**The role of relationships in the emergence of peace**

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**Abstract**

This chapter explains the connections between developing and maintaining good relationships and effective peacekeeping. Research with frontline peacekeepers suggests that good relationships with people across social sectors are central to effective peacekeeping. Peacekeeping takes place within a field of relationships. It is through relationships that peacekeeping deters violence, protects people, and supports local problem-solving. Though peacekeeping relationships are at times coercive, peace develops and is sustained through engaged relationships characterized by trust, cooperation, and acceptance. While military peacekeeping relationships include the threat and use of weapons, which pose challenges to cooperative relationships, unarmed civilian peacekeeping is effective nonviolently.

Key words: effective peacekeeping, frontline peacekeepers, relationships, cooperation

**Introduction**

Significant research has been done in the last two decades addressing the basic questions of whether peacekeeping interventions are successful and the conditions which contribute to success (Bellamy and Williams 2005; Druckman et al. 1997; Fortna 2008; Fortna and Howard 2008; Hegre et al. 2010). Peacekeeping, as used in this chapter, refers to organized 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 body of research addresses the following questions: whether peacekeeping is successful at decreasing the likelihood of return to war; if undertaken by the UN or other multilateral institutions, is it equally successful; and if the success is impacted by national or regional contexts such as levels of poverty, geography, availability of natural resources, or involvement of other nations in the conflict. Much of this research uses statistical methods to examine the relationship between variables. There is variation in this research as to how success is defined or understood (Druckman et al. 1997). Success is defined by some as no return to war within five years (or some other time period), measured by 1000 or more battle related deaths in a given year (Fortna 2008; Hegre et al. 2010). Others consider success to require fulfillment of a mandate or other broader criteria (Howard 2008; Martin-Brûlé 2012; Pushkina 2006). Recent research has also addressed the question of whether peacekeeping interventions succeed at protecting civilians, under what conditions, and if so, whether the UN and other institutions are equally successful (Kreps and Wallace 2009; Hultman 2010; Hultman et al. 2013). In general this research finds peacekeeping to make a significant contribution to preventing a return to war but less successful at meeting other criteria for success. The research generally suggests that UN peacekeeping is somewhat more effective than that undertaken by other organizations. Lastly, the research finds that peacekeeping has a poor record of protecting civilians, though again, UN peacekeeping may do better at this than other organizations, and it may be improving.

Little of this research considers how actual practices of peacekeepers in the field contribute to effective peacekeeping, though Howard (2008) considers integrative learning, referring to learning which occurs during the intervention and contributes to improved practices, one of the critical factors for success. This chapter discusses findings from research with frontline peacekeepers which elicited their analysis of what contributed to effective peacekeeping (Furnari 2014). The research was guided by a desire to contribute to strengthening interventions by third parties into armed conflict within communities, regions, and nations. It was based on an assumption that those who did the work of peacekeeping would have perspectives and insights different than their organizational superiors or academics. In other words, the research investigated effective peacekeeping from a ground-level view.

The research used constructivist grounded theory methods. This approach assumes that meaning is constructed through interactions. In other words, how people understand each other and the surrounding world is socially constructed. In the case of this research, meaning is constructed between the researcher and participants in the research reflecting on their experiences. Further, it assumes that meaning depends on who is doing the constructing, is contingent, and changes over time. This is in contrast with an approach which assumes there is truth which would be the same for all and which can be discovered or uncovered through specific methods (Moses and Knutsen 2007). Specifically, the research was carried out by interviewing former, as well as a few current, peacekeepers in person or via computer (Skype) technology. The interviews were semi-structured - there was a general plan, but each interview was different - and generally lasted a bit over an hour. Initial interviews were carried out with people reached through personal contacts and the contacts of colleagues, sometimes referred to as a convenience sample. Most of the interviews were conducted with participants referred by people who had previously participated, referred to as a snowball sample.

The research included interviews with 57 former or current peacekeepers between June 2011 and November 2012. Participants served as military, police, civilian or unarmed civilian peacekeepers and included 39 men and 18 women ranging in age from mid 20’s to late 60’s at the time of the interviews. They came from 18 different countries including Australia, Canada, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Ghana, India, Ireland, Kenya, Nepal, NZ, Poland, S. Africa, S. Korea, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, and the US. They served in UN, NATO, and African Union missions as well as in unarmed civilian peacekeeping (UCP) projects fielded by Peace Brigades International (PBI) and the Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP). Some of them served only in one intervention, but 34 served in two or more missions or the same mission at least twice. References in this chapter to what peacekeepers think or understand refer specifically to findings from these interviews and do not imply generalization to most or all peacekeepers.

A number of factors understood to impact effectiveness were identified in this research including organizational issues such as leadership, adequate logistical equipment and support, as well as concerns about internal organizational politics. Local people’s perception that the intervention was nonpartisan, not supporting one political faction or another, was also frequently mentioned as an important factor. Factors related to their actual practices included a concern that the intervention was accepted by local people, that the intervention supported local ownership, also referred to as local problem-solving, and that the intervention developed ‘good’ relationships across many social sectors. A relationship here refers to recurring interactions between two or more people through which, or during which they are able to influence each other (Reis et al. 2000). Importantly, this highlights interactions where people influence each other: these interactions vary over time, and thus, the character of the relationships can vary as they develop. These factors which were understood to contribute to effective peacekeeping are interrelated, and many believed good relationships are key.

