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Communal Peace: An Analysis of Peacekeeping in Intrastate Conflict through Institutional Rational Choice Theory

**Introduction**

Peacekeeping has been a very controversial yet important topic especially in the past two decades. There have been many debates about what the most effective ways to establish and maintain peace are, and often results in the field can look much different than what is expected on paper or in a UN hall or chamber. Peacekeeping is a sensitive process that must be very adaptable to the specific situation and which must build from the ground up; therefore: (1) a strictly UN led model of peacekeeping is not practical; (2) the study of effective peacekeeping operations can benefit from an analysis through the theory of Institutional Rational Choice; and (3) this analysis points to the potential effectiveness of peacekeeping operations guided by regional and subregional organizations as opposed to (or in conjunction with) the UN. This research was generated from the study of statistics from different peacekeeping initiatives, as well as specific case studies using institutional rational choice.

**Literature Review**

The following literature review is centered on: (1) an introduction on the need for peacekeeping; (2) pre-existing literature on the cause of intra-state conflict and civil war; (3) ideas and debates on how to best address the causes of conflict through outside intervention; and finally (4) debates on the potential theoretical and operational effectiveness of regional peacekeeping intervention.

***Introduction: The Need for Peacekeeping***

Peacekeeping, on an international scale, is a relatively recent invention but one that has been hailed by many as both a just and a practical aim. One goal of peacekeeping is to save innocent lives and promote a better standard of living; for some this moral consideration is the only justification needed and supersedes all other “selfish” albeit rational considerations. For example, Ramcharan (2008) argues that human rights must take precedence over all issues of “acceptability, financing, logistics, and management” (158). In addition, others such as current UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon choose to emphasize the benefits of peacekeeping from an economic standpoint. While he maintains that saving lives is still the most important motive for action, he goes on to explain how, “the average cost of civil war is equivalent to more than 30 years of gross domestic product (GDP) growth for a medium-size developing country” (Ki-Moon 2011, 3). Ki-Moon then proceeds to describe how civil wars can impose costs of tens of billions of dollars, from which it can take up to 14 years just to return to a state’s original growth path, while on the other hand the United Nations Office for West Africa, which has played an important role in prevention efforts in Guinea, the Niger and elsewhere in the subregion, has a regular budget of less than $8 million per year (Ki-Moon 2011, 5). It follows from this argument that prevention efforts that are much less costly would be a preferable alternative to conflict, and should be invested in more heavily.

 This argument of the economic practicality of peacekeeping also stands from the point of view of the world’s developed nations. According to Durch (2008), “the United States has found it increasingly cost-effective and politically helpful to lean on other states and organizations to help it advance shared strategic interests in international peace, security, justice, and prosperity” (4). By entering into coalitions, the U.S. saves money on an operation that it would have otherwise intervened in alone, burdened by the costs of the full military operation. In this way, peacekeeping can be used to promote stability in areas that are of interest to the U.S. and promote its objectives.

***Roots and Causes of Intra-state Conflict***

 Intra-state conflict, conflict within a state —as opposed to inter-state conflict, conflict between states —has been the main type of conflict since the 1990s and thus has been the main focus within peacekeeping. Therefore, in order to determine which peacekeeping solutions might be best, it will be valuable to have some insight into the broad nature of intra-state conflicts and their causes. As Doyle and Sambanis (2006) point out, “if the root causes of the war are left untreated, then the risk of war recurrence is significant” (35).

 Doyle and Sambanis mainly focus on civil war, which they describe as an armed conflict that involves both a strong opposition group(s) and the national army of a state recognized by the international community, and inflicts at least 1000 casualties (2006, 43). They address the idea of grievances and opportunity structure: “for a given level of grievance, what determines if there will be a rebellion is the ability to organize and support an insurgency campaign” (2006, 43). They then describe something akin to rational choice theory, in which both parties in the conflict choose whether to participate in or resolve conflict through an analysis of costs and benefits. Doyle and Sambanis also explain defensive and aggressive incentives: defensive incentives mainly center on security dilemmas, whereas aggressive incentives are mainly centered on war entrepreneurs/spoilers who gain something from the conflict. Therefore, a main argument of this research is that because both parties engage in cost/benefit analysis, the focus of peacekeeping or peace enforcement should be to alter the costs and benefits so that it is more beneficial to work peacefully towards a solution (Doyle & Sambanis 2006).

