

Civil Community-Peacekeeper Relations in UN Peacebuilding: The Case of South Asian Peacekeepers

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Building peace to prevent the recurrence of conflict is an inevitable role of United Nations peacekeeping operations today. As this activity increasingly occurs in populated, low-intensity conflict areas, relations between peacekeepers and civil communities become significant. Peacebuilding cannot achieve any level of success unless it is directly relevant to the communal needs of the local people. Building an alliance for peace in civil communities is vital not only for strengthening civil community-peacekeeper relations but also for fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility in local minds. By examining the peacebuilding experience of South Asian states, this article shows that the complex, sensitive and volatile nature of today's operational environments have necessitated employing soft aspects of military science as part of a community-centered approach to peacebuilding.

Keywords civil community relations, UN Peacekeepers, peacebuilding, intrastate conflicts, South Asia

Introduction

As contemporary conflicts increasingly assume a civilian character, the need for uniformed peacekeepers to operate alongside their civilian counterparts is a growing reality. Today's United Nations peacekeeping operations are complex, multidimensional, and broad in nature to the extent that they aim to achieve the long-term goal of preventing the recurrence of conflict within national borders. In his 1992 Agenda for Peace, the former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali defined peacebuilding as an "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (Boutros-Ghali 1992). To some extent, peacebuilding is identified as an extended activity of peacekeeping, which "has to be invented and re-invented everyday so as to respond to the new needs and challenges"

threatening global peace and security (*ibid.*). Thus, in addition to its traditional military role of keeping peace in unmapped labyrinths of war-torn civil societies, UN peacekeeping operations have absorbed a variety of new peacebuilding roles such as election monitoring, provision of humanitarian aid, demobilization, reintegration of civil society, and nation-building exercises. In so doing, UN peacekeepers are required to function effectively alongside a growing presence of non-military actors such as electoral advisors, human rights officers, civilian personnel and police officers, private sector groups, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the field.

Studies on civil-military relations in UN peacekeeping operations are numerous, but most are narrow in focus. A major focus has been an examination of the tensions that exist between UN peacekeepers and their civilian counterparts, and how relationships may be improved. Gourlay (2000, 36) examines the causes for the growing divergence in civil-military operating methods in UN peacekeeping operations, and argues that the cultural orientations of the two organizations are so different as to make them less than compatible. Pugh (2001) compares the effectiveness of civilian agencies vis-à-vis military peacekeepers in carrying out the broad mandates of UN peace operations in some complex emergencies. De Coning (2005) argues that civil-military coordination can contribute positively towards UN peacebuilding processes provided the energy, goodwill, and resources of the military can be positively channelled into the co-functioning of civilian and military cooperation. In a UN-sponsored research study, Lamptey (2007) advances arguments for strengthening partnership-building efforts between UN peacekeeping missions and local civil society organizations, and argues that the latter represent a central pillar for sustaining peace in war-torn civil societies. For these commentators, the “civil” in civil-military relations refers primarily to the various civilian agencies participating in UN peacekeeping operations.

This article expands the notion of civil to include civilian communities as critical actors in intrastate UN peacebuilding processes. There are four reasons for expanding our perspective: First, there is a growing recognition among policymakers and scholars of the need to secure community partnerships for sustainable peace (Iribarnegaray 2002, 13). The UN Millennium Assembly, held in September 2000, marked an important turning point when the General Assembly asserted the need to reform UN peacekeeping by way of adopting a “people-centred” approach to conflict resolution (Chandler 2001, 1). The value of civil community participation in UN peacebuilding activities should not be underestimated. For peacekeeping operations to move beyond mere political settlement into domains of peacebuilding processes—involving such tasks as democratic elections, reintegration of civil society, and nation building programs—local participation becomes extremely important. Iribarnegaray (2002, 13) argues that “there needs to be a facilitation of indigenous activism

such that local capacities are stimulated and enhanced, enabling local populations to ultimately claim ownership of the processes of reconstruction on all fronts, political, social and economic.”

Second, the presence of peacekeepers must be tolerated and accepted by the local population in order for the latter to be in a position to extend their cooperation to the peacekeepers (Dobbie 1994, 24). For example, for most of the period of the UN operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II, March 1993–March 1995), the reaction of locals was extremely negative. It was reported that Australian peacekeepers, who had initially served under the U.S.-led operation in Baidoa, were scoffed at and provoked by locals (Breen 1998). Therefore, in the words of Dobbie (1994, 24), “any peacekeeping force must seek to establish a genuine depth of consent which takes into account the whole community’s view.” Third, the unpredictability of political leaders and the difficulty of achieving their consent have often pushed peacekeepers to strategically turn to civil communities for cooperation. Political leaders do not always have the best interests of their communities at heart and are not necessarily representative. It is argued that in a civil conflict it is better to work with the civil community than to try to establish neutrality among different political factions (ibid., 121; Lamptey 2007). The latter process may be difficult because of the multiplicity of these factions and the chance of being perceived by one of them as less than neutral is very high. Fourth, local populations can be of some assistance in overcoming some of the immediate obstacles to peacebuilding processes in peacekeeping operations. For example, their help may be needed in the identification of “rogue” elements, such as bandits and looters, that can affect the success of an operation (Steadman 1997). In the Australian-led mission to East Timor in 1999, peacekeepers relied heavily on village communities to identify the pro-Jakarta militias in jungle hideouts and distant villages.

The place of the blue-bereted “peace soldier” in UN peacebuilding processes has also been a source of debate in the literature. Since the primary purpose of the armed forces is the preparation for and conduct of war, the traditional military outlook is one that trains soldiers to use “regulated violence to accomplish [set] objectives” (Gourlay 2000, 35). This type of training over time produces soldiers who develop a macho military outlook that gives prominence to muscular might and a “quick pull of the trigger” approach to managing conflicts. Although UN peacekeepers are deployed as a non-threatening third-party force, several of the UN peacekeeping operations launched since the 1990s have assumed a Rambo-style character (Bullion 2001). One example mentioned is the “muscle-up” approach adopted by the U.S.-led forces as part of UNITAF in Somalia. The extent to which military peacekeepers are prepared to functionally readjust their outlook in carrying out peacebuilding activities matters greatly.

