

Focus 71 - State Rationales for contributing troops to UN peacekeeping operations

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“UN Peacekeeping is an investment in global peace, security, and prosperity. The Blue Helmets are a concrete expression of the Charter’s determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary-General.

Abstract

In many conflict zones around the globe - spreading from Sub-Saharan Africa to Eastern Europe and from the Middle East to Haiti - contingent troops, experts, staff officers, police and personnel are working under the umbrella of the United Nations (UN). Controls struggle to promote peace and stability, as well as maintain the rule of law and order. According to conflict resolution theorists, peacekeeping operations (PKO) are necessary for positive conflict transformation. Thus the UNPKO plays a fundamental role in maintaining world peace (Diehl, Druckman and Wall, 1998). The UN Peacekeeping’s mandate is unique in terms of global partnership. It is set by the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council

(UNSC); consent of the host country is needed, as is that by troop and police contributors (*What is peacekeeping*, 2020). UN peacekeeping troops help countries navigate the challenging path from conflict to stability. However, as the UN doesn't have a regular army, it relies on member states troop to carry out Peacekeeping Operations in conflict areas.

This research demonstrates that well-equipped and trained UN peacekeeping operations promote peace and stability more efficiently. The paper centres on an important question: what motivates the willingness of member states to contribute with troops to the UNPKO. We found that states experiencing inter-state rivalry and with struggling economies tend to contribute more troops than great powers and wealthy states. Bellamy and Williams' Model and Middle Power theory are used here so as to better analyse the rationale of troops contribution in PKO. China as a case study is also used in the paper.

Keywords

Conflict, Peace, UN, United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, UNSC

Theoretical Framework:

Bellamy and Williams' Model:

Overall, Bellamy and Williams have presented five rationales behind states' contribution to the UNPKO – regarding why some states choose to participate while other states either refuse to contribute or change their policies mid-way. Countries chose to participate or increase troop numbers in the UNPKO according to national interests. The state rationales included in the model are political, normative, institutional, security and economic.

As regards the political rationale, troop contributions to the UNPKO are seen as a tool of soft power – as means to achieve political goals and objectives. Engagement at such level helps a state protect national interests and prestige globally. Such participation can be used as a tool of foreign policy in future alliances and as a means to benefit the national interest through peaceful means (Bellamy and Williams, 2013, p. 419).

The security rationale often concerns those states fearing spill overs from the conflict in question; core national security interests are not necessarily involved (Bellamy and Williams, 2013, p. 20).

The economic rationale concerns the UN's high salaries and overall payment system, which also motivate states to contribute to the UNPKO. This of course concerns mostly struggling countries or states in financial trouble (Bellamy and Williams, 2013, p. 19). Interestingly, countries which contribute to the UNPKO receive huge sums of money from the UN for their troops, sums of course much higher than average salaries (team, 2018).

The institutional rationale concerns those cases when civil-military relationships influence a state's decision whether or not to contribute to the UNPKO. It states that a state is more likely to participate when this benefits its military institutions. For instance, authorities may feel that participating in such missions can train the troops domestically after serving abroad (Bellamy and Williams, 2013, p. 20). However, because of failed past experiences, sometimes there is resistance within the institution regarding sending troops to the UNPKO. On an individual level, rewards and promotions of personnel can also lead to participation (Bellamy and Williams, 2013, p. 422).

The normative rationale argues that countries contribute to UNPKO because they see it as a favourable decision to take. According to this logic both contributing troops and increasing them is not always strictly interest-driven – it can be ideological as well. This includes humanitarian purposes and the will to support the current international world order. Conversely, countries call back their troops when there is a mismatch between the ideology of the state and that of the UNPKO. Under this rationale the main purpose of the state is to maintain peace and protect fundamental human rights under the UN agenda (Bellamy and Williams, 2013, p. 20).

