

A Synopsis of Perspectives on (United Nations) Peace Operations from Theories of International Relations

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Abstract

The post-Cold War era witnessed a significant increase in the size and scope of peace operations. However, the role and purpose of peace operations have not received commensurate attention within the intellectual context of theories of international relations. Comprehension of theoretical foundations of international relations is quintessential in understanding the motives behind and implications of third-party intervention in the quest for viable peace. This paper presents a synopsis of major theoretical paradigms in world politics with particular emphasis on their understanding of and implications for contemporary peace operations. The paper strives to delineate the central planks of a particular theoretical paradigm with special reference to the underpinnings of peace operations. Towards the end, the prospect of training peacekeepers to bridge the theory and practice of peace operations has been explored. The research findings shall fill a theoretical gap in peace operations studies and decipher the theoretical basis of the acerbic arguments against peace operations espoused by the obstructionists to the peace processes.

Keywords

Peace operations, theories, international relations, peacekeeping

Introduction

Peace Operations have become essential to the peace process in contemporary global conflicts (Karlsrud, 2018). Peace operations are carried out to stabilize the conflict zones and secure the conflict environment. Peace operations require planning strategies and executing the operations tactfully. Hence, such operations need to have frameworks (Jørgensen, 2017). Under the lens of International Relations (IR) theories, peace operations are often influenced by the conflict actors, institutions,

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population opinions, and the international arena. Understanding IR theories can aid in identifying the nature and significance of peace operations (Oksamytna & Karlsrud, 2020). Also, IR theories can give a variety of perspectives to peace operations. Jørgensen (2017) argues that IR theories can also provide a set of templates and analytical structures for peace operations to the peacekeepers and peacekeeping units.

Relatedly, the term ‘theory’ has many definitions in the discourse of IR. Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (1993, p. 15) define theory as a “systematic reflection on phenomena, designed to explain them and to show how they are related to each other in a meaningful, intelligent pattern, instead of being merely random items in an incoherent universe”. Like all other definitions of ‘theory’ within the context of global politics, this definition assumes that there are patterns to international events and theorists of international relations strive to interpret those events as instances of a more significant phenomenon or theoretical proposition.

One way of conceptually thinking about contemporary peace operations is to view them as third-party intervention strategies to stabilize the conflict environment (Bellamy & Williams, 2004, p. 13). Comprehension of theoretical foundations of International Relations is quintessential in understanding the motives behind and implications of third-party intervention in the quest for a viable peace. IR theory has an indelible impact on peace operations because it “influences what people think of as legitimate or illegitimate, what analysts consider to be core agents and agendas in world politics and how material questions about responding to suffering are constituted” (Pugh, 2003, p. 105). Theories implicitly or explicitly define normative benchmarks and help identify various stakeholders in the peace process. An intelligent ‘Red Team’ analysis of the theoretical paradigms can help decipher the theoretical basis of the acerbic arguments against peace operations espoused by the obstructionists to the peace processes. Theories of IR also provide “a set of templates or pre-packaged analytical structures” (Sterling-Folker, 2006, p. 5) to decision-makers in which peace operations might be categorized, explained, or understood. The usefulness of theory in the high-tech age has been highlighted by Walt (1998, p. 29): “we need theories to make sense of the blizzard of information that bombards us daily”.

Within this debate, there is a significant academic gap in understanding the discourse of peace operations. The peace operation studies lack contextualization and theoretical perspectives. The research views the conduct of peace operations under the lens of theories of IR. The research aspires to be an addition to the already growing literature and helps bridge the existing research gap in the discourse of peace operations.

