

The Cost of Peace: Understanding Patterns in State Financial Contributions to UN Peace Operations

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Abstract:

While peace operations are considered a global public good, great variation is observed in how committed states are to their success. Since their expansion in the post-Cold War era, UN peace operations have systematically experienced shortfalls in financial commitments from member states. This project seeks to understand the nature and causes of such shortfalls, since adequate resources are critical to operational effectiveness. We present background and analysis using a new dataset that measures mission-level payment of assessed dues by UN member states between 1990 and 2023. We find some evidence that states' support is driven by their perception of mission success. States are deterred by a greater number of peacekeeper casualties in the conflict, but not other indicators of violence. We find more evidence that state support is motivated by the potential costs of a conflict, as states are more likely to fund missions that present security externalities. We also find that support tends to improve, then decline, over time. This research reveals how UN members meet their international commitments to peace and security as well as how international organizations might incentivize states to better resource their activities.

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1. Introduction

In 2023, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres introduced *A New Agenda for Peace*, a policy brief outlining the primary challenges to global security and a series of steps aimed to improve the situation. A core component of the Agenda was a focus on improving the response of Member States to their collective responsibility to deliver global peace. Specifically, he drew attention to the under-resourcing of peacekeeping operations, emphasizing the impact of lacking resources on operational outcomes:

In a number of current conflict environments, the gap between United Nations peacekeeping mandates and what such missions can actually deliver in practice has become apparent. The challenges posed by long-standing and unresolved conflicts, without a peace to keep, driven by complex domestic, geopolitical and transnational factors, serve as a stark illustration of the limitations of ambitious mandates without adequate political support (Guterres 2023).

Later that year, the Fifth Committee - the body tasked with allocating resources to PKOs - noted the continued pattern of significant financial arrears for operations. The Committee said that a lack of contributions was a major threat to the liquidity of operations, which in turn undermined the delivery of mandates (United Nations 2023). Such practices as hiring freezes and restricted spending for missions had become commonplace, while unpaid reimbursements to troop- and police-contributing countries were mounting.

At the same meeting, Catherine Pollard, Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy, and Compliance, delivered a grim picture of peacekeeping financing.¹ Most notably, the unpaid balance for peacekeeping stood at \$3.3 billion, three months after contributions had been assessed (with the expectation that contributions are made in full within 30 days). Of this balance, \$1 billion was unpaid for the 2023/2024 year, amounting to a 28 percent shortfall in the

¹ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n23/298/48/pdf/n2329848.pdf>

peacekeeping budget for that year. She noted that 41 Member States had paid their assessments in full, comprising only a fifth of all states.

As Guterres, Pollard, and the Fifth Committee all have lamented, United Nations peacekeeping suffers from lack of support. Since 1990, UN missions have exhibited an average monthly shortfall of 21.6% in personnel contributed – meaning, missions on average have 21.6% fewer personnel than what has been mandated by the UN Security Council (Passmore, Shannon, and Hart 2018). Moreover, UN missions suffer from average annual financial shortfalls of 28%. Additionally, since states contribute funds to a separate account for each operation, there is significant variation in financial shortfalls from one mission to the next. The under-resourcing of UN missions raises critical questions: what explains why peacekeeping experiences persistent financial shortfalls, and why are some peace operations (POs) better supported than others? These questions become puzzling when considering that UN members are assessed with obligatory contributions. Despite UN members having assessed financial commitments, why are some peacekeeping missions less financially supported than others?

This paper explores financial support for UN peace operations. We conceive of financial support for peacekeeping as the product of a rational process by which states evaluate a number of competing factors. A first category of factors relates to states' perception of the likely success of the operation. By default, states generally support the provision of global public goods such as peace (Gaibullov et al. 2009), and conflict intervention by the UN aligns more with its organizational goals than with narrow political interests (Beardsley and Schmidt, 2012). However, state support is likely to be assuaged by a lower probability that the public good will be produced. We expect various indicators of the likelihood of mission success to correlate with the payment of assessed dues to individual missions. This invokes Principal-Agent dynamics and the means by

which states constrain international organizations they perceive are not performing their intended purpose satisfactorily. It also contributes to an understanding of how variation in both the execution and outcomes in POs have informed a diverse range of support for peacekeeping.

A second category of factors considers the costs of conflict in the mission-country. Conflicts pose externalities that are public and privately suffered by UN members. All UN members may suffer a breach of security from conflict in the mission-country. Additionally, some UN members may suffer more than others, depending on their private interests in and proximity to the conflict-country. A greater potential for costs from a conflict should induce greater financial support for peacekeeping missions.

In general, we find that countries do not strongly consider the likely success of a peacekeeping mission when supporting missions financially. We instead find evidence that missions in countries posing greater transnational security risks receive greater financial support. Moreover, we observe that financial support trends upward at the beginning of the analysis period but then declines at the end of the analysis period (1990-2023). The inferences from the analyses are mixed as to the extent members are driven by the obligatory nature of peacekeeping contributions when determining what missions to support. But while the inferences are preliminary, the paper has implications for how well UN peacekeeping missions are supported and, therefore, the efficacy of missions to reduce violence and pursue other goals of peacekeeping.

2. Financing Peace Operations

We begin by providing some context for the funding of peace operations.² While POs were originally funded from the UN's general budget, the increasing complexity and frequency of these

² For a more complete explanation of the financing process, see Passmore, Nadeau, and Shannon (2023).

operations necessitated a completely separate funding process. Peace operations have grown to constitute by far the most expensive aspect of the UN's annual output, dwarfing its regular budget. For the 2024-25 fiscal year, the UN allocated a budget of \$5.59 billion,³ compared with \$3.59 billion for the regular budget.⁴ Even as both the number and cost of operations has decreased in recent years, peacekeeping remains the UN's most resource-heavy activity.

Although funded separately to the UN budget, there is not a single budget for UN peace operations. Rather, each operation has its own budget that is approved by the UN General Assembly, usually by consensus.⁵ Forming and approving mission budgets is a lengthy process. For example, the UN mission to South Sudan was mandated by the Security Council in July 2011, but its budget did not receive General Assembly approval until December that year. The General Assembly's Administrative and Budgetary Committee (the Fifth Committee) negotiates and proposes to the GA resolutions for financing each new mission. It also reviews the resources and budgets each year for ongoing missions and proposes continuing or changing the amount of financing. All UN member states participate in the Fifth Committee.

Once the budget is formed for a mission, the standing system of assessments is applied to determine what countries are supposed to contribute to each peacekeeping mission. While all countries are charged with an assessment for every peacekeeping mission, assessments follow a scale established by the UN that determines what a country owes based on its gross domestic product. Countries are placed in one of ten assessment groups, each of which then receives a

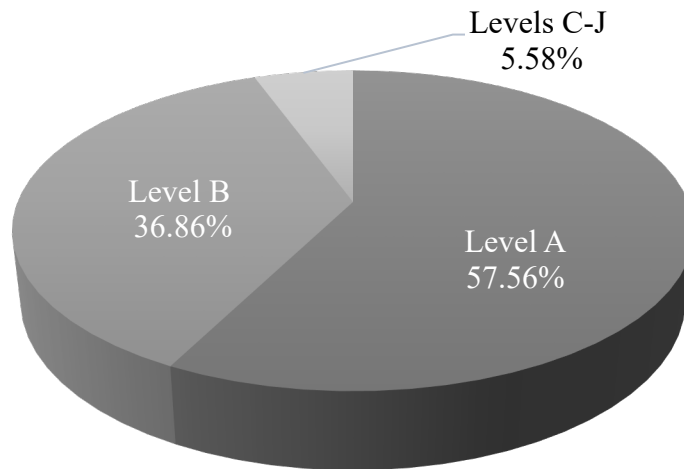
³ GA/AB/4463, 21 June 2024.

