SRSGs as Norm Arbitrators: Understanding Authority in UN Peace Operations

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Abstract:
Emergent literature has accorded agency to IOs, but has generally not grappled with the complex decision-making structure and parallel centers of agency that arguably exist within organizations such as the UN. In the area of peacebuilding, the UN could be argued to have several centers of agency, including the Security Council, the General Assembly and its Committee of 34 (C-34) on peacekeeping matters, the Secretary-General, the Departments of Peacekeeping and Political Affairs, the UN Peacebuilding Commission and lastly the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSGs) in the field who head up the peacekeeping missions. The paper will argue that SRSGs can be seen as norm arbitrators in the UN system. The decisions and practices of SRSGs are fed back into the system through best practices communities, lessons from the field through the system for organizational learning that has gradually been established over the last twenty years in this area. The paper will thus argue that practices from the field, crystallized through the actions of Special Representatives, form the potential for a bottom-up source of influence on normative change processes in the UN. The SRSGs can have this influence on normative change processes due to their relative independence and physical distance from the UN headquarters. With a background often derived from a diplomatic career and/or relative autonomy and interpretation of what the UN is and what it stands for, the paper will argue that SRSGs wield this influence due to a certain level of decentralized authority and their personal prestige in the UN.

Keywords: Peacekeeping, peacebuilding, authority, norm entrepreneurs, SRSG, prestige, normative change
Of course I met Taliban leaders during the time I was in Afghanistan. Anything else for me would have been unthinkable, given the emphasis I was placing on it myself, and the mandate that we have.

Kai Eide, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Afghanistan, The Guardian

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1. Introduction

On 4 and 10 April, Choi Young-jin, SRSG for the UN operation in Côte d’Ivoire (ONUCI), authorized airstrikes against the troops of President Gbagbo using MI-24 attack helicopters to defend civilian populations from attacks with heavy weapons by Gbagbo forces. Russia reacted with strong condemnation and immediately questioned the legality of the attack. A year earlier, Kai Eide had stepped down from his post as SRSG for the UN operation in Afghanistan, UNAMA. He had just admitted to have initiated contacts with the Taliban, challenging the US and UK policy of ‘sticks and carrots’ and meeting criticism from the US, UK and Russia, all permanent members of the Security Council.

The controversial actions and the norms they revolve around explored in this paper are pivotal to UN peacekeeping. In Afghanistan, the issue was centered on the principle of impartiality and whether the UN provide its good offices, also to groups designated as terrorists such as the Taliban. In Côte d’Ivoire, the tension was between the principles of impartiality and protection of civilians.

In both instances there was a clash between centre and periphery, or between UN HQ and the field, where the support of Member States on the Security Council to the SRSG significantly diminished. The paper will examine potentially controversial actions of SRSGs and explore whether these actions can tells us something about how authority is delegated in the UN system and what role, if any, the SRSGs have in the normative change processes of the UN system. What can this tell us about normative change in UN peacekeeping

2 The author would like to thank Connie Peck and Giulia Piccolino for incisive and very helpful comments.
7 See e.g. Mohit Joshi, "Russia warns West against talks with the Taliban," TopNews.in, http://www.topnews.in/russia-warns-west-against-talks-taliban-2185449.. When Eide took up the post as SRSG, he met with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Moscow, who "gave me a clear warning against taking initiatives which were not in full agreement with the UN list of sanctions on members of the rebel groups." (my translation), Kai Eide, Høyt spill om Afghanistan (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2010): 19.
8 This paper will for ease of reference use the term SRSG to refer to the various types of representatives of the Secretary-General, although these can be called Special Representative, Personal Representative, Executive Representative, Special Envoy or Special Adviser.
operations and the UN more generally? How do new norms arise? Rational theories stress the importance of states and particularly powerful states, while constructivist theories have shown how the UN at times can act autonomously against the intent of the Member States. The existing scholarly debate has been centered on whether the UN can act autonomously against the intent of Member States, what role the Security Council has in developing new norms and whether the Secretary-General can be considered a norm entrepreneur in his own right. This paper will argue that while these approaches have been able to shed some light on normative change processes in the UN, they are marred by a consistent top-down perspective, underestimating the role of the ‘field’ – where the actual operations take place.

Some literature has delved into bottom-up perspectives on normative change in IOs, e.g. Finnemore and Sikkink’s seminal work on NGOs as norm entrepreneurs, and organizational learning literature focusing on role that gathering of best practices and lessons learned has for the development of guidelines for action and new norms in peacekeeping. The paper acknowledges this work, but will bring in a bottom-up perspective from the field. In the area of peace operations, decisions have to be made on a daily basis in a politically charged and highly fluctuating situation. The SRSG has delegated authority from the Security Council and the Secretary-General through a Security-Council mandate and general guidelines for action, but it is hardly necessary to say that there is also room for considerable discretion. The paper will thus investigate whether SRSGs can mediate between conflicting norms as norm arbitrators, looking at controversial actions where the action is not clearly dictated from HQ, or where there is a clear incident of several principles for peacekeeping clashing with each other or with the instructions given by HQ.

The paper proceeds in four sections. First the paper will take a look at two case studies from Afghanistan and Côte d’Ivoire and examine situations where there can be said to exist


11 For two good edited books, see Benjamin Rivlin and Leon Gordenker, The Challenging role of the UN Secretary-General : making "the most impossible job in the world" possible (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993); Simon Chesterman, Secretary or General? The UN Secretary-General in World Politics, ed. Simon Chesterman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Ian Johnstone, "The Secretary-General as norm entrepreneur: Secretary or General?," in Secretary or General? The UN Secretary-General in World Politics, ed. Simon Chesterman (Cambridge University Press, 2007).


14 Howard has looked into the relationship between HQ and the field and found out that a peacekeeping mission is most likely to be successful when it receives moderate attention from the Security Council. Lise Morjé Howard, UN peacekeeping in civil wars (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
tensions between New York and the field. The paper will then show how existing theory not sufficiently manages to grasp these case studies, suggest some steps to augment the theoretical shortcomings including viewing SRSGs as potential norm arbitrators, and analyze the sources of authority of the SRSG to better understand how the SRSG can operate as a norm arbitrator in a field that is generally understood to be dominated by Member States. Finally, the paper will proceed to summarize some of the findings and outline a further research agenda.

