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Civil-military relations in peacebuilding

Karen Guttieri*

Abstract: Civil-military relations are vital to the coherence and effectiveness of post-conflict peacebuilding, but have often been problematic. This article argues that civil-military issues vary systematically in relation to the particular civil and military actors in peacebuilding, and that the coercive content of the external military's mission creates special challenges in each of these sets of relationships. Given the significance of the military footprint, the article presents trade-offs for policymakers intending to use military forces to make peace.

Key words: peacebuilding, peacekeeping, civil-military relations, coalitions, United Nations, conflict resolution

In traditional UN peacekeeping missions deployed during the Cold War, military forces supervised and monitored cease fires between states, usually in the wake of a peace agreement and authorized under Chapter VI of the UN charter. At about the same moment, military interventions by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Kosovo, US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan, and a US- and British-led coalition in Iraq, created deep divisions about the legitimacy of intervention and humanitarian actions - and among an increasing variety of agencies and actors facilitating transitions to peace. At the turn of the century, an emergent international consensus on coherence - the coordination of intervention and humanitarian actions - matured. At this same moment, military interventions by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Kosovo, US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan, and a US- and British-led coalition in Iraq, created deep divisions about the righteousness of intervention, the balance between civilian and military components within it, and the governance of what would follow.

Civil-military synergy is particularly vital to managing post-conflict transitions, but has too often been problematic. Civil and military actors, both within various troop-contributing states and in the multilateral arena, have waged fundamental contests over the determination of military mandates, specific military roles, training requirements, troop discipline, resource allocations, and multilateral command and control structures. What makes civil-military tensions more likely, and more harmful? First, tensions and rivalries differ systematically in relation to the particular civil and military actors in peacebuilding - in some measure a function of the division of roles among civil and military actors. Second, civil-military tensions are affected by the level/potential for violence in the post-conflict environment, particularly in relation to the coercive content of the external military's mission.

The first section of this article describes those military roles in peacebuilding, which make civil-military relations so vital to success. The second section discusses specific issues in military relations with three sets of civilians: command authorities, civilian agencies, and civilian populations. Military relationships with these three civilian groups arise in the context of the military footprint - the scope of military involvement in implementation. Military mandates that involve providing public security, disarmament and seizure of persons indicted for war crimes are more dangerous and imply larger military presence and intrusiveness in the war-torn society. The final section of this article illuminates trade-offs in policy decisions about the military footprint in peacebuilding.

1. Military roles in peacebuilding

The remark, attributed to former United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, that "peacekeeping is not a job for soldiers, but only soldiers can do it," depicts the military role as a necessary evil. Soldiers might agree, particularly if peacekeeping breaks with their long-standing conceptions of military purpose. Although the rules have changed, there is at least one consistent norm in United Nations peacekeeping: the use of force to defeat a belligerent is prohibited.

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Military forces, this means that in peacebuilding the center of gravity is commonly located in the civilian domain. Barred from war making, peacekeeping forces are all the more servants of civilian implementers engaged in peacebuilding.

Peacekeeping traditionally required impartial, lightly armed military personnel to monitor and observe the implementation of peace agreements between conflicting states. The military personnel who donned the blue berets of United Nations peacekeepers were generally from developed nations, but not major powers. As the Cold War ended in 1989-92, great powers got into the game, multilateral arrangements became more complex, missions became more coercive, and occurred within states.

