

Some considerations for civilian–peacekeeper protection alliances

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Abstract

Protection of civilians has become enshrined as a core task for international peacekeeping missions. How to ensure that civilians are safe from violence and human rights abuses is central to developing military doctrine for peacekeeping; how safe civilians are from attack is central to how peacekeeping missions are assessed both by locals and international observers. However, protection of civilians is often seen as something that is done by active peacekeepers on behalf of passive civilians, potentially missing the ways in which peacekeepers' actions interact with strategies that civilians undertake on their own behalf. Integrating peacekeeper and civilian self-protection strategies is not trivial, either from a practical or a moral standpoint. Drawing on primary research among women in Liberia, as well as case studies of civilian protection elsewhere, this essay examines the ways in which working with civilians on protection—creating 'hybrid' systems of protection—inevitably entangles peacekeepers in civilians' other social, political, and moral concerns, undermining at least a naïve impartiality. To retain their moral stance, peacekeepers ought to focus on using the safety they provide to allow different local actors (civilian and armed) to interact safely and, ideally, constructively.

Keywords: *United Nations; Liberia; women; self-protection; violence; civil conflict; conflict resolution*

Protection of civilians—the use of military force to deter and/or halt violence against civilians—is a major concern for peacekeeping doctrine, planning, and practice.¹ Morally, protection of civilians is deeply entangled with questions about how to reconcile the traditional (and plausible) concern that peacekeepers remain impartial guarantors of peace rather than becoming embroiled in the political issues being contested, while not remaining impotent in the face of 'obvious evil', like the slaughter and abuse of civilians.²

Much of the protection of civilians literature has focused on what peacekeepers and other military forces can and should do to protect civilians from death and other

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serious human rights abuses.³ What civilians do in their own defense is often absent from these discussions, and as a result some of implications that civilians' self-protection activities have for peacekeepers risk being ignored.⁴

Incorporating civilians' own actions into protection of civilians is not simple. While 'protection of civilians' by peacekeeping operations (PKOs) is largely a matter for the period between the initiation of a peace process and the end of military and paramilitary violence, protection is not just a matter of an individual being in the right place at the right time to intercede in an act of violence or abuse; it requires the creation of systems of protection that deflect threats of violence, intercede in crises, and mitigate harm afterwards. However, because these systems of protection involve social organization, and integration into the rest of civilians' lives, they are inherently political.

This piece outlines how PKOs can approach questions of their interactions with civilian activities and systems of protection.⁵

Even if we understand the peacekeeper's commitment to impartiality to involve loyalty to the mandate of the mission, international law, and universal human rights, rather than as pure 'hands-off' neutrality, working with civilian systems poses moral questions.⁶ Impartiality, understood in this sense, still typically retains the idea that peacekeepers should not be on any side in the local conflict, and should not seek to influence it beyond ensuring that all parties respect human rights, international law, and whatever peace or ceasefire agreements may be in place. But, civilian organizations and protection systems are players in internal conflicts. Civilian protection systems come with all the moral complexity of any other organization in the midst of a conflict—they have social and political aims other than mere protection, they are most often headed by elites rather than 'representative' of the broader population, and they may be 'uncivil' in other ways (patriarchal, nationalistic, sectarian, etc.). If we recognize that civilians are not just passive victims, granting them their agency also entails granting that they will have a stance on the issues in conflict.

There is no simple, universal answer to the question of which civilians peacekeepers should work with and how; too much will depend on the context. But making explicit some of the moral questions that arise when we think of civilians as more than just passive targets of attack (or, a little better, people purely yearning for democracy and human rights) provides some guidance for those judgments. In particular, I argue that peacekeepers should think of themselves not as protectors-from, standing between a mass of passive civilians and threatening armed groups, but, rather, as protectors-with, helping civilians broaden and consolidate systems of protection that involve partnership with peacekeepers and encounters with the very groups that threaten civilians.

SCOPE AND SOURCES

Before turning to substance, two notes about scope and sources. First, the issues are complicated enough that I will restrict my focus not only to peacekeeping (as distinct

from peace building, peace enforcement, or counterinsurgency), but also to one sort of peacekeeper, the armed military peacekeeper. What I have to say may have some implications for other armed elements of some peacekeeping missions, especially formed police units that can use paramilitary levels of force, and perhaps for police with an executive mandate, but they are not my primary subjects.

Second, this piece draws in part on primary research. In June 2011, my colleague Susan Merrill and I travelled to Liberia to meet with civilians—primarily women—who had been involved with self-protection and conflict resolution/transformation efforts during Liberia’s two civil wars. We conducted a series of confidential, semi-structured interviews with Liberians about their experiences during the war and their perspectives on the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and UN peacekeeping missions there. Unless a different date or venue is noted, any references to interviews in this paper are from that field research. All interviews were confidential, and so interview partners will be referred to only in generic terms.

We chose Liberia because of the unusual international prominence of the women’s peace movement there. Given that women are often framed as the paradigmatic passive *victims* of violence, we thought it would be especially worthwhile to look closely at a situation in which they displayed clear agency. While women (and men) everywhere find ways to respond to social violence, Liberia’s women have been better-documented than most. In addition to its inherent interest for questions of peacekeeper interaction, we hope that showcasing the actions of Liberian women will help undercut the perception that civilians, particularly women, are stripped of their agency in conflict—a perception that can, unfortunately, cause interventions to undermine that agency by assuming that civilians are simply in need of ‘saving’.⁷

WHAT CIVILIANS DO DURING VIOLENCE

Before we can meaningfully discuss peacekeeper–civilian interactions we should at least discuss briefly what exactly it is that civilians do on their own.

Explicit protection strategies

The perception that civilians are helpless in the face of physical violence results from too narrow a focus on the ‘point of impact’, where an armed group is threatening unarmed individuals *right now*.⁸ In such situations, there may be little for civilians to do besides flee if they can.

But there is always a question of how we came to this crisis point. It is better to think of protection, even relatively narrow physical protection, as a system of response to threats and vulnerabilities, rather than as just what happens when bullets are flying or machetes have been drawn. Protection systems will have at least three aims: to deflect/defuse gathering threats and reduce vulnerability, to intercede in actual acts of violence, and to mitigate the consequences of attack. Civilians and their

organizations may be weak on the second aim (stopping immediate violence), but strong—perhaps stronger than the PKO—on the first and third.

When we take this broader view, civilians engage in all manner of self-protection; as Bonwick argues, civilians mostly protect themselves, with international intervention a relatively marginal source of safety.⁹ Barrs has made a thorough inventory of civilian avoidance (removing themselves from the path of threats), accommodation (bargaining with or even confronting threatening groups), and affinity (building threat-reducing linkages) strategies.¹⁰ Paffenholz and Spurk acknowledge that civil society groups often have protection functions, including negotiating safe zones and temporary moratoriums on violence (e.g. to allow humanitarian access), monitoring, or even demobilization and demining in unusual cases.¹¹ Several recent case studies have focused in detail on civilian self-protection in Uganda and Sudan.¹²

Life goes on

Self-protection is rarely all-consuming. Explicit protection activities are in a sense marginal to self-protection; the core of self-protection is ensuring that lives can be lived. Political violence tends to be sporadic and come in spasms, and even during extended military campaigns, the violence is not everywhere, all the time. People live their lives in the interstices of violence, and find ways of living with it.

