

A FAILED PEACE IN SOUTH SUDAN? EXPLORING UNARMED CIVILIANS AND LOCAL PEACEKEEPERS THROUGH THE WORK OF NONVIOLENT PEACEFORCE[©] Σ

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ABSTRACT

Since the 2013 outbreak of civil war in South Sudan, the conflict has produced orgies of casualties and displacement of millions necessitating a series of mandates of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Yet, humanitarian crises and civilian protection challenges have not been reversed. To address these deficiencies, this article examined methods of the unarmed civilian peacekeeping as local peace formation and infrastructure involving the non-use of weapons for civilian protection as practiced by the Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP). Adopting ethnographic strands of Critical Peace Studies and utilisation of participant observations in humanitarian accounts with the NP between 2015 and 2019, our in-depth qualitative fieldwork indicates a potentially effective approach to unarmed civilian protection in the country. Our findings illuminate the limited viability of the UN civilian appointed personnel, while making an argument for the compelling efficacy of unarmed civilian peacekeepers in which those affected by the conflict are themselves empowered in their physical protection, the study further recommends the integration of the NP strategies into the current state of peace operation disarray so the current self-fulfilling prophecy of failed peace in South Sudan can be overturned.

Keywords: Nonviolent Peaceforce, peacekeeping, protection of civilians, South Sudan, unarmed civilian peacekeeping, and liberal peacebuilding.

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KEAMANAN YANG GAGAL DI SUDAN SELATAN? MENEROKA WARGA SIVIL TIDAK BERSENJATA DAN PENJAGAAN KEAMANAN TEMPATAN MELALUI NONVIOLENCE PEACEFORCE

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ABSTRAK

Sejak teretusnya perang saudara di Sudan Selatan pada 2013, konflik itu menghasilkan pesta korban dan perpindahan jutaan orang, mandat masa lepas dan baharu bagi perlindungan orang awam dalam Misi Pertubuhan Bangsa-Bangsa Bersatu di Sudan Selatan (UNMISS) tidak menunjukkan hasil yang baik. Untuk menangani kelemahan tersebut, makalah ini mengkaji kaedah pengaman awam tidak menggunakan senjata sebagai pembentuk keamanan dan infrastruktur tempatan, yang tidak menggunakan senjata untuk perlindungan awam seperti yang diamalkan oleh organisasi Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP). Menerusi etnografi Kajian Keamanan Kritis dan penggunaan pemerhatian peserta dalam aktiviti kemanusiaan NP sepanjang 2015 hingga 2019, hasil kerja lapangan kualitatif kami menunjukkan potensi keberkesanan untuk perlindungan orang awam tidak bersenjata di Juba. Hasil dapatan ini menunjukkan kemajuan terhadap kakitangan awam PBB di Sudan Selatan, sekaligus menegaskan keperluan dan potensi kaedah pasukan pengaman awam yang tidak bersenjata di mana mereka yang terjejas oleh konflik itu sendiri diberi kuasa untuk melindungi fizikal mereka. Kajian turut mengesyorkan integrasi strategi yang diamalkan oleh NP dalam operasi keamanan semasa PBB yang bermasalah di Sudan supaya ramalan kegagalan keamanan di Sudan Selatan ketika ini dapat dihalang.

Kata Kunci: *Nonviolent Peaceforce, penjagaan keamaan, perlindungan orang awam, Sudan Selatan, penjagaan keamanan sivil tidak bersenjata dan pembinaan keamanan liberal.*

Introduction

From around the 2000s, the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations (PKO) have shifted from merely keeping hostile peace (ceasefire) to the protection of civilians (PoC) (Bellamy and Williams 2015; Chandler 2017; UN 2003; Menkhaus 2014). Moreover, decades of peace research seem inspired by proponents of Galtung's triangle of peace and analytical distinctions between the short-term scope of peacekeeping and the long-term work of peacebuilding (Galtung 1976; Eyane, 2022; Bellamy and Williams 2013). Profound lessons from South Sudan have shown obscured these distinctions since present peacekeeping relied more on peacebuilding activities relied on safeguarding hostile ceasefire between conflicting parties (Abrahamsen 2017; Barnes 2022; Karlsrud 2019). While consolidating institution-building and myriads of local peace in liberal peacebuilding activities are now consolidated in the three pillars of the UN's PoC doctrine, the reality of failed peace in South Sudan is becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. (Deng 2018; Day 2021; Donais and Solomon 2021). Despite recent updates and new commitments of the UN to renew the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), there is an alarming concern about the normalisation of violence where existing orthodoxies and failures of PKO in South Sudan is rather apparent (Moro 2022; Martell 2019; Millar 2022). Additionally, the UNMISS has been unable to constantly prevent increasing numbers of violent attacks in South Sudan since its establishment (UNMISSb 2015; UNMISS 2016; UNMISS 2017a; UNMISS 2017b). This has not only damaged its credibility to protect civilians but has also called to question the claim that the presence and size of armed peacekeepers can reduce civilian and battle-related deaths during peacekeeping operations (Wardell 2014; Wiharta and Blair 2010; Woldemariam 2020). Mandates of the mission continued to be renewed as the disputes continued between the followers of South Sudan's President Salva Kiir and his former vice, Riek Machar (Young 2019; Wondemagegnehu 2019) By implication, there have been increases in the financial costs of the mission, which pictured the ineffectiveness of UNMISS as a mission to uphold negative peace and, essentially, protect unarmed civilians (Murphy 2017; Williams and Bellamy 2021).