⁴ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/12/1145072>.

⁵ The UN observer missions in the Middle East (UNTSO) and India/Pakistan (UNMOGIP) are exceptions and are funded from the regular UN budget. Both missions were established in 1948 and are carry-overs from the pre-assessment era.

discount rate commensurate to the group’s economic capabilities. For example, Level A, containing the Permanent Five members of the Security Council receives no discount, while states in Level J receive a discount of 90%.⁶ Subsequently, wealthier states pay a premium to make up the gap created by the discount system. Figure 1 shows the assessment burdens approved for the period of 2022 to 2024, indicating clearly that the majority of peacekeeping costs fall on the P5 states, while 94% is paid by the 36 states in Levels A and B. Counted a different way, 69% of the budget falls on just six states: the United States (27.9%), China (15.2%), Japan (8.6%), Germany (6.1%), the United Kingdom (5.8%), and France (5.6%).

Figure 1: Distribution of peacekeeping assessments by level.⁷



Level A	Level B		
China	Andorra	Iceland	New Zealand
France	Australia	Ireland	Norway
Russian Federation	Austria	Israel	Portugal
United Kingdom	Bahamas	Italy	Republic of Korea
United States	Bahrain	Japan	San Marino
	Belgium	Liechtenstein	Saudi Arabia

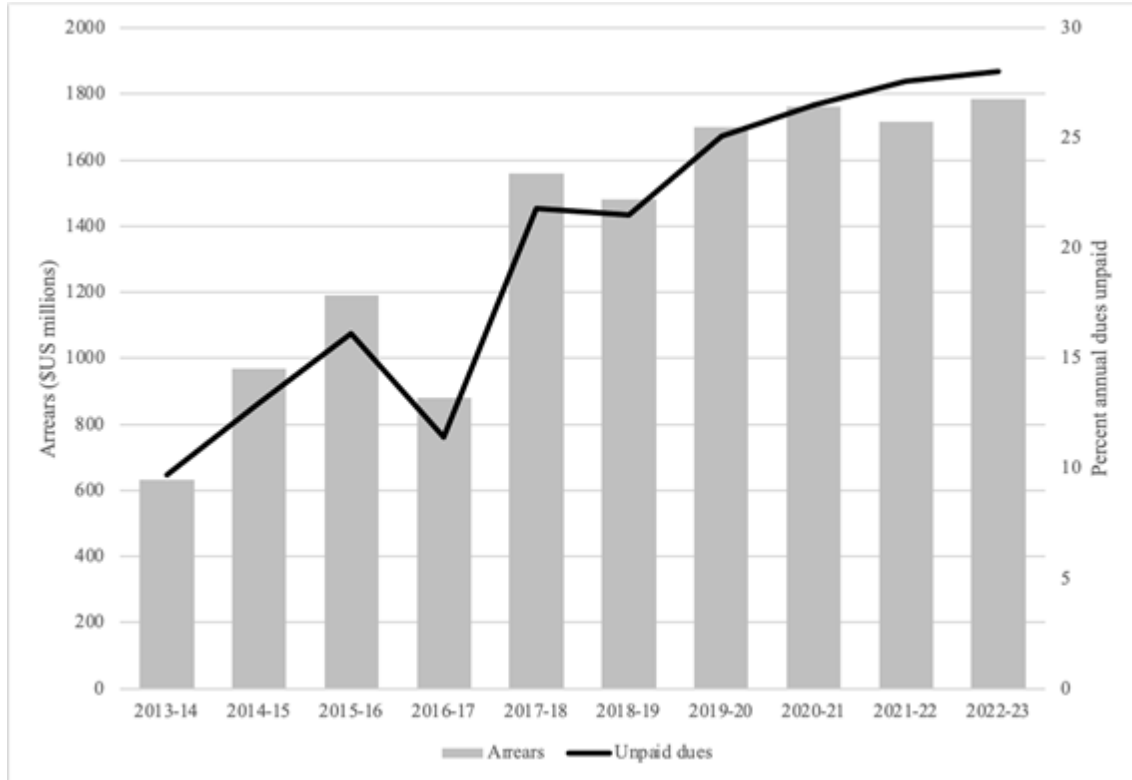
⁶ A/RES/55/235, 30 January 2001.

⁷ A/76/296/Rev.1/Add.1, 28 December 2021

	Canada	Luxembourg	Slovenia
	Cyprus	Malta	Spain
	Denmark	Monaco	Sweden
	Finland	Netherlands	Switzerland
	Germany		

Contributions to POs are therefore not voluntary and countries can lose their voting power in the UN General Assembly if they fail to pay their assessment for two consecutive years. There is evidence to suggest states take this assessment seriously. Gaibulloev, Sandler, and Shimizu (2009) find that financial contributions to UN peacekeeping are primarily driven by the fact that they are assessed – that is, countries contribute because doing so is not entirely voluntary, and because countries are motivated to support and provide a global public good. However, under- or non-payment of assessed dues is widespread among states, indicating that they are to some extent free to shirk this responsibility. The UNGA vote removal provision has never been enacted, and no other official means of enforcing payments exists. As noted by Passmore, Nadeau, and Shannon (2023), some countries like Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany consistently and promptly pay what they owe to peacekeeping, while some countries like the United States and Japan regularly fail to fully pay what they owe. Despite the fact that financial contributions are assessed, UN members shirk their financial commitments with regularity. Figure 2 shows that annual shortfalls in the payment of assessed dues have increased steadily over the last decade. This becomes more alarming when considering that the total amount budgeted for peacekeeping activities has decreased over the same period.

Figure 2: Unpaid dues to UN peacekeeping operations, 2013-2023.