Life during conflict is one that some individuals can become quite adept at navigating, even if from a safe outside perspective the situation seems oppressive. For instance, Utas has written an account of one woman caught up in the Liberian war who developed such aptitude for ‘victimcy’ strategies that she left a refugee camp (that called for different coping skills) to go back to the war.¹³

In describing her, Utas uses a helpful distinction between ‘tactic agency’ and ‘strategic agency’. The former is being able to make meaningful short-term decisions in a given social situation, while the latter is ‘an agency for those who can forecast future states of affairs and have the possibility to make use of other people’s tactical agency’. To this Utas adds a notion of ‘victimcy’, ‘the agency of self-staging as a victim of war’, which is the type of agency pursued by his subject as she became, by turns, a ‘girlfriend’ to more powerful soldiers, a refugee, a taxi driver, and other roles.¹⁴ Utas seems to make victimcy a sub-category of tactical agency and implies that most civilians caught up in the war zone are capable only of tactical agency.

Relegating civilian actions to reactive tactics undersells the agency exercised by women in Liberia (and likely by male and female civilians in other conflicts). While granting Utas’s point that it can be dangerous to treat individuals in a war zone as if they are fully masters and mistresses of their fate, given the extreme pressures they act under, civilian agency in Liberia seemed to involve at least partly effective attempts to shape the situation rather than simply react to it. The creation of peace networks and organizations even meets Utas’s strategic agency criterion of being able to make use of others’ tactical agency.

If we see civilians as exercising only victimcy/tactical agency, it might be tempting to think that anything peacekeepers can do to increase the physical safety of their situation can only be to their benefit—they are only reacting in a short-term fashion. But if we recognize that civilians can have long-term strategies, the moral landscape is more complicated. Let me now turn to some of the strategies pursued by women in Liberia in particular.

What women did in Liberia

The roots of Liberia’s civil wars reach back at least as far as the 19th-century project of returning freed US slaves to their ‘homeland’ in Africa, thereby creating a class of Americo-Liberians who dominated local populations. The conflicts had more recent origins in Samuel Doe’s 1980 coup against the Americo-Liberian regime. The war began in earnest in 1989 when Charles Taylor invaded from Côte d’Ivoire at the head of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NFPL). The NFPL split early on into two factions, with the ‘Independent’ NFPL (INFPL) led by Taylor’s former lieutenant, Prince Johnson—who would be the one to capture and kill Doe. The factions continued to fragment (though the NFPL and INFPL remained dominant players), and the conflict drew in the ECOMOG, as well as destabilizing neighboring Sierra Leone. The first conflict drew to a close with 1997 elections, won by Taylor, but the nation remained unstable, and war re-ignited in 1999, ending when Taylor and the main rebel groups signed a peace agreement in 2003.¹⁵

Much of what women did during the wars fell into Barrs’ category of avoidance. Avoidance is, of course, not always a passive matter of hunkering down until violence passes. The wives and market women who crisscrossed Monrovia while many men hid inside were engaged in active strategies of economic and social survival at the same time they dodged armed factions.

But Liberian women also actively organized to promote peace, particularly during the second war. They met with warlords, protested, organized strikes and sit-ins, and attended international peace meetings.¹⁶ On a more intimate scale, we heard stories of women going out to get food while husbands hid at home, as well as men and women confronting families and elders about sexual violence in the community, sharing information about threats, and helping community members (often through religious organizations) recover from the psychological damage of violence.

Women’s peace work was not direct ‘protection of civilians’, but it was not entirely separate from protection strategies, either. First, in the long run, achieving peace would increase civilian safety—in that way, it is as much a protection of civilians strategy as those aimed at defeating perpetrators of attacks on civilians.¹⁷ Peacemaking falls into the broader notion of ‘civilian protection’ embraced by many humanitarian concepts, for instance in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)’s ‘egg’ model, even if it is not always what military peacekeepers understand as falling under the rubric of ‘protection of civilians’.¹⁸

One of the lessons that we learned through our interviews was that it was very difficult to cleanly separate civilians' self-protection activities from 'making peace'. The female organizers told us that they discussed issues of immediate concern ('protection of civilians') when they met with warlords and others, but for them it was in the context of a longer-term process toward peace ('conflict transformation' or 'peace-making'). While they were concerned with individual acts of violence, their perspective was more systemic, and aimed at reducing sources of vulnerability and mitigating the impact of violence (one of our interview partners was heavily involved in work with his Church counseling victims of violence). It would be a conceptual mistake to treat this as something other than protective activity, however, simply because the fact that their organizations were weakest at the 'point of impact' meant that they focused on aspects of protection less emphasized in the military-focused protection of civilians discussion.¹⁹

WHY INTERACT WITH CIVILIANS?

One *might* think that peacekeepers should keep aloof from civilians' own organizations and activities and only take care not to interfere. Whatever peacekeepers do, it should add to civilians' own strategies, and the main way in which peacekeepers should attend to civilian strategies at all is to be sure to stay out of their way—for example, by not creating safe area boundaries that cut civilians off from their livelihoods or placing food distribution points in ways that incentivize civilians to displace themselves.²⁰

While in the abstract it may be clear what kinds of things are likely to interfere with civilian strategies, determining the likely impact of a peacekeeping strategy on particular civilian activities in a conflict is complicated, messy, and requires deep knowledge of the dynamics of the situation. Civilian organizations are in much better positions to understand these dynamics than outside interveners.

The first thing that peacekeepers can gain from engaging with civilians is information they may need to avoid interfering with those civilians' own self-protection schemes. Somewhat ironically, engagement may be the best means of staying out of the way.

Civilian organizations are also sources of information for the peacekeepers' own work. While some of the most egregious cases that led to the focus on protection of civilians in peacekeeping involved civilians being attacked in full view of peacekeepers (such as attacks on civilian protesters in Haiti, on safe areas in Bosnia, and the Rwandan genocide), many more attacks on civilians go forward because peacekeepers do not respond until it is too late. Civilians and their organizations will often be keyed in to dynamics likely to lead to violence in ways that peacekeepers—who often lack relevant language skills and certainly will not know the local situation as well—are not.

But the advantages of working with civilians are not just informational. Ideally, peacekeeper and civilian protection activities can be mutually supporting.

Peacekeepers can add coercive incentives and international legitimacy to civilians' own strategies, and civilians can defuse potentially violent situations, make connections, create and maintain support networks (not every civilian who dies from a conflict dies immediately—many die from lack of food, shelter, sanitation, or medical care), and otherwise provide preventive and reactive protection that may be more difficult for peacekeepers on their own. Peacekeepers and civilians can become part of a system of protection more comprehensive than either could provide on their own.

Despite reasonable concerns, the advantages mean that working with civilians is the right answer (and it is endorsed by the UN).²¹ But it is not uncomplicated.

‘HYBRID’ PROTECTION

If they work with civilians, peacekeepers' protection efforts will end up being 'hybridized', in a sense similar to the way the term is used in the peace building literature.