The analysis discussed in this chapter, based on the research described above, suggests that peacekeeping relationships tend to be task oriented and move within a range of mistrustful, coercive, and disparate interests to relationships characterized by trust, shared interests and cooperation, and everything in between (Deutsch 2011a; Deutsch 2011b; Hardin 2002). They tend to encompass both formal and informal aspects and are multidirectional. They function in contexts of conflict affected communities where violence has challenged trust and connections. This chapter elaborates on the findings and discusses what is meant by good relationships, how violence decreases and peace increases in part through developing good relationships that contribute to effective peacekeeping, and some of the implications of this analysis for peacekeeping practice.

**Peacekeeping takes place in relationships at the local level, on the ground in communities.**

While earlier peacekeeping tended to focus on observing a ceasefire at a physical border, today’s peacekeepers primarily address intrastate conflict and work in communities in direct contact with others. Thus peacekeepers working on the ground in communities experience the agency of local people, whether they are members of the national military, police, other armed actors, government officials, local civic and religious leaders, or just local people in their everyday activities in their home areas or Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP) camps. As Kalyvas (2003) and Leonard (2013) point out, local conflicts, or their absence, impact the overall possibility of maintaining peace, and the potential for local conflict is complex. Johnstone (2011) suggests that peacekeeping can be understood through relational contract theory, which addresses the need for flexibility within formalized, contractual relationships when there are ongoing interactions over a length of time rather than a short term, single incidence. In these contexts it is critical to maintain a generally cooperative relationship, while carrying out contractual obligations. Applied to peacekeeping, Johnstone emphasizes that while initial consent to an intervention may have been given, peacekeeping interventions need to maintain relationships with civilians as well as the government for the duration of the intervention through many changing circumstances. Given the need for effective peacekeeping practices in the community over time, it seems important to understand what frontline peacekeepers themselves find effective in their day-to-day work.

Peacekeepers interviewed indicated that developing and maintaining good relationships are one of the critical factors for being effective in these local contexts. Like most human activity, peacekeeping takes place in relational fields. Relationships are the context in which peacekeeping activities take place, be they coercive or cooperative, as well as the vehicle by which peacekeeping has effect. In other words, peacekeeping takes place in a complex network of interacting relationships, and it is through ‘good’ relationships that peacekeepers are able to exert influence to prevent violence and protect people. Peacekeepers also noted that it is through changes in behavior and what people said to them, implying in relationship, that they knew what was effective. Although discussing peacebuilding, Lederach (2005) uses the phrase ‘centrality of relationships’ and describes relationships as both the context of peacebuilding and the source of generative energy to build peace in communities that have suffered great violence. He notes “At the cutting edge of fields from nuclear physics and biology to systems theory and organizational development, relationships are seen as the central organizing concept of theory and practice (p. 34)”. Lederach uses the imagery of webs of relationships as the field in which peacebuilding occurs and which it must affect.

Reflecting on the importance of relationships, one former military peacekeeper interviewed by the author stated: “Relationships are more important than any body armor or mine resistant vehicle the government could purchase… It is a human terrain, and in order to operate effectively on that human terrain, you have to have relationships.”

Peacekeepers described good relationships as being characterized by trust, mutual benefit, and cooperation (the working definition of good relationships used in this chapter). There was no significant difference between men and women interviewed, although the only three who felt that weapons were more important than relationships were men. This seemed related to their shared experience of being military peacekeepers in Bosnia during the time the mission shifted from operating under the UN to operating under NATO guidelines, which altered the rules of engagement. They believed that the more permissive use of military power made a huge difference which could not have been achieved in any other way. Although friendships may develop, peacekeepers described relationships that were primarily task oriented, focused on preventing violence, protecting people, and supporting local ownership of the process (the purposes of peacekeeping most often described in interviews). It takes time to build relationships; they are not one time occurrences. Mac Ginty (2008) makes the point that in many societies on-going relationships are critical in that decisions are made through on-going processes, not at one time meetings.

Peacekeepers felt that good relationships were interrelated with both acceptance and supporting local ownership in effective peacekeeping. Local community acceptance of the mission and the specific local intervention created a context more conducive to good relationships. Some peacekeepers felt their missions were partisan, imposing solutions or undermining local initiatives, and this, in turn, undermined acceptance and made it more difficult to develop good relationships. Others noted the positive contribution that supporting local problem-solving contributed to acceptance and good relationships.

Peacekeepers view relationships as core processes for keeping peace. Relationships contribute to preventing violence in a number of ways including: with good relationships local people warn peacekeepers of impending violence; local people approach peacekeepers with information and appropriate requests; local government, civil society leaders, and others cooperate with peacekeepers; and armed actors are influenced within relationships and respond to peacekeepers’ concerns. Peacekeepers shared many explanations for why relationships were more powerful at preventing violence, in the long run, than weapons. While weapons might provide immediate influence in a situation, deterring violence or protecting someone, they do not change the underlying context. And as the news demonstrates daily, having the biggest and most weapons does not automatically produce the desired results. Building relationships characterized by trust and cooperation provides a context in which peacekeepers can influence those who are themselves armed actors. Peacekeepers can gain valuable information, revise their own understanding, and even derive protection in and through these relationships. The unarmed civilian peacekeepers (UCPs) described relying solely on relationships to deter violence. For example a former unarmed civilian peacekeeper explains how developing a complex network of relationships protected people through the influence they could exert in the area where she worked.