2. Giving meaning to peacekeeping norms through actions – a bottom-up, practice-driven approach?

There are three core traditional principles for peacekeeping; impartiality, consent of the parties and non-use of force. After the failures of Rwanda, Somalia and Bosnia, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and Protection of Civilians (PoC) have been advanced as important norms. While R2P still is at its infancy and has only recently been put into use in Security Council mandates, PoC is a staple ingredient in most SC mandates today. However, all these principles or norms seldom exist in harmony in a peacekeeping context. Norms exist in a competitive space, and according to the specific context the peacekeeping operation is faced with, the normative composition is rebalanced each time. Bellamy and Williams argue that there is an ongoing normative battle ongoing about what peacekeeping ought to be and do. This indicates that practices, and the normative reasoning backing up these practices, are significant when tracing how norms for peacekeeping operations wax and wane.

This paper will thus examine controversial practices on the ground in two peacekeeping contexts and use these as prisms to highlight the role of the field commanders in the normative change processes of the UN in the area of peacekeeping.

A. Ivory Coast – what does robust peacekeeping really mean?

On 4 and 10 April 2011, the UN peacekeeping operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) made a joint attack with attack helicopters on former President Gbagbo’s residence together with the French Licorne forces. The move was unprecedented and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Choi Young-jin was slammed for authorizing the attack by Sergei Lavrov, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, questioning the legality of the action: “We are now looking into the legal side of the issue because peacekeepers had a mandate which

16 For a comprehensive review of the use of PoC in peacekeeping mandates, see e.g. Victoria Holt, Glyn Taylor, and Max Kelly, Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Setbacks and Remaining Challenges, Independent Study jointly commissioned by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (New York: UN DPKO & UN OCHA, 2009).
17 Finnemore and Sikkink, "International norm dynamics."; p. 897.
18 Alex J. Bellamy, Paul Williams, and Stuart Griffin, Understanding peacekeeping, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 2010).
requires them to be neutral and impartial." Following up a few days later, President Medvedev said that "[t]he United Nations cannot take sides, but that is de facto what happened." Only one month prior, the UN had authorized the use of all military means to protect civilians in Libya, noting Libya’s responsibility to protect its civilian population. This was the first time that the concept of R2P had been directly quoted in a UN Security Council resolution on a situation in a country. The use of R2P in the mandates on Libya, and the subsequent authorizations to use all necessary means to protect civilians in Libya as well as in Côte d’Ivoire, seemed to set a new standard for mandates and the willingness of the Security Council to authorize robust action to protect civilians.

There are some historical precedents though: in Haiti in 2005 the UN mission MINUSTAH engaged criminal gangs in Cité Soleil in direct confrontation, also causing civilian casualties in Operation Iron-Fist. In a matter of hours on 15 August 2005, Peruvian and Brazilian peacekeepers fired more than 20,000 rounds of ammunition, grenades and mortar fire in a densely populated area, killing the gang leader Emmanuel "Dread" Wilme and many of his followers. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, UN Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations at the time, said it was “necessary to stand up to armed groups that threaten to undermine peacekeeping missions. But he said U.N. commanders had to strike a balance between engaging in all-out warfare and resorting to the passive military posture that characterized U.N. operations in Srebrenica.” Another precedence was the robust action taken by MONUC against rebel groups in eastern DRC in 2006. MONUC’s close support for the national force Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) resulted in MONUC being considered as a ‘party to the conflict’ even by some of its staff members.

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19 See BBC World News, "Besieged Gbagbo".
20 See Anischuk, "Russia criticises UN".
23 In Côte d’Ivoire this was with the caveat that force could only be used to protect civilians against the use of heavy weapons.
24 Colum Lynch, “U.N. Peacekeeping More Assertive, Creating Risk for Civilians," The Washington Post, August 15 2005 2005.. This could be explored at length, but it should suffice to point to how the norm of impartiality has been interpreted in DRC in the operational sibling of R2P, the concept of Protection of Civilians (PoC), where the UN in 2006 was engaged in robust action to protect civilians. See e.g. Jim Terrie, "The Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping: The Experience of MONUC," African Security Review 18, no. 1 (2008); Jon Harald Sande Lie, Protection of Civilians, the Responsibility to Protect and Peace Operations, (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), 2008).
25 Terrie, "The Use of Force.”.
Both of these instances have since been quoted as examples of robust action to protect civilians.\(^\text{27}\)

But let us return to Côte d’Ivoire. To understand the many considerations that the SRSG had to navigate, it is worth quoting almost entire paragraph 6 of UN Security Council Resolution 1975:

[The Security Council] [re]calls its authorization and stresses its full support given to the UNOCI, while impartially implementing its mandate, to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, within its capabilities and its areas of deployment, including to prevent the use of heavy weapons against the civilian population and requests the Secretary-General to keep it urgently informed of measures taken and efforts made in this regard.\(^\text{28}\) (my emphasis)

The SRSG was tasked to impartially implement the mandate, but at the same time use all necessary means to prevent the use of heavy weapons against the civilian population. UN operations had also previously been forced into similar situations, e.g. in DRC, but not attacked one of the principal parties to the conflict which was the contested president of the country at the time. This seems to run counter to how the UN had outlined the principle of robust peacekeeping only one year prior in a concept note presented to the UN General Assembly Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C34) for the February 2010 Substantive Session. Again, it is worth quoting an entire paragraph:

Robust peacekeeping is not peace enforcement. Robust peacekeeping is distinct from peace enforcement where use of force is at the strategic level and pursued often without the consent of the host nation/and or main parties to the conflict. The threat and use of force in robust peacekeeping is at the tactical level, limited in time and space, and aimed at countering or containing specific spoiler and residual or looming threat in a conflict or post-conflict environment. Large scale violence or one where the major parties are engaged in violent conflict is no longer a robust peacekeeping context. Robust, missions are not configured or intended to address any systemic breakdown in a political process.\(^\text{29}\)

It is worth noting that the concept note actually received criticism for being too assertive.\(^\text{30}\) E.g. Morocco representing the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) said that peacekeeping was robust enough, and South Africa said that robust peacekeeping should not be used as a peace enforcement tool.\(^\text{31}\) However, one year later South Africa, after a short visit by President Zuma to Paris, supported UN SC Resolution 1975 on Côte d’Ivoire authorizing the


\(^{29}\) UN, Concept Note on Robust Peacekeeping.: p. 3.


use of force to protect civilians against heavy weapons,\textsuperscript{32} thus completely changing their position on this issue.

