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THE UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARDS UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS UNDER THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract. *Introduction.* The United States has always been one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and the largest financial donor to the UN System and peacekeeping operations. American policy towards the organization and peacekeeping operations has varied from harsh critique to active support. While in the office, President Trump criticized UN PKO missions for their inefficiency and pointed out the need for reforms both in the field of peacekeeping and the entire UN system. This led some American scholars to conclude that the Trump administration was an entirely special phenomenon in American policy towards the United Nations. This article analyzes United States policy towards UN peacekeeping under the Trump administration and attempts to respond to the question: does President Trump's policy regarding UN peacekeeping operations represent a fundamentally new phenomenon, or is it a continuation of trends that emerged during previous administrations? *Methods and materials.* The article analyzes U.S. State Budgets, State Department Congressional Budget Justifications, official speeches by President Trump, Trump Administration foreign policy doctrine 'America First', official UN documents related to funding issues and troop contributions. The authors also conducted expert interviews. *Analysis.* President Trump administration policy towards UN peacekeeping is analyzed to identify its main trends and determine their similarities with the policies of previous presidents towards UN peace operations. *Results.* The article concludes that, although President Trump's policy on UN peacekeeping operations was more critical than that of many of his predecessors, it is essentially a continuation of long-standing trends in U.S. politics. *Authors' contributions.* D. Pushkina defined research focus of the article, examined academic literature on USA administrations' policies towards the United Nations, selected research methods, defined the main vectors of the research, organized interviews with experts and made general conclusions. A. Khazanova researched and analyzed official U.S. documents with special focus on U.S. policy towards United Nations and UN peacekeeping, examined relevant UN documents, gathered budgetary data, conducted interviews with experts, made conclusions.

Key words: American foreign policy, United Nations, UN peacekeeping, President Trump, international relations.

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ПОЛИТИКА США В ОТНОШЕНИИ ОПЕРАЦИЙ ООН ПО ПОДДЕРЖАНИЮ МИРА ПРИ ПРЕЗИДЕНТЕ ТРАМПЕ

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Аннотация. На протяжении всего периода существования ООН США являются одним из пяти постоянных членов Совета Безопасности и делают самый большой вклад в бюджет Организации Объединенных Наций и Департамента миротворческих операций ООН. Придя к власти, президент Трамп начал активно критиковать операции ООН по поддержанию мира за их неэффективность, указывал на необходимость их реформирования, а также настаивал на значительных сокращениях их финансирования. Данная риторика сохранялась Президентом Трампом на протяжении всего пребывания в Белом доме. В статье анализируются официальные документы США: государственные бюджеты, обоснования бюджета Конгресса, речи, произнесенные президентом Трампом во время официальных выступлений, внешнеполитическая доктрина «America First», официальные документы ООН, касающиеся вопросов финансирования и военного персонала. Авторы также провели интервью с экспертами. В статье сделан вывод о том, что политика Дональда Трампа в отношении миротворческих операций ООН хотя и оказывается более критической, чем его предшественников, в основе своей все же является продолжением давно возникших в американской политике тенденций. *Вклад авторов.* Д.Б. Пушкина сформировала исследовательский вектор статьи, изучила научную литературу по политике администраций различных президентов США в отношении к ООН и миротворческим операциям ООН, определила методологию исследования, организовала интервью с экспертами. А.Л. Хазанова провела анализ политики администрации президента Трампа в отношении ООН и операций ООН по поддержанию мира, изучила официальные документы США и ООН по данной теме, собрала и проанализировала данные о бюджетной политике США в отношении миротворческих миссий, провела интервью с экспертами.

Ключевые слова: внешняя политика Соединенных Штатов Америки, Организация Объединенных Наций, операции ООН по поддержанию мира, президент Трамп, международные отношения.