Peace is hybridized to the extent that local agents 'respond to, resist, and ultimately reshape peace initiatives through their interactions with international actors and institutions'.²² While in some sense this is true of every interaction, the nature of the hybridization varies depending on how well the international presence is able to make its vision of peace attractive or use coercion to get locals to go along, and how far locals have the power to resist or the resources to present attractive alternative visions.²³

Similarly, peacekeepers should recognize that protection will be hybridized.

Take the choice to engage in avoidance: different people have different views about when it is morally appropriate to ask someone to back down versus when the appropriate response is to back them up with protection from a threat. Peacekeepers may make this cut in terms of safe zones, green zones, and other areas they are prepared and obligated to defend, while locals may think of things more in terms of social status, kin relationships, or other aims/attributes.

For more concrete examples: in Somalia, clan membership is a major component of local systems of protection. Someone in danger of attack may be able to deflect that danger by being adopted or marrying into a powerful clan.²⁴ In Afghanistan, communities were able to pay off the Taliban to avoid attack.²⁵ Entering into something as personal as marriage for the sake of safety (perhaps almost literally with a gun at one's head) or helping to finance the activities of a group as abusive as the Taliban may (reasonably) offend the moral sensibilities of peacekeepers. But there may be pressures from locals to allow such strategies, especially if peacekeepers are not able to fully make good on alternative protections from violence.

These examples raise one way in which my focus differs from at least some of the literature on hybrid peace. Some theorists focus primarily on the ways in which Western-liberal political forms are blended with more traditional institutions. For example, Boege et al. discuss at length the ways in which nascent political orders combine Western democratic state forms of authority with 'traditional' authorities like chiefs, and they define hybridity (in part) by the fact that hybrid political orders

include ‘non-state forms of order and governance’ and institutional elements from ‘genuinely different societal sources’.²⁶

It is, of course, very worthwhile for peacekeepers to understand and interact with local, culturally embedded systems of protection where they can. But the above examples are not just matters of attending to (morally neutral) cultural forms that peacekeepers may miss the significance of if they think of Western-style institutions as the only way to do things. They involve genuine concerns about values and human rights. Moral questions arise not so much when the forms diverge as when working with some local group involves peacekeepers in a controversial moral stance, either because the moral commitments of the locals clash with those of peacekeepers or because the moral commitments of *these* locals represent a position in an on-going clash of values tied to the conflict. In other words, when going along or compromising with civilians’ values means either violating impartiality or cooperating with ‘obvious evil’. As one reply to Boege et al. points out, one of the ‘positive’ examples of a hybrid order that they use is Somaliland, which does not live up to ‘universalist claims of human rights and emancipation’, particularly with respect to press freedom and women’s rights.²⁷

Further, since war is a process of social disruption and change, the issue is not just one of finding the right compromise between peacekeepers’ values (as if they were unequivocal in a multi-nation mission) and local values (as if they were unequivocal in any society, let alone one in conflict). Stepping in to stop violence necessarily involves altering the course of that social conflict, and interacting with groups that have interests in directing change one way or another. A model of ‘first stop the fighting, then resolve the social conflicts’ is naïve.

In general, it is important not to be drawn in by an image of the PKO as the only, or even the dominant force in the dynamics of the situation. PKOs are often powerful influences, of course. But from the perspective of people on the ground, engaged in their own attempts to build systems of safety, they are only one actor. Factions, including armed actors, may attempt to leverage the PKO’s presence. Local NGOs and less-formal organizations may see the PKO a rival or patron. Their main impact, seen from the ‘ground’, may be to exacerbate, bias, or suppress existing social conflicts.²⁸ A PKO’s moral and strategic vision should be shaped by a self-conception as one actor operating in such a way as to make civilians safer, not as an organization that will, by its own force, provide safety.

Fortunately for us, the war came

Interviews with Liberian women and data from elsewhere highlight how deeply entangled ‘peace’ movements are with social divisions and organizational dynamics.

Several of the women with whom we spoke claimed that the war had had a positive effect on women’s rights in Liberian society—in particular, that women were accorded more legal rights, that the average Liberian woman (though certainly not all, and more in urban areas) was more aware of her human rights, and that it was

now socially possible for many of them to occupy higher-status positions (many of our interview partners were leaders in non-governmental organizations) in a way that would not have been possible in, e.g. 1980s.

Fortunately for us, as Liberian women, the war came. Though we were abused, our rights were violated during the war, it highlighted a lot of things and created awareness. So that's why I say it's fortunate, because it's because of what happened that we began to speak out.

These were not women who saw the war in a rosy light—they had lived through extreme violence, and many of them had been personally subjected to war-time atrocities, particularly sexual violation. The 'silver lining' of the war was just that it disrupted social relations so badly that it broke down many bad social norms (like subjection of women) as well as the good ones (like communal trust).

Female leaders with whom we spoke told us that they, personally, had always been more outspoken than their peers, but social norms had resisted them before the war's disruption. One said she had 'always been an outspoken person', and another said, 'all along, I wanted to be different'. The war seems to have allowed individual women to rise to the top in a period where norms that held them back were losing their force, rather than fostering general female empowerment. Our interviews were consistent with Fuest's research on the Liberian women's movement, which found divides between an (often internationally) educated elite and the rank-and-file of the movement, and that there was a perception of women's rights talk as being 'something of the city'.²⁹

Because civilian organizations are often led by atypical people, who peacekeepers build a relationship with is morally important. They are people, with their own commitments, desires, plans, flaws, and virtues. They are typically (relatively) elite members of society, with opportunities, education, and resources not shared by everyone and which shape their values and perceptions. And the organizations they head are likewise concrete and peculiar.

The fact that organized social movements tend to depend on and generate elites does not, in itself, make them *bad*. The point is that these are individuals with connections and skills that put them outside the social norm, and views that are not universally held.

The result is that working with civilian organizations is not anything so straightforward as doing what 'the people' want. If peacekeepers focus exclusively on ending immediate violence, issues of how the period of violence is changing society are unlikely to be at the forefront. But the social disruption of oppressive norms about women in Liberia highlights the fact that any action to end the violence will put peacekeepers in the position of taking some 'stand' on the underlying social conflicts, because it is a choice to disrupt (or stop the disruption of) some norms and support (or not) the creation of others. Not only armed factions have power and interests. The mere fact that some groups are civilians does not automatically mean that they will act more disinterestedly than their armed neighbors, or that they are without means to affect the situation.

Pointing out that civilian leadership may hold non-representative views is also not to imply that minority positions, like feminism in Liberia, are bad—far from it! But peacekeepers should not ignore the fact that promoting, say, women's rights is a move in a social conflict. Treating the issue as just one of supporting an abstract moral truth does not necessarily do women's rights any favors. Liberians who oppose women's rights have their reasons—they may not be good reasons, or they may be understandable reasons manifesting in a distorted way. If we care about women's rights, the goal should not be to ignore the conflict or to end it by putting international power on one side but to create ways in which the conflict between the defenders of women's rights and their opponents can meet in progressive ways, an issue I will return to below.