Middle Powers Theory:

After Bellamy and Williams' model of the five rationales, the behaviour of states contributing to the UNPKO is explained using the middle power theory. The idea is that middle powers (regional powers) are willing to enthusiastically contribute to missions around the globe. The model elaborates on why these countries choose to contribute their troops. Our research does not aim to test the theory but to use it for further interpreting Bellamy and Williams' model. Middle powers are defined as nations with a level of global capabilities between great powers and small powers (Manicom and Reeves, 2014, p. 27). There is no consensus on the exact definition of a middle power. However, one can state that middle powers have considerable capacities at the regional level, as well as the ability to influence nations at both the regional and global levels. Mostly, middle powers tend to interfere at a global level so as behave as responsible states (Jordaan, 2003, pp. 166–167).

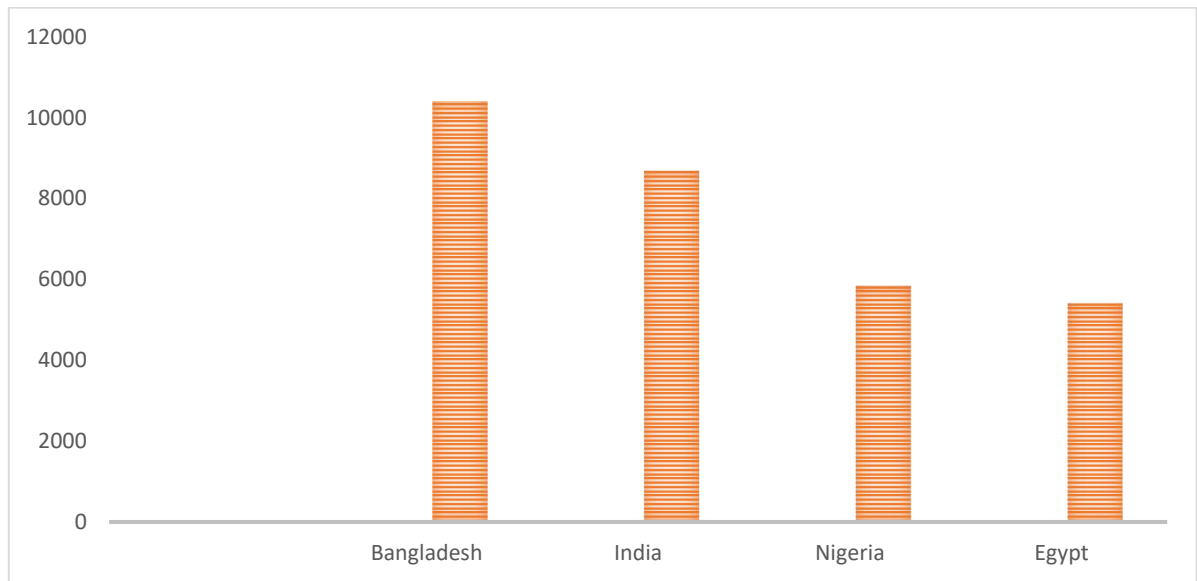
Central Argument and Hypothesis:

The central argument of this research is that regional or middle powers influence other countries' attitudes regarding the UNPKO. Middle powers are often willing to participate more in the UNPKO because they see troop contributions as an instrument for maintaining honour and prestige at a global level. All the five rationales by Bellamy and Williams demonstrate this behaviour from a middle power state. Each rationale comprises incentives for a state's preference regarding whether or not to contribute with troops. Some rationales might be more influencing than others; however, what is at stake is invariably the internal situation of the contributing country and its status at the international level.

There are a number of motivations leading states towards voluntary troops contributions to the UNPKO. However, some notable scholars argue that the issue should be examined on a case-by-case basis. Some common factors can make participation more or less likely (Bellamy and Williams, 2013). Some studies show that countries whose political cultures are similar to the United Nations' institutional values of protecting basic human rights and providing security are more likely to lean towards the UNPKO (Andersson, 2002; Perkins and Neumayer, 2008). Other studies show that countries are mostly inspired by narrow self-interests such as keeping their status quo in global politics (Neack, 1995) as well as taking care of ex-colonies or trade partners (Khanna, Sandler and Shimizu, 1999; Perkins and Neumayer, 2008). The second argument concerning the protection of trade partners it is in line with Chinese motivations (Best, 2020). Another rationale concerns the purpose of building alliances and security ties with other states (Lebovic, 2004) as well as halting refugee influxes (Uzonyi, 2015). However, this depends on specific cases; generalizations are dangerous. The study also shows that the continued funding and providing of equipment and support from great powers such as Germany, the US, the UK, Canada, France is also often a factor (Bobrow and Boyer, 1997).

