

Spoilers from Within: Bureaucratic Spoiling in United Nations Peace Operations

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Taking the organizational characteristic of international organizations seriously, this article draws attention to the internal bureaucratic dimension of United Nations Peace Operations. It focuses on the obstructing behavior of individual members of this international bureaucracy and its potential impact on an operation's overall performance. It does so by extending Stedman's spoiler concept to include actors within the peace operations bureaucracy. Subsequently, based on findings from public administration research, a working definition of "bureaucratic spoilers" is developed. In order to demonstrate the empirical relevance of the theoretical concept "spoilers from within," empirical examples are presented to illustrate the main forms of bureaucratic spoiling in UN peace operations: dissent-shirking, obstruction, and sabotage.

"Sometimes I have the feeling that there are more spoilers inside the UN than outside."

—Francesc Vendrell, long-time UN civil servant

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, the world has witnessed a massive increase in the number and scope of peace operations authorized by the United Nations (UN) Security Council and administered by an international bureaucracy in the form of the UN Secretariat. According to the figures of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)—the key organizational unit administering peace operations within the UN Secretariat—a total of 115,582 personnel is currently serving in fifteen peacekeeping operations.² While UN peace operations started as mere military observer missions monitoring ceasefires or controlling buffer zones, UN peace operations have evolved into so-called multidimensional peacekeeping operations. Over the last several decades, these operations have become highly complex organizational entities composed not only of military components but also of a variety of civilian components, addressing various issues like rule of law, human rights, or the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

In order to identify patterns and factors contributing to the success and failure of these missions, scholars have dealt extensively with the local conditions on the ground, the international community's will to invest its capabilities, structural design issues of the international presence, or single strategies in policy areas like security sector reform. As we will show, the role the international bureaucracy administering these organizations plays in this regard has by and large been neglected.

Building on a recent but growing research agenda, which takes international organizations

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2. Figures according to the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations Fact Sheet, 31 August 2013.

as organizational entities seriously (cf. Barnett and Finnemore 1999, 2004), this article sheds light on the internal bureaucratic dimension of peacekeeping operations. We argue that internal factors, such as the obstructing behavior of individuals in these international bureaucracies, may have a significant influence on the organization's overall performance. By emphasizing the internal administrative perspective, we aim at sketching a new research agenda analyzing the fine-grained processes, administrative micropolitics, and individual bureaucratic behavior within peace operations. By focusing on internal actors obstructing peace operations, we expand Stephen Stedman's landmark definition by which spoilers are often referred to as those local actors who deliberately undermine peace agreements.³ There are also "spoilers from within" the peace operation that make successful mandate implementation more difficult. This article develops a conceptual definition of bureaucratic spoilers (or "spoilers from within") and identifies three corresponding mechanisms of spoiling by transferring insights from public administration research and organization theories.

We begin with a brief review of the current scholarly contributions focusing on managerial aspects of international organizations in general, and peace operations in specific, as well as a review of literature on success and failure of peace operations. In the main part, we briefly describe the hitherto applied concept of spoilers in the context of peace operations and go on to expand the scope of this concept to include actors within the peace operation's bureaucracy. We further develop a working definition of bureaucratic spoilers and supplement it by findings from the field of administrative science and organizational studies. Finally, examples of UN peace operations illustrate the main forms of bureaucratic spoiling, which are dissent-shirking, obstruction, and sabotage, demonstrating the empirical existence and relevance of the theoretical concept of "spoilers from within."

International Organizations as Bureaucratic Organizations

Despite the doubtlessly increasing importance of international organizations (IOs) and their respective administrative bodies and substructures, especially in the field of peace and security, there is still a deficit in the research on the internal working procedures of international organizations and their respective secretariats in the international relations (IR) literature. As we elaborated briefly in the introduction to this special issue, although there has been quite a dynamic in (re)discovering these organizational dimensions recently, it still holds true that "for several decades, states have taken IOs more seriously than have scholars" (Abbott and Snidal 1998:29). Classical organizational theory provides various opportunities of theory transfer and even though there are many scholars "familiar with principal-agent problems and the ways in which bureaucratic politics can compromise organizational effectiveness, [. . .] these approaches have rarely been applied to IOs" (Barnett and Finnemore 1999:107). Hence, despite the fact that these international public administrations have received much public criticism for their mismanagement, their internal working procedures, and specifically those factors leading to dysfunctionalities, are rarely examined. More frequently, one finds accounts written by former members of the UN secretariat (Urquhart 1991; Sanjuan 2005), diplomats to the UN or journalists (e.g., Traub 2006; Shawn 2006), but they are either anecdotal or have a tendency to expose the organization, portraying the UN secretariat accusatory (and not analytical) as a byzantine administrative apparatus with ineffective civil servants and a high degree of corruption. However, the neglect has been identified and lamented upon for quite some time. A recurring theme for decades is the assessment that still too little is known about international public administration (cf. Weiss 1975; Pitt and Weiss 1986; Dijkzeul and Beigbeder 2003). The notable exceptions in the literature (Sebo 1973; Pitt and Weiss 1986) specifically looking into the UN and its administrative machinery do not establish a systematic link between the internal workings and the performance of the bureaucratic machinery