\textit{Navigating uncharted waters}

ONUCI was equipped with military gunships – MI 24 attack helicopters, which could and indeed made a serious difference.\textsuperscript{33} After the two attacks, President Gbagbo’s troops were finally conquered and President Gbagbo was taken into custody. The SRSG could have avoided entering the conflict, quoting the need to stay impartial and the limited capabilities of the mission. He could have argued, as many previous SRSGs have done before him, that he would need more troops to be able to protect civilians and that the use of helicopters would risk involving the UN in a protracted direct confrontation with Gbagbo’s forces.

Navigating these uncharted waters, the SRSG could well anticipate that his actions would be controversial no matter what – if he had chosen to ignore the continued fighting he would have joined the list of SRSGs being condemned for doing nothing in the face of civilians being killed. Instead he was attacked for taking sides and forcibly changing the regime of an African country, installing a pro-western President.\textsuperscript{34}

It is clear that the actions of the SRSG violated the principle of robust peacekeeping as outlined in the 2010 concept note. Two major parties were engaged in violent conflict at the strategic level, and the use of force was pursued without consent of the main parties. In the concept note, the UN being wary of Member States’ skepticism, the concept was outlined taking into consideration how practices had evolved over the last decade, with the actions taken to protect civilians against gangs in Haiti and rebels in eastern DRC. No one had foreseen that the UN would be engaged in what could effectively be characterized as peace enforcement in Côte d’Ivoire only a year later.

The concept note also stressed that “the Security Council should be clearly informed of the risks before the decision is taken.”\textsuperscript{35} In Côte d’Ivoire, the SRSG warned that he was in the process of using force and that the actions were imminent, just hours before launching the first attack.\textsuperscript{36} However, the Security Council did not have time to convene a meeting to discuss the potential risks of the action, and the SRSG went ahead and authorized the attack without intervention from the Security Council. However, considering that the SRSG is a fellow national citizen of South Korea and a close friend of the SG, it is very possible that he informally contacted the SG to ensure that he had some backing for such a controversial action from some of the Member States as well as the SG.

What emerges from Côte d’Ivoire is a case where the norms of protection of civilians and robust peacekeeping are being redefined through actions on the ground. This also has a

\textsuperscript{32} UNSC, "Resolution 1975".

\textsuperscript{33} The UN gunship helicopters took part in a joint attack with French Licorne forces, that could bring substantial firepower to bear. Although one might argue about the relative strength of the UN versus the French forces, this is beside the focus of this paper which will focus on the use of force by the UN.

\textsuperscript{34} Also Alassane Ouattara, the new President who won the elections, has been accused of being supported by forces that committed massacres and possibly crimes against humanity during the conflict: Daniel Howden, “Ouattara denies all responsibility for massacre,” The Independent, http://ind.pn/FXzkpu.

\textsuperscript{35} UN, \textit{Concept Note on Robust Peacekeeping}.: p. 3.

\textsuperscript{36} CNN live news coverage followed by the author the evening of 4 April 2011.
significant impact on the other core principles of peacekeeping, namely impartiality, consent of the parties and minimal use of force. To protect civilians, the UN will at times be willing to use force at the strategic level against one of the main parties to the conflict to end or prevent protracted large scale violence and protect civilians. While the Security Council gives the mandate for action, it is within the prerogative of the SRSG to decide whether the mission has the sufficient capabilities. This indicates the level of independence that the SRSG has vis-à-vis headquarters to decide the appropriate action to protect civilians against heavy weapons within its means and capabilities. However, it can be questioned whether the UN will be able to continue to play the role of an impartial mediator.

B. Afghanistan – upholding the principle of impartiality or undermining the operation?

After 9/11, on 7 October 2001, the US launched Operation Enduring Freedom to fight the Taliban and al Qaeda. The UN Security Council followed suit and affirmed that the UN would have an important role to play with UN SC Resolution 1378 on 14 November 2001, and following the Bonn Agreement in December 2001, the Security Council on 28 March 2002 set up the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA). UNAMA was tasked with “providing political and strategic advice for the peace process, promoting international engagement in the country, assisting the Government towards implementing the Afghanistan Compact of 2006 - a five-year strategy for rebuilding the country - and contributing to the protection and promotion of human rights. In addition, UNAMA continued to manage UN humanitarian relief, recovery, reconstruction and development activities in Afghanistan in coordination with the Government.”

The War on Terror had changed the environment in which UN staff operated in overnight. In many Middle Eastern countries interlocutors were coined “terrorists” by the US and the UN Security Council. The Taliban did not participate in the negotiations for the Bonn Agreement in December 2001, and at that point the US-led coalition had control of most of Afghanistan and did not see the need to include the Taliban. The UN Security Council established a dedicated counter-terrorism unit tracking members of Al Qaeda and the Taliban, effectively designating these groups and their members as ‘beyond the pale’. However, the Taliban soon emerged as a more difficult opponent than first envisaged, and the war in Afghanistan has now lasted for ten years. Lakhdar Brahimi, the first Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) to be sent to Afghanistan after 9/11, has since admitted that it was a mistake not to reach out to moderate factions of the Taliban already in early 2002. Engagement has proven difficult, both because of the reluctance of the Afghan government as well as of the US.

