



The UN as a competitive arena for linked ecologies: The case of UN peacekeeping

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Abstract: This article argues that the UN, in the area of peacekeeping, can be understood as a competitive arena, where informal policy alliances are competing to frame issues and build support for new norms, concepts and rules. These norms, concepts or rules may be advanced on altruistic grounds, or to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation. To theorise these phenomena, the article turns to the sociology of professions to describe how different professional environments, or ecologies, can link up and make policy alliances to advance new norms, prescripts, rules and concepts. To exemplify these theoretical arguments, the article in the third section uses the advancement of the norm of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) as an example.

Key words: linked ecologies, norm change, peacekeeping, professions, legitimacy.

Introduction

In recent years increasing autonomy and indirect agency has been accorded to IOs in constructivist literature, looking at how IOs at times act in contradiction to prescripts set by its constituencies – the member states. These instances of agency have been described as ‘dysfunctional behaviour’, ‘pathologies’, or ‘organised hypocrisy’ (Barnett and Finnemore, 1999; 2004; Weaver, 2008; Lipson, 2007). Other authors have sought to expand the notion of agency in IOs and looked how individuals can constitute a viable unit of analysis, proposing that the UN Secretary-General can be considered a norm entrepreneur (Johnstone, 2007).

This article seeks to further refine some of these analyses. The article argues that small and large member states, academic institutions, think-tanks and individuals at key positions play a role in the normative change processes that are taking place. The article looks at the thematic sub-area of UN peacekeeping to further explore these phenomena.

The article outlines some of the existing theories for understanding the behaviour of IOs in the second section. Norm change processes in IOs have so far been covered only to a limited extent in the extant literature. As mentioned above, there have been some recent attempts to broaden our understanding in strands of rationalist and constructivist literature, and in recent years there has also emerged some literature looking at organisational learning in the UN, and in particular in peacekeeping, that is very relevant (Benner *et al.*, 2011; Koch, 2009). These strands of literature have in common that they are describing autonomy and agency within IOs, generally in negative terms, such as bureaucratic spoiling, dissent-shirking, obstruction, sabotage, pathological behaviour, and organised hypocrisy (Trettin and Junk, forthcoming; Lipson, 2007; Barnett and Finnemore, 2004; Nielson *et al.*, 2006; Weaver, 2008). This article does not deny that this kind of behaviour is taking place, but tries to expand the understanding of norm change processes and who are involved in these processes.

Recent literature has pointed to the role of the 'Third UN' (Weiss *et al.*, 2009), showing how academics, civil society and statesmen have had an impact on norm formation and change in the UN. This article agrees to this, and builds a theoretical framework to conceptualize the interaction between these actors and the UN. The article argues that the UN, in the area of peacekeeping, can be understood as a competitive arena, where informal policy alliances are competing to frame issues and build support for new norms, concepts and rules. The UN can be understood as an arena in two senses. First, in the traditional sense, the UN is an arena where states further their interests. However, in a second and wider understanding, multilateral policy processes to further norms in the UN are often informal and much time and effort is spent to build ownership and buy-in among member states. These processes often involve academic institutions, think tanks and civil society, as well as diplomats on various levels.

The norms, concepts or rules may be advanced on altruistic grounds, or to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation. To theorise these phenomena, the article turns to the sociology of professions to describe how different professional environments, or ecologies, can link up and make policy alliances to advance new norms, prescripts, rules and concepts. States are not the only actors, NGOs, academic institutions, think-tanks, sections within the UN and powerful individuals are active constituents and guardians of the values of the organisation. The working level is particularly important. To exemplify these theoretical

arguments, the article in the third section uses the advancement of the norm of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) as an example.

Understanding anomalous behaviour and norm change in IOs

IOs' behaviour can be explained using rational theory that describes behaviour and practices of IOs as a functional consequence of the influence of powerful member states (Waltz, 1979; 2000; Koremenos *et al.*, 2001; Krasner, 2009). Rational institutionalism is interested in how states can minimize transaction costs through the functional design of IOs, but do not accord significant agency to the IO or their constituent parts. As these theories do not ascribe agency to IOs, they have difficulty in explaining instances where IOs act in contradiction to the intention of member states and even powerful member states. As Barnett and Finnemore have observed, drawing upon the work of Weber, the problem with these theories is that they pay "little attention to how IOs actually behave after they are created" (1999:699).