The study shows that since the end of the cold war regional powers or less powerful states increased their troop contributions to the UNPKO and started playing the role of more responsible states at a global level – more active in maintaining international peace and stability (Lebovic, 2010; Kathman, 2013). Below we can see the number of troops deployed in UNPKO missions in 2010. Looking at the top ten countries in terms of troop deployment in UN missions one immediately notices that none of these countries is a developed western state. We can also note that these top-ten are relatively less prosperous, low income in terms of GDP per capita and that none of them is a developed nation. Moreover, all these contributors have their internal issues such as unemployment, economic crises and security problems.

UNPKO_2010



Source https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dec10_2.pdf

Case Study: People Republic of China (PRC)

Chinese rise and engagement in global politics is increasing with every passing year. China is playing a positive role in maintaining international peace and stability under the mandate of UNPKO in Africa. This is probably part of the Chinese global strategy. Literature also indicates that increasing Chinese engagement in Africa is a tool of soft power in promoting Chinese values and protecting national interests (Zürcher, 2019, p. 45). The Chinese foreign policy has extensively changed since the end of cold war – for instance from the policy of non-interference to that of close watch (Lanteigne, 2018). Thus we witness increasing troops contributions to the UNPKO in Africa – and the second largest financial contribution to the UNPKO after the US (*How we are funded*, 2020).

A literature review shows that there are a number of reasons why China, unlike other great powers, is contributing troops to the UNPKO. First, Chinese rise has taken place smoothly and swiftly – and it is not only economic in nature but strategic as well. This rise has created concerns in different states, particularly in the US; the People Liberation Army's (PLA), contribution at a global level is a tool to mitigate concerns that China will become a revisionist great power. China instead projects the role of a more responsible power (Lanteigne, 2018).