Part of the issue here is that local organizations most often do not separate out an apolitical concept of protection from other goals the way that peacekeepers do. This may be a consequence of life going on in wartime. Civilians who face a constant background threat of violence are likely to respond by trying to find ways to pursue their interests and convictions in the context of that threat, rather than sacrificing all their other commitments to remove the threat.³⁰

One of the Liberian women we interviewed had worked for the Taylor government but joined the peace movement during the second war after seeing herself as non-political. While she cited physical safety as the first thing she thought about when she thought about 'protection', she quickly followed it with what got her involved—concern for the safety and future of her children. When the second war began, she crossed Monrovia at great risk to her physical safety to be reunited with them. She also chose the relatively difficult road of divorce and leadership in the peace movement and the NGO world after the war. She engaged in many actions intended to reduce vulnerability to violence, but if bare physical safety were her chief motivation, she would clearly have chosen a different path.

While the experiences of women in Liberia provide a strong example of how protection, peace, and politics become entangled in practice, the observation is certainly not unique to Liberia. The 'peace communities' in Colombia provide another example of how, in practice, it is rarely if ever possible to separate self-protection activities from the social and political cleavages in society. Set up to resist collaboration with both the rebels and government-affiliated paramilitaries, these organizations helped organize a united front against armed elements and provided mutual aid to members, but many also espoused leftist politics and a confrontational stance towards armed actors that led one analyst to assess them quite critically: 'Objectively, as a project to increase safety (rather than to increase freedom or respect for political beliefs), since the risks faced by the population [of the peace community] are considerably higher than those faced by people in the surrounding area',³¹

He also points out that the politicization of the peace communities led many humanitarian agencies to keep their distance. Just as there was no bright line between protection and peace-making activities for many of the women's groups in Liberia, the Colombian peace communities may not have seen their political and moral views

as so distinct from their protection practices as international humanitarians do. Physical safety may have been less valuable to some civilians if it came at the cost of sacrificing freedom or respect—though if that possibility is entertained, we should also ask whether everyone in the peace community saw things the same way, or if their leaders were taking a radical stance on their behalf.

Civilian–PKO alliances

In addition to factors that generally embed peacekeepers' actions in a social conflict, peacekeepers may find themselves more directly drawn into the orbit of particular civilian organizations.

Civilians, especially those leading active self-protection or peace movements, and/or living through long conflicts, may not be making 'first contact' with internationals. As a result, civilian contacts may be well-versed in international protection concepts, and they will not be approaching the PKO as naïve actors.

The women's peace movement in Liberia was deeply linked to external actors by the time of its most prominent activism in the second civil war (well before the arrival of UNMIL peacekeepers), and began building strong international links early in the career of ECOMOG peacekeepers.³² When we asked what had contributed to women's increased willingness and ability to engage in peace activism, especially during the second war, we received several variations on the response that they had become connected to broader peace networks and sources of information. One woman told us that the involvement of the Liberian Women's Initiative (LWI) in the Ghanaian peace talks in 1994 brought in international assistance that had not previously been forthcoming; and, that during the wars (between 1990 and 2003), 'several Liberian women had the opportunity of having training on women's rights, human rights and what have you'.

The urbanization of Liberia's population also seemed to help spread information among Liberians, both locally generated ideas and strategies and information that individuals were bringing back from international connections. One woman told us that 'women who know' spread information from outside trainings to other women, especially in densely populated urban areas.

Civilians, especially those with previous international contacts and training, may be savvy about seeking out alliances with PKOs. One of our interview partners was a member of an important women's peace group. When asked about her group's relationship with ECOMOG, she told us that it was very close and involved 'a lot of interaction'. In particular, she said that her group provided ECOMOG with a lot of information on the conflict and factions, and ECOMOG facilitated several of their meetings with warlords. Peacekeepers should expect organized locals to use the peacekeeping mission as part of their own strategy—one frequent characteristic of internationally linked advocates is that their strategies follow a 'boomerang' pattern, where domestic obstacles are moved by going outside the country to enlist the aid of foreign or international agents.³³

Savvy civilians can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the existence of well-organized civilian groups can provide an invaluable lever for peacekeepers trying to protect civilians—the information given to ECOMOG being only one example. And civilian organization is one of the most potent forms of civilian power. With and without international assistance, the women's groups in Liberia did tremendous work, both on the war and on changing an environment of violence and trauma. But on the other hand, civilians who know how PKOs 'tick' may also use that information strategically. And even groups not setting out to manipulate peacekeepers will inevitably (and, in many cases quite reasonably) use their connections with peacekeepers to press their view of how things should change.

The point is not to undermine the credibility of civilians, but just to realistically point out that assuming they are too innocent to be able to manipulate peacekeepers—to make use of peacekeepers' tactical agency in service of the locals' strategic agency—is to deny them due respect.

Choosing among elites

A non-Liberian example, the Community Liaison Interpreters (CLIs) attached to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), helps illuminate the difficulties peacekeepers face in choosing how to work with civilian groups.³⁴ CLIs were Congolese nationals charged with translating for the peacekeepers, but more importantly they served as a bridge between the mission (particularly its Joint Protection Teams) and civilians. But their successes were mixed. Part of the reason was that they varied in the level of community engagement they were able to build: 'CLIs do not reach the entire community ... CLIs appear to speak primarily with community leaders rather than the community at large. This fact, coupled with the lack of female CLIs, means that a significant number of voices are still not being heard'.³⁵

This criticism still implies that it is *possible* to speak to 'the community at large', but how would this look? It could mean speaking to each member of the community individually—but even this approach would in some way reflect community structure. For instance, would it be harder to speak to women? Would children be included, and how? Would CLIs speak to 'whole communities' defined by boundaries natural on the ground (e.g. kin groups—and would these be 'natural' to everyone?) or defined by the area of operations of the peacekeeping mission? Would they have an open door policy (who would feel comfortable coming? everyone equally?)? More likely, the solution would be to set up some form of community forum or consultation—which may be headed by the community leaders, or by (perhaps civilian) peacekeepers. In any event, once we consider the details of what it would mean to speak to 'the community at large' we see that all of the concerns about civilian organizations and structures and their particular perspectives re-arise.

The philosophical depth of this problem comes from the fact that it is not at all clear what it means to 'speak for the people', and so peacekeepers cannot solve the

problem of protection systems being tied to social divisions just by finding the right people to talk to. ‘The will of the people’ is something that is only expressed through reasonably well-functioning political institutions.³⁶ It is not just that it is difficult for peacekeepers to know ‘what Liberians want’, it is that there is arguably no such thing as what *Liberians* want in a situation like war-time or immediately post-war Liberia, precisely because of the damage to social institutions that peacekeepers are trying to repair.

Trying to reduce the dilemma to the civilian/combatant divide does an injustice to the decisions civilians make. One Liberian woman (speaking mostly about the 2000–2003 war) told us that a big challenge for the women’s peace movement there was the fact that many women were supporters of the armed factions. Civilian women were involved with the armed groups in a number of ways. Some, like feeding combatants, would leave them clearly civilians on most understandings—but still undermined the task of building peace and mitigating the violent threat to civilians. Others, like market women who helped keep supplies of ammunition flowing, would fall into a more ambiguous category.³⁷ For this woman’s group, the challenge was to get women whose activities were helping sustain the conflict, and who possessed organization and social power, to agree that their overriding interest was in peace and not their kin-group or the short-term benefits offered by alliance with an armed faction. Peacekeepers who assume that all civilian organizations are ‘good’ or that all organizations/individuals who serve a military or paramilitary role are to be kept at arm’s length may not be willing or conceptually able to make choices that are important to civilian allies.

