

3.6.1 Cost-Benefit Analysis of United Nations Peacekeeping

In 2008, a team of researchers led by Paul Collier, working under the Copenhagen Consensus project, published a report providing a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of international military interventions in postconflict societies and the abilities of these interventions to reduce the risk of conflict recurrence. The report found that UN peacekeeping operations are highly cost-effective, as they reduce the possibilities of relapse to conflict and coup attempts and all their negative consequences.

While interstate war has declined since the end of the Cold War, the incidence of conflict—particularly civil wars in low-income countries—has remained relatively constant. Further, the threat posed by the recurrence of conflict or coup attempts in postconflict societies remains high. The average direct cost of a civil war can be upward of \$250 billion. This does not include the humanitarian costs, which

impact negatively on broader developmental interventions by the international community.

The report explored a range of military intervention mechanisms used by the international community, with a primary focus on the curtailment of domestic military spending, the use of peacekeeping forces, and the provision of over-the-horizon security guarantees. The authors concluded that these methods have had positive impacts on the security situation where they were employed, but are not a panacea and need to be applied on a case-by-case basis.

The authors found that UN peacekeeping has proven to be extremely cost-effective, especially when the investment in a mission is weighed against the alternative impacts of relapse to conflict and its consequences. The study concluded that spending \$850 million on a peacekeeping operation annually over the course of ten years

reduces the risk of violence from nearly 40 percent to 7 percent.

An even more cost-efficient method of intervention is the use of over-the-horizon security guarantees, which are characterized by maintenance of only small contingents of personnel in-theater, with more robust forces available to be rapidly deployed. Interventions modeled on Britain's ten-year security safeguard for Sierra Leone, provide for diminished operational costs with positive impacts on the security situation.

The report concluded that the benefits of postconflict aid are maximized when packaged with the instruments described above. To ensure optimal effect, these efforts require significant coordination among institutional actors, a role that the authors see as a perfect fit for the UN's Peacebuilding Commission.