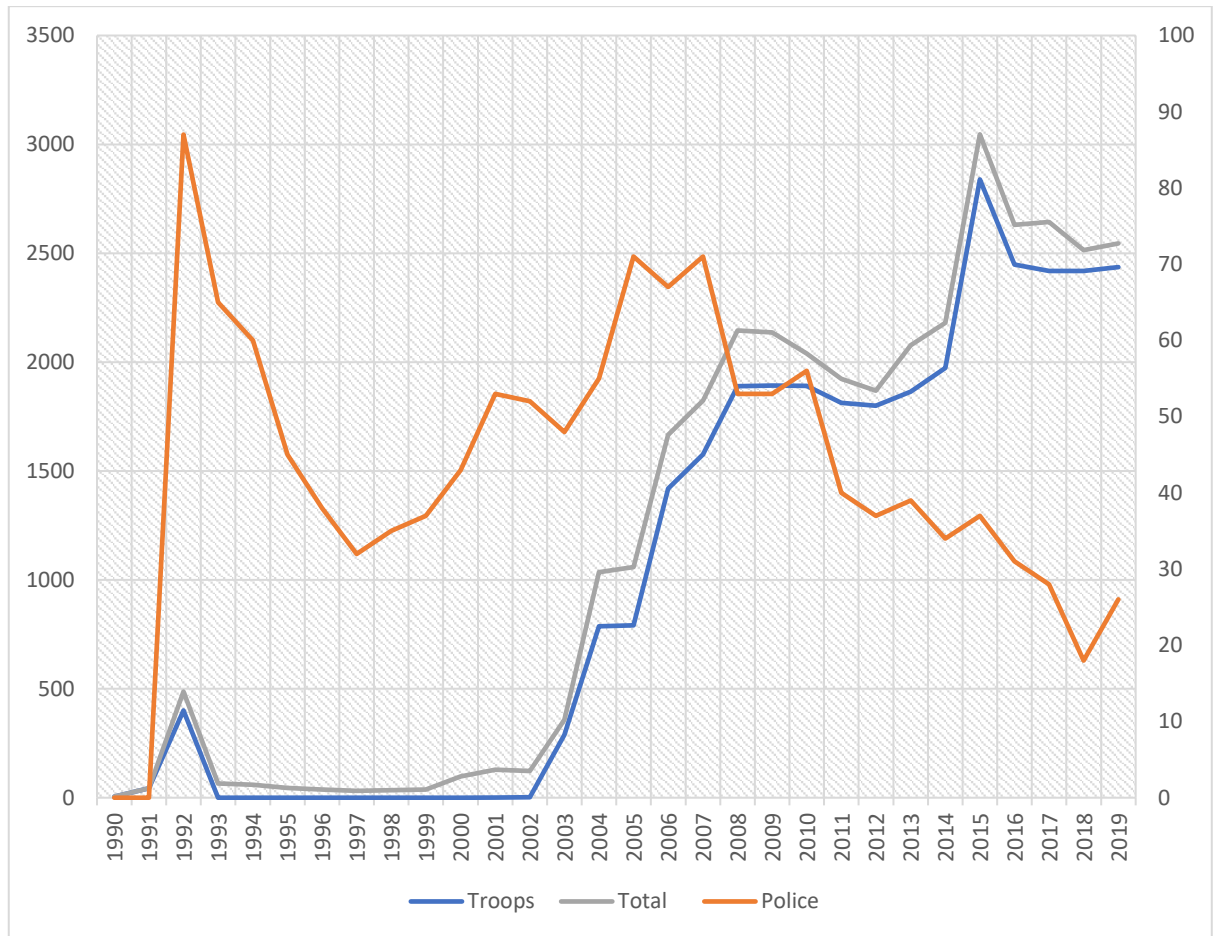
Second, during 2012 and 2018 the PLA participated in 13 different operations of the UNPKO, and in most of these countries China invested noticeably. It seems that there is a relationship between Chinese investment and the PLA's contribution to the UNPKO. Moreover, China is more interested in contributing troops into Africa than into other parts of the world (Best, 2020). Since the launch of the Chinese Belt and Road (BRI), China has grown more concerned with global security. Of course, for the initiative to be successful Beijing needs peace in the regions where it is to become operational. It is therefore likely that by contributing troops to the UNPKO Beijing is also acting to protect its economic interests (Lanteigne, 2018). Other, more immaterial factors may also be at play, as China seems to be building a new international identity (Fung, 2015).

Third, the UNPKO provides an opportunity for the PLA to gain practical global experience. It creates a good image for the country abroad as it shows a commitment towards global peace (Lanteigne, 2018; Best, 2020).

From the above arguments we can see that the PLA's engagement in UNPKO is driven by different factors – most notably political and economical interests. It is also clear that unlike other UNSC permanent members China is now contributing more troops to the UNPKO than before (Fung, 2016).

The bellow line chart shows the number of Chinese troop contributions to the UN from 1990 to 2019. Along with troops and police this also includes a number of individual police units and experts. The graph also indicates that 2015 saw the highest number of PLA troops contributed to the UNPKO.

China's Contribution to the UNPKO



The data was generated from the UN official website (<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>). The data refers to 31 December of every year, except 1990 and 1998, which refer to troop levels on 30 November. Until 1992, UN statistics only recorded troops. From 1992 onwards statistics differentiate between troops and police. The grey line that is used for the total number of China's contribution includes the whole staff (troops, police, experts and staff officers).

A Comparative Study (Analysis)

South Asian Countries Troops Contribution to the UNPKO.

In the aftermath of the Cold War India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal emerged among the top troop contributors to the UNPKO (SIDHU, 2016). This may reveal an increased alignment of interests between South Asia and the UNPKO (Zaman

and Biswas, 2017, p. 52). As these states are less well-off than western countries, the question arises as to what factors drive this upsurge in troops sent under the UN mandate. Motivational sources include national interests such as economical interests, foreign policy concerns, and showing a commitment to the current international order. However, specific motivations may vary from state to state (Virk, 2018). Moreover, the five rationales of Bellamy and Williams' model as well as the middle power theory are also applicable.