Цитирование. Пушкина Д. Б., Хазанова А. Л. Политика США в отношении операций ООН по поддержанию мира при президенте Трампе // Вестник Волгоградского государственного университета. Серия 4, История. Регионоведение. Международные отношения. – 2022. – Т. 27, № 2. – С. 126–136. – (На англ. яз.). – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2022.2.11>

Introduction. Since the establishment of the United Nations organization, the United States has been the largest financial donor to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations [10]. The approved budget for the UN peacekeeping operations for the 2020/2021 fiscal year is U.S. \$6.58 billion. The United Nations estimated the United States' share at 27.89% of this amount [17]. The share of each country is calculated by the UN according to a rather complex formula every three years and reflects the “paying capacity” of the Organization's member countries [38]. USA, the world's largest economy, pays the greatest share of all UN members [15]. While American financial contributions to the PKOs are substantial, it is worth noting that currently there are almost no U.S. military personnel involved in UN peacekeeping operations [34]. It should be noted that the U.S. policy towards the UN and peacekeeping operations is a topic of active debates in the USA. These discussions intensified after President Donald Trump came to power and

announced the need to reduce funding for the UN, including the organization's peacekeeping operations [35].

In academic circles, opinions about U.S. policy toward UN peacekeeping operations differ. Many experts consider that D. Trump's policy towards the UN and peacekeeping missions, particularly to reduce their funding, significantly complicated the work of UN peacekeeping operations [13; 30]. N. Sheehan specifies that the reduction in funding reduces the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations, and consequently affects the realization of peacekeeping missions [13; 30]. C. De Coning indicates that the Trump administration policy aimed at reducing the funding for peacekeeping operations will have long-term consequences, and the Organization will have to work on restoring its peacekeeping potential for a long time [8]. Many scholars do state that the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and the UN as a whole is a topic for a debate [40], however, they argue that the U.S. should be more actively involved into the UN in

order to both improve organization and contribute to U.S. national interest. For example, K. Rudd notes that the reform of the UN is necessary to improve the effectiveness of the Organization and UN strengthening would correspond with the national interest of the United States [29]. There is also an opinion that UN peacekeeping missions stabilize situations that are not particularly important to the United States: without the UN's participation, the United States might not have paid attention to these conflicts. However, further funding for peacekeeping operations can provide the United States with support of small countries on issues that are important to the national interest of the U.S. [40]. Other researchers criticize the excessive, in their opinion, concern in American academic societies with the foreign policy of the Trump administration towards the UN [29]. For example, G.R. Olsen thinks that D. Trump successfully implemented the interests of the United States in his foreign policy [20] and Trump's policies towards the UN correspond to the American national interest.

Several academic articles discuss the existence of continuity in the political agenda of the U.S. presidential administrations, both in general and towards the United Nations [14; 18]. It is emphasized by some scholars that the President's party affiliation does not affect the direction of his administration's policy in relation to peacekeeping operations [3], which underlines foreign policy continuity among the administrations. Some experts, analyzing various issues of the Trump administration's foreign policy, concluded that Trump did not carry out a radically tougher foreign policy towards the UN [29; 40]. However, other researchers describe the D. Trump's presidency as "special" [18]. They specify that the political agenda of President Trump differed from the agenda of his predecessors by being particularly critical towards the UN, which posed a threat to the future of international cooperation, and marked the beginning of a difficult period for peacekeeping [9]. In this article, we will consider President Trump's policy on UN peacekeeping operations with the goal intend to find out whether President Trump's critical policy towards UN peacekeeping operations represents a fundamentally new phenomenon or it is a continuation of trends that emerged during previous administrations.

Methods and materials. This article analyzes U.S. and UN official documents. The study examines the federal budgets of the United States for the period from 1994 to 2021 fiscal years, State Department Congressional Budget Justifications for the period from 1994 to 2021 fiscal years in order to highlight the main trends that have emerged in previous presidencies, data on the distribution of seats between parties in the U.S. Congress, official speeches by President Trump, Trump Administration foreign policy doctrine 'America First', official UN documents related to funding issues and number of American troops involved in peacekeeping operations. Authors conducted interviews with experts on U.S. foreign policy and UN peacekeeping operations to get insider information and point of view on the topic. For the anonymity, which is required by the method of expert interview and convenience, their quotes will be cited in the article under 'Expert 1' and 'Expert 2'.

Analysis. The U.S. President and President's administration form the political agenda and official rhetoric towards the United Nations and other international organizations. Executive branch of Government represents the United States and their interests in the UN bodies through the U.S. mission in the UN. The President nominates American ambassadors to the United Nations, and the Senate provides its advice and consent to its proposals [36]. U.S. policies towards UN peacekeeping operations are produced not only by the presidential administration. The decision on the amount of funds allocated to peacekeeping operations depends heavily on the Congress. The U.S. Congress is important in determining country's policy towards the UN and peacekeeping operations through funding and oversight [36]. Every fiscal year the Congress allocates a defined budget for U.S. foreign affairs costs, including for UN peacekeeping.