In late 2007, Mervyn Patterson, a high-ranking UN official and Michael Semple, the acting Head of the EU mission, were expelled after talking with and allegedly trying to ‘turn’ a senior Taliban commander. A spokesperson for President Karzai said that the men had been involved in activities that were “were not their jobs” and had been placed on a flight.

out of the country. Aleem Siddique, a spokesperson for the UN explained in the same interview that the UN was barred from meeting with Taliban leaders due to a UN Security Council resolution, but that the two men had met with tribal elders as part of a fact-finding mission. And in March 2010, just before leaving his post as the SRSG, Kai Eide admitted regular meetings with the senior members of the Taliban.

In spite of strong imperatives from UN HQ, senior leaders in the field have had considerable autonomy and have at times acted in contradiction to guidance from HQ. In Afghanistan, there was considerable pressure from HQ and the Security Council against engagement with armed non-state groups, but as we see from the quote in the introduction, operational imperatives and the long-term goals of the UN, as interpreted by SRSG Eide, dictated another approach. Secret talks and low-profile engagement continued under the argument that all parties needed to be engaged to establish sustainable peace and security, particularly as the Taliban represents a very significant part of the population in Afghanistan.

Over the last twenty years, the UN has carved out a role for itself in some of the world’s most intractable conflicts. It has established a tradition of talking with everyone, also those considered to be ‘beyond the pale’. The dictum has been central to peacemaking and mediation in conflicts in Latin America, Central Africa and the Middle East and the organization has had frequent meetings with groups such as the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda, the RUF in Sierra Leone, Hezbollah and Hamas in the Middle East and the FARC in Colombia, all frequently labeled as terrorist organizations.

Post 9/11, the engagement of these groups has proven more difficult. In the Middle East, Alvaro de Soto resigned from his post because of the limitations on engaging with Hamas and Syria. In his End of Mission Report, he warned against establishing a new precedence for UN officials, only talking with those actors who are considered in the clear: “Since the late 1980s the UN has become rather adept dealing with groups that most governments can’t or won’t touch. If this ability is removed we would seriously weaken our hand as a peacemaking tool.”

So what can the UN engagement with the Taliban and Hamas tell us about how norms develop in the UN and the influence of powerful states such as the US vis-à-vis the degree of autonomy and influence of the UN itself? On the surface the engagement with Taliban by SRSG Eide seems to be in contradiction with his instructions from the Security Council, or a contradiction between the talk of the Security Council and actions performed on the ground.

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41 Borger, "Kai Eide Lashes Out."
42 Except for LRA, but their leader Joseph Kony is indicted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity and I have thus included also this organization as it is generally considered ‘beyond the pale’ but senior UN officials have still met with Kony and other leaders (Interview with senior UN official). The Wikipedia listing compares organizations listed as terrorists by Australia, Canada, EU, UK, US, India and Russia, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_designated_terroristorganizations: Wikipedia, "List of designated terrorist organizations," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_designated_terroristorganizations.
SRSG Eide underscores his personal interpretation of the mandate – he is given a political mandate to work for the long-term peace and stability of Afghanistan, and for him not talking with the Taliban is not an option, as they represent a large part of the population, and thus a part of a sustainable and long-term solution. In the case of SRSG Eide, it is not a new norm that is being generated, but rather the interpretation of the norm of impartiality which is used as the main argument for engagement. Like de Soto, Eide underscores the importance of being able to meet with everyone to execute the political mandate of the mission:

We met senior people in the Taliban leadership and we also met people who have the authority of the Quetta Shura to engage in that kind of discussion. I have always believed in an engagement policy. I have always believed that it is better to try to talk than to refrain from talking. But I have no illusions with regard to the complexity of such a process and the time that such a process may require.\(^\text{44}\)

SRSG Eide is drawing upon the moral authority of the established norm of impartiality – like de Soto, he underscores the importance of being able to engage and talk with all the parties to the conflict. This comes in conflict with the newer post 9/11 norm of ‘not talking to terrorists’.

Through his practices, SRSG Eide thus reaffirms the traditional norm of impartiality, and knowingly risking conflict with UN HQ and key Member States, in similar ways to de Soto in the Middle East.

3. Autonomy of SRSGs – the composition of SRSG authority

The literature on the role of the SRSG and his/her relative authority vis-à-vis headquarters has been evolving over the last few years.\(^\text{45}\) In the case studies, we have witnessed instances where the SRSGs have navigated in difficult normative environments. Peacekeeping principles have not been in concordance,\(^\text{46}\) and the SRSG has been forced to make a choice. The ensuing actions have been controversial and stirred the waters at HQ.

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\(^{44}\) Borger, "Kai Eide Lashes Out."

\(^{45}\) See especially Global Governance Volume 16 (2010) Special Focus: Postwar Mediation in UN Peace Operations: The Role of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, but also Donald J. Puchala, "The Secretary-General and his Special Representatives," in The Challenging role of the UN Secretary-General: making "the most impossible job in the world" possible, ed. Benjamin Rivlin and Leon Gordenker (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993); Cyrus R. Vance and David A. Hamburg, Pathfinders for Peace. A Report to the UN Secretary-General on the Role of Special Representatives and Personal Envoys, (New York: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1997), http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/PDF/Pathfinders%20for%20Peace.pdf; Fafo, Command from the Saddle: Managing United Nations Peace-Building Missions (Oslo: Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science, 1999); Connie Peck, "Special Representatives of the Secretary General," in The UN Security Council: from the Cold War to the 21st century, ed. David Malone (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2004); Manuel Fröhlich, Maria Bütof, and Jan Lemanski, "Mapping UN Presence. A Follow-Up to the Human Security Report," Die Friedens-Warte (Journal of International Peace and Organization) 81, no. 2 (2006); Connie Peck, ed. On Being a Special Representative to the Secretary-General (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2006). The last book is an instruction handbook intended for internal use in the training of new SRSGs and contains interview material on a number of issues gathered by Connie Peck from interviews with SRSGs before 2006.\(^{46}\) This touches upon an interesting argument by Legro, who argues that norms should be in concordance. This paper argues the opposite, that several norms exist in parallel which not necessarily are in harmony with each other and where the relationship between them must be adjudicated according to the particular context. For
In the extant literature, some claims have already been made with regards to the responsibility of the SRSG to make difficult choices in hard-pressed situations when civilians are at risk. Holt, looking at the implementation of the PoC-concept in MONUC, asserts that “[t]he authorization for civilian protection is clear, but the Council’s resolution leaves the decision to protect civilians up to the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), the force commander or another actor further down the chain to “deem” it to be within the scope of “its capabilities.” Lise Howard has similarly argued that UN peace operations that garner relatively high interest of the Security Council tend to be less successful than other operations, and that the success of UN peace operations is dependent on the relative autonomy the operation has vis-à-vis HQ, as well as the degree to which the SRSG independently interprets his or her mandate. However, there is no doubt that an SRSG needs the support of the Security Council and the Secretary-General to maintain credibility with the main actors on the ground.

