

# CIMIC and Peacekeeping 'Effectiveness': The Role of 'Communication' as a Critical Interface in Evolving UNPKO Dynamics

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## Abstract

'Communication,' as an ongoing process underlying civil-military interaction, may be taken as a key component in conceptualizing Civil-Military Coordination (CIMIC) in the context of peacekeeping. Consequently, it allows for a process-centric understanding of peacekeeping 'effectiveness,' particularly in the light of the growing disconnect between the functional dynamics of on-ground missions and broader overarching doctrine/principles. Transitional and Protection of Civilians (POC) mandates compel United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs) to operate on the margins of existing doctrine, requiring personnel engaged in conflict management to cultivate and exercise a broader skillset than one initially associated with traditional peacekeeping. Given this background, this research utilizes 'scenario-based interviews' so as to engage with the self-reflexive praxis of veteran Pakistani peacekeepers having served in integrated/hybrid missions. In doing so, it attempts to conceptualize communication as a process premised on the 'shared intentionality' of both military and civil personnel, utilizing de Coning's peacekeeping dimension. Inputs received from the interview process are analyzed using a model conceptualizing communication as a process essential to the realization of successful PKO outcomes. Two key subthemes emerging from the interview process, i.e., crisis management/risk perception and resource management are discussed in relation to decisional processes and 'bounded rationality' constraints attending inter- and intra-group communication under CIMIC in peacekeeping spaces.

## Keywords

UN Peacekeeping, Pakistan military, civil-military coordination, communication, crisis and resource management

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## Introduction

This paper examines the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping in the post-Capstone era with a focus on intra-group communication underlying civil-military coordination in multidimensional peacekeeping missions. In doing so, it problematizes the idea of civil-military communication as a process with direct implications for the success of the peacekeeping doctrine, particularly in light of the changing nature of missions involving greater stabilization components, as well as protection of civilians mandates. The ‘effectiveness’ of peacekeeping has been the subject of multiple debates in the contemporary literature, with scholars divided on the possible criteria for evaluation, as well as the unintended effects of employing select criteria to the exclusion of others. This paper addresses an understudied component in designing a framework for peacekeeping evaluation, focusing on the *processes* underlying peacekeeping as opposed to an overt focus on the ‘final’ *outcomes* of the same. Further, it situates the site of a pre-identified process, i.e., communication, in the context of civil-military interaction, thereby presenting a schematic framework for how group communication in integrated missions in post-conflict, or transitional, spaces may be conceptualized. The paper builds on de Coning’s understanding of critical dimensions underlying the effectiveness of ‘CIMIC’ in an age of expanded UN peacekeeping. In doing so, it aims to draw attention to the importance of communication in informing the operational dynamics to improve the coherence and coordination of UN peacekeeping, with implications for the selection and training of relevant personnel.

Communication is premised on perception, a product of social cognition and psychology that informs how actors engage with the objects and people in specific contexts. Given the volatility of post-conflict and transitional spaces, effective communication training facilitates the creation of synergy and complementarity needed to generate and sustain common strategic objectives amongst both civil and military components of a mission. This has prompted authors such as de Coning (2005) and Lindenberg and Bryant (2001) to highlight ‘CIMIC’ as a critical interface in UN PKOs, with poor coordination risking delays in response-time that may translate into a significant loss of life. These delays may be prompted by role clarification and deliberation about respective responsibilities, particularly as integrated missions are faced with an increasing gap between actual operational practice and existing consensus on the nature and scope of UN peacekeeping as enshrined in existing principles and doctrine (de Coning et al, 2017). An added concern is the duplication of effort i.e., military components should not be called upon to perform humanitarian tasks, further complicated by the complexities of functioning in volatile post-conflict/transitional spaces. Thus, by emphasizing ‘communication’ as a processual skill, this paper aims to outline avenues for further research related to the design of ‘psychological peacekeeper profiles’ used in identifying and selecting personnel, as well as emergent areas of concern in pre-deployment training. Further, it conceptualizes communication as an essential prerequisite underlying peacekeeping ‘effectiveness,’ given its role in enabling participative management environments where both civil and military actors may utilize their training and skillset in frameworks ranging from cooperation to coexistence (Abiew, 2003; de Coning, 2005).

