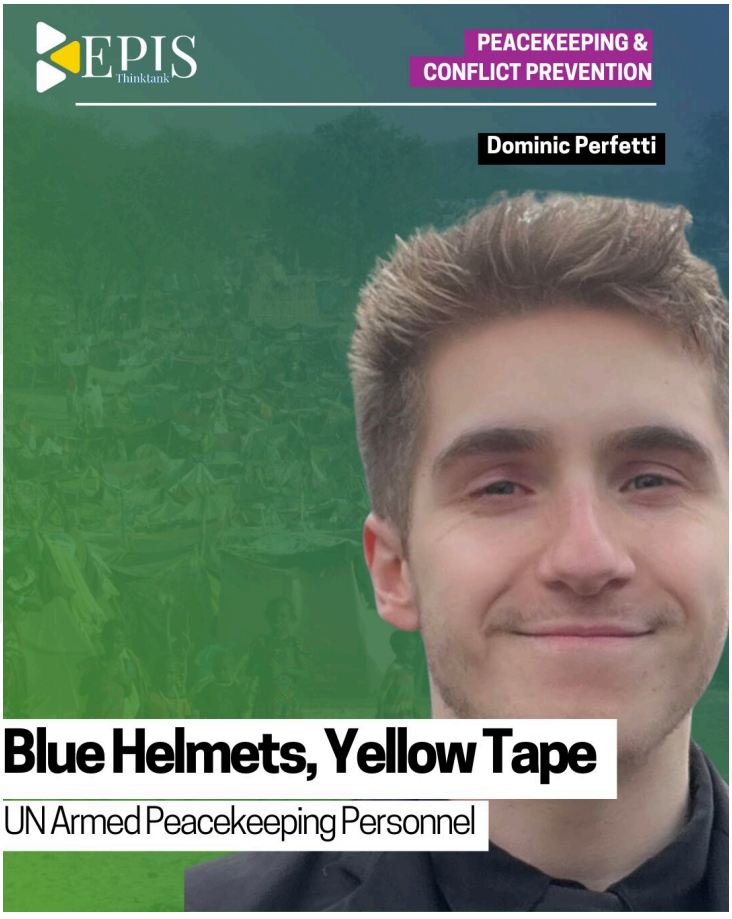
Blue Helmets, Yellow Tape

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Across eleven peacekeeping missions, approximately 60,000 UN Blue Helmets are currently deployed. The most recent mission is MINUSCA, where 14,400 military personnel have been protecting civilians and preserving order in the Central African Republic since 2014. As the leading global peacekeeping force, why are there no Blue Helmets in regions like Gaza and Ukraine?

Who are the Blue Helmets?

The Purpose of "Soldiers Without Enemies"

How are Blue Helmets Deployed?

Peacekeeping personnel are allocated and deployed when required by missions mandated by the UN Security Council. Peacekeeping missions are normally enacted with the consent of all parties in a conflict. If the Security Council mandates a mission but does not have the consent of all parties, it may invoke Chapter VII Article 42 of the UN charter to allow deployment without full consent. An example of this was UNMIK, the 1999 peacekeeping mission in Kosovo.

The charter prohibits a standing reserve, so personnel are allocated as needed. When a Security Council resolution authorises the deployment of Blue Helmets, individual UN member states voluntarily contribute personnel. The national composition of the Blue Helmets requires the consent of all stakeholders.

The Blue-Grey Area

The UN and its Blue Helmets are not universally regarded as a force of good. Critics have accused peacekeeping missions of neocolonialism and operational misconduct. Some scholars argue that the Blue Helmets reinforce a liberal global order rooted in Western norms and traditions. Consequences include perpetuating racial hierarchies and normalising international intervention. The professional background and nationality of the Blue Helmets has also been cited as contributing to partiality and ideologically driven practices.

More concretely, reports of misconduct have documented allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation by peacekeepers. Such misconduct is prohibited by the UN, as reflected by a "zero tolerance" policy. Efforts such as mandatory training on misconduct and internal investigations demonstrate the UN's stance, but have not fully resolved the problem. The requirement for consent by all stakeholders alongside these criticisms and scandals have further inhibited more widespread deployment of the Blue Helmets.

Consent and Constraints

UN peacekeeping is far from perfect and significant reforms remain necessary. Though Blue Helmets are unlikely to deploy to conflicts such as Ukraine, they aim to set global standards for international peacekeeping missions by providing security in post-conflict zones.

Further Reading Recommendation

UN Department of Public Information. (1990). The Blue Helmets : a review of United Nations peace-keeping. The United Nations Digital Library. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/105742?v=pdf

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