De Carvalho and Lie have argued that the PoC concept is vague on purpose so as to decentralize intent and the responsibility to interpret the mandate to the SRSG in the field: “The ambiguous protection language recognises the case-by-case applicability, as it lacks clearly demarcated thresholds and criteria for what constitutes a protection situation, and its decentralised intent, that the mission head is responsible to deem the when and what of protection activities”. And the “what” of protection activities, in the case of Côte d’Ivoire as well as DRC and Haiti, included using force against one of the parties to the conflict.

It can be argued that SRSGs can have a level of relative autonomy to implement UN Security Council mandates and UN DPKO policies with a certain level of discretion. But what if this brings the SRSG in conflict with the Security Council and/or the Secretary-General? What other sources of authority can the SRSG draw upon that can explain this form of anomalous behaviour? This paper will argue that the SRSG draws upon several forms of authority in decision-making processes. Drawing upon some of the extant literature on authority and the UN system, the paper will distinguish between five sources of authority: 1) Delegated authority from the Security Council and the Secretary-General; 2) Expert authority; 3) Moral authority; 4) Charismatic authority; and 5) Prestige.

A. Delegated authority


48 Howard, UN peacekeeping.

49 See e.g. Fafo, Command from the Saddl; Cedric de Coning, "Mediation and Peacebuilding: SRSGs and DSRSGs in Integrated Missions," Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations 16, no. 2 (2010).

50 de Carvalho and Lie, "Chronicle of a Frustration Foretold?": 350.

51 Barnett and Finnemore only list three sources of authority in their excellent analysis of IOs as bureaucracies – Rules for the World. These are delegated, moral and expert authority. I have chosen to also include charismatic authority and prestige due to the particular nature of the role of the SRSG, being both a bureaucrat of the UN system, but also drawing upon his or her personal experience.
Member States have created IOs and thus delegated authority to them to solve common tasks, including maintaining peace and security. The Security Council can deem a situation in a country to be threat to international peace and security and delegate appropriate tasks to tackle this threat to the SG, who subsequently delegates these tasks to the SRSG. The delegated authority of the SRSG can be subdivided into two components – operational guidance from the SG and his Secretariat, and strategic guidance from the Security Council. The SG has delegated executive responsibilities to the SRSG, and SRSGs carry out their assignments under authority given to the SG to appoint his staff in Article 101 of the Charter; Article 99 which gives the SG the opportunity to open good offices and have an independent political role; and Article 33 which invites the parties to select mediators of their own choice.\textsuperscript{52}

Puchala argues that because of staff constraints at the SG’s office, the ad hoc nature of special representation, and a history of relative autonomy of the SRSGs, the SRSGs have been granted wide latitude opening for personal initiatives, critical thinking and inventiveness.\textsuperscript{53} While this has permitted swift action on the ground, it has also “tempted special representatives to ignore or go beyond their mandates and instructions, thus creating tensions in center-mission relations or otherwise raising questions about the structure of authority. Sometimes it becomes unclear who is the tail and who is the dog.”\textsuperscript{54}

To adapt to the changing circumstances on the ground, the SRSG needs to keep the Security Council abreast of current developments through regular reporting. This practice was instituted by SG Kofi Annan, and was very much appreciated by the Council.\textsuperscript{55} The Council now more often also makes visits to the field to get their own impressions of the situation. Besides briefing the Security Council at regular intervals, many SRSGs choose to also brief a selection of Ambassadors on the ground at regular intervals. This can reinforce messages that the SRSG wants to send to garner support for a particular strategy.\textsuperscript{56} The SRSG are dependent on the support of the Council to have a strong standing and be respected by the parties in the field.

\textbf{B. Expert authority}

If further examined, this authority can be divided into the expert authority the SRSG confers on behalf of the UN system and the collective experience and guidelines that have been established for the role s/he is executing, and the moral authority that executing the will of the Member States according to the established principles and values of the UN confers on the SRSG.

The SRSG also has expert or rational-legal authority, drawing upon experience, knowledge of previous cases and established precedence. The modern bureaucratic organization had

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{53} Puchala, "The Secretary-General and his Special Representatives."
  \item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid.: p. 94.
  \item \textsuperscript{55} Peck, "The UN Security Council.": 331.
  \item \textsuperscript{56} See SRSG Aldo Ajello in Peck, Ibid. p. 333. The author, working as a Special Assistant to the SRSG in MINURCAT, also arranged and partook in similar monthly meetings that the SRSG had with the diplomatic community.
\end{itemize}
“technical superiority over any other form of organization” according to Weber.\textsuperscript{57} Weber’s thoughts on the bureaucratic organization and the role of its officials have informed the literature on norms and IOs. Several traits are common for the constructivist theories outlined in this paper, including the autonomy that IOs can display vis-à-vis Member States, the role knowledge has in developing authority for the organization and its officials on a subject matter, and how the Secretary-General and others can act as norm arbitrators advancing an agenda. The paper will return to these theories in the next section, when looking at controversial actions by the SRSG, and how these can be theorized with the existing theoretical framework.

C. Moral authority

The SRSG is vested with moral authority as a representative of the UN. He or she should embody the values of the UN, and should be “acting as agents of the international community and purveyors of UN norms”.\textsuperscript{58}

The SRSG should execute the mandate according to the established principles and norms for peacekeeping. The traditional norms for peacekeeping are consent of the parties, minimal use of force and impartiality. In the latter years, after the failures of Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda, protection of civilians has been established as an important new norm.