Also consider the example of protection through clan allegiance in Somalia mentioned above—even though the clan’s ‘civil society’ structure itself may have been ‘civilian’, at least part of the safety of belonging to a powerful clan surely came from the clan’s paramilitary assets.

In addition, military peacekeepers are themselves purveyors of violence. If the peacekeepers begin to act in a way that supports the agenda of one civilian group over another, or over an armed faction, that ‘civilian’ group is in fact now able to pursue its goals through violence, if indirectly. This is just a different version, in a sense, of protection by Somali clans—peacekeepers are a militarized part of a protection system that includes both civilian and combatant elements.

Finally, it may lead to an uncritical attitude toward civilian alliances. Peacekeepers have limited ability to support civilians and need to choose whose information they will act on. If peacekeepers are given no other guidance than to work with civilian organizations that seem to be good ones from the peacekeepers’ perspective, this may smuggle partiality in through the back door. We do not, after all, simply assume that all non-armed groups in our own societies are purely focused on the common good. Similarly, in conflict areas, civil society groups may be nationalist, sectarian, ‘tribal’, tied to economic divides, sexist, or otherwise ‘uncivil’.³⁸

A more fruitful analytic distinction than violent–nonviolent, which misses the potential uncivil nature of civil society groups, or moral–immoral, which risks simply imposing the peacekeepers’ own views of morality, is the distinction between

‘dividers’ and ‘connectors’ proposed by the ‘Do No Harm’ project framework for humanitarian aid.³⁹ Connectors are individuals, groups, institutions, and practices that link people in society, including across the divides that are salient to the conflict—the infrastructure of Barrs’ affinity techniques.⁴⁰ Dividers, in contrast, are those elements of society—whether people, institutions, practices, or ideas—that separate people from each other, set their interests in opposition, and cause them to think of each other as rivals or enemies.

This distinction does not line up with the combatancy distinction or the moral one. A multireligious armed ‘neighborhood watch’ group may be a connector, and an NGO intent on ensuring accountability for war crimes by opposing an amnesty deal may be a divider.

In addition, few groups (or ideas, or institutions) are unambiguously ‘connectors’ or ‘dividers’; rather they typically have connecting and divisive functions. A religion may bring people together across ethnic divides while sharpening sectarian divides. A marketplace may be neutral ground for armed groups, but a site of reproduction for other evils. For instance, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a large, initially unregulated (but later formalized and taxed) expanse of traders, the ‘Arizona market’, developed under the eye of UN and NATO forces. On the one hand, it was hailed by defenders as a place where the commerce would bring together people from the various ethnic factions, uniting them in mutually profitable trade (and thereby making it unattractive to resume fighting). On the other, detractors pointed to the black-market activities that flourished there, most infamously including the trafficking of women.⁴¹ Unfortunately, both may have been right.

Choosing with elites, protecting with civilians

The advantage of understanding the landscape of elites in terms of the connector/divider dichotomy is two-fold. First, it focuses attention on the social role of the groups with which peacekeepers interact, rather than on their means and capacities. To return to my main theme, this highlights the way in which peacekeepers are not separate from social dynamics (not simply sitting above the fray and determining who deserves their protection and who does not based on their conformance with an ideal). They can maintain some degree of impartiality through honestly recognizing the limits of that impartiality.

Second, the ambiguity of the connector/divider identity opens up the possibility that the contribution of groups to violence and social conflict can be changed without having to alter their identities or moral/ideological views. The question of ‘who can we interact with to pursue protection’ is subordinated to ‘how can we interact with civilian factions in a way that enhances their connective aspects while inhibiting their divisive ones?’ The problem is not to support the Arizona market/the clans/the feminist peace builders or not; the problem is how to engage with them.

Even the traditional worry that engaging with abusive actors will ‘legitimate’ them is somewhat displaced—instead of assuming that interaction entails legitimacy,

peacekeepers should look at how, precisely, their interaction will change the social dynamics in which legitimacy consists.

Lederach provides a supporting idea—‘mediative space’.⁴² The idea of a mediative space is to create the possibility for engagement between diverse perspectives on the conflict—whether through literal public space or through facilitating contact and discussion.

The important conceptual shift for the peacekeeper is from an outside agent who must decide what alliances to make and how to guide the violence he possesses with influence from whose interests, to the peacekeeper as a participant in a social process through which joint social interests can be worked out. This may require the creation of a mediative space both for the parties to the conflict, and for the peacekeeper himself.

In considering the respective roles of peacekeepers and local agents, we should not take the ‘space’ part of mediative space too metaphorically. In conflict situations, one barrier to changing conflictual relationships and to civilian self-protection in a more immediate sense can be literal physical space: barriers to communicating with those in other groups, barriers to flight, barriers to access to food and water, lack of violence-free spaces to pursue activities that in more normal times foster cross-communal relationships (e.g. trade). Peacekeepers can sometimes themselves exacerbate this problem, by creating security spaces with sharp boundaries—for instance, by cutting off any contact between civilians in a ‘safe zone’ and armed factions (and other civilians, with whom there may be links of affinity) in a ‘red zone’.⁴³

On the face of it, the ideal would be ‘saturation’, enough peacekeepers to function as a domestic police force and completely prevent violence. But this is prohibitively resource intensive in most peacekeeping situations. In addition, it would risk losing the attractive aspects of ‘hybridity’. Peacekeepers that could single-handedly create a complete system of protection would not just be able to intercede in individual acts of violence or abuse; they would need to handle the definition of threats, monitoring of vulnerability, decisions about levels of acceptable risks, choices about which groups and individuals can interact with each other where and when, etc. This level of pervasive influence would problematically—especially since their influence may not be immediately obvious to the peacekeepers themselves—entangle peacekeepers in the social conflicts that stand behind vulnerability, but as arbiters rather than partners.⁴⁴

Safety-from vs. safety-with

Barring saturation, peacekeepers must create safety strategically. This is where the remarks about physical space come in—to create mediative spaces, peacekeepers cannot simply create *safety from* armed actors. They must create situations in which civilians can experience *safety with* members of other groups, including perhaps armed factions. Not only does this shift in approach provide moral guidance for peacekeeper interactions, it is one that allows peacekeepers their own active role in

shaping where and how civilian vulnerabilities will manifest, so that they can proactively address threats rather than react to imminent ones.

Safety-from blocks mediative connections and sets peacekeeper agency at odds with local agency. Peacekeepers are in control to the extent that they can exercise control over the actions of civilians and those who threaten them (i.e. restrict their agency, even if benevolently). The out-groups are out until they accept the conditions for entry to the protected area—and negotiations about those conditions of entrance are generally carried out at leadership levels, where interests are most locked in and imagination hardest to exercise (the interventions of Liberian women at peace talks being a notable exception to the elite focus of many peace talks). This is potentially counter-productive for peace, and perhaps even for making the activities of civilian organizations wrapped up with self-protection effective. If I am right that peacekeepers working with locals cannot neatly divorce protection of civilians from influencing the social conflict in a more progressive direction, they need to note Lederach's insight that 'those building social change must intentionally seek to link people who are not like-minded and not like-situated in the context'.⁴⁵ Safety-with involves greater risk, but also allows for new connections to be made between groups.