Military arrangements became more diffuse. In Bosnia, great and major powers such as the United States, Britain, France and Germany acted through NATO and with UN pre-authorization, and in Kosovo with UN post-facto legitimization. NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has also mentioned the possibility of a peacekeeping role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.6 In Afghanistan and Iraq, the US formed its own coalitions and the UN wrestled with the challenges of coherence. Meanwhile, frustrated by great power reluctance to engage national or UN forces in Africa, West African nations have established their own missions under regional frameworks, including most recently a 2003 resolution by the African Union (AU) to approve the African Mission in Burundi.7 Similarly, Indonesia recently proposed the establishment of an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Peacekeeping Force by 2012.8

The roles for external military personnel vary widely. Foreign military leaders sometimes participate in negotiating cease fires or even peace settlements of civil wars, as was done in Mozambique, Angola and Bosnia.9 Military contributors perform or monitor military-oriented tasks such as demobilization, encampment and disarmament of parties. Enforcement of no-fly zones or cease-fires, for example, exercises external coercion. However, it might be sufficient to simply promote transparency among warring parties. In that event, external forces monitor cease-fires, disarmament, and demobilization. Securing relief convoys, as in Somalia, or ballot booths, as in Cambodia, requires passive coercion. External military missions might also play very non-coercive roles in support of civilian agencies, by lending craft to transport relief supplies, establishing camps for displaced people, and providing engineering and other expertise for reconstruction.

Given expanded roles in modern peacekeeping, military contributors can expect to deal with more complexity in their relationships. Multiple levels of civilian authority, active civilian management of peace processes, large numbers of civilian agencies active in theater, and scrutiny over compliance with norms of civilian protection increase the number and character of relationships. In short, this use of force makes for interesting and controversial civil-military relations.

2. Civil-military relationships

Civilian control of military force and military control of operations are fundamental issues in civil-military relations. Numerous sub-issues arise during attempts to improve civilian control and military effectiveness, including military professionalism, separation of military and civilian spheres, determination of roles and missions, contests over resources, and the mobilization of interest groups. These issues, long recognized as significant in domestic civil-military relations, also play out in the international context of peace implementation.

When discussing civil-military relations in international peacebuilding, it is critical to ask which civil-military relations one is considering. As the following table shows, these issues are relevant in military relations with different sets of civilians. In addition to command relationships, two other sets of civil-military relations are at play in peacebuilding: external military relations with civilian agencies and their relations with civilian populations.

2.1 Civil-military issues by categories of civilians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Civilian</th>
<th>Political Leadership</th>
<th>Participating Civilian Agencies</th>
<th>Civilian Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Relationship:</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Coordinative</td>
<td>Subordinate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary Level of Analysis:</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>Tactical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential Civil-military Issues:</td>
<td>Civilian control – or institutional equilibrium in calling the shots or getting involved</td>
<td>Cultural differences – or ability to get along with civilian agencies</td>
<td>Military professionalism – or good conduct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Relations with civilian command authorities

Military relations with their command authorities are intentionally hierarchical. Domestic civil-military relations are significant, even in multinational missions, which have two tiers of authority. Command, as generally understood, includes not simply authority over personnel matters like...
promotions, but also the ability to change missions. National governments retain command authority over military forces, even if operational authority is transferred, for example, to the United Nations.

The UN does not have the ability to exercise full command. The United Nations term «operational authority» is to a certain degree a combination of the elements of NATO’s operational command and operational control:

«United Nations operational authority entails the exclusive authority to issue operational directives within the limits of 1) a specific mandate of the Security Council, 2) a specific geographic area (the mission area as a whole), and 3) an agreed period of time. Operational authority includes the authority to assign separate tasks to sub-units of a contingent and general responsibility for logistic support.»

The degree of operational authority granted to the UN by troop contributing states is a political decision to be determined by the national authorities.

Political control, if not civilian control, is needed to commit troops to peacekeeping. However, although peacebuilding generally promotes the norm of civilian control, in the past Nigerian peacekeepers were not, and today Pakistani peacekeepers are not, governed by civilians. Moreover, today’s United Nations peacekeeping missions are manned primarily by developing nations. Militaries that acquire much-needed funding, training, and equipment from participation in UN peacekeeping, would seem less likely to balk at deployments than wealthier armed forces that see peacekeeping as «auxiliary.»

