Unarmed civilian peacekeeping: a potential response to peacekeepers’ and critical scholars’ parallel critiques of multidimensional peace operations?

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Abstract

This paper examines parallel perceptions of peacekeepers engaged in multidimensional peacekeeping missions, with critiques in critical peace studies literature. Recent literature critiques the liberal peace agenda which underpins the mandates and programs of many current peace operations. Among central issues are a concern with the everyday wellbeing of local civilians; the ways in which an imposition of agendas may not contribute to this wellbeing; and the lack of local ownership. This analysis has interesting parallels to the views of peacekeepers interviewed in a recent research project regarding effective peacekeeping, which included former peacekeepers from 18 countries who served in military, police or civilian positions. Peacekeepers work in specific communities and understood their work based on experiences with local people. They analysed effectiveness primarily at this micro level. These peacekeepers understood effective peacekeeping to include preventing violence and protecting people. Effective peacekeeping was undermined by the lack of attention to local needs, the imposition of external agendas and the inappropriate use of force. Unarmed civilian peacekeeping with a primary focus on protecting people and preventing violence nonviolently, and which is generally not linked to multilateral interventions, shows promise of addressing both sets of concerns and promoting local ownership and wellbeing.

Introduction

Drawing on both critiques of liberal peace and my recent research with former peacekeepers, I suggest that the connection between liberal peace and peacekeeping is often insufficiently beneficial for local people. Additionally the inappropriate use of force to implement peacekeeping raises challenges to effective peacekeeping. I describe the work of unarmed civilian peacekeeping and the potential it holds for effective peacekeeping in certain contexts to better serve local needs because it is not connected to liberal peace agendas and uses nonviolent strategies.

Multidimensional peace operations include peacekeeping components related to preventing a resumption of fighting and other peacebuilding components related to governance, development and economic reforms. While some research finds that peacekeeping interventions significantly decrease the likelihood that war will resume, other research finds that peace operations have less or little success at promoting democracy and protecting civilians. Thus the question of the effectiveness of peacekeeping depends on who defines success and the criteria used to judge it. Research based on the perceptions of local people tends to demonstrate dissatisfaction with some or many aspects of these peace support operations.

These multidimensional peace operation missions have been critiqued in recent critical peace studies literature for implementing a neo-colonial or neo imperialist agenda; for focusing on state building and other governance programs over local people’s safety and wellbeing; and for undermining or ignoring local efforts to address underlying causes and resolve conflicts. Peace operation missions have been described as part of a global north effort to assert hegemony in particular through connecting domestic security to a world wide effort to exert bio-political control through an ever growing field of security professionals and an ever growing list of issues that are labelled security concerns. Liberal peace at best has had mixed results for local people. Some of this literature notes that it is important not to romanticise ‘local’ as local people are heterogeneous and are not necessarily working for a more peaceful, just and equitable society. Some argue for developing a “post-liberal peace ([Richmond, 2009b](#_ENREF_70))”, which puts local wellbeing as the core concern and which imagine hybrid models of change which include elements of both liberal and indigenous practices. Peacekeeping itself as separate from a wider liberal peace practice is rarely discussed in this literature as it has become simply one component of these multidimensional efforts.

Assuming that frontline peacekeepers have an important perspective on effective peacekeeping and noting that their perspectives are mostly absent in the literature on peacekeeping, I interviewed 55 former peacekeepers. Peacekeepers I interviewed perceived effective peacekeeping to benefit from local acceptance and good relationships characterised by trust, cooperation and a sense of mutual benefit. Their analysis was based on their everyday experiences in the community, interacting with local people and reflected beliefs that peacekeeping was primarily intended to prevent violence, protect people and support local problem solving. They did not speak to other aspects of their missions related to governance, development and other programmes. Many former peacekeepers who served in UN, NATO or other multilateral peacekeeping missions expressed concerns that they were imposing inappropriate solutions created elsewhere and which where insufficiently sensitive to local contexts and needs. Not only did some express a sense of discomfort with this experience, they also suggested that imposing solutions, cultural insensitivity and undermining local ownership challenged effectiveness, as this decreases acceptance and good relationships. These military peacekeepers also expressed concerns about the use of force to impose solutions, describing it as necessary in times of high violence, but frequently undermining needed relationships for long term sustainable change.

Unarmed civilian peacekeepers did not experience these concerns. They identified strengths stemming from their integration with the local community via language, living in conflict affected communities and their focus on supporting local people to safely and actively engage in conflict reducing and peace promoting activities. Their efforts focused on protecting local people generally and human rights defenders, journalists and other key leaders specifically, so that local people could go about their lives with less fear and those that chose to do so, could work toward more peaceful communities. While a number reflected on the limits to their interventions, including a concern of not imposing global north practices, their primary concerns about not being effective related to the small size of their projects and their inability to impact larger underlying dynamics fuelling political violence. They acknowledged that while unarmed civilian peacekeeping can be effective in some violent contexts, it is not possible in contexts where the peacekeepers themselves would at worst become targets and at least, be ignored as irrelevant.

I perceive mutually supportive parallels between the critiques of liberal peace interventions and the concerns raised by former peacekeepers about impediments to effective peacekeeping. These two strands share concerns about the imposition of foreign solutions, undermining or ignoring local ownership of change processes, and a focus on state building or other dimensions over providing civilian security. Unarmed civilian peacekeepers are able, on a small scale, to effectively protect people and support local efforts. Expanding the scope of unarmed civilian peacekeeping, as part of an evolution toward more effective peacekeeping, seems well worth exploring as a potential intervention which addresses these concerns. It is a path to respond to the need to do something when there is sustained political violence in a country, region or community, without promoting a particular agenda or model of how to solve the underlying concerns. While some contexts are too violent to use UCP, these contexts may also be lacking consent and/or too violent for peacekeeping and require so-called ‘peace enforcement’ if there is to be any international military intervention.

The sections of the paper are as follows: a definition of peacekeeping; a brief review of current multidimensional peace operations and the research on the success of these interventions; a description of unarmed civilian peacekeeping organisations; a summary of some of the critical peace literature which critiques peacebuilding with a focus on concerns of the everyday lives of people and local ownership in particular; a summary of my research with peacekeepers and their views on acceptance, relationships, and local ownership, which parallel and support the preceding critiques; and a discussion of unarmed civilian peacekeeping and its potential for broader application. This paper concludes by envisioning an evolution of peacekeeping, based on unarmed civilian peacekeepers, which does not carry a liberal peace agenda and which supports local ownership.

