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## THE CHANGING NATURE OF HUMAN SECURITY

Global Risks in the 21st Century and What We can Do About it  
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**SPECIAL FEATURE | Toward a Common Theory of Value**



## ‘Another Peacekeeping’ is Possible<sup>2</sup>

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**Introduction:** *Peacekeeping* is a most essential link between *peacemaking*—that is, all the diplomatic negotiations and mediation work that results in signing peace treaties—and *peacebuilding*—that is, solving conflicts and addressing their deep causes that often have been missing in peace processes. *Peacekeeping* involves stopping the war and deterring violence during fragile ceasefires, and stabilizing the environment to make serious peace processes possible during these brief war-free periods. But in many situations, peacekeeping by armed people in military uniform may not be the most appropriate way to secure and sustain peace or protect civilians. This article makes the case for a new type of peacekeeping, one that is organized by unarmed global civilians who, by invitation only, come to help protect threatened local populations living in situations of war or violent conflict. Among the different roles, strategies and capacities civil society organizations may bring to conflict situations and peace processes, the concept and practice of unarmed civilian peacekeeping is probably least understood or recognized.

After giving the global context of wars in which the distinctions of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding arose, and after listing some of the limitations of armed peacekeeping, I will summarize what unarmed civilian peacekeeping is, how it operates, and why unarmed peacekeeping and direct physical protection actually work. Then I will refer to some recent writings on the economics of war and the disproportionate benefits of stopping war and building peace. And I will conclude by arguing that unarmed civilian peacekeeping should now be scaled up worldwide, not least for the practical contribution it can make to the ongoing global discourse about Human Security, about immediate Post-Violence Peacebuilding, the new Humanitarian Protection agenda and, potentially, the Local-to-Global Commons narrative.

**Much War, Little Peace:** It’s a truism that violence and war have been with us throughout history. But exactly how much war has been the norm is not generally known. It is estimated that “*between 1500 BCE and 1860 CE there were in the known world an average of thirteen years of war to every year of peace.*” In that whole period of well over 3000 years “*more than 8000 peace treaties were concluded—each one of them meant to remain in force forever. On average they only lasted two years!*”<sup>4</sup>

One obvious conclusion is that peace treaties don’t guarantee peace because they often don’t resolve conflicts nor address the underlying causes: ‘post-war’ is not the same as ‘post-conflict.’ At best, peace treaties provide a brief interlude without violent action, to give the conflict parties a chance to get down to the tough task of peacebuilding, to address the deeper reasons for the war and to get the peace right.

But the fact is that, since Roman times, that window of opportunity, that chance for peace, was almost never seriously seized. *Si*

*vis pacem, para bellum!* was, and has remained, the prevailing adage: *if you want peace, prepare (for) war!* Even in the second part of the 20th century, after the United Nations in 1945 had solemnly declared to be “*...determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war...*” more than 200 wars were fought.<sup>5</sup> And of the contemporary peace treaties concluded or ceasefires agreed, almost half collapse before a decade is over, with the conflict parties relapsing back into violence and war.<sup>6</sup>

**Civilian Casualties Up:** It is estimated that in the course of the 20th century, some 110 million people have been killed in wars,<sup>7</sup> but the percentage of *civilians* killed increased from 10 percent at the beginning of the century to sometimes as high as 90 percent at the end.<sup>8</sup> That would translate into over 1200 civilians (50 per hour) killed *each day* of the past century! Currently, the UN reports that at least 2,200 civilians have been killed in Syria so far this year and another 1,462 killed in Afghanistan—more than any comparable period since that war began.<sup>9</sup> These statistics reveal nothing about the other horrors, the scale of senseless, needless human suffering and cost of life-long disability, trauma, guilt, sorrow and anger.

Greater civilian casualties are in part due to the changed nature of wars. The so-called ‘new wars’ are increasingly intra-state, of relatively low-intensity, lasting ten times longer than international conflicts and less noticed by the world at large, especially by dominant powers and media.<sup>10</sup> But surely not less noticed by the victims themselves! According to the World Development Report 2011,<sup>11</sup> no less than 1.5 billion people now live in countries where repeated violence threatens lives, frightens civilians, traumatizes people, disrupts development and thwarts any chances of achieving the (already minimum) Millennium Development Goals for 2015.

*War and violence are the prime causes of war and violence*, Aldous Huxley observed.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, until and unless the world finds effective ways to interrupt and break the transmission of this cycle, the globalized world will continue to produce war and violence on ever larger scales and with ever greater intensities. This lesson of history has profound implications for the way we organize peace. Unless from now on we truly embrace and act on the new motto: *Si vis pacem, para pacem! If you desire peace, prepare (for) peace!*, our future would certainly look bleak!

