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Curran, D

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Learning to Protect? Identifying Elicitive Approaches in Protection of Civilians Training for UN Peacekeepers

David Curran

Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, Coventry, UK

ABSTRACT
How are military peacekeepers trained to undertake the Protection of Civilians (PoC)? This article addresses this important question, focussing on how 'contact skills' are integrated into the UN's flagship PoC training progammes through learner-centred 'elicitive' forms of training. The article outlines theoretical and policy considerations which advocate more complex training in this domain, before exploring the programmes. It then critically analyses the challenges of systematically standardising elicitive forms of peacekeeper training. The article makes a strong contribution to studies of peacekeeper training and to debates on the preparation of peacekeepers for deployment to complex environments where civilian protection is paramount.

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Introduction

In 2019, the United Nations (UN) Department of Peace Operations released its most recent iteration of its Protection of Civilians' (PoC) Policy (UN 2019a). As well as offering guidance related to the use of military force and techniques related to deterrence, it made clear through its updated revisions to 'Tier I' protection tasks that military peacekeepers use communication skills to engage with community representatives from the mission area, build consensus, de-escalate potentially violent situations and facilitate a protective environment. These techniques have been termed 'contact skills', a term drawn from studies of peacekeeping from the conflict research field. Defined as 'communication skills, methods of negotiation, facilitation, mediation, and conciliation', contact skills assist peacekeeping personnel to 'de-escalate potentially violent or manifestly violent situations and facilitate movement toward conflict resolution' (Fetherston 1994, p. 219).

CONTACT David Curran david.curran@coventry.ac.uk

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This article takes this as a starting point to investigate UN pre-deployment training programmes in PoC for military peacekeepers (identified in UN documents as 'uniformed personnel'), paying particular attention to how guidance encourages the development of contact skills. In undertaking this analysis, the article identifies that training programmes that aim to foster contact skills amongst participants incorporate 'elicitive' approaches to training which focus on learner-centred understandings of conflict and processes of resolution. The article places this analysis within the wider context of the peacekeeping training architecture. It asks two overarching questions. Firstly, *To what extent do we see an emergence of elicitive approaches to training in guidance as to how 'contact skills' are integrated into broader pre-deployment PoC training programs for military peacekeepers?* Secondly, it asks *how compatible is the desire to incorporate contact skills in UN PoC with the demands of the UN's training system?*

PoC has gradually 'become a key norm for the UN System' (Day and Hunt 2022, p. 97). In this context, it is the 'centre of gravity' for UN peacekeeping operations, and the 'principal issue on which missions are judged' (Bellamy and Hunt 2021, p. 145). Despite this, studies have identified variation in terms of implementation, and gaps between the UN's efforts to provide clarity in PoC through its policy and guidance, and the 'diverging implementation practices' of peacekeeping contributors (Bode and Karlsrud 2019 p. 477). Policy analysis of training identifies a need to 'revise training content' to better emphasise the non-security aspects of PoC mandates, such as provision of services, and respect for human rights (Milofsky *et al*. 2017, p. 23). However, academic studies have not explicitly surveyed the training dimension of PoC. This study seeks to fill this gap.

The article offers its principle contribution to studies on training peacekeepers, which is situated in the broader literature analysing preparedness for peacekeeping. It adds to studies which chart the evolution of the UN's institutional capacity to offer better guidance to prepare peacekeepers more generally (including the development of systematic linking of training to lessons learned) (Benner *et al*. 2011, p. 41, Bellamy and Hunt 2015, p. 1293), and with civilian protection more specifically (Holt and Berkman 2006, p. 102). PoC fundamentally shapes the majority of peacekeeping missions and has certainly contributed to operations having 'complex mandates that extend well beyond the skill sets of infantry troops with basic training' (Bellamy and Williams 2013b, p. 441). This necessitates better understanding of the processes which these troops are expected to undergo to acquire the understanding and skills necessary to meet the UN's expectations. Better appreciation of such processes is significant when considering how the UN and its member states can provide effective delivery and implementation of contemporary peacekeeping mandates.