Theorising IOs as bureaucracies

Examining IOs as bureaucracies, Barnett and Finnemore give examples of IOs and their staff acting autonomously in ways unintended and unanticipated at their foundation, showing that IOs are capable of creating their own norms, rules, and practices independent of, and unintended by, their creators (*ibid.*). Bureaucracies are composed of rules and are constantly reinterpreting old rules and producing new rules, defining the behaviour of the organisation, its officials and member states alike. Rules are explicit or implicit norms and regulations guiding, proscribing or prescribing action, defining the world and constitutive of the identity and culture of the organisation. The rules and norms of the organisation is more than bound rationality, distinct from its environment, they shape the rationality of the actors of the organisation and guide individual action. The relationship between rules and bureaucrats is mutually constitutive and dynamic, and at a given time several rules may be applicable. Dysfunctional behaviour based on bureaucratic culture may occur when the IO must make difficult choices where several imperatives may apply at once. Barnett and Finnemore identifies five mechanisms that can generate pathologies in IOs: 1) Irrationality of rationalisation; 2) Bureaucratic universalism; 3) Normalisation of deviance; 4) Insulation; and 4) Cultural contestation (*ibid.*). The authority of the organisation establishes the basis for autonomous action and IOs may choose ways to solve problems which may not be in line with espoused goals.

Central to their study is what they identify as dysfunctional and pathological behaviour by the UN Secretariat in e.g. its handling of the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Barnett and Finnemore show how the application of formal and informal rules of the organisation can result in dysfunctional and even pathological action and behaviour. According to them, the decision of the UN Secretariat not to push for an intervention by the Security Council in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 was based on the Secretariat's assessment that strong states such as the US wanted to stay out of the conflict, particularly as this was shortly after the failure of Somalia, and that the likely failure of such an operation would be detrimental for the organisation (ibid.). While this demonstrates that IOs have agency and can act in contradiction to the will of its member states, even powerful ones, it also underlines the difficult balancing act IOs must do in order to not betray their ideals.

Critique of current theorisation of the UN as a bureaucratic international organisation

However, there are several major flaws with the theoretical approach of Barnett and Finnemore. First, by arguing that dysfunctions and pathologies take place, they presuppose that the UN can be understood as one unitary actor, i.e. saying one thing and doing another. Still using constructivism as a methodological foundation, this article argues for a more nuanced approach and hold that the UN, in the area of peacekeeping, cannot be seen as one unitary actor, but as an organisation with several sources of agenda and agency (Lipson, 2007). In the area of peace operations, the UN consists of a range of different bodies, each with its particular dynamics, membership and staff. The Security Council is the most important actor and volumes have been written about the role of the Council with regards to peacekeeping (Malone, 2004; Berdal and Economides, 2007; Howard, 2008). The General Assembly and the C-34 Committee on Peacekeeping meets yearly and discusses matters pertaining to peacekeeping. In addition, the General Assembly also has plenary discussions on peacekeeping matters from time to time, e.g. the discussion on the Responsibility to Protect in 2009 and 2011 (UNGA, 2009; 2011).

Secondly, by employing the concept of bureaucratic culture and stressing the uniformity of action that this imposes on UN staff, Barnett and Finnemore also disregards the potential impact that other actors have on the norm formation for peacekeeping. The Secretary-General can act as a norm entrepreneur and uses high-level panels composed of statesmen, member state diplomats, and prominent researchers to advance thinking on topics of particular concern (Annan, 2007). The Secretariat sought to rebuild its authority after the failures in Rwanda and

Srebrenica through the use of issuance of reports, best practices and lessons learned to reform and improve UN peacekeeping (Weinlich, Unpublished; Benner and Rotmann, 2008).