It is no coincidence that United States military leaders, who generally do not see peacebuilding as a primary mission, have challenged civilian leadership before and during missions. American civilian and military leaders were bitterly divided over the Bosnia strategy. Diplomat Richard Holbrooke, who negotiated a peace accord for the warring Bosnian factions at Dayton, Ohio, and Leighton Smith, the military man implementing the agreement, argued with each other publicly, including public complaints by Holbrooke about the poor quality of military advice. The level of civilian expertise and the role of military advice affect the authoritative relationship of civilian command over soldiers in peace operations.

A more challenging issue of command and control arises from the nature of the use of force in peacebuilding. In war, military commanders tend to prefer freedom of action, or operational control. Peace operations lend themselves to civilian micro-management of the use of force. One attempted solution is to distinguish carefully between civilian and military mandates. US military leaders lobbied for and got a firewall between military and civilian tasks into the Dayton Accord for Bosnia. Thanks to this compartmentalization, some perversely portray the implementation of the Dayton Accord as a military success and civilian failure.

Multilateral operations add complexity. NATO itself was divided over Bosnia during the UNPROFOR era. European nations, with large numbers of troops on the ground under UNPROFOR, were wary of the American Congress’s proposal to lift an arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims (or Bosniaks), and to strike at Serbia – dubbed «lift and strike.» Furthermore, the two major intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) engaged, the UN and NATO, were «deeply and publicly at odds» over the proper military response to the situation in Bosnia in 1994. A «dual key» arrangement provided for UN approval of military action by NATO. This command system was an issue during a May 1995 crisis in which the UN Bosnia Force Commander, British General Rupert Smith, called for air strikes against the Serbs, who were shelling civilians in designated «safe areas.» The request went all the way to the Secretary-General, who turned it down. From a military perspective, the command arrangements were not only untidy, they were unsafe. Not surprisingly, the dual key arrangement was changed in July, in the wake of the massacre of an estimated 7,414 Muslims at Srebrenica. Interestingly, after this change, the «keys» for air strike launch were held by all military chains: General Bernard Janvier, overall commander of UN forces (rather than with the UN Special Representative Yasushi Akashi), and Admiral Leighton Smith, NATO’s Southern Region commander. External involvement afterward entered a new phase marked by the creation of a larger force and authorization of massive air attacks.

The commander of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) complained that he had «nothing to command.» Many of his proposals to military leaders of the national military contingents were referred back to governments for approval. Major power

14 Max Manwaring takes the notion from Clausewitz that the goal of policy is the «destruction of an opponent’s military forces or the means for waging war», to mean that «it is the military that dominates to create conditions that other means could not make.» Max G. Manwaring, «Limited War and Conflict Control,» in Stephen J. Cimbala and Keith A. Dunn, eds., Conflict Termination and Military Strategy: Coercion, Persuasion, and War, Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1987, p. 60. Italics added.

15 George A. Joulwan and Christopher G. Shoemaker, Civilian-Military Cooperation in the Prevention of Deadly Conflict: Implementing Agreements in Bosnia and Beyond, New York: Carnegie Corporation, December 1998. The authors commend the US military mission in Rwanda as a success, although the US military did not intervene to stop the genocide, because US commanders avoided «mission creep».


militaries, as in Bosnia and Somalia for example, generally took orders from their own governments.

Meanwhile, national preferences also translate into lobbying for appointments of military leaders to international peacekeeping missions. France lobbied for a French force commander of UNPROFOR in Bosnia in 1993, and the Swedish commander was changed for a French general. Un- diplomatically, the French defense minister announced the change on French television before UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali notified the Swedish government.19

Coalitions require consent and compromise, principles that seemingly conflict with requirements for military effectiveness.20 Lt. General Michael Short, the American who directed the NATO bombing campaign during the 78-day war against Serbia over Kosovo, alleged that coalition politics caused strategy to suffer and pilots to be at risk. The American contribution to the air campaign was by far the largest, but the decision-making was multinational and even micromanaging: «Targeting was a problem to us,» Short said, «...and as you know, the red card was played by France in particular [to veto selected targets].»21

In sum, coercive peacekeeping stresses the relationship between military leaders and civilian masters. Just when a mandate permits the use of force, national governments are more likely to put limits on its use in support of policy goals, watering down strategies to a lowest common denominator. Just when military might is most needed to create peace, missions are hampered by convoluted command and control structures, national troop withdrawals, or reluctance by political or military leaders to commit to operations in the first place.