However, IR is a vast interdisciplinary social science, and the theories in the discipline diverge sharply over their understanding of global politics. The disagreements typically revolve around “the nature of the being (referred to as ontology), how we know and acquire knowledge about being (referred to as epistemology), and what methods we should adopt to study being (referred to as methodology)” (Sterling-Folker, 2006, p. 6). In addition, multiple variants of each theoretical framework are discussed in the present paper. An effort has been made only to delineate the main planks of a particular paradigm, with special reference to the underpinnings of peace operations. Since “states may sometimes choose to act alone or to lead others, on the whole, peacekeeping operations tend to be organized and coordinated by international organizations” (Bellamy & Williams, 2004, p. 105). Moreover, emphasis will be restricted to the role of international institutions in each theoretical framework being discussed. Overlap among theories is another limitation

worth mentioning as the “boundaries of each paradigm are somewhat permeable, and there is ample opportunity for intellectual arbitrage” (Walt, 1998, p. 43). This research paper is qualitative and exploratory in nature. The research consists mainly of secondary data; collected from books, journal articles, and other online sources.

Positivist versus Postpositivist IR Theorists

The intellectual spectrum of IR scholars can be broadly divided into two schools of thought: positivists and post-positivists (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Positivists, also referred to as empiricists, are scholars who insist that there exists an objective state of being or ‘reality’. This reality can be accurately and scientifically measured. In other words, ontology is undisputable, and a fact is a fact. The goal of the IR theorist from a positivist’s perspective is to test competing IR theoretical perspectives against one another empirically. The best known methodological or analytical tools to perform such tests, as posited by Asal and colleagues (2020), are the levels of analysis; the three primary levels being the individual, the nation-state, and the system, also referred to, respectively, as the first image, the second image, and the third image. The first image is the micro-level, where causality is traced to the individuals making foreign policy and the psychology of human decision-making. The second image is the middle level and involves the examination of factors such as government structures, bureaucratic behavior, and interest groups, whereas the third image is the macro-level involving inter-state relations and other structural elements such as geography, relative power, governing system, or capitalist interdependence that might affect or direct the conduct of all nation-states. Realism, liberalism, and constructivism are the most prominent positivist theoretical paradigms.

Postpositivist scholars, also referred to as postempiricists (Pfaltzgraff Jr, 1997, p. 35), lie on the opposite end of the theoretical spectrum. They are skeptical that a fact is a fact and that it can be objectively known and measured. In other words, since ontology is disputed, the analytical methods drawn from pure sciences to explain the programmed behavior of atoms and molecules cannot be relied upon to describe the fickle and random behavior of human beings. They oppose the ‘rationalism’ of the positivists and insist that ‘what gets included and what gets excluded’ in the theory and practice of IR is not due to ‘natural’ or ‘obvious’ choices; instead, these are value judgments based on the interpreter’s commitments and biases. For most post-positivists, the primary activity of an IR theorist is “to reveal how policymakers and positivist IR theorists describe international events, act upon those descriptions as if they were natural, and then justify their actions and arguments in a self-fulfilling circle of codetermination” (Sterling-Folker, 2006, pp. 7-8).

Realism

Realism was the dominant IR theory throughout the Cold War. Realism developed out of the perceived failure of Wilsonian idealism (Steigerwald, 1994), which dominated the interwar period (Fetherston, 1994a, p. 89). It takes states as the primary unit of analysis, with the main focus on territorial-based power politics. Mearsheimer and Alterman (2001, p. 36) argue that the great powers are assumed to be rational actors who take security as a ‘zero-sum’ game, giving rise to the ‘security dilemma’. The essence of the dilemma is that the measures a state takes to its security usually decrease the security of other states. Relative power is assigned causal omnipotence in the realist framework. All outcomes in the realist analysis (human rights violations, military intervention, etc.) ultimately depend on relative power, especially the military power of the actors involved. Sterling-Folker (2006, pp. 13-14) adds that an

absence of a central authority that can impose limits on the pursuit of sovereign interests is labeled as ‘anarchy’. Anarchy coupled with relative power gives rise to a behavioral pattern called ‘balance of power’ in which the relatively weak seek the *ability* to counter the relatively strong.

Realists see global politics as a perennial competition for power—the United States may be the most powerful state in the world, but it cannot change the nature of politics among nations. As a result, realists view ‘world peace’ as a chimera and are “generally pessimistic about the prospects for eliminating conflict and war” (Walt, 1998, p. 31).