“But the big change was in dynamics, leveraging influence, establishing relationships that can influence actors, change dynamics. I do think we protected people via complex relationships, networks, coordination. Over time, we influenced decision makers, as dynamics changed. We had vertical and horizontal influence, people and events came together, overtime, a complex matrix.”

This quote highlights how violence decreases and peace develops in and through relationships. Similarly a military peacekeeper who had served in Africa suggested that in the beginning, you need to use military power, but said in the long run relationships are critical to accomplishing peacekeeping goals:

“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 … 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. But it is obvious the better that the relationships are with the people that you work with, the better progress you will make for sure.”

 One of the UCPs interviewed explained the power of having a broad network of relationships, as key to effective peacekeeping:

“UCP strength is the relationships. And I think why it works, is the ability of people [UCPs] to live in the communities, where threats are happening, where there is violence, and to build relationships with all the key stakeholders, civil society, security, there on the ground… they also create a lot of respect for them, not just as internationals but as human beings who have decided to do this kind of work…”

Protecting civilians is a key task and expectation for most peacekeeping missions today, and peacekeepers believed civilian protection to be a key purpose or goal of their work. As already mentioned, good relationships help provide early warning and support preventive responses. This was understood to result from increased sharing of information, and accurate information, between peacekeepers and civilians and peacekeepers and armed actors. Additionally, having a good network of relationships meant peacekeepers could understand the situation from various perspectives rather than relying on one particular bias. This supported more effective analysis and interventions. Peacekeepers also felt that with good relationships, protection was reciprocal. People warned of impending violence and areas to avoid when there were good relationships.

Peacekeepers from all backgrounds also acknowledged there were times when coercion was necessary. When cooperation and good relationships did not yet exist or circumstances had changed, peacekeepers attempted to coerce armed actors, pressuring them to refrain from attacking civilians and/or each other. At times, they also attempted to restrain government actions that, while not physically violent, infringed on civilians’ human rights. While military peacekeepers used the threat or actual use of weapons as part of their coercive activities, UCP relied on the coercion available through a network of relationships and the pressure which could be exerted through these networks. Peacekeeping exists within a wider network of relationships regionally, nationally, and internationally. Interventions can draw on the potential ramifications of drawing attention to violence against civilians or the breaking of a peace agreement (Mahony 2006; Mahony and Nash 2012). Most governments and other armed actors want to be seen as legitimate in the eyes of their constituency and the wider world. In addition to the threat of losing this perception of legitimacy, there may be a threat of sanctions including the possibility of charges in the International Criminal Court.

**The dilemma of carrying weapons**

The carrying and potential use of weapons posed a dilemma for a number of the military and police peacekeepers interviewed. They believed being armed was essential at times for their self-protection as well as to be able to uphold peace and protect others. Here a military peacekeeper speaks to this dilemma, valuing the benefits of relationship and engagement but worrying about self-protection.

“The security dilemma -- the need to be out in the community versus security… the physical risk of staff versus being close to the local people…the view [that] having close relationships with local people, the more secure you are, in the sense you will be warned of anything that might happen, that they think anyone is meaning you harm, and that is certainly how it worked when I was there, because we were out in the community, we relied on the community to help us with our security, to help protect us… But that was the conflict, the balance of the risk to ourselves, our own security, [vs] the need to be among the people and have good relationships and understanding what was going on.”

As he and other military and police peacekeepers noted, they believed that being armed made it more difficult to establish and maintain good relationships, and yet they also believed they needed to be armed for self-protection, even though this undermined being effective. Some noted that people were more afraid or avoidant of them and that it made it more likely to be seen as dominating rather than helping. For example a military peacekeeper who has served in several missions, sometimes as a soldier and sometimes as an unarmed observer, noted the differences in his relational experiences when he was armed or unarmed.

“When I used to go to the villages, [when] I was in the military, people do not prefer to see a stranger approaching to you, an armed stranger approaching to you, a stranger with a weapon. When I had no weapons, I could access people, people had confidence at the first sight… People used to welcome us more, but if you are there with a weapon, you are looked at in a different way. People used to think about it before talking with you. But without a weapon we have more, military observers have more access. Which is very true, that is what I have found myself.”

 Several peacekeepers pointed out that soldiers are trained to kill and win, and much of the relational work of peacekeeping might be better done by others with different training. Last (1995), in his research on the practice of peacekeeping, identifies the tension between the need to use military fire power versus the use of negotiations and other kinds of contact interventions (interventions that depend on contact with belligerents and civilians) as one of the key problems in peacekeeping. The NORDCAPS Tactical Manual (2007), while defending the use of the minimal force necessary, nonetheless notes that the use of force may undermine the legitimacy of the mission, leading to the withdrawal of consent and the failure of a mission.

UCPs believed they were safer because they were unarmed; carrying weapons could be seen as a threat and might draw violence toward them. At the same time, several addressed the limitations of being unarmed, acknowledging there were situations in which they could not operate if their own safety was at imminent risk and/or their presence was likely to increase harm to civilians nearby. Fundamentally, unarmed civilian peacekeeping by its very definition is committed to nonviolence and using nonviolent tactics to promote peace. One unarmed peacekeeper explained, for instance, that using weapons to keep peace did not lead to long term peace, rather maintained a focus on violence. She said,

“…if the only way people get from point A to point B is just because we have guns, then you get bigger guns, you haven’t changed anything. Protection still comes from the same source, you haven’t changed the dynamics. If it is about guns, it will escalate. But if you’re trying to have a transformative impact, you are trying to work with people who work nonviolently, …you aren’t actually changing the situation. You want to change the source of power.”

