Effective Peacekeeping and the Privatization of Security
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1 Introduction

In international relations theory the following deal between a nation-state and its population exists since the Westphalian State Order of 1648: the nation state provides law, order and protection within a certain territory; the inhabitants of that territory obey these laws, do not disturb the order and might even help out in case of emergency. Even if this Weberian deal ever existed in reality, these orderly times seem to be over. The disciplining threat of the Cold War has gone and state intervention in markets has become outdated, leaving all space for a new ideology: neoliberalism. The state retreats. At the domestic level (European) states privatized not only public services and the welfare system but even parts of the security sector. Armies were reduced in size, police forces remained overburdened and private security firms filled the gap. A next step might be to privatize security at the international level as well. Smart? Perhaps.

It is against this neoliberal and post-Cold War background that existential questions are raised about the effectiveness of multilateral organizations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations (UN). Of course, the answers vary and these organizations tend to fight for their existence. For example, in the early 1990s the UN started peacekeeping on an unprecedented scale. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO’s future has been at risk because of diverging ideas on either side of the Atlantic about the pacification of Bosnia-Hercegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. As Strobe Talbott noted before the US intervention in Iraq of 2003: “There is a larger political stake as well: if there is to be a war against Iraq in the coming months, its justification, conduct and outcome must vindicate the relevance not just of the U.N. but also of the U.S. led alliance [NATO] that rightly claims to be the most successful in history.” (Talbott 2002: 49) Ahead of the February 2006 Munich Security Conference, then UK-Defence Secretary John Reid has warned NATO members that they must change for the alliance to survive. (BBC 2006)

Now, NATO is active in Afghanistan and it trains the Iraqi army. Apparently, instead of a transatlantic defense organization, NATO is now an ironmongers’ shop operating globally, mostly as an expanded regional peacekeeping organization. But how effective is this reinvented UN, NATO, African Union or - if you like - any military ‘coalition of the willing’ at peace-
keeping? Or are private military companies better at it? Should we want them to do such operations or should they just fill some gaps?

I ask these questions because the change from a warfare organization into a peacekeeping organization (whether it is NATO, a national or private army) does not go without problems. In the second paragraph, I will try to shed a light on terms like war fighting, peacekeeping, state-terror, freedom fighters and terrorists because these terms are confused for reasons of public relations. In paragraph 3, I would like to focus on UN peacekeeping: its history, legitimacy and effectiveness. In paragraph 4, we will see that effective peacekeeping is an art very different from the art of effective warfare. I will explain that nevertheless soldiers are doing the job. The costs of peace in a competitive system of sovereign nation-states will be subject in paragraph 5. Here, I will consider the ‘enforcement of peace’ which is a veritable soldier’s job, but interestingly enough, soldiers are not queuing up. Why is that? In paragraph 6, I will consider the trade-off that has to be made between effectiveness and legitimacy. The UN or any regional organization might work more effectively and possibly cheaper with private security firms. The last part of my contribution tries to find an alternative for the dilemma sketched in paragraph 6. The trend is to privatize security. This is a policy choice with possible negative implications for the Weberian state. Why should citizens obey laws that are not enforced by the (democratically controlled) state but by (non-democratic) private entities? What happens with the public good of security if it becomes a private good? Citizens do not need to go that far if they do not want to.

2 Peace and War: Who Gets What When and Where?

Peacekeeping forces are effective if they secure (or at least contribute to securing) peace in a war torn society. But what is peace and what is war? What are root causes of a conflict? It is necessary to go into this, in order to understand how peacekeeping forces can contribute to peace.

Conflicts are about the distribution of scarce resources. Most conflicts are resolved peacefully; either by the invisible hand (the market) or by the state. “[M]any post-war realists seemed to forget that among the most vital political issues in either the domestic or the international domain was the question of material life: who gets what when and where. (...) Individuals, groups or states might revolt if they do not agree with the division of scarce resources. That this conflict [of who gets what when and where] periodically erupts into violence which in the international system we call war, is no more surprising than the social unrest or civil war at the domestic level.” (Stubbs/Underhill 2000: 10) Therefore it is not only the state that engages in