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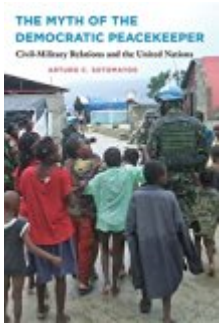

Arturo C. Sotomayor. *The Myth of the Democratic Peacekeeper: Civil-Military Relations and the United Nations.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. 280 pp. $39.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-4214-1214-6.

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The outcome of over a decade of research and multiple fieldwork excursions--including to observe the most recent United Nations (UN) mission in Haiti--Arturo Sotomayor's new book does something simple, original, and very important in peacekeeping scholarship. Instead of examining what peacekeepers do or do not do in the field, and whether or not they are successful, Sotomayor looks through the other end of the telescope, to examine the countries that contribute those peacekeepers to UN missions. With the world press so dominated by discussion of Western military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is still surprising for many when they learn that, after the United States, the majority of military forces deployed globally are neither NATO troops nor Russian forces but UN peacekeepers. Moreover the overwhelming majority of these blue helmets come from developing and transitional states. For the most part, peacekeeping scholars have hitherto taken this globalized supply of troops for granted, rarely bothering to examine who these peacekeepers are, where they come from, and why they are willing to deploy in such large numbers to remote and dangerous war zones, far from the country's borders that they are pledged to defend.

The originality of Sotomayor's contribution does not end here, however: although academic interest in analyzing peacekeeper contribution has grown in recent years, such interest is dominated by a restrictive policy agenda--how to identify the profile of those states most likely to contribute to peacekeeping, how to squeeze more peacekeepers out of these countries, how to identify the next tranche of major peacekeeping states, and so on. Sotomayor by contrast is interested in the effects peacekeeping has on contributor states, and specifically on their civil-military relations. Contextualizing peacekeeping in countries' foreign policies and civil-military relations gives Sotomayor's analysis a strongly political grounding. This again is in contrast to a field where "politics" is often taken to mean little more than cobbling together a resolution on the UN Security Council or mediation efforts between warring ethnic fac-

tions. For Sotomayor, the politics of peacekeeping includes state institutions, military interservice rivalries, ministerial working groups and bureaucracies, state security apparatuses, and the administrations of specific political leaders.

In a field still saturated with liberal naivety and whiggish complacency about the beneficial externalities and mechanical progress of international organization, Sotomayor sets out to test whether peacekeeping conducted under the blue banner--to defend human rights and restore war-shattered countries--has had a beneficial impact on civil-military relations in contributing states. The conventional thinking thus far has been that participating in peacekeeping will help to refine Third World armies, transforming them from nationalistic, praetorian primitives to sophisticated postmodern soldiers, equally at home providing humanitarian aid to children as with crushing enemies, equally committed to defending cosmopolitan human rights as the national interest.

As one might expect given the dangers that always attend the use of military power in politics, Sotomayor's findings give plenty of grounds for skepticism about this conventional thinking, and plenty of cause for concern as to how peacekeeping is affecting militaries in transitional states. Sotomayor examines peacekeeping and civil-military relations in three cases--Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. This regional focus does not detract from the applicability of his findings, as Sotomayor is careful and thoughtful in the attention that he gives to constructing his research design and case study methodology. Most obviously, the intensity of the Latin American experience of military rule and rapid democratization provides an excellent laboratory for the study of civil-military relations in transitional states. Moreover, taken together, these three states combine a swathe of rich and varied peacekeeping experience, as between them they have deployed troops on UN missions ranging from observation through enforcement to peacebuilding operations, across a variety of global theaters--from the Balkans through the Near East, to Africa and East Timor. Their roles in peacekeeping are significant, Brazil being the lead nation in the high-profile and ongoing peacekeeping mission in Haiti, and Uruguay being the largest peacekeeping nation in the world measured by per capita peacekeeper contributions (p. 57). In any case, as Sotomayor points out, studies of the liberalization and democratization of civil-military relations have thus far been restricted to examining NATO expansion in Eastern Europe. Any move beyond this Eurocentric perspective is welcome, even if only to one other region to start with--and Sotomayor gives guidance as to how his findings and frameworks might be extended to other regions, and which other countries of the world are closest to the ones he studies.

