yet fully integrated gender-sensitive understandings of conflict. Consequently, institutional actors often lacked the conceptual tools necessary to identify gender-based violence as a strategic issue directly relevant to mission effectiveness and civilian protection.

The significance of the Bosnian case extends far beyond the conflict itself. Experiences in Bosnia con-

tributed to a broader transformation in international security discourse during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Growing recognition of conflict-related sexual violence influenced developments within international criminal law, human rights advocacy, and ultimately the emergence of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 can be understood, in part, as a response to lessons derived from conflicts such as Bosnia and Rwanda, where gendered dimensions of violence had been systematically underestimated.

For the purposes of this study, Bosnia provides a critical illustration of how militarized masculinity influences peacekeeping legitimacy through institutional prioritization. The central issue was not that peacekeepers directly caused widespread sexual violence; rather, institutional cultures shaped the ways in which gendered harms were perceived, categorized, and addressed. By privileging conventional understandings of security, peacekeeping institutions struggled to respond effectively to forms of violence that did not fit traditional military frameworks.

The case therefore, supports the broader argument advanced in this article. Militarized masculinity operates not only through individual behavior but also through organizational assumptions concerning what constitutes security, whose experiences are considered relevant, and which forms of harm warrant institutional attention. These processes influence accountability practices, shape interactions with local populations, and ultimately affect the legitimacy of peacekeeping operations themselves.

In comparative perspective, Bosnia represents a transitional moment in the evolution of international peacekeeping. Whereas Cambodia exposed the consequences of institutional blindness toward gendered vulnerabilities, Bosnia revealed the limitations of traditional security paradigms for understanding conflict-related sexual violence. Together, these experiences laid important foundations for subsequent reforms associated with gender mainstreaming, civilian protection, and the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

5.4. MONUC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Sexual Exploitation, Accountability Failures, and the Emergence of Institutional Reform

The United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), established in 1999, represents one of the most significant turning points in the history of United Nations peacekeeping. Unlike earlier controversies surrounding peacekeeping conduct, allegations emerging from MONUC did not merely generate criticism of individual personnel. Instead, they triggered a fundamental re-evaluation of institutional accountability mechanisms within the United Nations system itself. For this reason, MONUC constitutes a critical case for understanding how militarized institutional cultures, accountability failures, and legitimacy crises interact within contemporary peacekeeping operations.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo presented an exceptionally complex operational environment. Following years of armed conflict involving state forces, rebel movements, regional actors, and local militias, the country experienced widespread insecurity, displacement, economic collapse, and severe humanitarian suffering. By the early 2000s, MONUC had become one of the largest and most challenging peacekeeping missions ever deployed by the United Nations.

The mission operated within a context characterized by profound asymmetries of power. Peacekeepers possessed access to resources, mobility, salaries, and legal protections that were unavailable to

many local communities. Large numbers of civilians, particularly women and children, faced extreme poverty, displacement, food insecurity, and limited access to social services. Such conditions produced a social environment in which relationships between international personnel and local populations were inevitably shaped by structural inequalities.

Beginning in 2004, a series of investigations conducted by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) revealed allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving peacekeeping personnel in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Reports documented a range of misconduct, including transactional sex, exploitative relationships involving minors, and allegations of sexual abuse committed by individuals associated with peacekeeping contingents. These findings generated considerable international concern because they appeared fundamentally inconsistent with the normative objectives of peacekeeping missions and the broader humanitarian principles upon which international intervention was justified (United Nations, 2005).

The significance of these allegations extended beyond the specific incidents under investigation. What attracted particular attention was the apparent inability of existing institutional mechanisms to prevent, detect, and respond effectively to misconduct. In many cases, accountability procedures were fragmented across multiple jurisdictions. While peacekeeping missions operated under United Nations authority, criminal jurisdiction frequently remained with troop-contributing countries. As a result, institutional responsibility and legal responsibility were often separated, creating significant obstacles to effective enforcement.

This fragmentation exposed a structural weakness within the architecture of peacekeeping governance. Existing accountability mechanisms had largely been designed for traditional peacekeeping operations in which interactions between military personnel and civilian populations were relatively limited. The multidimensional peacekeeping environments of the post-Cold War era generated new forms of social interaction that existing regulatory frameworks were poorly equipped to address.

From the perspective of feminist security studies, these accountability failures cannot be understood solely as administrative shortcomings. Rather, they reveal deeper institutional assumptions concerning authority, professionalism, and organizational priorities. Militarized institutions often emphasize operational effectiveness, command structures, and mission accomplishment. While these priorities are essential for maintaining organizational cohesion, they may also contribute to the marginalization of issues perceived as peripheral to core security objectives.