Definitions

Currently peacekeeping is generally defined in relationship to legitimating authorisation by the UN or other multilateral institution, and including multiple components and multiple actors. For instance the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre definition includes actions that are specifically approved by a national or international body “designed to enhance peace, security, and stability; they are undertaken cooperatively and individually by civilian police, military, humanitarian, good governance, and other interested agencies and groups.” ([Morrison, Cumner, Park, & Zoe, 2008, p. 1571](#_ENREF_57)). This is a definition that includes an expansive spectrum of activities. I use the phrase ‘military peacekeeping’ to refer to this model of peace interventions which rely on military force as the core source of power, and which involve this complex set of actors and practices.

 Unarmed civilian peacekeeping (UCP), in contrast, is defined in terms of the use of civilians to use nonviolent means to protect people and prevent violence. Wallis suggests UCP missions are activities by civilians to prevent or reduce violence so as to make it safe for others to engage in peacebuilding activities ([Wallis, 2009](#_ENREF_86)). Schweitzer defines UCP as “the prevention of direct violence through influence or control of the behaviour of potential perpetrators by unarmed civilians who are deployed on the ground” ([Schweitzer, 2010, p. 9](#_ENREF_77)). This is what is meant when I use the phrase unarmed civilian peacekeeping or UCP.

Based on my own research and a review of the literature, I understand both military and unarmed civilian peacekeeping to be organised action by third parties to prevent violence, protect civilians, and support local problem-solving by controlling or influencing belligerents and/or their proxies, as well as local people. This reflects the emphasis peacekeepers put on the need to support local efforts, which can be understood as influencing local people to engage in peacebuilding work. Rather than passive recipients of peacekeeping, it recognises the agency of local actors in reciprocal processes. In this way, while primarily focused on preventing violence and protecting people, peacekeeping can contribute to peacebuilding indirectly, through helping to create sufficient safety and relational support of local efforts to address conflicts nonviolently.

Military peacekeeping context

Peacekeeping today primarily addresses intrastate conflicts. Peacekeepers tend to work in communities whether urban or rural. This brings them into frequent contact with local people from many different sectors of society. At the same time, since the 1990s, most UN missions and most undertaken by other multilateral organisations, are considered multidimensional, often termed multidimensional peace operations ([W. J. Durch, 2006](#_ENREF_12); [United Nations Department of Peacekeeping, 2008](#_ENREF_84)). The actual peacekeeping is just one dimension. Other dimensions may address democratic elections, constitutional and security sector reforms and other efforts to strengthen governance, various humanitarian and development components, as well as economic reforms oriented toward supporting free markets. This combination of dimensions is frequently referred to as the liberal peace agenda ([W. J. Durch, 2006](#_ENREF_12); [Richmond & Franks, 2009](#_ENREF_72)), and is often described as related to the assumption that liberal democracies do not fight each other ([Luckham, 2011](#_ENREF_45)). This leads toward programing to establish a world of liberal democracies with free markets as the path to world peace and an argument that non-liberal governance is a security issue for existing liberal democracies ([Annan & Mousavizadeh, 2012](#_ENREF_1)). This analysis obscures any indications of neo-colonialism, capitalist exploitation, and manifestation of self-serving great powers which may influence the construction of these interventions ([Cunliffe, 2012](#_ENREF_8); [Lidén, Mac Ginty, & Richmond, 2009](#_ENREF_43)).

Military peacekeeping mandates which are authorised by the UN are created through a political process primarily within the UN Security Council. Mandates are created through negotiation among Security Council members as much or more then through analysis by the UN Secretariat and the UN Department of Peacekeeping ([Howard, 2008](#_ENREF_33); [Sartre, 2011](#_ENREF_75)). Many mandates include similar language regarding governance, economics, and increasingly the use of force not only for self-protection, but to protect civilians as well ([Franke & Warnecke, 2009](#_ENREF_18)). Though there are challenges in practice, at least in theory the many components required to carry out these missions are coordinated to simultaneously support the implementation of a peace agreement, protect civilians, reform and rebuild governance, and support social, political and economic development ([Gowan, 2008](#_ENREF_27); [Metcalfe, Giffen, & Elhawary, 2011](#_ENREF_53); [Rolfe, 2011](#_ENREF_73)). This means that the peacekeeping component is directly affected by the implementation of other components and perceived by local people as one part of the overall intervention ([Pouligny, 2006](#_ENREF_65)). Much literature on peacekeeping and peacebuilding no longer distinguishes between the two concepts.

Some research finds these military peacekeeping interventions successful at preventing a return to war, based on statistical analysis ([Fortna, 2008a](#_ENREF_16); [Hegre, Hultman, & Nygard, 2010](#_ENREF_29)).[[1]](#footnote-1) On this basis, they conclude that peacekeeping ‘works’ ([Fortna, 2008a](#_ENREF_16)). Other research defining success using variables such as meeting the mission mandate, and allowing for outcomes which are a mix of success and failure, find peacekeeping less successful ([Howard, 2008](#_ENREF_33); [Martin-Brûlé, 2012](#_ENREF_51); [Pushkina, 2006](#_ENREF_67)). One way to evaluate success is the establishment of functioning democratic governments. Traditional peace research suggests that efforts to create liberal democracy through multidimensional peace operations are not generally successful, and that the outcome tends to be anocracies, hybrids of democracy and autocracy ([Call & Cook, 2003](#_ENREF_5); [Fortna, 2008b](#_ENREF_17); [Frantz, 2012](#_ENREF_19); [Gurr, Hewitt, & Wilkenfield, 2010](#_ENREF_28); [Marten, 2004](#_ENREF_50)). Of particular importance in this paper, success can also be defined as protecting civilians. Military peace operations are frequently criticised for the failure to protect citizens, and this failure is the subject of much discussion and research ([Annan & Mousavizadeh, 2012](#_ENREF_1); [W. Durch & Giffen, 2010](#_ENREF_11); [Fjelde & Hultman, 2010](#_ENREF_15); [Holt, Taylor, & Kelly, 2009](#_ENREF_31); [Hultman, 2010](#_ENREF_34)). However it is explained, local people have an expectation that they will be protected and are critical and disappointed when the mission fails to do, leading to non-cooperation and at times active resistance to an intervention ([Higate & Henry, 2009](#_ENREF_30); [Pouligny, 2006](#_ENREF_65)). And while the debate continues within the UN regarding the use of robust force to protect civilians and achieve the mission mandate, there continue to be concerns about the limits to what can be achieved through force and that the use of force may undermine acceptance and cooperation in the field ([Duyvesteyn, 2008](#_ENREF_13); [Homan & Ducasse-Rogier, 2012](#_ENREF_32); [Kreps, 2010](#_ENREF_40); [Last, 1997](#_ENREF_41); [Sartre, 2011](#_ENREF_75); [Tardy, 2011](#_ENREF_82)). While many missions have certainly done some good, too often they have failed to produce the promised political, economic and social benefits envisioned in the liberal peace doctrine.

Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping context

The history and performance of UCP are less well known.[[2]](#footnote-2) The following are some brief highlights, to provide background to the discussion presented later. Growing out of a history of nonviolent third party interventions, Peace Brigades International (PBI) has been providing unarmed civilian protection to human rights and other peace leaders, as well as to threatened communities in conflict affected regions since 1983 ([Mahony & Eguren, 1997](#_ENREF_49)).[[3]](#footnote-3) Though PBI does not call itself a peacekeeping organization, nor its staff peacekeepers, their work fits the definition above. PBI has fielded interventions in Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, North America, Colombia, Haiti, the Balkans, Mexico, Indonesia and Nepal. These projects have been primarily successful at protecting the people and communities they accompany, with few deaths of those they protect and no deaths of their volunteer staff. PBI states on their website: “Our work is based on the principles of non-partisanship and non-interference in the internal affairs of the organisations we accompany. We believe that lasting transformation of conflicts cannot be imposed from outside, but must be based on the capacity and desires of local people. Therefore we do not take part in the work of the organisations we accompany. Rather our role is to open political space and provide moral support for local activists to carry out their work without fear of repression.”[[4]](#footnote-4) A number of the former peacekeepers interviewed for the research project had previously worked with PBI.

The Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) is the other organisation for which unarmed civilian peacekeepers I interviewed had previously worked. NP considers its work to be unarmed civilian peacekeeping. Founded in 2002, NP has fielded interventions in Sri Lanka, Guatemala, Philippines, the South Caucasus, and South Sudan.[[5]](#footnote-5) NP’s work employs a broader range of activities and is focused on providing protection to communities and regions, and to a lesser extent, to key individuals. Evaluations on NP’s website suggest that NP has been relatively successful at influencing local level violence and protecting people, but given the broad aims of interventions, success is not easy to define or evaluate.[[6]](#footnote-6) NP’s mission is: “to promote, develop and implement unarmed civilian peacekeeping as a tool for reducing violence and protecting civilians in situations of violent conflict.”[[7]](#footnote-7) They describe their work: “We most often respond to invitations by credible local organizations committed to nonviolent solutions. Once invited, we meet key players, including commanders from opposing sides, local police, religious, business, and civil society leaders. We live and work in communities within conflict zones alongside local people. We build the confidence and safety of civilians deeply affected by conflict so they can access available structures and mechanisms for addressing problems and grievances.”[[8]](#footnote-8) I will come back to a number of these themes in the discussion section of this paper.

Critique of liberal peace

There is extensive literature critiquing the liberal peace agenda. Of particular interest in this paper are critiques of putting national security before human safety and wellbeing ([Booth, 2005](#_ENREF_3); [Burke, 2013](#_ENREF_4); [Linklater, 2005](#_ENREF_44); [Olsson, 2008](#_ENREF_62); [Richmond, 2008](#_ENREF_68)); concerns about imposing liberal peace solutions assumed to be universally appropriate ([Darby, 2009](#_ENREF_9); [Jabri, 2010](#_ENREF_35); [Pugh, 2004](#_ENREF_66); [Zanotti, 2011](#_ENREF_90)); and disregarding or undermining local efforts to address needed social change ([Lidén et al., 2009](#_ENREF_43); [Mac Ginty, 2011](#_ENREF_47); [Paffenholz, 2013](#_ENREF_63)). Military peacekeeping operations today are generally operating with mandates focused on supporting and reforming national governments ([Franke & Warnecke, 2009](#_ENREF_18)). This orientation toward state security is criticised for paying insufficient attention to local civilian needs for safety, for ignoring the context when states are responsible for committing violence against civilians, for using military interventions in ways that may contribute to increased insecurity, and for paying insufficient attention to local contexts and local knowledge which would improve the practice of preventing violence and protecting people. Though military peacekeeping is oriented toward the national level, the local conflicts which occur in communities and regions where peacekeeping takes place, play a part in continuing conflicts and need greater attention ([Kalyvas, 2003](#_ENREF_38); [Leonard, 2013](#_ENREF_42)). There are calls for refocusing support to local dynamics for peace and community safety and for prioritising the everyday needs identified by local people such as food, shelter, health and employment over other reforms ([Richmond, 2008](#_ENREF_68), [2009b](#_ENREF_70)). Rather than focusing on global north ideas of implementing specific models of governance and the right to vote, peacebuilding interventions would more usefully and successfully support local efforts, trusting that local people will (re)create functional governance, though it may not resemble liberal democracy ([Darby, 2009](#_ENREF_9); [Jutila, Pehkonen, & Väyrynen, 2008](#_ENREF_37); [Leonard, 2013](#_ENREF_42); [Peterson, 2010](#_ENREF_64); [Richmond, 2010](#_ENREF_71); [Richmond & Franks, 2009](#_ENREF_72)).

Peacebuilding initiatives that are part of the multidimensional peace operations are critiqued for promoting what are assumed to be universal values, thus destabilizing and undermining local practices of governance and social organization ([Jabri, 2010](#_ENREF_35); [Leonard, 2013](#_ENREF_42); [Zanotti, 2011](#_ENREF_90)). The liberal peace agenda is critiqued for instituting the dominance of western ideas, based on the assumption that these ideas, policies, technologies, and approaches are superior to any competing local ideas and practices and are worth imposing through both military presence and conditional aid ([Pugh, 2004](#_ENREF_66); [Richmond & Franks, 2009](#_ENREF_72); [Zanotti, 2011](#_ENREF_90)). These interventions are seen as supporting and promoting only those organizations that work within and to implement this liberal agenda, which has the intended or unintended result of undermining local, indigenous organizations and leadership ([Mac Ginty, 2008](#_ENREF_46); [Paffenholz, 2013](#_ENREF_63); [Pouligny, 2006](#_ENREF_65); [Stamnes, 2010](#_ENREF_79)). Those who desire something else are not rational or civilized ([Zanotti, 2011](#_ENREF_90)). And yet liberal peace has frequently failed to materialise for various reasons, not the least of which is that local elites do not want to change the power structures ([Eriksen, 2009](#_ENREF_14)).