Another issue relates to the difference between civil and military cultures. According to Daneker and Gow (1999, 59), “culture comprises a set of ideas and

symbols that provide a definition of the world for a group or organization and guides for action.” The top-down, rigid, and command-focused military culture raises questions about its ability to interface effectively with civilians who are less hierarchical and more consultative and participatory by nature (Gourlay 2000, 36). It is for this reason that Pugh (2001, 345) gives primary importance to civilian personnel and organizations, which are seen to be more aligned and in sync with the actions and sentiments of civil communities in UN peace missions.

A third factor relates to the kinds of men who are perceived to serve in UN peacekeeping operations. Though the deployment of female peacekeepers has been a growing trend, the persisting dominant perception of peacekeeping forces is that of peacekeeper masculinity. This perception has been summed up by two extremes, as sketched here by Gurchathen, Henry, and Higate (2008, 5-6):

On the one hand, peacekeepers continue to be informally represented as humanitarian warriors whose skills and attributes speak to shifts in hegemonic military masculinity where the caring dimension is played-up. On the other empirically informed dimensions, peacekeepers are akin to soldiers of old, frequenting brothels—or worse—in their exercise of gender power.

Further, the atrocities of peacekeepers who were responsible for murder in Somalia and sexual exploitation and abuse of children in Haiti, Cote d’Ivoire, and Southern Sudan have led some scholars to question the ability of peacekeepers to participate in UN peacebuilding processes (Whitworth 2004; Higate 2007; Simic 2009).

UN peacebuilding, as compared with peacekeeping, is multifaceted, requiring the involvement of a variety of actors. Views about the extent to which the military should be involved in UN peacebuilding processes vary. To some, the role of peacekeepers should be limited to providing a foundation for peacebuilding, but fundamentally peacebuilding should be the primary task of national governments and their populations (Hazen 2007; Suhrke 2001, 1). To other scholars, the military is a critical agent of peacebuilding (Harris 2007, 241; Rigby 2006). Two arguments may be advanced to emphasize that the role of peacekeepers in peacebuilding processes cannot be neglected. First, since there is no agreement on the timing of peacebuilding in peacekeeping operations, the embracing of peacebuilding tasks by peacekeepers is unavoidable. Peacebuilding activities may occur at different points. Once a violent conflict has begun to slow down peacebuilding processes may be set in motion to manage the immediate consequences of the conflict through a variety of programs such as demobilization, humanitarian assistance, maintenance of civil law and order, and minor reconstruction efforts. This period is referred to as the stabilization phase of UN peacebuilding (De Coning 2005, 92). A related point refers to the

consolidation phase of peacebuilding. This phase, which is aimed at fostering reconciliation and nation building, occurs in a post-conflict setting where the conflict is perceived to have been contained. Since these phases may occur in different time spans and in uncharted boundaries, it is impossible to draw clear lines that separate the traditional function of keeping the peace from the wider peacekeeping functions involving peacebuilding activities (*ibid.*).

A second argument relates to the reality that peacebuilding success depends on the establishment of a secure operational environment. This protective role can be provided only by the military, which carries out a variety of military-related tasks such as monitoring ceasefires, controlling militia activity, and decommissioning of weapons. The aim is to create a secure environment that helps to facilitate the short-term and long-term aims of peacebuilding. The harsh reality is that in many areas tenuous security conditions prevent civilian agencies from establishing a presence. In some instances they are deliberately targeted by insurgent groups in an effort to prevent them from gaining a foothold and becoming effective in assisting the local populace (Steadman 1997). In such harsh environments of peacebuilding the role of the military becomes a critical necessity.

As UN peacebuilding increasingly takes place in the context of low-intensity conflicts affecting populated areas, relations and interactions between peacekeepers and civil communities become significant. The establishment of a community-peacekeeper partnership helps to build relationships that may better position peacekeepers to foster a sense of local ownership and responsibility in the minds of the civil community as a whole. The success of building sustainable peace in war-torn civil societies depends partly on the extent to which this local ownership and responsibility are realized. However, establishing community-peacekeeper partnership in complex theaters—where behaviors and actions are predominantly shaped by uncontrollable subjective elements such as perceptions, attitudes, and socio-psychological factors—is a challenge in itself. The question arises, therefore, as to how such behaviors and actions may be managed.

In order to build a sustainable and long-lasting peace in complex operational theaters peacekeepers will need to do more than simply carry out the expanded mandates of the United Nations. To this end, this article contends that the employment of “soft” aspects of military science is crucial in a community-centered approach to peacebuilding. This may help the realization of a community-peacekeeper partnership that may be more fully operationalized overtime. The next section of this article examines the operational environment in which a partnership with local populations will need to be established. The third section develops a theoretical framework for a community-centered approach to UN peacebuilding. The fourth section reflects on the peacebuilding experiences of South Asian peacekeepers to show how community relations

are established through the use of appropriate field strategies. The article concludes by making a few observations relating to the type of skills and outlook required by uniformed peacekeepers in order to maintain a strong and effective community partnership in UN peacebuilding activities.

“Rough” Operational Environments in Intrastate Conflicts

The nature of intrastate conflict is complex and enduring. Since 1989 the world has witnessed well over 140 armed conflicts across the globe of which a third are still ongoing (*Economist* 2013). Armed conflicts may be broadly divided into four categories: state-based conflicts where fighting occurs between a government and non-state actors; internationalized intrastate conflicts that are supported by a foreign government; conflicts between states (interstate conflicts); and extra-state conflicts between a state and a non-state armed group outside the state’s territory (Human Security Centre 2013, 12). Peace researchers have observed that the number of active conflicts in the world has remained relatively stable over the past ten years. In fact, relative to 2012 the number of intrastate conflicts increased by only one, up to 33, in 2013 (*Economist* 2013).

