Gender Neutral?

Revisiting UN Cold War Peacekeeping

By Martin Ottovay Jørgensen

Abstract

Scholarship has not explored gender in relation to Cold War United Nations peacekeeping. I argue that this is far more problematic than a cursory glance would suggest. It has, I contend, important implications for UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding projects in the different 'mission areas' and their scholarly critiques, thus limiting the potential for profound change in how we go about both. By way of an analysis that begins to explore how gender informed the workings of the first UN peacekeeping operation in its 'mission area', I point to ways in which scholars can engage in challenging the status quo by historicising and gendering the undertakings of the UN in its multiple and diverse 'mission areas'. In doing so, I link neoliberalism to the deeper dynamics of inter-imperial modes of governance, which have never quite faded.

Keywords

Peacekeeping, gender, history, space, interdisciplinary

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On a warm summer afternoon, two off-duty – and unarmed – soldiers serving in a United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force entered the village near their observation post (OP). According to a villager witness, they were both drunk and searching loudly for women for sex. Unsurprisingly, they were dismissed by a young man at the first house they approached. In response, the two UN soldiers hit both the young man and a disabled man who had appeared. Consequently, several male villagers gathered and chased away the two soldiers. Fearing for his two younger sisters and mother, the young man who had been hit by the soldiers ordered his younger brother to take their sisters to their grandmother in another village. Still angry, the group of villagers went to the nearby UN observation post, operated by a squad of UN soldiers, and threw stones and empty beer cans (discarded by the soldiers) at the bastion. Otherwise unarmed and thus not able to engage armed soldiers directly without risking being killed, the villagers ran away before any soldiers appeared. On their way, however, the villagers encountered and beat up two other off-duty and unarmed UN soldiers headed for the OP. Shortly after the villagers and the younger brother returned to the village, three trucks loaded with UN soldiers drove into the village. Most families, a witness told a UN investigator, hid in fear, dreading the outbreak of war. On their part, the UN soldiers were also uncertain as to who had chased the two soldiers out of the village, thrown the stones at the OP and beaten the two UN soldiers. Nevertheless, they kicked in the door of the house of the young man, detained both him and his younger brother, and kept them locked up overnight before handing them over to the local police authorities.[1]

Undoubtedly, gender and feminist scholars will find such incidents and environments familiar. As of now, however, the episode lies well outside their scope: the incident, which involved Finnish soldiers and Palestinian villagers, took place in 1957 in a village in the Gaza Strip in the context of the first UN peacekeeping operation, the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF 1956-1967). Placing gender on the agenda, the fields of Feminist International Relations (IR), Feminist Security Studies, Feminist Peace Research, and Critical Military Studies (all of which emerged after the Cold War) have logically concentrated on present-day operations and neoliberalism (e.g. Cockburn and Zarkov 2002; Enloe 1993; Mazurana et al. 2005; Olsson and Tryggestad 2001; Rech et al. 2015; and Whitworth 2004). This has left Cold War operations and the history of international peacekeeping within that context to social scientists with little interest in gender.

Similarly, the field of Peacekeeping History (which also emerged after the Cold War) has neither explored gender nor cared for analytical perspectives anchored in the everyday life of Cold War UN peacekeeping (e.g. Carroll 2009; O'Malley 2015; Spooner 2010). Expressing interest only in (Cold War) geopolitics, UN diplomacy, and national foreign policy, the field has mirrored – and continues to mirror – the dominant, non-gendered and ahistorical research paradigm of the social sciences, especially IR, which have centred on legal and logistical matters, diplomacy and 'how-to-fix' approaches (e.g. Bowman and Fanning 1963; Bratt 1996; Jakobsen 2007; Korcek and Pucik 2007; and Krishnasamy 2010).

Consequently, the dominant non-gendered and ahistorical research on Cold War peacekeeping and peacebuilding has largely been left empirically unchallenged. This lacuna may seem immaterial. It is not. Mainstream research on Cold War peacekeeping, I contend, has not only been able to silence

– and keep silent – voices from past UN 'mission areas'. This body of research has also, I suggest, retained its hegemonic grip on what peacekeeping was and should be, how we create knowledge thereon, and, accordingly, how people, states and international institutions act on problems related to, or generated by, peacekeeping and peacebuilding in *current* 'mission areas'. Gender may well have become a formal dimension of UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding, but many gender and feminist scholars suggest that this reflects a process of hegemonic appropriation rather than systemic transformation (e.g. Harrington 2011; Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011). Gendering the UN peacekeeping 'mission areas' of the Cold War and their histories offers, I suggest, a potent means with which to challenge the hegemonic grip of mainstream research and the implications thereof at the UN, in current and future 'mission areas' and in peacekeeping and peacebuilding research.