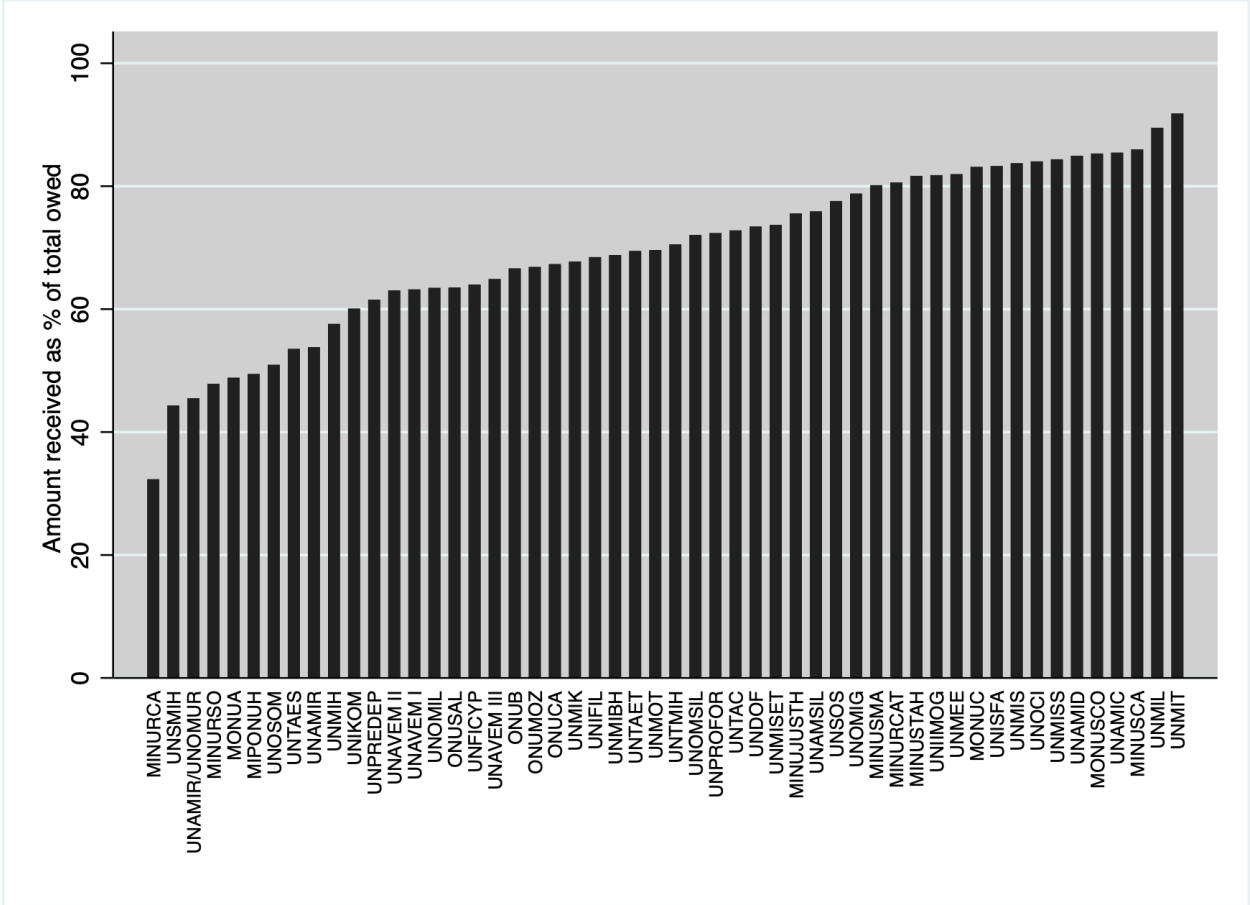
Source: Passmore and Oestman (n.d.).

Not only are members assessed different amounts to pay to peacekeeping, but peacekeeping budgets differ among missions. Some missions are mandated or allocated more financial resources than others to reflect the complexity of the operation’s mandate or the scale of activity within the country, and contributor-countries are sent separate bills for each mission. For example, in the 2024-25 budget year, the Fifth Committee apportioned \$1.3 billion for MINUSCA in the Central African Republic and \$994.5 million for MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. By contrast, it approved only \$61.3 million for UNFICYP in Cyprus and \$47.4 million for UNMIK in Kosovo.⁸This means that, in the event that states choose not to pay their

⁸ <https://press.un.org/en/2024/gaab4463.doc.htm>

entire peacekeeping bill, they may pick and choose which missions to pay and which missions to neglect. Consider Figure 3 below. It shows that no UN mission has received 100% of the financial resources it has been owed. Missions have been funded in a range of approximately 30% to 90% of assessed dues, when averaged across all years the mission was active. Almost a quarter of states received an annual average of less than 60% of dues, while almost two thirds received less than 80%. Visualized in this way, it is clear that one or more factors explain the variation from one mission to the next.

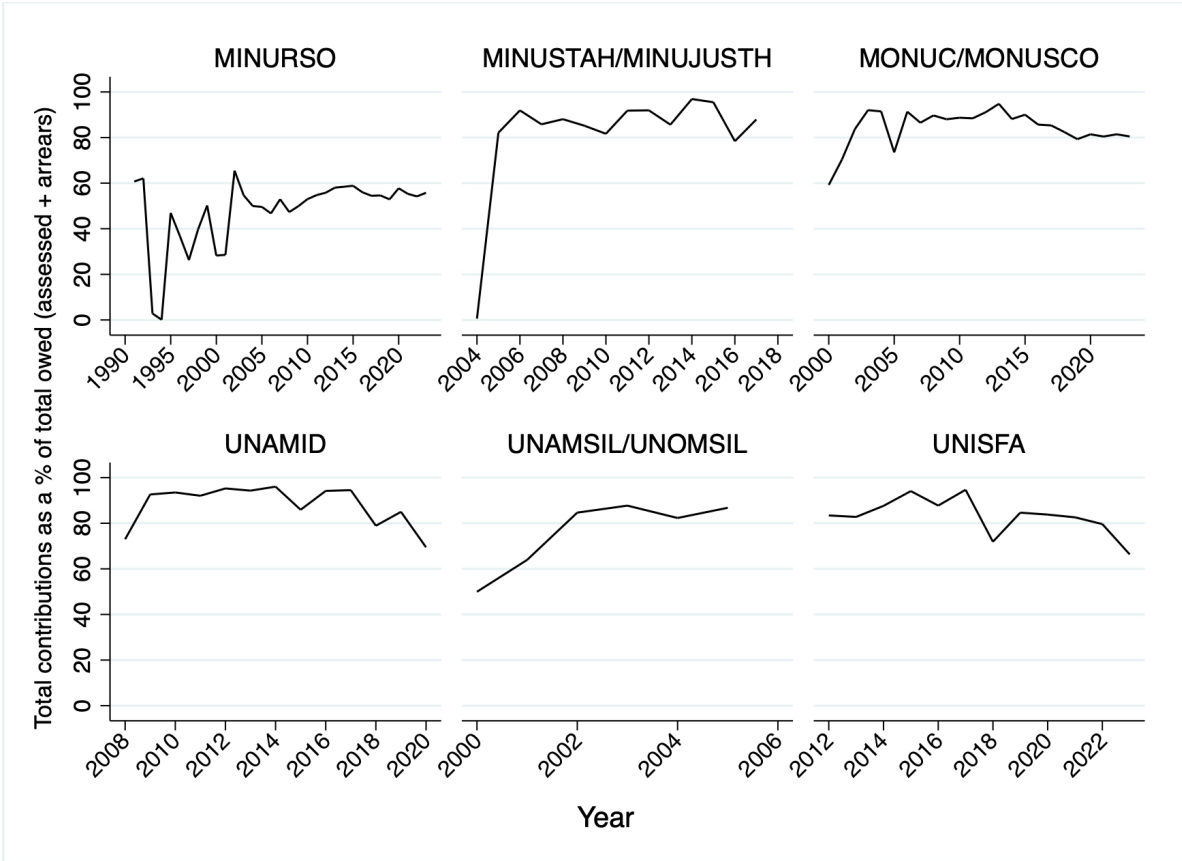
Figure 3: Total paid financial contributions as a percentage of total owed, averaged across all contributors and years of a UN peacekeeping mission.