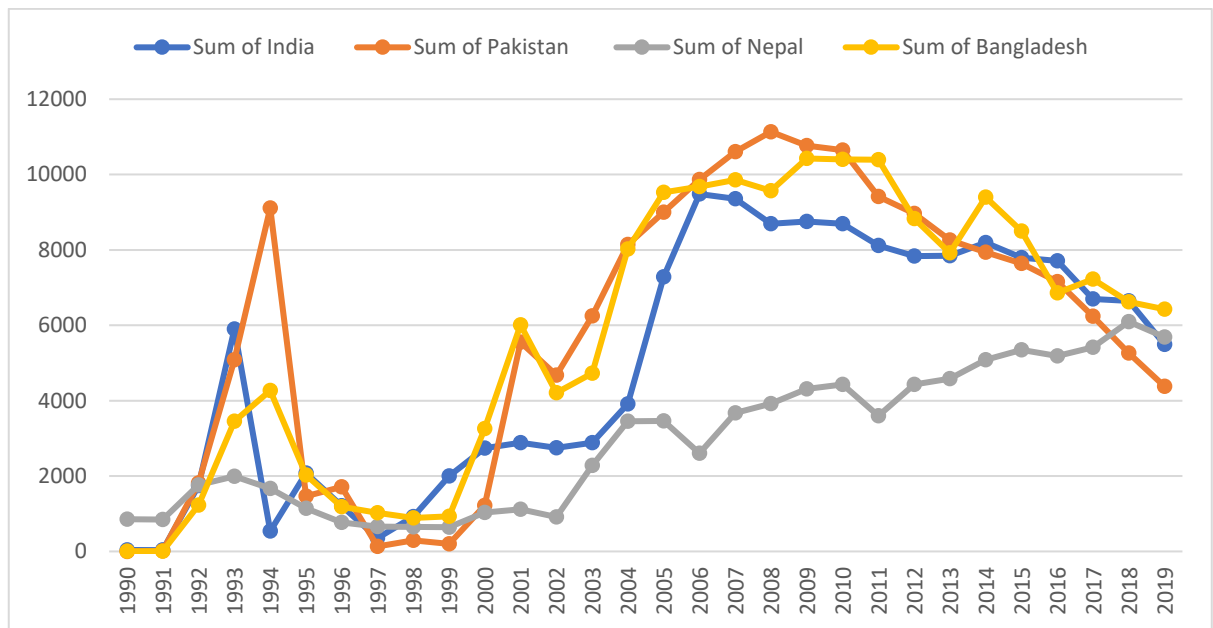
South Asian countries of course have the manpower and human resources to deploy troops to the UNPKO. On the other hand, many western countries are cutting their troops in these operations.

A very strong rationale behind contribution by these countries concerns economic interests, as the UN is paying US\$ 1,410 per troop as of 2018 (team, 2018). This probably aids these countries decrease their military expenditure to some extent. This salary level is not high for western countries; however, it is for South Asian nations. Besides, high salaries boost soldier morale and are considered prestigious for one's career. Apart from this the UNPKO provides an opportunity for troops from rivals Pakistan and India to work together (SIDHU, 2016).

Another rationale behind South Asian nations' troops contribution is that these can become a platform to obtain UN-funded training abroad. Scholars such as Anit Mukherjee agree that troops can get experience with modern technologies during their missions and various combating techniques (SIDHU, 2016).

One of the core rationales behind South Asian contribution to the UNPKO is showing a commitment to international peace. The UNPKO constitutes a platform for these states to build their image at the international level. India is also taking the opportunity to gain international support for obtaining a permanent seat in UNSC. New Delhi is thus using the UNPKO as a foreign policy tool (SIDHU, 2016).

South Asian Countries’ (Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan) Personnel Contribution to the UNPKO from 1990 to 2019



The data generated from the UN official website (<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>). The data refers to 31 December for every year, except 1990 and 1998, which refer to troop levels on 30 November.

