

Global civil society initiative to create a large-scale, unarmed peaceforce.

A New Instrument for the Peace builders' Toolkit

Rolf C. Carriere

Resumen

La noción de mantenimiento de la paz suele evocar imágenes de Cascos Azules u otras fuerzas armadas o policiales financiadas por las Naciones Unidas y desplegadas en zonas de conflictos violentos de países pobres. Sin embargo, las actividades relacionadas con el mantenimiento de la paz por parte de miembros civiles de ONG de todo el mundo mediante el empleo de estrategias de probada eficacia es un complemento (o una alternativa) valioso y rentable a la idea hoy dominante del mantenimiento de la paz por medio de las armas. Civiles desarmados ofrecen sus servicios de acompañamiento de protección y «presencia proactiva», seguimiento, creación de espacios de seguridad neutrales e interposición cercanos a lugares habitados por personas amenazadas y vulnerables. Como tales, ofrecen una fuerza de paz profesional y muy necesaria, una fuerza que cuesta poco, que es disciplinada y resulta beneficiosa, y que está impregnada de la mejor tradición de teoría y práctica asociadas a la transformación de conflictos no violentos.

El siglo XXI probablemente verá más, no menos conflictos violentos, y la necesidad de contar con la presencia preventiva de cuerpos de mediación internacional es mayor que nunca. Mientras la comunidad internacional (y la ONU) no prueben a gran escala la presencia de civiles no armados para el mantenimiento de la paz, estaremos perdiendo una enorme oportunidad para la paz.

Abstract

The notion of peacekeeping usually conjures up images of UN-sponsored Blue Helmets or other armed military or police forces deployed in areas of violent conflict in poor countries. But unarmed peacekeeping, by civilian members of global non-governmental organizations who employ proven strategies, is a valuable, cost-effective complement (or an alternative) to the currently dominant approach of armed peacekeeping. Unarmed civilian peacekeepers offer services of protective accompaniment and 'proactive presence', monitoring, creating neutral safe spaces, and inter-positioning—close to where threatened, vulnerable people live. As such, they provide a much-needed, low-cost, disciplined, benign, professional force for peace, steeped in the best tradition of theory and praxis of non-violent conflict transformation.

The 21st century is likely to face more, not less, violent conflict, and the need for preventive international third-party nonviolent presence is greater than ever. As long as the world community (and the UN) has not tried large-scale civilian unarmed peacekeeping, this remains a huge missed chance for peace.



ROLF C. CARRIERE

Rolf Carriere worked for 34 years in the UN. Now retired, he is Senior Adviser, Nonviolent Peaceforce, r_carriere@hotmail.com.

People around the world are calling for alternatives to military intervention to resolve violent conflicts. Given the changing nature of violent conflicts, their high human and economic cost, and the resulting humanitarian crises, interest is growing to try out a variety of effective peacekeeping methods. Attention has recently turned toward larger-scale, unarmed peacekeeping efforts initiated by civil society organizations, undertaken independently or in association with pertinent UN agencies. Now that the UN and the international community are working to redesign the global peace-and-development architecture, greater use of unarmed civilian peacekeeping holds out the promise of a more integrated, balanced and benign response to crises, at once advancing the interrelated causes of development, security, and human rights.¹

NONVIOLENT PEACEFORCE: AN ALTERNATIVE TO MILITARY INTERVENTION

The Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), conceived at the 1999 Hague Appeal for Peace and founded as an international federation of 93 member organizations operating in six continents, is unique in its aspiration to increase the scale, scope, and professionalism of multinational, civilian, unarmed peacekeeping, on a strictly non-partisan basis. NP uses specific, proven methodologies of nonviolence, including protective accompaniment, protective presence, creating safe & neutral spaces for local peace building, interposition, and monitoring. Its

rationale, niche, and modalities were the subject of an extensive feasibility study² in 2001. Two years later, NP fielded its first team of peacekeepers, in Sri Lanka, and used the experience to fine-tune its operational systems and policies; this project, with 50 peacekeepers from 26 countries, is still ongoing. A project in Mindanao/Philippines has been operational for a year now, while another one, providing 24/7 body guard services by three women to threatened female human rights workers, was completed in Guatemala. Other projects currently under negotiation or implementation include Northern Uganda/Southern Sudan, Colombia, Georgia and Palestine/Israel; explorations are also underway to engage in Darfur and Nigeria (River Delta). As a matter of principle, NP insists on being invited by local civil society groups, at times also operating in partnership with one or more UN agencies. Project approval by NP's International Governing Board will be considered only after thorough screening.³

Over the past 4 years, NP has demonstrated the effectiveness of unarmed, professional civilian peacekeeping in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. In order to meet the growing demand for its human security work, support is now needed to help enhance its technical and logistical capacity to provide civilians trained and ready for deployment on short notice. In fact, NP is receiving many more requests for fielding peacekeepers than current funding prospects allow.