2.3 Cooperative relations with civilian partners

«Unity of command» is vital to operational effectiveness in war. The analogous concept in peace operations, «unity of effort» (or «coherence») with civilian agencies, is also intended to achieve desired outcomes more quickly. This notion of unity implies shared civil-military objectives; however, civilian and military agendas may differ.

Expanded civilian non-governmental and intergovernmental participation in peace processes after World War II created a new set of civil-military considerations at the operational level. In contrast to previous history, civilian agencies are typically on the scene before the military arrives.

International military forces and civilian humanitarian organizations have been depicted as «two natural partners, who had long been intended for one another but had never actually met during the Cold War.»22 However, the relationship might be better described as a «marriage of convenience.»23 NGOs and IGOs operating in a hostile environment need the military for security and logistics, and military forces need these civilians to take over humanitarian relief and enable them to leave. The participants often enter with incompatible expectations and in part acrimoniously.

Cultural differences between hierarchical military forces and decentralized non-governmental organizations (NGOs) abound. During the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM), lack of professional respect between peacekeepers and humanitarian workers hampered demining and demobilization efforts.24 Time horizons differ. Civilian actors tend to operate for longer periods in the field, so that civil-military relationships are recreated to some extent with each rotation. While many civilian agencies look at long-term development needs for war-torn societies, military personnel are more likely to focus on achieving their objectives in a specific mission.

NGOs are non-governmental, but not necessarily neutral, actors. Those that focus on human rights monitoring and advocacy are «far from neutral,» says Pamela Aall, adopting «principled and often adversarial positions with regard to both official institutions and the parties engaged in a conflict.»25 On the other hand, relief, economic development or conflict resolution organizations tend to be impartial, sometimes more so than military forces.

Coercive interventions force aid organizations to make difficult choices between seeking the protection of peacekeeping forces and maintaining distance from them, thereby giving the impression of impartiality. In Somalia in 1992, prior to the arrival of the US-led United Task Force (UNITAF), some relief agencies hired protection from armed locals.26 This created difficulties when UNITAF sought to demilitarize the environment. Ten years later, civil-military relations were worse in Afghanistan. NGOs protested against United States military actions, which concurrently delivered aid and bombs. Sally Austin of CARE International complained about American Special Forces: «They are here in civilian clothes, saying they are doing humanitarian work. But they are putting our own efforts as humanitarians at risk.»27

Finally, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) confronted the reality of belligerency in the US- and British-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. OCHA’s «General Guidance for Interaction between United Nations Personnel and Military Actors in the Context of the Crisis in Iraq» emphasized operational independence of UN personnel and regarded coalition forces as belligerent occupants. This was an astonishing break with the trend toward a more integrated approach to post-conflict security-building. After decades of humanitarian intervention, belligerents and humanitarian actors were clearly identified.

2.4 Relations with civilian populations

When missions are coercive, military interactions with civilian populations are also more intense. This was obvious or a security company. It’s a guerrilla war. They don’t care who they get.

When missions are coercive, military interactions with civilian populations are the center of gravity of military tasks, precisely because they have more experience in civilian environments. Ironically, the focus of investigations into allegations of patronizing and even participating in the Balkans sex trade is on civilian police. A senior official conceded that military peacekeepers are generally easier to discipline than civilian participants, as military organizations train and rigorously police their own members.

Military professionalism is vital when troops operate in heavily populated environments. Unfortunately, some troops are more professional than others. The commission of crimes by peacekeepers themselves can undermine public support for the mission. The types of misconduct alleged to have been committed by multinational peacekeeping troops include torture, rape, murder, black marketing, racketeering, and child prostitution.