The perspective of security as a fixed concept effectively closes doors for conflict resolution in the realist paradigm. Realists also downplay the role of institutions by considering them ‘empty vessels’ and ‘little more than ciphers for state power’ (Koremenos, Lipson, & Snidal, 2001, p. 762). A leading neorealist proponent Mearsheimer (2017, p. 7), asserts that “institutions have minimal influence on state behavior and thus hold little prospect for promoting stability in a post-Cold War period”. However, the challenges of creating and sustaining institutions are valid and persistent. Realists such as Walt (1998, p. 43) posit, “[...] although US leaders are adept at cloaking their actions in the lofty rhetoric of ‘world order’, naked self-interest lies behind most of them”. In blunt and simple words, realists assert that institutions are created by great powers as smokescreens to camouflage their sinister self-interest.

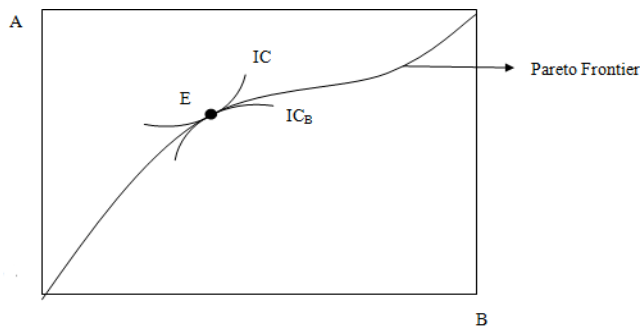
It is pertinent to discuss the conduct of American foreign policy from a realist perspective, which is currently the sole superpower. Mearsheimer and Alterman (2001, pp. 23-25) assert that realism’s central message — that the great powers should selfishly increase relative power — does not have broad appeal, especially to the American general public. Realism is, therefore, a hard sell to the American public. Hence, United States “leaders tend to portray war as a moral crusade or an ideological contest, rather than as a struggle for power”. This dichotomy necessitates a discernable gap (which) separates public rhetoric from the actual conduct of American foreign policy.

The realist paradigm divorces morality from politics. The Hobbesian/Machiavellian dictates of realism leave little or no place for morality or human rights in international politics. In light of this amoral interpretation of global politics, realists blast the concept of ‘American innocence’, as a snare. America’s siding with communist Stalin against the Third Reich and its subsequent dangling with Mao Tse-tung against the Soviet Union is termed by realists as not the action of an innocent nation.

Realist Perspective on Peace Operations

Denial of qualitative progress in the field of IR directly infringes on the peace operations in the realist paradigm (Sterling-Folker, 2006, p. 16). Realists such as Jervis (1999, p. 47) argue that much of international politics is “life on the Pareto frontier”, implying that states have already been able to cooperate to such an extent that no further moves can make all of them better off. The Pareto concept in the realist world can be elaborated with the help of the following diagram:

Figure 1: Pareto frontier through realist perspective



In Figure 1 above, if we assume only two countries, A and B, in a hypothetical world, the intersection of the indifference curves of the two countries on point E represents equilibrium in the realist world. Any deviation from this equilibrium will lead to a loss in the ‘utility’ of one or both countries, prompting the consideration of war between the two countries. The same analysis can be extrapolated to the ‘n’ number of countries in the real world.

After the end of the Cold War, realism suffered a temporary retreat from its dominant position in academic debates. However, realists have since come up with some interesting new perspectives. Of particular importance to peace operations, Barry Posen has offered a realist explanation for ethnic conflict, noting that ‘the breakup of multi-ethnic states could place rival ethnic groups in an anarchic setting, thereby triggering intense fears and tempting each group to use force to improve its relative position’ (Walt, 1998, p. 35).