Criticism of the UN and peacekeeping operations, specifying the need for their reform and attempts to reduce the budget allocated for peacekeeping are features of the U.S. political agenda that were prominent not only during the D. Trump's presidency. The Clinton administration insisted on reforming the UN to improve the Organization's efficiency. U.S. during Clinton's term in the office also proposed to reduce the budget for peacekeeping operations. Since 1994,

Congress has limited the amount of payment to the United States, setting a threshold of 25%, due to the concerns that the tariff for the USA is too high compared to what is set for other UN member states. Clinton's administration also took this stand due to serious losses in peacekeeping operations in Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia [2; 37]. In 1994, the Presidential Decree No. 25 "U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peacekeeping Operations" was issued, which outlined clear criteria for making decisions about U.S. support and participation in UN peacekeeping operations. Claiming that peacekeeping operations were not, and cannot be, a key element of American foreign policy, the document considered well-designed and well-conducted peacekeeping missions as a useful tool to advance American interests [14]. The Clinton administration was initially loyal to UN peacekeeping operations, but it has revised its active support and stopped participation in them, especially in regions that were not vital for the U.S. national security. An important role in this change was played by the fact that serious criticism of peacekeeping operations came from the Congress controlled by the Republican Party at that time [21; 22]. Under Clinton, the United States began to provide significantly fewer peacekeepers. According to President Clinton's

resolution No. 25, one of the criteria for increasing the number of U.S. troops sent to peacekeeping operations was more active participation of other UN member states in them [37] (Fig. 1).

In comparison with the Clinton administration, the George W. Bush administration was initially skeptical of UN peacekeeping. Similarly to Clinton's administration, Bush administration reduced the number of personnel provided by the United States to the UN PKOs. V. Holt and M. McKinnon believe that the rhetoric of the Bush administration indicated that the United States would become less involved in UN peacekeeping operations in the future or even make obstacles for new operations [14]. However, after the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, the political agenda of the United States changed. During the presentation of the new U.S. security strategy on September 17, 2002, George W. Bush declared that "...weak states, such as Afghanistan, can create as much danger to our national interests as strong states..." [31]. Such a change in the U.S. political course promoted state's closer cooperation with the UN and greater support for peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping operations began to be interpreted by the president as a "useful tool" [14]. The Republican-controlled Congress under George W. Bush favored

