A comprehensive review of the book United Nations (UN) Peace Operations and International Relations Theory, edited by Kseniya Oksamytna and John Karlsrud, helps analyze the challenging notion that International Relations (IR) theories are impersonal and abstract. The book offers insights into international conflict resolution through the practical application of various IR theories. The book explores three main themes of peacekeeping, which are mentioned as follows: 1) the reasons behind state participation in missions, 2) the results of peacekeeping efforts, and 3) the relationship between international and local peacekeeping players. By examining several theoretical frameworks, such as constructivism, critical theory, feminist institutionalism, liberal institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism, sociological institutionalism, and complexity theory, each chapter provides insights into the actors, motivations, and mechanisms influencing UN peacekeeping.

In chapter one Philip Cunliffe, in his explanation of the conceptual differences between the realist theory of international relations and peacekeeping operations, highlights the similarities between the views of these two fields on world order, war, and peace. He argues that, in contrast to realism, which usually focuses on the geopolitical conflict between powerful nations, peacekeeping seeks to sustain peace through international cooperation and institutional structures. He critically examines the potential applicability of three forms of realism, structural, neoclassical, and classical, to peacekeeping research.

While Carla Monreleone and Kseniya Oksamyta's in chapter two argument around liberal institutionalism stems from the significance of international institutions that pave the way toward international partnership and collaboration while alleviating uncertainty in an anarchic system. They thoroughly explored the applicability of liberal institutionalism on UN peacekeeping while arguing that regardless of the close association of theory with UN peacekeeping, it has only been applied to negotiations by the Security Council and troop contributions.
Yf Reykers while emphasizing Rational Choice Theory in chapter three explained the politics of control and command as one pertinent issue that is faced by UN peacekeepers. The principal argument of Reykers, therefore, pertinently revolves around the challenges of UN peacekeeping control procedures and mandates, and he strongly affirms the usage of the principal-agent model of rational choice theory in understanding these difficulties.

The central idea of sociological institutionalism and its application to UN peacekeeping has been rightly explained in chapter four written by Sarah Von Billerbeck. She interprets the impact of sociological institutionalism on standards, norms and culture in influencing the behavior of an organization, whilst emphasizing the role of UN peacekeeping. The author's argument about local ownership in UN peacekeeping stresses institutional norms and repute of UN staff along with considering local ownership as innovative policy option.

Marion Laurence and Emily Paddon Rhoad in chapter five thoroughly examined the discussion around constructivism and explained how constructivism gives a useful understanding to examine peacekeeper’s interpretative processes and the effect of norms on their daily actions and activities.

Further in chapter six, Ingvild Bod builds the argument that practice theories provide a profound perspective that paves the way for examining the dynamics of peacekeeping along with implementation and relevant challenges. He focused on the relatability of social hierarchies and power dynamics in affecting the working of peacekeeping standards.

In chapter seven Lucile Maertens made an argument by explaining the perspectives of Critical Security Studies (CSS) around UN peacekeeping and the inclusion of environmental concerns into peacekeeping operations. For instance, the exemplification of cholera outbreak that took place in Haiti and the environmental rules adopted by the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations show the concurrent link between security and environmental challenges.

Georgina Holmes in chapter eight pertinent highlights Feminist Institutionalism as an important theoretical framework for the comprehensive study of gendered dynamics and functioning within peacekeeping organizations, and international security at large. She aptly argues that feminist institutionalism emphasizes the need for institutional change to enable women to engage in peace operations in a meaningful, rational, successful way. The explanation given by the author around the execution of UNSCR 1325 and the inclusion of female military peacekeepers into Ghana’s Armed Forces seconds the related empowerment.

Moreover, in chapter nine Charles T. Hunt's explanation of complexity theory and its applicability to the study of UN peacekeeping enhances our understanding of the interconnected features of peacekeeping operations. By focusing on feedback processes, unexpected systemic outcomes, and emergent order, he effectively highlights the challenges faced during peacekeeping missions. Hunt's emphasis on these issues provides valuable insights into the complexities of peacekeeping operations.

In the concluding chapter, Mats Berda very accurately explained IR as a crossroads by pertinently stressing upon multifarious character of IR to analyze complicated peacekeeping scenarios.

While the chapters centered around different theories, there is still space to integrate practical challenges and ethical concerns that are a part and parcel of peacekeeping missions. The book should also inculcate discourse about the unpredictable impact of peacekeeping missions on local communities and
environment, as well as cultural rules, norms, sociopolitical issues, and economic challenges. Incorporating these elements would have provided a more complete picture of peacekeeping missions and their effects on various populations in the current context.

In summary, this book offers valuable insights into the application of international relations theory to UN peacekeeping missions. It effectively illustrates the evolution of peacekeeping missions and the relevance of various theoretical frameworks. However, it falls short in addressing the practical issues and ethical dilemmas inherent in peacekeeping. Despite this, it remains a significant resource for anyone seeking to understand the dynamics of modern peacekeeping operations from multiple theoretical perspectives, aiding in navigating the complexities of peacekeeping practices at any time.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.