3. Stedman's definition of spoilers is "leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it" (Stedman 1997:5).

and remain rather descriptive. The reason for this is subject to speculation that range from difficulties in accessing data and the object of research itself, the complexity of the empirical task, and the division of two camps—one doing theoretical and conceptual work, the other digging deep into the empirics and practical knowledge on organizational processes.

Peace Operations as Bureaucratic Organizations

The above-mentioned scholarly omission of the internal dimension of international organizations also applies to peace operations, which constitute a special type of international public administration and can well be viewed as bureaucratic entities. “Bureaucracy” is a frequently used term and concept, but to date, there is no commonly accepted definition and meaning of “bureaucracy” (Beetham 1996). Usually the term “bureaucracy” is linked to Max Weber’s bureaucratic theory. There are several organizational characteristics frequently associated with bureaucratic organizations such as clear jurisdictional areas of competency, office hierarchy, management based on documents, specialization and professionalization of staff, full working capacity of the official, as well as administration governed by impersonal rules and standard operating procedures (see Weber 1978 (1915):956 et seq.). Weber’s description of bureaucracy is not a prescription of how bureaucracies have to be designed but rather the description of an ideal type. Consequently, it is empirically useful to talk about degrees of bureaucratization instead of establishing a dichotomous understanding of bureaucracies and non-bureaucracies based on Weber’s ideal type criteria.

While UN peace operations had been managed on an ad hoc basis during the Cold War, an institutionalized administrative structure has existed within the UN Secretariat since the creation of the DPKO in 1992 and the establishment of an additional Department of Field Support (DFS) in 2007. Just by looking at the organizational charts of DPKO, DFS, and UN peace operations themselves, one can identify a strict organizational hierarchy with a clear system of super- and subordination as well as different spheres of competence and division of labor between the various departments, divisions, branches, sections, or units. Furthermore, the UN system is governed by various sets of rules and standard operating procedures that often regulate in detail areas such as procurement or human resource management. From this perspective, UN peace operations and their related administrative structures at field and headquarters level can be regarded as a bureaucratic organization. However, what differentiates peace operations from the ideal type of bureaucracy is the fact that they are not designed to be of permanent nature, and are to a great extent influenced by the political interests of the member states. Their provisional and precarious character is already highlighted in the name of some missions such as the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) or the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). Their constituting mandate is subject to renewal by the UN Security Council, normally for a period of twelve months, sometimes shorter. As a further difference to Max Weber’s ideal type concept of a public bureaucracy, most of the multinational personnel are recruited under contracts of limited duration, and permanent appointments—or *tenure for life* (Ibid:1962)—are the exception rather than the rule. According to the latest report of the Secretary-General on the ‘Composition of the Secretariat’, out of the 921 total staff working in DFS and DPKO only 247 (26.82%) hold permanent/continuing appointments whereas 674 (73.18%) hold fixed-term or temporary appointments. Of all 21,157 staff in field operations 97.21% hold fixed-term or temporary appointments whereas only 346 hold permanent appointments (see General Assembly document A/68/356). Nevertheless, in practice most of the fixed-term contracts are constantly renewed creating sometimes tenure-like careers which again is in line with Weber’s claim that “as a factual rule, *tenure for life* is presupposed even where notice can be or periodic reappointment occurs” (see Weber 1978 (1915):962).

Not surprisingly but contrary to the traditional conception of bureaucracy as apolitical, the UN “Secretariat is, in many ways, a political institution, a place where UN member states

compete for power and influence of others” (Myint-U and Scott 2007:x). Cooperation and coordination problems, selection of managerial staff, the need to learn from previous missions, as well as the organizational design of peace operations⁴—all this is superimposed not only by the particular interests of the member states but also by the micropolitics of various organizational units within the system of the UN.