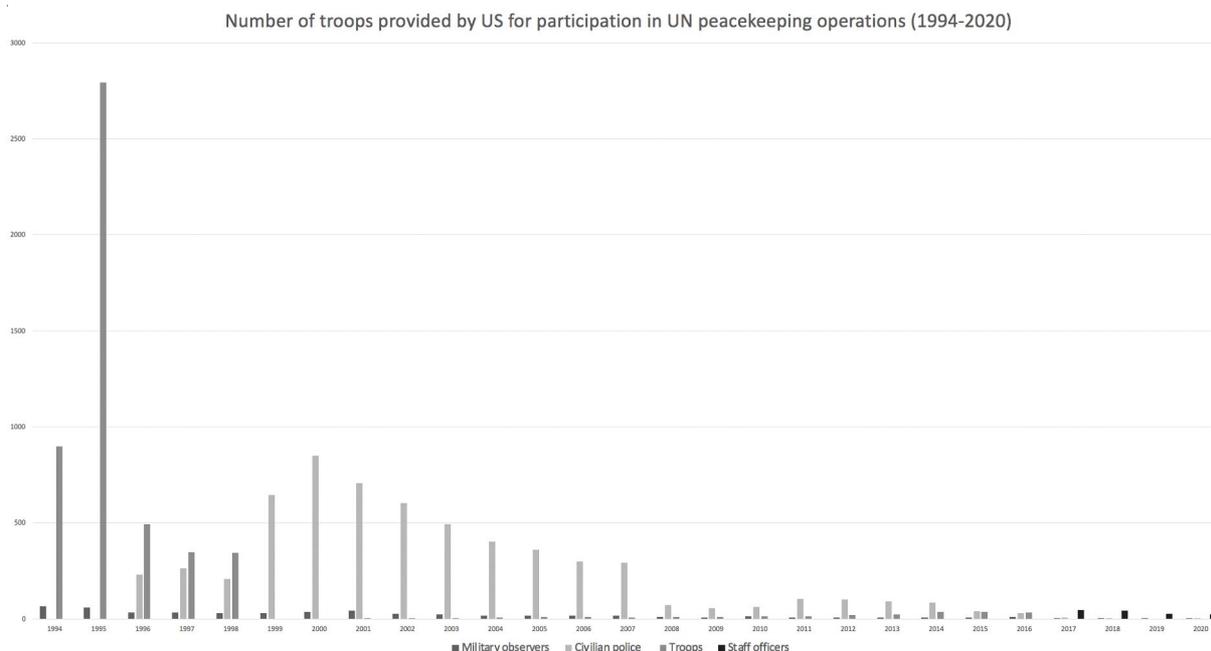


Fig. 1. Number of troops provided by U.S. for participation in UN peacekeeping operations (1994–2020)

Note. Source: Troop and Police Contributions // United Nations Peacekeeping URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors> (accessed 31 March 2021).

administration's budget proposals, and by 2006 the president had gathered relatively stable congressional support for funding peacekeeping missions. The majority of the seats in the House of Representatives at that time belonged to the Republicans, and in the Senate – to the Democrats [21; 22].

V. Holt and M. McKinnon, in their analysis of Clinton and Bush administrations policy towards the UN peacekeeping operations, identified certain trends: the United States interpreted UN peacekeeping missions not as the core object of its foreign policy, but as one of the many tools necessary to achieve humanitarian purposes and implement national interests; skepticism about the United Nations is widespread among American political elites, which results in disagreements over funding, mission support, and the provision of troops; United States policy has demonstrated flexibility and low-key support for peacekeeping, despite Congressional budget reductions and a relatively low degree of its importance to the U.S. national interest; support for peacekeeping operations was not a policy priority of either Clinton or George W. Bush; the U.S. intention to reach a more equitable division of contributions to UN peacekeeping operations emerged during the Clinton presidency and continued during Bush administration in the U.S. policy towards the Organization.

The Obama administration supported UN peacekeeping operations to the greater degree. Few months after coming to power, President Obama announced the resumption of closer ties with the UN [33]. The academic literature states that there is some continuity in the policy of presidential administrations towards the Organization: the Obama administration, like the Bush administration, was interested in using the Security Council in the national interests of the United States, particularly to approve various operations in the Middle East aimed at eliminating the terrorist Osama Bin Laden [3]. At the same time, President Obama also repeatedly supported international cooperation, the United Nations and participation in peacekeeping operations in Addresses to the UN General Assembly. Since 2010 Obama administration requested more money from Congress to fund peacekeeping than was requested by his predecessors. Since 2010, Congress allocated amounts below those

requested by the presidential administration, but tried to pay the full amount specified by the UN. From 2007 to 2015, the majority of the seats in the Senate belonged to Democrats, from 2015 to 2017 – to Republicans. In the House of Representatives from 2007 to 2011, the majority belonged to Democrats, and from 2011 to 2017 – to Republicans [21; 22].

In general, the Obama administration also criticized the UN for inefficiency but believed that the organization could be reformed and U.S. should play an active role in it. As Expert 1 stated: “for Obama, the United Nations was something which should work better and they began to reform the organization to make it more effective... for Trump... it was an organization that really didn't need to exist. So both were skeptical about what the UN is actually capable of doing but Obama was disappointed that the UN was not doing more and Trump thought that it should not be there in the first place... The net result was the neither president got the USA very involved in the UN peacekeeping”.

Donald Trump came to office with the promise to “Make America Great Again”. President's administration engaged in a foreign policy “America First”, focused on the national interests of the United States and American national security [1]. The main idea declared by the President Trump administration was the preservation of the U.S. global leadership in providing humanitarian assistance, together with the expectation of greater participation from other countries. Describing its foreign policy program, the Trump administration emphasized the fight against terrorist organizations as a top priority, said it intends to strengthen the military sector and paid great attention to foreign trade, claiming that the president will act exclusively in the interests of the American people and conclude trade agreements that are beneficial for the United States [1].