Formed as a multidimensional peacekeeping operation, UNMISS has grown to involve civilian members involved in humanitarian, coordination, and administrative activities (Russo, 2022, Roach2023; Jower 2018; Munive 2013). Given near agreements of recent commentators over the state of 'illusory peace' and the blind spot of UNMISS in South Sudan (Pnaud 2021; Natsios 2012; Kaplan 2015), this article argues on the need to explore 'local peace' and 'peace formation' concepts as theorised by leading Critical Peace and Conflict scholar, Richmond (2016) Richmond and Visoka 2021). The lacuna of liberal peacebuilding and top-down approaches of the UN policymakers in South Sudan is evident (Johnson 2014, 2016, 2018; Deng 2016; Diehl and Druckman 2015). Renewed mandate without realising the short-sightedness of excluding the non-UN civilian stakeholders cannot be underestimated (Day 2021; Coughlan 2017, Akonor 2017). Therefore, the question that still needs answers is why the various functions of the UN-appointed civilian officers of the mission have not translated to the actual physical protection of South Sudan civilians.

Perhaps it is the right time to acknowledge the endemic resistance of the UN Peacekeeping Department (UNPKD) through the UNMISS mandate to expand and include civilian components beyond the UN appointees (Kroops *et al*, 2015c, 2015d, Large 2014). Unintendedly, the failure of the UNMISS to mitigate the problem created a security vacuum, resulting in a paradox of success and the ubiquitous presence of multiple and other transnational and militarised peace actors (Leira 2016; Howard 2019). Through our observation, during the fieldwork with NP in Juba, we discovered that the endangered negative peace dominated the UNMISS, especially when experts on the ground considered to have more numbers and flexible ways of incorporating non-UN civilian appointed actors. The problem brought another layer of peacekeeping competition and friction with the African Union (AU) Peacekeeping forces and East African Community with overlapped roles and other international and local peace activists in South Sudan (Gray 2022; Young 2019, Williams 2018, Williams 2010). To further unravel the exclusion of non-UN civilian actors and the politics of liberal peacebuilding beyond the UNMISS, AU, and EAC brinkmanship games, we examine and illustrate our case study, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), deployed since 2010 at the invitation of the Institute for the Promotion of Civil Society (IPCS) and the Sudanese Organization for Nonviolence and Development (SOND). Present exhaustive themes of PoC failures in South Sudan illuminate the real danger: the overzealous presence of UNMISS as a legitimate international actor is undermined by AU and EAC's regional politics (Wiharta and Bliar 2010).

The main objective of this paper is to demonstrate instructive *lessons of the NP works* in neutralising communal violence in South Sudan and unpacks the compelling arguments for *unarmed civilian peacekeepers* as a missing local peace infrastructure and peace formation. To answer the question: 'why can't civilians provide direct physical protection to civilians?' in South Sudan's peacekeeping theatre and peacebuilding literature, subsequent discussions of this paper address the following questions. *Firstly*, can unarmed civilian peacekeeping fit into the literature of peacekeeping in contemporary security studies? *Second*, can unarmed civilian peacekeepers protect civilians in South Sudan? *Third*, how have NP's unarmed civilian peacekeeping strategies impacted the protection of civilians in South Sudan? *Finally*, can NP's unarmed civilian peacekeeping practices be integrated into the UNMISS and future UN peacekeeping operations? Nonetheless, to answer these questions, this article is segmented into three sections. The first section introduces NP's execution of the unarmed civilian peacekeeping for civilian protection vis-à-vis conventional UNMISS's protection strategies. The second section examined the efficacy of NP's unarmed civilian peacekeeping strategies explained in the first section by reviewing previous case studies and mission reports. The section also examined UNMISS's activities to demonstrate how the mission's approach toward civilian protection in South Sudan has been ineffective. The third section emphasises the need for the integration of NP's unarmed civilian peacekeeping as an alternative for the multidimensional peacekeeping operation in South Sudan and in future UN peacekeeping operations. Qualitative ethnographic approaches in Critical Peace Research guided our method in utilising participant observation and informal interviews with the NP officer, former survivors, and UN personnel in several local projects, and throughout the period between 2016 and