When attacking UNTAC forces, the Khmer Rouge claimed to be protecting women and children from an occupation army.


Keeping the Peace? Dateline NBC. Program aired 10 January 1999. Lea Thompson reporting, Mark Feldstein producing. UN officials interviewed for this program conceded that the DPKO has not kept statistics on crimes committed by its peacekeeping troops.

Monitoring cease-fire violations. Peacekeepers have been implicated as patrons in the industry of sex slavery in the Balkans. In 2002, the head of the UN Office for Human Rights in Bosnia, Madeleine Rees, said, «If there is absolutely no dispute that the sex traffic market in the Balkans came with the arrival of the peacekeepers.»

Civilian police officers are generally preferred for civil order tasks, precisely because they have more experience operating in civilian environments. Ironically, the focus of investigations into allegations of patronizing and even participating in the Balkans sex trade is on civilian police. A senior official conceded that military peacekeepers are generally easier to discipline than civilian participants, as military organizations train and rigorously police their own members.

Some militaries, particularly NATO members and the armed forces of wealthier nations, receive better training than others. The behavior of American troops therefore ought to be exemplary. Even so, a US Army investigation into the abuse of Kosovar Albanian civilians by a US Army Unit on peacekeeping duty identified a lack of proper training for missions that required soldiers to temper «their combat mentality.»

High quality training and standards for conduct are clearly needed, with emphasis on military professionalism and discipline. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has reacted to shortcomings in training with the creation of the Training and Evaluation Service (TES), which develops and provides standardized peacekeeping training guidance. International organizations such as the UN do not have the same leverage over misbehaving peacekeepers as do civilian officials at home, since soldiers are generally immune from prosecution except by their own governments. Problems in the field can lead to civil-military tensions back home. A cover-up at the senior officer level during the inquiry into the murder of a Somali youth in 1993 by Canadian peacekeepers provoked a civil-military relations crisis in Canada

35 Kathryn Bolkovac, a human rights investigator, has sued DynCorp in London, the contractor for United Nations Civilian Police, charging unfair dismissal after she sent e-mail messages to the UN Mission about UN police officers and humanitarian workers exploiting women forced into prostitution, Steward Payne, «Teenagers ‘used for sex by UN in Bosnia,' The Daily Telegraph (London), 25 April 2002, p. 17.
as an entire regiment was dissolved. The International Criminal Court is a forum for prosecution of alleged crimes during missions that have to date been confined to national military tribunals. This very issue is part of the US rationale for refusing to participate in the court.

3. Trade-offs in intervention strategy

Intervention strategies include choices about the relative weight – in roles, resources and composition – of civilian and military components of the peace mission. These choices affect civil-military relationships. In observer or traditional peacekeeping missions during the Cold War, often involving fewer than 1,000 troops, there was no basis for military components to challenge, and little opportunity for them to thwart, the dominance of diplomatic components. Coercive strategies require more military forces. These commitments involve more risk, more expense, and more likely civilian micromanagement of military operations. In sum, coercive strategies exacerbate tensions in each of the civil-military relationship sets.

In multinational missions, coercive actions are more problematic because of variations in doctrinal approaches to peacekeeping. The approach of United States civil-military operations (CMO) doctrine, incorporating principles of war, for example, contrasts markedly with the emphasis in other civil-military cooperation or CIMIC doctrines.

General agreement on the principles of traditional UN peacekeeping does not translate to agreement in modern peace enforcement. The United Nations Secretariat offers guidelines rather than doctrine as such. Of the various regional organizations, NATO has made more progress than most toward a comprehensive CIMIC doctrine, although the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and others are actively engaged in capturing the lessons of their peacekeeping experiences. External UN CIMIC doctrine acknowledges the possibility of coercive intervention, while respecting the requirements of coordination and cooperation of civil and military actors in support of the mission.