### **‘Effectiveness’ of UN Peacekeeping**

Diehl’s 1993 publication, titled ‘International Peacekeeping,’ bifurcates the criteria for evaluating peacekeeping operations using two essential outcomes i.e., (i) that missions limit armed conflict, and (ii) promote conflict resolution. Ensuing debates in the relevant literature present markedly varied approaches towards the appropriate frameworks for analysis, standards for evaluating ‘effectiveness,’ and the relevance of purportedly ‘objective’ criteria in mission-specific contexts. Thus, Johansen (1994) argues that Diehl’s criteria fundamentally misrepresent the real purpose of peacekeeping while eclipsing many of the key benefits of UNPKOs. What emerges is a debate between scholars such as Diehl, Durch, and Ratner, versus Fetherston and Johansen (Druckman & Stern, 1997). The former group emphasizes designing criteria relevant to ‘quantifiable’ mission mandates and contribution to containing conflict, while the latter highlights the need for ‘qualitative’ criteria linking peacekeeping to the promotion of such overarching values as human rights, justice, and the reduction of human suffering. An intermediary approach is presented by the work of Todd Sandler (2017) who analyzes ‘mission’ effectiveness in the light of the changing nature of PKOs, alongside the idea of ‘burden sharing’ using the private provision of public goods and joint products. In terms of whether the application of a single, ‘objective’ criterion for effectiveness is warranted, scholars such as Diehl and Druckman (2010) cite the increasingly hybrid nature of ‘peacekeeping/peacebuilding/peace enforcement’ missions to argue for the need for multiple dimensions in the process of evaluation. An additional element in gauging effectiveness, corresponding to the broader quantitative/qualitative debate, concerns the question of temporality i.e., when does one deem the mission to have been ‘successful’ and thus ‘effective’? In an early study examining UN interventions in 147 interstate crises during 1946-88, Diehl, Reifschneider, and Hensel (1996) proposed a time period of ten years i.e., no militarized conflict occurring within that time frame, following the UN’s intervention, would be taken as a standard of ‘effectiveness.’ In contrast, Hartzell, Hoddie, and Rothchild (2001) opted for assessing whether negotiated peace held for a period of five years in their study of intrastate wars during 1945-98.

The markedly varied criteria — and attendant concerns surrounding such themes as temporality, under positivist (quantitative), versus constructivist (qualitative) — approaches towards peacekeeping evaluation may be contextualized using the fast-changing nature of peacekeeping itself. Dorussen (2014), building on the work of scholars such as Ratner (1995, p. 528), highlights how peacekeepers,

[T]end to intervene as much in civil as in interstate wars. They often intervene early even before the situation has become resolved militarily or politically making it necessary to enforce rather than to keep the peace. Peacekeepers operate with a broader mandate; so-called ‘new’ or “integrated” peacekeeping monitors and observes, but also aims to protect civilians, to build capacity and to address the underlying factors that contributed to conflict.

A similar theme is identified by de Coning et al. (2017) in highlighting how there is a shift away from the UN’s role in keeping the peace, towards using UN to protect civilians amidst active conflicts or governments from insurgencies. Further, the emphasis on ‘peacebuilding’ involves management of dimensions including but not limited to assisting with judicial reforms and civil administration, supervising

elections, providing humanitarian relief, and training public officials in various government functions (Aniola, 2007). In such a context, authors such as Abiew (2003) highlight the importance of civil-military coordination in ensuring common goals, with communication emerging as an essential process impacting the effectiveness of CIMIC vis-à-vis peacekeeping. Studies on communication in the context of CIMIC have focused mostly on disaster-management contexts, with sites of active conflict, post-conflict areas, or transitional spaces herded under the heading of ‘complex emergencies,’ and accorded less exclusive focus in terms of critical research inquiry. Nevertheless, key frameworks, particularly concerning the role of dual-use Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in enabling information exchange, may be adapted for further analysis and research on CIMIC in peacekeeping contexts.