Note: The total owed comprises the current year assessment added to prior arrears. Includes all POs from 1990-2023.

Figure 4 shows how contributions vary across the life of a mission. The six missions shown illustrate how missions differ both in their year-to-year stability of contributions and their general trajectory. For example, MINURSO shows significant fluctuation in its early years, followed by a period of consistency (albeit with low total contributions). After its first year, MINUSTAH shows relatively stable contributions at a high level, as do UNAMID and UNISFA, although they demonstrate a decline in the later years of the mission. UNAMSIL/UNOMSIL and MONUC/MONUSCO experience low contributions after their formation, but consistently receive over 80% of what is owed in later years.

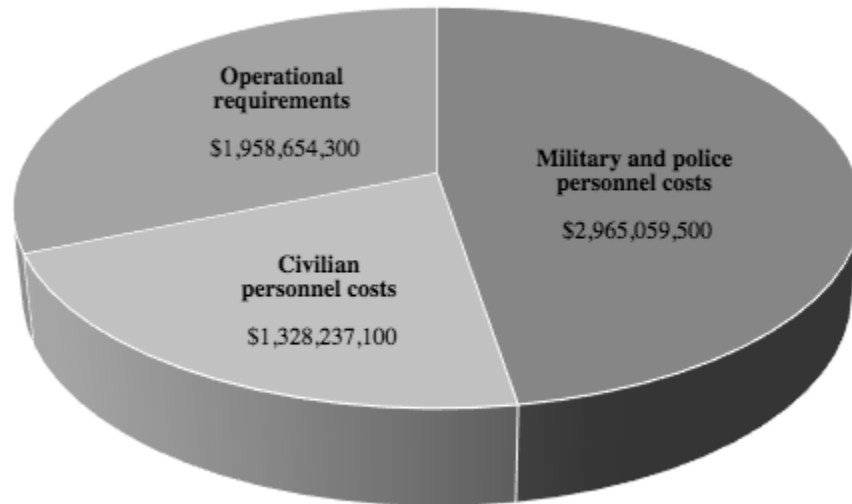
Figure 4: Contributions to individual missions over their life span.



3. The Importance of Financing for Peacekeeping Effectiveness

Financial support for UN POs is critical for operational effectiveness. It is clearly linked to the provision of the other two forms of resourcing: personnel and equipment. Figure 5 shows that in the 2018-2019 budget, 47 percent of expenses were allocated to uniformed personnel reimbursement costs. This highlights how financial shortfalls likely have severe repercussions for sustaining an adequate force, because member-states are reimbursed by the UN for contributing peacekeeping personnel and equipment. The situation is more problematic given that reimbursements for personnel (as well as equipment contributed by member-states) are typically paid once all other outstanding debts are settled. When money is received into the mission's account, priority is given to civilian personnel costs and procurement contracts, with reimbursements paid last (Coleman, 2014: 26). Mir (2019: 8) reports that around one-third of financial assessments were unpaid through most of 2018, suggesting that as much as two-thirds of personnel costs were paid late or not at all. A UN report showed that, as of April 30, 2019, outstanding payments were owed to 85 personnel-contributing countries, including Egypt (\$96 million), India (\$91 million), Bangladesh (\$89 million), Nepal (\$77 million), and Rwanda (\$75 million) (Beagle, 2019). Taking Egypt as an example, this is equivalent to the annual salary of 5,602 peacekeepers. If financial resources have not been paid to a mission, then reimbursements to personnel and equipment-contributing countries are delayed. This can lead members to withdraw peacekeepers or choose not to contribute personnel and equipment altogether. Canada and other contributors have remarked that "late reimbursements to troop- and police-contributing countries are impeding troop rotations and the willingness of States to contribute to provide personnel," (United Nations General Assembly, 2019).

Figure 5: Distribution of Costs within UN Peacekeeping, 2018-2019



Source: A/c.5/72/25

The contribution of Contingent Owned Equipment (COE) faces similar problems. Member-states are largely responsible for providing equipment, both for their own deployed soldiers (such as weapons and protective equipment) and general-purpose equipment such as vehicles and technology. Although countries are reimbursed for equipment contributions, such payments face similar delays to personnel. In fact, while the UN owed personnel-contributing countries a total of \$373 million in outstanding reimbursements at the end of 2018, it owed equipment contributing countries \$708 million (Beagle, 2019). The implications of such debt are similar to those associated with personnel: countries will either refuse to contribute equipment, are unable to update equipment when necessary, and will send older and less effective equipment.

There are other implications of under-financing besides delayed personnel deployment and personnel shortfalls. Even if personnel are adequately contributed, the personnel in the field may be less effective (Passmore, Nadeau, and Shannon 2023). They may be forced to work with

outdated and inadequate equipment because of lack of financing (Sheehan 2011). The UN has in fact highlighted the need for better equipment in its assessment of peacekeeper fatalities (Gladstone 2018). These delays in payments can ultimately affect if and how countries continue to support peacekeeping through personnel and equipment, which is a critical determinant of the effectiveness of peacekeeping (Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon 2019).

4. Determinants of Financial Shortfalls in Peacekeeping Missions

Since state contributions to POs vary significantly from one country to the next, and also from one mission to the next, we argue that the decision of how much to contribute to each individual missions is the result of a deliberate and rational process. While there may be reasons for states to pay more or less across the board, such as political pressures, economic constraints, or ideological persuasions, conditions specific to the operations themselves are major factors in this process and explain the variation observed in Figure 3.

We offer two categories of factors that likely influence such decision making. First, states make larger contributions when they perceive the operation is going well or likely to end in success. These factors range from the structure of the operation – such as the type of mission and the nature of its mandate – to conditions that evolve during the execution of the operation – such as the level of violence or the perceived intractability of the conflict. Second, states are driven by actual or potential externalities of the conflict that will be detrimental to other states. For example, risks posed to its economic interests in the conflict country should induce greater support from a state. Analysis of these two categories identify the extent to which states are resilient in the commitment to the provision of the public good of global peace, or whether the challenges of delivering peace deter international cooperation. In the latter case, a failure to instill confidence in

the UN's peacekeeping efforts raises questions of the necessity for change in how the organization conducts its interventions. The analysis will also indicate whether states' private interests are sufficient to outweigh their concerns over the viability of the operation.

4.1 Perceptions of mission effectiveness

Although research shows that peace operations tend to be sent to the most difficult cases (Gilligan and Stedman 2003; Fortna 2008), this does not mean states will support such missions. Indeed, the difficulty of peacekeeping may discourage financial support if states perceive that their resources are being committed to activities unlikely to succeed. We consider a number of ways in which states interpret the likely efficacy and success of an operation: the nature of its mandate, the length of time for which a mission endures, and the prevalence of violence amid the conflict after deployment.