In sum, the UN Secretariat as well as UN peace operations may be treated as bureaucratic organizations in the form of an international bureaucracy (see, amongst others, Bauer and Weinlich 2011) or international public administration that is run by professional international civil servants, hierarchically organized, based on specialization and the division of labor, as well as governed by written formal rules and standard operating procedures.

The Neglected Internal Dimension

Since the late 1980s, the world has witnessed a surge in the number and scope of peace operations the members of the UN Security Council authorized. Concerning the success and failure of these endeavors scholars dealt extensively with a variety of factors (Bratt 1997; Šimunović 1999; Pushkina 2006; van der Lijn 2009). The role the international bureaucracy itself plays in this regard has been largely neglected though. Besides the general debate on how to assess or measure the performance of these endeavors (Bratt 1996a, 1996b; Druckman et al. 1997), most studies pay attention to “external” factors outside of the core of the peacekeeping system.

The most prominent approach conceptualizing the conditions for successful peace operations is the so-called peace-building triangle by Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis (2006). According to this model, the chances of success are determined by the hostility level in the territory, the local capacities, and the international will committed to the operation. Contrary to our article’s focus, Doyle and Sambanis’ comprehensive approach focuses on macro-level factors. Another widely cited approach for the analysis of performance conditions is the one presented by Roland Paris (2004), whose general thesis is that the chances for success are better if the international community first focuses on putting a rudimentary network of domestic institutions in place before the liberalizing processes of democratization and marketization are tackled. Summarizing, Pushkina (2006) and van der Lijn (2009) identify several factors for success mentioned in the scholarly literature, but they all refer to conditions at the international level or general characteristics of the mission, such as the robustness of the mandate or the involvement of a major power.

Furthermore, there exists a range of studies that examine the relationship between the success of a mission and the local conditions, thus bringing factors at the field level, such as the influence of spoilers (Stedman 1997) or the supportive role local ownership plays (Poulligny 2006), into focus. The classic peace and conflict research also focuses on the determinants for success and failure in the context of post-conflict reconstruction efforts of the international community, partially with explicit reference to peace operations (cf. Fortna 2004; Gilligan and Stedman 2003; Cooper 2001, Diehl 1993; Small and David 1982).

Nevertheless, the “internal” dynamics and factors of peace operations as well as the fact that peace operations and the UN Secretariat constitute complex administrative entities have been largely neglected—despite abundant theoretical arguments for the assumption that bureaucracies under certain circumstances undermine the policies they actually have to implement, such as the economic theory of bureaucracy or theories of bureaucratic politics.⁵ Policy outcomes might rather be the result of turf-battles and compromises than of a rational macro-level process that tries to serve the public interest in the most efficient and effective way. Furthermore, there exist clear hints from practitioners such as our first quote

4. On organizational learning see Benner et al (2011), Berthoin Antal et al (forthcoming) and on design Junk (2012).

5. On economic theories see Downs (1967) and Niskanen (1971); on bureaucratic politics see Allison (1971) and Brewer (2008).

in this article or written accounts from the field (Eide 2012:30 et seq.) that internal matters from within the UN system undermine the successful implementation of peace operations. Overall, a closer look at the internal dynamics of peace operations, conceptualizing them as bureaucratic organizations, offers scholars and practitioners alike the opportunity to refine their understanding of endogenous factors contributing to or constraining organizational performance.

Mixed Blessings of Bureaucratic Organizations

The inefficiencies or dysfunctionalities of bureaucratic organizations have not only been subject to public criticism but also the subject of scholarly interest. While Weber praises the rational and efficient characteristic of his ideal concept of bureaucracy, he highlights the flip-side too. In a rare critique to modernism, he argues that further rationalization may lead to an “iron cage” in which a rigid set of rules depersonalize and overly specialize an organization. Along the same thoughts, Merton (1940) emphasizes the reverse side of the bureaucratic model by pointing to the effects of rigidity in the form of red tape and inefficiency. He highlights that certain features of bureaucratic organizations that make them more effective, like the dominance of rules guaranteeing predictability and reliability, may have dysfunctional or adverse effects, too, such as rigidity and the inability to adjust. This is the case when through a “process of displacement of goals” (Ibid:563) the civil servant internalizes the strict observation of rules and consequently an initial means, intended to ensure the organization’s effectiveness, becomes an end in itself.

As a consequence, this “over conformity” gives rise to rigidity as illustrated by Merton’s study of polar pioneer Bernt Balchen. The authorities in the U.S. denied Balchen American citizenship, arguing that he had failed to comply with the five-year residency rule in the United States. Indeed, he once had left the country for an Antarctic voyage on an American vessel to a territory that was claimed by the United States. This formed the basis for the authority’s rigid application and orientation on rules and led to the inadequate rejection. Merton argues that such inadequacies derive their origin from structural sources.

