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Pay for Peace

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Do UN peacekeepers really help countries experiencing internal conflict? Or, as military strategist Edward N. Luttwak and other scholars have argued, do they cause more violence in the long run by preventing civil wars from ending decisively?

Page Fortna, a Columbia political science associate professor, has conducted one of the first quantitative studies of UN peacekeeping missions and finds that they are, in fact, overwhelmingly successful. While the news media have focused on peacekeeping disasters, such as occurred in Somalia, the data on the ground tell another story: UN peacekeepers since the end of the Cold War reduced by 50 to 80 percent the chances of resumed fighting within five years of a cease-fire. That's true, Fortna says, both for well-armed UN military operations with license to forcibly uphold a peace settlement, such as is under way now in Darfur, and for more pussyfooted missions invited to observe disarmament, elections, and political reforms.

The findings, reported in Fortna's forthcoming book, *Does Peacekeeping Work?* (Princeton University Press), are based on her analysis of 60 civil wars whose parties reached a cease-fire or had one imposed by the UN between 1989 and 2000; UN peacekeepers intervened in about half the conflicts. Fortna accounts for variables such as the length of fighting, if neighboring nations stoked the flames, and whether the country had democratic governance before or after the war. She says that among the most important factors in maintaining peace is one considered distasteful by many policymakers: cash handouts.

"Mozambique became peaceful in the 1990s partly because the UN paid rebel leaders not to go back to war," says Fortna, who has done extensive fieldwork in the country. "It was blatant co-option, and it worked. Meanwhile, Mozambican government officials benefited from having thousands of peacekeepers and aid

workers pouring into the country, renting homes, and spending money. That provided a major boost for a bad economy. Everybody knew that if war returned, the money would be gone."

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