

# THE MORAL CULPABILITY OF SOLDIERS: WHERE DO PEACEKEEPERS FIT IN?

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The doctrine referred to as Moral Equality of Combatants, like its opposite, the *Moral Inequality of Combatants*, is an old theory that has generated much debate and resulted in numerous philosophical studies about the moral status of combatants in war. I have previously examined the status of soldiers in combat and argued that soldiers possessed the right to determine the justice of war and, thereupon, decide their participation in it. Subsequently, I also discussed the unique views of pacifists on the moral status of soldiers. This essay seeks to determine where peacekeepers fit into this discussion. It is clear that peacekeepers are not to be confused with belligerent parties on the battlefield; their goals and objectives are radically different. Nor are peacekeepers pacifist, although their goals may align with pacifist non-combatants at least some of the time. I conclude, ultimately, that the status of peacekeepers is fluid; their status is determined by the degree of military engagement. I also conclude that the *moral* status of peacekeepers is never the same as that of belligerents—even if some peacekeeping actions on the battlefield will cause them to be legally equal.

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## INTRODUCTION

This is the third in a trilogy of essays published in this journal that seek to examine the moral culpability of soldiers. The first essay,<sup>2</sup> “A Soldier’s Right Not To Fight: Breaching the Insurability of Military Oaths,” scrutinised military loyalty oaths and asked whether individual soldiers had the right

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