2019. Security and ethical considerations of working in the conflict zone are guided by Richmond (2014), Zartman (2009), Omeje (2021), and Azman (2016) works. Their fieldwork reflections on the potentials and pitfalls of the qualitative methods in African peacebuilding and conflict zone research inspired our attempt to explain and understand the work of NP's unarmed civilian peacekeepers in South Sudan.

Nevertheless, our findings over the work of the NP contribute a new perspective on the role of non-combatant civilians within the local peace space, especially in proving more effective PoC operations beyond the rigidity and top-down regulation of the UNMISS or other African peace operations in South Sudan. With its strategic non-use of weapons approach, NP empowers the ability of civilians as front liners of conflict to protect civilians in danger, which can be an option for UNMISS. After all, the UNSC resolution 2252 (2015) had encouraged the mission can "use all necessary means to carry out its task" (UNSC 2015). One then wonders why the UNMISS has not learned from the experiences of other peacekeeping organizations with which it has the same mandate. Additionally, to support NP's argument for the essentiality of unarmed civilian peacekeeping in South Sudan, the former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon recognized the practice of unarmed protection strategy as a need that "must be at the forefront of the UN efforts to protect civilians" (UNSC 2016b).

Bringing the Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping within the Peacekeeping Literature

This section incorporated Richmond's Peace Formation seminal works (2014, 2016, 2020) and Richmond and Visoka (2022) to explore NP as unarmed civilian peacekeepers and local peace infrastructure. According to Richmond (2016), unlike typical external crafted and imposed of the UN's liberal peace, national peace formation organically evolved from below wherein external and top-down ceasefire proposals mediated and included local and other transnational civilian personnel. For Richmond and Ginty (2022), local legitimacy consolidated international peace projects and operations, especially locals, who are empowered with knowledge of conflict resolution and peacekeeping activities, so they served as peace dividends instead of peace spoilers. Thus, to characterise NP projects with South Sudanese former victims and survivors, and considered these local agencies as unarmed civilian peacekeepers, transnational conversation, and diffusion of peace knowledge between the NP officers and South Sudanese represent organic and more flexible forms of peace partnerships and powerful actors of pacifism. In line with Richmond peace formation and post-liberal peace emancipation in Critical Peace Studies, Kovacs (2019) works with the peace margins in post-conflict survivors in Balkan confirmed transnational civilian actors and knowledge transfer with locals beyond the rigid radar of the UN is a missing peace infrastructure and often excluded. As such, unarmed civilians or works of peace activism by non-state individuals, civil societies, and international NGOs as a bridge in peace formation processes.

Within the peace formation literature, Richmond (2014) explores underlying conditions to escalate social capital and the roles of local actor empowerment during the transition from violence to peace. Despite increasing deployments of UN civilian

personnel and heavy munitions, non-military experts are occupied with strategic concerns, coordination of bird 'eye views of peace operations, and logistic mobilisation of ceasefire clauses (Kovacs 2019).

Even though South Sudan's conflict hotspots are occupied by enough UN civilians, the rigid top-down approach controlled by the UN and exclusion of non-UN civilian appointees creates a red-tape bureaucracy in the instant peace needs of unarmed civilian workers (Richmond and Ginty 2022). Survivors from previous episodes of violence confessed to NP officers and similar transnational civilian actors that they opted to rejoin conflicting parties to survive future violence when UNMISS and UN civilian officers are late in responding to their security concerns (NP 2014). To further contextualise NP's humanitarian work in mediating civilian space as local peace infrastructure (during the ceasefire transition), we need to consider the Social Constructivist views on the changing norms and construction of humanitarian needs of the victim in the conflict zone.