Peacekeeping can be understood, then, as moving within a system or spectrum of relationships that encompasses good relationships characterized by trust, mutuality, and cooperation, as well as coercive relationships characterized by threats and, at times, physical violence. Good relationships are understood to be more effective at creating sustainable peace, causing dilemmas for armed peacekeepers in particular.

 **Understanding peacekeeping relationships**

As one peacekeeper said, “These are not normal relationships.” Peacekeeping relationships have a number of peculiar characteristics. When the intervention begins, peacekeepers arrive as strangers and have to build relationships across many social sectors in multiple directions. While the intervention may take place over many years, specific peacekeepers come and go, often being in the field for only 6 months or a year (though UCPs tend to stay longer). So, in a sense, local people are often relating to strangers. Peacekeepers may not share similar cultures among themselves nor with the local population. As noted above, these are primarily task oriented relationships and so move between coercion and resistance to cooperation and back again. This process is based primarily on analysis of the context rather than emotion or personal conflict, and the stakes are high for all those involved. Good relationships can save lives (both civilian and peacekeeper) and/or strengthen local capacities and infrastructures for sustainably dealing with conflict nonviolently. Conversely, the absence of good relationships may contribute to continued conflicts and even death. These relationships take place in a broader context impacted by dynamics of struggle for power and dominance with related struggles over economic, cultural, and religious inclusion and exclusion and are impacted by international agendas and perceptions of the legitimacy of the intervention itself. The potential for building relationships is impacted when interventions are perceived as undermining local power structures, culturally inappropriate, and any number of other problematic systemic issues. Nonetheless, there are some sensitizing concepts that point to aspects of these relationships that deepen our understanding and highlight areas for further research.

Social capital is one theoretical framework that offers useful insights to thinking about these relationships (Nan 2009; Paffenholz 2009). Social capital refers to the strengths and capacities that develop when people are connected to each other in networks that operate cooperatively and for mutual benefit to some degree. One can think of peacekeeping as engaged in building networks between peacekeepers and others but also (re)building networks between various local social sectors directly. For example, peacekeepers can help bridge connections between conflicted groups by providing increased security, rumor control, and what some call shuttle diplomacy. This may simultaneously support increased social capital while preventing violence. One peacekeeper noted that while they needed good relationships in the communities where they worked, it was more important to support local people in building good relationships with government, aid agencies, and other critical actors. Another described a period of work to build a network which included diverse ethnic groups. When lethal violence flared in a nearby community, this network mobilized members and helped prevent the spread of violence to their area. In order for networks to be of mutual benefit and for members to cooperate, there must be a degree of trust. It may be a limited trust around specific issues or a more inclusive trust in each other’s reliability.

There is a large body of work on trust (Nannestad 2008; Newton and Zmerli 2011; Cox 2009), which was the most frequently used word to describe good relationships. Trust was described as indicating a belief that the other encapsulates your interests (Hardin 2002), or as peacekeepers said, having shared interests and mutual benefit. How peacekeepers and local people understand each other and the potential for mutual benefit seems both critical and complex. Murphy (2006, p.429) conceptualizes trust as “…a sociospacial process enacted by agents through relations mediated by structural factors, power differentials, emotions, meaning systems and material intermediaries.” In other words trust takes place is specific places and within particular social contexts, involving particular people. It is impacted by power, emotions, how those involved understand what they are about, and the actual physical objects involved in their interactions – be it money, guns, books, food, etc. This highlights that these relationships occur over time and are not static. There are power differentials, both obvious and subtle. And the sense of trust emerges from the meaning local people and peacekeepers make of their interactions over time and in conflict affected contexts.

A concept in the trust literature of particular interest to peacekeeping is termed the control dilemma (Miller 2004). Briefly stated, there is a dilemma between trying to control the other and trusting them in order for a job to be done well. This arises in part because it is not possible to specify and control everything in most jobs, and the attempts to do so may actually undermine performance. On the other hand, inadequate control may also contribute to poor performance, if people do not do what they should.

Jagd (2010) describes trust and control as related processes, not static attributes or concepts, and analyzes the circumstances in which they can complement or undermine each other. While his examples of control are related to typical businesses, and thus without discussion of nonviolent or force based coercion, there are a number of useful parallels with peacekeeping. In the business world, control is thought to be needed when there is a high level of risk and uncertainty about another’s intentions or actions. Trust is thought to be needed in complex environments when there is a need for flexibility and when excessive control might limit responsiveness to change. Thus, control is seen to be relevant when the larger risk relates to the (mis)behavior of others, and trust is seen to be needed in dynamic environments and where tasks cannot be easily circumscribed. He notes that both trust and control are emergent and in flux and are processes better described as trusting and controlling. Trusting is needed because of the uncertainty and risk in situations where the achievement of the goals or interests of actors depend on each other to some extent. He suggests that the expectations people have of each other in the beginning of a relationship affect the development of trust.