There is *some* good news from the global peace front. According to the Human Security Report 2005, over the past twenty years, since the end of the Cold War, the number of wars and war fatalities has decreased.<sup>13</sup> This historic reduction is variously attributed to more active diplomacy, better mediation, more military peacekeeping and the spread of democracy. The question is whether this trend can continue. With wise policies, it might. But the potential for future violent conflict remains high due to growing religious and ethnic tension,<sup>14</sup> competition for scarce resources, the nefarious trade in—and ubiquitous presence



UN peacekeeping chief accompanies peacekeepers on patrol in Haiti

of—small arms,<sup>15</sup> growing population pressure, widespread land degradation and widening income disparities—all exacerbated by the effects of climate change. The world of the 21st century is likely to be much *more* dangerous, not *less* than the one just past. Civilians will need much *more*, not *less* human protection.

**Peacekeeping—To Give Peace A Chance:** How does peacekeeping fit in here? We already concluded that the world has been far more successful at *peacemaking* than at *peacebuilding*. But peacemaking is only the very beginning. And what we have been critically short of is deliberate *peacekeeping* efforts: stopping the war and deterring violence during fragile ceasefires, and stabilizing the environment to make serious peace processes possible during these brief war-free periods. Effective, appropriate peacekeeping, ranging from ceasefire monitoring and verification to more robust engagement and a much sharper focus on the special protection needs of civilians, especially women and children, is one critically missing link between peacemaking and peacebuilding.

The term ‘peacekeeping’ usually conjures up images of UN-sponsored, armed Blue Helmets deployed in areas of violent conflict in poor countries. Indeed, armed, military peacekeeping is currently the dominant paradigm, the UN’s own invention that was not mentioned in the UN Charter, a “*great experiment in conflict control*”... using “*soldiers without enemies*.”<sup>16</sup> So, altogether, peacekeeping is a relatively new concept and practice. But while UN peacekeeping (and peacekeeping in general) has suddenly become much more important, and the world expects more of it, it has also become much more controversial, for several reasons.

**Limits to Armed Peacekeeping:** First, it is limited by its size. Over 120,000 armed peacekeepers are serving today in 16 different conflicts.<sup>17</sup> This poses a daunting logistical and management challenge. Consider that the UN’s equivalent of the Pentagon consists of a mere two crowded floors in the NY Secretariat building! Consensus is growing that Blue Helmets (and NATO forces, for

that matter) are often not the appropriate instrument to deploy in the ‘new wars,’ especially if their mandate includes civilian protection in more complex missions.<sup>18</sup> They take a long time to field, often only after mass atrocities have already been committed. Carrying guns does not always make it easy to establish informal relations with local communities, to win hearts and minds. Concerns have also been expressed that their high cost (some US \$8 billion per year) has not yielded commensurate returns. And if you add to that the well-publicized cases of sexual abuse and exploitation by some of these forces themselves, then it is clear why the UN is in soul-searching mode over its peacekeeping operations.

**The Case for Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping:** Perhaps not surprisingly, people all over the world are beginning to see the limits of meeting violence with only armed, military means. Restoring or keeping the peace, protecting civilians, and resolving conflicts are mandates that often exceed the capabilities of global military force. For that reason, ‘live’ demonstrations have been made of some new, non-military peacekeeping methods initiated by global civil society organizations to support likeminded *local* civil society organizations that find themselves in situations of (potentially) violent conflict. These initiatives are mostly undertaken independently from, but could also be in association with, mandated UN or regional institutions.

This is *another* peacekeeping, one in which civil society organizations deploy *unarmed* civilian peacekeepers to deter violence and human rights violations in conflict situations. Unarmed civilian peacekeeping has three principal, complementary components: monitoring agreements (which includes ceasefires, peace treaties, human rights and international humanitarian law), preventing outbreaks of violence, and protecting civilians (through proactive and conscious presence, close to where threatened, vulnerable people live). Unarmed peacekeeping uses methods that have proven to be effective. For example, providing unarmed ‘body guards’ for the protective accompaniment of individuals or



groups under threat; or creating neutral safe spaces for local people to engage in sustainable conflict resolution and peace-building; or monitoring local ceasefires and verifying human rights violations, always in close coordination with the authorities and local peace monitors on the ground; or rumor control to prevent conflict escalation; or strengthening local early warning systems to spot imminent violence outbreaks and arrange for quick preventive responses; or even sometimes inter-positioning between conflict parties.

There is an important niche<sup>19</sup> for this work. It can be undertaken during almost any stage of the conflict cycle, but is most effective early on if and when mediation and peacemaking are in progress, or later, when a ceasefire or peace treaty has been concluded, or before, during and after critical elections.