Sociology of Professions as an analytical framework

According to Abbott, “professions are exclusive occupational groups applying somewhat abstract knowledge to particular cases” (1988). Control of the occupation relies on control of the abstractions which generate practical technique and implementation – in other words control of the profession-specific practices and concepts. In similar terms to Weber, Abbott identifies jurisdiction as the central connecting element between a profession and its work (ibid.). Professions have both an organisational and a performative aspect, according to Molander and Terum (2010). Professions are exclusive occupational groups who try to achieve control over certain tasks due to their skills, specialist education and the organisation that they work for. Since professions have internal control over their tasks this also implies that they have a certain degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the state, or in the case of the UN, the member states. Furthermore, a profession will seek to have jurisdictional control of the defined tasks, legitimised through expert authority and the delegation of these tasks by the member states. Members of a profession also have a collective ‘fiduciary responsibility’ – the relationship between the profession and the member states, as well as other stakeholders, is based on the trust that the members will execute their tasks according to their mandate (ibid., see also Parsons, 1964). This implies the need for self-control and penalisation of members of the profession that break the professional code to retain legitimacy. Finally, a profession is also a collective actor and will act as such when defending its tasks and legitimacy.

Practices constitute the performative aspect of professions. Professions execute services to clients. The services are solutions to particular specialised problems requiring particular knowledge and leading to change. The tasks or problems are often complex and require the use of common sense. This also implies that the actions taken to solve the problem may be wrong, and the responsibility for the action lies with the professional. Over time, professions thus become communities of practice, gathering best practices and lessons learned which together with established rules, norms and values that form the direct repository of guidance and constitute jurisprudence for future problem-solving actions.

Barnett and Finnemore tend to look at how IOs as bureaucracies establish ‘jurisdictional competency’ or rational-legal authority in their areas of expertise (Barnett and Finnemore,

1999), excluding from their analysis how bureaucratic control of a policy area tend to be created in close cooperation with think-tanks, donor governments and other actors who have similar interest in the area of discussion. Barnett and Finnemore do make reference to the importance of the external environment, but do not investigate this matter at any depth.

In the area of peacekeeping the UN has been reliant upon funding and support from donor governments to develop doctrine and best practices since the end of the Cold War (Benner and Rotmann, 2008). Staff have been moving through ‘revolving doors’ between being practitioners in IOs, policymakers at think-tanks and officials in government institutions. Middle powers and donor governments like the UK, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden have pushed the development of doctrine for peacekeeping, with dedicated government offices having peacekeeping on the agenda and funding the development of policy reports; discussions around new concepts and recommendations; and even best practices positions on peacekeeping at UN Headquarters (Benner *et al.*, 2007; Benner and Rotmann, 2008). A closer look at how this dynamic has evolved and what consequences it has for the development of doctrine and evolving practice within the UN is thus called for. Building on the sociology of professions, it is possible to argue that jurisdictional competency of the UN peacekeeping bureaucracy is partly being dictated by the development of a profession of peacekeeping and the staff that makes up this new profession (Abbott, 1998; Abbott, 2005; Fourcade, 2006).

Applying Abbott on the development of peacekeeping as a profession, we see the importance of developing the concepts, diagnosis and prescripts – in essence the doctrines that guides peacekeeping operations – to establish jurisdictional claims on the area of peacekeeping. External actors from different institutional contexts such as think-tanks, donor officials and academics have been essential in this process. According to the conceptual framework of Abbott, these different institutional contexts can be called *ecologies*.

Building on Abbott, Fourcade, studying the transnationalisation of economics, has identified how professions achieve jurisdictional competency and claims on a *global level*. Fourcade identifies transnational connectedness as one of the dimensions underlying the globalization of the economics profession (Fourcade, 2006), and it is also a constitutive dimension of conceptual formation within the area of peacekeeping. Increased movement of staff between

the various government institutions, think-tanks and UN offices working is also a characteristic trait in the area of peacekeeping.

Fourcade has shown how actors within different ecologies form alliances or ‘hinges’ with like-minded actors to influence practices and gain control over a policy ‘location’ (Seabrooke and Tsingou, 2009). The alliance of actors will then be ‘able to influence how certain policy problems are understood and inform broader norms on how policy problems should be legitimately addressed’ (ibid.). Linking this argument with the concept of norm entrepreneurs, the article will argue that an alliance of actors from different ecologies can form a policy alliance to advance a norm.