In the policy sphere, training is now considered a key pillar in improving the overall effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. A widely held view shared amongst UN member states is that 'better training will mean that peacekeepers are better equipped' to meet what the UK Ambassador described as 'unpredictable and complicated, complex, multidimensional mission environments' (HMG 2019). Strategic level commitments to peacekeeping reflect this. For instance, the 'United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial-level Meeting' held in December 2021 focused on improving the 'performance and impact' of operations, and was informed by a bespoke meeting on the topic of training, capacity building and partnerships (Boutellis 2020, p. 1). Member states at the Ministerial engaged with this, to the extent that training programmes were considered a specific type of contribution towards peacekeeping. At the Ministerial, 43 of the 64 pledging states offered contributions to 'Training and Partnership' as part of the overall pledge, with eight of those countries focussing only on that area in their pledge[1] (UN 2022). With this emerging trend in mind, it is important to engage with the type of training offered and methods of delivery.

To understand how training is guided, the article is based on documentary analysis. Its primary source of evidence is training curricula for those courses which the UN states as being essential for all uniformed personnel in peacekeeping to undertake at the pre-deployment stage: the Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials; the Comprehensive Protection of Civilians Training Materials; and the Tactical Level Protection of Civilians Training Modules. Within this, the article focusses on training process, namely the instruction given to trainers particularly in areas such as group exercises, simulations and scenario-based roleplay. Studies of training curricula have offered valuable insights into the development of training in the peacebuilding field more generally (Wolter *et al*. 2016, p. 11), national approaches to peacekeeper training (Dorn and Libben 2018) and studies of other policy areas in UN peacekeeping training such as anti-corruption (Schwickerath 2018). As stated above, this allows the opportunity to understand in greater depth the expectations attached to training delivery.

The article develops in four sections. Following this introduction, the article offers a theoretical overview, situating it in the literature on peacekeeper training, before surveying literature on contact skills and elicitive training. It then looks to the current policy context through outlining where UN Security Council Resolutions into PoC discuss training, as well as examining three key documents in the current UN PoC framework. From this, the article surveys three foundational training programmes in the pre-deployment sphere for UN peacekeepers. It then discusses the implementation challenges for these programmes, when considering they must fit into a peacekeeping training system in which variation is practically hardwired.

Theoretical Overview

Peacekeeper Training

This work offers its contribution to the 'emergent' area of peacekeeping training (Holmes 2018, p. 8–9). Studies have offered valuable contributions through examining the effectiveness of the training space as a place where norm implementation is facilitated (Holmes 2018), the role of training as a form of socialisation (Flaspöler 2018) the evolution of gender training (Carson 2016), the impact of UN Security Council Resolutions pertaining to Women, Peace and Security (Holvikivi 2021), the role of experts in training of police personnel (Neubauer 2022), national approaches to peacekeeper training (Dorn and Libben 2018), peacekeeping training in Africa (Jowell 2017, 2018) and the use of digital technologies (Holohan 2019). These studies offer strong contributions in terms of their chosen case studies or primary topic area, but they also highlight the significant challenges of the training system itself, and how it is shaped by the politics of global governance. For instance, Jowell's work examines how the practicalities of international peacekeeping training centres in Kenya has influenced training practice, Flaspöler's study of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) examines the interplay between standardisation and localism in peacekeeping training, and Neubauer's work on police training experts has identified their role as 'brokers', who bridge the domestic and international dimensions of police deployment on peacekeeping operations.

This article adds to this field in two ways. Firstly, it provides an examination of PoC training for military peacekeeping, addressing a gap in the literature insofar that PoC training has not been explicitly surveyed in the academic literature (though it has been acknowledged as part of wider studies). Secondly, it identifies the training processes as an important function of the training space, where guidance offered to trainers and participants offers a significant indicator of the importance attached to a specific topic area. Here, it adds to work by Holohan in charting the evolution of contact – or soft – skills in training design and engages with Georgina Holmes's study of norm implementation in training. In the case of Holmes, she finds that for Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs), training is not aimed necessarily to 'transform the mindset' of military personnel who are to deploy on UN peacekeeping operations. Instead, her research finds that TCCs prefer a more conservative approach, whereby training is only there to ensure that the 'deployed peacekeeper subjects perform peacekeeping practices to the standardized level of competence required – either by the UN or by the TCC' (Holmes 2018, p. 14). As shall be seen, this leads to

a potential expectations gap, as elicitive models (and UN PoC training to some degree) ask trainees to develop more independent approaches which are beyond basic competence.