The shift in armed conflicts from interstate to intrastate has significantly altered the operational theaters in which UN peacekeepers are deployed. Challenges confronting UN peacekeepers in these operational theaters are much greater and more difficult to manage than ever before. The days when lightly armed uniformed soldiers patrolling with the consent of belligerents along international borders to monitor and supervise a ceasefire between two opposing states are long gone. Nevertheless, consent is still a fundamental ingredient for the success of today’s UN peacekeeping operations, which in essence are third-party interventions. The British army, for instance, defines post-Cold War UN peacekeeping as “operations carried out with the consent of the belligerent parties in support of efforts to achieve or maintain peace in order to promote security and sustain life in areas of potential or actual conflict” (Dobbie 1994, 122). Similarly, the former UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1992), once asserted that peace is something that cannot be imposed and strongly stressed the primacy of consent. However, the issue is not about the importance of consent, rather it is more about the management of consent so as to facilitate the implementation of intrastate peacebuilding tasks. The level of consent needed for carrying out these tasks must be more broad-based than that required in interstate peacekeeping operations. Today, peacekeepers are required to seek the support of not only warring parties in a civil conflict but also of the civil population as a whole, and eliciting cooperation at both these levels is a challenge in some of today’s complex operational environments. Indeed, modern day conflicts produce operational environments that are highly militarized,

but also shaped by strong human and subjective elements such as perceptions, attitudes, cognition, psychology, and personal experiences (Fisher 1990, 6). Nordstrom (1994, 2) argues that “to understand [civil] conflict and solution [today] is to delve into the complexities of human experience.” In other words, one must look beyond the physical challenges in order to build peace effectively in today’s complex operational environments.

The subjective human dimensions are not exclusive to intrastate conflicts, but the level and intensity of these factors affect conflicts in different ways. In interstate conflicts these subjective factors largely play a role at the leadership level where the important decisions are made. Since in wartime states control the actions and reactions of their respective militaries, the operational environment can be quite predictable once the differences between leaders are resolved. In intrastate conflicts, however, the operational environment poses a bigger challenge to peacekeepers, not only because of the presence of many actors in the field, but also because each group’s behavior is controlled by individual subjective factors. Thus, the degree to which these subjective dimensions shape operational environments is much higher in intrastate conflicts than in interstate wars. It is for this reason that this study uses the term “rough” to differentiate the operational environments of intrastate conflicts from interstate wars.

The actions, reactions and general behavior of fighting groups in rough operational environments can be difficult to manage and control for a number of reasons. First, the intensity of the subjective forces may increase as the conflict escalates into an overtly violent stage, and subsequently the perception of the “other” is stereotyped and eventually viewed as “non-human” (Nordstrom 1994, 10-12). Second, different fighting groups may have differential valuing of interests and needs (Fisher and Loraleigh 1991, 34). In other words, warring groups may have different priorities attached to a particular issue or need. In such situations, perceptions, attitudes and values held by locals and fighting groups in the conflict may shape their own behavior and responses vis-à-vis other parties. Fetherston (1994, 10) notes that “perceptions (which are made up of individuals’ experiences, values, cultures, emotions, psychology) of issues and the reactions of the ‘other’ (including the mediator) matter and are also changed by the process of the conflict.” Negative perceptions and misperceptions obviously result in resistance by locals and warring factions and an escalation of conflict and aggression.

Finally, the local communities’ bitter experiences of everyday situations in a conflict further intensify the subjective forces (Fetherston 1998, 165). Civil conflicts, which represent the worst manifestations of domestic and human violence, breed a totally different culture of violence (Nordstrom 1994, 2). Fighters often use the civilian population as targets to assert and express their dissatisfaction. The calculated use of rape, acts of genocide, and ethnic cleansing in many modern day conflicts, as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, Kosovo,

Sierra Leone and East Timor, all reflect the plight of civilians caught in a civil war. In such “dirty” wars, violence has been the dominant means by which most warring groups operate. When local communities experience rape, physical brutality or ethnic cleansing as terror tactics the impact on the lives of people is severe. The psychosocial scars that penetrate the minds of the victims are so intense that they not only “last long beyond the ‘physical fact of brutality’ but it may [even] take about 15-20 years for the problem to surface” (Fetherston 1998, 166). The everyday experiences of torture and physical brutality also shape perceptions which can, in turn, affect the way civil communities behave, relate and react to one another and towards the peacekeepers sent to “help” them. Given the importance of civil communities in peacebuilding, these behaviors, and more importantly the psychological factors that shape them, must be considered carefully.

A Community-Centered Approach to UN Peacebuilding

Despite being in usage for several decades, the concept of peacebuilding continues to be a contentious subject on several fronts. First of all, there is no single agreed-upon definition of peacebuilding. This is because some view peacebuilding as a function of peacekeeping operations, while others treat the two as separate activities (Hazen 2007, 324; Diehl and Balas 2014, 8). Also, there are debates about the goals that peacebuilding should aim to achieve. Diehl and Balas (2014, 8) contend that the concept of peacebuilding may embrace different perspectives, but they mostly share the common goal of preventing a return to violence. Fetherston (2007, 193), however, argues that peacebuilding must aim to address the root causes of a conflict with a long-term view of resolving them rather than managing conflicts through preventive mechanisms. He holds that short-term aims of conflict abatement and settlement only produce “negative peace.” This refers to a situation where a settlement is reached based on a compromise but the powerful may benefit more than the weak, and the latter may still be discontented with the outcome. Most traditional peace missions were carried out with the aim of achieving this type of negative peace which is synonymous with the absence of war (Fetherston 1994, 8). However, the management of civil conflicts cannot be limited to the achievement of negative peace. This is because there is always a risk of resumption of hostilities if parties are not satisfied with the old deals. One example is Angola where the peace process, which started in 1994, was pursued in a climate of pervasive pessimism (MacQueen 1998, 8). Although a settlement was reached in 1997 the problem re-surfaced a year later. The UN was faced with the difficulty of re-working old problems and was ultimately forced to withdraw from Angola in 1999. This shows the limitations of negative peace. Alternatively, “positive peace” involves having a far-reaching vision towards the establishment