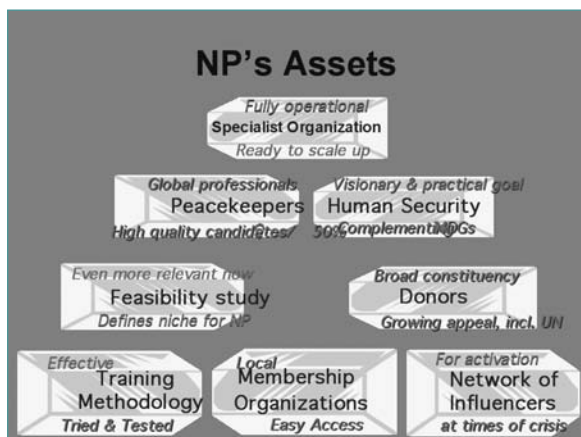
Since mid 2006, the Nonviolent Peaceforce has begun the process of recruiting, screening, training and holding in ready reserve 500 peacekeepers for dispatch to areas of conflict under partnership

1 Adding an explicit goal, namely on transforming violent conflict, to the present eight UN Millennium Development Goals would reinforce the notion that the spheres of 'development', 'rights', and 'security' are not to be treated separately. It could also help give greater currency to the new concepts of 'Sovereignty as Responsibility' and 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P)-important areas where the UN is seeking to reinvent itself to better deal with sub-national violence not foreseen by the framers of the UN Charter.

2 <http://nvpf.org/np/english/resources/rstudy.asp.html>

3 For more information, please visit NP's website at www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org, or write to NP's International Headquarters: Nonviolent Peaceforce, Rue Belliard 205, 1040 Brussels, Belgium

arrangements with UN agencies, regional and local organizations, and with the invitation or consent of the parties to the conflict. It is the first phase of a planned capacity enhancement and deployment that should hopefully see some 200 peacekeepers on the ground by 2011, with sustainable funding coming from subcontracts and a variety of individual and institutional donors. It is noteworthy that NP has found that very qualified, committed, and courageous people, men *and* women from all over the world, from the global north *and* the global south, *are* available, willing to serve two-year terms, receiving an off-shore stipend of US\$800/month plus a local subsistence allowance.



THE INVESTMENT CASE FOR SCALING UP

The case for greater investment in the creation of an unarmed, multinational civilian peace force rests on four premises.

First, in a world likely to see *more*, not *less*, violent conflicts,⁴ large-scale non-violent conflict transformation is not an option, but an imperative. As former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, has repeatedly stated, the cost of peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace building pales into insignificance when it is compared with the cost and consequences of violent conflict and war.⁵

Second, unarmed 'multinational' civilian peacekeeping by non-governmental organizations is a largely

unused but highly cost-effective and appropriate first response with which to prevent, contain and manage violent conflicts, to create space for peace building, and to enable the conduct of further preventive diplomacy. By applying strategies of non-violence, peacekeepers will help assume the 'responsibility to protect' children and women, refugees and internally displaced people, human rights workers, humanitarian aid workers, journalists and others who are caught in the conflict cycle. It provides an antidote against the general sense of powerlessness, resignation and cynicism in the face of violent conflict, including ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Third, since unarmed peacekeeping by non-governmental organizations has yet to capture the world's imagination, bolder approaches to create demand are called for. By training peacekeepers on a larger scale than before, and by holding them in reserve, ready for immediate deployment, UN agencies and others charged with the responsibility for peacekeeping and security will be interested in procuring their services. Supply will enable UN agencies and others to call on and utilize unarmed peacekeepers which would not otherwise have been available.

Fourth, provided that sufficient (matching) grant funding can initially be secured from appropriate donor sources to begin the process of capacity building of a pool of peacekeeping reservists, peacekeeping operations could become self-financing from income obtained under contract or in partnerships.

