

INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING POLICY

Naimjonova Zarnigor

Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies

"International relations and World Politics" master's student

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Abstract - *This article presents considerations regarding international peacekeeping policy.*

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The 1990s offered conflict resolution theory increasingly unexpected opportunities to make effective contributions to the resolution of contemporary, deadly conflicts. With greater opportunity, however, has come greater critical scrutiny; conflict resolution ideas were tested both at local and international levels in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, and both peacekeeping and conflict resolution have evolved to meet new challenges and to remain relevant and effective in the changing landscapes of twenty-first-century conflict. The lessons in this course explain how peacekeeping has evolved as a conflict resolution mechanism. There has been a continued shift away from a top-down model of peacebuilding toward widening participation of civilian personnel and the local population in peacekeeping deployments. These efforts strengthen and balance the civilian content and capacity of missions.

At the same time, the global context has changed, with analysts seeing a move from a unipolar to a multipolar world. This shift means that the conflict environment has changed from the post-Cold War, unipolar world. Debates have emerged about the need for corresponding changes in the nature of UN peacekeeping — for example, in relation to counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency, the protection of civilians, and the tension between peacekeeping as stabilization or peacekeeping as transformation, designed to address the root cause of conflict. There is a concern that peacekeeping missions that are only concerned with stabilization or counter-insurgency may restore order in the short term but might end up reinforce the economic, political, and military structures that created the conflict in the first place. While covering these debates, the perspective in this course further emphasizes the process of conflict transformation, which refers to the longer-term and deeper structural, relational, and cultural dimensions of conflict resolution. In taking this approach, all the lessons in this course engage with the ways in which peacekeeping and conflict resolution continue to innovate and respond to conflicts, for example, in the areas of cultural sensitivity, gender relations, conflict mapping and analysis, and rethinking the balance between negative peace (stopping violence) and positive peace (the attitudes institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies). Case studies, where such innovative activity is displayed at the peacekeeping-conflict resolution interface, are embedded throughout the course. In the areas of conflict data, conflict mapping, and conflict analysis, we show how new methodologies have enriched existing ones — for example, the Global Peace Index, the Positive Peace Index, and the Eight Pillars Model of Positive Peace developed by the Institute for Economics and Peace (Lessons 4 and 8).

Developments in information and communications technologies (ICTs) continue to advance with great speed and reach (Lesson 7). While there is still some way to go, there

is a much greater understanding of how to operate effectively around issues of cultural and gender sensitivity and inclusion, as suggested in the following sections in this lesson. This lesson has shown how conflict resolution as an academic project was created and institutionalized in a small number of centres, most of them set up by men who, consequently, constitute a majority among the exemplars (although, today the gender proportions may well have more parity). More troubling is the fact that women are usually the silent victims of violent conflict. However, they are often the main creators of new modes of survival and conflict resolution.

The involvement of women in formal peace processes and negotiations has been limited; they are largely excluded from high-level negotiations despite their active participation in local peace movements and peacemaking initiatives. Regrettably, women at the negotiation table or in mediation teams are underrepresented. UN Women found that in 24 peace processes since 1992, only 4 per cent of signatories, 2.4 per cent of chief mediators, and 9 per cent of negotiators were women. 8 Nearly all peace agreements have been written in gender-neutral language and have not taken into consideration that women and men have different needs and priorities. Additionally, the experiences, needs, and interests of men are considered as the “norm” and point of reference. The exclusion of women from the discourse about new political structures defined in peace agreements and the political process of negotiations determined at the international level may well be factors that perpetuate the exclusionist and violent discourses and institutions that contribute to the conflict in the first place.

Gender is rarely considered when choosing participants of mediation and negotiation teams, and gender is rarely on top of the agenda when identifying issues to negotiate. If women and men contribute equally, they will be able to build resilient communities where no talent remains untapped. According to the International Peace Institute, research on peace processes that have included women shows that a more robust and resilient peace is achieved as a result.⁹ Women’s mere participation does not guarantee gender-sensitive peace agreements. It is necessary to ensure everyone’s commitment to gender-sensitive peace agreements. The earlier gender issues and women’s participation are integrated into a peace process, the easier it becomes to incorporate them into the peace agreement. This integration may reduce resistance to gender issues and facilitate implementation right from the outset. The importance of gender in peacekeeping and peacebuilding is dealt with fully in Lesson 10. A case study of the role of women in the peace process in Mindanao, Philippines, illustrates positive peacekeeping and peacebuilding since the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1325 in 2000.

In the last decade, the question of whether the conflict resolution field constitutes a truly global enterprise as its founders assumed or whether it is based upon hidden cultural specifics that are not universal. Anthropological studies have long demonstrated the diversity of conflict expression and conflict resolution practice across cultures. This research eventually led to a major controversy in the 1980s in the form of an explicit critique of Burton’s universal human needs theory by anthropologists Kevin Avruch and Peter Black (Center for Conflict Analysis, George Mason University in Virginia, United States [US]). Others have also offered cultural perspectives in response to the “Western” assumptions of the field, including John Paul Lederach, a distinguished scholar at the Eastern Mennonite University (Virginia, US).

The expansion in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding work in areas of conflict in the 1990s has propelled the culture question in conflict resolution to the top of the agenda. The presence of thousands of military and civilian personnel from numerous countries in conflict zones in all parts of the world, attempting to achieve common conflict

resolution goals, has highlighted glaring cultural discontinuities. In many cases, there has been a clear presence of ignorance and misunderstanding of other cultures, illustrating the need to adopt culture-specific approaches to conflict resolution.

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