of long-lasting sustainable peace. As Fetherston (1994, 3) notes, unlike negative peace, which brings negotiations to a halt through a settlement but does not move beyond that phase, positive peace is a proactive approach and is tied to the process of addressing the fundamental causes of civil conflicts. It brings a sense of hope and confidence that the actual causes of the distress and civil war will be tackled in the long run. Of course a short-term settlement is essential for moving in this direction in the first place. The role of UNTAC in Cambodia (1991-1993) and of UNTAG in Namibia (1989-1990) are examples of having successfully moved from negative peace to achieving a resolution.

Debates on the best way to operationalize nonviolent conflict resolution mechanisms have dominated the literature. While the UN has acknowledged the need for more comprehensive and longer lasting approaches to peacebuilding, it has essentially based its approach on liberalism as a model for producing positive peace (Richmond 2007, 83). This model, which relies on democratic institutions and a free market economy to address the underlying causes of conflict, aims to build or strengthen governmental institutions in host countries by way of consolidating, or locking in, political and economic reforms (Paris 2010). However, there has been much criticism by some commentators that such reforms have been undertaken in such a way that peacebuilding operations are viewed as a “form of Western or liberal imperialism” (ibid.). Pugh (2005), for example, criticizes the state-building functions of peacebuilding as part of a larger “hegemonic” agenda of dominant power brokers whose aims are to extend Western ideological values and norms in non-Western societies. Similarly, Chandler (2006) characterizes liberal peacebuilding as a process of colonizing the “other.” Paris (2010) critiques these commentators for having “gone too far” in describing liberal peacebuilding as being exploitative or imperialist. For Paris, the liberal model for peacebuilding should be saved, but its focus must be one that develops and transforms institutions before transitioning to a liberal, democratic civil society.

Although such debates may be useful for informing international policymakers and thinkers, it is important to move beyond the liberal peacebuilding approach that has its focus only at the national level. A major study, undertaken by an expert panel led by Lakhdar Brahimi, a former Algerian Foreign Minister, highlighted that contemporary UN peacekeeping operations “should be given the capacity to make a demonstrable difference in the lives of the people in their mission areas” (Brahimi 2000). The endeavour may impose serious constraints on the UN’s limited resources, but it is worth noting that the UN was already envisioning at that time the kind of peace that focused on a population’s priorities and imminent needs. In his study, Roberts (2011, 411) advances the concept of “popular peace” with a view to making peacebuilding processes more relevant and legitimate to the people. Building peace on the ground in the rough operational theaters is quite different from thinking about

approaches to reforming the state's apparatus for sustainable peace. Establishing positive peace requires that peacebuilding must look beyond simply efforts to repair the economic and political institutional structures of a collapsed society. To this end, this article advances a community-centered approach to peacebuilding which is underpinned by two key theories.

The first centers on Burton's (1990) "needs" theory, which argues for the development of appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms from a broader sociological perspective. This theory argues that in intrastate conflicts the sources of tension are found not in the traditional sphere of competition for scarce resources, such as territory and other environmental factors (for example, the water dispute between India and Bangladesh), but in the "frustration of compelling needs" (Fisher and Loraigh 1991, 5). People fight within a country because they are in need of something. At one level, internal conflicts are caused by the deprivation of basic human needs such as food, water, medical facilities, and also of psycho-social needs like security, political identity, leadership, and power. At another level, the need to protect the cultural and societal values that bind the identities of individuals in an ethnic and communal setting may also be a cause for prolonged violence and domestic dispute (Fetherston 1994, 8). This has subsequently led to labelling most intrastate wars as "protracted social conflicts" (Burton 1990; Azar 1990).

To achieve positive peace in protracted social conflicts, Burton offers both short-term methodologies and a long-term focus that deals with issues of common good, political interests, and ideologies. Burton (1990, 3) calls this "prevention," which is defined as the "means of deducing from an adequate explanation of the phenomenon of conflict, including its human dimensions, not merely the conditions that create an environment of conflict, and the structural changes required to remove it, but more importantly, the promotion of conditions that create cooperative relationships." Fetherston (2007, 203), however, argues that this sociological approach to peacebuilding is limited in that it is "disconnected from the social spaces inhabited by people, including war zones."

Peacebuilding approaches must target not only the issues but also the context in which these issues emerge. Lederach's (1997, 24) reconciliation theory, which focuses on relational aspects, offers a theoretical framework for this. Lederach takes Burton's need's theory one step forward by advancing the argument that peacebuilding must go beyond the resolution of issues to transforming relationships in civil communities (Fetherston 2007, 203). The development of suitable strategies and tactics for peacebuilding activities, therefore, must focus on the restoration and rebuilding of relationships at different levels (top, middle and grassroots), with the long-term goal of transforming societies. In citing Lederach's work, Fetherston contends that although the middle range of leadership is the strategic link that holds the

potential for establishing relationships at all levels, “important ideas and practical efforts do emerge from the grassroots” (Fetherston 2007, 205). What are these ideas and practical efforts that have been employed by peacekeepers at the grassroots level? It is argued here that peacekeepers on the ground today need to rely on the soft aspects of military science to shape the subjective elements of complex operational environments in such a way that enables them to transform relationships and generate cooperative behavior and positive reactions. Peacekeepers need to engage themselves with the local population and effect change at the grassroots level. This process of engagement by peacekeepers with civil communities may be described as forging “partnerships for peace” in today’s UN peacekeeping operations.