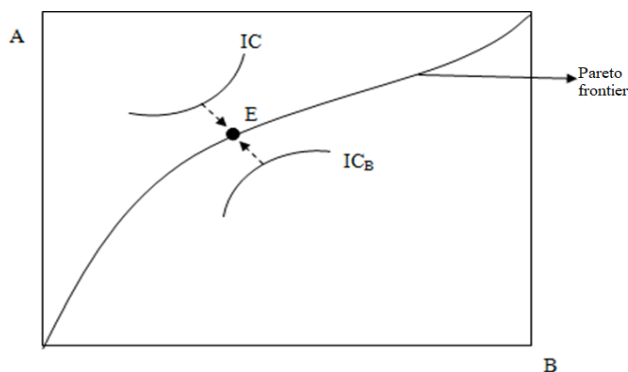
International anarchy advocated by realists implies that the demise of the Soviet Union has left the United States free to follow its whims. *Articles 1, 3, 5, and 6* of the NATO Charter stipulate that NATO is a purely defensive alliance. Similarly, *Article 53* of the UN Charter requires that regional organizations like NATO can be used to enforce peace only with the authorization of the Security Council. However, ‘anarchy’s effects are obvious in the ability of the United States and other NATO countries to flout the NATO Charter, ignore their obligations as United Nations members to obtain a Security Council resolution authorizing war, and disregard international norms against intervention in the domestic conflicts of other states (Adams, 2006, p. 25).

As the dominant state in the world, the United States has the greatest capability to take on peacekeeping, yet it also has the most significant capability to shirk such responsibilities. In line with the dictates of realism, when the Kosovo Force peacekeeping sectors were allocated, the United States could have chosen the “most sensitive” northern sector of Mitrovica, which borders Serbia. Instead, it decided on the southeast sector, which “appeared to be the easiest” (Adams, 2006, p. 30). Anarchy’s imprint is also evident in the de facto allegiance of contingent commanders in various peace operations to their respective governments, although they are supposedly under the command of an international institution (such as, NATO, UN, and AU).

Liberalism

Liberalism is considered the primary theoretical competitor of realism in the positivist school of thought. In sharp contrast to the realist denial of qualitative progress in IR, liberalists profess faith “in at least the possibility of cumulative progress” in human affairs (Sterling-Folker, 2006, p. 55). Liberalists consider that many conflicts in world politics are unnecessary and avoidable. This unrealized cooperation results from failure to employ institutions, resulting in a prisoner’s dilemma or a market failure and producing suboptimal outcomes below the Pareto frontier for all concerned (Jervis, 1999, p. 47). This phenomenon has been explained in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Pareto Frontier, through a liberal perspective



As depicted above, there is a possibility of obtaining mutual gains by both countries A and B, cooperating and moving towards point E on the Pareto frontier. The same logic applies to the ‘n’ number of countries in the real world.

The cooperation literature in the liberal framework is based on the “Folk Theorem” (Ely & Välimäki, 2002), which shows that decentralized cooperation is possible in repeated games. However, since decentralized cooperation is difficult to achieve and is often brittle (owing to distribution and enforcement problems, large numbers, and uncertainty), states devise institutions to promote cooperation and make it more resilient. These institutions have been defined as “explicit arrangements, negotiated among international actors, that prescribe, proscribe, and/or authorize behavior” (Koremenos et al., 2001, pp. 764-766). The role of institutions in promoting peace is pivotal because they “can provide information, reduce transaction costs, make commitments more credible, establish focal points for coordination, and in general facilitate the operation of reciprocity” (Keohane & Martin, 1995, p. 42). Institutionalist liberals highlight the informational role of institutions in promoting transparency and believe that uncertainty or ‘noise’ is reduced through the punishment of ‘cheaters’ in the system. Cooperation is cited more easily in ‘low’ politics (e.g., economic, cultural, environmental), but liberals also believe in the gradual evolutionary development of cooperation in ‘high’ politics (securitization).