PoC and Contact Skills

Contact skills emerged from the field of conflict resolution, in which the central aim of peacekeeping has been defined to be to 'support peace processes, protect civilians and fulfil legitimate international mandates' (Ramsbotham *et al*. 2016, p. 170). Assessments from this field note that peacekeeping operations tasked with PoC activities address the 'injunction to protect civilians from violent conflict', enabling the peacebuilding-oriented 'positive peace dimension' of the human security agenda (Woodhouse and Ramsbotham 2005, p. 140). This reflects a fundamental aspect of the relationship, which is namely that local actors[2] who are to ultimately lead peacebuilding efforts are those who are likely to need protection from violent actors (Ramsbotham *et al*. 2016, p. 235). In providing protection, military peacekeepers ideally should assume both 'hard' and 'soft' power roles at various points of their deployment. 'Hard' power roles refer to operations using coercive action to 'pre-empt or defeat spoilers as well as protect civilians' (Diehl and Balas 2014, p 211), particularly in areas where civil society is under threat from 'destructive forms of particularist politics' (Elliott 2004, p. 25). 'Soft' power roles refer to the techniques peacekeepers use to non-violently de-escalate conflict, as well as to better appreciate their role as interveners in establishing the conditions for longer term peacebuilding.

The requirement for peacekeepers to 'mix and match' these different techniques when faced with potentially violent situations leads to the emergence of contact skills. This includes an emphasis on mediation, facilitation, consultation, conciliation and communication (Diehl *et al*. 1998, p 36, Wall and Druckman 2004). Betts Fetherston, whose definition of contact skills was cited at the top of this article, argues that if deployed military peacekeepers are proficient in contact skills they can coordinate and facilitate local level resolution processes and begin the groundwork of 'what might be called a "pre-resolution" or a "pre-peacebuilding" phase' (Fetherston 1994, p. 151–152). Writing in 2014, Diehl and Balas add the element of balancing hard and soft power into their definition of contact skills, stating that they are built from 'interpersonal and intergroup relations, communication, negotiation, and in the case of military operations, a mix of combat and political skills' (Diehl and Balas 2014, p. 212). Likewise, Dorn and Libben's (2018, p. 275) study also links the emphasis on negotiation and mediation to restrictions on the use of military force in peacekeeping contexts.

From Contact Skills to Elicitive Training

To better understand how training programmes can develop the interactional contact skills mentioned above, the article now turns to the elicitive model of training. The elicitive model, first posited by John Paul Lederach in his work with civilian peacebuilding organisations, stems from the belief that training in conflict resolution comes in two distinct forms. Firstly, the prescriptive model, which 'assumes that the expert knows what the participants need' (Lederach 1996, p. 48–49). Here, the trainer/expert will bring 'packages' built around his or her specialised knowledge and experience in the field of conflict resolution, and the knowledge flow is predominately from trainer to receiver. The elicitive approach, on the other hand, is centred on the implicit knowledge of the participants. This type of training is therefore based on how participants understand conflict and its resolution, based on the idea that 'implicit indigenous knowledge about ways of being and doing is a valued resource for creating and sustaining appropriate models of conflict resolution in a given setting'[3] (Lederach 1996, p. 54). Elicitive models focus primarily on discovering 'what people already have in place and already know about the strengths and weaknesses of their own models of conflict resolution' (Lederach 1996, p. 56). The role of a trainer in this scenario is more akin to a facilitator who 'brackets' his or her own experiences and techniques, in order to develop a 'participatory process of discovery' (Lederach 1996, p. 58).

The application of elicitive models to military peacekeeping has been taken on by Dietrich (2013). Dietrich explores the various ways interveners – including military peacekeepers – can be informed by elicitive approaches which draw on the 'common knowledge, values, and communication techniques that exist' amongst those affected by conflict (Dietrich 2013, p 10). Within this framework, the 'transnational' soldier, Dietrich argues, risks their life 'without license to win', need to be constantly aware of their freedom and responsibility in carrying out orders, and:

> must be empathetic and able to communicate with those about whom they know very little. They must be aware of the feedback loops generated by their presence and, therefore, adopt a consistently congruent style of communication. (Dietrich 2013, p. 173)

Through categorising military peacekeepers as 'peace workers' (just like their civilian counterparts), Dietrich argues that they can play a critical role in 'elicitive transformation' through operating with a high level of self-awareness within the military structure, as well as across the military/civilian divide (both with international and national NGO's and the civilian population). This requires personnel who are 'willing to navigate the perilous territory of international armed conflicts in a way that actively contributes to elicitive conflict transformation across the entire range of

ranks'. Being able to do this 'requires thoughtful training and preparation for each specific mission, and responsible, specialized workers with a clear awareness of themselves' (Dietrich 2013, p. 174). Dietrich relates this to violence faced by civilians in contemporary conflict, and highlights the 'immense importance of contact skills practiced in peace operations that intervene in foreign contexts', as well as intercultural sensitivity, communication skills, and leadership skills down to lower ranking soldiers (Dietrich 2013, p. 171).