Reflecting on the Peacebuilding Experiences of South Asian States

South Asian states have an outstanding and impressive record of making large troop commitments to UN peacekeeping operations.¹ Donning the blue helmet for more than five decades, India has been singled out as having one of the longest and most consistent records of participation in UN peacekeeping operations. India has participated in 43 out of the 63 UN peacekeeping operations established since the inception of the UN (Krishnasamy 2010, 225). More than 100,000 Indian troops, military observers, and civilian police officers have participated in UN peace operations in various trouble spots across the globe. In addition to participating in UN peace missions India also demonstrated a capacity to launch its own peacekeeping force in the late 1980s when it deployed the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) to manage the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Pakistan’s participation in UN peace operations commenced in the 1960s, but a major part of its participation and contribution has been made only in the post-Cold War era. Pakistan has participated in a total of 41 missions in 23 countries, and in 2014 it emerged as one of the top troop contributors, with 8,230 Pakistani troops constituting over 9% of the UN’s total deployment (Pakistan Mission to the UN 2015). Bangladesh, which is a relatively new peacekeeper has embraced an active role in UN peace missions since the late 1980s (Krishnasamy 2003b, 25). In 2014, it had 6,223 troops deployed in various UN peacekeeping operations (Zaman and Biswas 2014).

Of course, it is not an exaggeration to say that the generous contributions of South Asian peacekeepers are driven by more than just international goodwill. Serving the needs of other states by contributing troops to UN peacekeeping operations enables these South Asian states to pursue their own interests as well. New Delhi’s proactive foreign policy agenda is driven by politico-strategic interests, such as realizing its ambition for “great power” recognition in a globalizing world and a strong desire to be considered a favorable candidate for

a permanent seat on the Security Council (Krishnasamy 2003a, 263). Pakistan's aim to make itself more attractive to the international community is shaped by its growing security needs. For Pakistan, it is important to strengthen its bilateral relations with key major powers, which it has traditionally relied upon to balance the perceived threat from its main adversary, India (Krishnasamy 2002, 112-113). Bangladesh is eager to enhance its status in the international system to attract greater economic assistance and foreign investment (Krishnasamy 2003b, 37-40). Given the weak economies of some of these states, financial reward might be viewed as another major motivation for participating in UN peace missions. The question arises as to the extent to which income earned from participation in external UN peace missions assists South Asian States in financing their external debts and internal financial deficits. In fact, studies have shown that, although the financial reward is a source of attraction,² the sums earned are too small to make a significant difference to their national economies (Krishnasamy 2003b, 37; Mohan 2014, 14-15). Notwithstanding this, South Asian states have a proven track record of functioning in a way that enables peacekeepers to shape perceptions with a view to securing community relations in new and rough operational theaters.

To most policymakers the UN peacekeeping operation in Somalia (1992–1994) was a debacle; however, to India it was a grand success (Krishnasamy 2001, 27). The Indian brigade, as part of UNOSOM II, had primary responsibility for providing humanitarian relief to people caught in the intense war zones. It had operational responsibility for one-third of Somalia, the largest area ever controlled by any contingent (Rooyen 2010). India's entry into Somalia as part of UNOSOM II came at a time when internal fighting was at its peak. The impact of Somalia's violent conflict resulting in massacres and terror tactics such as rape, extortion and physical brutality had a major psychological impact on local populations. The painful experience of being physically abused by male, uniformed military rebels made uniformed military peacekeepers unpopular even though they were there to help. Research conducted in Somalia by the NGO Medica's psychological team indicated that most raped women felt uncomfortable and unable to have any sort of relationship with men (Cockburn 1998, 207). The research indicated that even women who had not suffered direct physical abuse from men tended to alienate themselves from the masculine culture which seemed to be particularly implicated in the barbarism. It was against this backdrop of growing mistrust and psychological distress that the Indian contingent was required to carry out peacekeeping duties as part of UNOSOM II.

The Indian contingent implemented a very different approach in its area of responsibility, Baidoa. It focussed intensely on combining the often-conflicting roles of coercive disarmament and humanitarian relief for the civilian population (Rooyen 2010). This was undertaken by way of adopting a soft, people-centered

approach with a view to addressing some of the subjective aspects of the conflict in Somalia. The main aim was to alter negative perceptions and create a favorable environment that would enable them to encourage cooperative behavior among locals. These negative sentiments were tackled by fostering social contacts with the locals through cultural exchanges, such as organizing a joint performance by a popular local singing group called Allardi and the Sappers band from India, rebuilding of mosques, and screening Indian movies in a “make-shift theatre” (Krishnasamy 2001, 35). The Indian contingent also established and administered an orphanage (named Bonkay Orphanage) to attend to the hundreds of children who were left homeless as a result of the civil war. A major hospital was also established which treated an average of 400 patients a day (*ibid.*). With the participation of female medical staff, more Somali women were willing to come for treatment. These efforts helped the Indian military peacekeepers to interface with local populations and at the same time gradually transform their negative perceptions and relationships.

India’s role in the UN peace operation in Somalia gained the admiration of locals, and even of General Farah Aideed, a leader of one of the warring factions in the Somali civil conflict who was branded by the West as the “enemy,” who stated: “On behalf of the Somali National Alliance, the Somali people and on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate and praise the Indian troops for their good start in restoring peace” (Hindu 1994). India also received praise from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, James Victor Gbeho, who commented on the excellent performance of the contingent and in particular of the Indian force commander for his mature guidance and exemplary leadership (*Indian Express* 1995). Being one of the traditional peacekeepers with vast field experience,³ India is in fact in an admirable position to play a leading role in shaping new thinking about peace operations (Krishnasamy 2010). Such opportunities are in fact emerging as the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon appointed a retired Indian Army Lieutenant General to a high level panel, led by Jose Ramos-Horta, a Nobel Peace Prize winner and former president of Timor Leste, to undertake a comprehensive assessment of UN peacekeeping operations, including the needs of future missions (*Times of India* 2014).

