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Military Peacekeeping and the Politics of Protection

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UN Peacekeeping operations are increasingly judged on their ability and willingness to protect civilians from threats and atrocities. Protection of civilians is enshrined in key UN strategic and operational documents and has been likened to a new norm for the UN. Similarly, local communities hold protection expectations of UN peacekeepers including, but not limited to, active military protection from imminent threats. While the robust turn in peacekeeping has provided detailed debates about the challenges and potential pitfalls of militarizing the UN, we know surprisingly little about how exactly UN peacekeepers use military force and, crucially, how such use of force for protection is perceived by local communities. This roundtable focuses on recent debates that shine more detailed light on the operational, community-focused, and local aspects of peacekeeper's use of force. Specifically, this roundtable addresses variation in local community's legitimacy perceptions of peacekeepers' use of force; how and why UN peacekeepers use force for protection purposes and they are trained in doing so; and how we can theorize protection from threats and atrocities in a pluralistic manner.

Track Classification: Peacekeeping, Peacebuilding and Human Rights Working Group