### **Communication and Civil-Military Coordination**

Kanciak et al. (2021) analyze the importance of information sharing in CIMIC operational theaters given the deployment of ‘Internet of Things’ (IoT) devices, outlining the design for a ‘federated smart environment’ for enabling the same. While this study focuses on the technical architecture required for secure civil-military information sharing in emergency response and disaster recovery operations, the underlying premise corresponds to the overarching theme of ‘effectiveness’ related to information exchange, i.e., communication, under CIMIC interaction. Bollettino’s (2015) work on the humanitarian perception of civil-military coordination during the response to Typhoon Haiyan illustrates a more direct focus on the given theme in the context of disaster management. The study engages with the impact of communication in analyzing how CIMIC may be undertaken to identify the needs of the affected population and deliver relief goods. It then explores the perception of the ‘effectiveness’ of civil-military coordination following such interactions, examining the same using the training imparted to humanitarian actors to better coordinate with the military. Thus, Bollettino’s 2015 piece focuses primarily on humanitarian actors in *disaster relief* contexts involving CIMIC, using survey instruments to gauge the perceptions of country directors and agency leads. A similar focus is exhibited in Cook and Yogendran’s (2019) conceptualization of civil-military partnerships using the ‘4Cs’ of disaster partnering, as theorized by Martin et al. (2016). The first is ‘Communication,’ followed by Cooperation, Coordination, and Collaboration. The study assesses the effectiveness of civil-military disaster partnering in the Asia-Pacific region using this model, elements of which may be seen as holding relevance for post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction operations (SROs).

In contrast, a monograph by Wentz (2006) for the US Defense Technical Information Center situates the impact of ICTs on CIMIC in disaster relief, as well as post-conflict SROs. Wentz (2006) outlines the need to better understand the capabilities and requirements of ICTs in order to create a collaborative information sharing environment to support data collection, communications, and coordination needs in environments not limited to disaster relief. Rietjens et al. (2009) also focus on CIMIC during ‘*complex emergencies*,’ using an understanding of inter-organizational communication to analyze civil-military cooperation in the context of Afghanistan. The authors employ a logical framework analysis to identify six major

improvement tactics for information sharing, each of which may have implications for UN peacekeeping in a post-conflict/transitionary setting. These include the creation of overlap in personnel rotation, the specification of tasks and aims regarding information management, the improvement of skills and competencies of personnel, and the introduction of regular joint CIMIC evaluations.

Thus, 'communication' as a process features prominently in analyses of the effectiveness of civil-military coordination and cooperation in the context of disaster relief. In terms of post-conflict or transitionary spaces, there is less of a focus on UN PKOs as informed by specific principles and doctrine. Further, the gap between these principles, and the evolving functional dynamics of integrated UN PKOs in the field, highlights the importance of CIMIC as a key interface for engaging with the ensuing disconnect. 'Communication,' as a conceptual framework, may encompass the dimensions of ICT systems, personnel training, and management protocols outlined above, in addition to the parameters of social cognition involved in civil-military interaction. This paper seeks to identify 'communication' as a process embedded in such parameters, with implications for UN PKO personnel selection and pre-deployment training.

## **Methodology**

In order to engage with the self-reflexive praxis of veteran Pakistani peacekeepers with experience serving in integrated missions in both post-conflict and transitionary settings, this study employed 'scenario-building' alongside semi-structured interviews. Ramirez et al. (2015) analyze how scenarios have the potential to produce 'interesting research,' in challenging existing assumptions and identifying novel lines of inquiry. A similar logic informs Beighton's (2021) use of scenario-based interviews in a study on UK further education management settings, with the added utility of facilitating interviewer interaction with interviewees. Scenarios draw on the working practices and real-life scenarios commonly experienced by the interviewees, feeding into the interview process through what Ratcliffe (2002) identified as 'strategic conversation.' In the case of this study, four distinct scenarios were developed using four select 'dimensions' for effective peacekeeping, as identified in de Coning's work on peacekeeping evaluation (2005; 2017). These dimensions, embedded across distinct scenarios, were used to assess interviewee perception of the role of 'communication' in ensuring mission success, under the broader heading of CIMIC 'effectiveness.' Both civilian and military personnel formed part of the sample, with 22 of the total 30 interviewees having served as military personnel. The given scenarios prompted both groups to reflect on their own lived experiences interacting in the field, while assessing the impact of their pre-deployment training in informing the nature of their interaction. 'Communication' emerged as an essential process in translating the dimensions identified in the scenarios into actionable strategies drawing on the training imparted to both groups.

Inputs received from the interview process were analyzed using a model conceptualizing communication as a process essential to the effectiveness of civil-military interaction i.e., a critical interface informing UN PKOs.