 To illustrate this, a case study of Nepal by Suhrke (2011) places the roots of conflict on “deep-seated social, political, and economic divisions”, including one third of citizens living in poverty (38). He also holds that the conflict occurred at the time that it did because the state was on a threshold of significant social transitions. These social transitions (perhaps due to globalization) led people to expect more equality and development, both politically and economically (Suhrke 2011, 38). This goes in hand with Doyle and Sambanis’s application of cost/benefit analysis: when citizens are not benefiting from the government in power and think they can do “better”, they are likely to revolt.

 Both Suhrke and Doyle and Sambanis also discuss political legitimacy. Doyle and Sambanis propose that “civil wars arise when individuals, groups and factions discover that a policeman, judge, soldier or politician no longer speaks and acts for them” (2006, 47). Of course, one corrupt person is not enough to cause a civil war, however rampant corruption and lack of representation, paired with economic underdevelopment is a leading cause of rebellion and conflict. As such, one of the peacekeeping strategies that Suhrke praised from his Nepal analysis was the presence of UN election observers: giving legitimacy to the outcome, reducing corruption, and proving that the citizens actually did have representation (2011, 41).

***Intervention: Forms of Peacekeeping to Resolve Intra-state Conflict***

 Just as there has been discourse on the causes of intra-state conflict, even more has been discussed concerning how the international community should intervene in such cases, if at all. These solutions, if they may be called that, take into account the realities on the ground, as well as consider macro-issues such as coordination of the operation.

 When it comes to peacekeeping operations, Suhrke (based on his evaluation of Nepal) argues for the virtues of minimalism/minimal intervention. He emphasizes the importance of a state “owning” their peace process and building capacity. He claims that UN officials are most effective when performing duties such as assisting elections, monitoring cantonment, and acting as liasons who receive and process complaints (thus relieving tensions between groups). He also praises what he calls a “tripartite structure” consisting of both high commissions and joint patrols which allowed members from opposing parties to interact and adjust, and also physically portrayed the fact that the war was over. As a result, these actions created confidence, acted as a deterrent, lead to political legitimacy, and helped to conquer the security dilemma (Suhrke, 2011). Suhrke also notes that “out of slightly more than fifty operations in 2008, only perhaps half a dozen, mostly political missions were similarly minimalistic” and emphasizes a need for more missions to be designed similarly to the one in Nepal (2011, 44).

 What Suhrke refers to as minimalist intervention is somewhere between traditional peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The peacebuilding aspect is important to many scholars in that it addresses the roots of conflict, and thus prevents reoccurrence of conflict. According to statistics compiled by the World Bank, within the past ten years, 90 per cent of civil wars occurred in countries that had already experienced a civil war within the previous three decades (Ban Ki-Moon 2011, 14). In light of these statistics, the Secretary-General explains the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission which ensures that countries emerging from conflict are provided with the support they need to recover, including physical reconstruction as well as institution-building.

 In accordance with the previous arguments and preferences, Ramcharan (2011) also emphasizes peacebuilding, but he argues that peacebuilding should be used even before conflict occurs through preventative deployment. He cites the success of programs, like that studied by Suhrke, in South Africa and Macedonia that use UN agents to process complaints, gain confidences, and defuse tensions. He also emphasizes the role of women in the peace process, as well as the importance of finding effective ways to deal with refugees, famine, and plagues, to reduce harm and thus prevent desperation which can lead to and exacerbate conflict (Ramcharan 2011, 152). The argument that can be brought against Ramcharan (that he himself raises) is that states are often not willing to donate troops and money to operations like this that have an undetermined length and could be risky if things turn violent.

While peacebuilding is key to some literature, other scholars argue that it is not enough. For example, Doyle and Sambanis (2006) agree that peacebuilding can be part of a solution to conflict but they believe outside actors should do whatever they can to alter the costs and benefits of conflict: “simply put, in a rationalist model, we would observe war-recurrence if the expected utility of a new war is greater than the expected utility of peace” (55). He argues that strong peacekeeping, including peace enforcement is sometimes necessary in order to “alter the game” and increase the costs of noncooperation especially in cases where there are “spoilers” involved (2006, 56). In this sense, the United Nations (or another international organization) acts to reduce and control the anarchy created by civil war. Additionally, Doyle and Sambanis illustrate the effective capacity for peace as being contingent on a triangle created by local root causes, domestic capacity, and effective transnational threats; therefore, they argue that increased transnational authority can substitute for domestic capacity up to a certain extent (2006, 63).