Just as we must ask which citizens form the civil-military relationship, it also matters which military forces are involved. Some militaries bring international political baggage. Accepting troop contributors from interested regional actors or major powers may increase the odds of military effectiveness at the expense of political impartiality. Secondly, militaries have different orientations toward society. Some have been segregated from society and oriented toward defense against uniformed adversaries on a defined battlefield, as was the US military during the Cold War. Other militaries have more recent and extensive experience with counter insurgencies or other internal control functions.

When member states consider participation in a peacekeeping mission, two criteria for that participation are national interest and estimations of likely success. Canadian General Romeo Dallaire, whose life changed forever ten years ago when, as UN Force Commander, he was unable to stop the Rwandan genocide, regrets the role of national interest. «Who do I blame?» he asks, «I blame the lack of statesmanship. I blame the Americans – leadership, which includes the pentagon in projecting itself as world policeman one day and recluse the next... President Clinton saying...that the Americans will go in only if it's in their self-interest.» External national motivation to contribute troops to peace implementation brings disadvantages as well as advantages. National interest ensures a sense of purpose and support from the public at home. UN missions have been generally successful at containing conflict, even if they have fared poorly overall at resolving it. However, this evidence suggests that UN missions are really an extension of great power management. When national interest is obvious, humanitarian operations may appear as rehearsals for armies of the developed countries to rapidly project power into the developing world. Meanwhile, UN military forces seek to be perceived as impartial in the field.

Estimations of success provide further criteria, based on power balances among belligerents, the quality of a settlement, and indigenous resources for reconstruction. An approach that picks implementation based on its likely success minimizes the risk that failures in peace implementation will erode its legitimacy and the morale of multilateral participants. As a disadvantage, this approach may cause the international community to abandon some of the peoples that are in greatest need of assistance, and leave them to their own devices as human rights abuses, genocide, and the ravages of war continue.

Choices about organizational structures – how multilateral and how military – were controversial in the recent occupation of Iraq. Nationalization of peace implementation, as defined by an emphasis on the leadership of contributing states, helps to overcome the reluctance of its soldiers to serve under foreign officials and streamlines policy channels compared to highly complex multilateral operations. On the other hand, choosing multilateralization potentially pools resources and provides a better sense of impartiality that may be necessary to the maintenance of consent of the parties to the conflict. The civil-military mix itself also matters. The use of military forces for peace implementation accus-

The civil-military interface with local populations: Impact on peacebuilding strategies

Ann M. Fitz-Gerald*

Abstract: Multinational troops are increasingly deployed to internal wars characterized by multiethnic violence, paramilitary regimes and autocratic state leadership. Their closeness to the local populations presents interesting implications for contemporary peacekeeping training programs and the further development of military doctrine in warfighting, peace enforcement and peacekeeping environments. In most cases, regional paramilitary forces and warlords garner local support by convincing indigenous populations that their allegiance will be rewarded with the provision of individual security and protection. The success of the multinational forces in redirecting this allegiance depends largely on how the force is perceived as a credible security provider. For this reason, a careful balance must be preserved between maintaining a "robust posture" and interfacing within the local population to strengthen confidence-building measures.

Key Words: peacekeeping, peacebuilding, peace enforcement, multinational military interventions, coalition forces, military culture

Military intervention through multinational peace support operations has become increasingly challenging due to the complex environments and the many different players that are brought into theatre. Whereas the prevailing model represents a major departure from the former "buffer-zone" peacekeeping, where warring factions were separated by a demarcation zone, nowadays it is quite commonplace for indigenous populations to live in close proximity of the intervening military forces and, as such, are able to view their behavioral conduct and operational effectiveness. A common method used by warlords, nonstate actors and paramilitary regimes in garnering the support of local communities, is to offer security guarantees in exchange for their support. As a result, the main task for the international community in responding to these conflicts involves determining the basis for local support and seeking to redirect the population's allegiance towards the interventionist forces by demonstrating the provision of credible security. This is the more important as research indicates that disparate national approaches observed in recent multinational peace support operations have had a di-