Many scholars point in the same direction, namely to the fact that deficiencies of the bureaucratic organization are not the degeneration of the bureaucratic model itself but originate from the same structural characteristics that make it an efficient organization—what Mayntz (1985) metaphorically described as the Janus-faced character of the bureaucratic organization. So the origin of dysfunctionalities of the bureaucratic organization does not lie necessarily within the individual bureaucrat, but within the organizational characteristics of the bureaucracy itself as well.

The Myth of the Loyal Bureaucrat

Closely related to Weber’s ideal type of bureaucracy as the most rational-legal form of authority is the conceptualization of the civil servant or bureaucrat as an impartial actor and willing servant implementing the policies and laws of its political master. But like Weber’s description of bureaucracy, this is an ideal type that can rarely be found in reality. Scholars of public administration have again and again pointed out that civil servants are not only loyal servants to the common interest but also have their own interests and often have a surprisingly high degree of autonomy and discretionary authority in implementing policies (Lipsky 1980). Therefore, one can argue that not only the structural and organizational characteristics, but the individual civil servant can be one origin of a decrease in efficiency in bureaucratic organizations. Consequently, the activities of international organizations are shaped by the inevitabilities of bureaucracy, as well as individual behavior.

Already in 1937, a leading government official and political scientist of the Weimar Republic, Arnold Brecht, who opposed Hitler and later emigrated to the U.S. (Krohn and Unger 2006) introduced the term “bureaucratic sabotage.” Thereby, he shifted the focus of

the origin of undesirable outcomes of bureaucracy to the individual bureaucrat. According to Brecht, the concept of bureaucracy refers to “any kind of political domination exercised consciously or unconsciously by civil servants as distinct, and eventually in contrast to, the political exponents of the government” (1937:48). He describes four stages of such domination by the civil service. The first two stages are the command of red tape and domination through expert knowledge, which he describes as unconscious forms of political influence by civil servants. Through case routine and red tape all initiatives of the political leadership will be slowed down and eventually the initial plan impaired, whereas expert knowledge refers to the domination over political newcomers by old civil servants who have more detailed and substantial knowledge in their field of expertise. The two other forms are the application of conscious political will by individuals and groups and are characterized by their malicious nature. According to Brecht, there have always been cases when an embittered civil servant has counteracted his superior and red tape, as well as expert knowledge, has served as a tool to obstruct the disliked order. The most serious form of bureaucratic sabotage is reached when not only individuals counteract the orders and policies of the government, but large portions of the civil service collectively undermine the efforts of the government, because legislation involves their personal interests like salary or pensions. Brecht points to the fact that the phenomenon of sabotage by individuals in bad faith is especially more frequent than it is understood.

Sixty years later, analyzing the behavior of civil servants, Brehm and Gates (1997) reach the same conclusion that sabotage of policies by bureaucrats is a significant but often overlooked phenomenon, rarely included into analyses. Even though some scholarly attention has been devoted to shirking, they content that in particular “the politically motivated act of attempting to wreck a policy or to prevent policy reform has been ignored” (Ibid.:31). In their analysis of who, or what, determines what bureaucrats do, Brehm and Gates came to the conclusion that the individual bureaucrats’ preferences determine their policy choices rather than pecuniary rewards or supervision. In their work, they present four choices bureaucrats have with respect to the production of policy outputs: work, leisure-shirking, dissent-shirking, and sabotage. According to their enhanced principal-agent model, the bureaucrat decides across a set of different policies how to allocate the time he devotes to the four choices. Only the first behavior produces a positive output, both forms of shirking reduce the bureaucrats output toward zero, while sabotage is defined as a negative output of the individual that must be absorbed by the other bureaucrats.

One of the most recent approaches from the field of public administration that describes this kind of dark side behavior is the concept of “guerilla government” presented by O’Leary (2006). This refers to “the actions of career public servants who work against the wishes—either implicitly or explicitly communicated—of their superiors” (Ibid.:xi). Similar to Brecht (1937), as well as Brehm and Gates (1997), a central assertion of O’Leary’s work is that guerilla government represents a routine problem within bureaucracies that happens all the time. Moreover, it is the “manifestation of inevitable tensions between bureaucracy and democracy that will never go away” (O’Leary 2006:3). Thus, it is mainly of the power of the career bureaucrats and the tension between them and political appointees that persistently challenges a functioning bureaucracy. As a form of dissent, the behavior of guerilla government is displayed by public servants who are dissatisfied, for instance, by their organization and due to strategic reasons refrain from going public. In order to achieve their objectives, they may use many techniques ranging from less obvious behavior, such as simply forgetting orders or leaking information to outsiders, to direct disobedience.