All of the previous models for effective peacekeeping have taken for granted high foreign involvement. Many argue that this is not practical or desirable. In his article on the participation of Western soldiers in international operations, Blocq argues that the “cosmopolitan philosophy” underlying peace operations is not always present on the field. According to him:

Civil society sometimes assumes that soldiers are prepared to fight in any military operation. Both a readiness to kill and a preparedness to die are taken as fact. However, reality demonstrates that military personnel need to actually conquer their aversion of killing and constantly suppress their fear of dying. (Blocq 2009, 295)

He continues that soldiers are often willing to die and/or kill for something they hold very dear, such as the idea of fighting for family or their country. They are not necessarily willing to risk as much in situations involving people and ideas that are more foreign to them and that do not involve their direct interests. This can lead to situations of inaction even when given the mandate to use force. In addition, he explains, casualties among their personnel diminish an officer’s chance of promotion, leading them to take fewer risks (Blocq 2009, 195). Furthermore, many developing countries are not willing to contribute more money to peacekeeping operations. Additionally, some argue that foreign intervention in conflict can actually lengthen the conflict, leading to higher casualties and economic costs. This is due to the fact that foreign troops are often supporting parties who would have easily been defeated producing a quick end to the conflict (Doyle & Sambanis 2006).

 Some additional approaches and suggestions emphasized include: clarifying the roles and responsibilities of peacekeepers (UN 2009) and designing early warning systems (Ban Ki-moon 2011). In addition it is suggested that missions devise guidelines for information collection and sharing (internally and externally), although such guidelines should include victim protection and related rules to ensure that information sharing does not put vulnerable sources in danger (Durch 2010). A number of scholars (particularly Durch and Tanner) have also pointed towards increased coordination between various international organizations and NGOs. Tanner specifically insists that partnerships must be formed between local actors, civil society organizations, states, and international organizations (Tanner 2010, 215). He also encourages the formation of formal ties between the UN and regional organizations (Tanner 2010, 215).

***Regional Peacekeeping***

 Recently, some literature has focused on the role that regional organizations (as opposed to the UN) can play in peacekeeping. Some argue for more coordination between such organizations and the UN, while others think that regional organizations should take the lead when it comes to peacekeeping and coalition building.

 Coleman (2007) shows through quantitative data that many current peace operations are not controlled primarily by the UN or an IO:

In eight of the eighteen cases, the mandating international organization did not assume command of the intervention force it authorized. Instead, it authorized the creation of a multinational force (MNF) that it did not directly control. […] This trend is particularly noticeable for the UN, which selected the MNF formula in seven of its ten peace enforcement operations. (2007, 15)

Operations are usually controlled by either an MNF or a lead state. States only engage in risky and costly enforcement operations when they expect to gain large benefits from the operation; this motivation can vary from state to state as different states may have widely varying policy objectives. These diverse aims could include “maintaining international stability, projecting military power, obtaining economic assets, and halting humanitarian disaster” (Coleman 2007, 15). The question then remains whether regional organizations would expect more substantial benefits than the international community as a whole.

 Tanner (2010) emphasizes the growing role these regional organizations have played in the past twenty years and also the increased coordination between multiple organizations stating that “in 2007, forty of fifty-four peace missions involved some inter-institutional arrangement” (210). He praises this, and encourages even more coordination between organizations, as well as encourages their use as a force for preventative deployment.

 Finally, Murithi (2009) illuminates the changing role of regional organizations by specifically focusing on the African Union and its transition from “non-intervention” to “non-indifference”. He claims that the AU has become increasingly involved and even assertive, particularly in Zimbabwe and Burundi. The AU has also shown its growing role through its’ missions in South Sudan, Somalia, Mali, and the Central African Republic. At the same time Murithi reveals how the AU is polarized and states within it have their actions based on agendas, particularly that of not setting a precedent for intervention (2009). Another issue remains, in that regional organizations are not nearly as well funded as the UN.