This body of work offers some fruitful lines of questioning for peacekeeping. It would be worthwhile to explore when trust and control complement or undermine each other in peacekeeping contexts. Control or coercion in peacekeeping occurs when peacekeepers perceive others as untrustworthy in some important ways, such as belligerents threatening to attack civilians or local authorities violating human rights, but many peacekeepers say coercion and the use of force may undermine trust and good relationships. There are significant risks in peacekeeping. Inaccurate information and analysis can lead to death for peacekeepers and local people at worst and, at the very least, may undermine political aspects of a peace process. It is not possible to exert complete control over belligerents, local authorities, or people in communities, nor over peacekeepers themselves.

Further investigation of this tension between trust and control in peacekeeping might prove fruitful as peacekeepers, military doctrine, and peacekeeping institutions themselves all refer to this control dilemma in the discussion of the need for a credible military threat while also recognizing that the use of military fire power may undermine acceptance and cooperation.

Relationships can also be understood according to various typologies and categorizations. Deutsch (2011b) describes a typology of social relationships based on interdependence constructed across a number of dimensions. By interdependence, he means the degree to which people either mutually need each other to achieve their goals or the degree to which the achievement of one person or group’s goals depends on the failure to achieve the goals of the other. In other words, he considers how much the actions of one affect the other. Interdependence does not necessarily imply cooperative or beneficial interdependence. Deutsch uses the term “negative interdependence” for competitive relationships in which the success of one depends on the failure of the other.

It may be helpful to think of peacekeeping with these concepts in order to better understand what kind of relationships are implied by peacekeepers’ desire for “good” relationships. Yet the structure and language of categories and typologies implies dichotomies and distinctions that are often blurred or unclear and perhaps obscure the ways in which peacekeeping relationships, even between the same two people, change and evolve over time and as needed.

Deutsch (2011b) suggests that relationships can be thought of in two overarching categories: socio-emotional or task-oriented. While Deutsch notes there is a continuum, he nonetheless tends to classify relationships as one or the other. One would generally consider peacekeeping as more task oriented. Listening to peacekeepers, however, it appears that in some circumstances, it is important to pay attention to the emotional, more informal, and even amicable aspects of a relationship. This was discussed in particular in terms of mentoring relationships where peacekeepers mentor other police or military, with co-workers, and in terms of building more personal connections with many different kinds of people in communities. Cross cultural interaction further complicates the experience of relationship in peacekeeping, as what are considered appropriate task oriented behaviors in one culture may not be in another. In the author’s own experience working in Sri Lanka, the first part of most meetings started with asking each other about families, health, and talking about generalities. To try to address a task too soon was considered very rude, and it was generally ignored. In another example, a police peacekeeper, who has worked in several different missions, talks about how mentoring depends on a close relationships with the police he is mentoring, that he can only work with a few at a time, and that his interactions must support mentees in developing confidence and skills. To do so, in one context, he has to go out drinking with those he is mentoring, even though it is not an allowed activity.

“[Effective mentoring] it is about giving the local police confidence in what they do… You have to go and sit beside the people you are working with … You have to basically work alongside them and have important discussions and basically giving the local police confidence to actually go out in to their community and actively talk and actively discuss, and by you being there, having that presence, well first of all you empower them… [and culturally you have to engage in friendship activities too] I'll have some beers with you, though it is a no-no … because everyone in his service did it, it's the norm. And in the end, I can remember having some very beery afternoons sitting in a grass hut with some of the other police leaders, getting horribly drunk, and after that you were their best buddy.”

Deutsch describes a number of other relational dimensions along dichotomous lines, which combine to produce specific categories. These include cooperation versus competition, equal versus asymmetrical power, formal versus informal, and intensity of importance. He notes that a number of other dimensions appear in the literature including temporary vs. long term, voluntary versus involuntary, public versus private, as well as the number of people involved in a relationship (Deutsch 2011b).

While useful concepts for exploring peacekeeping, it is important to keep in mind that the process of relationship building in peacekeeping is in flux. Peacekeeping relationships are initiated and maintained with people from governments, local military and police personnel, other belligerent groups, and all sorts of groups and individuals. Peacekeepers report believing they have more power in some situations but less power in others. They may have both formal and informal aspects of a relationship with people, and whatever dimension is under consideration, it evolves over time. Significantly, perceptions of the degree of cooperation may be different between peacekeepers and the other people and groups with whom they are building and maintaining relationships.

As discussed above, peacekeepers describe striving to create and maintain cooperative relationships. Cooperative relationships are thought to have a preponderance of common goals, while conflictual or competitive relationships give disparate goals more salience or weight. Coleman et al (2012) elaborate a model of conflictual or cooperative relationships, noting that the degree of cooperation or conflict will fluctuate over time and depends significantly on context. The experience of cooperation in peacekeeping may relate to the degree to which the intervention supports local ownership and the degree to which local people accept the intervention. It would appear that when peacekeepers are supporting local problem-solving through local efforts, there is likely to be a higher degree of shared goals. Similarly, it is possible that the perception of shared goals is a significant component of local acceptance.