Case-study – Advancing the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

The Secretary-General uses high-level panels and senior advisory groups as independent panels that can explore a particular issue and inform member states. These panels are composed of a multicultural blend of eminent personalities – statesmen, international diplomats, and academic heavyweights who have significant standing in the international community and can provide legitimacy to a new idea or norm: ‘their names lend credibility to an idea which might otherwise have appeared utopian or fanciful’ (Annan, 2007: xii). Also Kittikhoun and Weiss argue that these panels influence UN ideas and policies (Kittikhoun and Weiss, 2011). This was particularly important with R2P: the concept had been accused of being a Western norm, and it became important to defend its African origins: “Although western governments were central in forming the concept, and it was based on the failures of Bosnia and Rwanda, the term was coined by Francis Deng, an African scholar and senior UN official” (Gowan and Jones, 2010:315). Proponents of R2P also never fail to mention that the Constitutive Act of the African Union also supported the concept (AU, 2000).

In 1999, Kofi Annan ran an article in *The Economist* just ahead of the UN General Assembly laying out two understandings of sovereignty, where he counterposed the sovereignty of the state with the sovereignty of the individual, and the responsibility of the former to protect the latter (Annan, 1999). At the General Assembly in 1999, he asked ‘how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica – to gross and systematic violations of human rights that affect every precept of our common humanity?’, and repeated the question in his report *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century* (Annan, 2000:48).

Canada, who had been a champion of humanitarian interventions since the failures Bosnia and Rwanda, picked up the challenge and created a commission of high level statesmen and diplomats, researchers and former UN officials. The high level panel was supported by a research directorate housed at the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY). The research directorate was led by ‘Thomas G. Weiss, Director of the Ralph Bunche Institute and Presidential Professor, Stanlake J.T.M. Samkange, a lawyer from Zimbabwe and former UN staff member, and Don Hubert, of the Peacebuilding and Human Security Division at Foreign Affairs Canada (FAC)’ (CUNY, 2000). Weiss and Hubert were the leading authors of a supplementary volume to the report issued by ICISS, with participation by another 51 participating authors from around the globe (Weiss and Hubert, 2001). When working with ICISS, Don Hubert had the experience from on another successful norm change process on establishing the mine ban treaty. Besides being a government official, he was well acquainted with the academic field with a Ph.D. under his belt, and he had made some reflections on how to best advance norms in the international arena in his book *The Landmine Ban: A Case Study in Humanitarian Advocacy* (2000). In the book, Hubert listed three core criteria for successful humanitarian advocacy that, with few modifications, also would apply to other substantive areas:

- Favorable negotiating conditions (a strong chairperson, NGO access, and provision for voting);
- Effective coalition building (among and between NGOs, governments and international organizations);
- Clear campaign messaging (advocating stringent provisions within an explicitly humanitarian discourse). (Ibid.: 57)

Indeed, the ICISS report was perhaps one of the foremost examples of coalition building and extensive use of think-tank, academic and civil society expertise and input. In addition to the supplementary volume, ICISS also added an extensive bibliography including more than 2,000 references, ‘to reflect the best writing of the range of material published on all aspects of humanitarian intervention through the middle of 2001’ (CUNY, 2008). The bibliography was continuously updated with new entries, and contained 3,600 references when the updates stopped in 2008 (ibid.).

The process was also a very inclusive and participatory process. The Commission itself met five times in Ottawa, Canada; New Delhi, India; Maputo, Mozambique; Wakefield, Canada; and Brussels, Belgium. Another eleven regional roundtables and national consultations took place in Ottawa, Geneva, London, Maputo, Washington DC, Santiago, Chile; Cairo, Paris, New Delhi, Beijing and St Petersburg, to engage ‘members of the academic community and civil society’ (Thakur *et al.*, 2005:199). According to Thakur, “[T]he consultations were intended to take the issue beyond the confines of the Western liberal internationalism and ensure a broader consensus on the Commission’s findings’ (ibid.: 199), and 50 pages of the report was devoted to summaries from these consultations (Weiss and Hubert, 2001: 349-398). According to the ICISS report, the result was quite successful – it stated that ‘the text on which we have found consensus does reflect the shared views of all Commissioners as to what is politically achievable in the world as we know it today’ (ICISS *et al.*, 2001: VIII). The funders of the report were first of all Canada, as well as Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and a number of philanthropic foundations.