As the literature indicates, it holds that peacekeeping is a sensitive process that must be very adaptable to the specific situation and which must build from the ground up; therefore: (1) a strictly UN led model of peacekeeping is not practical; (2) it can benefit from an analysis through the theory of Institutional Rational Choice; and (3) this analysis points to the potential effectiveness of peacekeeping operations guided by regional and subregional organizations as opposed to (or in conjunction with) the UN.

**Failures of the Current Peacekeeping System**

As can be seen by the widespread denouncement of many aspects of operations over the past 20 years, a strictly UN led model of peacekeeping has proved impractical. There are many issues involved with UN peacekeeping operations, from corruption and sexual abuse to slow bureaucracy and lack of necessary troop contributions. Policies and operations are often not specific, or not specific enough, to the situation and location at hand. This is often because peacekeepers do not know enough about the culture, location, and situation where they are operating. Since designing programs, operations, and institutions specifically fashioned to address the issues and needs of the particular situation is imperative to the success of peace and stability, knowledge of the specific scale of the conflict, as well as historical, geopolitical, and socioeconomic roots is essential (Brahimi & Ahmed 2008, 1). Without this knowledge, it is likely that peace agreements and operations will not fully address the root causes and “underlying political problems of the conflict” (2008, 10). In situations like this, violence is much more likely to reoccur, as can be seen from examples like Darfur, Timor-Leste, and Cote d’Ivoire (2008, 10).

As is admitted by peacekeepers and mediators themselves (such as Brahimi and Ahmed), it is easy for foreign (and especially Western) peacekeepers to heavily depend on the few people in the country who are “most fluent in English”, often leading to a biased view and even a tendency for these citizens to tell the mediator what he/she “wants to hear” (Brahimi & Ahmed 2008, 14). This can quickly lead to failure since the goal of any peace operation should be to seek to balance the many different views of the situation and take action from there. After all, the citizens of the country in question, and the participants (both perpetrators and victims) in the conflict understand their country and situation much better than foreign mediators; even if these peacekeepers may have seen similar situations in the past, there are bound to be differences that call for changes in strategy (Brahimi & Ahmed 2008). Citizens of the host state are much more invested in the situation, as they are the ones who will have to live with the consequences of decisions made. Therefore, it follows that they can and should participate in the situation in many ways from identifying potential dead ends to designing effective institutions and organizations; it is a huge mistake to ignore opportunities to engage a diverse range of thoughts and opinions from citizens.

Gradually scholars, peacekeepers, and policy makers have come to similar conclusions about the ineffectiveness of strictly UN led peacekeeping. The reasons for this have ranged from political to financial to ethical, and they have led to a shift of peacekeeping from UN led/controlled operations to the current majority being led by a multi-national force or lead state (often of that region) (Coleman 2007). There has also been a vast increase in the number of inter-institutional arrangements or “hybrid” arrangements within peacekeeping; these tend to incorporate a shift from strict outside intervention to more local and regional input (Bah & Jones, 2008). There is still much debate, however, over who should be responsible for peacekeeping in all or in varied situations, and also over which types of organizations are most effective.

**An Analysis through Institutional Rational Choice Theory**

The debate over effectiveness and responsibility for peacekeeping indicates a need for fresh perspectives and insights on the topic. In particular, there may be much to gain from analyzing peace processes through the theory of Institutional Rational Choice, a theory popularized by Elinor Ostrom, particularly in relation to common-pool resources. The theory of Institutional Rational Choice (IRC) holds that actors use institutions to maximize their utility and that certain aspects of institutions make some organizations and/or action arenas more likely to succeed than others (Ostrom 1999). Through multiple books and in-depth research papers, Elinor Ostrom has worked to identify the effect that institutions have on the ability of common-pool resources to be well-managed, well-distributed, and sustainable. In particular, she has studied the effectiveness of organizations created by users of group-property/common-pool resources, in comparison to private property or government control of these resources. A major part of this research has involved analyzing which aspects of institutions lead some organizations to be more effective than others at distributing and sustaining resources (Ostrom 1998, 1999, 2006, Ostom et al, 1999).