Two other dimensions highlighted by Deutsch (2011b) and Coleman et al (2012) that also seem important in peacekeeping relationships are equality or power and the importance of the goals and the relationship’s ability to impact them. Some relationships have shared or oppositional goals regarding issues that are of little importance. In other relationships the goals are of greater importance, but the relationship may have little ability to influence achieving these goals. Applying this to peacekeeping, it would seem likely that peacekeepers’ goals to prevent physical harm and stop armed conflict would be shared by many in the community and would be of greater importance. For instance a peacekeeper here suggests that through building good relationships with the government and different groups of non-state actors, they can both allay fears and misperceptions and work together on issues of concern, even reaching a point where criticism can be shared with positive results.

“We have to constantly engage the government and non-state actors which are there. This is an issue of trying to [address] any misunderstanding that we come in as an organization that wants to create trouble for the government or non-state actors…. We have regular meetings with different government ministries that are of great importance to our work here, to allay the fears of the government that we might do some subversive work… when we do peacekeeping it is about building confidence and relationships, the more comfortable I am with you, the more I will buy your ideas, will support what you do, be interested in what you do… If you really engage them well, it really plays well with our work on the ground…you find that your presence will be so much welcome by all parties, so the issues that might arise concerning our own intervention, concerning our own understanding of what is happening on the ground, will be so appreciated, and if there is a criticism to either party, it will be taken with some positiveness, rather than negativity.”

Presumably, however, these peaceful goals would not be shared by all, as some groups may wish to continue to use physical violence to achieve their desired outcomes. Other goals currently involved in many peace support missions such as government and security sector reform or developing free market economies may have less or no shared interest with local people or may be of a lower priority than their physical safety or basic welfare. Conversely, some local groups may have goals that are not shared by peacekeepers such as dominating through the use of armed violence, forcing particular groups to move, or profiting from a no-war / no-peace situation. Furthermore, it may be that while shared, some aspects or goals are of little importance to particular people and groups, such as building relationships through playing sports together. Lastly, whether shared or not, peacekeepers may or may not be significantly able to influence the achievement of these goals.

Bringing together all of the above dimensions, it seems that peacekeepers perceive effective peacekeeping as more likely within relationships that share the following characteristics: primarily task oriented; able to identify, articulate, and work on shared goals cooperatively; a shared understanding of who has the power to affect what; and with shared assessments of what is more important to accomplish. This literature does not, however, address how peacekeepers move between cooperative and coercive interactions and how that affects their ability to maintain effective relationships. Nor does the research reviewed here, as it was an issue that emerged after the research was completed.

Higate and Henry (2009) discuss peacekeeping as embodied performances with props, by which they mean that real people bodily perform peacekeeping acts with specific materials. They emphasize that the props, which are weapons, other equipment, transportation, and the like, must be convincingly menacing for the performance to have a coercive influence. Deutsch (2011a) theorizes that acting cooperatively – i.e. acting as if one shares goals, trying to solve problems together, fostering mutual respect, and acting benevolently if one has more power – creates the conditions for cooperation. On the other hand, behaviors that indicate competition create conditions for further competition and negative interdependence. The so-called ‘weapons effect’ theorizes not only that people carrying weapons are more likely to act aggressively but that weapons may also bring out anxiety and fear in others (Turner et al. 1977), responses not conducive to building positive relationships. Thus, military peacekeepers and their weapons may symbolize an embodiment (as well as enactment) of coercion upon arrival in a community, a negative interdependence which may trigger anxiety and even resistance and which must then be overcome in the process of creating “good” relationships. UCP peacekeepers arrive with actions and props that may symbolize and embody their intention for and reliance on cooperative interdependence. They must work to establish sufficient understanding of their capacities, however, to be able to be effectively coercive with those threatening violence. The performances of military and UCP peacekeepers are at least symbolically, and in many cases actually, quite different in terms of weapons, living conditions, and the like, yet both use coercive methods at times, which may undermine trust and cooperation. Still, these differences in performance may account for the perceptions many peacekeepers shared (both armed and unarmed) of the advantage of being unarmed. One military peacekeeper reflected on his experience that when his mission shifted to being unarmed, it was more fully accepted, and further discussed how being accepted led to information and cooperation, which was essential for their operation. He said,

“Better if you are unarmed and going to the people... and going without the weapon. If you patrol out in the streets, with heavy equipment and APC,... they just got away from these things in the war,... they say - we just got away from all these things, now you people come with the same things... what people told me, why do you come, what are you afraid of, why do you come in a big vehicle... it was difficult to convince them it was for their security, later we started going without weapons... and the people welcomed that.”

 As peacekeepers say, they are perceived differently whether armed or unarmed, which leads to different potentials for relationship building.

The relational model, based in ethology, provides another set of sensitizing concepts. In general the model suggests that peace promoting, or reconciliation promoting behaviors often follow conflict behaviors, and this seems to reflect the value of the relationship, as well as the confluence of shared interests to those involved (de Waal 2000). This research directs attention to the value of the relationship to each individual involved, the importance of the conflict versus the presence of shared goals, conflict as related to negotiating hierarchy, and the risks associated with the conflict such as physical harm or losing the relationship. The research on which this model is based (see de Waal 2000 for a historical summary) resulted from the study initially of animals and then of humans in stable social groups with shared history, culture, behavioral patterns, etc. and most frequently studied dyads, families, or small social groups. In general, the kinds of human conflicts studied did not involve lethal or potentially lethal physical violence. This is obviously quite different than the peacekeeping relational context described above. Still, there are some findings which point to areas for further exploration in understanding how peacekeeping relationships contribute to peace. The preference for cooperative relationships described by peacekeepers may reflect the context in which the need for each other is high for all who are genuinely working for peace and the risks associated with non-cooperation are also high. The use of coercion by peacekeepers and by various armed actors may be part of a process to clarify power and dominance. Coercion reflects the existence of conflicting goals between peacekeepers and others, be they government officials, rebels, militias, criminal elements, etc. At core, these conflicts concern peacekeepers’ goals of preventing violence, protecting civilians, and supporting local nonviolent political struggle whether through social movements, elections, or other forms of contestation. Peacekeepers engage in coercive acts or processes to attempt to impose their goals, which tests their power or ability to dominate. So while this chapter uses the word *coercion*, reflecting the language of peacekeepers, it clearly reflects the existence of conflicts in peacekeeping contexts.