As elucidated in Principal-Agent theory, international organizations (IO) are created to be agents of their state principals, tasked with doing the bidding of those states more efficiently than they could do it themselves (Abbott and Snidal, 1998; Nielson and Tierney, 2003; Hawkins et al., 2006; Vaubel, 2006). Since states desire to retain sufficient control over the IO to ensure these goals are being achieved, they are often vested with mechanisms to constrain or punish the IO if they stray from their delegated tasks or fail to perform them satisfactorily. In this vein, one might consider the funding of POs as a tool states can employ when they perceive that peacekeeping is ineffective, inefficient, or otherwise underperforming.

A first consideration of how effectively state resources are being used to achieve desired goals is assessing how the mandates of peacekeeping missions affect their financial support. Each PO receives a unique mandate at the outset, which is often augmented during the mission.

Mandates show significant variation across missions as well as within them. Lloyd's (2021) TAMM dataset identifies a range of mandate items across all missions from one to 33. Within missions, Di Salvatore et al. (2022) find that mandates are adjusted (items added or removed) in 12 percent of mission-year observations, indicating that mandates change with relative frequency. Therefore, rather than monolithic programs that vary little, the dynamic nature of mandates illustrates both the influence of varied actors and changes in complexity that likely play some role in states' funding calculations.

Mandates for peacekeeping missions have become increasingly complex over time, and are regularly cited as a contributing factor to underperformance of POs. The 2015 Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) reprimanded the creation of excessive and unachievable mandates, stating:

In recent years, mandates have become lengthier and more specific, and at times less realistic or manageable. In increasingly difficult operating environments, many mandates have arguably also become less achievable, especially where worsened security or political conditions undermine or impede implementation (United Nations 2015: 60).

In 2018, Secretary-General Guterres implored the Security Council to “put an end to mandates that look like Christmas trees,” (United Nations 2018). Yet, the situation appears to have improved little. At a Security Council open debate on peacekeeping activities in 2024, members identified the achievability of mandates as a primary obstacle to success (United Nations 2024).

While much of the variation in mandates reflects the conditions specific to the conflict being addressed, there is also latitude for different actors within the organization to influence the process. Mandates begin within the Secretariat, which drafts a list of recommended mandate items that are then submitted to the Security Council for consideration and adoption. Though these items generally reflect the Secretariat's perception of need on the ground, it may also have institutional

motivations for creating mandates of a particular size or content. the Secretariat may push for a larger mandate in order to provide more robust peacekeeping, undeterred by concerns about resourcing. The literature on principal-agent theory and institutional survival also suggest the Secretariat may push for broader mandates to increase its remit of activity in order to promote its relevance and indispensability (Oksamytna and Lundgren 2021). The 2015 HIPPO report identified the Secretariat as a cause of large mandates, suggesting that convoluted wording “frustrate[s] efforts at prioritization and sequencing during implementation, and progress is increasingly more difficult to realize in more difficult settings” (United Nations 2015: 60).

The Security Council has also been instrumental in shaping mandates over the years. As bargaining and negotiation over the content of mandates ensues, Council members (and predominantly the P5) push to add, remove, or alter items to reflect their preferences (Allen and Yuen 2014, 2022). This has led to the frequent creation of “Christmas Tree” mandates, where such states adorn the mandate with their preferred items (Oksamytna and Lundgren 2021).

Not only do mandates affect how peacekeepers act on the ground, mandates feed back into UN members’ propensity to support peacekeeping. Complex mandates in particular may draw resistance from UN members, because peacekeepers are less able to execute complex mandates and less likely to achieve their goals when mandates are complex (Blair, DiSalvatore, and Smidt 2022).⁹ While penholders on the Security Council are most responsible for complicating the mandates of missions, the overall set of financial contributors to peacekeeping is less likely to have a say in how complex a mandate becomes. If contributors perceive mandates as too unwieldy, they may withhold financial contributions. This also relates to members’ perceptions of mission success

⁹ Blair et. Al find that complex mandates impede missions’ ability to engage in peacebuilding, though they do not impede their ability to provide security.

– members may be less likely to support missions with complex mandates that they perceive as less likely to succeed.

Related to the complexity of the mandate is the type of operation being implemented. UN POs have taken a variety of forms in its eight decades of activity. Early peacekeeping was “traditional” (separating sides, usually from different states, to maintain a ceasefire), while the 1990s saw the emergence of “multidimensional” operations with broader mandates that prioritized human security. Later still came the era of “enforcement” and “stabilization” missions sent to countries with persistent raging conflict as non-state actors undermined governance by the state. The UN has responded to the increasing difficulty and complexity of intervention by implementing Chapter VII mandates that allow peacekeepers to use force to either respond to violence or protect civilians. But while Chapter VII mandates may be appropriate for assuaging ongoing violence, they are also more difficult to implement, and may provoke resistance from UN members. This resistance may manifest in members withholding their financial support, consistent with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Missions with more complex mandates will experience lower total contributions of dues from states.

Another indication of whether or not an operation is likely to be completed successfully is its duration. Though operations are established with largely undetermined timelines beyond the first mandate term (usually not more than one year), the complexity of the mandate or severity of the conflict may be rough indications of the commitment required to achieve success. States will therefore likely interpret longer missions as being increasingly unlikely to achieve their mandates,

having either been drawn into an unremitting quagmire of conflict (such as MINUSCA in the Central African Republic), or else presiding over a relatively stable situation but nevertheless moving no closer to achieving its mandate (such as UNFICYP in Cyprus). As is evident in the cases of UNAMID and UNISFA in Figure 4, overall payments to the mission show a gradual decline as the duration of the mission extends. We therefore test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Missions that persist for a longer duration will experience lower total contributions of dues from states.

A more direct way that states perceive the progress of the operation is the prevalence of violence after the mission has deployed. Though the presence of peacekeepers has been found to reduce both battlefield and civilian deaths in general (Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon 2013, 2014, 2019; Hegre et al. 2019), this may be conditional on factors such as the location of peacekeepers (Cil et al. 2019), or the actor committing the violence (Fjelde et al. 2019). Cases such as MINUSCA in the Central African Republic, UNAMID in Darfur, and MINUSMA in Mali illustrate how violence often persists long after the deployment of peacekeepers. There is likely a threshold of violence beyond which states will question the viability of the mission. In turn, they may respond to heavy violence by reducing their financial commitment to the operation, perceiving it faces an uphill battle. Evidence of this has already been identified in personnel contributions, where greater violence leads to larger withdrawals of peacekeepers by contributing countries (Melin and Kathman 2023).

States also likely equate the efficacy of a mission with the prevalence of peacekeeper fatalities. More than 4,400 peacekeepers have died since 1948 while deployed to operations, whether by malicious acts, accidents, illness, or other causes (United Nations 2025). Initial studies

have examined trends in these fatalities (Boshoff 2008; Rogers and Kennedy 2014; Van der Lijn and Smit 2015; Henke 2019; Lindberg Bromley 2018), while more recent research links fatalities to the behavior of personnel contributors, finding that states who incur peacekeeper fatalities tend to reduce their contributions in response (Levin 2021; Oestman 2021; Melin and Kathman 2023). While this may be a narrow calculation of states directly affected by the fatalities, a larger number of fatalities is also a signal to other states that the operation is unable to procure or maintain peace, or even to provide adequate safety to its own personnel. States will therefore likely equate more peacekeeper fatalities with a lower prospect of success for the mission. This leads to a hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Missions that experience a greater number of casualties (battlefield and peacekeepers) will experience lower total contributions of dues from states.