It is through examining existing studies of the broader peacekeeper training field where we can find intrinsic links between contact skills and these reflective forms of training. Deborah Goodwin, who has written on her experiences of negotiation training for military peacekeepers, finds that 'a learning method that is frequently overlooked is the sharing of ideas with mentors and colleagues, through general conversation or more formal interviews'. Such experiences, in Goodwin's view 'tend to promote higher-level skills, and the refinement of technique and approach' (Goodwin 2005, p. 143). This is linked to the use of role-plays and simulation activities, in which participants are immersed in a particular scenario they may encounter during deployment, and are debriefed by trainers after the exercise (Tunney *et al.* 2017, p. 20–21). Holohan's investigation into digital capacities for training notes that role-playing 'is the most effective training for building empathic interactional soft skills' (Holohan 2019, p. 559). She goes on to argue that the method has the capacity to 'sensitize personnel to the experiences of others with an identity different to one's own, including gender' (Holohan 2019, p. 562). Curran's study of training peacekeepers in conflict resolution skills notes elicitive training informs mentoring and feedback given to trainees during an immersive simulation exercise based at the UN Training School, Ireland, where trainees were brought 'out of role' during a role-play simulation exercise, to have facilitated conversations which allowed them to 'reflect on their abilities to build relationships, and the extent to which they influence conflict for the better, and the worse' (Curran 2017, p. 109). Additionally, an EU funded project into military, civilian and police training for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding incorporates elicitive peace education theory with approaches to adult education, making the case that an elicitive approach is compatible with the goals for peace training as it values 'inclusivity, participation and the richness of diversity' (Tunney *et al.* 2017, p. 11).

Flaspöler also offers an example of elicitive approaches in her analysis of the in-mission training programme 'Conflict Management for Peacekeepers', undertaken by ACCORD for civilian peacekeepers. She notes how instead of being offered case study scenarios, trainees were:

> approached with what can be described as a 'reversed' case study exercise, as they were asked to provide different accounts that reflected the conflicts they

> had dealt with, the training components (knowledge and skills) they had applied, the impact it had had, and the challenges they had faced in doing so. (Flaspöler 2018, p. 144–5)

Flaspöler's account highlights that this form of training yielded positive results. Peacekeeping staff who underwent the course found that they used conflict management skills in a range of situations with local actors from the conflict zone (for instance land disputes, mediating with tribal chiefs, and dealing with human rights abuses[4]), as well as using them to better work within a multinational, multicultural peacekeeping mission (Flaspöler 2018, p. 145).

In comparison, Marco Jowell notes that significant challenges stem from forms of conflict management and resolution training programmes which do *not* engage in elicitive approaches. Here, he notes that prescriptive methods reduce conflict management to simply being 'rigid and measurable terms using rigid analytical frameworks'. He argues that by offering a prescriptive approach based on such models, the reality of how violent conflict emerges, develops and evolves 'is distorted at best and at worst lost beyond recognition', and technical steps to conflict resolution are 'presented as a panacea to solve almost any outbreak of violence' regardless of the particular historical and cultural context (Jowell 2018, p. 189).

The Un's PoC Policy and a Requirement for Contact Skills

The article now moves to specifically engage with POC policy, explaining in more detail the contact skills element. It will firstly outline how this has been driven by UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs), which have broadened the scope of PoC (with training implications), before examining the UN's 2019a Policy document entitled *The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping*, the 2020 *Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook* and 2015 *Implementing Guidelines for Military Components of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions*. Taken together, they will demonstrate a move towards contact skills training more generally, as well as specific approaches to take to engaging a range of local community actors.

Security Council Resolutions

The desire for across-the-board training for contact skills is clear from the first two cross-cutting UNSCRs into PoC, passed in 1999 and 2000. The first of these, UNSCR 1265 (UN 1999), urges member states to develop 'appropriate training' for personnel involved in peacekeeping. Within the paragraph devoted to the appropriate training, there is specific reference to those

techniques that could be considered as contact skills. The resolution requests that training should include training in the topics of:

> international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, including child and gender-related provisions, negotiation and communication skills, cultural awareness and civilian-military coordination.