Studying peacekeeping missions and strategies through Institutional Rational Choice may lead to key insights about the peace process at the ground-level as it can help to determine what is successful or necessary in certain areas, and thus provide possibilities for manipulating the costs and benefits of war and peace (as discussed by Doyle & Sambanis above). The key to this analysis is that action arenas (a combination of the actors and the situation) are treated as dependent variables; “rules, states of the world, and the nature of the community all jointly affect the types of actions that individuals can take, the benefits and costs of these actions and resulting outcomes, and the likely outcomes achieved” (Ostrom 1999, 50). Therefore certain types of rules, institutions, and strategies can be employed in combination with the given state of the world and nature of the community with the intent to produce certain outcomes. Specific strategies or aspects could be employed or emphasized in peacekeeping missions, both in general and in reference to certain conditions (specific to that location and conflict), to lead to greater success in creating and maintaining peace and stability. Therefore, this paper will proceed to analyze peacekeeping operations through IRC, and compare the conclusions drawn from the application of IRC to common-pool resources to an application to peacekeeping operations.

By using IRC, both Ostrom and Wade are able to refute the notion of the Tragedy of the Commons and instead determine that users of common-pool resources can in many cases organize themselves in a way that effectively sustains resources and serves the long-term benefit of all as opposed to the short-term benefit of each individual (Wade 1987, 100; Olstrom et al 1999). Ostrom rejects the idea that individuals are necessarily “helplessly trapped in social dilemmas from which they cannot extract themselves without inducement or sanctions from the outside” arguing that this very belief has often led to policies which have “been subject to major failure and have exacerbated the very problems they were intended to ameliorate” (Ostrom 1997, 3). This conclusion seems to be very comparable to the actions of the U.N. in regard to many conflict situations. While well meaning, the “external authority” often assumes that actors in a conflict situation (and in the region) are unable to significantly contribute to building peace and stability, and instead need outside enforcement. While it is true that help from third-party actors is necessary in these situations, the idea that citizens (actors in the given action arena) are helpless often leads to failed policies that do not take into account the diverse opinions and sources of conflict (Brahimi 2008; Suhrke 2011). Ostrom, in regards to common-pool resources, concludes that “Policies based on the assumptions that individuals can learn how to devise well-tailored rules and cooperate conditionally when they participate in the design of institutions affecting them are more successful in the field” (Ostrom 1997, 3); this seems to be a legitimate conclusion to come to in regards to peacekeeping operations as well. While it is true that third-party negotiators/peace-keepers from an organization or state are needed, policies involving significant input from citizens/actors in the conflict should prove more successful as these policies should have a lasting effect if they are supported, developed, and enacted by the actors who will remain in the state: the citizens.

 IRC also presents a valid argument against the existence of a prisoner’s dilemma in regards to common-pool resources, lessons which can be applied to dilute the influence of security dilemmas often present in conflict situations. According to the prisoner’s dilemma, in a game involving two rational actors, the dominant strategy will be to defect to noncooperation, as one cannot be sure that the other actor(s) will cooperate. It is safer to assume noncooperation and gain what one can from “defecting” because while there may be more to gain from cooperating, the uncertainty makes the stakes too high (as they have much to lose if they choose to cooperate while the other actor defects/doesn’t cooperate). Wade, however, points out that in order to come to this conclusion, one must assume that: 1. players choose in ignorance of each other’s choices, and 2. each player only chooses once before payoffs, and cannot change their mind after seeing the others’ choice (Wade 1987, 98). Wade continues his argument by determining that this is most often is not the case in common pool resource situations; instead, 1. players know the game will be played repeatedly into the future, so they are often willing to “cooperate today so others’ will do so tomorrow”, and 2. players learn quickly and can alter decisions before payoffs, so they can cooperate first and defect if others cheat (98). While, this argument somewhat correlates to conflict situations (and thus peacekeeping) because there are multiple chances to “play” and actors can alter their decisions, the stakes are often much higher than in cases of common-pool resources, and so one can argue that players are less likely to “cooperate today so others’ will do so tomorrow” because if the other actor cheats (rearms and attacks, etc.), then there may be no “tomorrow”. Therefore, it is very important to have third-party actors (peacekeepers/negotiators) who can raise the benefits of cooperation and the costs of defecting.