In this article, I have accordingly three aims. Firstly, I wish to invite gender and feminist scholars working on these topics to reflect on the importance of both the UN Cold War operations and the histories of present-day peacekeeping 'mission areas' to their own work. Secondly, I equally wish to invite peacekeeping historians to reflect on the importance of gender to their field. Thirdly, I also hope to illustrate the need for scholars within these research fields to collaborate. To emphasize the importance of these aims and take a first step towards challenging mainstream research on UN Cold War peacekeeping, I begin here to explore empirically how gender informed both the making of UNEF's 'mission area' in the Gaza Strip and the broader presence of UNEF over time (from 1957 to 1967). This entails foregrounding not only UN soldiers, their units, Palestinians and their communities on the one hand, but also, on the other hand, their deeper histories, memories and the spaces in which they interact with one another. As the first UN peacekeeping operation, and thus the first 'mission area' of the UN, UNEF provides a good case in which to anchor this undertaking, not least as it has been used to build the myth of UN peacekeeping as a successful and desirable global good, a myth which continues to inform research, even that critical of current UN peacekeeping (e.g. Higate and Henry 2009; Rubinstein 2008).

The article consists of four sections. Initially, I turn to military sociologist Paul Higate and gender scholar Marsha Henry's reflections on gender and peacekeeping to build an analytical framework that is both familiar to gender researchers and suitable for historical research. I then turn to the methodological issues arising from 'excavating' gender in the UN Archive in New York. In the third and fourth sections, I then begin to explore how gender informed both the making of UNEF's 'mission area' and the broader presence of UNEF over time.

An Open-ended Analytical Framework on Gender, Space and Peacekeeping

In this exploratory article, I do not wish to engage in what the Critical Military Studies scholars Victoria Basham and Sarah Bulmer call "a preoccupation with the conceptual for its own sake" (Basham and Bulmer 2017, 62). Rather, I seek a flexible analytical framework that reflects how gender is, as feminist IR scholar Carol Cohn notes: "fluid, contingent and fragmented, something that is continually being produced" (Cohn 2013, 10), and thus tied to both space and time. While anchored in contemporary UN peacekeeping, Higate and Henry's analytical reflections on conflict, peacekeeping, space and gender (Higate and Henry 2009) link research fields that do not agree on the role of theory and enable empirical explorations of how gender in-

formed both the making of UNEF's 'mission area' and UNEF's broader presence in the Gaza Strip from 1957 to 1967.

Overall, Higate and Henry argue that, in a broader sense, "Peacekeeping missions are masculine spaces" (Higate and Henry 2009, 137) in which various conflict dynamics may linger on. In other words, peacekeeping revolves not only around gender, but also past conflicts and "space, how it is seen, the ways it is reconfigured by peacekeepers going about their security work, and, crucially, the impact these spatial-security practices have on those living and working in missions" (Higate and Henry 2009, 3). Thus emphasising complexity, they contend that these gendered spaces are "understood differently by different people and can be contested, fluid and uncertain" (Higate and Henry 2009, 16).

UN forces, Higate and Henry suggest, both perceive and operationalise space as military units. To Higate and Henry, this means that "the conditions of possibility generated by military-cartographic ways of engaging these particular spaces are necessarily limited and may default towards the use of force" (Higate and Henry 2009, 66). Yet, members of different UN military contingents must also not only be seen as generic 'international peacekeepers'. As soldiers deployed in national contingents, they are shaped by and shapers of gendered, ethnic and racial dynamics, and seen by locals in the 'mission area' as both being and doing so (Higate and Henry 2009, 119). As such, the presence of some UN military units and not others may intimidate communities, groups or individual residents within UN-controlled areas and/or restrict their movements between and within them, making these gendered regimes of 'micro-mobility'. However, these experiences of insecurity go beyond mere physical interactions and their material dimensions, enacting what Higate and Henry label "spaces of both symbolic and material insecurity" (Higate and Henry 2009, 21). For example, the broader presence of male UN soldiers may lead to gendered experiences of insecurity, especially amongst women exposed to gender-based violence both during and after conflict and/or left disadvantaged by unequal and conflict-driven socio-economic dynamics and power relations, which UN troops may subsequently exacerbate. Additionally, men may also feel insecure (Higate and Henry 2009, 141), either in concrete encounters or more broadly in relation to dominant discourses of, for example, marriage, fatherhood, motherhood etc. These experiences of gendered insecurity may also be informed by transgenerational memories of conflict within both families and communities (or parts thereof).

To recap, Higate and Henry argue that perceptions of security and insecurity in peacekeeping 'mission areas' are linked, gendered and spatial. Altogether, I see their analytical reflections as an empirically-oriented and open framework that allows for historical complexity, assigns importance to both space and gender, and, not least, foregrounds neither soldiers nor locals but places them both in the same analytical space, grants them equal analytical significance, considers their multiplicities, and links their gendered experiences.

'Excavating' Gender from the UN Archive and UNEF memoirs

To begin to explore gender in the Gaza Strip is both a question of finding sources and of challenging the hegemonic narrative of both UNEF and its promoters in the form of the UN, the troop contributing states, veterans, and mainstream researchers. I thus engage in what Marsha Henry, Paul Higate, and social justice scholar Gurchathen Sanghera call 'transformative politics', which requires the consideration of the power and privilege vested in us by networks and institutions and our intersectio-

nal personal habitus (Henry et al. 2009, 469). As a Western, white, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual and cisgender male researcher from a male-dominated and Western-centric discipline, my perspectives on life and work are certainly shaped by both privileges and riddled with blind spots. However, working in a supportive department in a relatively well-funded Western university means that I have been able to gain access to valuable sources and publications to support the transformative politics of gender and feminist scholars working on contemporary UN peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding.