Liberal theorists such as Keohane and Martin (1995, p. 50) acknowledge that institutions are not always valuable or ‘constitute a panacea for violent conflict’. They recognize that considerable barriers exist to realizing collective action. Hence they assert that “institutions make a significant difference in conjunction with power realities” (p. 42). Liberal IR theorists consider that their emphasis is to explore the impediments to collective action with an underlying rationale that, in revealing such

barriers, it might also be possible to overcome them in the future (Sterling-Folker, 2006, p. 59).

Liberalist Perspective on Peace Operations

Bellamy and Williams (2004, p. 26) argue that from the outset, the theory and practice of peacekeeping have displayed a commitment to ideas about liberal peace by trying to maintain stable peace across the globe by promoting and defending liberal political and economic practices. In the Westphalian conception, the liberal ideology aimed at creating institutions and spaces for peaceful conflict resolution. In the post-Westphalian conception, however, emphasis has shifted towards the democratic-peace dividend which is a refinement of the earlier claim that democracies were inherently more peaceful than autocratic states. It rests on the argument by Walt (1998, p. 39) that although democracies seem to fight wars as often as other states, they rarely, if ever, fight one another. Successive American governments, especially since the end of the Cold War, have made spreading democracy around the world a pivotal foreign policy tenet.

Critics have, however, pointed out several qualifiers to this theory. First, states may be more prone to war when they are in the midst of a democratic transition, implying that efforts to export democracy might worsen things. Recent experiences in Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Venezuela, and Egypt are cited as support for the thesis that a US foreign policy that promotes democracy is misguided. Second, evidence that democracies do not fight each other is confined to the post-1945 era, and the absence of conflict in this period may be due more to their common interest in containing the *Red Threat* than to share democratic principles.

The public goods variant of liberalism provides important insights into the initiation and continuation of peace operations. It theorizes that intervention in deadly conflicts is impossible without the powerful states playing a significant role. This is because the smaller states tend either to 'free-ride' or consider the burdens of peacekeeping and peacebuilding as too large and the potential benefits too indirect for them to take action themselves (Boyer & Butler, 2006).

The institutional mechanism for peace operations is not a trouble-free phenomenon. As noted above, institutional peace operations create distributional, enforcement, and organizational problems. During the Kosovo campaign, US leaders became increasingly frustrated with what they saw in NATO as a 'war-by-committee'. The 2003 Iraq crisis demonstrated that even Belgium was willing to use NATO assets to block the will of the United States. The United States took NATO out of the war fighting business as a critical course correction but welcomed it in post-crisis peace support operations (Kay, 2006, pp. 72-73).

Constructivism

Realism and liberalism tend to focus on material factors such as power or trade, and constructivist approaches emphasize the impact of ideas (Walt, 1998, p. 40). The true genesis of constructivism lies at the end of the Cold War, which was a shock to both the realist and the liberal paradigms. Sterling-Folker (2006) argues that the most striking aspect of the theory is its transformational logic and the feasibility of rapid and radical change, symbolized by the title of the oft-quoted article: "Anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt, 1992, p. 391). Contrary to realism, constructivists argue that actors are responsible for creating their security dilemmas and competitions by interacting with each other in ways that these outcomes appear inevitable. 'Security

dilemmas are not acts of God: they are effects of practice', argues Wendt (1995, p. 77).

Constructivist IR scholars have borrowed ideas from other disciplines (such as literature, linguistics, and sociology) to build the edifice of constructivism. Since identities and interests are socially constructed, constructivists believe that if actors in the international system were to start perceiving each other as friends instead of foes, the resultant outcomes could be very different. Even structures that the IR scholars typically take as 'given' or 'natural' (e.g. the Westphalian system and the sovereign nation-state) are not seen as immutable structures by the constructivists. They also explore the role of ideas, norms, culture, narratives, rhetoric, speech acts, and discourse as contributory factors in producing particular identities and interests. Constructivism has thus broadened IR theoretical debates by incorporating a philosophical and diverse range of topics within the discipline of international relations (Sterling-Folker, 2006).