The advantages of creating this multinational reserve peacekeeping force for UN agencies or donors include:

- Unarmed peacekeepers that are as well trained in conflict transformation skills and peacekeeping techniques as their military counterparts, and often are better able to help build the peace or prevent outbreaks of violence and war.
- Ready availability of stand-by surge capacity.
- Avoiding lengthy bureaucratic procedures to identify, mobilize, and deploy peacekeepers.
- Lower cost in comparison to UN Peacekeepers.

4 While the 2005 *Human Security Report* shows a reduction of violent inter- and intra-country conflicts, the potential for violent conflict in the short and medium term remains high due to ethnic tension (there are about 2,000 distinct ethnic groups living within some 200 sovereign nation-states), competition for resources (oil, precious metals, even water), aggravated by the ubiquitous presence of small arms and other weapons.

5 Paul Collier at the World Bank/Oxford has estimated the economic consequences of war and the benefits of well-considered responses. He calculates that the total national and regional cost of a single war on average is more than US\$ 64 billion. Additionally, global impacts include international terrorism, production of hard drugs, and the spread of HIV/AIDS—not easily quantifiable. He concludes that a US\$5 billion investment in international peacekeeping and well-targeted aid would have a return of US\$397 billion in selected post-conflict countries. See: Paul Collier & Anke Hoeffler, *Reducing the Global Incidence of Civil War: A Discussion of the Available Policy Instruments*, (2004).

- Flexibility of adding an entirely-civilian, gender-balanced security dimension to ongoing emergency, development, human rights and democracy activities.
- Greater informality and easier access to local communities.
- Providing encouragement and empowerment to local people and its leaders.
- Enhanced versatility and responsiveness in sudden adverse developments.
- Not subject to UN security phases.

Within the 'big global picture' context, the contribution of unarmed civilian peacekeeping may look insignificant, perhaps even naïve.⁶ But note: peacekeeping as an immediate, first response to dangerous polarization and escalation, to prevent death and destruction, is so much less costly both in money and in human lives than allowing conflict to spiral out of control. It is a low-key, humble, and unglamorous strategy of opening up spaces in which conflict can be transformed and creative peace-building processes initiated. In fact, it is a highly sophisticated, albeit perhaps counter-instinctual, strategic response to violent conflicts. (See textbox 2: What Unarmed Peacekeeping Is-And What Not!)

Actually, the use of large-scale *unarmed peacekeeping* forces in the new global constellation has not yet received the serious consideration, and practical test, it deserves. It is actually surprising that, while the UN Security Council has often authorized the use of military force as a measure of 'last resort', and while the UN Charter speaks of 'all necessary means' to maintain peace and prevent violent conflict, in fact the UN has never systematically considered large-scale civilian unarmed peacekeeping.⁷ Most if not all global reform proposals deal with various modalities of *military* peacekeeping and policing, but largely ignore the potential of unarmed civilian peacekeeping. A large unarmed Nonviolent Peaceforce would

be a tangible sign of the new resolve of global civil society to take on responsibility to apply the 'soft power' of non-violence. It would be a concrete opportunity to enter into creative partnerships, ready and able to join new coalitions with other peace actors. And it would be an affirmation of humanitarian concerns and values.

A NEW PEACE ROLE FOR GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY

The remarkable omission of unarmed civilian peacekeeping as a significant idea and strategy in the plethora of new global proposals for peace⁸ and the minimal role of civil society⁹ in this area over the past decade clearly indicates the need for more effective advocacy and assertive lobbying. Nonetheless, some self-organization is now underway. The 2005 Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a case in point. So are the Nonviolent Peaceforce and other networks of civil peace organizations.

In its current efforts to reform its peace and security mechanisms, the UN and individual governments now have an opportunity to allocate more attention and resources to the potential role civil society may appropriately play. In fact, the use of unarmed civilian peacekeepers organized by civil society organizations (*not* by member states contributing police and civilian personnel to the UN) is entirely compatible with the new move toward preventive diplomacy and deployment of UN forces. Their added value lies in their low key, low cost, neutral, benign presence at local level, independent but aligned and complementary to other peace making work. They can be inserted into conflict situations early on, and with merely *informal* consent, thus making a graduated response possible. As such, they may well be more mission driven than donor driven.