The politics of access, which, from a Palestinian perspective, connect to transgenerational memories of ethnic cleansing and lives of dispossession following the destruction of Palestine during and after the war in 1948, prevented me from going to the Gaza Strip to interview elderly Palestinians (and Bedouin) with memories of the UN force. To avoid giving further voice to the hegemonic narrative, I also chose not to interview UNEF veterans and administrative staff. This left me with written documents produced mainly by UN units – the Egyptian-Israeli Military Armistice Commission (EIMAC) and UNEF – while they were operational and subsequently memoirs written later by UNEF veterans.

Produced within the context of either unequal and gendered power relations in the 'mission area' or the self-promotional narrative, EIMAC and UNEF records and UNEF memoirs link back to the ways in which the British, and later the Zionist settler organisations, then Israel as well as the UN, have collected economic and demographic data on Palestinian communities and framed discourses on peace, conflict, and peacekeeping (Fischbach 2011; Hoffman 2013). When the Zionist forces established the state of Israel on the territory of Palestine, they not 'only' expulsed more than 800,000 Palestinians. They also obtained the existing British records and committed what could be called a cultural genocide, by destroying Palestinian villages and material heritage. Most surviving books and records ended up in the new Israeli National Archive in Jerusalem. Similar actions may well have taken place during the occupations of the Gaza Strip from 1956 to 1957 and again from 1967 to 2005. Consequently, Palestinians have little access (Masalha 2012; Nasser 2003). The records of both EIMAC and UNEF are thus Palestinian material heritage. To get access, however, one needs a visa to the US, ties to a research institution, the capacity to travel, a command of written and spoken English and funding to live in New York during several weeks of archival work. In this way, unfortunately, very few Palestinians will ever get access. Here, my privileges as a scholar at a Western institution become useful.

Besides the issue of access, the UN records have other limitations. UNEF and EIMAC's own purpose, practice, and needs as well as the UN's archival requirements not only defined what was recorded. Appraisal policies also led to either the destruction or the transfer of records from the Gaza Strip to New York. Since, the UN Archive has also destroyed records in line with its centralised appraisal policies. Moreover, one does not find archival records entitled 'gender', 'masculinity', etc. Rather, these topics must be understood as silences in the material that need unpacking. However, given that the UN Archive is an active site in which narratives of Cold War peacekeeping and gender are negotiated, there is much to 'excavate' from these records.

As for records, I use records from two UN institutions working in the 'mission area': EIMAC and UNEF itself. Whereas UNEF and its approximately 6,000 troops arrived in the Gaza Strip from Egypt in March 1957, a handful of EIMAC observers had been present on the *de facto* border between Israel and the Gaza Strip, the Armistice Demarcation Line (ADL),

since the war in 1949. Specifically, I use internal correspondence and reports from UNEF. From EIMAC, I use incident reports (such as that used in the introduction). As already hinted, Palestinians – especially children, youth, women and the elderly – are not the main actors in their own fragmented histories as these appear in the records. Rather, they often figure as 'problems': as involved in incidents, as troublesome employees, etc. In doing so, however, they both claim and provide evidence of their agency, which in turn lets us explore the complexity of the gendered negotiation of the UN presence.

Similarly, published UN soldiers' memoirs, diaries, and letters do similarly not explicitly foreground Palestinian children, youth, and women, let alone gender and masculinity. Nevertheless, they are also valuable as sources. Indeed, feminist peace scholar Claire Duncanson sees such accounts as useful for exploring how soldiers make sense of peacekeeping, depicting in detail their thoughts, everyday lives and habits (Duncanson 2009, 67). This is also the case here.

Additionally, I have also made use of my access to both Western libraries and bookshops stocking historiographical works on British, Palestinian, Jewish and Israeli history. As will be clear, these works are central in interpreting the records, since the gendered dynamics of both imperialism and conflict deeply informed the making of UNEF's 'mission area' and its broader presence from 1957 to 1967.

Gender and History in The Initial Negotiation of UNEF's 'Mission Area'

Heading into their 'mission area-to-be' as the Israeli occupation forces withdrew in March 1957, most of the approximately 6,000 soldiers in UNEF's different contingents probably knew little either of the history of the Gaza Strip or of the recent crimes of the Israeli occupation forces, judging by published memoirs and diaries (e.g. Jensen 2005; Kjeldsen 1958; Letts 2010; Sköld 1990). In extension thereof, the soldiers probably saw their future 'mission area' as an area, which they were to take control of rather than as a delicate, tested, and militarised space (to use the framing of Higate and Henry).

The Gaza Strip came into being in the 1948 war as a tiny slice of the Southern Province of Palestine under Egyptian military control. In ruins and isolated, it was instantly overpopulated due to the forced Zionist expulsion of more than 220,000 Palestinians into the area, where 80,000 residents were already taxing the fragile eco-system. Disease became rampant, and NGOs and eventually the UN began offering aid. While the new United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) managed to eradicate some diseases, malnutrition remained a problem for years. With so many people forcibly displaced, wealthy families became middle-class refugees, the middle-class poor refugees, and the poor even poorer refugees. This was reinforced by the war-torn, Egyptian-run and class-driven economy, which distorted salaries and kept the unemployment rate in the new territory well over 80% (Baster 1955), while Egypt both outlawed unions and political parties, initiated political surveillance, and built up a visible military presence (Feldman 2011). People also grew further disillusioned as the horizon of return diminished (Feldman 2000).