Other central actors who could be seen as norm entrepreneurs in their own right during the R2P process include Gareth Evans, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Australia; Ramesh Thakur, Edward C. Luck; Francis Deng, Stephen J. Stedman; and Bruce Jones. Ramesh Thakur was Vice Rector and Senior Vice Rector of the United Nations University from 1998–2007 and one of the principal authors of the ICISS report, and has continued to vigorously support the principle through regular inputs in the debate (Thakur, 2006; Thakur, 2011). The work of Gareth Evans has over the last decade been deeply intertwined with the fate of R2P – he was co-chair of the ICISS and a member of the SG’s *High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change* where he played a vital role in the drafting of the report (NUPI, 2006:65; Bellamy, 2009); he has published extensively on R2P and also took part in the General Assembly debate on R2P in 2009. Evans was the President and CEO of the International Crisis Group from 2000 to 2009 and is also the Co-Chair of the International Advisory Board of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (Evans, 2008). Francis Deng is currently serving as Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, sharing a Joint Office with Edward C. Luck, who is the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, and mandated to work for ‘conceptual development and consensus-building, in recognition of the fledgling nature of the international agreement on the responsibility to protect’ (UN, 2007). Luck is also Senior Vice President for Research and Programs at the International Peace

Institute. He is on leave from his post as Director of the Center on International Organization of the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University.

Stephen J. Stedman was the Research Director to the *High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change*, and Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General in the crucial period leading up to the UN World Summit in 2005 ‘to help gain worldwide support in implementing the panel's recommendations’ (Stedman, 2012).

The Director of CIC, Bruce Jones, held several key positions in the process leading up to the adoption of the principle of R2P in 2005, first as a Deputy Research Director to the *High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change*, and in the crucial period ahead of the General Assembly in 2005, where the principle was agreed upon and adopted at the eleventh hour (Stedman, 2007), he was a Senior Advisor to the Secretary-General.¹

The careers of these persons can be characterised as a ‘revolving doors’ phenomenon whereby they have created close-knit networks between the different institutions they have worked for. Think tanks and academic institutions have often an explicit goal of norm change in the international system and have also been central actors in the R2P process. CIC has been a key institution here, in the development of the R2P concept as well as others.² The centre publishes the *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations* and conducts applied research on a

¹ From the CIC website: Dr Jones ‘was Senior Advisor in the Office of the Secretary-General during the UN reform effort leading up to the World Summit 2005, and in the same period was Acting Secretary of the Secretary-General’s Policy Committee. In 2004/5, he was Deputy Research Director of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. From 2000 until 2002 he was special assistant to the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East peace process; and held assignments in the UN Interim Mission in Kosovo, and in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs’, <http://www.cic.nyu.edu/staff/brucejones.html>, accessed 5 March 2011.

² On its webpage, the Centre states that it ‘works to enhance international responses to humanitarian crises and global security threats through applied research and direct engagement with multilateral institutions and the wider policy community. It has an international reputation for agenda-setting work on post-conflict peacebuilding, global peace operations, and UN reform.’ The Centre relies on funding from traditional donor governments such as the UK, Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands, as well as charitable trusts and foundations. For more information, see <http://www.cic.nyu.edu/about.html>. Other important think tanks and academic institutions include the [Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect](#) at the University of Queensland in Australia, the [Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect](#) at the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies at City University of New York, the [Norwegian Institute of International Affairs](#) (NUPI), the [Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies](#) (Fafo-AIS), and the [Peace Research Institute](#) (PRIO) in Norway, [FRIDE](#) in Spain; the [International Peace Institute](#) in New York, government agencies with a focus on peace operations such as the [Folke Bernadotte Academy](#) in Sweden; the [African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes](#) (ACCORD); the [Institute for Security Studies](#) (ISS) in South Africa; and the [Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre](#) (KAIPTC) in Ghana, to mention only a few.

series of concepts related to peacekeeping. On the website of the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect the normative goal is clearly stated:

Despite the progress achieved to date in terms of the development, initial codification and state acceptance in principle of the R2P norm, much remains to be done to effectively implement the concept of the responsibility to protect if civilians are not to continue to be the victims of mass-atrocity crimes. (APCR2P, 2011).