6 As Liam Mahony points out, in situations of armed conflict, all parties have multiple sensitivities, vulnerabilities and points of leverage, and international 'presence' is implicitly linked to those sensitivities. Abusers pay attention because their personal or political reputation is at stake, because they fear international prosecution and want to avoid blame, because they want to keep option open for future careers, and because of individual moral concerns. Liam Mahony, *Proactive Presence-Field strategies for civilian protection* (Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva, 2006).

7 It should be noted that when the UN speaks of *civilian* UN peacekeepers, they refer almost always to a category of technical assistance workers who deal with issues such as transitional justice, interim administration, police training etc. —*not* the kind of *direct* human protection the Nonviolent Peaceforce provides.

8 *An Agenda for Peace: Report by UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali (1992, 1995); Our Global Neighborhood: Report of the Commission of Global Governance (1992); Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (Brabimi Report, 2000); The Responsibility to Protect-Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001); Human Security Now: Protecting and empowering people- Commission on Human Security (2003); A more secure world: Our Shared Responsibility-Report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2004); In Larger Freedom: towards development, security, and human rights for all-Report of the UN Secretary General (2005).*

9 *We, the Peoples: Civil Society, the United Nations and Global Governance: Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons* (Cardoso Commission, 2004).

IF NOT NOW-WHEN?

One may ask: 'Why has organized civilian unarmed peacekeeping in conflict areas of third countries never gone beyond very small scale?'¹⁰ The answer is that most civil society initiatives never really seriously tried to become a global force. Most organizations lacked access to regional sources of significant influence or global governance. Moreover, they could not mobilize significant resources, especially financial. And finally, the world simply did not seem ready to try and scale up non-violent peacekeeping interventions. That probably has now changed. (See textbox 3: Proposal for an International Commission on Unarmed Peacekeeping).

But the big challenge remains: how to go to scale? (See textbox 1: Unarmed Peacekeeping-An Early Vision). Perhaps the many recent problems of military intervention and peacekeeping will now make the case of non-violent peacekeeping more convincing, and more attractive for donor funding. Cynically, even very expensive corporate mercenary forces (like Blackwater) now promote themselves as peacekeepers and successfully compete for government funding. The Nonviolent Peaceforce presents not only a new idea with a compelling moral appeal, but also a practical proposition of effective, benign, and courageous activism based on the idea of 'do no harm'-and the radical philosophy of making peaceful change possible. A huge opportunity exists for global NGOs to provide hands and feet to this new preventative concept of R2P *well before* the possible need for military intervention arises (or as a post-conflict intervention). It is what you can say 'yes' to when you say 'no' to war. As such, this philosophy of non-violence is every bit in the best interest of all peoples, states, and the international community.

Fifteen years ago, in 1993, John Paul Lederach made a visionary call for a non-violent peace force of 250,000 unarmed peacekeepers. His summary proposal follows below:

Text box 1: unarmed peacekeeping-an early vision

"As a concrete alternative for non-violent peacekeeping I would offer the following simple suggestions, perhaps launched as a pacifist provocation:

1) Under the auspices of the U.N., member nations commit themselves to the development of an international non-violent Peaceforce, a body with capacity and preparation to undertake peacekeeping in contemporary conflicts.

2) Peaceforce will number 250,000 members by the year 2000, made up of rigorously trained, smaller, cross-national, and virtually self-sufficient units, who are paid and are committed to five-year assignments after a full year of training.

3) This body will be used to accompany relief deliveries in settings of armed conflict, provide physical presence and protection for vulnerable populations, and actively place themselves in protracted situations to secure and monitor ceasefires while negotiations are pursued and implemented.

4) Five major peacekeeping training centers will be established, one each in Africa, Asia, Latin America, North America and Europe, with the capacity for training, deploying, researching and evaluating the ongoing efforts.

5) Financing Peaceforce and these efforts will come from a multilateral base.

6) Each member state of the UN agrees to divert 1% of its annual military budget to the Peaceforce fund.

7) Each year the top 10 arms exporting states will be levied a 1% "peace-added tax" (PAT) on their gross sales of weapons that year.

8) NGO's, PVO's, donor agencies and governments agree to a 5% PAT, where 5 cents of each dollar spent for humanitarian aid, relief or development in settings of protracted armed conflict is sent to the fund.

9) Major religious organizations would create an inter-religious Council responsible for establishing an necessary endowment for funding the training centers.

10) Under a campaign titled "Peace makes better business" transnational corporations will be asked to contribute 1% of their annual profit to the fund.