***Scenario: 1***

Local forces and insurgents are two forces at war, with insurgents now occupying the Eastern part which was previously under the control of the local forces. A small village (in a part of local forces that is now occupied by insurgents) has been effectively cut off. Messages from the area indicate that food is running low as markets and supply routes are not functioning. The people living there are now exposed to high danger, and there exists a need to establish a safe and secure environment. The UN has started to negotiate a humanitarian corridor and localized ceasefire so that a civilian aid convoy can get in, but it is anticipated that this will take some days to achieve. In the meantime, a food distribution point has been established within an armed perimeter (established by peacekeeping forces) and Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) are being distributed by soldiers in uniform. A small medical clinic has also been established and is treating minor injuries and illnesses. However, there still remains a threat from the insurgents that they might try to infiltrate the secure perimeter.

***Scenario: 2***

A counter-insurgency operation is being undertaken in a highly contested area of A, a very fragile state. UN's civil organizations have been operating there for years and are undertaking the direct provision of essential services through a network of supplies and training to those existing facilities that are still functional. Recently there has been an upsurge in attacks, especially Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) focused on one village. The commander of an X infantry unit (part of a UN Peacekeeping force) has arranged a meeting with the village elders to discuss the situation and seek support in improving local security, accompanied by a UN civilian advisor. At the meeting, the civilian advisor recognizes that the village does not currently have a working health facility as the doctor fled after it was damaged in an arson attack. He offers to restore power to the clinic by replacing the generator and also to stock it with some basic supplies in the hope that the doctor can be persuaded to return. While the team are working on the generator and carrying in medical supplies, the commander of the X infantry unit also takes the opportunity to discuss the worrying security situation (and where perpetrators might be found) with villagers.

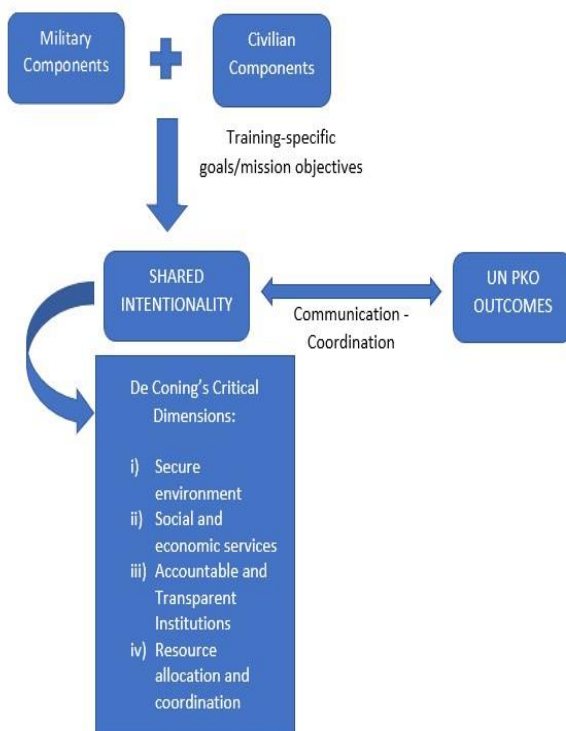
***Scenario: 3***

While on peacekeeping operations (in a fragile state emerging from civil war) personnel from a Peacekeeping medical military unit are invited to a major Incident planning meeting, as a period of unrest is expected. However, the civilian advisors are also called in to discuss and formulate a plan. The UN and its military counterparts have found it difficult to develop a coordinated plan agreed by both sides. At the request of the UN and the WHO (chairing the health cluster), the civilian advisors lead a series of workshops and seminars and support the development of an integrated plan. They also arrange train-the-trainers sessions on managing the scene of the incident. The various military agencies themselves later deliver tactical level training.

**Scenario: 4**

Several independent and state-sponsored development organizations are active in Country A, a low/middle-income country with poor economic and development indicators, especially in rural areas. The Country’s (A) local army runs a clinic in a remote mountain pass in one of its most rural areas, between April and September every year. It usually has around ten staff and provides a wide range of primary care services to hard-to-access populations, some of whom travel for several days to get to the facility. This year UN has sent a small team of military doctors, nurses and medics to accompany the usual A team. It hopes to gain experience for all personnel in altitude-related conditions while also teaching a WHO-endorsed trauma course. It aims to improve the trauma skills in the facility itself but is also planning to run half-day first-aid packages for community volunteers from the various villages in the area. The programme has been designed and implemented in collaboration between UN peacekeepers, civilian support groups, and the local A military.