4.2 Negative externalities and costs associated with conflict

A second category of factors that may influence financial contributions to missions relates to the negative externalities associated with conflict. Instability in a conflict country can pose costs to the entire international community, as well as costs that are more concentrated for certain actors. Countries may be enticed to contribute when the public and private costs of conflict are higher. Research finds evidence of this dynamic in the economic incentives of countries to support peacekeeping, particularly among the permanent five Security Council members (Stojek and Tir 2015). Research also finds that contributors are more likely to meet the personnel demands for peacekeeping missions when they have greater investment interests in the conflict-country (Passmore, Shannon, and Hart 2018). We therefore expect that the greater the potential costs to contributor-countries from a particular conflict in which peacekeepers are deployed, the more likely they are to economically support the mission and meet their financial commitments. In other

words, the potential costs offset the incentives to free ride or be deterred by challenging mission conditions, resulting in a better-supported operation.

Hypothesis 4: Missions in conflict countries with greater economic ties to the international community will experience higher total contributions of dues from states.

Other potential externalities include security costs. States may be more invested in the success of a peacekeeping mission if they are more likely to be affected by spillovers from conflict, such as the spread of violence or the movement of refugees across borders. Peacekeeping has been shown to reduce the diffusion of intrastate conflict to neighboring states (Beardsley 2011). Such states should therefore desire to offer greater support to POs to ensure they are adequately resourced, or else face a host of challenges that may present from large inflows of refugees (Murdoch and Sandler 2002, 2004; Saideman and Ayres 2000). Uzonyi (2015) finds that states experiencing refugee inflows amid civil war in nearby countries are more likely to contribute troops to a peacekeeping mission than other states. Other work shows that troop-contributing countries that receive refugees from PO host states voluntarily locate more of their troops in areas within missions that experience high levels of violence (Oestman 2023). There is also reason to believe that large refugee flows would elicit support from the broader international community and not just those directly affected, since such flows can lead to new conflicts involving the host states, further threatening regional and global security (Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006; Salehyan 2008). Contributors may view POs as a worthwhile investment for this purpose as recent research by Costalli et al. (2023) also reveals links between aspects of peace operations, including both the size of deployments and those with displacement-related mandates, to effectiveness in encouraging the return of forcibly displaced populations.

We therefore expect that a greater number of refugees caused by a conflict will correspond with larger contributions to the mission assigned to address that conflict. We also acknowledge that large refugee flows may be an indication of a deteriorating situation and, consistent with our previous hypotheses, may cause states to lose confidence in the mission.

We also consider a broader conceptualization of conflict spillover by assessing the number of states contiguous to the conflict state, implying a greater international concern over the potential spread of the conflict. As with refugees, we do not necessarily suggest that the contiguous states are those that reduce financial shortfalls for the mission. Indeed, countries in conflict-ridden regions are likely those that owe only small sums to peacekeeping in the first place. Rather, we consider the number of contiguous states as a proxy for international concern over conflict spillover. We test these two arguments with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Missions with a greater risk of conflict spillover to neighboring countries will experience higher total contributions of dues from states.

States may also underfund individual operations if they face an overall higher demand across all POs. Since states have limited resources to contribute to peacekeeping, a larger number of ongoing missions may force scarce resources to be spread more thinly. This is particularly true in years where one or more new operations are established, adding to the existing burden for states. In such circumstances, states may “pick and choose” those missions they prefer most (whether for public or private incentives), or instead may reduce contributions to all missions across the board. In the former instance, we would expect no clear relationship between the number of ongoing missions and funding for each mission, as some would receive more and others less. In the latter case, we would expect that more missions would lead to a general suppression of funding for all

missions. This leads to the following hypothesis, although we have good reasons to believe both that a relationship may or may not exist.

Hypothesis 6: Missions operating with more concurrent missions will experience lower total contributions of dues from states.

5. Research Design

We test the hypotheses on a sample of all UN peacekeeping operations between 1990 and 2023. Given that operations occur at different times and for different lengths, the data exist in an unbalanced panel format and produce a total of 443 mission-year observations over 42 separate missions.¹⁰ The sample of PKOs corresponds to data in Passmore, Shannon, and Nadeau (2022), which are those that are given a separate budget account to receive member state contributions.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is the total payment made by all states to the mission's budget in a year taken as a proportion of the amount owed that year. The amount owed is a combination of assessments and arrears. For example, for the mission to Mozambique (ONUMOZ) in 1994, \$81,436,108 was owed in arrears from prior years and \$302,070,156 was newly assessed, leaving a total balance for all countries of \$392,728,770. That year, a total of \$311,292,662 was contributed, equating to 81.2% of the total balance, or a proportion of 0.812. We chose the proportion of the total owed rather than that of the total assessed primarily due to the erratic nature of the latter. The contribution total is often well below that owed, and as back payments are made, the contribution late in a mission may exceed the assessment by a large amount. While such payment behavior may not be entirely stochastic, it would likely be difficult to effectively model.

¹⁰ The sample size for our analysis is reduced to 281 due to a lack of available data for the independent variables in certain missions.

We therefore employ the smoother measure using the total owed as the denominator, which more accurately identifies a state's calculation when deciding to make a payment. Financial contributions data are based on Passmore, Shannon, and Nadeau's (2023) data, updated to 2023 using the annual Financial Report and Audited Financial Statements of the UN, prepared by the General Assembly.

Independent Variables

The first set of factors expected to influence financial support are those related to the perception of mission success by UN members. We first expect the complexity of mission mandates to render members more reluctant to support UN missions. To test mission complexity, we include the number of *Mandated Tasks* for each mission, taken from the updated TAMM data (Lloyd 2021). The number of *Mandated Tasks* ranges from 1 to 33. We expect that as the number of mandated tasks increases, financial support will decline. As another measure of mission complexity, we include *Chapter VII Mandate*, which captures missions that are mandated to use force to address ongoing violence. We also include *Mission Duration*, expecting that as the number of years that a mission has been deployed increases, members will perceive the mission as less likely to be successful and therefore offer less financial support.

We account for ongoing violence within the mission as a measure of the potential for mission success. We include the logged *Number of Battle Deaths* that have occurred as the result of interstate or intrastate battle violence on the conflict-country's territory, taken from the UCDP Country-Year Data on Organized Violence (Davies et. Al 2024; Sunberg and Melander 2013). We

also include a measure of the number of *Peacekeeper Fatalities* caused by malicious attacks. The values for this measure were collected by the authors from original UN files.¹¹

To capture the potential costs and externalities of a conflict in which peacekeepers are serving, we include the amount of *Exports* by the country in which the mission is serving, as well as the amount of *Foreign Direct Investment* in that country and the country's *GDP*. The data for trade and GDP were taken from the World Bank's World Development Indicators and FDI values were obtained from UNCTAD. As a measure of the potential for conflict spillover, we include the number of *Contiguous States* to the mission-country, as well as *Refugees* that have fled the country in which the mission is serving. We measure contiguity using data from the Correlates of War's Direct Contiguity Dataset (Stinnett et al. 2002). Data for refugee flows comes from UNHCR.