Despite the fact that the “America First” foreign policy doctrine declared a diplomatic approach to the resolution of international conflicts and interaction with other states [1], it did not focus on the relations with international organizations or mutually beneficial interaction with other countries. In many documents and speeches Trump administration was quite open about the fact that U.S. interests were a priority in foreign

policy. Delivering his speeches, President Trump encouraged the leaders of other countries to respect the sovereignty, declared the intention of the United States to act in its own national interests and indicated that other countries can and should stand by this policy [27].

The United Nations, being an important institution of international relations, could act as a convenient platform for promoting American interests. Peacekeeping operations could also be interpreted as an effective and profitable political tool to protect and promote U.S. national interests. For example, UN peacekeeping is 8 times more cost-effective than sending American peacekeeping forces to conflict points [23]. However, the President Trump's administration has criticized the Organization and peacekeeping operations. In his Addresses to the UN General Assembly, President Trump repeatedly mentioned their inefficiency, the need for reforms and spoke about the desire to reduce their funding. For example, in 2017, D. Trump addressed the UN member states, specifying the excessive bureaucratization and irrational spending of funds in the Organization, and also

encouraged to support his declaration on the need for its reform [19].

This policy arguably reflected widespread opinions within the American society about the United Nations in general and U.S. participation in its peacekeeping activities in particular. As Expert 1 stated: "There is a reluctance to see American soldiers abroad, even in situations which the United States had began, whether it is Afghanistan, whether it is Iraq, ...the American public have not been supporting the idea of sending Americans abroad and certainly not doing it under a third party like the United Nations peacekeeping".

Since 2017, Congress has refused to raise the 25% funding threshold, as it did during previous presidencies, and the Trump administration in mid-2017 allowed U.S. funding equal to 25% of the total budget for peacekeeping operations, but not greater. This resulted in the accumulation of the United States debt in the amount of more than \$900 million as of fiscal year 2020 [39]. This policy of the United States towards peacekeeping operations resulted in a 21% reduction in their budget and caused significant troubles to the work of the missions [8] (Fig. 2).

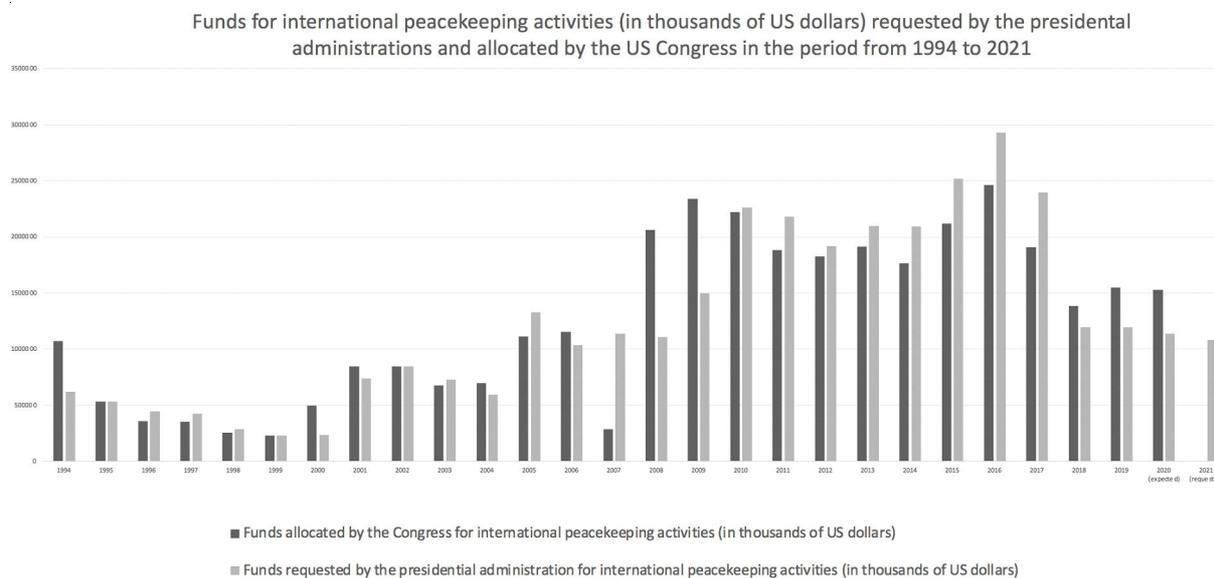


Fig. 2. Funds for international peacekeeping activities (in thousands of U.S. dollars) requested by the presidential administrations and allocated by the U.S. Congress in the period from 1994 to 2021

Note. Source: Congressional Budget Justifications: State Department, foreign operations, and related programs for fiscal years 2010–2021; United Nations Peacekeeping: Issues for Congress // EveryCRSReport. URL: https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20110211_RL33700_cf1b351ae70f97932c3541e5589e4a1891adbdb4.pdf (accessed 31 March 2021).