To some extent, the UN peacekeeping operation in Cambodia (UNTAC) can be viewed as the exemplar of the changing nature of UN peacekeeping as it was one of the first missions that witnessed the emerging civilianization of peacekeeping roles. For Pakistan, which deployed troops as part of UNTAC, this was a new experience because the roles and functions were a major departure from any of its earlier experiences in peacekeeping missions. The challenge that confronted Pakistani peacekeepers was related to carrying out the wider peacekeeping tasks in a new and unprecedented operational environment. Indeed, one cannot forget the Cambodian genocide, which has been described as a “conflict that pitted Khmer against Khmer” (ICRC 1999, 2). During the long

years of war in Cambodia, and particularly during the Khmer Rouge regime, the civilian population became not only “collateral casualties but rather the express targets of a homicidal regime that buried its victims in the killing field” (ibid., 1; Hurst 1989). The traumatic experiences and memories remained vivid; according to one local, “everybody has been damaged psychologically. You can ask: everyone [lost] at least one family member or relative. This affected the brains of the Cambodian people a lot” and “the Cambodian people lost their spirit. They are traumatised, have no courage, or confidence” (ICRC 1999, 14). It was in such an operational environment that UNTAC had the primary task of organizing and conducting democratic elections in Cambodia as part of the transitional process. As the conduct of elections drew closer the violent activities of the Khmer Rouge increased to a point where they affected the overall security environment. Fighting and looting were daily events. The Khmer Rouge intimidated locals to prevent them from participating in the democratic elections. Several outposts, including that of the Pakistani contingent, came under severe attack. The Khmer Rouge also threatened UNTAC’s voter registration teams, destroyed and burnt the registration cards, and forced the teams to evacuate (interview, UNTAC contingent commander of Rawalpindi, December 4, 1997).⁴

Without the popular support of the local communities UNTAC could not have carried out the democratic elections. One of the biggest challenges was to encourage local participation in the democratic process. This was not an easy task given the severe psychological condition of the local population and the deteriorating security environment. Hence, as part of UNTAC’s nationwide campaign the Pakistani contingent developed a self-initiated public awareness program to educate locals about the elections. The program involved the distribution of information to help locals understand the significance of voting and election. However, the effectiveness of communicating verbally with the aid of a translator was questioned. The Pakistani contingent took a number of steps to overcome this problem (ibid.). First they established a local radio station that had the capacity to transmit to distant areas. However, completing the establishment of the radio station took almost a year as the UN initially raised doubts about its usefulness and was reluctant to commit financial resources (Sanderson 1996, 157). Once operational the radio station became an important communication tool in mobilizing greater support and cooperation among locals. At the same time the Pakistani contingent interacted with locals in smaller groups by way of screening specially prepared videos that highlighted the significance of exercising voting rights. The Pakistani troops also organized social events such as peace walks, which were intended to get the locals into the spirit of participating in the democratic process (Mahmud 1994, 13). These field strategies proved to be highly successful: nearly 90% of the 41,215 eligible Cambodians in Preah Vihear Province registered to vote (ibid., 14). The high

level of enthusiasm was reflected in Preah Vihear where people made the effort to walk 25 kilometers to the polling stations. These efforts were noticed by UNTAC's Force Commander, General Sanderson, who lauded the Pakistani contingent: they "have delivered the electoral process to the people and the Cambodians responded with an overwhelming vote, in turn delivering a clear message that they were there for peace alone" (ibid., 17).

The Powell Doctrine, as described in the *U.S. Psychological Operations Manual for Operations Other than War*, speaks about the need to establish a dominating physical and psychological presence that deters resistance and aggression in complex operational environments (cited in Weiss 1999, 185). The Bangladeshi peacekeepers dispatched to Haiti (UNMIH: 1994–1996), a country plagued by a long history of violent military coups resulting in popular unrest and some of the worst atrocities and violations of human rights, demonstrated the use of such an approach. During a violent military coup in 1992, the de facto government used violence to control a public uprising and to contain demonstrations. By 1993 the acts of violence and intimidation by the Haitian military and its allies had resulted in the deaths of at least 300 Haitians (Reed 1996). Reports also indicated that some entire villages were massacred. Violence against women and children was increasing and the brutality was so severe that it led to large numbers of refugees fleeing the country. The continuous repression, terror tactics, and brutality had a serious impact on the psychology of the Haitian people as manifested in widespread fear, terror, anger, hatred and frustration (Lawless 1996, 370). As a result, the locals were vulnerable and easily influenced when drawn into group demonstrations, and were incited to carry out the type of mob violence that created a mass panic and public stampede for no apparent cause or reason.

It is against the backdrop of these bitter sentiments that Bangladeshi peacekeepers adopted psychological tactics to exert a favorable influence on Haitians. For example, in response to the street fighting and rioting that were common in Port Au Prince the Bangladeshi contingent, which had a heavy responsibility for controlling the civil unrest, broke the crowd into small groups and engaged in discussions at the group level. As the contingent aimed to keep the use of force to a minimum, this was done without carrying guns but by the use of other means such as pepper spray and batons as a last resort. Unnecessary arrests were also avoided; in extreme cases of violence ringleaders were handed over to the civilian police (interview, senior military officer of Dhaka, January 15, 1998). It was crucial for the Bangladeshi peacekeeping contingent to present itself as a positive force in an environment where misperceptions and negative attitudes were likely to abound and affect local reactions and behavior. Another tactic was the adoption of a peculiar patrolling method which ensured that the Bangladeshi troops had the barrels of their rifles pointed towards the ground at all times instead of pointing at the public (Wadud 1996, 64). While patrolling

the roads in urban areas the Bangladeshi contingent took every opportunity to communicate with the locals in order to establish rapport. For example, in a patrol composed of 12 soldiers, six would remain alert with the barrels of their guns pointing down and the rest would talk with the locals in a friendly manner (interview, senior military officer of Dhaka, January 15, 1998). While helping to enhance mutual confidence and trust, this tactic was also very useful in gaining social cooperation and support for the democratic elections that were crucial for the transition from military rule to democracy.