The MONUC experience illustrates this dynamic particularly clearly. Prior to the public emergence of the allegations, concerns about exploitation were consigned to a secondary position relative to broader operational challenges such as ceasefire monitoring, disarmament initiatives, civilian protection, and support for political stabilization. Consequently, institutional attention was often directed toward traditional security concerns while social harms affecting vulnerable populations received less systematic scrutiny.

Feminist scholars have argued that such patterns are symptomatic of militarized masculinity operating at the institutional rather than the individual level. Militarized masculinity should not be understood simply as a set of personal attitudes held by peacekeepers; rather, it functions as a broader organizational logic that influences how institutions define priorities, allocate resources, and interpret responsibility (Whitworth, 2004; Westendorf, 2020). Within this framework, threats to operational effectiveness may be treated as urgent security concerns, whereas harms experienced by local wom-

en and girls may be categorized as disciplinary or humanitarian issues.

The consequences of this institutional hierarchy of concerns became increasingly apparent as allegations continued to emerge. Public confidence in the mission suffered significant damage. Media coverage, advocacy campaigns, and criticism from human rights organizations generated growing concerns regarding the credibility of United Nations commitments to human rights, civilian protection, and gender equality.

The resulting legitimacy crisis is particularly important for the argument advanced in this article. Legitimacy in peacekeeping operations is often conceptualized as deriving from Security Council authorization, host-state consent, or successful mandate implementation. The MONUC case demonstrates that legitimacy is also socially constructed through everyday interactions between peacekeepers and local communities. Regardless of formal legal authority, institutions may experience declining legitimacy when they are perceived as failing to uphold the norms they claim to represent.

This dynamic reveals an important causal mechanism linking gendered institutional culture to peacekeeping effectiveness. When allegations of exploitation are inadequately addressed, the consequences extend beyond individual incidents of misconduct. Trust between peacekeepers and local populations may be weakened, cooperation with civilian communities may decline, and the broader credibility of international intervention may be undermined. In this sense, accountability is not merely a legal requirement but an operational necessity.

The growing recognition of these challenges contributed directly to one of the most significant reform initiatives in the history of United Nations peacekeeping. In 2005, Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein submitted the report *A Comprehensive Strategy to Eliminate Future Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*. Commonly known as the Zeid Report, the document represented a landmark effort to address the institutional dimensions of misconduct within peacekeeping operations (United Nations, 2005).

The report marked a significant departure from earlier approaches. Rather than treating incidents of exploitation as isolated disciplinary problems, the Zeid Report emphasized systemic vulnerabilities within peacekeeping institutions. It identified deficiencies in training, reporting procedures, investigative mechanisms, command responsibility, victim assistance, and accountability frameworks. Importantly, the report acknowledged that organizational culture played a crucial role in shaping institutional responses to misconduct.

From a theoretical perspective, the Zeid Report can be interpreted as an implicit recognition of many concerns raised by feminist security scholars (Karim and Beardsley, 2017). Although the report did not explicitly employ concepts such as militarized masculinity, it nevertheless highlighted the need to address structural and institutional conditions that facilitated exploitation. The reform agenda therefore reflected a growing understanding that accountability required organizational transformation rather than merely punitive measures directed at individual offenders.

The MONUC experience also coincided with the broader consolidation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda following the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325. Consequently, debates regarding sexual exploitation and abuse increasingly became linked to questions of gender mainstreaming, representation, and institutional reform. The issue was no longer understood solely as a matter of misconduct; it became a test of the United Nations' capacity to integrate gender-sensitive principles into peacekeeping governance.

In comparative perspective, MONUC differs from both Cambodia and Bosnia in one crucial respect. Whereas earlier missions revealed institutional blind spots and conceptual limitations, the Democratic Republic of the Congo generated a crisis severe enough to produce significant institutional change. The mission therefore represents a transitional moment in which the legitimacy costs of accountability failures became impossible to ignore.

The case provides strong support for the central argument of this article. The persistence of exploitation cannot be explained exclusively through individual misconduct, nor can institutional reform be understood solely through legal analysis. Rather, the interaction between gendered organizational cultures, unequal power relations, and fragmented accountability structures shaped both the emergence of the crisis and the subsequent reform process.