 There are two main ways that third-party actors can manipulate the costs and benefits to favor cooperation and thus peace and stability. In reference to common-pool resources this cooperation can be induced through organizations, known as communal arrangements, created by the users (actors) themselves (although external monitors are often utilized). However in terms of peacekeeping a third-party actor is clearly needed to serve as an un-biased reporter of each actors’ activity. As Ostrom concludes in her research, the best way to raise the benefit of cooperation and thus increase the likelihood of cooperation is to enable communication. She asserts that in experiments she has performed, face-to-face communication raises the cooperation rate by an average of more than 45% (Ostrom 1997, 7). The best way to raise the costs of noncooperation are by creating (within the rules which are designed and agreed upon by all actors) punishment/sanctions for defecting/cheating, and creating monitors to track cooperation and punish those who defect. Both of these strategies seem particularly practical and important within peacekeeping operations and are already enacted by peacekeepers in the field (Doyle & Sambanis 2006).

Finally, and most importantly, IRC can be utilized to determine aspects of institutions that prove most successful. There are three aspects in particular, which Elinor Ostrom determined were vital for organizations to succeed in managing common-pool resources, which seem the most transferable to peacekeeping operations. These aspects that are most vital to the success of peacekeeping operations, for reasons which will be explained below, are: rules, communication, and legitimacy. Therefore, peacekeeping operations that are the most effective at: (1) establishing effective rules, (2) enabling effective communication, and (3) promoting/portraying legitimacy should be the most effective at building and maintaining peace and stability.

**The Potential of Peacekeeping Success through Regional and Subregional Organizations**

A brief, initial analysis of peacekeeping operations through Institutional Rational Choice theory indicates that regional and subregional organizations have the potential to be the most effective at the 3 criteria listed above.

***Rules***

Rules are “shared prescriptions that are mutually understood and predictably enforced” (Ostrom 1999, 37). Rules are essential in that they limit acceptable available actions, and so define the structure of the action arena. When analyzing rules and their effect on an action arena, one must analyze both official (written) and unofficial rules, as well as both the rules currently in place, and rules which one is seeking to create (Ostrom 1999). In terms of peacekeeping, these could include: the terms of a ceasefire or treaty, the restructuring of the political system (constitution, elections, etc.), economic structure, and local governance/organizations.

 One aspect that is possibly the most imperative to the stability of rules, Ostrom emphasizes, is the existence of a shared meaning of words, actions, common values, interactions, etc. (Ostrom 1999, 57). As it is a role of negotiators/peacekeepers to help create and embed the rules that will lead to stability, they must have a knowledge of the language(s) and social norm(s) so that it is clear that they understand the rules in the same way that the actors do, and also so that they can bridge any differences between peoples in the country and help to solidify these shared norms. Essentially, peacekeepers must know where the situation/country is coming from to know where to lead it to (and how to do so, the proper rules that must be enacted). In order to be proficient at this, peacekeepers must possess a working knowledge of the actors, preferences, and conditions, as well as the history, economy, and social structure of the country and/or region.

According to Brahimi, some key things to be aware of include: “different explanations for why the violence erupted in the first place, why the conflict has persisted for as long as it has, and what solutions have already been tried and discussed […] they need to understand the motivations, interests, and strengths of those with whom they must work.” (Brahimi 2008, 13). Without much of this knowledge, it is improbable that negotiators will be able to help create effective ceasefire, treaty, or rules to a new political structure. They may miss important points, and problems, if not excluding entire groups of actors altogether. Brahimi adds that it is often a huge challenge for peacekeepers to research these questions while they are in regions that they are unfamiliar with, often without dependable regional specialists and/or headquarters to rely on. He concludes that, unfortunately, “Ignorance is the norm rather than the exception as it often takes too long to gather all necessary information, and action is needed quickly” (2008, 13). UN troops, often the majority of who are foreign to the region, are often admittedly at a disadvantage due to lack of important, if not imperative, information. Regional and subregional organizations are at an advantage in this area as they will usually already have working knowledge of the basic make-up of the region. Therefore it does not take them as long to acquire the more specific details as far as questions to be answered before engaging in rule building, as well as knowledge/details of the culture required to effectively communicate the meaning, purpose, and structure of new rules that are designed to lead to stability in the given region. Especially when peacekeepers are in a situation where it is essential to act fast, it seems wisest to send in at least some unit of peacekeepers from a regional/subregional organization to debrief and share what they know with UN troops.