The other advantage of thinking of protection of civilians as the provision of 'safety-with', is that we should not expect military peacekeepers to play the role of primary mediators and relationship-builders. What peacekeepers bring to the table is their ability to (ideally) create safety for themselves and others in their immediate vicinity. By accompanying and cooperating with civilians engaged in conflict resolution and self-protection tasks, peacekeepers can make it possible for them to expand their activities. The creation of new relationships is still the work of the local civilians. If, to lean on the metaphor, peacekeepers can 'open' mediative space by providing physical safety for civilians to interact, civilians and their organizations 'fill' it. If interactions that help build a broader and more stable system of protection for civilians were safe in the absence of peacekeepers, the mission may not be needed.

This even applies to the creation of safety for international civilian specialists in mediation or conflict-resolution. If peacekeepers can provide safety for international civilians, why not for local civilians? There may of course be special skills and abilities that international experts bring to conflict resolution, but at the end of the day, the conflict is not between internationals and local factions. And, while in an immediate crisis peacekeepers may not be able to make civilians safe *here, now*, the creation of a system of protection is a broader aim that conceptually involves providing safety for on-going civilian activities including at interface points where they contact threatening groups—constructing these interface points as a rigid border is only one option, and my argument is that it should be a last resort.

Conceiving of physical protection as aimed at safety-with is helpful precisely in that it allows the connections between self-protection, social change, and conflict transformation to be *maintained*. If peacekeepers focus only on physical protection without concerning themselves with working with local self-protection actors, they risk breaking all the links. If they focus on working with certain approved groups and

protecting their own protection activities, they risk breaking the link between politics and conflict transformation. To recapitulate a bit, the fact that civilians organize to safely accomplish concrete projects means that self-protection is always *for* something (agenda) and for something that has become a matter of concrete conflict (in need of transformation).

This should affect the strategic vision of peacekeepers. Even in the presence of an agreed cease fire or peace treaty, they should not see the peace as ‘finished’ and those who oppose the agreement as ‘spoilers’ to be simply controlled, co-opted, or deterred. Rather, they should seek connections with civilian organizations involved with self-protection, and as part of this cooperation, actively seek opportunities to bring stakeholders into contact with each other—women, e.g. should not have to fight to be heard because they are not the ones who took up weapons to fight physically (and not only women who can ‘speak the language’ of international actors should be heard, even if they provide a necessary entry point).

Such a strategic vision also helps to solve the worries about the connection between popular will and undamaged institutions. In a conflict or immediate post-conflict situation, social structures do not exist to give meaning to anything like ‘popular will’. But actively seeking opportunities for protection—with on behalf of civilian organizations can provide a structure in which local-scale joint projects that represent a local-scale common will and locus of organizational power can emerge.

Finally, seeing the ‘how’ of connection with civilian organizations this way pulls the sting out of the ‘who’. Peacekeepers are not aligning themselves permanently with one side of a social conflict. They are focusing their protection activities on creating safer spaces in which to work those conflicts out concretely. This is not to be read as a matter of providing a global safe space; peacekeepers need to identify *particular* organizations and make them safe with other *particular* organizations. Nor is it primarily about creating spaces for them to negotiate, or talk—that may come, especially later when things are safe enough for civilian mediators. It is primarily about creating space for joint work on issues of concrete protection and life-sustaining activity. The ideal for military peacekeepers should not be just setting up a conference or workshop—though they may draw on peace building insights, they should still remain primarily concerned for the creation of systems of protection, not general social rehabilitation.

For instance, we pressed the woman who spoke with us about the need to reach out to women who had been supporting the fighters about what approach she and her comrades used. It was not just a matter of trying to get them to see where interest lay or even of moral suasion. An important part of their success was getting women involved actively in the peace movement itself. This gave them an alternative means of working to help their society, families, and friends, and that active involvement, she argued, was key to bringing women away from the factions. This makes perfect sense if we keep in mind that even people supporting the worst abuses generally believe that they are doing right. If they were supporting armed factions because they believed it was what was required of them as a member of their community, they needed to be shown a more attractive community with more

attractive modes of belonging. It also shows a different face of mediative space. It is not just about creating space for people to come together, it is about fostering joint projects that expand the reach of the organizations that speak for this or that group of civilians. Through their links with whatever civilian organizations they ally with, peacekeepers should seek to foster greater practical involvement with other civilians.

The ideal of creating mediative space, and thereby space for the expansion of systems of protection, through the provision of concrete protection-with is a realistic one, I believe, for military peacekeepers. It is neither too demanding, nor does it take them too far outside their comfort zone to become the primary mediators or peacemakers.

That is not to say that it is easy, or will be realistic in all situations. The accomplishments of Liberian women under very difficult circumstances were impressive, but there may be some situations in which the violence is so immediate and overwhelming that protection-from needs to be the first priority. Fortunately, these situations seem to be rare outside genocides-in-progress and major assaults by industrialized militaries. Peacekeepers also need to be careful and honest about the protection they can provide within the limits of their mandate, any restrictive instructions from their national governments, and their equipment and training. Spaces that are on the border of zones of control are often the most dangerous for civilians, and peacekeepers should not encourage civilians to enter them unless they can be fairly certain of being able to provide effective protection.⁴⁶

On a more philosophical level, this approach does require peacekeepers to embrace the fact that they are now part of the conflict situation, in a way that may offend against some concepts of impartiality—they must actively try to shape the political environment, not just the security environment. All I can say to this is that, regardless of their intentions, they are shaping the political environment no matter what they do (safe zones are as separating as mediating spaces are joining). Any concept of impartiality that cannot accept that is unworkable.⁴⁷

It does not, however, require moral relativism on the part of peacekeepers. We can acknowledge the fact that improving the situation for women in Liberia was the right thing to do (and not just by appealing to legalistic sources, like UN resolutions on women's rights). Peacekeepers who create or protect a mediative space between a women's rights group and opponents are not sitting back and saying that however the conflict comes out is fine. The conflict is not an abstract moral one, it is one in which there is a way in which the women's groups and others must work together on something. It may be best to flip perspective and realize that the situation is one in which less progressive groups need to work with the women and take their concerns into account.

CONCLUSION

Peacekeepers who do not recognize the presence of organized, directed civilian groups already engaged in self-protection strategies risk disrupting those

strategies—possibly endangering civilians further, especially in areas where peacekeepers’ ability to project safety on their own is limited—and depriving themselves of connections that are resources for protection. But peacekeepers who ally with civilian groups need to recognize that the connection goes both ways, and they are now part of savvy civilian strategies to affect the socio-political situation. The activities of Liberian women show both the ways in which civilians can be quite active on their own behalf and also savvy about their own socio-political goals and their relationship to peacekeepers.

These problems can be concealed if we focus on protection of civilians primarily in the moment when civilians are at immediate risk of violent death or abuse. A broader perspective reveals that people are protected by social systems that deflect threats, protect from immediate attack, and mitigate damage. Peacekeepers who recognize that their protection activities should be seen as the creation of such systems will see new opportunities and pitfalls for working with civilians, but can also glean much insight from peace building analysis that may initially seem irrelevant to military protection of civilians.