Perhaps most interestingly, the relational model understands conflict as part of the natural process of negotiating connection and cooperation (de Waal 2000). The processes of reconciliation after conflict hold potential to develop deeper connection and cooperation. Unfortunately, this author’s research does not address the processes by which peacekeepers, after a coercive incident or period, return to more cooperative periods. For instance, several UCPs described periods of time or incidents in which they understood their presence to have a coercive, violence preventing impact. In other words, their presence coercively restrained potentially violent actors. Yet later they engaged cooperatively with the same actors. In an example of this dynamic, an unarmed civilian peacekeeper described a subtle coercive interaction with police, which resulted in a sort of cooperation. He shared,

“There was a [human rights] researcher we worked with, who went out to the field and interviewed people on human rights. Dark cars started to follow him around, there were threats to his family and friends about his life. We …made a plan that was acceptable to him. A couple of [UCP] folks went to the police office and mentioned our client, we’re worried about our client, and we wanted you to know he is being threatened. We know you are in charge of safety, and we know you can keep him safe. And the threats stopped. We know the threats were coming from the police….We took a non-confrontational, nonviolent approach. We knew we could bring more political clout to bear but this was effective, asking the head of the police to do his job and complimenting him.”

In this case, the UCPs, in a sense, forced the police to stop threatening the researcher, by expecting them to visibly do their job. The ability to apply pressure built on their previous relationship. The resulting cessation of threats was, in a sense, cooperation. They both were then working for a shared goal of maintaining police control of violence which would lead to keeping the person safe. And they worked in a way that presumably made it possible to continue to work cooperatively in the future, despite having coerced the police to stop threatening and possibly even murdering this researcher.

 This process of shifting between coercion and cooperation seems a critical area for further exploration. How do peacekeepers signal their intentions to shift from coercion to cooperation to armed actors and others in the communities where they work? How is the relationship, if not reconciled or repaired, at least recalibrated toward cooperation and trust? Does the previous period of coercion contribute to increased cooperation later?

Deutsch describes a “crude law of social relations” (Deutsch 2011a), which helps to draw these various strands together. He theorizes that acting cooperatively produces cooperation and vice versa with competition, using the analogy of genotype and phenotype. In other words, the initial behavior can be thought of as the genotype, which is the internal genetic coding in biology. The initial behavior sets a pattern. Phenotype references how this patterning is expressed externally, in further behavior in this case. Thus the initial patterning sets the context for what follows, though does not determine it precisely. This suggests that how peacekeepers enter a community is a critical factor. Entering in ways that symbolize and signal trust and expectations of cooperation may be more likely when unarmed or lightly armed. As expressed in several of the research quotes above, many peacekeepers implied that heavy weapons and body armor signal mistrust or at least make a peacekeeper less accessible to people (Furnari 2014). One peacekeeper who had served as both a military and a UCP peacekeeper summed it up nicely saying, “Once you arrive with a uniform and a gun ... even in civilian engagement, you are still a soldier, and all that means to people, even if you don’t pull a trigger… you don't inspire people's confidence. Even if you only have a pistol, it affects women and children.”

Rubinstein (2005) theorizes that peacekeepers are seen as the embodiment of international order. This suggests that the way peacekeepers are perceived locally is potentially affected not only by their own actions but by the ways in which the overall intervention is understood in the local communities where they work. Some interventions are reported to be welcomed at the start. The perceptions peacekeepers and local people have of each other may be affected by their on-going embodied performances (Higate and Henry 2009; Pouligny 2006) which indicate symbolically and concretely to each other cooperative or competitive intent and the extent of their power to impose their goals, if needed, within interdependent relationships. The achievement of preventing violence, protecting people, and supporting local ownership is positively interdependent in that peacekeepers and local people need each other to achieve their shared goals. It should be noted, however, that this does not address those local people who act to continue the violence nor peacekeepers unwilling to protect people. Alternatively, it is negatively interdependent in that peacekeepers and local people need to block or overcome each other when they do not have shared goals.