**Figure 1.** Conceptual Modeling: ‘Communication’ and CIMIC Effectiveness



**Discussion and Analysis**

The conceptual model outlined above deploys de Coning’s dimensions for evaluating peacekeeping under the heading of ‘shared intentionality’ underlying civil-military interaction in UN PKOs. As evidenced in multiple interview responses, both military and civilian groups exhibit certain ‘organizational’ cultures informed by distinct modes of ‘learning’ i.e., training. Thus, salient group memberships shape the nature



and scope of the 'communication' that occurs during the fast-changing contexts of post-conflict/transitional setups, with personnel reliant on organizational and social cognition imbibed during the course of formal training. While the 'intention' behind CIMIC may be common to both civilian and military personnel, there is a need to avoid duplication of effort, while ensuring that both groups function within their distinct domains. Doing so in integrated mission contexts adds complexity, particularly in light of the disconnect between peacekeeping principles/doctrine and functional mission dynamics identified earlier.

Further, authors such as Llyod et al. (2009) identify how psychological selection profiles for peacekeepers are not catered to identify skills and traits essential to civil-military coordination. Communication forms an essential process under this coordination, as determined by interviewees in analyzing the four scenarios outlined above. In the context of assessing how the four dimensions under 'shared intentionality' may be effectively actualized in the form of successful mission outcomes, two following subthemes emerged in relation to the broader idea of communication vis-à-vis CIMIC.

### ***Crisis Management and Risk Perception***

Interviewees cited the importance of translating 'shared intentionality' into actionable strategic plans in a participative management environment. This was particularly evident in scenario 1, where both civilian and military personnel emphasized the need for functional communication in fast-moving crisis contexts. In establishing a perimeter so as to ensure resource distribution in a secure environment to embattled civilians, rational decision-making under conditions of risk and uncertainty emerged as a primary consideration i.e., gauging how long the perimeter would hold, while assessing the threat of insurgent attack. Interviewees commented on the risk of the 'passing of wrong information' prompting 'a substantial military effort' with little gain, citing the importance of efficient support training for both military and civilian components. Consequently, a key aspect under 'CIMIC effectiveness' was highlighted as identifying the conditions of 'bounded rationality' that impede decision-making processes in volatile contexts i.e., the contextual and psychological constraints that prevent the realization of optimal choices. In light of this, 'strategic communication' was discussed as a pervasive component in the process of civil-military interaction during the course of 'hybrid' missions, with a key impact on decisional processes. It was felt that effective division of labor during crisis situations necessitated recognizing the comparative advantages of both civilian and military domains, allowing for building a more effective understanding of changing circumstances.

The efficacy of models used to inform action in crisis contexts relies on the effective transmission of information that is as accurate as possible. It is essential that pre-deployment training and the selection of personnel incorporate skills specific to intra- and inter-group communication, particularly given the impact of cultural sensibilities. This is particularly crucial for missions with a protection of civilian mandate (POC) in the absence of a peace agreement, as well as transitional administration mandates where the UN is possessed of both executive authority and responsibility. In light of the gap between doctrine and functional dynamics identified



earlier, the UN is faced with maintaining consent, minimum use of force, and impartiality in increasingly volatile contexts that go beyond traditional peacekeeping boundaries. The resulting complexity is amplified when proxy militias associated with the host state pose a risk to civilians, as highlighted by de Coning et al. (2017). Personnel interviewed felt that conflict management missions, characterized by a significant risk of relapse and lack of a clear political exit strategy, are a key site for gauging the evolution of UN peacekeeping. Consequently, the psychological profiles of UN peacekeepers, and the skills needed by both military and civil components to optimize mission outcomes, must keep pace with this evolution, a key aspect of which is intra- and inter-group communication.