It is clear from the above that all three South Asian peacekeeping forces share a similar outlook, one in which the militaries have demonstrated an attitudinal reorientation in conducting modern day peacekeeping operations. For South Asian peacekeepers the traditional peacekeeping rules of consent, impartiality, and presentation as a non-threatening force in the field have been observed, but at the same time one cannot ignore the fact that the traditional peacekeeping rules may not necessarily apply effectively in the rough operational environments of modern day conflicts. The South Asian peacekeeping philosophy and military doctrine is underpinned by the application of the soft aspects of military science in a community-centered approach to peacebuilding. Several observations may be made regarding the peacebuilding experiences of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. First, their peacebuilding style is largely targeted at managing consent at the micro-level, the level at which the building of positive peace must occur. As representatives of the international community, UN peacekeepers are entrusted with the crucial and difficult task of ensuring that people understand the value of nonviolence and divert their energies to building a peaceful society. Such values cannot be automatically transferred by simply engaging in civic interactions and expecting people to understand them. The South Asian peacebuilding style, therefore, is underpinned by a strong emphasis on developing community relations through the employment of appropriate field strategies such as psychological tactics, social and cultural activities, and the use of Civil Affairs units. These tactics provide peacekeepers with an opportunity to interface with the local population, since the central objectives of military peacekeepers is not gaining immediate solutions to the pressing situations but first and foremost building trust that can be utilized over time.

Second, the need to establish a strong presence in the field has been a priority of South Asian peacekeeping forces. The “staying power” of a UN peacekeeping operation will depend on how contending parties and local populations perceive the presence of a peacekeeping force. This makes a huge difference for peacekeepers to be able to facilitate constructive and positive dialogue. Although the peacekeeper is an outsider, this peacekeeper will need to be seen as having a genuine interest in building sustainable peace for the community.

Third, it is clear that the South Asian peacekeepers have shown a significant level of flexibility in embracing civilian-oriented activities—a major advantage in UN peacebuilding. Unlike in Pakistan and Bangladesh, which have experienced several military coups, in India military and civilian rule are traditionally separated. Furthermore, the Indian military has played a major role in the state-building activities of its own country (Cohen 1971; Schiff 1997). Whether this has had an impact in shaping the Indian military peacebuilding philosophy and outlook is unclear, but the military's exposure to civilian-oriented activities has been a major advantage in building peace under the aegis of the UN in other parts of the world.

A fourth point is that South Asian peacekeepers in general view force as a means shaped by psychological tactics. The risks of departing from the traditional parameters of peacekeeping are high, and there are arguably some lessons that India might have learned in the 1980s when the IPKF adopted an interventionist approach to peacekeeping in Sri Lanka, but solved nothing. For South Asian peacekeepers muscular might does not necessarily need to be based on firepower alone. Rather, the peace and security in peacekeeping operations can also be achieved through socio-psychological strategies. The long-term goal of such strategies is to develop trust and community relations that may help to create a positive environment that allows peacekeepers to maintain a presence and carry out the broader peacebuilding tasks. Clearly, South Asian peacekeepers give primary importance to tackling the sensitive and vulnerable human dimensions which shape actions and behaviors in the rough operational environments of contemporary conflicts.

Conclusion

Appropriate field strategies and tactics may help to create a sense of physical closeness between peacekeepers and local populations, but that closeness itself depends greatly on how interactions take place at this level. A number of key variables may shape the nature of these interactions. Military peacekeepers must have appropriate contact skills to be able to interface effectively with local communities. It has been argued that a weak peacekeeping force may resort to inappropriate violence, but strong forces with inappropriate contact skills may also be a problem (Last 1995; 1998, 233; Foster 1997). Contact skills can take the form of verbal or non-verbal messages. In the process of human communication, people can generally make use of information from their senses through three preferences namely visual, sound, and kinaesthetic (touch, taste, smell, feelings) (Tubbs and Moss 1994, 101-41). Messages conveyed verbally are important in a negotiation process for enhancing interpersonal and social relations between the civil and military spheres. This is because it provides an opportunity for the

peacekeeper to clearly state their aims and intentions, reinforcing their roles in the theater. Since language and thought are closely connected, it could in some ways help locals understand the purpose of the peacekeepers, who are there to build the peace.

Non-verbal cues also give information about intentions and emotional responses (*ibid.*, 139-141). In other words, non-verbal communication is relational. It conveys messages about thoughts that are difficult to find expression in verbal messages. In some cases non-verbal cues can have a greater impact because they convey messages easily, quickly, and with enhanced comprehension. In cross-cultural contexts non-verbal cues can replace verbal messages through gestures and non-verbal expressions (*ibid.*). They are dominant in the communication process and are part of the civil society at all times. The non-verbal communicative cues include greeting local people with a handshake, which may make a difference in the relationship by helping the receiver understand the feelings of the peacekeepers. Physical contact cues are arguably an effective form of non-verbal communication because they are very revealing and hence increase comprehension. It is said that “touch is a bonding gesture” (*ibid.*, 101). It is a form of “approach behaviour” that reinforces the involvement of the peacekeepers in the affairs of the civil communities.

The success of peacekeepers in establishing strong community relations and carrying out civil affairs also depends on their ability to mix acquired skills with a variety of personal attributes. Given that peacekeepers are deployed as third-party mediators, they need to possess critical qualities to carry out that role effectively. Boulie (1996) suggests that successful mediators are empathetic, non-judgemental, patient, persuasive, optimistic, persistent, trustworthy, intelligent, creative, and flexible, and they also have a good sense of humor as well as common sense. Empathy in mediation is important for building understanding between mediators and the parties in conflict. “As an instrument, empathy is employed strategically by the negotiator for the better understanding of the wants and needs to uncover where there is room to manoeuvre, to help tailor arguments to change minds, and to enhance the ability to influence” (Noce 1999, 283).