Moreover, Dun and Shaw (2001) confirmed the difficulty of theorising African security objects into narrow confinement and mainstream International Relations theory. However, the improvisation of selective theories like Social Constructivism in understanding the limitations of the UN and its international humanitarian intervention in South Sudan is acceptable (Abrahamsen 2017). Omeje (2021), Akonor (2017), and Teiku (2014) acknowledge Social Constructivism contributions in the study of peacekeeping operations and considered Constructivist readings of African Security subjects. As such, while UNMISS's activities constitute legitimate post-Cold War military efforts for humanitarian intervention in saving victims during conflicts as described by Finnemore (1998, 1999), the protection of civilians in a peacekeeping operation can be reinforced by the effectiveness that unarmed civilian peacekeeping can provide. Although the deployment of troops to a conflict zone is legitimate as debated in Wendt's meaning of anarchy (1992, 1995), but it indicates a state of disorder (Weiss 2015). Thus, how can peace result from carrying weapons to protect civilians? Bringing a new idea to the table, such as unarmed civilian peacekeeping, requires influence, endorsement, adherence, and compliance by the actors in the conflict for a "norm internalisation," (Wallis 2010, 2015) which is why the idea for unarmed civilian peacekeeping cannot be "taken-for-granted and is no longer a matter of broad public debate" (Weber 1996).

However, this article is not to stage the conceptualisation of norm change in a peacekeeping sphere, but to realise the study of peacekeeping and determine how unarmed civilian peacekeeping fits into the military context of most ceasefire operations (see Akonor 2017). The definition of peacekeeping has been conservative for focusing mostly on the military component, and, surprisingly, the UN that legitimises the establishment of a peacekeeping operation does not even have its definition of peacekeeping as argued by Williams (2010, 2015a, 2015b, 2016), Williams and Bellamy (2021), as well as Goulding (1993). The conservative yet controversial notion essentially depicts peacekeeping as "involving military personnel, but without enforcement powers... to help maintain or restore international peace and security in

areas of conflict." (UNPKO 2008, UNNC 2016a). International Peace Academy (1984) also considered the components of a peacekeeping operation to include prevention, containment, moderation, and termination of hostilities to uphold and maintain peace (see also Doss 2011). A definition Williams and Bellamy (2021) considered to be too broad and lacking principles that connect other functions of a peacekeeping operation. Goulding (1993), however, suggests that peacekeeping includes principles of consent, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate (see Weber 1993; Weiss 2015; White 2015).

The question that comes to mind then is: of what use are the principles of non-use of force which still reserves the idea that peacekeeping still needs armed personnel? It is in this regard that Carrier argued that peacekeepers possessing weapons undermines winning over the hearts and minds of the local communities or establishing informal relations (Carriere 2010). Alchin *et al.* (2018) have advised a change in the traditional scope of peacekeeping by involving increased interaction with locals, which means that peacemakers can be anyone, including those not from the military group (Kroops *et al.* 2015d). Arising from the foregoing, this article argues that the definition of peacekeeping provided by the UN Peace Operations Training Institute has opened an avenue for an alternative approach towards peacekeeping, given its definition of peacekeeping as "a technique designed to preserve the peace, however fragile, where fighting has been halted, and to assist in implementing agreements achieved by the peacemakers" (UNPKO 2008; UNNC 2016b).

Though the UN peacekeeping operations have involved civilians both in definition and actual operations as reported in the 2003 Handbook on United Nations Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations (UN 2003). This study advocates that such civilians need to go "beyond their circle of duties and go the extra mile to become experts in conflict management and political analysis with a clear understanding of history and culture" (Woldermariam 2020). Schweitzer's (2010) definition of civilian peacekeeping highlighted the role of civilians similar to Mahatma Gandhi's "Peace Army," (Schweitzer 2012) - that is, preventing direct violence through influence or control over the behaviour of perpetrators, with no weapons and even without any military background (Sharland and Gorur 2015). Historically, we have seen the practice of preventing violence initiated in the early 1990s by networks of churches and synagogues in North America that protected Central American political refugees wanting to return to their home villages in Mexico (Coy 1993). In short, civilian peacekeeping officials are unarmed civilians that place themselves in conflict situations at any time, physically present and close to the threatened individuals, including living with them with the objective to prevent violence from happening (Tshiband 2010).

Nevertheless, to reconcile the contested watershed of the definitional debates, Schweitzer's (2010; 2012) unarmed civilian peacekeeping can be an addition for the UN PKO by looking at when either of these peacekeeping practices can start to operate. NP argues that unarmed civilian peacekeeping can start at any stage of the conflict without relying on an official peace accord to be reached beforehand. The principles of unarmed civilian peacekeeping appear similar to or at least mirror the principles of UN

peacekeeping stated by Goulding (non-use of force), except for self-defence and defence of the mandate. The difference is that unarmed civilian peacekeeping does not allow for the use of force at all, and peace is essentially achieved through relationships and communication skills as emphasised by Schirch (2006), Boothe (2007), and Schmidt (2018).

Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) and the Protection of Civilians in South Sudan

Co-founded by David Hartsough and Mel Duncan, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) was envisioned as a large-scale “peace army” of unarmed, paid civilian peacekeeping organisations for fostering dialogue among parties to a conflict and providing a protective presence for threatened civilians (NP 2015b). Since its first mission in Sri Lanka in 2003, NP operates by having to “live and work within the communities” (NP 2012). NP aims to achieve four goals: (1) create a space for fostering lasting peace; (2) protect civilians, especially those made vulnerable because of the conflict; (3) develop and promote the theory and practice of unarmed civilian peacekeeping so that it may be adopted as a policy option by decision-makers and public institution; and (4) build the pool of professionals able to join peace teams through regional activities, training, and maintaining a roster of trained, available people. To achieve these goals, NP draws its peacekeepers from international personnel from the top down and functions as an unarmed ‘global civilian peacekeeping army’ with no allegiance to any state. NP only makes voluntary efforts as a strategic, organised, and trained peacekeeping organization that fits in all spectrums of peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and peace-making (NP 2016b).

Different conflicts in different countries present different conflict complexities, and UNMISS practices have faced challenges within South Sudan’s local contexts (Turse 2016; Vandervort 2009). In South Sudan, despite gaining independence on July 9, 2011, political stability remains the main criterion for the success of the country, which was not achieved in 2011 (Tong 2013; Wall 2014; Wal 2015; Clapham 2017). The South Sudanese parliament is dominated by the majority from the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), which also controlled nine of the ten-state governorship positions in the country, signifying its major control over most bureaucracies (Young 2019; Thion 2022). Rick Machar, the Vice President of South Sudan, rose against President Salva Kiir when the latter accused him of planning a coup d’état, culminating in the South Sudanese civil war that has killed about 2.5 million South Sudanese (Arnold 2013; Barnes 2022; Colins 2019).

However, aside from the political connotations, the conflict has also been ethnically motivated, especially given the fact that President Kiir is from a Dinka tribe while former Vice President Machar is a Nuer, the two major ethnic groups in South Sudan (Deng 2016). With the majority of Dinka ethnic group members in the South Sudanese military force being loyal to President Kiir, and army defectors and allied militias loyal to Machar, things have been worsened for the civilians. In short, whether civilians are Dinka, Nuer, or of any ethnic group, their lives have been at stake (Easthom 2015; Giovanni 2014). For instance, as of October 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2017) reported that there were 1.88 million

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in South Sudan, posing significant challenges to the UNMISS's strategies for civilian protection.

In response to the internal displacement, UNMISS initiated the Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites located in the most affected areas of the country. However, as Toby Lanzer, the UN's humanitarian chief in South Sudan, revealed, the PoC became complicated with congestion, poor water supplies, and sanitation (Rolandsen and Lonardi 2014) becoming "unlivable, being entirely flooded, and people suffered and died at extremely high rates" (Russo 2022). What more, there was poor handling by the UN peacekeepers who focused more on protecting civilians inside the sites at the expense of those outside and poor monitoring of inward and outward movements (Schmidt 2013). There was also a lack of guidance from UNMISS leadership for the peacekeepers when responding to violence. For instance, when the mission leader sent a message that does not resemble 'independent and impartial' in delivering their protection mission (UNMISS 2016), it opens various avenues for conflict engagement and lack of guidance on how to respond, especially when the threat and violence to the population come from the South Sudanese government forces. These dynamics undermined the performance of military peacekeepers, as they often performed their duty when orders are given even in the face of imminent threat (Wall 2013).

Addressing the shortcomings of the UNMISS operations, NP's strategies have included using the Women's Protection Team for peace and security in their communities to ward-off gender-based violence (GBV) perpetrators, which was in response to numerous reported cases of GBV incidents among women and girl victims in conflict-ridden areas. Although it is not common for women to play a role as armed combatants (NP 2017b) but given their leadership charisma, women can serve as peacekeepers, demonstrating a newly discovered 'agency' that shifts the balance of power in their families and communities (NP 2016c). Thus, the Women Protection Team has enlisted over 1,900 local women, and reports have highlighted the participation of 50 women in Rumbek, and the local female peacekeepers among the Kook community brought deterrence to violence and have advocated for peace and engagement with the community (Pinaud 2014).