Related to this critique is a call for supporting local knowledge, initiatives, leaders and traditions that are oriented toward improving the everyday lives of civilians in conflict affected communities ([Mac Ginty, 2011](#_ENREF_47); [Merlingen, 2005](#_ENREF_52); [Stamnes, 2010](#_ENREF_79)). While determining what is local or traditional is complicated by indistinct boundaries, western influences and on-going changes in communities ([Charbonneau, 2012](#_ENREF_6)), I use this term along the lines of Richmond’s phrase of ‘local-local’ ([Richmond, 2009a](#_ENREF_69)). Mac Ginty warns about romanticising indigenous processes, noting that some reflect values and practices that serve elites, continue or develop new oppressions and are harmful to others ([Mac Ginty, 2008](#_ENREF_46)). Both Tull ([2009](#_ENREF_83)) and Erikson ([2009](#_ENREF_14)) make this point in regards to the UN missions in the DRC, which has supported the national government and national army, both ‘local’ institutions that have been responsible for significant violence against civilians. A similar point is made by Gelot and Soderbaum ([2012](#_ENREF_25)) in relationship to UN and AU intervention in Darfur. In discussing the potential in realms of everyday life to either produce positive quality of life practices or to exert dominance and control which can undermine this quality, Mitchell ([2011](#_ENREF_56)) suggests that one realm does not belong to local actors and the other to international actors. Rather local actors are implicated in both, and cannot be seen only as a positive force. Jabri ([2010](#_ENREF_35)) argues that the implementation of a liberal peace agenda undermines self-determination. At a fundamental level, supporting local knowledge, practices and leaders, as well as the wellbeing of civilians in communities to go about their everyday life, is about self-determination, sustainability and justice. All of which suggests that careful analysis must be made about who and what local people and processes are supported. It requires letting go of pre-determined values and assumptions about how a community, region and nation should resolve and transform its conflicts, govern itself, and interact with other states.

Frontline peacekeepers perspectives on effective peacekeeping

***Research***

This paper uses findings from research on frontline peacekeepers’ perspectives of effective peacekeeping, using constructivist grounded theory ([Charmaz, 2006](#_ENREF_7); [Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006](#_ENREF_54)). I interviewed 55 former peacekeepers from 19 different countries, who served in 20 different missions in military, police, civilian and unarmed civilian peacekeeping roles.[[9]](#footnote-9) While the views of local people are infrequently included in research on effective peacekeeping, the perspectives of frontline peacekeepers are almost entirely absent.[[10]](#footnote-10) Through in-depth interviews I constructed an understanding of how frontline peacekeepers understood effective peacekeeping. I assume that people who do the everyday work in communities have a different perspective than high level staff or academics researching peacekeeping from afar. My primary focus was to understand their perspectives including how they defined peacekeeping, what they understood the purpose of their mission to be, and what if anything they found to be effective. While addressing prevention and protection was not unexpected, I was surprised by the frequent mention of local problem-solving or local ownership in the definitions of peacekeeping and as a crucial element in effectiveness. Peacekeepers mentioned many factors outside the scope of this article which in their experience contributed to effective peacekeeping such as organisational structures and decision making, sufficient size and speed of intervention, leadership, and a number of strategies to prevent violence and protect people. Here I focus on their perspectives regarding acceptance, local ownership and relationships.

Peacekeepers described developing their understanding of effective peacekeeping through embodied performance, in everyday life, day to day.[[11]](#footnote-11) When asked how they knew about what was effective, they inevitably referred to what people told them, but most importantly, by observing the way people behaved in interactions with peacekeepers or with others. They learned what worked by seeing what led to a decrease or prevention of violence, what seemed to protect themselves and local people, and what they felt supported local problem-solving rather than ignoring or undermining local efforts.

Reporting primarily on the perspectives and explanations I constructed with military and police peacekeepers first (19 military and 17 police), there were three themes – acceptance, relationships, and local-problem solving which were understood to be crucial for effective peacekeeping and that seemed to particularly raise dilemmas and contradictions which parallel the critique of liberal peace discussed above. Most peacekeeping today takes place in communities and frontline peacekeepers interviewed in this research spoke of the need to build trusting, cooperative relationships with local people in order to be effective with such critical tasks as gathering information, moving freely, receiving appropriate requests for assistance, preventing or containing violence, supporting local efforts and mutually protecting each other ([Furnari, 2012](#_ENREF_22)). Peacekeepers discussed the need to be accepted in order to build these task oriented cooperative relationships. And many believed that aspects of the mission mandate related to imposing solutions, particularly governance related solutions, and using force to impose solutions, undermined this acceptance and potential for relationships. Rather, they believed it was important to support local efforts to find solutions to pressing community needs. While interrelated, I will discuss each of these themes separately below.

I understood acceptance to be related to legitimacy. Legitimacy is considered important at the international level and can be thought of as a constructed social status or judgment ([Gelot, 2012](#_ENREF_24)). The legitimacy of missions is presumed to rest on both the authorizing institution and the three traditional principles of peacekeeping – impartiality, consent, and the use of force for self-defence or to protect civilians ([W. J. Durch, 2006](#_ENREF_12); [Ryan, 2000](#_ENREF_74); [Whalan, 2010](#_ENREF_89)). Legitimacy is thought to be important in conferring power, cooperation and other benefits ([Nye, 2011](#_ENREF_61); [Whalan, 2010](#_ENREF_89)). These assumptions are questioned with concerns regarding the underlying agendas and political processes of UN authorisation ([Jabri, 2010](#_ENREF_35); [Pugh, 2004](#_ENREF_66)), the unlikelihood of an impartial mission as intervention is likely to affect belligerents differently ([Gelot & Soderbaum, 2012](#_ENREF_25)), the contradictions between the use of force and impartiality ([Berdal, 2000](#_ENREF_2); [Tardy, 2011](#_ENREF_82)), the degree to which consent can be coerced ([Johnstone, 2011](#_ENREF_36)), and concerns about contradictions between sovereignty and intervening to protect civilians ([Nasu, 2011](#_ENREF_59)). Peacekeepers I interviewed however, talked about the need to be accepted. Acceptance was described as the basis for cooperation and in order to gather and use information, to be asked to intervene appropriately, and for mutual protection as peacekeepers noted that local people will protect you if they accept you. I suggest that while acceptance is built on local judgments that a mission is legitimate, it is a relational experience in the community which requires on-going nurturance. For instance, one military peacekeeper from S. Asia who had served in several UN missions, offers his analysis of the need for acceptance.

The cooperation of people is very important. Unless and until the people there accept you, you cannot operate… there has to be a sort of teamwork between the local people and the UN... Similarly people provide you access, information and so many other things. The logistic support that you require, the local people provide you logistic support also. … Information is very important, that is how you can plan your future operations, and this is what you get from local people. If there is a communication gap, if people lose hope and there is a communication gap, and then the gap starts to widen and then people do not cooperate with you and then slowly you cannot perform effectively… It is very important that people understand the UN presence is for their benefit and accept them, it is very important that they understand this, and only then can the peacekeepers operate effectively.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Acceptance is challenged when local people perceive solutions are being imposed, discussed below. Acceptance can also be challenged by the use of force. This tension was referenced in interviews, but also in military peace operation manuals. For instance the NORDCAPS peace support operations manual states ([NORDCAPS, 2007, p. 34](#_ENREF_60)):

The unnecessary, or irrational, use of force will adversely affect the perceived impartiality and credibility of the organisation, leading potentially to the loss of consent in a PSO [Peace Support Operation] and possible failure of the mission. Additionally, it may lead to an overall increase in the level of violence throughout the mission area.