As pressure mounted, the already patriarchal gender dynamics most probably hardened further and revolved especially, though not exclusively, around masculine nationalism; ideas of land ownership, labour, courage and masculinity; the gendered roles within the family and the family home; and imagined links between female bodies' reproductive capacities and the Palestinian nation (Duke 2018; Fleischmann 2003; 2000; 1999; Massad

1995). The inability to protect family and nation in the war may thus have been one factor. Gaza Strip refugee masculinities were likely also challenged by the loss of homes, land and wealth, dispossession, dependence on the UN system for survival, and the turn to surrounding Arab states for political support and leadership. Not surprisingly, the number of Palestinian male militants increased from 1948 onwards (Bartal 2011).

Additionally, UN support from the late 1940's may also have intensified these gender dynamics until the Gaza Strip became a 'mission area' in March 1957. The British educational system in Mandate Palestine had educated mostly boys and men and thus strengthened Palestinian patriarchy (Greensberg 2001). While the UN built more education institutions than had the British and both primary and secondary school attendance amongst refugee children improved from 1948, the UN education system continued the practice of educating more boys and men than women and girls. In 1954, for example, only 18.3% of Palestinian girls versus 39.9% of Palestinian boys attended school. In the same year, only 1.2% of the girls continued into secondary school while 15.1% of boys did. After having studied home economics, weaving and similar gendered skills in UNRWA schools in the refugee camps, most girls were married off for dowries precisely for these skills, to face lives in refugee camps and poor villages and to reproduce the Palestinian nation by bearing children. Perhaps, if lucky, they would also weave small items for self-reliance, or work on farms for vegetables or small wages. Even fewer young women with secondary school education became teachers, midwives or nurses, or worked in self-run textile co-ops (UNRWA 1954). For many refugee women and girls, 'UN-supported motherhood' thus became the main if not only horizon.

Further buttressing Palestinian patriarchy in the future UN 'mission area', the UN system would enable male students to attend vocational training and higher education courses on engineering and low level management, for example (UNRWA 1954). Reduced to dependency by 1948, thousands of men, however, had their roles as husbands, fathers, bread winners and family heads – and futures as such – suspended, creating what can be described as a masculinity crisis. Some men drifted towards militancy, especially at the ADL. In 1952, for example, Israeli security forces estimated that women and children made up 43% of the groups that returned to their former homes and villages to harvest (in the early years), gather possessions, or steal items in Israeli settlements. In mid-1956, this number was down to 25% (Korn 2003), which coincided with more Palestinian men and adolescents mounting uncoordinated attacks on Israeli settlements (Bartal 2011). Israel initiated a shoot-to-kill-policy, which from 1952 to 1956 both hardened the ADL space (as the numbers of organised 'hostile' incursions into Israel and killed Palestinians grew, the latter estimated between 2,700 and 5,000 (Korn 2003)) and turned it into a space governed by opposing notions of militant and military masculinities. A Palestinian biography, for example, suggests that militant deaths increased recruitment amongst younger men (Baroud 2010). In late 1956, the ADL dynamics (despite Egypt enlisting militants to fight the British in the Suez Canal area) and Egyptian arms purchases led Israel to invade both the Gaza Strip and Egypt, the latter with Great Britain and France (Laron 2009; Thornhill 2006). In the Gaza Strip, Israeli forces committed massacres, looted homes, patrolled the larger towns with tanks and raided refugee camps and homes, thus creating new traumas, re-actualising trans-generational memories and further militarising public spaces and everyday life. (Cossali and Robson 1986; Filiu 2014; Masalha 1997).

If viewed through the prism of Higate and Henry, the Gaza Strip appears not only

overpopulated, poverty-struck and militarised by the time UNEF arrived, but also deeply informed by gendered and transgenerational experiences and memories of imperialism, conflict and insecurity. These would inform the negotiation of the arrival and the continued presence of UNEF.

Already before arriving to the border town Rafah (through which they entered the Gaza Strip), Danish, Norwegian, and Canadian units would see the combination of their imperial and colonial legacies, military cultures and previous assignments inform their discourses and practices, according to published memoirs, letters, and diary excerpts. They bonded with the often battle-hardened British and French imperial invasion troops in the Suez Canal area and thus also aligned their norms of whiteness and masculinity. They regarded progress as a Western gift to the world and stereotyped what they referred to as Arabs (as both Egyptians and Palestinians were mostly called) as emotional and feminine (e.g. Burns 1962; Jensen 2005; Kjeldsen 1958; Letts 2010; Swettenham 1959). Naturally, UNEF's arrival and initial negotiation of its future 'mission area' would not go well.