UNSCR 1296 develops this by further by firstly requesting that the Secretary General disseminates appropriate guidance to ensure that UN personnel have appropriate training, and secondly by urging that member states disseminate 'appropriate instructions' and to 'ensure appropriate training' is included for peacekeeping personnel (UN 2000a).

Since then, a series of UNSCRs have been passed, introducing new focus areas of Civilian Protection Policy (UN, 2006a). These include Resolutions which focus on the protection of journalists and media personnel (UN, 2006b, 2015a), humanitarian personnel (UN 2014) and health workers (UN 2016). At points, these resolutions have related directly to the scope of UN peacekeeping operations. UNSCR 2175 states that mandates ensure that peacekeeping missions 'help to contribute to a secure environment to enable the delivery of humanitarian assistance by humanitarian organisations' (UN 2014, p. 3), and 2286 states similar with regard to protection of access to health (UN 2016).

In most cases, this has an inferred consequence on training and preparedness. For instance, UNSCR 2475 emphasises the 'importance of building capacity and knowledge of the rights and specific needs of persons with disabilities across United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding actors' and asks member states to 'play a central role' (UN 2019b, p. 2). Training is specifically mentioned in only one resolution, Resolution 1894, which restated the need for appropriate training for personnel in issues of civilian protection, as well as requesting member states to configure training programmes to raise awareness and responsiveness to issues of civilian protection (UN 2009).

UN Policy: The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping

With the development of strategic level PoC policy at Security Council level, the UN's Department of Peace Operations has kept pace with the development of policy and guidance as to how peacekeeping operations operationalise PoC. In 2019, the UN released an updated PoC policy. Much like the policy it replaces, it has a three-Tiered system, which is set out as follows:

- Tier I: Protection through Dialogue and Engagement
- Tier II: Provision of physical protection:
- Tier III: Establishing a protective environment

Notably, the 2019 policy has updated Tier I to '*Protection through Dialogue and Engagement*' (from '*Protection through political process*'), and it is here where the article focuses on. Tier I's approach is in line with a guiding principle of the policy that PoC is a 'tailored, community-based approach', whereby plans and programmes are informed by the local community, based on 'regular, meaningful, safe and respectful engagement' to consider locals' concerns, as well as 'empowering local actors and organizations' (UN 2019a, p. 10). As a result, Tier I speaks directly to the requirement for 'contact skills'. The UN policy describes Tier I activities as:

> active, structured and regular dialogue with perpetrators or potential perpetrators of violence against civilians; conflict resolution and mediation between parties to the conflict; advocating with the host government, its security institutions and other relevant actors to intervene to protect civilians; local conflict resolution and social cohesion activities; strategic communication; investigation; advocacy; reconciliation initiatives; reporting on human rights and protection concerns; and other initiatives which seek to protect civilians through communications, dialogue and direct or indirect engagement. (UN 2019a, p. 10)

The policy goes on to advise that missions engage with three key constituents: the local population; host state; and belligerent groups. With local civilian actors, the mission is advised to engage with local community-based mechanisms of dialogue and mediation. If the mission cannot do this, it will seek other third-party actors who may be better placed to support. Regarding the host state – who the policy states have the primary function of protecting civilians – it advises that the mission acts as an advocate specifically in terms of requesting that the host state deploys security services to locations where their absence 'results in increasing threats to vulnerable groups' (UN 2019a, p. 11). Engagement with non-state armed actors is more loosely defined, but focuses on the aim to:

> prevent or stop attacks on civilians, change a group's behaviour so that they no longer threaten civilians, seek a group's meaningful commitments to desist from attacks on civilians, and improve understanding and respect for international human rights and international humanitarian law. (UN 2019a, p. 11)

Underneath Tier I therefore, there is a strong reliance on contact skills specifically to better understand the local community's approaches to conflict management, and preventative frameworks to respond to attacks on civilians. Moreover, there is a noted requirement to engage in dialogue with armed groups.

Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook

Released in 2020, the *Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook* expands on community engagement, focussing more on ways in which missions engage with civil society as opposed to armed groups. Here, the Handbook devotes a chapter to 'working with communities on PoC', which opens by stating that 'peacekeeping operations should take a people-centred approach to PoC', whereby all mission components should undertake community engagement for PoC through regular and routine activities. These activities ideally engage with 'all community members', including women, youth, minority groups, different religious and ethnic communities, people with disabilities and older persons (UN 2020, p. 107). Moreover, it encourages that peacekeepers in their engagement are aware of gender issues, local customs, existing power dynamics (and the potential for peacekeepers to exacerbate them) and the need to consider traditional conflict management and mitigation measures (UN 2020, p. 110) Although the focus is largely on community engagement, the Handbook refers to the varied types of interaction undertaken by military components of missions with armed groups. For instance, a reflection piece from a Military Observer who deployed with MINUSCA states that communicating with armed groups, 'interactions were more about building trust and making sure they were used to our presence and understood our intentions (UN 2020, p. 71).

Implementing Guidelines for Military Components of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions

Informing the Policy and Handbook on PoC, the UN's Department of Peace Operations developed in 2015 the 'Implementing Guidelines for Military Components of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions' (hereafter 'Implementing Guidelines'). The Implementing Guidelines outline what is termed 'community-based PoC', whereby 'UN mission interaction with local populations should be rooted in values of respect and dignity' (UN 2015a, p. 3). This means consultation is required with a range of local community actors to better understand their approaches to protection, as well as better develop strategies for the mission to act on. Moreover, the implementing guidelines identify four phases which guide PoC tasks undertaken by the military component. Throughout the four phases – Assurance and Prevention, Pre-Emption, Response, Consolidation – the requirement to communicate with the local population, NGOs and armed groups is continually highlighted. It is only the 'response' phase where one sees a total reliance on 'hard power' responses to attacks against civilians. This leads to the recommendation that training programmes (in this case, induction and in-mission training) 'should include local cultural

sensitivities, early warning indicators, gender dynamics, and referral arrangements in the specific mission area'. Such training should also include mission-specific scenario-based simulation (UN 2015a, p. 17).

Beyond this explicit recommendation, pre-deployment training is largely left alone in these documents, as training, in the words of the Implementing Guidelines, is 'the responsibility of the individual troop contributing countries' (UN 2015a, p. 9). The Implementing Guidelines offer relatively little guidance in terms of institutionalising the training programmes mentioned above, beyond noting that the DPO/DFS 'play a role' in pre-deployment training by providing pre-deployment training standards. Additionally, the 2019 PoC Policy makes little reference to pre-deployment training, only noting that the Under-Secretary General for Peace Operations ensures that Senior Leaders understand the concept through pre-deployment training, and that pre-deployment training plays a part in assisting all components in being 'operationally ready, able and willing to perform their responsibilities' (UN 2019a, p. 25). The Handbook on PoC points personnel to the Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials, United Nations Comprehensive POC (CPOC) training and Specialised Training Materials. Importantly here, the scenario-based training element of the CPOC materials is highlighted by the Handbook, as a way of reinforcing knowledge on PoC, and to incorporate PoC considerations into 'existing decision-making planning methods' (UN 2020, p. 119).

PoC Training and the Emergence of Elicitive Approaches

Taking the lead from the Handbook on PoC, the article will examine the three flagship training programmes for UN peacekeepers in PoC, the *Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials* (CPTMs), the *Comprehensive Protection of Civilians Training Materials* (CPOC) and the *Tactical Level Protection of Civilians Training Modules* (which is the PoC-Specific specialised training material), as well as outlining the range of programmes offered by individual training institutes. These programmes cover a wealth of information about PoC. The *Comprehensive Protection of Civilians Training Materials* for instance, has modules on topics related to definitional aspects of PoC, the UN's approach to PoC, different actors in the protection field, operational concepts, mission challenges and special considerations of conflict related sexual violence and child protection. In addition, modules are concerned with the legal basis of action for PoC activities, including International Humanitarian Law, and International Human Rights Law, International Refugee Law, International Criminal Law, the UN Charter, and various aspects of Rules of Engagement and Status of Forces. However, this section is concerned with the intention of 'how' training should operate, and the relationship that has with contact skills. Here, to identify where elicitive approaches may be

emerging, it focuses on activities which learners undertake and guidance which is offered to trainers.

Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials

To begin with the UN Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials (CPTM), PoC is integrated into the module 'Mandated Tasks of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations'. Although the module's key aims are largely to focus on clarifying broad concepts of PoC, it is interspersed with group work activities, which focus on four key areas:

- Critical incidents – by-stander or first responder?
- Standard mandate language
- Vulnerability and threats
- Four phases of response

Each of these activities encourages learners to discuss several issues pertaining to PoC, often on topics which have no defined correct or incorrect answer. The exercise on 'vulnerability and threats' utilise group discussion, using the case study of a report of human rights abuses in the Central African Republic (UN 2017a). The discussion here is centred around tasks to identify threats and understand the vulnerability of particular groups and individuals from the local population. Moreover, the activity 'Critical Incidents – By-stander or First-responder?' asks learners to look at a series of photos of incidents in peace time (fires, car accidents, physical attack, natural disaster), and photos of threats faced by civilians in violent conflict. Learners are asked to draw on previous learning and experience to address the question 'Should you respond in the same way or differently in peace-time and during violent conflict?' (UN 2017a, p. 4). The instructions to the trainer indicate that the discussion has no specific 'right' or 'wrong' answer, stating that the purpose of the exercise is mainly to 'understand the importance of taking immediate action to protect civilians – for both existing and potential threats'. Importantly, trainers are asked to undertake a 'difficult request' to encourage participants to 'put themselves in the shoes of individuals' (UN 2017a, p. 2). This encouragement of empathy for others, in a context whereby there is no right or wrong answer, offers an indication that the learner's reflections on the best approach are at the centre of the exercise as opposed to the views of the trainer.

Comprehensive Protection of Civilians Training Materials

Perhaps, the most expansive UN training material which incorporates elicitive approaches to training is the *Comprehensive Protection of*

Civilians Training Materials (CPOC), targeted at military decision makers at the tactical level. The CPOC is based on three themes: Conceptual Framework; Legal Framework; and Operational Framework. The last of these (Operational Framework) was developed with Battalion Commanders in mind, as they are 'leaders of the smallest military unit capable of limited independent operations' (UN 2017b p. 3). It is here where advice can be found as to what military peacekeepers 'should' do when engaging with local actors. For instance, the training asks that peacekeepers be a 'Role Model' in their engagement with communities and 'be respectful towards community members and customs' (UN 2017b, p. 232). It also asks that peacekeepers 'think creatively' about engaging local communities, beyond more traditional mandated tasks, and to liaise with local NGOs and community representatives as a means to engage communities. Alongside this guidance, the training offers a small group work exercise concerning ways to mitigate potential risk for interlocutors.

The CPOC is accompanied by a large scenario-based exercise. The exercise, based in the fictitious country of Carana, asks trainees to place themselves in the position of personnel in the United Nations Assistance Mission to Carana (UNAC). Supporting this exercise is guidance documents for various parts of the mission, deployment maps, threat assessment and planning matrixes, a fictitious peace agreement, DPKO directives and a mock-UN technical survey of the country. The mission, based on real life events from existing UN deployments (UN 2017d, p. 2) is backed by a (fictitious) UN Security Council Resolution, where PoC is the second most important task behind supporting the peace agreement. The order of operations for the role of 'Force Commander' illustrates this, through stating the 'mission' of UNAC as:

> ... to establish and maintain a safe and secure environment in Carana in accordance to United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1544, including all necessary actions, up to and including the use of deadly force, aimed at preventing or responding to threats of physical violence against civilians, within capabilities and areas of operations, and without prejudice to the responsibility of the host government to protect its civilians. (UN 2017c)

Like with the CPTMs, the guidance to instructors for this exercise is to 'encourage' discussion among the learners about the various challenges of implementing PoC in the UNAC mission. Trainers are 'strongly recommended not to discuss in detail or judge the conclusion of the analysis or the tactical decisions' that were made, to 'bear in mind that there are no clear blueprints to solve the tactical situation presented', and expect that participants will have different approaches to the analysis based on 'their own background and expertise' (UN 2017d, p. 3). Similar to the CPTM above, this points to learner centred approaches to better understand the impact of their presence and actions on a given situation.

The STM Level: Tactical Level Protection of Civilians Training Modules

In 2013, the UN released the *Tactical Level Protection of Civilians Training Modules*, aimed at 'military or police contingent leaders and staff' (UN 2013b p. 2). These pre-deployment modules, which are at the level of the STMs, are designed for personnel who have already completed the CPTMs and to be adapted by member states in such a way that 'National trainers need to design a course and adapt the materials to the necessities of their audiences'. Hence although the modules do form a coherent 'course', it is up to nation states to tailor this to suit the specificities of their context.