At the same time the legitimacy and acceptance of a mission, and the UN itself, is challenged when peacekeepers do not use force to protect civilians ([Annan & Mousavizadeh, 2012](#_ENREF_1); [Giffen, 2011](#_ENREF_26)).

Peacekeepers note that when accepted, they can build good relationships characterised by trust, mutual benefit and cooperation. Good relationships with local authorities, armed groups, religious leaders, local activists, and every day people is understood to be central for effective peacekeeping. Relationships provide both the context in which peacekeepers work and the vehicle for preventing or deterring violence, including violence against civilians. They are essential for providing effective protection to the community as well as contributing significantly to the safety of peacekeepers. In interviews peacekeepers explained that as relationships are made with belligerents, these actors are more willing to consider and respond to issues peacekeepers raise, more trustable and reliable in their commitments, and more trusting that the benefits of peace such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) will occur and are worth participating in. Building relationships requires acceptance, and a belief that peacekeepers are there to support local people to address their conflicts. Two former military peacekeepers shared these thoughts about the importance of relationships.

You have to establish relationships and maintain these all the time… You have to be deliberate about it, you have to employ methods and tactics to be able to do that… Obviously, if you have a good relationship with the specific rebel leader, he is much more open to you, much more positively disposed toward you. It means you'll be able to operate in that specific area, you will be able to approach them without being shot at, etc etc.. The deeper the relationship develops, the more keen they will be to listen to what you want to accomplish, to listen to what you want to say.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Relationships are more important than any body armour or mine resistant vehicle the government could purchase. I can only speak about Afghanistan because that is where the majority of my experience has been. It is a human terrain, and in order to operate effectively on that human terrain, you have to have relationships.[[14]](#footnote-14)

And as with acceptance, not only the use of force, but the show of weapons was seen at time to challenge making good relationships, and undermine the cooperation needed for effective peacekeeping. A former police peacekeeper talked about the need to talk to people one on one, unarmed, using communication rather than weapons as the effective strategy, when possible.

Sitting down one on one, talking to a person, a villager, having tea. As soon as you have 4 to 5 police with guns, interrogating this villager, they build up resistance, it intimidates villagers, they don’t talk… As things are going, there’s no guarantee your force will be bigger than the force you are up against. The biggest force is with your tongue, talk, communicate. Bigger guns, you get more bigger guns, it escalates more and more and then you get war.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Peacekeepers interviewed highlighted the need to support local problem-solving efforts as a critical aspect of effective peacekeeping. Imposing solutions was seen to undermine acceptance and relationships as well as undermine the long term sustainability of their interventions. Solutions were understood as being imposed because in their interactions with local people, it was clear there was resistance and a lack of consent to some mission components. Though not elevated to a principle of peacekeeping, local ownership is highlighted in the literature on multinational, UN authorised peace efforts as an important factor in peacekeeping ([United Nations Department of Peacekeeping, 2008](#_ENREF_84)) ([Ministry of Defence, 2004](#_ENREF_55)). It isn’t always clear however, who is local, what local ownerships means, nor if it is respected ([Charbonneau, 2012](#_ENREF_6); [Mac Ginty, 2011](#_ENREF_47); [Sending, 2010](#_ENREF_78)). For instance, the UN peacekeeping guidelines state:

Effective approaches to national and local ownership not only reinforce the perceived legitimacy of the operation and support mandate implementation, they also help to ensure the sustainability of any national capacity once the peacekeeping operation has been withdrawn ([United Nations Department of Peacekeeping, 2008, p. 39](#_ENREF_84)).

The guidelines do not provide guidance as to what these terms mean and follow shortly after with an admonishment to be sure this is not just rhetoric. The British Defence Force notes that local people may have better knowledge, connections, and experiences in their communities, and that promoting local leadership in reconstruction efforts has benefits for sustainability and acceptance.

Peacekeepers implied that local ownership or local problem-solving meant supporting local people through relational strategies such as protecting key leaders, looking to cooperate with local leaders on community protection, connecting local leaders to resources, and undermining marginalisation by asking local people what they needed and helping them strategize to get it. Peacekeepers perceived the need for local ownership as critical for efficacy and sustainability. For instance a former police peacekeeper shares,

I made a conclusion after my three missions. We can't solve the problems in these countries by being there. We are not the only answer, there is so much more answer to solving that problem, and that is the people themselves. But we can give them some peace and stability, so they can develop it themselves, that is the only way .[[16]](#footnote-16)

From different perspectives, elites and everyday people are thought to resist the imposition of pre-packaged solutions ([Talentino, 2007](#_ENREF_81)). It may be seen to undermine their power, challenge local customs, and/or imply a judgment of the inferiority of local ways ([Eriksen, 2009](#_ENREF_14); [Mac Ginty, 2011](#_ENREF_47); [Pouligny, 2006](#_ENREF_65)). Peacekeepers were concerned about the need to work in a way that went with local efforts rather than generating resistance. A former military peacekeeper speaks to this as he says:

When we look at Western society, civilization, it took us about 300 years to get where we are at the moment. So any solution we suggest, any solution we impose, is going to be completely foreign and completely wrong and so you are going to have some real problems and some real issues.[[17]](#footnote-17)

A former police peacekeeper speaks to the inter connection of issues of acceptance, relationships and supporting local efforts.

And If you are going into a lot of cultures and pretending you care, but you upset them because you are working against their culture, and you are using force, there is no way they will come on board. But if you can meet them at a level where you can communicate with them, and gain their trust and support, then they will come to you with their problems, and you can look at their problems and problem solve with them… I can’t see by using a more robust force that will happen… [if] you are not being sensitive to their cultural issues, and not listening to them, it isn't going to work.[[18]](#footnote-18)

All this is not to glorify local actors nor judge local action as always good or desirable. Local customs, power structures and institutions may be quite oppressive ([Mac Ginty, 2008](#_ENREF_46); [Mitchell, 2011](#_ENREF_56)). Peacekeepers had multiple concerns about what they saw in local communities. Nonetheless, they understood respecting local ownership to be critical for acceptance, relationships and sustainability, as well as to decrease the likelihood of resistance to their intervention.

Military peacekeepers experienced the dilemma of working for peace while also supporting some efforts that appear to impose unwanted and even inappropriate changes. And they believed that this process of imposing solutions undermines effective peacekeeping by posing challenges to acceptance and building relationships, as well as to the sustainability of the reduction in violence and local initiatives.