Possessing better understandings of the Gaza Strip and its predicaments than the units of UNEF, both the Eisenhower administration and UN Secretary-General Hammarskjöld, who were working closely to secure the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, agreed that the UN should provide "a UN administration in Gaza, not of Gaza".[2] On the 7th of March 1957, however, shortly after arriving in the early hours, UNEF installed military governors in several towns and sent out vehicles with speakers communicating that UNEF had "responsibility for civil affairs in the Gaza Strip" and that people should "remain quiet" (Burns 1962, 261). Performing 'the mission area' in this pointlessly muscular and confrontational way is likely to have irked Palestinian militants as well as the wider Palestinian population, given the further hardening of gender dynamics of the Gaza Strip following the Israeli occupation.

UNEF memoirs and published letters and diary excerpts suggest that UNEF misstepped again the same day, failing to release some 300 prisoners in the main police station in Gaza City whom the Israeli occupation forces had imprisoned for political reasons. As the prisoners rioted in what had been the bastion of both British and Israeli forces – and thus the strongest symbol of occupation and military violence – a Danish unit used tear gas, batons and warning shots instead of dealing with it quietly. Elsewhere in Gaza City, a non-violent demonstration of both women and men 'forced' soldiers from another Danish unit to barricade themselves in a school behind barbed wire and sandbags, to mount heavy machine guns, and to adopt a posture of 'combat readiness', which meant carrying personal weapon(s), all ammunition, and additional tear gas grenades.

Whether the Danish soldiers came to embody vulnerable military masculinities or their opposite, they were under fire during the night. Once again turning to hegemonic and masculine posturing, UNEF banned both larger meetings and all forms of unapproved demonstrations across the entire Gaza Strip the next day. Rather than defusing the situation, trust therefore broke down during the only approved demonstration, which took place in Gaza City. The situation deteriorated when the Danish units, after firing tear gas grenades, sounding warning shots and mounting bayonets, killed a demonstrator with a ricochet bullet. As people began throwing stones, the Danish platoon had to call on their Danish colleagues – who arrived in kitchen clothes and underwear – and on a Norwegian platoon and the entire Brazilian battalion to keep control of the situation (Burns 1962; Jensen 2005; Kjeldsen 1958; Sköld 1990). Fortunately, most UNEF units were guarding water pumping installations, power stations, and other 'vulnerable points', rather

than engendering anger and insecurity in towns and villages.

Peacekeeping, as Higate and Henry note, revolves around gendered and spatial perceptions of security and insecurity, and, I want to add, history and agency. Certainly, locals and UN soldiers saw matters differently. The Egyptian government, which saw UNEF's first week as a replay of the strong Palestinian 1954 refusal to accept the relocation of 50,000 Gaza Strip refugees to the Sinai Desert, both reinstated its governor and instructed him and the Gaza Strip press to portray UNEF as an ally in order to prevent Gaza City from influencing the rest of the Gaza Strip and potentially causing another war with Israel (Burns 1962; Jensen 2005). In other words, Cairo and New York had to reconsider UNEF's 'mission area' due to gendered posturing, miscalculations and Palestinian resolve.

UNEF as Gendered Insecurity and Imperialism on 'Repeat'?

As noted, unarmed and non-violent Palestinians effectively did away with a transitional UN regime. UNEF thus gradually pulled out of towns to the ADL and established a joint security regime with the returning Egyptian forces (Burns 1962). While the creation of a joint (and gendered) security assemblage came faster than anticipated, UNEF's role and anticipated 'mission area' did not change fundamentally. Certainly, it did not, in the terms of Higate and Henry, shift from its military-cartographic way of viewing, engaging, militarising, and gendering space to one sensitive to the experiences and memories of the Gaza Strip's Palestinian refugee and non-refugee population.

Before UNEF's arrival, EIMAC observers had envisioned a security regime, which on the Gaza Strip side of the 59-kilometre long ADL would entail a series of permanent or semi-permanent watch towers with barbed-wire and defensive positions, a fence, and a patrol road that would allow both foot and motorised patrols. They also proposed a 100-yard wide 'no-go' zone on both sides of the ADL and aerial reconnaissance for the Israeli-Egyptian border, which occasionally saw Bedouins cross. UNEF adapted the proposed ADL regime, only skipping a presence in Israel (as Tel Aviv rejected this) and a fence in favour of a less aggressive bulldozed trench and concrete markers.[3] Indeed, UNEF's surveillance regime – in the form of 72 watch towers with overlapping lines of sight, mobile hourly day and night patrol patterns, a field telephone network and 27 nearby platoon camps in addition to the seven battalion headquarters and 13 company headquarters – not only established a real-time surveillance and regulatory system vaster than anything the British ever commanded. Tellingly, it also mirrored the late 1940's British security forces (Hughes 2013; Thomas 2008), with its multi-national force of some 6,000 soldiers in light infantry and armoured reconnaissance units, light reconnaissance aircraft and small investigatory corps of observers. In doing so, UNEF further militarised not only the existing (primarily demographic) UN surveillance of the Palestinians, but also the ADL to a hitherto unseen degree, and, in extension thereof, also challenged the Palestinian negotiation of masculinities in the Gaza Strip, especially near the ADL.