The Trump administration carried out a critical policy on peacekeeping operations. It aimed at reducing their funding throughout the entire president's term. For example, in the Justification of the budget allocated by Congress to the State Department in 2018, the presidential administration noted the necessity to pay attention to the share of funds provided to international institutions by the United States [16], including the United Nations. The priority of funding organizations that most successfully promote the interests of the United States and the willingness to reduce funding for organizations that are less effective in this aspect were emphasized [6]. The document reviews the activities of the UN, in particular, peacekeeping operations. It is noted that peacekeeping operations must be improved in order to be carried out more effectively and to resolve conflicts more effectively [6]. Furthermore, Trump's administration specified that the costs of peacekeeping operations should be distributed more fairly among UN members, and the rate for the United States was too high and needed to be reduced. The document specifically marked the need to carefully examine mission mandates and their progress in order to assess their success and effectiveness, as well as to promote mission mandates to advance the purposes pursued by the Security Council [6].

In 2018, the Trump administration proposed to reduce the funding of peacekeeping operations by 52% compared to the approximate amount allocated to UN peacekeeping in 2017 [6]. It is also notable that the criticism of the UN and peacekeeping was contrasted with a positive assessment of the activities of NATO. The document highlights NATO as an example of such an organization, emphasizing the intention to prioritize funding for organizations that directly support the interests of U.S. national security [6].

In the budget for the 2019 fiscal year, the Trump administration specified the problems that seem to them most significant in relation to peacekeeping operations. The disproportionate distributions of responsibilities, both financial and military, as well as the insufficient certainty of the goals of peacekeeping operations and indicators for measuring the success of missions were issues of particular concern to President Trump [4]. One of the basic concepts expressed in the budget for the 2019 fiscal year – increased

accountability and responsibility, as well as more honest “burden-sharing” among the member countries of the United Nations, becomes a key policy of the President towards the UN peacekeeping operations and can be deduced in subsequent documents. Once again specifying the importance of the ability of international organizations to “promote” the interests of the United States, the presidential administration requested U.S. \$1.2 billion [7] to fund peacekeeping operations in 2019, but Congress allocated a larger amount – U.S. \$1.55 billion [12].

In the budget for the 2020 fiscal year, Trump administration proposed to reduce funding for the UN peacekeeping operations by 27% in comparison with the amount allocated in 2019. The International Peacekeeping Contributions Account (CIPA), which funds contributions to most UN peacekeeping operations, was expected to be reduced from 1.55 billion in fiscal year 2019 to 1.13 billion in 2020, according to the proposed budget for fiscal year 2020 [11]. However, Congress again allocated more funds than the presidential administration had proposed: the approximate budget for peacekeeping operations in 2020 was \$1.52 billion [12].

In fiscal year 2021, the Trump administration proposed to allocate \$1.07 billion for UN peacekeeping, which is 29% less than the approved level of fiscal year 2020 of \$1.52 billion [12]. The budget for fiscal year 2021 reiterates the need to fund international institutions that are essential for U.S. national security, and to reduce funding for programs that do not affect U.S. national security interests [5]. Consequently, using critical rhetoric and insisting on reducing funding for the UN and peacekeeping operations, the Trump administration stressed that the UN is not an Organization that can promote and protect the national interests of the United States. Despite such a policy of the president, due to the Congress decisions, the United States allocated more amounts to UN peacekeeping operations than it requested during the entire presidential term of Donald Trump (Fig. 3, 4).