In this quote a former police peacekeeper who served in several missions and had clearly thought about these things, shares her concern that overall, it is not desirable nor possible to impose democracy, that local people need to, and ultimately will, make their own decisions.

But it is not 100% good everything, even if you do it with a good intention. It doesn't turn out well all the time … We have our idea of how democracy works... But that doesn't mean it is correct for that country and these people living there. They have to create their own democracy, their own way. And democracy takes such a long long time to develop and it is such a delicate thing, a difficult thing... It is in the whole picture of the mission, the mission has regulations of what to do and how to do, and that is what we are supposed to implement and to follow. … but that doesn't mean it works in another country, that doesn’t mean you can copy it and place it in another country, then don’t think we are the best… Be humble and listen to other people, there are so many other ways to do things … for sure I made a difference. But if it was in a good way or another way, that's not for me to decide in all the cases… you can run a whole country, you can take it over for years and years but you can’t change the people, I don’t think so, you know, not the UN neither. So it is up to them, the people, to make the choices and what to use and how to use the information that they are receiving from everyone I think…it is up to them to make their own choices.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Is UCP an emerging response to these parallel critiques?

Through their own day to day lived experience, military peacekeepers perceived problems with the practical experience of imposing solutions, and the underlying discomfort of feeling it was not right to tell others how they should govern themselves. These peacekeeper’s perspectives align with many of the criticisms of liberal peace discussed above. This alignment between what is reported as views by local people, military peacekeepers themselves, and the critical literature suggests to me a need to unlink peacekeeping itself from the many state-building components in current peacekeeping missions. The concerns shared about ways the use of force may undermine effective peacekeeping, suggests the need to de-militarize peacekeeping to the strongest degree possible. I suggest both changes are needed in order to strengthen the potential for accomplishing fundamental goals. By peacekeeping, I mean the direct efforts to prevent violence, protect people and support local problem-solving.[[20]](#footnote-20) These are the fundamental goals of peacekeeping, as understood by frontline peacekeepers. Unarmed civilian peacekeeping (UCP) and a few unarmed military peacekeeping missions, provide models and evidence that unlinking and demilitarising are possible.

***UCP and supporting local ownership***

UCP missions have generally been focused only on the goals of protecting people and preventing violence, so that local people can address their conflicts nonviolently. This provides an important model, I believe, of third party intervention into violent conflicts, without imposing agendas of how they are to be solved. UCP interventions have protected key leaders and whole communities through strategies including accompaniment, presence and communication ([Furnari, 2006](#_ENREF_20), [2010](#_ENREF_21); [Mahony, 2006](#_ENREF_48); [Mahony & Eguren, 1997](#_ENREF_49); [Schirch, 2006](#_ENREF_76); [Schweitzer, 2010](#_ENREF_77); [Wallace, 2010](#_ENREF_85); [Wallis, 2010](#_ENREF_87)). While not in their mandates to provide aid directly, former peacekeepers discussed providing protection to humanitarian and development staff through accompaniment and presence, so that they could engage with and deliver services in conflict affected communities. This was done without promoting a larger agenda.

UCP peacekeepers perceived their strength and effectiveness as directly linked to being based in communities. They lived in conflict affected communities and worked closely with local government, belligerents, community and religious leaders, and with families and individuals from all sectors of local society. A number of them spoke the local languages and saw this as a critical aspect of developing good relationships. Several related their experience that traveling in public transportation or driving motorbikes or average condition vehicles, made them accessible for informal contact and improved their acceptance and relationships. They were not seen as above or outside, but as within the community and yet still retained advantages of being foreign and to some degree non-partisan. Here a former UCP peacekeeper talks about their strengths and the contributions they made to the community.

In order to do anything, you have to build relationships and trust with the community. One of the strengths was we were embedded in the community, we had some language training to build those relationships. And our mandate itself encouraged respect, encouraged us to support community initiatives. You have to understand what are the strengths and strategies and resources that exist, or what previously existed and had broken down. You have to understand what the community wants to achieve. How can they use us, as a tool, so they might use us to accompany them to someplace, or just for logistics – to use our vehicles or our offices. Also if an international person says something it gets listen to, when [local people] wouldn’t be listened to. Some of it is communication style, we could connect people, very high UN people, to meet key people. We served as a bridge – linking key people, but also helping the community to know what key people wanted to know about, help community people be able to express themselves… If families, local activists, local networks, community based organizations, approach you, they trust you. That is a key indicator. In terms of effectiveness improving safety of civilians, again their willingness to engage with you is a key indicator, they are not stupid, they know how to survive. If you are not helpful, they will stay way away.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Another UCP peacekeeper notes how working in rural areas enabled a deeper understanding and the how their work protecting leaders in the community had a broader impact.

Having long-term relationships, allowed a deeper understanding of those struggles and having field offices, especially in rural areas , had an impact on their [local human rights defenders and community activists] ability to do their work. And that had an impact on their communities, and these people existed in every area where we worked. Maybe not stopping bullets but they were absolutely critical for community resilience, getting information out, getting people so they are still willing to put out information, to say we want to get our children back, actually we are going to record when people are killed in our town in front of other people. They are the main resistance, and when the situation became more stable, they could be more positively proactive, rather than the reactive resistance. It was often the same people, the same organizations, networks of relationships.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Former UCP peacekeepers I interviewed discussed the need to support people without telling them how they should resolve their conflicts. Peacekeepers mentioned the need to get frequent feedback that their intervention was still accepted, and to take correct action if this acceptance was slipping. Some referred to the need to be sure that even training provided was not simply a transmission of global north ideas. Below one UCP peacekeeper talks about preventing violence as simply a way to support local people taking the lead.

For me this is the most powerful thing. Apart from saving lives, that is a side line activity actually, by our presence we deter violence and destruction of property. But if you look deeply at what we do, the primary goal is really, we give voice to civilians, to give them that level of confidence that some civilians from different parts of the world, are standing with them, during that difficult point in time. So, issues of saving lives, securing civilian property, these are just some of the side benefits, but the key issue would be standing with people who are usually positioned at the lower level of the table when negotiations start. You find that with this relationship, most civilians take it seriously … they articulate their views well … they continue with confidence, knowing there are people standing with them.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Here another UCP peacekeeper discusses the complex interaction of deterring violence and supporting local efforts by being supportive rather than encouraging or empowering.