All of the above presented studies suggest that, in general, individual bureaucrats not only have administrative discretion when implementing the given policies of their political masters but also the possibility to actually undermine or work against them. Based on the

conceptualization of UN peace operations as bureaucratic organizations and at the same time highlighting the often neglected potential of the individual civil servant to actually undermine policies, “spoilers from within” must be viewed as a potentially important but largely neglected internal explanatory factor for the (mis-) performance of UN peace operations.

The Spoiler Concept Extended

By including actors that spoil the performance of their organization from within, we expand the landmark “spoiler” definition by Stedman (1997). According to this debate, local actors who deliberately undermine peace agreements are often referred to as spoilers. As Stedman points out, in civil war termination “the greatest source of risk comes from spoilers—leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it” (Ibid.:5). In his much cited article “Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes,” Stedman initiated the debate on spoilers while introducing a typology to analyze and address this problem in the context of a given peace agreement. He describes three types of spoilers—limited, greedy, and total—and argues that spoilers differ on two dimensions: “The goals they seek and their commitment to achieving these goals” (Ibid.:6). A review of the literature shows that during recent years the debate on spoilers has evolved, and some aspects of Stedman’s initial concept have been criticized or refined.

First of all, some scholars contest that it is not possible to identify spoiler types *ex ante*, questioning the predictive power of the concept (Zahar 2003). Second, the inconsistency and ambiguity of the typology were criticized because different types of spoilers share the same characteristics in terms of their goals and level of commitment (Ibid.). Third, the immutability of a total spoiler has been refuted by empirical evidence (Darby 2001). Fourth, it is argued that the focus on actors who use violence is too narrow and consequently scholars have extended the original spoiler definition. For instance, Schneckener presents a wider definition of spoilers and describes them as “all actors that avoid, block or sabotage a peace process, because they fear either to lose something or are not considered in an appropriate manner” (2003:4). In the same vein, Newman and Richmond propose to define spoiling as “activities of any actors that are opposed to a peaceful settlement for whatever reason, from within, or (usually) outside the peace process, and who use violence or other means to disrupt the peace process in pursuit of their aims” (2006:4). Whereas the previous two definitions still relate to actors who are against a given peace process, Cockayne and Pfister (2008) apply the concept of spoiler to organized crime, and Boucher and Holt (2009) include all actors undermining sanction regimes, thus broadening the perspective on spoiling.

Although the initial spoiler concept has been refined and the initial definition extended to include a wide range of actors, all concepts have in common that their point of reference for spoiling behavior is the resistance of actors against a given peace agreement and its successful implementation. Furthermore, and despite the extension of the definition, the outlined approaches still focus on external elements of peace operations. Consequently, to this day no attention is paid to spoiling behavior amongst the “custodians of peace,” or in Stedman’s words, among those “international actors whose task is to oversee the implementation of peace agreements” (1997:12). These can be international organizations, concerned third parties or states, or individuals such as the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (Trettin forthcoming). In the subsequent section, we expand the scope of the spoiler term to include actors within the peace operations’ administration.

Toward a Working Definition of Bureaucratic Spoilers

In order to analytically grasp the phenomenon of bureaucratic spoiling one might describe it as some kind of deviation from the organization’s standards, rules and norms, but this

conception comes along with substantial difficulties to determine the “abnormal” or “normal” in bureaucratic organizations as Ellwein (1992) highlights. For instance, to work overtime or not leave the office on Friday after lunchtime—to make use of typical bureaucratic stereotypes—might be considered a deviation from the norm. Furthermore, despite having a negative connotation, the deviance from organizational norms and rules can be positive and constructive too according to Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2003). Therefore, they extend the focus of deviant behavior to positive deviance and define it as “intentional behaviors that depart from the norms of a referent group in honorable ways” (Ibid.:209). Complex organizations like UN peace operations are usually established under very fragile and difficult circumstances in which improvisation and pragmatism are important, and, consequently, consciously bending or working against the rules and standards in an honorable way might become a necessity. Such an honorable deviation from the norm can be, for instance, working overtime during the phase of mission set up to get the peace operation running. Even extreme deviations from the norm like issuing faux UN contracts, encouraging other staff members to resign and refusing to take orders from the top of the bureaucratic hierarchy can become an honorable deviation.