Civil society has also been very active in advancing R2P. The International Coalition for Responsibility to Protect, housed by the World Federalist Movement Institute for Global Policy and sponsored by Canada, has been a central actor, with 30 NGOs worldwide as members (ICRtoP, 2012). Together with Oxfam they ran the 'Responsibility to Protect – Engaging Civil Society' (R2P-CS) project and organised global consultations, one of them at the 2003 World Social Forum in Brazil. The coalition has played an important role, 'by marshalling the support of NGOs globally, fostering efforts to inform the public better, and by actively lobbying permanent delegations in New York' (Bellamy, 2009: 71). The Global Centre for R2P is another important, New York-based NGO. According to its Director, 'it is not a classic NGO, it is inside and outside the policy circle, gets to speak with policy makers, and is a privileged mechanism to push forward R2P' (Interview 1, 2011). The NGO conducts policy-oriented research and helps member states to build capacity by supporting focal points for R2P in the delegations to the UN in New York – 'doing some of the intellectual heavy-lifting for member states' (ibid).

A few UN member states have taken the wheel on R2P. Canada sponsored the work of the ICISS, and the UK, Australia, Norway and Sweden are among those which have supported think tanks and academic circles to undertake research, in parallel with vigorous activism at the UN. Support from non-permanent members of the Security Council like Canada and Norway for expanded mandates for peacekeeping has also helped to persuade the United States, according to Bruce Jones, Director at CIC (Jones and Forman, 2010:15).

The work of the Joint Office intersects with all the above actors. It is led by Deng and Luck, two of the key individuals who have formed extensive networks with the other actors. The Joint Office issues statements on country situations, provides training to UN and member-state officials, and collaborates with partners – defined broadly, including UN funds,

programmes and agencies, regional and sub-regional organisations, and civil society organisations (UN, 2012). It can gauge the interest among member states for the norm, noting where resistance may originate; it works to build capacity and knowledge among member states to galvanise support and build consensus; and to refine conceptual thinking around the norm and its three pillars.

Interestingly, in addition to serving as Special Advisor on R2P, Ed Luck was also the Vice President of IPI. The UN post does not include a salary, nor funding for an office, so IPI was instrumental in providing support to the Special Advisor to perform his tasks. With donor funding from a range of states, IPI established several task forces to implement the reform agenda of the 2005 Outcome document, and arranged a number of consultations in 2008: ‘The Task Forces were funded by Sweden, Norway etc., as part of the Coping with Crisis Program. It was designed as a vehicle to push forward a lot of the recommendations of the outcome document’ (Interview 2, 2012).

This process engaged more than sixty member states, from, *inter alia*, Switzerland and South Africa. The UN is seen as unable to reform itself, so consultations in an informal setting were deemed necessary for advancing the reform agenda: ‘Funding IPA was seen as a way to fuel the machinery a little bit, if you took Ambassadors to Greentree and had discussions you could move the position forward’ (ibid.).³ The final report from the consultations, presented to the Secretary-General in 2009, ‘mirrored a lot of the first SG [Secretary-General] Report, but also went a bit further’ (ibid.; IPI, 2009). IPI has a useful insider/outsider position, according to its former Executive Director, Thomas G. Weiss (Interview 3, 2012).⁴ Looking at how ideas and policies are formed in the UN, he supports the view that the revolving door phenomenon is a key factor in norm change processes in the organisation (Kittikhoun and Weiss, 2011), and that this phenomenon has increased ‘enormously over the last twenty years’, significantly impacting the way the UN operates (Interview 3, 2012).

Analysis and reflections

The effect of the work of a few persons, think-tanks and engaged staff in Ministries of Foreign Affairs in advancing R2P should not be underestimated. In a close knit circle, the same persons shift from advancing a norm and issuing reports from prominent think-tanks and

³ Greentree is an estate in Manhasset, Long Island, New York, owned by the Greentree Foundation.

⁴ Weiss is a professor at the City University of New York.

academic institutions with the support of a few member states; to serve on UN high-level panels, or act as secretariat to these panels. The revolving doors phenomenon is clearly discernible, and using the linked ecologies framework of the sociology of professions makes it possible to grasp this phenomenon also theoretically.

Bellamy and Williams argue that there is two fundamental stances among member states in the UN and other actors trying to influence how peacekeeping should be understood and implemented in the field today. On the one hand, there is a strong pressure for the UN and the international community to take on a more assertive role to ensure that not only the sovereignty of a state is respected, but that the state also respect and take on the responsibility to ensure the rights of their individuals (Bellamy and Williams, 2010:6). This divide is reflected in most of the norm debates today, whether it is on R2P, the form and scope of a peacekeeping or peacebuilding mission, and so on.