The importance of personal attributes for peacebuilding has been acknowledged in several works. Bowling and Hoffman (2000, 7) identify two reasons why personal characteristics are so crucial in a conflict resolution process. First, personal attributes, which are seen as “useful metaphors,” can have a direct impact on the mediation process and the outcome of mediations. For example, “the ability of the mediators to reach a genuine resolution is derived not so much from a particular set of words but instead an array of personal qualities” that help to create a favorable environment for the process to take place. Second, notwithstanding their impartiality and neutrality, mediators are inevitably engaged in creating sources of strength in subtly influencing the

behaviour of the parties. Indeed, peacekeepers require some form of “personal power” or “force of personality,” as opposed to asserting power over another to establish a strong presence (not physical but in terms of personal qualities) in the mediation process. Hence, peacekeepers can no longer create a positive influence by merely displaying traditional military “machoness” but must embrace a new personal outlook.

Another key variable is the selection of military personnel for peacebuilding activities. Identifying soldiers with the ability to demonstrate the required skills and with the possession of personal attributes is crucial for participation in peacebuilding processes. Soldiers need to have the right sort of attitude which can be shaped by the factors that motivate them to participate in UN peace operations. In a study by Battistelli (1997, 471) three different categories of soldiers were identified: paleomodern, modern, and postmodern. A paleomodern soldier has traditional motivations such as nationalistic feelings, and the aspirations to strengthen the integrity and image of his or her country at the global level. A modern soldier is one who has a utilitarian commitment to earn money and to gain an education. Finally, post-modern motivations are based on the desire for adventure and to gain some personal experience. A different survey of Italian peacekeepers in Somalia found that soldiers with paleomodern motivations comprised 33% and those with post-modern motivations about 53%. Hence, it was concluded that a new generation of post-moderns who are willing to participate in UN peace operations for personal adventure was emerging. The behavior of these post-modern Italian soldiers in Somalia is not clear, but there have been allegations of a general lack of discipline and poor personal conduct among a small minority who have been accused of torturing civilians and engaging in illegal activities such as black marketeering (Williams 1998).

Unfortunately, the poor behavior of a small minority of UN personnel in the field could have a devastating impact at various levels for troop-contributing countries. Despite the impeccable record of participation in, and contributions to, UN peace missions, South Asian states have come under criticism for not doing enough to guard against the poor behavior of a minority of uniformed personnel in specific missions. For example, in the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), there were six alleged cases of sexual abuse between July and November 2007 brought against Indian peacekeepers (Chakma 2014, 2). In 2007 four Bangladeshi peacekeepers deployed to the UN mission in Sudan had to be repatriated following investigations into allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of children (Sharma et al. 2014, 5). Such incidents not only shake the confidence level of the civil community in peacekeepers, but also taint the image of the peacekeepers at large.

Troop-contributing nations, therefore, should make conscientious efforts to ensure the establishment of a rigorous and transparent process for selecting

personnel for deployment in UN peace missions. In fact, the UN's 2012 policy reinforces the need for troop-contributing nations to conduct a screening test of all peacekeepers prior to deployment in a mission (Ban 2014). However, the nature and manner in which such a test is conducted varies across troop contributors. There have been criticisms that Bangladesh and Nigeria, for example, not only lack transparency but also their selection processes "have been marred by corruption and nepotism" (ibid., 2). Some other contributing nations, including Finland, Denmark and Norway, have adopted a rigorous selection process for military peacekeepers. Finland, for example, requires that soldiers must be between 20-35 years of age; have received above average marks for the conscription service tests; have a good citizen reputation; be fit in terms of both physical and mental health; have proven language skills; and have successfully completed pre-deployment training (Harrell and Howe 1995, 191; Karhilo 1995). Norway and Denmark have also moved away from their traditional recruitment process based on volunteers to establish a well-trained standby force.

The most important work of peacekeepers is among the people in local communities. Peacekeepers must know how to operate and what field strategies to employ on the ground. While training plays a key role in bringing about a shift in the outlook of peacekeepers, it must be designed in a way that enables peacekeepers to understand the importance of securing community partnership in today's complex and rough operational zones. However valuable it may be to focus on technical and traditional military skills, peacekeeper training that fails to touch on the soft aspects of military science or does not cultivate a "soft warrior" outlook could significantly undermine peacebuilding processes in UN peacekeeping operations.

Notes

1. Although this article primarily focuses on the contributions of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to UN peace operations, it is recognized that Nepal is the fourth largest Asian troop contributor to UN peace operations across the world. Further to becoming a member of the UN in 1955, Nepal's role in UN peace missions commenced in 1958 when it despatched five personnel to the observer mission in Lebanon. It is reported that "as of April 2013, Nepal had contributed 94,000 peacekeepers to 43 UN missions overall. Since late 2006 it has consistently provided at least 3,000 or more peacekeepers, making it one of the UN's largest Troop-Contributing Countries (TCC). In recent years Nepal's participation has declined almost 20% from its 2010 peak of nearly 5,500. In February 2013, the Nepal Army deployed to two new missions, bringing its total to 11 operations, most of which are in Africa" (Bhattarai 2013).
2. The UN allocates US\$ 1,028 per soldier per month to the national governments which then pay their military forces based on internal scales and calculations.
3. A number of troop contributors have established strong peacekeeping training links

with India. The United Service Institution of India–Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (USI-CUNPK) has trained nearly 445 officers from more than 70 countries, including participants from Canada, the United States, Australia, Sweden and the Netherlands. The CUNPK has also established institutional partnerships involving instructor-exchange programs, with training centers across the globe including the Australian Defence Force Peacekeeping Centre, German UN Training Centre, Canadian Peace Support Training Centre, and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

4. All interviews were conducted by the author in the locations and on the dates indicated. Interviewees were senior military officers who had participated in UN peacekeeping operations as well as those who had managed and coordinated the deployment activity in their home countries. Specific names of those interviewed are not provided in order to ensure anonymity.

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