The formation of the new joint Egyptian-UN assemblage soon amplified the existing socio-economic pressures and linked gender dynamics. Seven weeks in, an internal UNEF report admitted that "The cost of living in Gaza continues to rise as more UNEF funds are spent in the area. Many locals are complaining that there is no rent or price control as formerly".[4] The rising prices further challenged the economy, which was still a war-economy run by "the Egyptians, sometimes in tandem with old rich Gazan families" (Shachar 2010, 67). As historian Nathan Shachar notes, these

two groups "functioned as a superior caste, controlling and taxing every economic initiative, from prostitution – the cheap brothels of Gaza were well known in Cairo and drew many visitors – to the valuable and beneficial projects" (Shachar 2010, 67).

One aspect of the economy was the sale of citrus fruits (from farms owned by the pro-Egyptian Palestinian large land owners) to Eastern European markets, in return for machinery and construction materials. Another was the remittances from Palestinian men (whom Egypt allowed to migrate to the Gulf States to relieve socio-economic pressure), transferred through Lebanon where Gazan traders would then buy consumer goods to sell to middle-class Egyptians visiting the Gaza Strip (Cossali and Robson 1986). The UN itself did not offer much respite either. While UNRWA employed nearly 7,000 Palestinian men and women as teachers, camp workers and so on, UNEF took on only 1,000-1,500 Palestinian men, many of whom ended up in unskilled labour such as cooks, kitchen aids, drivers, barbers and security guards for officers' villas, and even more as part time casual day labourers, none of whom had the right to organise or strike.[5]

In some cases, Palestinian men seeking casual labour at the UN military bases were so desperate to find work to support their families – and regain their roles as breadwinners if even just temporarily – that they would not only gather at the UN bases, but storm the base gate when UN trucks entered, resulting in the UN guards firing on the crowd and wounding and killing desperate job seekers.[6] A few women managed to find work as cleaners, employed by UN officers' wives (Shachar 2010). As the economy offered few options, social pressures also mounted. Throughout 1957, Egypt sought to accommodate this by making the Gaza Strip a tax-free zone, offering subsidies for basic food supplies and appointing a few Palestinian men to a new municipal council in Gaza City and the Egyptian-run administration (Cossali and Robson, 1986). As a result, the situation of some Palestinians improved. Yet for most it did not. As before, many turned to the fields and the ADL, and hence to UNEF, to deal with their concerns. While an extreme case, an EIMAC incident report describes a young Palestinian refugee woman trying to commit suicide. She had been married off to an elderly male refugee with no means to sustain them and had provoked soldiers hoping that they would shoot her: "I crossed the ADL because I am angry with this life and wanted to be killed."[8] While this suicide attempt may have been unique in relation to interactions between Palestinian women and UNEF soldiers, it is still illustrative of the struggles for a liveable life in the Gaza Strip and the pressures on the Gaza Strip's broader gender dynamics.

The various forms of ADL interactions between Palestinians and UNEF soldiers thus reflected broader gender dynamics of the Gaza Strip. For example, women working the fields as day labourers or on their families' small lots of land near the ADL often encountered UN soldiers. Typically, they were left alone to seed, harvest, or pick grass for their cattle and sheep, despite being close to the ADL. They would be harassed in various ways: detained for trespassing and handed over to the Egyptian security forces, chased for kilometres after fleeing or compelled to stand their ground and defend themselves against the UN soldiers with fists or knives, seeing them as aggressors.[7] Similarly, the incident outlined in the introduction also shows that UN soldiers near the ADL were seeking to sexually exploit women. Other still sealed UNEF records may be able to ascertain how commonplace these harassments were. While most interactions between UN soldiers and Palestinian girls and women are likely to have been less controversial, the more tense encounters appear to have tested, if not defied, the perceived links be-

tween the (sacred) female Palestinian body, its reproductive capacity, and Palestinian nationhood as well as the notions of male pride and ownership over female bodies, both of which, as mentioned above, came to the fore in the 1948 war (Fleischman 2003).

Similarly, the interactions between Palestinian men and adolescents and UN soldiers also varied within the negotiations of space, authority, vulnerable masculinities, and race. Most often, it appears, male peasants, day labourers, and boys selling fruits to soldiers or walking off a 'fatherly' beating were left alone. In other cases, they clashed with UN soldiers, resulting in them being detained, beaten, and, more rarely, in being wounded or killed.[9] However, many Palestinians attacked UNEF during the first year, seeing its soldiers as stand-ins for the Israelis, as curtailing geographical mobilities, as harassing and assaulting Palestinian women, and as taking fertile land for the ADL. A few weeks after arriving, for example, a Brazilian unit (perhaps enacting its mixed heritage of racist colonial military culture with its then contemporary counter-insurgency operations in the Amazon (Beattie 2001; Smallman 2000)) was attacked with redeployed Egyptian or Israeli mines, a tactic used against both British and Israeli forces.[10] Palestinian militants' incursions into Israel continued, although they decreased in frequency from 1958 (Korn 2003). In some cases, Palestinians also fired on UNEF bases with hundreds of troops.[11] In other words, the broader gender dynamics of the Gaza Strip almost 'encouraged' Palestinian men to challenge UNEF to assert their manliness just as UNEF's ADL regime more than just occasionally challenged Palestinian masculinities in relation to the significance attached to the access to land, hegemonic posturing, and revenge incursions into Israel.