Discussion on crisis management prompted consideration of the role of risk perception and communication, in fast-changing spaces, with personnel's lived experience of complexity a key asset for designing relevant training models. Interviewees referred to situations that require CIMIC officers to assess how local communities gauge the risk of potential conflict escalation using community-based inter-group dialogues. The given scenario 4 prompted comments on the need to characterize decisions faced by local communities in sufficiently precise terms to identify critical areas necessitating immediate action. Doing so was seen as requiring intra-group coordination in integrated missions, with both civilian and military personnel able to designate domains of action and attendant roles in risk-related choices. The interdependence of effective risk communication vis-à-vis the local community, and collaboration/coordination in risk management between civil and military operatives of UN PKOs, was stressed by multiple interviewees, with communication failure being tied to fractured risk analysis.

A related concern, which may form an avenue for further research, concerned the 'visual' communication of risk perception through modes other than verbal signaling i.e., a multimodal form of risk communication involving photographs and educational images to external audiences. This led to interviewees highlighting an attendant, somewhat unexpected, aspect of communication efficacy under crises, i.e., media relations. Media coverage of conflict/post-conflict/transitional spaces tends to contain elements of sensationalism i.e., human suffering and battle scenes etc. Nevertheless, coverage can increase the attention a crisis receives from international and regional actors i.e., donors, global powers, NGOs etc. Further, the media can act as a site for disseminating information to establish linkages with host communities, with most peace operations having a public information component that can be effectively utilized alongside alternative media structures. Communicating *with* the media, as well as *through* the media, especially in the context of emergent crises, were highlighted as two distinct avenues warranting due attention and training for both military and civilian components in peacekeeping missions. While designated CIMIC officers may be put in charge of media relations, it was considered important that all personnel have some idea as to the most appropriate modes of interaction to adopt when faced with journalists, both local and international. Communication distortion being a key risk vis-à-vis media engagement, it was felt to be prudent that personnel be trained to engage with the role of the media more effectively in peacekeeping spaces.

### ***Resource Management***

The second sub-theme to emerge concerning resource allocation, focusing on the effective identification and communication of attendant opportunity costs. Interviewees commenting on the given scenarios identified the importance of identifying, allocating, and ensuring the effective utilization of scarce resources in volatile contexts. *Time* was treated as one such resource, particularly in connection with crisis management, as ‘windows of opportunity’ for effective action were seen as essential to securing successful outcomes. Given concerns surrounding funding, opportunity cost emerges as an essential parameter for framing not only temporal but also material questions of resource allocation i.e., prioritizing mission objectives in the light of emergent situations. The ability to rationalize, and convey the relative benefits of utilizing scarce resources for select purposes, to the exclusion of others, is essential to the realization of mission objectives.

Additionally, interviewees commented on ‘human resource’ training and management as an essential feature of evolving peacekeeping praxis, as long-term stability was tied to developing best practice guidelines for locals. Given the learning demands and continuous adaptation, required in volatile spaces, commentators cited the role of UN PKOs in conducting training workshops for host communities. Further, as outlined in scenario 6, partnerships between local specialists i.e., health practitioners and UN personnel carry the potential to develop guidelines for use by non-specialists in similar contexts. Human resource ‘management,’ in such a context, may be seen as a two-way process holding mutual learning for both host communities and deployed personnel. Interacting and engaging with host communities in training contexts may at times enable peacekeepers to strengthen inter-group communication between the civilian and military components of a given mission. A key consideration concerns the role of language in communication with the host communities, as well as the ‘positionality’ of the interpreter in enabling the same. Personnel highlighted the need for designing specific training regimens for interpreters, which may act as a key liaison between the PKO personnel and the hosts. Accurate and concise interpretation of local languages was seen as key to assessment and analysis of emergent crises, as well as planning and decision-making in risk perception and management. It was argued that strong language skills are a component in the nomination and selection of personnel, particularly in integrated missions.

### ***Regular Personnel Self-Evaluation and Rotation***

With reference to both crisis management/risk perception and resource management, commentators argued for the need for regular and more comprehensive personnel self-evaluation, particularly concerning the role of communication in enabling more effective civil-military interaction under these themes. It was felt that self-evaluation by personnel, especially those having served in integrated or hybrid mission contexts, would enable greater improvement in the performance and impact of evolving UN peacekeeping. As PKO missions continue to face a dynamic set of administrative, operational, and political challenges, complex and wide-ranging mandates require that personnel exert a range of skills to navigate volatile and often dangerous environments. Given the high cost of operational failures, there emerges a need for restructuring efforts aimed at better crisis management and resource planning.