However, as has been shown in this paper, these principles do not always form a coherent framework for action, but can be in conflict with each other. The question then will be which norm is the more important and who is to decide?

D. Charismatic authority

Weber differentiates between bureaucratic and charismatic authority and argues that the modern bureaucracy has advanced beyond charismatic authority which most predominant form is the patriarchal structure. This paper will argue that while this is an important distinction, the SRSG draws on both forms of authority when executing his or her role. Weber defines ‘charismatic authority’ as “…a rule over men, whether predominantly external or predominantly internal, to which the governed submit because of their belief in the extraordinary quality of the specific person.”\textsuperscript{59} SRSGs are often charismatic personalities – they are often a top diplomat of their country or have risen through the ranks to the top in the UN.

The UN can be vested with extraordinary powers in a post-conflict country, and it is the job of the SRSG to execute these. Many missions have been given executive mandates, effectively instituting the SRSG as a ‘viceroy’, as has been the case in Kosovo and Timor Leste. But even in other countries, where the UN mission only has a mandate to support what is often a fledgling state, the SRSG has a very influential role vis-à-vis national politics and dynamics. This role, this paper will argue, confers charismatic authority to the SRSG, akin

\textsuperscript{58} Puchala, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{59} Weber, Gerth, and Mills, Essays in sociology.: 295.
to the authority that Weber argued that the monarch wielded over his men. Compared to the leader of the country that the mission is deployed to, the SRSG often controls and coordinates enormous financial, material and human resources. The decisions of the SRSG can at times seem opaque and hard to understand from a national point of view, and there has been ongoing criticism towards peace operations that there is too little national ownership.\(^6^0\)

E. **Prestige**

From the case studies, we can see that the SRSG sometimes is willing to go out on a limb and make a controversial decision that the Member States may not support or indeed be against. What source of authority does the SRSG draw upon in these instances where s/he is in risk of losing significant political capital and support from the Security Council and the Secretary-General? First of all the SRSG draws upon the moral authority that is vested with the position and balances the different norms guiding peacekeeping against each other. But secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the SRSG is enabled to make a controversial decision because of his or her prior career.

The SRSG is a person who normally has spent a long and distinguished career within his or her national service, or as a UN staff member.\(^6^1\) While they are required to be managers of a peace operation, they are first and foremost diplomats with a keen sense of politics. Over the years they may also have built up considerable amounts of political capital and prestige – something the case studies show that they may be willing to at least in part risk in defending a controversial decision. Breaking norms creates stigma,\(^6^2\) but in these cases one norm is broken to uphold another. The prestige of the SRSG is composed of the reputation of integrity and accountability that the SRSG has built up throughout his or her career. Prestige grows on investment – by taking a controversial decision and exposing himself to risk the SRSG may actually gain more prestige and credibility if the decision proves correct. In arbitrating between the different norms SRSGs thus risk their credibility, but more importantly may increase their prestige. The relationship between credibility and prestige is not locked and SRSGs may be willing to lose their credibility and their post to uphold their values and ultimately their prestige.

Secondly, the SRSG will in most cases have some sort of exit option. When finishing their assignment or if kicked out, they may be able to return to their diplomatic service at home, to a distinguished fellowship position at a prestigious university, or serving as a senior fellow at a think tank. In these postings they continue to engage with the issues they have worked with as an SRSG and can take on roles as advisors to the Secretary-General, e.g. chairing a panel. Throughout their career they may have moved back and forth between these various roles, a ‘revolving doors’ phenomenon in the field of peace operations. This also means that there is always an exit option – if a disagreement arises because of a difference of opinion in


\(^{61}\) Some SRSGs have also come from national parliaments or from NGOs.

\(^{62}\) Finnemore and Sikkink, "International norm dynamics.": p. 892.
how to interpret the Charter and the norms guiding peace operations, the SRSG can choose to go elsewhere, keeping his or her pride and prestige.

**The SRSG balancing act**

SRSGs are either long-term employees of the UN or diplomats who have an extensive and unique experience from working with their national service and in or with international organizations.\(^{63}\) In their job as an SRSG, they must juggle a series of roles. In UN integrated missions, the SRSG is the top political representative of the Secretary-General and the Security Council, providing the good offices of the SG;\(^ {64}\) the eyes and ears of the SG on the ground; the overall coordinator of the UN system; and the general manager of the peace operation. In most operations the SRSG is also expected to play a coordinating role outside of the UN, interacting with national counterparts, bilateral development donors, the humanitarian community, and chairing various coordination efforts in these widely varying domains.\(^ {65}\)

Strategic decisions, while having a mandate from the Security Council, still involve a large amount of discretion on the part of the SRSG. He or her will interpret the mandate (delegated authority) in light of their own interpretation of the UN Charter (expert and moral authority), and in terms of personal gain or loss of prestige (revolving doors authority). From this, we can see that the sources of authority guiding SRSG action are inherently complex offering a range of different arguments and solutions. This in turn, the paper would argue, opens up for a considerable amount of discretion and contextualized responses depending on the personal analysis of the political economy on the ground, the personalities involved, the guidance given from HQ and the personal experience and fallback options of the SRSG.\(^ {66}\)

4. **Autonomous behavior of IOs – the role of SRSG practices and norm arbitration**

Already one of the first special representatives of the Secretary-General, Count Folke Bernadotte, deployed to mediate in Palestine in 1948, experienced that he had relatively free hands to devise and propose possible solutions to the parties, and the parties did in fact expect him to do so even if he had too little time to consult with the Secretary-General:

> ...the two parties had made it quite clear that they expected to receive from me, during the period of the truce, an indication of my ideas as to a possible basis of settlement. [...] Notwithstanding,

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\(^{63}\) Puchala divides between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' and argues that the division is dependent on the level of interest from the permanent member states of the Security Council, as well as the personal taste of various Secretary-Generals, see Puchala, "The Secretary-General and his Special Representatives.": pp. 82-83.