Through the case study it has become clear that the working level is particularly important. The individuals on working levels are establishing connections with colleagues. Interaction between different ecologies opens up for different perspectives and stimulates the policy debate that percolates up to the state level over time. An officer in the DPKO Peacekeeping Best Practices Section (PBPS) argued that ‘academics can analyse issues much more frankly, which allows for provocativeness and frankness. This is helpful for us – it is easier for someone external to say something, and this can be used to start a broader policy dialogue’ (Interview UN official, 2011).

Some of these institutions have the convening power to bring actors together in an informal setting, with Chatham House rules. They can link academic, member states and the UN Secretariat. The yearly meeting that NUPI [Norwegian Institute of International Affairs] arranges is a good *arena* for this kind of informal policy discussions. It combines the external analytical perspective and the convening power of UN DPKO Best Practices Section. That it is outside New York is also helpful, as it avoids some of the entrenched positions that prevail there and opens up for a constructive debate. It is very valuable that the Global South and others are included so that they feel that they are included and that the consultations are not happening behind closed doors. (Ibid., author’s emphasis)

The yearly informal discussions convened by NUPI on peacekeeping issues serves as a platform where working level officials can meet and informally discuss issues. During these meetings the participants take stock of the different issues, including debates on issues such as robust peacekeeping, consent of host states, development of peacekeeping doctrine, use of civilian capacities and so on. The participants from think-tanks and the academic institutions have an opportunity to test some of their hypotheses and get a reality check with peacekeeping officials. Other think tanks and academic environs perform a similar role. The think-tanks and academic institutions based in New York and Geneva may enjoy greater influence because of their physical proximity, but relevance may also be amplified through the ability of establishing a position as a leading institution on a particular topic, such as the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

Conclusions

The theories and case studies presented here support the idea that the UN in the area of peacekeeping, as a bureaucracy, and as a professional organisation, can act autonomously. Through autonomous acts, the organisation is part of the normative change processes that form and guide UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding. However, there are significant discrepancies between different theories on normative change in IOs when it comes to how and whether they can grasp and explain how autonomous acts come about.

Autonomous acts can in part be explained with the conflicting normative pressures that exist at all times in any organisation, and in the UN the principal divide is between those wanting the organisation to have a stronger role in terms of protecting individuals and those wanting to maintain the post-Westphalian sovereignty of the state in a traditional sense.

As has been demonstrated, the UN is reliant on donors, think-tanks and academic institutions to develop policy and analysis capacity. This gives these actors a more central role than previously argued in the norm evolution or codification processes in the UN. However, because of the dominant role of donor governments and think tanks have had on the norm evolution in the UN, the article holds that there has been reluctance among other member states, such as the NAM and the G77, against codifying the *de facto* hollowing of the principle of sovereignty that implementing the R2P norm potentially signified.

R2P was a norm that enjoyed support from member states in the north as well as in the south. The consultative process that Canada sponsored was however necessary in order to build support among member states in the south, as well as to quell anxiety that the norm could be used to authorize humanitarian interventions, the predecessor of the R2P norm. Unfortunately this debate has now resurfaced with recent events in Libya. Here, R2P was for the first time was quoted in a UN Security Council mandate (2011), authorizing intervention. Critics have argued that NATO, which implemented the mandate, used the mandate to achieve regime change, and Brazil has advanced its own concept “Responsibility While Protecting” or RWP (Rousseff, 2011) that seeks to balance the responsibility to protect by the host state and the responsibility of intervening actors. In the coming years, one thing is certain – more discussion will surround the norm of R2P, and informal alliances will continue to be important actors in advancing various understandings of the concept and what it entails.

There is a need for a more pluralistic and complex understanding of norm development in IOs. States are not the only actors, NGOs, academic institutions, think-tanks, sections within the UN actively cooperate to influence and shape the development of the doctrines and norms guiding international organizations. In recent years, more work has been undertaken to study the interaction between member states, think-tanks, academic institutions and civil society in norm change processes. There is a need to further examine these processes, identifying who the actors are, how they cooperate and what influence they have on global change processes.

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