Moreso, high demands against scarce supplies in PoC sites worsened the overcrowding and shortage of food supplies, creating further security challenges (such as weapons proliferation) and signifying a need for an innovative approach to a protected territory. For instance, in May 2012, NP began to dialogue with the stakeholders leading to the creation of a Weapon-Free Zone (WFZ) in the town of Yirol in October 2012 (NP 2012). The essence of this is that local communities can establish their desired WFZ to neutralise the use and possession of weapons in their community and neighbourhood, which would allow for a safer environment to run other activities. In fact, NP also assisted with the establishment of a Child-Friendly Space (CFS) in Ulang, which is a special WFZ to make the children "feel like kids again" even in the conflict situation (Russo 2022).

However, in cases of conflicts in areas where there is no peace actor present, for instance in Upper Nile State, NP peacekeepers have tended to enter such areas and conducted monitoring and assessments under the tasks of its Mobile Team. According to a former International Protection Officer of NP in South Sudan, interviewed in 2018:

There is no UNMISS presence in Upper Nile State, and protection concerns over civilians exist. By having a mobile team, we would drive to the area and conduct our work there. Basically, we would be deployed for a period of one week... conduct assessments to see any protection needs, engage with the community to see any concerns over their protection, and with the limited time we try to educate them about our work (NP 2018).

Furthermore, although it is not a new term, Early Warning, Early Response (EWER) has been complemented as a mechanism for civilians to better prepare for attacks and seek safe passages instead of being displaced in another location without knowledge of the safety of that area (Shaw 2014). It does not only provide a safe passage for displaced people seeking safety from threats of conflict but also enables reunification activities to take place (UNMISS 2016). For instance, in December 2017, NP managed to reunify a lot of vulnerable individuals, including the elderly, the disabled, and children, separated from their families in the conflict (NP 2017a). Lastly, NP has responded to the conflict in South Sudan with protection strategies that prevent violence through active engagement with the local actors. NP's strategies of the Women Protection Team, WFZ, EWER mechanism, and the NP Mobile Team reach out to the local population and include them in the process of keeping the peace. This proves that initiating a protection strategy that involves the participation of the local community has a higher prospect to become successful.

The efficacy of Nonviolent Peaceforce's unarmed civilian peacekeeping strategies

For an evaluation of the NP's effective protection strategy in South Sudan, it is important to know how it has managed to save civilian lives, protect its staff, and cost-effectively execute activities. This section identifies the gaps that exist in UNMISS's and other AU similar peacekeeping operations to point out key comparisons of the work done between UNMISS and NP which can support the need for unarmed civilian peacekeeping in future UN peacekeeping missions.

NP's unarmed civilian peacekeeping in South Sudan has only one common objective with all other NP missions: to save lives by preventing conflict from happening, and cases abound to lend credence to NP's successes. In one case, in Yirol, violence broke out after a meeting among youths from different clans, which triggered the early-warning alarm and was responded to by an international NP protection officer with several local officers (Samuel and Anderson 2018). Another case, shared with Rotary Peace Chula by Florington Aseervatham, the former NP Country Director in South Sudan, was when he and his team acted in different levels of intervention to provide support to the affected communities following an outbreak of violence in Pibor County in Jonglei State in 2015 (Aseervatham 2015). With their international identities and physical presence, he argued that NP in South Sudan was able to protect civilians,

especially women and children, from attackers carrying weapons (Donais and Solomon 2021). Additionally, Aseervatham (2015) shared another experience in which his team found and brought to the hospital for medical treatment a 9-year-old girl, hiding in the bush for 10 days after being thrust through the torso. NP peacekeepers' presence at the hospital also ensured that the girl was safe to receive medical attention.

The focus on preventing conflict has also successfully built trust between the civilian peacekeepers and the local community, encouraging capacity-building opportunities for local communities to decide by themselves in achieving peace and preventing violence (Draper 2015). In this particular regard, the *Nelson Daily* published a report about Randy Janzen (2014), who joined NP to learn about how this organisation works on the ground in South Sudan and described his experience seeing NP peace teams quickly build relationships with parties to the conflict (Ioffe 2012). Randy Janzen equally observed further that:

I was told repeatedly by South Sudanese staff members that unarmed civilian peacekeeping was the most important component of creating a culture of peace in their country. They told me to go back home and inform people about the important work the civilian peacekeeping teams are doing (Janzen 2014).

Whereas, the UN peacekeeping mission is argued to be the opposite, primarily because the political process in carrying out its operation involves multiple decision-makers from different levels, which at the UNSC level may even be a subject of veto power (Abrahamsen 2017; Akpsom 2016; Akonor 2017). For example, Russia and Venezuela reportedly reached a consensus and placed reservations on the proposed sanctions of the South Sudanese leadership, just as the troop-contributing countries tend to put forward conditionalities (Apuuli 2014; Arnold *et al.* 2013). Thus, these scenarios provide ample scope for the adoption of NP's protection practice in the UN peacekeeping operation.