Nordic States’ Contribution to the UNPKO:

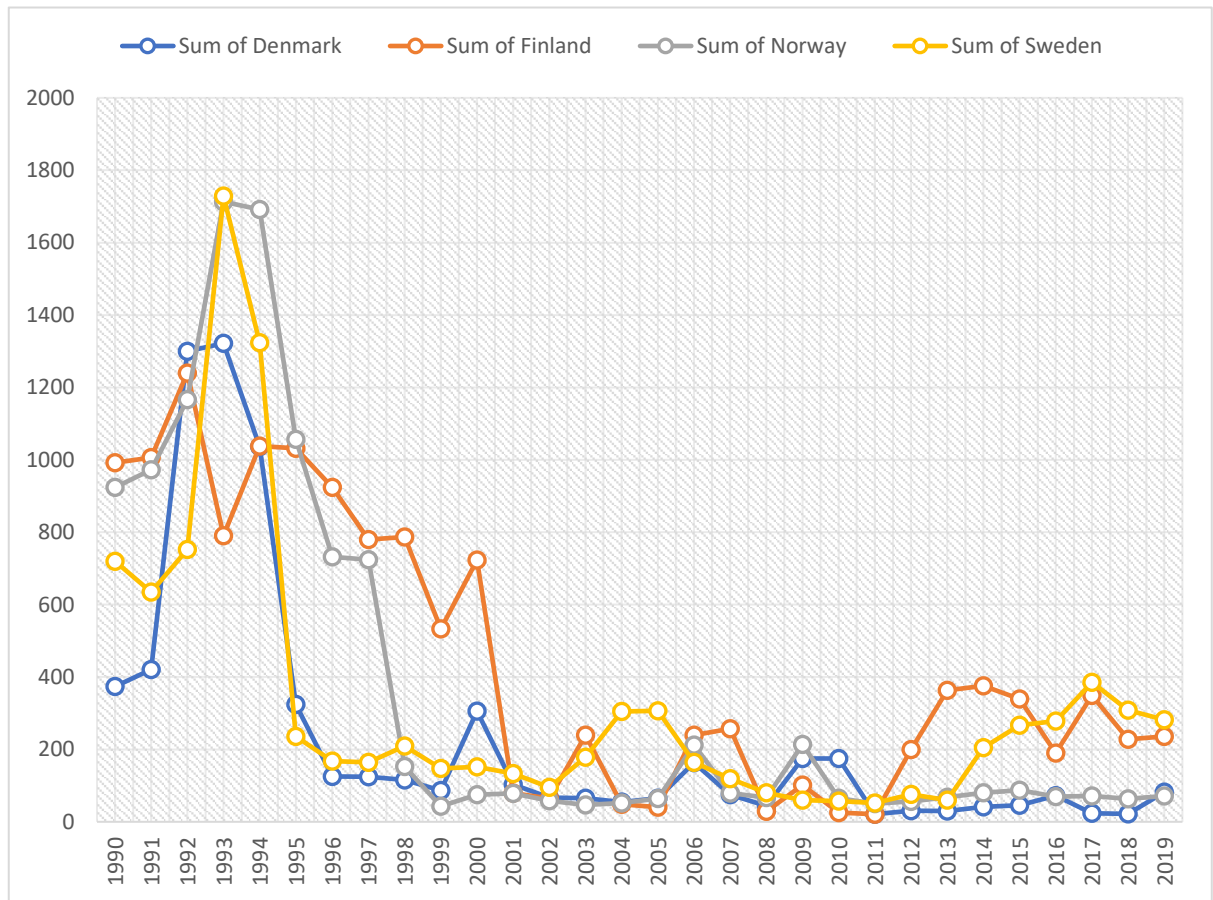
During the Cold War Nordic states were the top contributors to the UNPKO around the world. Nordic states participated in 11 out of 13 global peace operations. According to the estimations above four Nordic countries contributed 125,000 troops to the missions during the Cold War – an estimated 25 percent of the total personal that took part in UNPKO missions during that time (Jakobsen, 2006). The UN first Secretary Generals Trygve Lie and [Dag Hammarskjöld](#) were from the Norway and Sweden respectively (Former Secretaries-General, 2016). This is also considered a significant explanatory factor regarding the significant contribution by Nordic states to the UNPKO. The rationale behind Nordic states’ contributions to the UN is not exactly the same as that held by South Asian countries. Some of the factors behind their troop« contributions involved common interests, suitability (as during the Cold War there were conditions for contributing troops to the UN) and the narrative of success (Jakobsen, 2006).