Considering this, self-evaluation reports help contextualize the experiences of deployed personnel in the light of ongoing high-level reforms while allowing for the identification of skillsets and psychological traits that may aid in improving personnel selection and pre-deployment training.

Finally, regular and robust personnel rotation was seen as essential to cultivating the type of experience-based learning in various contexts that would enable more effective strategic communication. Different contingents from different countries across the world are illustrative of ‘practice communities’ i.e., contexts which allow peacekeepers to cultivate ‘contact skills.’ The IPI Global Observatory defines these skills as helping to “de-escalate potentially violent or manifestly violent situations and facilitate movement toward conflict resolution,” especially in the context of POC missions. Strategic communication may be identified as one such skill, particularly in how it pertains to civil-military interaction in the course of UN PKOs. Thus, combined with the praxis of self-evaluation, personnel rotation was taken as key to sustaining and improving, the operational capabilities of UN peacekeeping. Scenario-based interview interactions also helped in the identification of potential research themes for further study i.e., the impact of effective intra-group communication on personnel morale in mission contexts, as well as the use of social media applications by both civil and military personnel for personal, professional, and communication needs. Additionally, how various contingents perceive ‘strategic’ communication in relation to effectiveness may be tied to the predominant nature of this perception in ‘sending states’ — an area which may be explored further given the increasing role of such states as China in peacekeeping. This, in turn, stands to impact how contingents operationalize communication praxis in integrated mission contexts — an area beyond the scope of this present piece but nonetheless warranting further study.

## **Conclusion**

‘Communication,’ as an ongoing process underlying civil-military interaction, may be taken as a key component in conceptualizing CIMIC in the context of peacekeeping. Consequently, it allows for a process-centric understanding of peacekeeping ‘effectiveness,’ particularly in the light of the growing disconnect between the functional dynamics of on-ground missions and broader overarching doctrine/principles. Transitional and POC mandates compel UNPKOs to operate on the margins of existing doctrine, requiring personnel engaged in conflict management to cultivate and exercise a broader skillset than one initially associated with traditional peacekeeping. Given this background, this research utilized ‘scenario-based interviews’ to engage with the self-reflexive praxis of veteran Pakistani peacekeepers having served in integrated/hybrid missions. In doing so, it attempted to conceptualize communication as a process premised on the ‘shared intentionality’ of both military and civil personnel, utilizing de Coning’s peacekeeping dimensions as a base for the ensuing interaction. ‘Scenario-based interviews’ aided in identifying two broad subthemes under the umbrella of communication i.e., crisis management/risk perception and resource management. It emerged that multidimensional approach(es) towards peacekeeping entail ensuring synergy between the mechanisms that sustain and generate common strategic objectives under civil-military coordination. Given the

distinct social and organizational ‘learning,’ i.e., training that underlies these two groups, salient group membership was seen as shaping the cognitive processes underlying communication in peacekeeping spaces.

It followed that the evolution in the functional dynamics of peacekeeping be reflected in the psychological selection profiles for peacekeepers, as well as in pre-deployment training. In such a context, poor communication signified the lack of essential ‘contact skills’ needed to ensure effective coordination, thus enabling the realization of core mission objectives. Delays in response caused by role clarification, and protracted deliberation about the allocation of responsibilities, were seen as risking a significant loss of life in volatile spaces. This may be analyzed alongside concerns for avoiding duplication of effort i.e., ensuring that both civil and military components operate within their distinct domains. Thus, this research explored the challenges of functioning in a ‘cooperative versus coexistence’ framework under the umbrella of CIMIC in peacekeeping spaces. Communication was seen as a critical interface between humanitarian and military components in such a context, potentially informing further research addressing the perception of ‘strategic communication’ cultures in troop-contributing states.

Further, the multimodal nature of communication, including visual communication utilized through engagements with local and international outlets, was seen as increasingly relevant to the role of media coverage in conflict situations. Thus, the study sought to highlight the somewhat underrated importance of communication, focusing on its ‘strategic’ elements, vis-à-vis the operationalization of civil-military coordination in volatile conflict situations. In doing so, it outlines an area of inter-and multidisciplinary inquiry for further research i.e., how organizational communication theories and attendant risk management modeling may be adapted for the study of peacekeeping contexts.

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