Note that it is not only people in military uniform who work to keep the peace. Many civilians and organizations, all over the world, are convinced that they, too, can contribute to practical peacekeeping. Nonviolent Peaceforce<sup>20</sup> is a prominent one among them. What distinguishes their work from 'normal' armed peacekeeping is that they are *always* unarmed, operating as an impartial 'international third-party presence,' *always* working on the invitation of, and in close cooperation with local civil society organizations and *always* with the consent of all conflict parties. This approach was pioneered and refined over the past three decades, by many civil society peace organizations, but almost always on a very small scale.<sup>21</sup> While intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) like the OSCE, EU and the UN (DPKO, UNHCR, UNICEF) also field unarmed missions with civilians,<sup>22</sup> they differ significantly in mandate and method from initiatives by *global* civil society organizations working hand in hand with *local* civil society organizations. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC, 1863) is the exception: a large, one-of-a-kind organization with a venerable history, legally defined rights to be active in zones of war and assured funding (mostly from governments). As a hybrid IGO-INGO it is specifically mandated to ensure compliance with the Geneva Conventions and related humanitarian laws, with a focus on the protection of POWs and political prisoners, but also of other victims of armed conflicts to whom it provides humanitarian relief assistance.

**How Can Unarmed Be Effective?** The question could be asked: Why would such unarmed teams be able to deter violence and human rights violations? Experts point out that in situations of violent conflict all parties have multiple sensitivities, vulnerabilities and points of leverage, and international 'proactive presence' tacitly activates those sensitivities.<sup>23</sup> A conflict party naturally wants to look better than its opponents. Moreover, all conflict parties have several good reasons to pay attention to third parties, especially outsiders: first, because their personal or political reputation is at stake; second, because they want to avoid blame or retribution; and finally, because of individual moral concerns. *"The decisive restraint on inhuman practice on the battlefield lies within the warrior himself, in his conception of what is honorable and dishonorable for a man to do with weapons."*<sup>24</sup> The presence of civilian peacekeepers also reinforces the natural inhibition to killing our own species that most humans possess. And civilians with a disciplined commitment to nonviolence can change the atmosphere of violent situations and reinforce nonviolence and courage in others. Civilian peacekeepers will work together with all

parties to stop and prevent human rights abuses and violations of agreements in dialogue with all stakeholders. They work in close relationship with local communities, more as part of them than as representatives of an exogenous force. Therefore, 'unarmed' is not 'defenseless:' the leverage of unarmed peacekeepers is mostly through personal persuasion, and this operates particularly in the humanitarian space between the grassroots and the higher national and international levels of command and politics. People in danger confirm that presence is an essential protection tool.<sup>25</sup>

It is easy to dismiss unarmed peacekeeping as some kind of wooly-headed idealism or naïve pacifism, a romantic notion, or even as something only suited for the weak and the timid. But isn't it our deepest belief that power grows out of the barrel of a gun? That there is only one kind of power—'threat power?' As Theodore Roszak put it, *"people try nonviolence for a week, and when 'it does not work', they go back to violence which hasn't worked for centuries."*

But unarmed peacekeeping is a form of 'soft power,' benign and low profile but hard-nosed, working in solidarity with threatened civilians. It aims to influence all conflict parties to comply with human rights and international humanitarian law standards. It is based on intelligent human relationships built and maintained by impartial peacekeepers with all the conflict parties. Therefore, unarmed peacekeeping is a subtle but effective force, requiring courageous hard work by well-networked professionals operating in a low-key, disciplined fashion, on the alert 24/7 in often challenging field conditions. There is nothing glamorous about this work, but that does not make it any less valuable. And it is done at a much lower cost than the armed military variety of peacekeeping operations.

**Economies of Peace:** The huge costs of war<sup>26</sup> and violent conflict, both in human and economic terms, might finally bring (or force) us collectively to our senses. Paul Collier has estimated the economic consequences of war in *developing* countries and also the benefits of well-considered responses. He calculates that the total national and regional cost of a single war, on average, is more than US \$64 billion. Further global impacts include international terrorism, production of hard drugs, and the spread of HIV/AIDS—which are not easily quantifiable. He concludes<sup>27</sup> that a US \$5 billion investment in international peacekeeping and well-targeted, conflict-sensitive aid would yield a return of US \$397 billion in selected post-conflict countries—a huge pay-off for preventing conflicts from becoming violent! Kofi Annan summed it up well when he said: *"The cost of peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding pales into insignificance compared with the cost and consequences of violent conflict and war."*<sup>28</sup>

