The Fight Against Corruption Within Peace Support Operations: In Search of the Responsibility of International Organizations

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I. Introduction

Traditionally, UN peace-keeping has been one of the main tools for maintaining peace and security. However, the needs of contemporary conflicts led to a transformation of the system, so that the international community stands before a new form of peace maintenance, the so-called peace support activities of the United Nations.¹

The changes that emerged in the structure and function of peace keeping activities during the 1980s has also influenced the attitude of the contributing states. Expanding the activities in the territory of the host state meant that the peacekeepers could no longer be mere spectators of a conflict or post-conflict scenario, and that a more active, operational involvement² in

¹ For a comprehensive review of the history of the peacekeeping activities of the United Nations, which has successfully been characterized as a story of limited success, see M. Bothe, “Peace-Keeping”, in 1 The Charter of the United Nations: A Commentary 661 (B. Simma ed., 2002).
² The “operationalization” of the peacekeeping system has been a novel proposal, bearing the meaning of making the mandate work. Relevant discussions have been initiated on the occasion of the proposals by the Secretary General for a more effective international action...
peace support operations (PSO), was required. Thus, peacekeepers inevitably became, or at least tried to become, part of the solution. Accordingly, in the early 1990s, the UN Secretariat, under the direction of the Secretary General, was reorganized to meet the new challenges set by complex emergency situations. A decade later, thanks to the broad experience acquired on the subject, the UN Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, with his Millennium Report, initiated changes, aiming at the institutionalization of the activities required as one of the principal means for the management of international conflicts.

Unfortunately, the existing practice did not correspond to the organization’s goals, namely the establishment and the maintenance of peace. Thus, the missions presented inherent problems, either due to the malfunctioning of the operations or the deficits of the peacekeeping system itself. Phenomena of corruption, which flourished among PSOs troubled the United Nations undermining its credibility and above all the legitimacy of the peace operations themselves.

UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, being the competent authority for the conduct of a peace support operation according to the UN Charter, could not ignore this situation. His efforts to review the peacekeeping sys-

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3) PSO is the abbreviation of the term “Peace Support Operations.” On the categorization of the peacekeeping activities in different types or generations, see M. Katayanagi, Human Rights Functions of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations 42-53 (2002).


6) For the relevant case studies and the analysis of the respective failures, see Katayanagi, supra note 3, ch. 3, 4, 5 and 6.