Samantha Power (2008:288 et seq.) describes forms of such deviant behavior, which were displayed by the staff of the UN mission in East Timor (UNAMET). After the result of the Timorese vote for independence from Indonesia was announced on 4 September 1999, and 78.5 percent of Timorese had voted for independence, pro-Indonesian militia unleashed a bloody scorched earth campaign against the Timorese population. In the following days, fifteen hundred civilians poured into the UN compound in Dili to seek refuge. Given the drastically deteriorating security situation, on recommendation by the Head of Mission Ian Martin, the secretary-general declared a Phase V emergency ordering the withdrawal of all UN staff members. But as many of the UN staff members were sure that a massacre would commence if they abandoned the Dili compound and leave the refugees behind, they tried to find ways to undermine and ignore the evacuation order. Some prepared falsified UN contracts for the civilians so they could claim to be UN staff and have to be evacuated; others encouraged staff members to resign so they did not have to follow the order. Overall, many UN bureaucrats refused to leave Dili, and, finally, more than seventy of them stayed at the compound until a few days later all refugees had been evacuated by Australian forces.

As this illustration demonstrates, describing this positive deviance and saving of human lives as spoiling behavior would not make sense or would at least be counterintuitive. Moreover, using deviation from norms as the baseline and indicator for spoiling behavior in peace operations is unsuitable because there are various norms or broader organizational goals that are sometimes in conflict with each other. How do you deal with the fact that it often becomes a necessity in order to successfully implement the mission’s mandate to negotiate with members of conflict parties who have committed serious war crimes or are indicted by the International Criminal Court? Handing over those persons might harm the operation’s efforts to build peace, while ignoring the indictment violates important norms the UN embodies, such as justice. Therefore, we view bureaucratic spoiling more broadly as a harmful behavior that undermines or counteracts the successful implementation of peace similar to the concept of counterproductive behavior presented by Sackett and DeVore (2001). According to them, counterproductive behavior “refers to any intentional behavior on the part of an organization member viewed by the organization as contrary to its legitimate interests” (Ibid.:145). So any work against the interests of the organization is considered spoiling behavior.

The above-mentioned notion that the behavior is intentional is another important building block for the definition of bureaucratic spoiling. Adapting the idea that the deviant behavior is voluntary, we argue that one has to analytically distinguish bureaucratic spoiling from other forms of unintended or subconscious acts that undermine the efficiency of the bureaucratic organization. These acts can be phenomena such as mistakes, social-loading, or

the above-mentioned leisure-shirking, meaning you are “not working because you do not feel like working” (Brehm and Gates 1997:30). Although empirically it will be very difficult to prove a person’s intention, it is of conceptual merit to postulate that bureaucratic spoiling is a conscious and intentional act, or, in simple terms, the person is aware of the consequences of his or her own spoiling behavior.

Based on the above-discussed elements, we propose the following working definition of bureaucratic spoilers: Bureaucratic spoilers in peace operations (or spoilers from within) are individuals or a small group of actors that, as staff members of the peace operation’s organizational structures, consciously counteract the successful implementation of a peace operation by undermining the efficiency and effectiveness of the mission, consequently working against the interests of the organization.

Forms of Bureaucratic Spoiling and Empirical Relevance in Peace Operations

Following Brehm and Gate’s criticism of the simplified “work or shirk” dichotomy of most principal-agent models (1997:29 et seq.), we expand their proposed set of alternative action to three basic forms of bureaucratic spoiling: dissent-shirking, obstruction, and sabotage. Dissent-shirking is the weakest form of bureaucratic spoiling, as this behavior is not necessarily deviant from the established organizational norms and principles. It is difficult to identify as such, because working according to the rules, deliberately withholding effort, or remaining passive is an indirect form of spoiling behavior. In contrast, obstruction is easier to detect as it presents an active and direct form of bureaucratic spoiling as illustrated above. Nevertheless, there is a blurry line between dissent-shirking and obstruction, and often it might not be possible to empirically distinguish between both forms, as obstruction can be both deviant and nondeviant from norms. Sabotage is the strongest form of bureaucratic spoiling as it represents a deliberate form of destruction with the intention to damage the organization, and the negative output has to be compensated for by the other individuals in the organization.