Many constructivist scholars seek to occupy the middle ground between positivism and postpositivism. Sterling-Folker (2006, p. 118) further argues that constructivism seeks to legitimize 'certain subjects of inquiry that had either lain dormant in the discipline or had simply been ignored, such as collective identity formation and culture. Ruggie (1998), a leading proponent of constructivism, believes that scholars do not even possess an appropriate vocabulary that can help describe the new factors and forces that are transforming global politics in the digital age.

Constructivist Perspective on Peace Operations

Constructivists argue that international institutions (including peacekeeping institutions) play a vital, independent, and exogenous role in spreading global norms. They also contend that normative discourse is an important aspect of institutional life and that norms are contested within, and are sometimes propagated by, international institutions (Koremenos et al., 2001).

A crucial issue overlooked in the realist and liberal analyses of world politics is the issue of legitimation. A relational constructivist interpretation of peace operations would advocate that the debates and discourse involving various aspects of the peace process are (deliberately) framed in ways that shape, justify, reinforce or overturn opinions. United States policymakers merged the interventionist and humanitarian discourses to justify a violation of the sovereignty of nation-states in the Balkans in the 1990s. This led to what constructivists argue is a discourse of words enabling "bombing in the name of civilized humanity" (Jackson, 2006, pp. 146-147). Their argument is further reinforced by the fact that a similar, if not severe, humanitarian tragedy was allowed to occur in Rwanda in 1994 and subsequently in Darfur.

Positivists and Peace Operations

implications of the positivist theoretical frameworks for policymakers, including those involved in the peace processes, have been summed up by Walt (1998, p. 44), contending that "diplomat of the future should remain cognizant of realism's emphasis on the inescapable role of power, keep liberalism's awareness of domestic forces in mind, and occasionally reflect on constructivism's vision of change". A summary of the preceding arguments of the positivist theoretical paradigm in IR, along with the views of each positivist theoretical strand, is presented in tabular form below (adopted from Walt, 1998, p. 38):

Table 1: Summary of positivist IR theories

SUMMARY OF POSITIVIST IR THEORIES			
Competing Paradigms	Realism	Liberalism	Constructivism
<i>Main Theoretical Proposition</i>	Self-interested states compete constantly for power or security	Concern for power overridden by economic/political considerations (desire for prosperity, commitment to liberal values)	State behavior is shaped by elite beliefs, collective norms, and social identities; Transformational logic, Possibility of rapid, radical change
<i>Main Units of Analysis</i>	States	States	Individuals (especially elites)
<i>Main Instruments</i>	Economic and especially military power	Varies (international institutions, economic exchange, promotion of democracy)	Ideas and Discourse
<i>Modern Theorists</i>	Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer	Michael Doyle, Robert Keohane	Alexander Wendt, John Ruggie
<i>Representative Modern Works</i>	Waltz, Theory of International Politics Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics	Keohane, After Hegemony Fukuyama, "The End of History" (National Interest, 1989)	Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It" (Int'l Organization, 1992); Koslowski & Kratochwil, "Understanding Changes in Int'l Politics" (Int'l Organization, 1994)
<i>Post-Cold War Prediction</i>	A resurgence of overt great power competition	Increased cooperation as liberal values, free markets, and international institutions spread	Agnostic because it cannot predict the content of ideas
<i>Views regarding Peace Operations</i>	Mainly as a vehicle to advance great power interests 'Life on the pareto frontier' closing doors for conflict resolution	As a symbol of growing cooperation among states can help move conflict state towards pareto optimal outcomes	Emphasize the independent exogenous role of institutions; Ideas and discourse play important role in the success of peace operations
<i>Main Limitation</i>	Does not account for International change	Tends to ignore the role of power	Better at describing the past than anticipating the future

Post-positivist Perspective on Peace Operations

Post-positivists, especially since the 1990s, have theorized across a broad spectrum of issues about peace operations. The normative purposes and the ontology of peacebuilding have, in particular, been subjected to scrutiny by post-positivists. Galtung and Fischer (2013) posit that in societal terms, negative peace exists when personal, physical and direct violence is absent. Similarly, positive peace, on the other hand, exists when indirect or structural violence is absent. Radical feminists insist that

the absence of violence against women is included in the peace concept and that attainment of positive peace can help achieve gender balance in society. This conception is especially relevant to post-conflict reconstruction, peacebuilding, and stabilization phases of the peace processes (Brock-Utne, 1990).