Moreover, international presence is arguably a pre-condition but not essential to preventing violence, and NP's formation of the WPT is an example of how protection responsibilities can be carried out by the determined locals to maintain peace and stability (Coy 1997, 2012; Doss 2011; Duncan and Hartsough 2016a). Ann Frisch, a Senior Advisor to NP, told White Bears Press that being seen as armless and nonpartisan contributes to the trust established between the peacekeepers and the locals (Easthom 2017). As she added: "We don't take sides. We're not the judges" (NP 2014). Thus, the non-use of weapons makes it easier to engage with locals, as nonviolent peacekeepers do not pose any threat but earned the needed trust of the locals (see also Mahony 2006; Magok 2015).

However, the core activities of accompaniment and patrolling are other strategies used by NP for preventing gender-based violence (NP 2012). Based on the case studies, perpetrators would not stand a chance to harass local women whenever they go out to collect water and firewood when accompanied (NP 2015b). Although not officially recorded, Mel Duncan claimed in 2015 that NP's civilian peacekeepers' accompaniment

of women outside of the protection area to stop gang rapes has been done more than 1,000 times in 14 months (Duncan 2016b). Moreover, Easthom highlighted that evidence of the success of WFZ can be seen immediately after its implementation, (2015) in which civilians felt safer, weapons proliferation dropped, and violence was managed as more people became aware of and respected the boundaries of WFZ, which effectively gained interest from commissioners from seven counties in the Lake States (NP 2017b).

However, contrary to NP's unarmed peacekeepers, military troops deployment such as the UNMISS could potentially trigger violence. As Kohn (2010) argued, it can be assumed among the locals that the presence and deployment of armed personnel would make the local populations to be preyed upon. For the troops to carry weapons could trigger a situation in which the locals would take actions into their own hands, which resonates with the argument of Kaplan (2015), posted on *Political Violence at A Glance* (2015) that:

Armed actors are also prone to attracting 'opportunists' to their ranks as armed coercion can be employed for profiteering. Opportunists are less ideologically committed, show less restraint, and are more prone to pillage and plunder. Not limited to rebels and paramilitaries, these kinds of individuals are also found among peacekeepers and militaries as well (Kaplan 2015).

However, another important dimension of the discourse is the cost implications of peace sustenance. With 170 local and international staff members, NP spent USD 6,97 million for the execution of its activities from January 2016 to December 2016, and total expenditure only increased to about USD 7 million in 2017, which is arguably cost-effective for the protection of civilians in South Sudan (NP 2017c). By implication, the NP's expenditure is insignificant if compared to that of the UN with an average annual budget of USD 1.12 billion and 18, 802 personnel, just as their capacities are incomparable too. But if we compare the efforts of the frontliners of UNMISS and NP, then there could be a reasonable commendation for the efforts of the unarmed peacekeepers against those who carry arms.

Potentially, therefore, having unarmed front-liners who would engage directly in protecting civilians would be more cost-effective as compared to the armed military personnel who could potentially make their presence a threat to themselves (see Nyak 2017). Consequently, the UN's adoption and implementation of NP's strategies stand the chance of increasing the protection of civilian mandate. After all, reports abound about unarmed civilian peacekeeping bringing peace to South Sudan (Oldenhuis *et al.* 2016). In this regard, the next section discusses a possible integration of unarmed civilian peacekeeping into UN peacekeeping operations and agenda.

Nonviolent Peaceforce and the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: A Call for Integration and Expansion of Civilian Capacity in Peacekeeping

Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) has received recognition from legitimate organisations such as UN Women, and there has also been a call to scale up support for unarmed civilian protection in conflict-affected countries, including working alongside peace operations authorised by the UN in 2015 (UNW 2015). This is, therefore, suggestive of the need to expand the civilian peacekeeping activities in South Sudan, perhaps in conjunction with UNMISS. Similarly, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC 2016a) Resolution 2327 regarding the situation in South Sudan recognised the importance of unarmed civilian peacekeeping, stating that unarmed civilian protection can:

often complement efforts to build a protective environment, ...and encouraging UNMISS, to explore how it can use civilian protection techniques to enhance its ability to protect civilians (UNMISS 2016a).