**Robust relationships**

This discussion of the importance of relationships has significant implications for the practice of peacekeeping. Some of the current discussion in the field of peacekeeping calls for more robust efforts (Tardy 2011). In general, robust peacekeeping implies a greater use of military force, though Sartre (2011) suggests robust peacekeeping is more complex. However, as the above discussion suggests, there are dilemmas related to the use of force. Cooperative relationships are considered most useful for effective peacekeeping in the long run. The use of coercion and, in particular, the use of weapons is understood by many peacekeepers to challenge and possibly diminish this cooperation. Whether because carrying and using weapons signals mistrust and an intention to be coercive, or that people are wary of approaching armed soldiers, or that military peacekeepers tend to live in barracks and only spend limited time in communities, as previously described, military peacekeepers reported dilemmas related to the tension between the need for weapons and the challenges posed by having them. UCP interventions developed from a long history of nonviolent practice (Moser-Puangsuwan and Weber 2000; Schweitzer 2010) and consciously use relationship building as a core practice (Wallis 2010). In the long run, to support effective violence prevention, protection of civilians, and long term sustainable local peace efforts, building and maintaining reciprocally cooperative relationships is an essential component of effectiveness for all peacekeepers.

Thus, one of the implications of this research is the need to develop what might be termed robust relationships as a core strategy and practice in peacekeeping. Robust relationships are relationships strong enough to withstand both the movement between coercion and cooperation and the many stresses and strains on relationships that communities suffer during armed conflicts. Based on a solid understanding of good relationships as a key to effective and sustainable peacekeeping, a commitment to robust relationships as a core strategy would require a major reconfiguration in military peacekeeping. As one peacekeeper said,

“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. I can see in other places, in conflicts, in missions around the world, if you go in with that attitude you are going to feel like you are taking over a community, you are doing it because you think it is good, but you are not being sensitive to their cultural issues, and not listening to them, it isn't going to work.”

This suggests the need for more research to understand the tensions in military peacekeeping between the use of military force for protection and violence prevention and the need for robust relationships. When does the risk outweigh the potential advantage of being unarmed, and what does this imply for decisions on when and how to intervene? What are the actual practices that support the movement between coercion and cooperation? How do peacekeepers create, restore and deepen cooperative relationships? This also suggests the need to train peacekeepers to be sensitive to developing good relationship and the related skills of listening, cultural sensitivity, and a variety of good communication practices.

**Conclusion**

Peacekeeping today primarily addresses intrastate conflicts, and peacekeepers mostly operate in communities, experiencing the agency of local people across multiple social sectors. Peacekeeping can be thought of as working within a field of relationships influenced by multi-directional interactions which build or undermine trust, attempt to assert influence or control, and take place in dynamic contexts affected by external forces that may contribute to further conflict or peace. Peacekeepers believe that good relationships characterized by cooperation, mutual benefit, and trust are a critical and central factor of peacekeeping effectiveness. Good relationships contribute to protecting civilians and interrupting armed violence by supporting accurate information and analysis, early warning and mutual protection, and cooperation around shared goals. Peacekeepers found that cooperation was more effective than coercion at meeting their goals of preventing violence, protecting civilians, and supporting local ownership of peacebuilding processes. The stakes are high. Ineffectiveness can lead to disrupted peace processes, destruction of property and livelihoods, and possibly death for peacekeepers and/or the civilians they are there to protect.

These relationships are somewhat peculiar. Peacekeepers are strangers entering conflict affected contexts. In an intervention, peacekeepers themselves will come from different countries with different cultures and languages. Peacekeepers will also likely be from a different culture and speak different languages than those in use locally. They will have some shared goals relating to peace with some and conflicting goals with others whether relating to preventing violence itself or the particular vision of peace which peacekeeping is meant to promote. Ideally, the use of coercion to attempt to impose their goals stems from political and contextual analysis rather than from emotions or a personal desire to dominate.

Peacekeeping relationships are affected by how peacekeepers enter communities and encounter local people. For example, whether peacekeepers enter carrying weapons or unarmed has an impact on the quality and depth of these relationships. The relationships move between periods of cooperation and episodes or periods of coercion. This suggests the need for robust relationships able to withstand various stresses and obstacles.

While the initial research on which this chapter is based identified peacekeepers’ beliefs that relationships are a central component for being effective, there is a need for further research. General questions raised by this research include what happens in the process of constructing relationships, perceptions of power and influence, and other relational dynamics that create perceptions of increased costs of violence and increased benefits of cooperation for belligerents. How do relationships contribute to the prevention of violence and protection of civilians? More specifically, how do peacekeepers move between coercion and cooperation; how do they understand when the risks of being unarmed outweigh the advantages to relationship building and maintenance that being unarmed signals; how do peacekeepers think about the contexts and criteria for making these decisions; what are the actual practices that peacekeepers use to build and maintain cooperation; and does the use of coercion, in the long run, ever strengthen cooperation, and if so how and when? The initial research for this study used in-depth interviews with former peacekeepers from a wide variety of backgrounds and experience, which ultimately led to these new questions. Further research using interviews with open ended questions that focus on these questions would presumably shed light on how ground level peacekeepers understand these issues. It would also be useful to identify other contexts that resemble peacekeeping in some ways, such as community policing in high crime areas, and interview people in various roles to see what might be similar or different to peacekeepers’ understanding.

Another avenue of research would include not only the experiences of frontline peacekeepers but also the experiences of people in local communities who experience peacekeeping. While there is some literature on how local people perceive peacekeepers ( for example Pouligny 2006), there appears to be no literature comparing local perceptions of peacekeepers with the perceptions that peacekeepers have of themselves and of local people. Do local people also believe that good relationships are a central factor in peacekeeping, and would they describe them similarly?

Understanding peace as developing within peacekeeping (and peacebuilding) relationships opens new avenues for research and for more effective interventions. In the long run, it is hoped this will contribute to a more peaceful world.

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