Critical Theories of Geopolitics and Media

A critical variant of post-positivist theory in IR argues that “readings of world politics are heavily influenced, perhaps dictated, by visual stimuli” (Jervis, 1999). Thus, television pictures of peacekeepers distributing or guarding humanitarian assistance have more dramatic visual appeal than the ‘conflict trade’ responsible for perpetuating some conflicts in the first place. Subsequent dramatic representations are also made with the implicit purpose of mythologizing conflict and intervention. The *Black Hawk Down*, made with Pentagon support, had little to do with the Somalia and Somali people. On the contrary, it depicted the heroism of the US military in a ‘failed’ state and provided the ‘civilized’ watchers worldwide with a sense of “moral security in the attempt to respond to distant suffering” (Pugh, 2003, p. 109).

The war stories emanating from ‘embedded’ journalists or war-reporters ostensibly provided ‘security cover’ are also subjected to criticism by critical post-positivists. They raise an interesting question as to whether ‘war stories’ or ‘peacebuilding accounts’ dispatched by persons living with the peacekeepers/combattants on the ground, can be fair and impartial, especially keeping in view prolonged/selective exposure to a particular point of view and probable ‘conditioning’ of these journalists.

Critical theories of geopolitics point out the ‘idealized’ and ‘denounced’ versions of one of the core dimensions of peace operations — its neutrality. Pugh (2003, p. 110) also posits that peacekeepers are eulogized in the ‘idealized’ version for remarkably exhibiting no declared interest in outcomes. In the ‘denounced’ understanding of the same concept, to be neutral is tantamount to standing by in an amoral vacuum when ‘natural’ justice cries out for the protection of the ‘innocent’—thereby justifying ‘choices’ to be made for ethical world order. Time to contemplate again: whose ethics and whose world order?

Implications of Postpositivists for Peace Operations

The post-positivist perspectives on peace operations should be seen as a welcome development in the evolution of the theory of peace operations. These should be taken as a challenging riposte to the existing theorization in the field of peacekeeping (Pugh, 2003). A critical evaluation and absorption of the various post-positivist strands can ultimately help mature the nascent theory of peacekeeping for the increasingly demanding peace operations envisaged for conflict zones in the 21st century.

Analysis

The above discussion leads to the analysis that different theoretical frameworks exist, propounding different perspectives on peace operations. The positivist theories encapsulate realism, liberalism, and constructivism, while the post-positivist includes feminism and critical theories of media and geopolitics. Realism perceives peace operations as a tool used by strong power and smaller states to pursue vested interests and agendas. Realists also consider peace operations as a by-product of conflict. Liberalists believe peace operations serve as a tool for cooperation among states and help states determine their needs and define their interests through mutually agreed

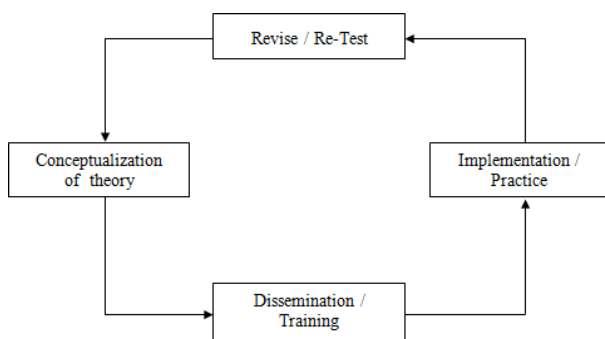
diplomatic perceptions. At the same time, according to constructivists, ideas and norms play an imperative role in the success of peacekeeping operations, which means targeting and accessing the prevalent mind-set, ideas, and norms that paved the way for conflict. Constructivists also stress redefining the way forward towards positive peace through dialogue. Feminists are staunch supporters of positive peace, which is reckoned as sustainable and long-lasting peace, to attain gender balance in society. The theories of media highlight the role of media in molding public perception regarding peace operations through strategic communication and urging states to participate in these operations. According to theories of geopolitics, peace operations are a tool for states to promote their ideologies and agendas in other states and influence militarily and economically strategic territories. The post-positivist theories, i.e., feminism, media, and geopolitics, are a new and positive development giving a new dimension to the theoretical framework of peace operations in the 21st century. All these positivists and post-positivist theories can greatly help dig deeper into the motives and implications of peace operations.