The outlined gender dynamics at the ADL may be understood as further reinforced by Israeli fighter jets' aerial deterrence and reconnaissance patrols. After they began in 1958 following the merger of Egypt and Syria into a single state, UNEF could do little about them to the anger of Palestine and Egypt. Well aware of this, Israel may have made the intimidation a goal in itself. For example, estimates from one UN contingent alone put 41% of the sightings of Israeli fighter jets between April 1959 and April 1961 as illegally entering the air space of Egypt and the Gaza Strip. While highlighting Palestinian defencelessness repeatedly, aerial incursions over the territory of the Gaza Strip may not seem a manifestation of gender. However, we may see the Gaza Strip as the territorial manifestation of both a defeated Palestinian nation and an emasculated nationalism on the one hand and the Egyptian control of the Gaza Strip and the presence of UN military forces as further embarrassments to Gaza Strip masculinities in extension thereof on the other. In this view, each Israeli overflight of the ADL could be understood as one painful Israeli penetration of the Palestinian body politic after the other, something that Palestinian men were yet again unable to prevent.[12]

Away from the ADL, UNEF soldiers also continued to produce more than fleeting moments of gendered insecurity. In traffic, for example, families in the overcrowded area came to fear UNEF. In the first six months, soldiers were involved in 77 accidents, some of which were fatal. In 1960, UNEF averaged 10 accidents a month, often involving young men speeding or being drunk.[14] Drinking – and related behaviour – caused problems from the beginning. Having anticipated more exciting tasks than occasionally capturing peasants, several UN soldiers found their duties boring and not manly enough. For example, the Finnish soldiers were known as "hard soldiers and hard drinkers who treated the inactive role of the UNEF as a joke" (Swettenham 1959, 1). Unsurprisingly, the Egyptian liaison officer had to request UN-

EF to prevent its soldiers from accessing the brothels of Gaza City already in August 1957, possibly being compelled to do so by drunk and brawling UN soldiers, who may have irritated the Egyptian clientele and angered Palestinians.[15] Accordingly, UNEF began to send its soldiers on rest and recreation in both Cairo and Beirut. This, in turn, (predictably) caused concern when soldiers began to acquire – and spread – sexually transmitted diseases in the Red-Light District of Beirut and amongst sex workers in Cairo, where prostitution was illegal and thus a dangerous undertaking for the involved women. However, UNEF saw these women – rather than its soldiers – as spreading the diseases, and thus as 'dangerous'.[16]

From 1958 onwards, however, dynamics at the ADL began to change, as various Egyptian policies changed the lives of a growing number of people, especially men, and thus relieved pressures on Palestinian masculinities. More men found (precarious) work in the landed elite's citrus plantations, which expanded after the Gaza Strip became tax free in 1957. The Persian Gulf immigration scheme also shipped out young men, leading to remittances (Baroud 2010; Cossali and Robson 1986; Filiu 2014). Forced by peasants and large land owners, Egypt also nudged UNEF into a compensation scheme for land use and land/property damage.[13] Politically, Egypt also sought to reign in Palestinian militancy. Outside the Gaza Strip, Cairo and Washington put "the Arab-Israeli issue 'in the icebox', insulated alike from war and diplomacy" (Salim Yaqub 2004, 70). Within the Gaza Strip, Cairo also reformed its groups of Palestinian militants into a larger Egyptian-run, Palestinian-staffed border corps (1958), allowed the establishment of Palestinian nationalist organisations such as *Fatah* (1959), decreed a constitution (1962), and set up the Palestinian Liberation Army (1964). Finally, it recruited Palestinian militants to fight in its proxy war against Saudi Arabia in Yemen from 1963 (Baroud 2010; Filiu 2014; Sayigh 1998). Clearly these policies, rather than the presence of UNEF, led to the decreasing pressures on the ADL and on Palestinian masculinities.

Altogether, it seems fair to say that UNEF did not change its posture, norms, and practices after having withdrawn to the ADL. Rather, the circumstances around it changed.

In Lieu of a Conclusion: Now What?

The emergence of feminist and gender research on UN peacekeeping at the end of the Cold War brought several political and scholarly achievements. Nevertheless, UN Cold War peacekeeping has remained within the confines of what I call mainstream peacekeeping and peacebuilding research. This is not merely a scholarly lacuna. Rather, it has severe implications for the scholarly critique of UN peacekeeping and the potential for deeper reform.

Against the backdrop of Higate and Henry's open-ended analytical reflections on conflict, peacekeeping, gender, and space, I have therefore sought to begin to explore empirically – if only briefly – how gender, while unstable, informed both the making of UNEF's 'mission area' in the Gaza Strip – the UN's first 'mission area' – and the presence of its numerous contingents and their different units while it was operational. Although short, the analysis suggests that the existing gender dynamics were key to how various members of different Palestinian communities understood and interacted with the soldiers of the different UN units, who on their part both reactualised some aspects of the previous modes of governance of the 'mission area' and the imperial legacies of their own military cultures in these interactions. While merely exploratory, the analysis have made clear both that the first UN Cold War

peacekeeping operation was not gender neutral and that the problems recent feminist and gender scholars have pointed to in relation to post-Cold War operations are in fact not new but most likely have been part and parcel of UN peacekeeping from the very first operation. If anything, many of the problems appear to reflect how the post-1945 paradigm of global governance very much recycled doctrines, norms and strategies from the prior paradigm of inter-imperial governance. Or, as noted by the philosopher of history Frank Ankersmit, "big problems have long histories; and as long as we remain in the dark about these histories we shall be unable to deal with them" (Ankersmit 2007, 186). In extension thereof, I believe we need to rethink how historical empirically-oriented scholarship can serve as powerful critique. As Guldi and Armitage argue, "Renewing the connection between past and future, and using the past to think critically about what is to come, are the tools we need now" (Guldi and Armitage 2015, 13).