\(^{64}\) Puchala, quoting Cyrus Vance and David A. Hamburg, argues that the SRSG must be “a bona fide surrogate”, Ibid., p. 83. Original quote in Vance and Hamburg, *Pathfinders for Peace. A Report to the UN Secretary-General on the Role of Special Representatives and Personal Envoys.*: p. 11.

\(^{65}\) For more on the various roles of the SRSG, see e.g. de Coning, "SRSGs and DSRSGs in Integrated Missions.". He argues that the most important job of the SRSG is too rally the numerous actors around a common agenda, coordinating a common effort and pooling resources.

\(^{66}\) The SRSG will receive guidance from their department in New York, either DPKO or DPA, and advice from their senior management team on the ground. In the end however, they will be responsible for their actions.
therefore, the complete divergence of aims and the very short time left at my disposal, I decided to submit to the two parties a set of tentative suggestions…

Looking at the history of individual actions of SRSGs from Folke Bernadotte to Kai Eide and Choi Young-jin, the question is whether it is possible to subsume anything from the actions of SRSGs in terms of normative change in IOs, or whether this is a too small unit of analysis for theorizing normative change? The literature on organizational learning in IOs in general, and peacekeeping in particular, is developing. In 2008, UN DPKO finally managed to develop a set of guidelines for peacekeeping operations – the CAPSTONE Doctrine, and aside from this a series of reviews have been conducted over the last two decades gradually developing the main cornerstones of peacekeeping operations, such as impartiality, limited use of force and consent of the parties, as well as developing new norms such as the responsibility to protect (R2P) and its conceptual sibling protection of civilians (PoC).

Practices have played an important role in this process, and indicatively, the lessons learned unit of DPKO has grown from two seconded staff in 1995 to become a separate section of UN DPKO today. The recording of best practices plays a central role in the codification and rule-making for peacekeeping operations. Building on Weber and 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 practices independent of, and unintended by, their creators. Bureaucracies are composed of rules and are constantly reinterpreting old rules and producing new rules, defining the behavior of the organization, 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 organization.

Autonomous behavior 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 rationalization; 2) Bureaucratic universalism; 3) Normalization of deviance; 4) Insulation; and 4) Cultural contestation. The authority of the organization 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 behavior 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 organization can result in dysfunctional and even pathological action and behavior. According to Barnett and Finnemore, 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

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67 Bernadotte quoted in Puchala, "The Secretary-General and his Special Representatives.": p. 88.
70 Barnett and Finnemore, Rules for the world..
71 Ibid., 39-40.: pp. 39-40.
shortly after the failure of Somalia, and that the likely failure of such an operation would be detrimental for the organization. While this demonstrates that IOs have agency and can act in contradiction to the will of its member states, even powerful ones, it also shows that IOs can act autonomously.

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 paper argues for a more nuanced approach and hold that the UN, in the area of peacebuilding, cannot be seen as one unitary actor, but as an organization with several sources of agenda and agency. In the area of peace operations, the UN consists of a range of different bodies, each with its particular dynamics, membership and staff. Composed of member states, the Security Council is the most important actor and volumes have been written about the role of the Council with regards to peacekeeping. 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 mentioned on R2P.

The Member States have vested the SRSG with political capital. The SRSG has to be very careful in the execution of his or her role, so as not to lose the support of the Member States and the Security Council. Without this support, the political role the SRSG is expected to play will no longer be credible, so when SRSG Eide and Choi-jin challenge the authority of UN HQ and/or Member States, it is at considerable risk.

The SRSG as a norm arbitrator?
According to Finnemore and Sikkink, new norms in the international system are formed through the persuasion of member states by norm entrepreneurs. Norm entrepreneurs call attention to and ‘frame’ issues through the application of new terms, reinterpreting issues and putting them into new contexts. Finnemore and Sikkink argue that norm entrepreneurs during an ‘emergence’ stage use their organizational platform, as well as their expertise knowledge to advance the norm vis-à-vis member states, IOs and networks of professionals. Using the analytical framework developed by Finnemore and Sikkink,
Johnstone argues that the Secretary-General can act as a norm entrepreneur and “helped to push the norm to a “tipping point”, which it may have reached at the 2005 World Summit”. It is a fine balancing act the Secretary-General has to perform when advancing new norms, being ambitious, but at the same time being sure to resonate with the prevailing sentiment among Member States – or as former Secretary-General Annan puts it in his own words: “He has to challenge member states to aim high, yet also convince them what he is suggesting is within their reach”.

The SRSGs in the case studies navigate difficult normative waters. Based on the context; their interpretation of UN values and norms; their experience; considering the risk to their own credibility and position vis-à-vis local stakeholders, the UNSG and the Security Council; they have to balance and arbitrate between different peacekeeping principles and norms. Protection of civilians has complicated the normative waters and is not easily reconciled with the traditional peacekeeping principles. SRSGs Choi and Eide have both taken actions that they were criticized for, but also received support for. Talking with the Taliban is now the main line from Presidents Obama and Karzai, and Côte d’Ivoire has now reached a period of calm where the economy is allowed to restart and normal life can return.

The SRSGs have to take risks, and sometimes it is better to ask for forgiveness than permission. The need to trust the discretion of the SRSG to take the right action in pressed circumstances has of course great implications for the selection process of SRSGs. They need to be well versed in the intricacies of UN politics and bureaucratic procedures, intimately familiar with international diplomacy and be able to build and nurture relationships with the main powers with vested interests in a particular conflict, as well as being perceived by the host state stakeholders – from top to bottom – as a legitimate, credible and accountable partner.