In terms of consequences, we differentiate between forms of bureaucratic spoiling that differ in the degree of seriousness or harmfulness. The behavior of bureaucratic spoilers varies on a continuum ranging from dissent-shirking to sabotage. Dissent-shirking may be considered a form of silent protest, and it is the weakest form of bureaucratic spoiling (Ibid.). The bureaucrat deliberately withholds effort, because he or she is opposed to a certain policy or order. The distinctive characteristic is that it does not constitute an active form of spoiling behavior, the bureaucratic spoiler just works according to the rules and does not show any extra effort, including no overtime. Hecló (1977) described absolutely passive compliance, the “yes boss” approach, as the easiest means for bureaucrats to undermine political leadership. An illustration would be, for instance, a bureaucrat who purposely does not take advantage of his edge on information or experience for the benefit of the organization. If someone embarks on the road to ruin because he or she is new to the organization, the spoiler intentionally does not provide advice or service, although he easily could. Albeit indirectly undermining the performance of the organization, the bureaucrat’s behavior does not deviate from the organizational norms. Another illustration is a chief of staff of a UN peace operation having had a long career within the organization and consequently knowing very well how the administrative machinery functions to work around problems, such as lengthy recruitment processes. This chief of staff could easily act as a bureaucratic spoiler by not providing his expert knowledge on the UN bureaucracy to his superior, the head of mission, who likely might not have worked for the UN before and does not know how the organization functions.

In general, the field-level leadership has both considerable authority and leeway to change the path of a mission or to interpret the mandate. In the case of Sudan, it was the mission leadership that decided to thwart the best practice section, the supposed focal point

for learning in peace operations, to a simple UN volunteer position, as well as not foster the training and career development plans set by the mandate and UN rules (Berthoin Antal et al. forthcoming). The mission leadership is critical, for instance, in generating knowledge and enabling its translation into actual learning. If the leadership deliberately wants to maintain a low profile and to avoid constructive conflict with headquarters, member states, or the host country altogether, it may easily act as a spoiler in the form of dissent-shirking.

Between the poles of bureaucratic spoiling, obstruction constitutes a more direct form of spoiling behavior to the effect that the spoiler actively undermines the efficiency and effectiveness of the mission. This behavior can be both deviant and nondeviant from organizational norms. A bureaucrat who deliberately wants to slow down a new initiative or to thwart an ambitious colleague might insist everything goes through the proper official channels. The bureaucratic spoiler's behavior still does not deviate from the norm, but the dysfunctional aspects of bureaucracy, like red tape, are exploited in a malicious way. Obstructing behavior that deviates from the organizational norms and significantly reduces the output of the individual is illustrated by Schöndorf (2011)⁶ in her analysis of alternative explanations for the success and failure of UN transitional administrations. She describes how during the termination phase of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, the international staff became "glued to their seats" (Ibid.:365). An important element of the transitional administration was to build up local administrative capacities through training local staff, meaning the ultimate objective was that the Timorese counterparts eventually would take over. But instead of this capacity building for local administrative structures and training the local staff, it is reported that the international staff deliberately obstructed the capacity-building process. The perceived precarious employment situation of the international staff is cited as the reason behind the low performance of the capacity-building program, which delayed the whole transition process. In this case, the civil servants actively undermined the effective and efficient implementation of a program they were intended to implement, thus deviating from expected behavior.

A similar example of obstructing behavior is described by Dijkstra (2010) relating to the period when the EU took over parts of the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and was supposed to take over personnel and infrastructure. As the UN mission was slowly terminating, many UNMIK staff members had to give up their jobs, and one of Dijkstra's interviewees notes that "people were trying to hold on to their unit. We asked all units which tasks they could hand over to the local authorities in terms of the transition. A number of the units came with good overviews, but many units simply refused to hand over any tasks" (Ibid.: 9) Furthermore, Dijkstra describes the Russian staff members of UNMIK at the lower levels tried to undermine the handover on orders of the Russian government, which did not support the handover in the first place. Their bureaucratic spoiling included sabotaging the cars that were supposed to be handed over or not delivering the mail.

The most serious form of spoiling behavior is sabotage: The underhanded effort to harm the organization in a way that your negative output has to be absorbed by the extra efforts of your colleagues. In contrast to the previous forms of spoiling, not only the effectiveness and efficiency of the mission is significantly reduced but also the organization as a whole is harmed. Forms of bureaucratic sabotage are actions that discredit the whole organization and damage its reputation, such as corruption. A prime example might be the oil-for-food scandal or public disputes that severely undermine the working relationship with the host government as illustrated by the quarrels of the leadership of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). After the presidential elections in Afghanistan in 2009, Peter Galbraith, deputy head of UNAMA, had a public dispute with Head of Mission Kai Eide about the role of the UN in preventing and monitoring the massive fraud in the election. Eide had urged his staff