Well, I think UCP, they use their presence in a way to influence the conflict dynamics in a way to deter violence in a bigger way, even on a macro level. Or if it is on a micro level, the community level, their presence is there, it is going to help deter a certain amount of violence. It doesn't mean they will deter everything but with their presence they will be able to deter at least some of the violence. And so protection is more a strategy that people use in order to deter the violence. Deterring violence is the big objective. Protection is how you achieve that objective … encouraging local actors is what happens after, if you can help deter violence on community and a regional level, and you put in specific protection measures especially for human rights defenders or local actors that have the desire to work on these conflicts… Actually recently I have changed my vocabulary. I don’t use empowerment anymore and I don’t use encouragement anymore, because I think in some way they are very patronizing. I think a lot of the local actors you meet, they are already empowered, they know what they want to do, they just don’t have the space to do it. And you don’t need to encourage them either, because they are already encouraged. They have lived in violent situations, many of them all their lives, and they already want to make changes, so a lot of them are empowered and encouraged. Some of them lack skills, so you can help build their capacity, but I think that is, I just like to say support, supporting local actors because as internationals, or national staff, they can offer certain support, whether it be skills or knowledge, or space in a way for them to do what they are doing. But I think encouragement and empowerment are words I like to stay away from, it continues a paradigm of international patronizing local people, because … [INGO staff] get it on an intellectual level, they all get that we have to build local capacity, they all get it, we need to support locals in their process, but deep down on an institutional level it usually usurps local staff and their role, on one level on another.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Former peacekeepers discussed the need for careful analysis, acknowledging that UCP interventions are not possible in all violent situations. The armed actors have to reasons to be influenced by international opinions and restrained about overtly killing internationals ([Mahony, 2006](#_ENREF_48)). And, as with all interventions, they acknowledge the limits of what might be possible. But in their current form, unencumbered by multiple components and dimensions and without a larger agenda to impose, UCP interventions have been successful in many violent contexts at deterring violence. Reflecting this effectiveness, the Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) is currently part of the International Monitoring Team in Mindanao, Philippines providing leadership in civilian protection. NP work is supported by UN agencies in South Sudan. And yet, in my mind, this connection to larger institutions, with broader agendas, may eventually undermine part of what has contributed to UCP effectiveness to date, which is the independence and non-partisanship of interventions. As of now however, UCP interventions draw strength from being fielded by smaller, independent organisations, whose sole agenda is to prevent violence, protect people and make space for local people to address their conflicts nonviolently.

***UCP and de-militarising peacekeeping***

The critical peace literature and the traditional peacekeeping literature which focus on the limits and dilemmas of using force, suggest the need to decrease the militarization of peacekeeping rather than to argue for ever more robust or muscular interventions. Such interventions blur the distinction between peacekeeping and war ([Berdal, 2000](#_ENREF_2); [Sartre, 2011](#_ENREF_75)), potentially undermining the peace that was the intended goal. These concerns were echoed by military peacekeepers, who described dilemmas between self-protection and the need to establish and maintain good relationships, as well as the concern that once you use too much force, you have undermined acceptance which is needed for effective peacekeeping.

There is a long history of people wanting to do something, to intervene rather than just stand by and hope for the best ([Schirch, 2006](#_ENREF_76); [Weber, 2000](#_ENREF_88)). Often the choice seems to be presented as either stand by and allow civilians to continue to be killed, or to intervene with military peacekeeping or peace enforcement. UCP interventions in a number of violent contexts suggest there are nonviolent alternatives that prevent and protect, without increasing violence ([Schweitzer, 2010](#_ENREF_77); [Wallace, 2010](#_ENREF_85)). Several of the military peacekeepers and all of the UCP peacekeepers served with interventions that were unarmed. One former police peacekeeper describes providing unarmed protection to UN election workers in the lead up to the independence vote in E. Timor. While not trained in UCP strategies, they seem to have developed similar tactics in the face of necessity.

We didn't take our side arms, we left behind are bulletproof vests, and batons and spray and even handcuffs. [ How did you provide security without weapons?]... We did a lot of talking to people, with our hands up, just talking, getting people to stop, to slow down, we mediated events … Things moved slower, you had to talk to someone, who introduced you to someone, who introduced you to the militia, or a new commander. We would explain that this will look bad if you do this, it will make the Indonesian government and president look bad if you do this, lots of meetings, sit down and talk, we didn't have UN muscle to put things through … We had to come up with alternatives, to convince people if you do this, it will make your supervisor look bad, sometimes we would go back through our supervisors in Dili, to lean on their people, through their leadership. A lot of time was spent talking to people with our hands up in the air, with guns or machete or knife, pointed at us, lots of time talking, and looking unthreatening … Once they saw me, they would start talking to me in Indonesian or Timorese, I spoke a bit of Indonesian and I picked up more when I was there, I could speak okay by the end of the first month. All of the locals spoke Indonesian, I would apologize that I couldn't speak the other Timorese dialects, and then people were okay, though they resented Indonesian, at least we had a common ground to be able to speak, after apologized.[[25]](#footnote-25)

A former UCP staff concludes they were able to do their work and were safer without guns.

Now there’s a big crossover of military and humanitarian agendas, it puts humanitarian workers at risk, is related to the militarization of humanitarian agendas. And I have been told there has been a massive increase in deaths of aid workers worldwide. The effective relationships … were built on relationship building, trust building. It’s harder to build trust with a weapon. It is a symbol of loss of trust, of the breakdown of communication. There was nothing we could do with a gun, that we couldn’t do without it. Apart from getting shot. It would have increased our chance of getting shot.[[26]](#footnote-26)

A former peacekeeper who served in both the military and with NP discusses his concern that military peacekeeping is becoming too violent, and then discusses NP’s ability to protect civilians through an acceptance strategy rather than the use of weapons.

Now [we]have chapter 6 ½ [UN missions], post Rwanda. The UN, they are not peacemakers, they are more like peace enforcers, or violence reduction enforcers… you don't want to be part of the conflict, but you will, once you go in and start shooting people you are part of the conflict, that's how it is, it’s human nature… When you have full acceptance, then you can save lives…. Where you have acceptance, your high visibility works very well, and you know it is working because people return to you. You get positive feedback from the people, the police, the armed groups, they like having you around…. The Philippines government and army know we have strong nonpartisan relationships with other legitimate actors. We are totally open about this. You must be seen as not taking sides, having strong non-partisanship… You have to monitor your image of being nonpartisan all the time, if someone tries to undermine your image of nonpartisan, we have to ask ourselves what we did, have we undermined our non-partisanship and what we need to do to correct this. I've seen it work, people come back and we get positive feedback from the military, non-state armed actors and more importantly from civilians, who we are really out there to protect, who really need violence reduction. I saw in the Philippines, we got the government and an armed group to hold off fighting once in one case, until we got the civilians out and then they fought. We said why kill innocent women and children and elders, and it worked. But you can’t be naïve here, it is not putting on a superman suit, it is very hard fought and hard won, but in the end if it saves hundreds of families, it is successful.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Conclusion

Military peacekeeping, using traditional scientific research methodologies, is found to decrease the likelihood of a return to war, but have less clear success at fulfilling mandates generally, and in particular in protecting civilians or establishing functional democracies. Critical peace literature questions the underlying agendas of such interventions and points to the ways in which peacebuilding operations pay too little attention to the everyday needs of local people. Interventions may actually increase insecurity and violence at worst, or simply not address human rights to food, clothing, shelter, health or education with the same urgency as the right to vote and the establishment of presumed universal models of governance. Both fields of literature address a concern that military peacekeeping interventions impose inappropriate solutions and undermine sustainable locally owned change processes, while not doing enough to improve the conditions of everyday life for civilians in conflict affected communities.