Conclusion

My argument is, in the end, quite simple. There is enormous need for pacifism in the Post Cold War Era. There is a clear theological basis for moving toward, being present with, and promoting alternatives to militarization and violence in contemporary conflicts.

There is a need to be faithful, creative, and practical. It is incumbent upon us to articulate the vision and pursue it with such pragmatic passion that makes it overwhelming sense to the rest of the world."

10 Over the past 50 years there have been at least 30 such efforts, but the largest civilian deployment to date (that of Peace Brigades International) placed less than 1,500 peacekeepers in the field *over a period of 25 years*. This is in stark contrast to the need and opportunity for such peace interventions throughout that period. Consider also that in 2008 over 120,000 UN Peacekeeping personnel (mostly armed) were deployed in 17 operations.

“Once in a while a new idea comes along that challenges conventional wisdom and opens the floodgates to a new, unexpected future...”

Text box 2: what unarmed peacekeeping is (and what not)!

Unarmed Peacekeeping is...

- Hard-nosed
- Proven effective
- Courageous
- Professional
- Sophisticated & subtle
- Benign & humble action
- Hard work
- Low cost
- Low key
- Disciplined
- Cooperative
- Impartial
- Not naming & blaming
- Secular
- Cutting edge
- Making peace practical & real
- Peace by peaceful means
- A force more powerful

Unarmed Peacekeeping is not....

- Woolly-headed idealism
- Naïve pacifism
- Unrealistic enthusiasm
- Glamorous
- Taken up by people looking to become martyrs
- For the timid or weak
- The 'holy grail' or panacea of peace-building
- Polarizing good vs. evil

Text box 3: proposal for an international commission on unarmed peacekeeping

A call is made here for an international *Commission* to investigate the reasons for the curious underemployment of unarmed global peacekeepers, professionals who, by their very presence, will deter abuses and protect threatened local populations, including peace workers as well as humanitarian and human rights workers. The principal role of the *Commission* would be, through its work, to begin to capture the world's imagination about the significant contribution the use of such peace forces could make. It would help bring into being a new global people's movement while at the same time support the emergence of a large-scale organization –the contours of which cannot now be predicted. Meanwhile, the initial emphasis would be on advocacy, training and communication: to do the much-needed consciousness-raising among several priority audiences and, ultimately, the general population.

The scope of this study would include modalities of unarmed peacekeeping by third parties, outsiders, whether from a single nation, a group of nations or a global

group. Invariably, these peacekeeping teams would work in close consultation (and often at the invitation of) governments as well as domestic civil society organizations.

It may be good to consider *any* type of unarmed peacekeeping, whether organized by donor governments, the UN, regional organizations (such as AU) or international civil society, but excluding the private 'security' sector. Civil administration that sometimes accompanies the UN Blue Helmets (e.g., experts in transitional justice) should probably be left outside the scope of this study. It would also distinguish and deal with the roles of (unarmed) police forces, army medical/engineering corps, a topic of considerable recent interest with some major donors (wanting to use their 'military lift capacity' in disasters and conflict areas). Relationships between armed and unarmed peacekeeping will be a vital issue to address. Likewise with global, specialized civil society action such as MSF, which has performed as a functional 'witness'. Therefore, the issue of mainstreaming or professionalization will need to come up as well.

Protection of any individual or group would qualify, including the case of genocide. Whether to include the 'civil disobedience' dimension often associated with the concept of non-violence would need to be negotiated with all stakeholders. On one hand, it may not help the infant efforts at civilian unarmed peacekeeping by third parties since they will always need to go into conflict situations with the *consent* of all (or most) parties to the conflict, and those parties, especially the representatives of the nation-state, may at times have reservations about having global civilian 'outsiders' interfere in their internal affairs by encouraging civil disobedience. On the other hand, if third parties only intervene when both sides (or however many there are) want them to, then unarmed peacekeeping and 'proactive presence' will not be showing the world the full power of non-violence for peace, including 'bearing witness', with its honorable tradition rooted in Thoreau, Tolstoy, Gandhi, King, and its practical application in several more recent political developments. These may well be referred to, studied, and understood –if only to reinforce the notion that the praxis of non-violence is possible, that it saves lives, prevents destruction, and has traction.

This study would be an effort to help find influential sponsors interested in stimulating the global discourse on unarmed protection of civilians, by civilians or unarmed military/police, sponsored by bilateral governments, multilateral organizations or civil society. ■