D. Trump emphasized that the national interest is central to U.S. policy towards the UN and peacekeeping operations in his Addresses to the UN General Assembly. The problems of sovereignty and national security were also often mentioned in the speeches of the former

president [26; 27]. In the 2018 Address, Donald Trump also mentions peacekeeping operations. The President speaks about the reduction of funding for UN peacekeeping operations, encouraging other countries to participate more actively in the Organization’s peacekeeping

activities [27]. The effective allocation of financial resources provided by the United States, as well as the success of the missions and organizations to which they are provided, are important factors for D. Trump. The President also criticized UN peacekeeping missions as ineffective. Meanwhile,

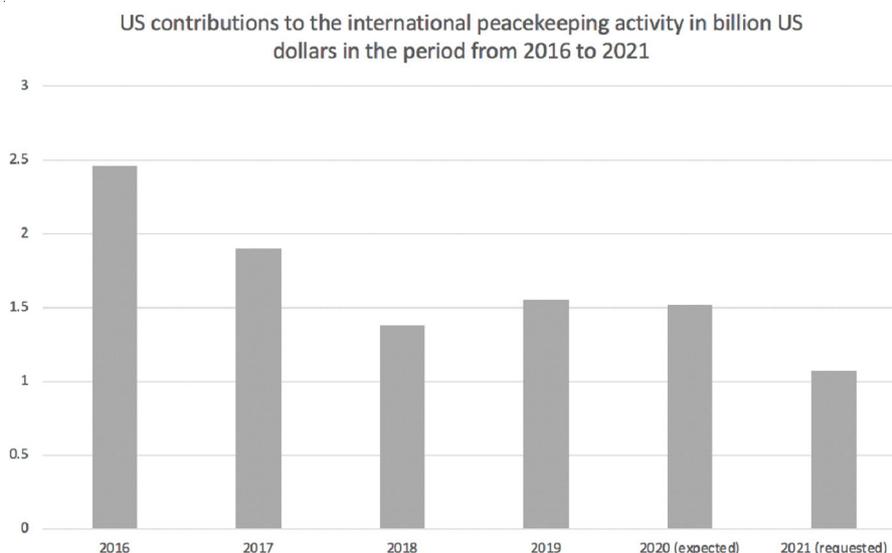


Fig. 3. U.S. contributions to the international peacekeeping activity in billion U.S. dollars in the period from 2016 to 2021

Note. Source: Congressional Budget Justifications: State Department, foreign operations, and related programs for fiscal years 2018–2021.