5. Conclusions

The War on Terror changed the normative framework that senior UN staff in Afghanistan and Palestinian Territories operated in overnight. Established practices of talking with everyone had to give way to a more restrained mode of operation where some groups where considered ‘beyond the pale’. However, as senior staff realized the loss of freedom they started to regain lost territory through assertive practices in the field, as documented above. Alvaro de Soto argued for this principled approach in his End of Mission report:

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The UN is not in business of recognizing governments; we deal pragmatically with whoever are the authorities. In good offices, we deal with the players who need to be part of peace agreements. We should practice *realpolitik* in the purest sense, by removing *politik* and dealing with reality."\(^{80}\)

The role of the good offices of the Secretary-General was developed during the Cold War, when the Security Council was jammed in a deadlock between East and West. The Secretary-General, through his special representatives, mediated in various conflicts and over time established a pacific settlement mechanism that also enhanced the authority and autonomy of the Secretary-General vis-à-vis the General Assembly and the Security Council. The SRSGs are an extension of this authority, and by being deployed to the field they enjoy considerable discretion in strategic questions as well as their day to day activities. In contemporary peace operations, they have the main responsibility for navigating the tension between the norms of non-use of force, impartiality and consent of all parties one the one hand and the responsibility to protect and protection of civilians on the other.

The two case studies on Côte d’Ivoire and Afghanistan suffice to show that SRSGs have engaged in controversial practices which could give impetus to important doctrinal developments. The case studies have been clear examples of tensions between centre and periphery. The SRSGs have in these cases chosen to take initiative to actions that very well can be perceived as controversial, stepping out of the comfort zone and actively interpreting the mandate they have been given.

This is a necessary feature of the role of the SRSG, if they are to be relevant and useful to the countries they are deployed to. In every peacekeeping operation, the core principles of peacekeeping are contested again and again, particularly with the addition of protection of civilians as a staple ingredient in mandates for most peacekeeping operations today. In Afghanistan and Côte d’Ivoire, the principles of consent, impartiality and the limited use of force in self-protection have been locked in a battle over how the UN should execute its mandate. Holt, in a recent study of PoC in PKOs, argues that peacekeeping has moved beyond its traditional role of monitoring peace agreements to more multidimensional and integrated operations with an increasing focus on the protection of civilians...The principles of UN operations still remain consent of Host States, impartiality and minimal and proportionate use of force/defence of self and mission, but they have been pushed to go beyond to legitimacy, credibility, local ownership.\(^{81}\)

With the actions of the SRSGs in the Ivory Coast and Afghanistan we have witnessed what can be argued as a certain level of decentralized authority and the relative autonomy of the SRSGs and Special Political Envoys in the UN DPKO system. Using the concept of prestige we

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\(^{80}\) de Soto, *End of Mission Report*: para 82, p. 32. Later in the same document he criticizes the UNSG for not protecting the good offices function: “On this I strongly believe that the UNSG must be prepared to take a stand. He should not yield the ground gained by his predecessors since the late 1980s. If he does, he will unavoidably contribute to the post-9/11 polarization rather than help bridge it.” Ibid, para 91, p. 35.

\(^{81}\) Holt, Taylor, and Kelly, *Protecting Civilians*: 10. The second sentence is a footnote to the first in its original form. The study was commissioned by UN DPKO and UN OCHA.
can better explain how SRSGs can engage in potentially controversial practices. Further research should be made into the various sources of authority that SRSGs draw upon.

Extant literature has looked at how the UN at times is acting in contradiction with its rules and mandates, but only in a negative way, looking at “dysfunctions” and “pathologies”, and organized hypocrisy. However, this paper would argue that the gap between theory, doctrine and practice often times also is of a positive nature and that the gap can create a generative ambiguity in which senior field staff can operate. The extant literature is only dealing with these ambiguities in a simplistic manner, while the real world is more complex and differentiated.

The rules and norms of the organization is more than bound rationality, distinct from its environment, they shape the rationality of the actors of the organization 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. With these findings in mind, the paper would argue for the need for considerable leeway for senior leaders in field, and one should caution against a too fine-grained and detailed normative framework limiting the freedom of action of special representatives and envoys. The drive to conceptualize and codify peacebuilding experience can thus at times be counterproductive. The UN special representatives and envoys, using their local knowledge and previous experience, can utilize the generative ambiguity of mandates and guidelines which have not spelled out the rules for all forms of behavior.

Looking at the practices of senior leaders of the UN, not only the UNSG, could be a promising new way of theorizing normative change in IOs. Normative change is constant and non-linear, and norms wax and wane through decision-making at the Security Council as well as through practices in the field. However, the latter often precedes the former and this paper has argued that there can be a tempo-spatial lag between periphery and centre, where the practices in the field and the codified norms at HQ could differ. Practice can thus precede codification, which has important consequences for how we understand normative change processes in the UN and which deserves further scrutiny.

The paper has argued that decisions on the ground are often taken by individuals using their various sources of authority, and cannot only be seen as the collective output of the organization. The paper has asserted that several parallel sets of norms, rules and practices co-exist within the UN, which at times can be at odds and even in contradiction to each other. This underscores the dynamic situation in which norms are generated and solidified, but also change significantly over time. Furthermore, it shows that this is not a linear process, norms wane and wax like we have seen with the norm of impartiality in Afghanistan.

The existing literature is only dealing with these contradictions in a simplistic manner, while the real world is more complex and differentiated. The paper asserts that senior managers in the field rely on their prestige and experience when they perform actions which are seemingly in contradiction to established norms and rules, and that they have relative safety in challenging the central authority through the networks they are part of, and the exit options they may have at hand. SRSGs are norm arbitrators – arbitrating the relationship
between conflicting norms in each case. In Côte d’Ivoire PoC trumped impartiality and in Afghanistan, impartiality made a comeback and trumped the new norm of War on Terror after being sidelined because of pressure from the US. In arbitrating between the different norms SRSGs risk their credibility, but more importantly may increase their prestige. The relationship between credibility and prestige is not locked and SRSGs may be willing to lose their credibility and their post to uphold their values and ultimately their prestige.

SRSG practices in the field forms a prism through which several interesting questions concerning IOs converge. Examining the practices of SRSGs, we can learn more about how new practices are formed; how norms and rules are arbitrated, maintained, but also broken; and ultimately learn more about how about bottom-up influences on normative change in IOs. The relationship and evolving practices also has important, perhaps crucial, insights and implications for the evolving and changing notion of sovereignty.
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