Sotomayor's findings confound the expectations that deployment on UN peacekeeping missions should lead to the liberal democratic homogenization of civil-military relations. Outcomes are instead more varied, and contingent on a variety of factors, ranging from the decisions of individual political leaders, to the content of military doctrine taught in army colleges, to the type of mission on which peacekeepers deploy. Only in the case of Argentina did peacekeeping serve to durably transform the military, infamous for its murderous brutality during the Dirty War of the 1980s. This fortuitous outcome was largely due to the energy and initiative of Carlos Menem's administration (1989-99) in reshaping the military agenda and bringing security institutions under civilian control. Even here, however, according to Sotomayor this outcome was due less to the foresight or democratic commitment of Menem as much as it was a defensive reaction to repeat military uprisings following the collapse of the dictatorship in 1983. Menem's gambit was calculated to disorganize a praetorian threat to his rule by dispersing the mutinous elite officer corps around

the world on (individually) lucrative peacekeeping missions.

The picture is more mixed in Uruguay and Brazil, although in both countries Sotomayor concludes that the military has succeeded in insulating its corporate interests and prerogatives from civilian and democratic oversight. Sometimes, the military has even succeeded in expanding its prerogatives through peacekeeping--in both cases, ironically enough, under the rule of left-wing parties that the military had hitherto repressed when it was in power. What is worse, however, is that peacekeeping has not only not transformed these militaries, it has strengthened their prevailing modus operandi as predominantly counterinsurgent forces organized around the tasks of domestic repression--"techniques aimed at preventing and crushing crowds, gangs, drug lords, and rebels … the police-soldier model" (p. 200).

Sotomayor's chapter on how the Brazilians turned the peacekeeping mission in Haiti into an urban counter-insurgency campaign replete with the "collateral damage" so familiar from Western intervention makes for chilling reading (although Sotomayor brushes over the circumstances of Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide's overthrow by the United States). In the case of Uruguay, Sotomayor argues it is largely the apathy of civilian governments that has allowed the post-dictatorship armed forces to remain one of the largest in per-capita terms in the region. In Brazil on the other hand, it was not apathy but the ambitions to global power of the Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva administration that led to their granting the military more influence as against civilian bureaucracies.

For all his patient and sustained dismantling of the customary assumptions that dominate thinking in this area, Sotomayor is not without some naivety of his own--on two points in particular. First, he places significant emphasis on the fact that Argentinean peacekeepers had the opportunity to interact with the militaries of consolidated Western democracies on their peace missions, unlike the Brazilians and Uruguayans. This experience, he claims, helped to "professionalize" civil-military relations in Argentina. But given how much counterinsurgency Western armies have been doing in Afghanistan and Iraq in recent years, there is no prima facie reason to expect that interaction with Western militaries will necessarily help to reorient Latin American militaries away from their traditional repertoire of repressive behavior (we need only recall the significant support Latin American dictatorships have historically enjoyed from the consolidated democracies). Second, Sotomayor holds that an "external" or internationalist orientation is instrumental in turning praetorian militaries away from domestic repression and meddling in the political realm. But it is not clear why we should expect an "externally" oriented military--even one observing the highest ethical and legal standards--to be compatible with or loyal to the institutions of democracy, which by definition will be rooted within their home nation-state. It is not difficult to imagine a scenario in which an externally focused military develops a set of (global) interests and (cosmopolitan) incentives at odds with those of domestic institutions and elected leaders--which would only recreate the problem that Sotomayor is hoping the external focus will dissolve.

All that said, Sotomayor's book has set the nascent subfield of peacekeeper contributor studies on a firm and intellectually rigorous footing. His book is to be highly commended to anyone interested in the changing dynamics of global militarism, the international use of force, and the unintended consequences and paradoxes of liberal internationalism.

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