The way out of the dilemma of which civilians to work with and how is through—peacekeepers who embrace the fact that they affect the socio-political situation by their presence can work with civilians to extend their own work, while also focusing on making it safe for that work to involve fruitful contact with other groups, with other agendas. A shift from a focus on protection-from to protection-with may seem subtle, but opens up far more possibilities for imaginative connections between peacekeepers and populations they are trying to help.

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NOTES

1. ‘Protection of civilians’ is the phrase generally used to refer specifically to military protection from violence, whereas other activities that help civilians remain safe and secure in conflict zones, notably humanitarian assistance, are termed ‘civilian protection’.

2. The quote is from the ‘Brahimi Report’s’ discussion of neutrality/impartiality (Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. A/55/305 – S/2000/809. United Nations, Aug. 21, 2000, §50).
3. See, e.g. Sarah Sewall, Dwight Raymond, and Sally Chin, *Mass Atrocity Response Operations: A Military Planning Handbook* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard College, 2010); Victoria K. Holt, Glyn Taylor, and Max Kelly, *Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Setbacks, and Remaining Challenges* (New York, NY: United Nations, 2009); Erin A. Weir, *The Last Line of Defense: How Peacekeepers Can Better Protect Civilians* (Washington, DC: Refugees International, 2010); Ban Ki-Moon. Report of the Secretary-General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. S/2010/579. Nov. 11, 2010, though see a brief mention of local strategies at para. 40; Victoria K. Holt and Tobias C. Berkman, *The Impossible Mandate? Military Preparedness, the Responsibility to Protect, and Modern Peace Operations* (Washington, DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2006); Alison Giffen, *Addressing the Doctrinal Deficit: Developing Guidance to Prevent and Respond to Widespread or Systematic Attacks Against Civilians* (Washington, DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2010); Genocide Prevention Task Force, *Preventing Genocide: A Blueprint for U.S. Policymakers* (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, The American Academy of Diplomacy, and the United States Institute of Peace, 2008), esp. chapters 4 and 5, which deal with responses to threats.
4. For important exceptions, see Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams. *Protecting Civilians in Uncivil Wars*. Working Paper No. 1. Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Aug. 2009; Casey A. Barrs. *Preparedness Support: Helping Brace Beneficiaries, Local Staff and Partners for Violence*. The Cuny Center, Nov. 2010. <http://cunycenter.org/files/Preparedness%20Support7.pdf> (visited on 12/05/2011); Casey A. Barrs. *How Civilians Survive Violence: A Preliminary Inventory*. The Cuny Center, Feb. 2012. On file with the author.
5. There is some variation among practitioners and analysts in the use of the term ‘peacekeeping’. I follow the UN ‘capstone doctrine’ (UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines*. United Nations, Jan. 18, 2008, pp. 17–20) in understanding peacekeeping as the use of military forces (generally, but not always, armed) to support a peace agreement, cease fire, or other peace process through observation, providing assurance, confidence-building, deterring violence, and/or building institutional capacity.
6. While neutrality has sometimes been emphasized as the ideal for peacekeepers, current thinking on peacekeeping tends to favor the mandate/human rights view. See, e.g. the UN capstone doctrine (*ibid.*, pp. 33–4).
7. Not only were Liberian women not passive, but not all were even civilians. Several Liberian women, such as Martina Johnson and ‘Black Diamond’, rose to infamy during the wars, and many less well-known Liberian women also fought. My focus on active female civilians is not intended to imply that there were no female combatants.
8. This is the image most easily conjured by the ‘imminent threat’ language in many UN PKO protection mandates; the language in the mandate for the UN force in Sierra Leone (S/RES/1270 of 22 October 1999) was the first, and is typical. The recent UN Infantry Battalion Manual defines an ‘imminent threat’ as existing “from the time it is identified as a threat, until such a time the mission can determine that the threat no longer exists” (UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support. *United Nations Infantry Battalion Manual*. Volume I. United Nations, August 2012, p. 103). This more expansive and proactive definition in current doctrine makes my discussion all the more relevant to the kind of protection PKOs are expected to provide.

9. Andrew Bonwick, 'Who Really Protects Civilians?' *Development in Practice* 16.3&4 (June 2006), 270–7, Note that Bonwick is concerned with humanitarian 'civilian protection' as well as issues that fall under the narrower, military 'protection of civilians'.
10. Barrs, Preparedness Support; Barrs, How Civilians Survive.
11. Thania Paffenholz and Christoph Spurk, 'A Comprehensive Analytical Framework'. in *Civil Society & Peace building: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Thania Paffenholz (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2010), 65–78, though they imply—I believe wrongly—that protection is largely a function of international NGOs.
12. Erin Baines and Emily Paddon. "'This is How We Survived': Civilian Agency and Humanitarian Protection". In: *Security Dialogue* 43 (3 2012), pp. 231–47; Justin Corbett. *Learning from the Nuba: Civilian Resilience and Self-Protection During Conflict*. Local to Global Protection, Oct. 2011. <http://www.local2global.info/area-studies/sudan> (visited on 10/12/2012); Simon Harragin. *South Sudan: Waiting for Peace to Come: Study from Bor, Twic East, & Duk Counties in Jonglei*. Local to Global Protection, Sept. 2011. <http://www.local2global.info/area-studies/south-sudan-jonglei> (visited on 10/12/2012).
13. Mats Utas, 'West-African Warscapes: Victimcy, Girlfriending, Soldiering: Tactic Agency in a Young Woman's Social Navigation of the Liberian War Zone', *Anthropology Quarterly* 78.2 (2005): 403–30.
14. *Ibid.*, 407–8.
15. For general overviews of the war, see e.g. Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*. Revised and Updated Second Edition (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 2007), (covering the first war only); Joseph Tellesoyan, *The Years the Locusts Have Eaten: Liberia 1816–2004* (USA: Xlibris, 2006).
16. For overviews of Liberian women's action, see, e.g. Veronika Fuest. "'This is the Time to Get in Front': Changing Roles and Opportunities for Women in Liberia". In: *African Affairs* 107 (427 Mar. 13, 2008), pp. 201–224; African Women and Peace Support Group. *Liberian Women Peacemakers: Fighting for the Right to be Seen, Heard, and Counted*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004; Veronika Fuest. 'Liberia's Women Acting for Peace: Collective Action in a War-Affected Country'. In: *Movers and Shakers: Social Movements in Africa*. Ed. by Stephen Ellis and Ineke van Kessel. Boston, MA: Brill, 2009, pp. 114–138, as well as the 2008 documentary film *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*.
17. On attacking perpetrators as a variety of protection, see, e.g. Sewall, Raymond, and Chin, *Mass Atrocity Response Operations*, pp. 84–87; Holt and Berkman, *The Impossible Mandate*, 38, on the 'warfighting concept'.
18. Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *Growing the Sheltering Tree: Protecting Rights Through Humanitarian Action* (Geneva, Switzerland: UNICEF, 2002), 11–12.
19. For a non-Liberian example of the breadth of protection systems, consider the work of Bosnian civil-society organizations in mitigating domestic violence (Roberto Belloni and Bruce Hemmer. 'Bosnia-Herzegovina: Civil Society in a Semiprotectorate'. In: *Civil Society & Peace building: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Thania Paffenholz (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner 2010), pp. 129–52, p. 140). Relegating domestic violence—which can, after all, harm someone just as severely as a paramilitary attack—to the sphere of private or 'merely' criminal activity risks leaving civilian vulnerability untouched by ignoring both the severity of the violence itself and the connection between domestic violence and warfare. Civilian organizations may be especially well suited for extending systems of protection off the battlefield and into spaces like the home. However, given the importance of social and legal change for this sort of protection, as Belloni and Hemmer note, it is unsurprising that 'protection activities merged with advocacy'.
20. For brief discussions of these problems, see Bellamy and Williams, *Protecting Civilians*, pp. 31–32; Sewall, Raymond, and Chin, *Mass Atrocity Response Operations*, pp. 78–80.