***Communication***

A second aspect that is essential to peacekeeping success is communication, particularly repeated, face to face communication. Communication is crucial as, along with raising benefits of cooperation (as discussed earlier), it creates trust, enforces norms, portrays commitment and values, and most importantly establishes group identity, which is absolutely vital if there is to be hope of a lasting peace. Communication is essential both on the “upper level” of actors, between leaders of the government and formal rebel organizations, etc., as well as the “lower level” between citizens of different ethnic groups, soldiers from opposing rebel factions, etc. In order for peacekeepers to effectively enable communication, they must, once again, have knowledge of the language, culture, and norms of the location in which they are operating. Especially on the ground level, citizens are much more likely to approach peacekeepers when they speak the same language and understand their culture; in this way, regional or local peacekeepers are much less intimidating than foreign UN peacekeepers. In one particular case study in Nepal, the use of local peacekeepers (within a UN mission) was found to be particularly effective; the local peacekeepers were approached much more often by citizens and were thus able to address grievances these citizens had with others and with the system before they had the chance to get out of hand (Suhrke 2011). In general, regional and/or local peacekeepers know how the local people communicate, celebrate, etc. and thus can find general or unique ways in which to help enable all these forms of communication which build trust and identity which are essential in the long run.

Another example of enabling of communication by regional peacekeepers was by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Liberia in 2003; according to Blaney, the US Ambassador to Liberia at the time, the strategy while ECOWAS was preparing for the UN to enter the scene and assist with elections was “to repopulate the universe of parties who would push for peace in a variety of ways. In other words, we began to move toward a web-building/web-based approach to advance the peace process and counter constant attempts by “opponent webs” composed of those dedicated to returning Liberia to war and chaos” (Blaney 103). In this way regional and local peacekeepers utilized their knowledge of the many different kinds of actors and citizens in the situation/region to guide communication and networking in a way that would push toward peace and security. Regional peacekeepers are much more likely to be able to identify a greater number of groups who can be useful in the peace process, as well as identify all of the actors from the conflict whose acknowledgement and/or participation of some sort is crucial (Brahimi 2008, 10).

***Legitimacy***

The final aspect highlighted that is essential to the success of a peacekeeping mission is legitimacy. Legitimacy is probably the most important aspect to the peacekeeping mission itself, as it determines if, and how seriously, other aspects of the mission are carried out or respected by local citizens and leaders. Obviously, the majority of compliance with rules must be voluntary (Wade, 1987, 99); it is impossible to police an entire population into compliance, and it would not create long-term stability. The bottom line is that, although there will always be spoilers (those unwilling to cooperate and/or looking to profit from conflict), citizens must be willing to follow rules voluntarily, and they will not do so if they do not see the peacekeeping mission itself or the rules and structures created as legitimate. This is part of why participation by citizens is essential; people are much more willing to follow rules and structures that they had a say in the make of.

Research done by Coleman indicates that citizens of the host state may be more likely to see local or regional peacekeepers as more legitimate; in fact, she argues that this is the key reason as to why states enter regional and subregional organizations to perform peacekeeping operations as opposed to the UN or entering as an individual state (Coleman 2007). She demonstrates this by illustrating case studies from Liberia, the DRC, and Lesotho. In addition, Brahimi asserts that “mediator’s political room for maneuver and leverage increases when he or she is acting […] with the backing of key regional players” (Brahimi 2008, 11). His reasoning stands that “Parties need to see a tangible connection between the recommendations the mediator makes and the decisions and actions these members of the international community take” (2008, 15). Since regional organizations (such as ECOWAS) usually have more sway in their specific region, it can be argued that they possess the necessary connections, to see impact in that specific region.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, peacekeeping is a sensitive process that must be very adaptable to the specific situation and which must build from the ground up; therefore: (1) a strictly UN led model of peacekeeping is not practical; (2) the study of effective peacekeeping operations can benefit from an analysis through the theory of Institutional Rational Choice; and (3) this analysis points to the potential effectiveness of peacekeeping operations guided by regional and subregional organizations as opposed to (or in conjunction with) the UN. **A**nalysis through IRC proved quite useful and shows a strong potential in regional and local peacekeeping, and indicates that this should be emphasized in future operations. Although regional and subregional organizations may not yet be ready or equipped to bear the brunt of peacekeeping operations, the international community should invest in them and encourage their increasing role.Additionally, more research should be done highlighting additional aspects of institutions that can lead to more effective peacekeeping.

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