According to peacekeepers interviewed for this research project, peacekeeping is most effective when it is sensitive and responsive to the local concerns in the communities where they worked. In their eyes, effective peacekeeping is accepted by local people, emphasises building and maintaining good relationships as a key process and strategy, is careful in the use of force not to undermine acceptance or relationships, and supports local problem-solving.

Bringing these themes together leads me to envision an evolution of peacekeeping toward robust relationship and fundamental peacekeeping. This evolution builds on the experience of UCP and other civilian based interventions. Rather than a focus on robust force, I argue for putting the need for developing relationships sufficiently robust to withstand the stress of the movement among coercion and cooperation at the centre. This imagining[[28]](#footnote-28) perceives civilians – both police and unarmed civilian peacekeepers as the ideal peacekeepers.[[29]](#footnote-29) Additionally, this vision imagines peacekeeping unlinked from wider peacebuilding and state building agendas. This would support a focus on the fundamental tasks identified by peacekeepers of preventing violence, protecting civilians and supporting local ownership. Though needing to be coordinated, physical and social reconstruction would be undertaken separately. Supporting local ownership is understood here as reinforcing local problem solving and local action/actors through relationship based strategies such as presence and accompaniment, building networks, and communication strategies. In order to actualise peacekeeping which serves to increase the ability of local people to engage nonviolently in addressing their conflicts, decisions would need to be made carefully regarding supporting local actors who are working for a more tolerant, inclusive and just society. While violent force might be used, it would be within strategies that take in to account the impact of the use of force on relationships. This vision leaves many issues unaddressed, unresolved or unchanged. Still versions or aspects of this peacekeeping are already in operation or have occurred, so it is not entirely imagined nor can it be said to be entirely unrealistic.

Peacekeeping that was not associated with liberal peace might be less resisted by UN members and thus easier to authorise.[[30]](#footnote-30) With a focus on supporting local efforts, it might be possible to intervene earlier in conflicts, rather than the current practice which generally waits until there is a high level of death, destruction and the breakdown of governance before intervening. Most importantly, this envisioned peacekeeping might more effectively prevent violence and protect people, core functions that are expected of peacekeeping. It might also put humanitarian and aid workers at less risk, if peacekeeping was understood to be less of an imposition of foreign agendas and if aid and services were not seen as integrally connected to the peacekeeping itself. This is not a call to return to earlier versions of peacekeeping, with unarmed observers monitoring demarcation lines, as peacekeeping today takes place in communities, in relationship with local people. Rather it is to move forward toward peacekeeping practices which are effective at what to me is the core purpose of peacekeeping, that is supporting sufficient safety from harm, for local people to engage in exploring, managing, resolving and transforming their conflicts nonviolently.

The evolution of peacekeeping I am envisioning is somewhere between a problem solving fix and a profound reconfiguration. Disconnecting peacekeeping interventions from the liberal peace agenda would require significant changes in how peacekeeping is understood and used in the international arena. And these changes do not address underlying international factors that contribute to armed conflicts such as the trade in small arms, the globalised economy, political manipulation by the great powers, nor the oppression of marginalised groups within countries, to name a few. It raises issues of coordination with other simultaneous interventions, but as the UN struggles to coordinate within current structures, perhaps this would not be harder ([Rolfe, 2011](#_ENREF_73)). It will not work in all situations of political violence as clearly some belligerents will not accept or cooperate with such an intervention, and so would only put the lives of the peacekeepers at irresponsible risk.

Nonetheless it seems worth exploring the potential of unarmed civilian peacekeeping as a model of effective peacekeeping. It retains the capacity for third parties to enact the need to do something when political violence is unleashed. It maintains a focus on preventing violence, protecting people and supporting local actors and action to solve their problems appropriately. It suggests it is possible in many contexts to do so without increasing the violence. It also reflects my assumption (and experience) that people over time (perhaps a long time) will work out issues of governance, marginalisation, oppression and other underlying causes of conflict, when they are safe to do so without fear of violence. There are local people, everywhere, with visions for how to make their societies more just, tolerant of dissent, and sustainably governed. In contexts of political violence however, they may need the support of outsiders to prevent violence, and provide protection, so that they can engage in social change.

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1. In general war in this research is defined as 1000 or more battle related deaths. See Doyle and Sambanis ([2006](#_ENREF_10)) and Fortna ([2008a](#_ENREF_16)) as examples. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A detailed summary is outside the scope of this paper. See Moser-Puangsuwan and Webber ([2000](#_ENREF_58)) for a number of chapters which detail the history of nonviolent intervention by third parties. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See PBI website for further information on organizational history and performance. http://www.peacebrigades.org/about-pbi/ Accessed June 28, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See PBI website [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See NP website for more history and updates. http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/about Accessed June 28, 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See NP website for evaluations at http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/resources/research Accessed June 28, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See NP website [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See NP website [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Contact the author for further information ([Furnari, 2013](#_ENREF_23)) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. While many researchers such as Fortna ([2008a](#_ENREF_16)) and Howard ([2008](#_ENREF_33)) reference interviews with high level peacekeeping staff in their theorising on how peacekeeping works, few appear to have interviewed ground level, frontline peacekeepers. See Last ([1997](#_ENREF_41)) and Kramer ([2007](#_ENREF_39)) as exceptions. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For discussion of embodied performance in peacekeeping see Higate and Henry ([2009](#_ENREF_30)) and for analysis of everyday life particularly in peacekeeping see Darby ([2009](#_ENREF_9)) and Mitchell ([2011](#_ENREF_56)). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Interview October 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Interview October 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Interview November 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Interview July 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Interview October 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Interview November 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Interview October 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Interview October 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. As may be clear from this article, the support to local problem-solving is meant to be through relational strategies, rather than direct aid. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Interview July 2011 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Interview August 2011 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Interview July 2011 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Interview October 2011 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Interview April 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Interview July 2011 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Interview August 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Imaging used in the sense referred to by Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis ([2002](#_ENREF_80)). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See Furnari ([2013](#_ENREF_23)) for an elaboration on this vision in general, and in particular on why to include police in this way. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Suggested in personal conversation by Christine Schweitzer April, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)