Since the end of the Cold War Nordic countries decreased their direct engagement in the UNPKO. There are number of factors that explain this decreased participation by Nordic countries in UN peacekeeping missions.

One of the rationales that might have been involved concerns the changing nature of operations and controversiality of the missions. Currently there are a number of allegations that the missions are mostly taking place in in war-zone countries; this can stigmatize the impartiality of participating (Nordic) nations. Operating in war zones might lead to the use of force; Scandinavian nations hold a good record of maintaining peace talks between rival groups and might not want anyone to question their neutrality. Furthermore, the possibility of angering foreign countries is also to be equated; not to mention possible terrorist threats (Jakobsen, 2006). For instance, the Danish Security Intelligence Service *Politiets Efterretningstjeneste* believes that taking part in 2003 Iraq war increased the likely possibility of terrorism inside the country (*The Danish Security Intelligence Service Annual Report*, 2004). Stig Møller, former Foreign Minister, also believed that mistakes were made prior to the Iraq war.

Another rationale behind the fall of the Nordic contribution to UN-led peacekeeping operations is the changing dynamic in international politics and the emergence of other developing countries' contributing troops to the UNPKO. The rationale behind this factor is that it was difficult for Nordic states to remain at the top of contributors. Furthermore, the changing geopolitics and national interests of Nordic countries also affected their motivations (Jakobsen, 2006).

Nordic Countries’ (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) Personnel Contribution to the UNPKO from 1990 to 2019



The data was generated from the UN official website (<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>). The data refers to 31 December for every year, except 1990 and 1998, which refer to troop levels on 30 November.

Analysis and Conclusion:

The current international system has made the world more connected than ever before; conflicts, pandemics and crises rarely stay within national frontiers. The conflicts can swiftly spread and can become a regional or even continental issue. All these conflicts breed other issues and can pave the way for crises such as refugee issues, hateful political movements, drug trafficking, and many more.

The PKO is criticised for contrasts between theory and practice. There are differences in the rhetoric and practice of troop-contributing countries, particularly those South Asian, which are accused of using the UN platform for achieving their own interests. Often UN troops are not able to solve the issue at hand and instead

helplessly witness the war. Sometimes they contribute in organizing elections and declare the winner without focusing on the root cause of the problems at stake. There are also allegations of misconduct and abuse by PKO forces. Most probably, like is the case in many other military missions, there are some mishaps in the UNPKO. However, the Blue Helmets have played a tremendous role since their inception in resolving many conflicts and maintaining global peace and stability.

It is likely that peace in other countries can increase stability in troop-providing nations. Therefore, contributing to the PKO is doubtless a positive development. Despite its problems, the research shows that the UNPKO often successfully functions in maintaining international peace and converting conflict into peace.

According to the statistics, as of 31 January 2020, collectively 95,423 personnel from 121 countries are serving in 13 peacekeeping operations for the purpose of maintaining international peace and stability (DATA, 2020). Since the end of the Cold War new countries are now contributing with troops. Developed states of the world have reduced contributions. On the other hand, developing countries from Africa and Asia – most notably some South Asian nations – have tremendously increased their troop levels. Nowadays, developed states provide financial support while others provide troops (Lebovic, 2010). Nordic states have decreased their troop levels but increased their financial support since the end of the Cold War. Scandinavian nations' commitment to the PKO needs to be understood according their national interests and strategic cultures.

Looking at the generous contribution in troops we sought to explain what are the underlying rationales. The research found that the main factors behind troop contributions are national interests, image building, institution building, economic interests and endorsing the current international order. Moreover, the five rationales of Bellamy and Williams' model as well as the middle power theory helped in analyzing the logic behind troop contributions. Finally the case study of China helped in explaining the rationale of protecting one's own national and economic interests by contributing to the UNPKO.

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