We include the number of peacekeeping missions ongoing around the world that year, expecting that a larger number of *Concurrent Missions* puts more demand on contributor-countries and induces greater financial shortfalls on other missions as contributors stretch to meet demand. We also include dummy variables for the region of the mission-country to account for the propensity of members to support efforts in one region over others.

We control for a number of factors that may influence shortfalls beyond the scope of the theoretical expectations. We include *Mission Length*, which is the total number of months that the mission has been active as of the end of the budget year. We expect that longer-serving missions demand more from UN members and will therefore have greater financial shortfalls. Although mission budgets are approved annually and therefore states do not know for certain how long a mission will last, each passing year not only sustains the burden on contributors, but also likely signals the growing intractability of the conflict. We also control for host-state *Population* size as

¹¹ <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/fatalities>, accessed January 9, 2024.

conflict zones with larger populations may generate higher costs from conflict and demand more complex and expensive operations that struggle to obtain sufficient funding.¹²

Finally, we include a series of geographic region indicators to check for the possibility that missions in some regions are less financially supported than others, as well as a count of years since 1990 to control for the fact that the demand for financial contributions to peacekeeping has steadily increased over time. To estimate the results, we employ Ordinary Least Squares regression with panel-corrected standard errors to adjust for heteroskedasticity across missions.

6. Results and Discussion

We present the results of the analysis of financial contributions in Table 1.¹³ The analyses reveal mixed support for the hypotheses. The hypotheses regarding the perception of mission success through the effect of mission complexity on financial contributions are largely not supported. We expected that the two measures of mission complexity, number of mandated tasks and Chapter VII mandate to have a negative effect on the amount that countries contribute to missions. Instead, we find no effect of *Chapter VII* mandate and a positive and significant effect of the *Number of Mandated Tasks* ($p < .01$ in Models 1 and 2), indicating that as mandated tasks increase, missions receive greater financial support. While we initially thought an increasing number of mandated tasks indicates a more complex mandate, it could actually be the case that increasing number of tasks indicates a clearer and more well-defined mandate. If that is accurate, then the analyses reveal that contributors prefer to support operations with clear and well-defined mandates over those with ambiguous mandates or fewer specified tasks. Another measure of the

¹² In the analysis, we log-transform the variables *Battle Deaths*, *Peacekeeper Deaths*, *Host Exports*, *Host FDI*, *Refugees*, and *Host Population* to address skewness in their distributions.

¹³ We estimate two models due to missingness for some host states in the FDI data.

perception of mission success, *Mission Duration*, also did not have a significant effect on contributions.

One measure of the perception of mission effectiveness (*Peacekeeper Deaths*) is significant ($p < .05$ in Model 1 and $p < .1$ in Model 2). The result is further illustrated by the marginal effects in Figure 6, which shows that as peacekeeper fatalities increase from their minimum to maximum observed value, the percentage of owed contributions decreases from over 80% to over 70%. This reveals that as peacekeeper deaths increase, members are less likely to fully financially support peacekeeping missions. However, the measure of *Battle Deaths* does not similarly reveal support for the argument that members base their contributions on their perceptions of mission effectiveness. The evidence is therefore inconclusive that UN members consider the level of violence in a conflict when deciding to financially support a mission.

The analyses indicate that financial support for missions is somewhat driven by the public and private externalities that conflicts pose to financial contributors. The security costs of conflict better predicted support for peacekeeping missions than did the economic costs. Both the number of *Contiguous States* and *Refugees* was positive and significant ($p < .01$ in Models 1 and 2), indicating that as the potential for spillover costs from conflict increases, members are more financially supportive of missions. Figure 7 illustrates the marginal effects of increasing refugees from the mission-country on financial support for the mission. When *Refugees* increases from its minimum to maximum observed value, the percentage of owed contributions increases from just under 60% to around 90%. However, none of the measures of economic costs (*Exports*, *FDI*, or *GDP*) significantly explained financial support. While UN members support missions to conflicts posing security risks, they are not similarly compelled to support missions to conflicts that threaten economic interests.

Figure 6. Marginal Effect of Peacekeeper Deaths on Financial Contributions to UN Missions.

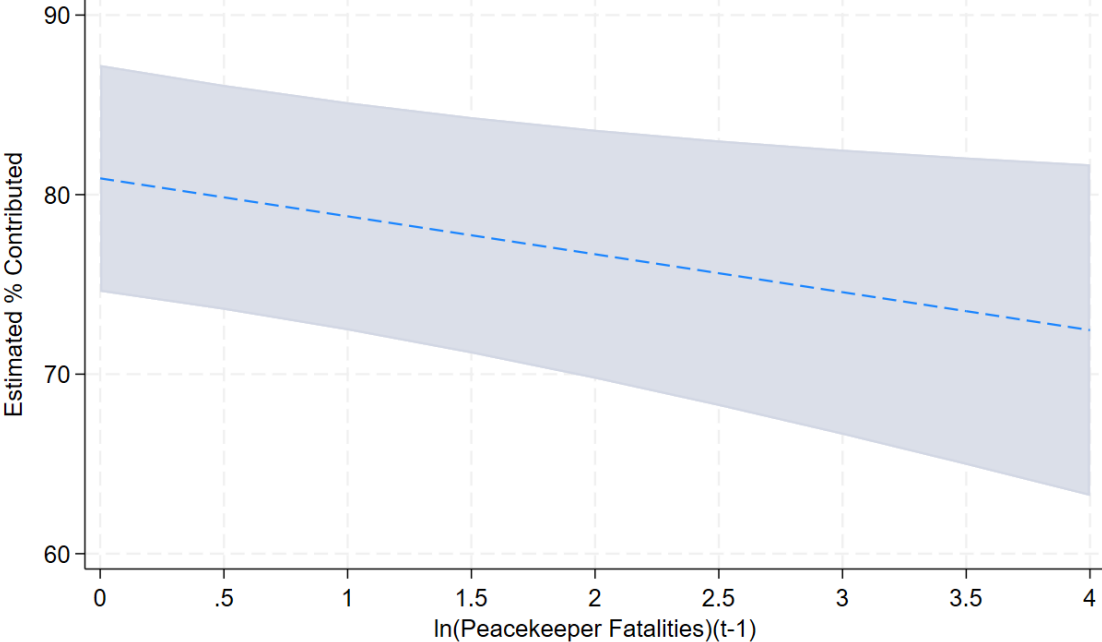


Figure 7. Marginal Effect of Refugee Outflows on Financial Contributions to UN Missions.

