

Insecurity, Precarity and locally recruited Labour in United Nations Peacekeeping: Towards a Research Agenda

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Since the end of the Cold War, the peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations' have expanded significantly: more operations, growing numbers of troops and administrators and increasingly broader mandates and responsibilities. Consequently, systemic challenges linked to the interventions ranging from, for example, the externalization of political decision-making and accountability issues over racism towards the local populations and across the different contingents to peacekeeper violence and sexual exploitation and abuse have become increasingly visible and (accordingly) gained scholarly and media attention. Despite the growing body of research focusing on these (and other) complex systemic problems, however, few scholars have explored the precarity and insecurity locally hired UN staff and workers face within the UN 'mission areas'. Accordingly, this article explores the labour practices of the first UN peacekeeping operations in the 1950s and 1960s and how local employees in these 'mission areas' in former colonies reacted to their employment and working conditions. The aim of doing so is not only to identify research themes relevant for historians, but also to highlight themes, questions and approaches to help the policy-related and interdisciplinary dialogue move towards a broader research agenda with both historical depth and social relevance across case studies, comparative studies, cluster studies and comprehensive studies.