Moreover, the Secretary-General's view in a report on UNMISS's report published in November 2016 recognised the use of unarmed civilian peacekeeping as a practice to protect civilians from violence (UNMISS 2016b). Responding to the pressure for a peacekeeping strategy reform to better protect civilians, UNMISS has reportedly taken steps with the local civilians with direct interaction between its front-line peacekeepers and the civilians and assisting them with the challenges of their daily routine. For instance, given the importance of cow rearing and its conflict-invoking tendencies, Indian peacekeepers have provided free veterinary services for many of the locals (Roach 2023). Mary Yar, a cattle owner, shared her experience and appreciation of UNMISS personnel for saving her \$100 in veterinary service costs (Murphy 2017). Similarly, in Unity State, Ghanaian peacekeepers have taken the same initiative in providing hands-on support and training for cattle farmers to get through the rainy season and become self-sufficient in the long term (HRW 2017). These initiatives signified a humane engagement that builds trust between the peacekeepers and the communities, which is an important focus in all NP strategies that enable the communities to trust the peacekeepers in protecting them and addressing their daily concerns.

When it comes to creating a safe zone for civilians, probably the most significant integration of NP's unarmed civilian peacekeeping strategy missing in UNMISS protection strategy was the setting-up of a 200-meter-wide weapons-free zone (WFZ), an initiative to respond to the allegations that UNMISS is harbouring criminals in its PoC sites (HRW 2016). In 2016, WFZ was established to enhance visibility and regular patrols to deter, search and apprehend armed individuals (Julian and Gasser 2019), which effectively increased the works of UN peacekeepers from patrolling the outside area of the PoC sites to escorting women to collect firewood (Murphy 2017). It also facilitated the reopening of community schools outside of the PoC site in Juba (Phayaland Prins 2020), and generally promoted a safe environment among neighbouring villages (Pendle 2021; Pinaud 2021). The Head of UNMISS, David Shearer, acknowledged that the establishment of WFZ in Juba has reduced all serious incidents of murder, armed robbery, assault, kidnapping, and rape in the area to approximately 4 per month from 48 incidents before WFZ was initiated, which suggests

a 90% drop in crime taking place within a 200-meter radius around the PoC site in Juba (Quinn 2016).

However, while it is important to showcase the successful integration of some practices of NP's unarmed civilian peacekeeping into UNMISS peacekeeping strategies, it is still arguable that the UN may not be amenable to implementing unarmed civilian peacekeeping as practiced by NP. For instance, the bureaucracy of the UN system and the presumed reluctance to accept the works of unarmed civilian peacekeepers are among the arguable reasons that unarmed civilian peacekeeping strategies may be frustrated as an alternative peacekeeping methodology (Richmond 2022; Reno 2011; Roach 2023). However, given the fact that UN resolutions, speeches, and case study recommendations have called for the inclusion and action to be taken to include unarmed civilian strategies, the least that the UN could do is to start planning for its inclusion of such a promising peacekeeping strategy and agenda.

Conclusion

While NP has earned award-winning recognition and successful stories over its implemented strategies in the past and present operations, it is fair to highlight the prospects of such operations for sustenance of peace in the troubled regions of the world. This study reinforces Julian and Gasser's argument (2019) that military or uniformed personnel, with the availability and use of lethal weapons in performing peacekeeping duties, are not universally essential for peacekeeping, let alone the protection of civilians. Unarmed civilian peacekeeping has been successful for over 35 years, but without being reported, researched, or publicised to the same extent as military peacekeeping such as the UN peacekeeping operations. Nonetheless, evidence from the work of NP constitutes a new form peace effort previously identified by the literature as a "local peace formation" (Richmond and Visoka 2021), "peace infrastructure" (Kovacs 2019) which is not being included nor considered by the current UNMISS. However, to date, research on this approach is growing and this study is an example of the work that supports the implementation of unarmed civilian peacekeeping (see also Funari *et al.* 2015).

Furthermore, the works of the NP showcase the Social Constructivist assumptions, in the elaboration of norm entrepreneurs as agents of norm change through Finnemore and Sikkink's norm life cycle (1998). Norm entrepreneurs such as NP and UNMISS promote their ideas and methods of protection towards a mutual ambition of civilian protection (see Howe 2020). On the other hand, with the historical background of the South Sudanese population, filled with a long history of intra-state violence and arms proliferation, it is difficult to imagine how UNMISS can promote peace. This is because their identity is affected by the historical experience of the population, whose sight of armed peacekeepers makes them "construct" an idea of continuity of violence (Harshe 2019; Reid 2012, 2007; Roach 2023). On the other hand, with an approach that does not involve carrying weapons, NP promotes a relatively harmless method of engaging with local civilians. Thus, the act of not carrying weapons to promote peace and protect

civilians helps the locals to forget their violent experiences. This is an indication that if a large organisation such as the UN could adopt the NP's peacekeeping methodology and agenda, global peace will be more workable.

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