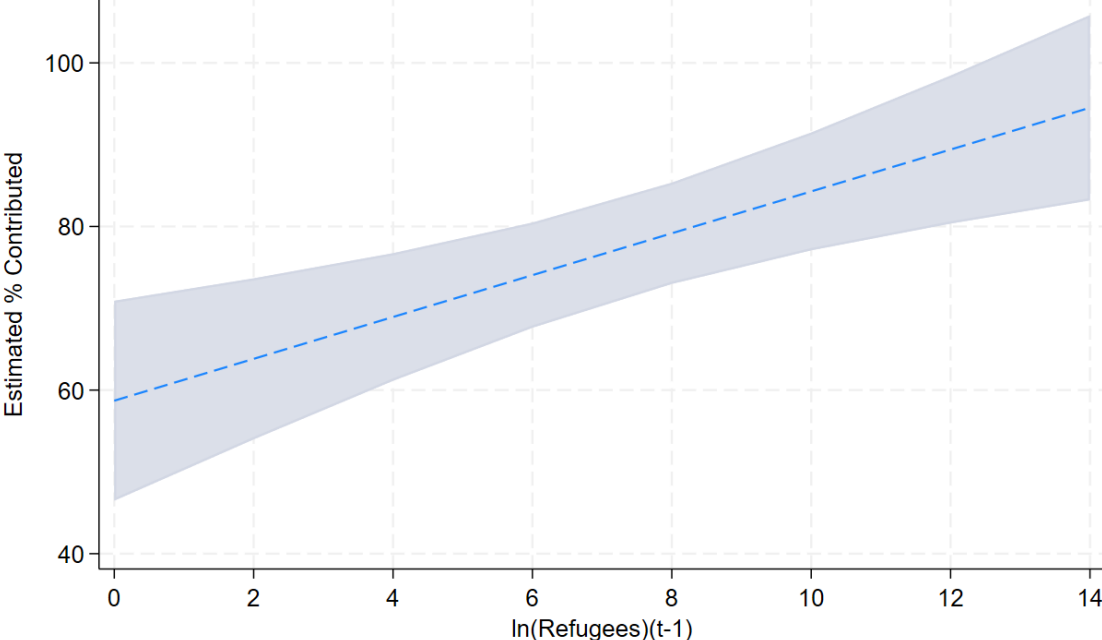


Table 1. Analyses of Financial Contributions in UN Peacekeeping Missions, 1990-2023

	Model 1 % Contributed	Model 2 % Contributed
Mandated Tasks _{-t-1}	1.444*** (.257)	1.651*** (.309)
Ch. VII Mandate _{-t-1}	-1.488 (3.552)	-4.229 (4.435)
Mission Duration _{-t-1}	.249 (.221)	.388 (.327)
ln(Battle Deaths) _{-t-1}	-.638 (.389)	-.687 (.463)
ln(Peacemaker Deaths) _{-t-1}	-2.114** (.972)	-2.088* (1.187)
ln(Host Exports) _{-t-1}	.295 (.6)	1.322 (1.356)
ln(Host FDI) _{-t-1}		-.902 (1.023)
Host GDP per capita _{-t-1}	-.0005 (.0003)	-.0003 (.0004)
Contiguous States _{-t-1}	3.094*** (.624)	3.471*** (.803)
ln(Refugees) _{-t-1}	2.558*** (.732)	2.919*** (.803)
Concurrent Missions _{-t-1}	-.943* (.511)	-1.059* (.554)
ln(Host Population) _{t-1}	-8.067*** (1.309)	-7.613*** (2.008)
Americas	-2.822 (3.656)	-4.396 (4.308)
Europe	3.35 (4.199)	.198 (4.415)
Mideast	-3.841 (2.785)	-6.819 (4.337)
Asia	12.735** (5.617)	14.616** (6.051)
Year Count	3.308*** (.488)	3.673*** (.583)
Year Count Squared	-.076*** (.011)	-.087*** (.013)
Constant	135.47*** (19.756)	106.928*** (24.42)
Observations	281	243
R-squared	.63	.632

Notes: *** $p \leq 0.01$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, * $p \leq 0.1$. Results estimated from ordinary least squares regression. Panel-corrected standard errors, adjusted for heteroskedasticity, reported in parentheses. For region, Africa is the comparison.

The analyses provide support for Hypothesis 6, as the measure of *Concurrent Missions* is negative and significant ($p < .1$ in Models 1 and 2). As the number of ongoing missions increases, members are less likely to financially support peacekeeping. This indicates a certain amount of overstretch; when members feel strained by their commitments, they are less likely to fully pay dues to peacekeeping.

The only region variable that is positive and significant is the coefficient for *Asia* ($p < .05$), indicating greater support for missions in Asia relative to the excluded category of missions in Africa. Otherwise, the analyses do not indicate greater support for missions in regions other than Africa. In contrast, the effect of host state *Population Size* is negative and statistically significant in models 1 and 2 ($p < .01$), suggesting that missions in more populated areas face larger shortfalls.

Finally, two variables indicating time significantly explain financial support for peacekeeping. The *Year Count* variable is positive and significant ($p < .01$), indicating that financial support for peacekeeping has improved over time. However, the *Year Count Squared* measure is negative and significant ($p < .01$), indicating an inverse-U shaped relationship between time and peacekeeping support. In other words, financial support trends upward at the beginning of the time period under study, but then trends downward. It is notable that these variables are significant after controlling for other factors that we expect to have changed over time, such as the number of mandated tasks. It could be the case that some factors correlated with time are not sufficiently considered in these analyses.

The mixed nature of the inferences taken from the analyses indicate that there may need to be more thought given to modeling financial support of peacekeeping missions. While it seems that members are less likely to financially support missions where peacekeepers have been killed, their support is not affected by battle violence in a conflict. Contributors also do not balk at

missions with more mandated tasks, and in fact seem more supportive of such missions. Contributors are also more compelled to support peacekeeping as the risks of security spillover increase. And finally, financial support for peacekeeping generally improves at the beginning of the analysis period but then declines over the end of the analysis period (1990 – 2023). Future versions of this paper will give more thought to how changing institutional dynamics in the UN might simultaneously affect financial support for peacekeeping.

7. Conclusion

The UN has persistently emphasized the importance of member states meeting their financial obligations as well as the demand for personnel in peace operations for over at least the last quarter century. This paper illustrates the extent of the problem addressed by these calls: even though contributions by UN members to peacekeeping are obligatory, financial shortfalls are widespread across time and mission. We offer preliminary insight as to why some missions are better supported than others. Missions with greater peacekeeper deaths are less likely to be supported, but missions in conflicts posing greater security spillovers are more likely to be supported. Also, financial support seems to increase and then decrease over time. Given that the UN has consistently called for its members to pay their owed contributions, the results of these analyses could be helpful. The results here indicate that better provision of security for peacekeepers can improve financial support. The results also indicate that the UN should continue to emphasize the importance of peacekeeping for regional stability and security. And finally, the UN should consider how institutional dynamics and initiatives have led to waning and waxing support over time.

Overall, this project paves the way for a variety of future studies on the causes and consequences of financial and personnel contributions to peacekeeping, as well as how they relate to one another. Such investigations are particularly important as peacekeeping has become more complex in recent years, and as the nature of conflicts to which missions are sent renders them increasingly intractable and stable peace seems ever less likely.

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