Ultimately, the significance of MONUC lies not only in the misconduct that occurred but also in the lessons that emerged from institutional responses to it. The mission demonstrated that legitimacy, accountability, and effectiveness are deeply interconnected dimensions of peacekeeping governance. It further revealed that efforts to strengthen peacekeeping effectiveness must address not only operational capacities but also the gendered institutional cultures through which authority is exercised. In this respect, MONUC serves as the clearest empirical illustration of the causal pathway proposed in this study: militarized institutional cultures contribute to accountability deficits, accountability deficits generate legitimacy crises, and legitimacy crises ultimately shape the effectiveness and future evolution of peacekeeping operations.

5.5. Comparative Analysis: Militarized Masculinity as a Structural Factor

The three cases reveal important contextual differences, yet several common patterns emerge.

First, each mission operated in environments characterized by significant power differentials between peacekeepers and local populations. Second, institutional responses initially focused on individual misconduct rather than structural conditions. Third, accountability mechanisms often lagged behind operational expansion. Finally, concerns regarding gender inequality repeatedly emerged as issues affecting mission legitimacy rather than merely disciplinary compliance.

These findings do not suggest that militarized masculinity alone caused sexual exploitation and abuse. Economic vulnerability, weak oversight, legal fragmentation, and conflict-related instability also played important roles. Nevertheless, the evidence indicates that militarized institutional cultures function as an enabling condition that shape how power was exercised, how misconduct was interpreted, and how organizations responded to allegations.

Consequently, militarized masculinity should be understood not as a deterministic explanation but as a structural factor that interacts with other institutional and contextual variables to influence peacekeeping outcomes.

6. Discussion: From Militarized Masculinity to Peacekeeping Legitimacy. Toward a Gendered Institutional Theory of Peacekeeping Effectiveness

6.1. Beyond Individual Misconduct: Reframing the Problem

The dominant institutional response to sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations has frequently been framed through the language of individual misconduct. Investigations, disciplinary procedures, and policy reforms have often focused on identifying offenders and strengthening pu-

nitive mechanisms (Westendorf, 2020). While such measures remain necessary, the findings of this study suggest that this perspective captures only part of the problem.

Across the three cases examined, namely Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, patterns of exploitation emerged within markedly different political, cultural, and operational environments. The recurrence of similar challenges across these diverse contexts suggests that explanations centered exclusively on individual behavior are insufficient. If misconduct were simply the product of individual deviance, substantial variation would be expected across missions. Instead, the evidence indicates the presence of common institutional mechanisms operating across cases.

The comparative findings therefore encourage a shift in analytical focus from individual actors to institutional structures. The central question is thus not merely why certain individuals engaged in exploitative behavior, but why peacekeeping institutions repeatedly struggled to recognize, prevent, and respond effectively to exploitative relationships. This distinction is significant because it transforms misconduct from a disciplinary issue into a governance problem.

From this perspective, the most significant finding of the study is not the existence of misconduct itself but the persistence of institutional vulnerabilities that allowed misconduct to emerge, remain insufficiently addressed, and ultimately undermine mission legitimacy.

6.2. Militarized Masculinity as an Institutional Logic

The findings support a reconceptualization of militarized masculinity as an institutional logic rather than a set of individual characteristics.

Much of the existing literature associates militarized masculinity with traits such as aggression, dominance, emotional restraint, or risk-taking behavior (Connell, 2005; Enloe, 2014; Whitworth, 2004). While these characteristics remain analytically useful, the case studies suggest that militarized masculinity operates most powerfully through organizational processes.

In each mission examined, institutional priorities consistently privileged forms of expertise associated with traditional security thinking. Operational effectiveness, force protection, command cohesion, ceasefire monitoring, and political stabilization received substantial organizational attention. By contrast, gendered vulnerabilities, exploitative social relations, and everyday insecurities affecting local populations were often treated as secondary concerns.

This pattern reveals that militarized masculinity is embedded within institutional understandings of what counts as a security problem. Rather than simply shaping behavior, it shapes perception. Institutions influenced by militarized logics tend to privilege threats that can be measured through conventional security indicators while marginalizing harms that emerge through social relationships and structural inequalities.

The Cambodian case illustrated this process through institutional indifference toward unequal power relations surrounding transactional sexual economies. Bosnia demonstrated how traditional security paradigms struggled to recognize conflict-related sexual violence as a central security concern. MONUC revealed how accountability mechanisms remained underdeveloped until legitimacy costs became impossible to ignore.

Taken together, these cases indicate that militarized masculinity functions not only through coercion but also through what may be termed selective institutional visibility. Certain harms become legible to organizations while others remain at the margins. This process of differential visibility constitutes

one of the primary mechanisms through which gendered power relations are reproduced within peacekeeping operations.