Put differently, interdisciplinary dialogue is urgent and necessary. UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding – and the growing number of missions, rising troop numbers, larger budgets and broader mandates – will only grow in systemic importance, as the numbers of conflicts, Internally Displaced People and refugees in the Global South increase, amplified by resource depletion and climate change (Rüttinger et al. 2015). The problems we face both transcend disciplinary boundaries and disagreements and stand to intensify. Collaboration seems less a choice than an obligation?

Notes

1. "Incident Rep" 3 Jul 1957, Compl. & Invest. Apr-Jun 1957, Gaza Strip, Area Files, EIMAC, Pol. Affairs, EIMAC, S-0375-0073-0003, UNA
2. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. 17, Doc. 194
3. "Cable from UNEF Commander to Acting Chief of Staff UNTSO" 26 Feb 1957, Israel Admin. of GAZA Jan-Mar 1957, Gaza Strip, Area Files, Pol. Affairs, EIMAC, S-0375-0069-0005, UNA
4. "Summary of General Situation" from Chairman EIMAC to Chief of Staff UNTSO, 22 Apr 1957, Weekly Rep 1957, Reports, Pol. Affairs, EIMAC, S-0375-0028-0003, UNA
5. "UNEF HQ Analysis of locally recr. civ. staff" 23 Sept 1958, Estimates 1958, Local Staff, Chief Adm. Off. Files, S-1773-0000-0004, UNA
6. E.g. "Incident Report" 18 April 1957, Complaints and Investigations April 1957- June 1957, Gaza Strip, Area Files, EIMAC, Pol. Affairs, EIMAC, S-0375-0073-0003, UNA
7. E.g. "Incident Rep" 3 Jan 1958, Compl. & Invest. Jan-Jun 1958, Gaza Strip, Area Files, Pol. Affairs, EIMAC, S-0375-0067-0002, UNA and "Incident Rep" 23 Apr 1958, Compl. & Invest. Jan-June 1958, Gaza Strip, Area Files, Pol. Affairs, EIMAC, S-0375-0067-0002, UNA
8. "Incident Rep" 7 Mar 1958, Compl. & Invest. Jan-Jun 1958, Gaza Strip, Area Files, Pol. Affairs, EIMAC, S-0375-0067-0002, UNA
9. E.g. "Incident Rep" 2 Apr 1957, Compl. & Invest. Apr-Jun 1957, Gaza Strip, Area Files, EIMAC, Pol. Affairs, EIMAC, S-0375-0073-0003, UNA, "Incident Rep" 14 Jun 1957, Compl. & Invest. Apr-Jun 1957, Gaza Strip, Area Files, EIMAC, Pol. Affairs, EIMAC, S-0375-0073-0003, UNA and "Incident Rep" 27 Aug 1957, Compl. & Invest. Jul-Dec 1957, Gaza Strip, Area Files, Pol. Affairs, EIMAC, S-0375-0067-0001, UNA
10. "Incident Rep" 4 Apr 1957, Compl. & Invest. Apr-Jun 1957, Gaza Strip, Area Files, EIMAC, Pol. Affairs, EIMAC, S-0375-0073-0003, UNA
11. "Incident Rep" 29 Nov 1959, Compl. & Invest. May-Dec 1959, Gaza Strip, Area Files, Pol. Affairs, EIMAC, S-0375-0067-0004, UNA
12. DANOR BN, "Final Rep from DANOR BN VI-IX", 1959-1961
13. E.g. Message "Dam. to Civ. Prop." from UNEF Commander, 20 Jan 1965, Land Claims, Contracts, Leases, Insurance and Claims, Privileges and Immunities of UNEF, Legal Affairs, Chief Admin. Off. Files, S-1773-0000-0004, UNA
14. "Sum. Roll of Traffic acc. 1956-1960", undated 1960, Series II: Traffic Acc., Non-fatal Inj., Prop. Dam. (1956-1960), UN Field Service, S-0534-0228, UNA and "Sum. Roll of Traffic acc. 1956-1960", undated 1960, Series II: Traffic Acc., Non-fatal Inj., Prop. Dam. (156-1960), UN Field Service, S-0534-0228,

15. UNA "Minutes" UNEF and Egyptian Liaison Staff, 7 Aug 1957, Gaza Admin. Rep Nos 23 thru to 53, UN Field Service, S-0534-0252, UNA
16. "Letter on nightclubs from LAU to Chief Admin. Off." 16 Nov 1960, Cairo Leave Center, 1960-1962, Add. CAO Files, UNEF, S-1773-0000-0043, UNA

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