6. See her article in this issue.

to not comment on the widespread fraud during the elections, because he feared it would destabilize the UN's efforts to build a democracy. Galbraith had a different point of view and publicly accused his own organization of failure to probe fraud charges. After Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon removed him from his office as deputy special representative, Galbraith published a much-noticed and highly critical op-ed in the *Washington Post*. The public debate heated up in December 2009 when a *New York Times* article reported that, according to senior UN officials, Galbraith had proposed to enlist the U.S. government in a plan to replace Afghan President Karzai with former Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani or former Minister of Interior Ali A. Jalali (Glanz and Oppel 2009). This allegation was leaked by Eide, who meanwhile had resigned from his position as head of UNAMA. Not only did this public debate severely undermine the reputation of the mission and its relationship with the host government, but reports also describe that the dispute almost sparked a mutiny within the mission as some of the senior staff backed Galbraith in the quarrel with his boss, Eide (Bone et al. 2009).

It is precisely the above-described complexity of the organizational set-up of peace operations, their temporary nature (in particular, vulnerabilities in the start-up and termination phase), and their politicization that makes them prone to bureaucratic spoiling, with negative consequences for their implementation performance. Having illustrated that bureaucratic spoilers are not only a theoretical construct but actually exist and matter in terms of the organization's overall performance, the question arises as to what motivates these individuals to exhibit spoiling behavior. In accordance with the existing literature, we can identify individual motives as well as contextual factors providing incentives for individuals within UN peace operations to consciously counteract and undermine the organization's mandate. The above-described thwarting of the best practice section in the Sudan mission, and the deliberate decision not to foster training and career development in order to avoid conflict with headquarters, illustrates that bureaucratic spoilers might be motivated by political reasons. Furthermore, the phenomenon that some individuals refuse to hand over tasks to their successors or local staff, especially during the termination phase of a peace operation, clearly indicates economic motives. These economic interests tied to job security are certainly fueled by contextual factors, such as the marginal career opportunities and the lack of comprehensive and functional career development systems within the UN system that could mitigate the disadvantages of temporary organizations. Finally, the public dispute among the mission leadership in Afghanistan reveals the political aspect of these organizations and how handling ambiguous political questions or responding to political divisions might serve as an antecedent for bureaucratic spoiling. Although Kai Eide and Peter Galbraith insisted they were old friends, it seems plausible that personal quarrels or antipathies might induce spoiling behavior.

Conclusion

The demanding conditions of peace operations, which include solving problems that require flexibility and heavily bureaucratic rules of organizing its labor force or managing procurement, inevitably leads to a proclivity for working against the rules—with either honorable or rather destructive intentions. As this article discussed, this is certainly a contributing factor to understanding the performance of peace operations. Research should not shy away from analyzing it. Understanding the internal dynamics of peace operations offers scholars and practitioners alike the opportunity to refine their understanding of endogenous factors contributing or constraining organizational performance. While research of peace operations by and large has omitted this important field, this article demonstrated that public administration and organization studies have accumulated plenty of insights on these organizational patterns. Based on this, we developed a conceptualization of bureaucratic spoilers as individuals or a small group of actors who, as staff members of the peace operation's organizational structures, consciously counteract the successful implementation of a peace operation by undermining the efficiency and effectiveness of the mission, consequently working against the interests of

the organization.

Hence, by extending the spoiler concept from peace and conflict research to bureaucratic spoilers, we propose to analyze UN peace operations as bureaucratic organizations and to take the individual civil servant—the human factor—seriously as he or she could be an important factor undermining the efficient and effective implementation of the mission and its mandate. While most mission staff is certainly very much dedicated to the mission's mandate and bureaucratic spoiling is not the dominant behavior of the UN's civil servant, the analytical importance of spoiling behavior cannot be emphasized enough: Bureaucratic spoiling is targeted against the organizations ultimate interests. Although our illustrations show that extreme forms of spoiling (obstruction and sabotage as the second and third spoiling mechanism this article discusses) behavior do exist, it is more likely the less dramatic forms, such as dissent-shirking, occur more frequently, as they are difficult to identify and consequently carry less risk to be recognized. This is not only of analytical but of practical importance: "Spoilers from within" work against the very interests of the organization and thereby increase the workload for all other staff members within the mission and bind a lot of time and energy. Given the fact that the staff of peacekeeping operations very often works in challenging environments, it is imperative that any additional burden in terms of bureaucratic spoiling should be mitigated. Transparent communication of an organization's visions and goals, as well as proper coordination and efficient oversight mechanism (based on project management techniques), can counteract these dysfunctionalities.

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