6.3. Accountability as a Mediating Variable

A second theoretical insight emerging from the analysis concerns the role of accountability.

Existing scholarship often treats accountability as an independent institutional objective. Discussions generally focus on reporting procedures, disciplinary frameworks, investigative mechanisms, and legal jurisdiction. While these issues remain important, the present study suggests that accountability occupies a more complex position within peacekeeping governance.

The comparative evidence indicates that accountability functions as a mediating mechanism linking organizational culture to institutional legitimacy.

This relationship can be conceptualized as follows:



Figure 2. The accountability functions linkage

Source: The authors

Under this framework, accountability mechanisms are more than technical instruments for enforcing compliance; they also embody institutional assumptions about responsibility, authority, and vulnerability. When militarized organizational cultures prioritize operational effectiveness over social accountability, misconduct allegations tend to be handled as isolated disciplinary matters. In contrast, institutions that view gendered power relations as essential to mission effectiveness are more likely to implement proactive accountability systems.

The MONUC case provides particularly strong evidence for this argument. Institutional reforms accelerated not simply because misconduct occurred, but because failures of accountability generated broader legitimacy crises. Accountability therefore emerges not only as a governance mechanism but also as a source of institutional credibility.

This finding suggests that future peacekeeping reforms should conceptualize accountability as a core component of operational effectiveness rather than an external regulatory requirement.

6.4. Legitimacy as a Socially Constructed Outcome

A third contribution concerns the concept of legitimacy itself. Mainstream peacekeeping scholarship has traditionally conceptualized legitimacy in relation to legal authorization, host-state consent, or successful mandate implementation (Bellamy, Williams, & Griffin, 2010). Although these dimensions remain important, the findings suggest that legitimacy is also produced through everyday social interactions between peacekeeping institutions and local communities.

The three case studies demonstrate that legitimacy cannot be reduced to formal legal authority. Peacekeeping operations may hold robust legal mandates yet still face declining credibility among local populations, emphasizing the importance of local perceptions and everyday governance. However, the present study extends these arguments by demonstrating that legitimacy is fundamentally gendered.

Gendered legitimacy denotes the extent to which security institutions are perceived as capable of protecting individuals from unequal and exploitative power relations. From this perspective, allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse are not merely reputational problems; they challenge the normative foundations upon which peacekeeping authority is based.

When institutions fail to address gendered harms effectively, they undermine their own claims to impartiality, protection, and moral leadership. Legitimacy deficits therefore emerge not only through operational failure but also through failures of institutional responsibility.

6.5. Toward a Gendered Institutional Theory of Peacekeeping Effectiveness

The principal theoretical contribution of this article is the development of what may be termed a Gendered Institutional Theory of Peacekeeping Effectiveness.

Traditional approaches generally explain peacekeeping effectiveness in terms of military capabilities, mandate design, resource availability, political support, or operational performance. Feminist scholarship, by contrast, has emphasized gendered power relations and institutional inequalities (Heathcote, 2018).

The findings of this study suggest that these perspectives should be integrated rather than treated as competing explanations.

The proposed framework identifies four interconnected mechanisms:

1. **Militarized Institutional Culture** shapes organizational perceptions of security and vulnerability.
2. **Power Asymmetries** between peacekeepers and local populations create opportunities for exploitation and unequal social relations.
3. **Accountability Mechanisms** mediate the relationship between organizational culture and institutional responses to misconduct.
4. **Legitimacy Outcomes** influence the broader effectiveness of peacekeeping operations by shaping trust, cooperation, and institutional credibility.

The resulting causal pathway can be summarized as follows:



Figure 3. The pathway of Peacekeeping Effectiveness

Source: The authors

Importantly, the model does not claim that militarized masculinity is the sole cause of misconduct or institutional failure. Economic inequality, post-conflict instability, legal fragmentation, and political constraints remain significant explanatory variables. Rather, the framework identifies militarized institutional culture as an enabling condition that shapes how institutions perceive, interpret, and respond to these challenges (Shepherd, 2021).

This approach bridges a longstanding divide between feminist security studies and mainstream

peacekeeping research. Instead of treating gender as an additional variable, the framework positions gendered institutional dynamics at the center of explanations of peacekeeping effectiveness.

6.6. Implications for Future Research

The theoretical model developed here opens several avenues for future research.

First, future studies should examine whether reforms adopted after the Zeid Report successfully altered institutional cultures or merely improved compliance mechanisms. Second, comparative research could investigate whether missions with higher levels of female participation demonstrate different patterns of accountability and legitimacy. Third, scholars should explore the relationship between local perceptions of legitimacy and institutional responses to gender-based harms.