That is precisely why the Copenhagen Consensus included it as one of ten 'best buys' for development if the world wanted to spend another US \$50 billion.<sup>29</sup> And an international panel of experts,<sup>30</sup> estimating the financial value of peace, has recently calculated an overall positive annual economic impact of a cessation of violence worldwide of US \$7.2 trillion, with US \$4.8 trillion of new business created each year (and a loss of US \$2.4 trillion in violence-dependent economic activity undertaken by *"industries that create or manage violence"*). In short, peace is far more profitable for *all* than war for *some!*



left. UN peacekeepers from Brazil patrol a hillside ravaged by bandits in Haiti; right. nonviolent peaceforce meeting, Soccsksargen, Philippines

**A New Peace Role for Global Civil Society:** Inviting civil society to a new role in conflict prevention, the former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan said: *“I look to civil society to act as our partners in helping to defuse potential conflicts. As experience tells us, you will be most effective by coordinating with bilateral and intergovernmental actors—and with one another. As civil society organizations, you have a vital role to play. You are uniquely placed: to facilitate local conflict resolution; to champion human rights; to mobilize public support for peace settlements; and to build trust to encourage healing and reconciliation.”*<sup>31</sup>

Creating a large, multinational professional reserve force of unarmed civilian peacekeepers would indeed have significant advantages for the international community, UN agencies and donors. It could offer a quick, non-bureaucratic response to local requests for help. It would offer round-the-clock dedicated protective presence that was not distracted by other duties. It would not be subject to UN security phases. It would not entail a compromise of sovereignty. If deployed in a timely manner, such a force could potentially even be effective in preventing crimes of mass atrocities. And it would model for the world a new, nonviolent approach to dealing with conflict without the introduction of more guns and escalation of violence.

**Not Last, But Early Resort:** Deployment of unarmed civilian peacekeeping may well follow most of the criteria the UN applies when mandating its Blue Helmets under UN Charter Chapter VI: gravity and urgency (preventing large-scale, imminent loss of life); right intention (to halt or avert human suffering); acceptability (with consent of conflict parties); proportional means (scale and scope are only the minimum necessary); reasonable prospects (action likely to be more successful than inaction). But it would differ with regard to the use of force (even in self defense or as a measure of last resort) because it would always be unarmed; moreover, it would also always be on the invitation of civil society partners; and finally, it could mobilize much earlier in the conflict cycle, to enable more preventive action long before large-scale loss of life could become a reality.

The world has too often failed to protect civilians threatened by genocide and ethnic cleansing. While unarmed civilian peacekeeping obviously cannot stop many of these atrocities, it is one highly appropriate *first* response to prevent, contain and manage violent conflict, to prevent escalation and to enable the conduct of further preventive local, national or even international diplomacy. It therefore has the potential to contribute to the prevention

of these kinds of atrocities from developing further down the road. Civilian peacekeepers can work in partnership with local communities to contribute to the protection of all civilians—mainly children, women and the elderly, refugees and internally displaced persons, demobilized child soldiers, human rights workers, humanitarian aid workers, journalists and others caught somewhere in the conflict cycle. Unarmed civilian peacekeeping could also become an antidote to the general sense of powerlessness, resignation and cynicism in the face of violent conflict, including ethnic cleansing and genocide. It answers the question: *What do you say ‘yes’ to when you say ‘no’ to war?*

The UN always maintains that its use of military force is a measure of ‘last resort.’ Likewise, the Security Council often authorizes ‘all necessary means’ to maintain peace and prevent violent conflict. To them we say: “Unarmed civilian peacekeepers are a low-cost, subtle force for peace. Make them an important addition to the peace-builder’s toolbox.” It is our hope that the international community will avail itself of this new tool, through predictable long-term funding, once its value is more widely appreciated. The OECD’s Development Assistance Committee has already broadened its definition of Official Development Assistance to include activities such as unarmed civilian peacekeeping.<sup>32</sup>

**Conclusion:** Many millions of civilians all over the world find themselves caught in conflict cycles and trapped in war, facing unprecedented hardship and injustice. The humanitarian reflex and response is to provide material relief. Such relief is necessary, but not sufficient. Direct human protection is equally essential! But how? We have argued that while armed, military peacekeeping, the currently dominant form, may sometimes be necessary, often it is not effective enough—especially in the so-called new and civil wars. International ‘presence’ itself confers protection, but far more so when done consciously, deliberately and proactively, together with national and local organizations and people. *Unarmed* peacekeeping by global civilians is now a newly available force for peace. The world can ill afford to ignore its great potential.

Note. Footnote 1 is located in the Introduction, which is available with full footnotes at [www.kosmosjournal.org](http://www.kosmosjournal.org).

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