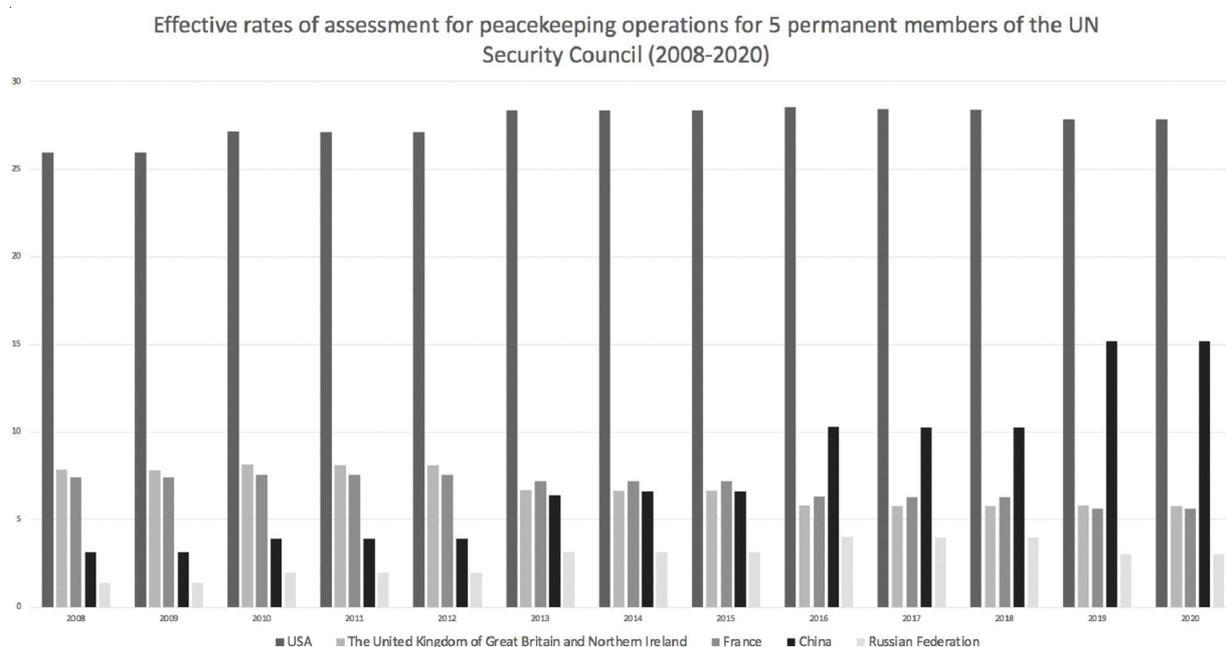


Fig. 4. Effective rates of assessment for peacekeeping operations for 5 permanent members of the UN Security Council (2008–2020)

Note. Source: How we are funded // UN Peacekeeping. URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/how-we-are-funded> (accessed 31 March 2021).

many researchers emphasize that UN peacekeeping operations can be effective in the presence of certain factors [25; 32].

In his address to the UN General Assembly in 2019, President Trump again spoke about the key concepts of his “America First” policy: the importance of state sovereignty and the intention to act in the interests of the American people [24]. The president did not mention peacekeeping operations in this address. In 2020 in Trump address to the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, he mentioned the merits of the United States in promoting peace, using as an example his own mediation in signing of agreement between Serbia and Kosovo [28]. As Expert 2 said: “He <Trump> said, a lot of negative things about the UN and its peacekeeping operations, about the U.S. standing in the world and all of these things, but actually a lot of the actual policies didn’t really change that much in the impact it had. ...the approach... especially for Trump, was driven by domestic politics and the desire to impress those who elected him...”.

President Trump repeatedly accused the UN of inefficiency and stated “if the United Nations is to be effective organization it must focus on the real problems of the world...” [28]. Expert 1 observes: “By the time you get to the Trump administration, there is this sort of general hatred for anything liberal like the United Nations and a determination not to be involved. But that is linked to with a determination under Trump not to place American forces overseas, to bring American troops back home as far as possible... never using American troops under command of non-American, and I think that has always been a big thing for the UN peacekeeping side of things as United States does not like its troops being under the control of non-American generals and, of course, in peacekeeping operations, that is quite a usual thing”. In general, this study found that Trump administration policy seems to support some general trends formed by the previous U.S. administrations and reflect on widespread thinking in the American society.

Results. The critical policy of the United States towards the UN peacekeeping operations was noted by researchers during several post-Cold War American administrations, starting with the Clinton administration. The Trump administration was not the first to specify the need

to reform the UN and peacekeeping operations. The national interest was an important factor in participating in peacekeeping operations for all previous administrations, and Trump administration was not the first to focus on it but his administration and particularly, his official rhetoric was very critical of the organization. The intention to reduce funding for organizations that do not effectively promote the interests of the United States was repeatedly emphasized in documents and speeches. President Trump pointed out that he does not consider the UN and peacekeeping operations as useful and effective tools for promoting the national interest of the United States, he repeatedly insisted on reducing U.S. funding for the UN and stressed the importance of such organizations as NATO to the USA.

During his time in the office, President Trump has proposed more dramatic reductions in the peacekeeping budget than his predecessors, and the measures taken by the Trump administration have resulted in a 21% reduction in the overall peacekeeping budget [8]. However, none of Trump’s proposals to reduce U.S. funding for peacekeeping was approved by Congress, which allocated more than the amounts requested by the presidential administration, thus the reductions in funding were not as significant. The amount of American troops participating in UN PKOs has been reducing progressively since early 1990s and Trump’s administration did not propose anything special in this regard. Trump’s calls on other countries to participate more in the United Nations, including its funding and including funding PKOs were also not entirely new, such calls were made, for example, by Clinton administration.

This article concludes that, although the policy agenda expressed by D. Trump towards the UN and UN PKOs created a serious concern in a large number of American academic scholarly circles, the U.S. foreign policy towards the UN and UN peacekeeping missions followed the trends formed in the U.S. policy during previous administrations. Despite this, it should be noted that the Trump administration particularly criticized peacekeeping missions, which is not typical of previous administrations. D. Trump’s policy towards UN peacekeeping operations can be described not as “special”, but as a more critical continuation of the existing trends in American foreign policy towards the UN and UN peacekeeping operations.

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