More broadly, future research should move beyond the question of whether gender matters in peacekeeping and focus instead on how gendered institutional dynamics shape the effectiveness of international intervention itself.

Viewed in this way, gender is not a peripheral concern within peacekeeping governance. It is one of the mechanisms through which authority, legitimacy, and effectiveness are produced and contested.

7. Conclusion

This article examined the influence of militarized masculinity on United Nations peacekeeping operations between 1988 and 2005. Drawing upon feminist security studies and a qualitative analysis of the UNTAC, UNPROFOR, and MONUC missions, the study investigated how gendered institutional cultures shaped accountability practices, interactions with local populations, and perceptions of mission legitimacy.

The findings indicate that misconduct within peacekeeping operations cannot be fully explained through individual-level accounts. Rather, organizational cultures, institutional norms, and structural power asymmetries played an important role in shaping both the emergence of exploitative practices and the effectiveness of institutional responses. Across the three cases, recurring patterns of unequal power relations, limited oversight, and delayed accountability contributed to legitimacy challenges that extended beyond individual incidents of misconduct.

The study further demonstrates that militarized masculinity influenced peacekeeping operations not simply through interpersonal behavior but through broader institutional processes. Organizational priorities, professional socialization, and assumptions regarding authority shaped how misconduct was understood, reported, and addressed. These dynamics frequently limited the effectiveness of reforms intended to promote accountability and gender equality.

The analysis also contributes to contemporary debates concerning the Women, Peace and Security agenda. While Resolution 1325 and subsequent reforms represented significant normative advances, the findings suggest that meaningful transformation requires more than increased representation or policy innovation. Sustainable progress depends upon addressing the institutional cultures and structural inequalities that continue to shape security governance.

More broadly, the article argues that legitimacy and accountability should be recognized as core dimensions of peacekeeping effectiveness. Peacekeeping operations cannot achieve their long-term objectives if the populations they are intended to protect perceive them as unresponsive to exploitation and abuse. Strengthening accountability mechanisms, integrating gender perspectives into op-

erational planning, and promoting inclusive institutional cultures are therefore essential not only for protecting vulnerable populations but also for enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of international peacekeeping itself.

Future research should examine whether the reforms introduced after 2005 have succeeded in addressing the structural dynamics identified in this study. Comparative analyses of contemporary missions may provide valuable insights into how the relationship between militarized masculinity, accountability, and legitimacy has evolved in the context of twenty-first-century peacekeeping operations.

Although this study focuses on peacekeeping operations conducted between 1988 and 2005, its findings remain highly relevant to contemporary debates on international peacekeeping. Over the past two decades, the United Nations has implemented significant reforms aimed at addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda. These initiatives include the adoption of the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy, enhanced reporting procedures, victim-centered approaches, conduct and discipline units, and expanded gender mainstreaming strategies.

Nevertheless, allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse have continued to emerge in several contemporary missions, including operations in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Such cases suggest that formal regulatory reforms, while necessary, may be insufficient if underlying institutional cultures remain unchanged. The persistence of these challenges reinforces the central argument of this article: accountability failures are not solely legal or administrative problems but are also shaped by deeper organizational assumptions concerning authority, vulnerability, and responsibility.

The study therefore has implications for ongoing discussions regarding peacekeeping effectiveness. Contemporary evaluations increasingly recognize that mission success cannot be measured solely through ceasefire maintenance, electoral assistance, or mandate implementation. Sustainable effectiveness also depends upon the capacity of peacekeeping institutions to establish and maintain legitimacy among local populations. In this context, gender-sensitive accountability should be viewed not as a supplementary normative objective but as an essential component of operational effectiveness.

The findings further suggest that future peacekeeping reforms should move beyond compliance-oriented approaches and place greater emphasis on institutional transformation. Efforts to increase women's participation in peace operations, strengthen gender advisory structures, improve community engagement, and enhance transparency in accountability processes are likely to contribute not only to gender equality but also to the broader legitimacy and effectiveness of international interventions.

Viewed from this perspective, the historical experiences of UNTAC, UNPROFOR, and MONUC remain more than episodes in the evolution of United Nations peacekeeping. They continue to offer important lessons regarding the relationship between institutional culture, accountability, legitimacy, and the future of international peace and security governance.

Ultimately, the experience of post-Cold War peacekeeping demonstrates that the pursuit of international peace and security cannot be separated from questions of gender, power, and institutional responsibility. Understanding these relationships remains essential for building peacekeeping operations that are not only operationally effective but also socially legitimate, accountable, and responsive to the communities they serve.

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