Though this study will go a long way in filling the theoretical gap in peace operation studies, bridging this gap would be inefficacious if the practical aspect is subsided and neglected. So, the training of peacekeepers stands paramount in this regard and plays an important role in bridging theory and practice. Further analysis regarding the importance of training to link theory with the approach is below.

Training as a Bridge between Theory and Practice

Apart from integrating peace operations into major theoretical frameworks of International Relations, it is equally important to link the theory of peacekeeping with the practice thereof. The training of peacekeepers is a critical factor in this process. Unfortunately, the training of peacekeepers continues to suffer from conceptual ambiguity and practical incoherence. In most cases, it is not even considered worthwhile to adjust the peacekeepers from an essentially ‘military/combat’ culture to a ‘third party/peace support’ culture. Training of peacekeepers in a coherent and organized fashion carries the potential of not only fulfilling the dissemination of guiding principles for successful third-party intervention; it can also serve as a vital link in the testing, revision, and polishing of the conceptual basis of peace operations.

Figure 3: The cyclical development of the theory and practice of peace operations



The cyclical development of the theory and practice of peace operations has been visually represented in the above figure (Fetherston, 1994b). The conceptual analysis

leads to training refinements, which leads to practice changes. These changes then spark revision and re-testing, providing crucial feedback into the conceptualization process. The need for a flexible theoretical foundation for peace operations with built-in provisions for constant re-evaluation of the on-going peacebuilding enterprise, in light of practical feedback from peacekeepers on the ground, cannot be over-emphasized. It is only through such an exercise that workable and effective exit strategies can be arrived at.

In the absence of a sound link between training and practice of peacekeeping, the effect of the peace operations on the conflict process itself is, as yet, a moot question. As argued by Fetherston (1994b, p. 210), one should not rule out the possibility that “by intervening as a third party and then lacking in third-party skills needed to facilitate settlement and resolution, peacekeeping prolongs conflict, further polarizes warring factions, and adds to economic and social problems by creating dependency”.

Conclusion

This research has demonstrated that multiple and equally legitimate perspectives exist on peace operations, thereby revealing the inherently political nature of peace operations. For example, the realist school of thought believes that peacekeeping operations are tools that the superpower and other states use to pursue their vested interests and agendas. Liberalists consider peacekeeping operations as a tool for increased cooperation among states. Constructivists believe that the role of ideas and norms is paramount in the success of peace operations, which means targeting and addressing the prevalent norms and ideas that paved the way for conflict. The feminists staunchly support positive peace for attaining gender balance in society. The theories of media regarding peace operations highlight the role of media in molding public perception and urging states to engage in peace operations, while the theories of geopolitics reflect the competition among states in promoting their ideologies and influencing militarily and economically strategic territories through peace operations. The research findings can serve the purpose of filling a theoretical gap in peace operations studies. Roland Paris is of the view that ‘building the study of peace missions into a mature academic subfield will require a concerted effort to move beyond the current preoccupation with practical operational issues and, instead, to use these missions as windows into larger phenomena of international politics’ (De Coning & Peter, 2019). Moreover, training of the peacekeepers stands paramount and can serve as a bridge to link the theory of peacekeeping with practice.

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