21. Ban Ki-Moon, Report of the Secretary-General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, para. 37.
22. Oliver P. Richmond and Audra Mitchell, 'Introduction—Towards a Post-Liberal Peace: Exploring Hybridity via Everyday Forms of Resistance, Agency, and Autonomy'. in *Hybrid Forms of Peace: From Everyday Agency to Post-Liberalism*, ed. by Oliver P. Richmond and Audra Mitchell (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 1–38.
23. Roger MacGinty, 'Hybrid Peace: The Interaction Between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace', *Security Dialogue* 41.4 (August 2010): 391–412.
24. Ken Menkhaus et al., 'Somalia: Civil Society in a Collapsed State'. in *Civil Society & Peace building: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Thania Paffenholz (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2010), 334–5.
25. Kaja Borchgrevink and Kristian Berg Harpviken, 'Afghanistan: Civil Society Between Modernity and Tradition'. in *Civil Society & Peace building: A Critical Assessment*, 235–58.
26. Volker Boege et al., 'On Hybrid Political Orders and Emerging States: What is Failing—States in the Global South or Research and Politics in the West?' in *Building Peace in the Absence of States: Challenging the Discourse on State Failure*, ed. Martina Fischer and Beatrix Schmelzle. Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series 8 (Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2009), 15–36. http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue8_failingstates_complete.pdf?LANG=e&id=269 (visited on 9/20/2012), pp. 20–4.
27. Trutz von Trotha, 'The "Andersen Principle": On the Difficulty of Truly Moving Beyond State-Centrism'. in *Building Peace in the Absence of States: Challenging the Discourse on State Failure*, ed. Martina Fischer and Beatrix Schmelzle. Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series 8 (Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2009), 37–46. http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue8_failingstates_complete.pdf?LANG=e&id=269 (visited on 9/20/2012), p. 44.
28. Béatrice Pouligny, *Peace Operations Seen from Below: UN Missions and Local People* (London: Hurst & Co., 2006), 104–7.
29. Fuest, 'Liberia's Women', 131–3, quote on 131.
30. In fact, individuals facing existential threats may be especially vulnerable if they do not have commitments that transcend their own situation. The classic study of this phenomenon is Frankl's reflections on survival in Nazi concentration camps (Viktor E. Frankl. *Man's Search for Meaning*. Revised and Updated Ed. New York, NY: Pocket Books, 1997). See also Corbett's (Corbett, *Learning from the Nuba*, §3.4) discussion of the importance of unity, rights, and even fun in Nuba self-protection.
31. Andrew Bonwick, *Protection in Colombia: A Bottom-Up Approach*. HPG Background Paper. Humanitarian Policy Group, Dec. 2006, p. 17.
32. Fuest, 'Liberia's Women', pp. 128–130; Katie Tyrrell. 'In Support of Their Sisters in Conflict: Understanding the Transnational Impact of the Liberian Women Peacemakers'. In: *Women's Policy Journal of Harvard* 7 (2010). Online-only content. <http://sites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic853697.files/Tyrrell2011.pdf> (visited on 12/03/2011), pp. 15–16; Erica K. Sewell. 'Women Building Peace: The Liberian Women's Peace Movement'. In: *Critical Half* 5.2 (Fall 2007), pp. 15–19, pp. 17–18.
33. Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, 'Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics', *International Social Science Journal* 51 (March 1999): 89–101.
34. Clea Kahn. *Engaging With Communities: The Next Challenge for Peacekeeping*. Briefing Paper 141. Oxfam, Nov. 22, 2010. <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bp141-engaging-with-communities-221110-en.pdf> (visited on 12/05/2011), 13–15. MONUC's acronym is derived from its French designation. In July 2010, MONUC was superseded by the UN Stabilization Mission in the DRC, MONUSCO.
35. *Ibid.*, 14.

36. For a thoroughly worked-out example, see Henry S. Richardson. *Democratic Autonomy: Public Reasoning About the Ends of Policy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002, esp. chapters 4, 10, and 13.
37. C.A.J. Coady. *Morality and Political Violence*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 112–113, introduces the helpful category of ‘ancillaries’ for people in such positions.
38. See, e.g. Roberto Belloni, ‘Civil Society in War-to-Democracy Transitions’. in *From War to Democracy: Dilemmas of Peace building*, ed. Anna K. Jarstad and Timothy D. Sisk (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 182–210.
39. The problem with moral–immoral as an analytic divide is not that there is no such thing; the whole project of protection of civilians is deeply moral. The problem is just that we cannot base our analysis on the assumption that peacekeepers possess privileged access to morality and hence that their judgments represent merely impartial adherence to moral standards rather than the same imperfect, politically embedded interpretation of morality all other actors are making.
40. Anderson and her collaborators differ slightly in terminology in different project publications. In her 1999 book (Mary B. Anderson. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—Or War*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999, chapter 3, esp. 24), she seems to equate connectors with ‘capacities for peace’; but, the Do No Harm project’s 2000 practitioner manual (*Options for Aid in Conflict: Lessons from Field Experience*. Cambridge, MA: The Collaborative for Development Action, 2000. http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/book/options_for_aid_in_conflict_Pdf1.pdf [visited on 09/26/2012], pp. 11–12) distinguishes between aspects of society that connect and those that provide capacity for peace. Given the centrality of fostering connection to the manual peace building. However, this seems to be a distinction without a difference. Similarly, I will assume that ‘dividers’, ‘tensions’, and ‘capacities for war’ are more or less synonymous.
41. For a critical discussion, see Dina Francesca Haynes, ‘Lessons from Bosnia’s Arizona Market: Harm to Women in a Neoliberalized Postconflict Reconstruction Process’, *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 158 (2010): 1779–829.
42. John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, 95.
43. See, e.g. Paul Higate and Marsha Henry. *Insecure Spaces: Peacekeeping, Power, and Performance in Haiti, Kosovo, and Liberia*. London: Zed Books, 2009, esp. chapters 3–4; Sewall, Raymond, and Chin, *Mass Atrocity Response Operations*, pp. 75–80.
44. In a nutshell, this is just a special case of the complaint that peacekeeping aims to establish a ‘liberal peace’ that purports to be value-neutral, but it is not.
45. Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, p. 84.
46. On the danger of border zones, see Stathis N. Kalyvas. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, esp. chapter 7 and §8.5.
47. I propose a concept of impartiality that embraces embeddedness in Daniel H. Levine, ‘Peacekeeper Impartiality: Standards, Processes, and Operations’, *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 15 (2011): 422–50.