Three modules form the bulk of the course (basic concepts of PoC; Mandate language and tactical considerations; PoC strategy and planning considerations), and they are accompanied by a learning activity, whereby four case study missions are used (UNAMID, MONUSCO, UNMISS and UNOCI) to illustrate questions to trainees. The questions are 'direct and simple and want to trigger the discussion on the general understanding of the POC concepts' (UN 2013a, p. 1) amongst trainees and focus on four areas:

- Protected persons
- Protection actors
- Protection risks
- Protection responses

Questions under each of these areas are accompanied by a photo from the mission to prompt discussion. For example, the 'protection risk' questions for UNAMID are guided by a photograph of civilians fetching water from a large well (UN 2013a, p. 28), as opposed to the UNMISS example, where the photograph shows an attack against civilian population in Pibor, Jonglei State (UN 2013a, p. 13).

In addition to the learning activity outlined above, the training modules contain in-depth scenario-based simulations of UN missions. Like the questions above, the scenarios are based on four missions (UNAMID, MONUSCO, UNMISS and UNOCI), but in this case the scenarios from these missions are re-written to fit into the Carana simulation from the CPOC training (above). For these simulations, trainers are encouraged to develop learner-centred approaches based on interactive discussion and reflection, where the trainer is to only interject if a participant misses an important issue, misunderstands something or makes a statement which is clearly wrong. Noting the limitations of the 'directive approach', the trainer guide suggests that '[m]ost groups of adults learn far more from discussing things amongst themselves than from sitting passively to listen to lectures'. Within this, and echoing language related to elicitive approaches, the guidance states that the trainer

should see their role as 'being to guide a boat with a rudder rather than to drive a car with a steering wheel' (UN 2013c, p. 3).

Beyond the UN: Training Institutes

These UN training materials – particularly the CPOC – go some way to informing the range of specialised PoC training courses which are organised by national and regional peacekeeping training centres (UNTSI 2019, BCN 2019b, KAIPTC 2022b, ASPR 2022) as well as online provision through the Peace Operations Training Institute (POTI 2022). These courses – either accredited by the UN's Integrated Training Service or recognised by the UN's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations – cover a range of topic areas under the umbrella of PoC, including Gender Awareness, Human Rights, the creation of protective environments, child protection, legal provisions and lessons learned. The on-site courses outlined above have similar approaches to learning than what is seen in the CPOC course, incorporating a range of methods including lectures, small group discussions, practical exercises and 'peer exchange of experiences' (BCN 2019a). In one case, a 'Problem-Based Learning Approach' forms the basis of the training, whereby participants play a 'very active role under the guidance of an experienced team of facilitators' (KAIPTC 2022a). In another, a series of smaller case-study-based exercises are used throughout the course to develop learners' awareness of PoC as the course progresses (UNTSI 2019, p. 5).

Taking the above courses into account, varied interactive methods are employed which encourage uniformed personnel to reflect, discuss and offer peer exchange of ideas. In terms of the UN training (CPTMs, CPOC and Tactical Level PoC Training Material), the use of field-based examples, scenarios and open questions to lead discussion is notable. Also important here is the recognition of there being 'no correct answer' in many of the situations, and the resultant guidance to trainers to allow conversation to flow and assist learners to draw conclusions based on their knowledge and experience. To a certain extent this means that training frameworks which develop contact skills may be able to address the aspirations for contact skills to be a mainstreamed element of PoC. Whilst acknowledging that there is a considerable prescriptive element to these programmes (which will be discussed below), those elements which looked at how to analyse PoC situations, who to engage with, and the manner in which that engagement should take place, are often learner-led and elicitive in nature.

The Practicalities of Training

Expansive forms of training take time, energy and resources – things that are not always abundant in the training field. Moreover, hard-wired into the

training system is an expectation that variation exists, as training is largely left to individual states. Consequently, there are significant differences in the structures which underpin training, leading to inconsistency in terms of provision offered, and the attitudes of training institutes and trainers towards key concepts. It is because of this, and returning to Holvikivi, it is important to not only celebrate the 'normative good' of these developments (Holvikivi 2021, p. 177).

Training Structures

Core to how the training field functions is the key principle that training is, according to the UN, a national responsibility of member states. Member states are supported by the UN Department of Peace Operations (through the Integrated Training Service, or ITS), which aims to focus primarily on 'improving cultural awareness in order to improve the quality of the response of peacekeepers, on teamwork, and the transfer of knowledge among peers' (Dorn *et al*. 2020, p. 303). ITS materials come in the form of the training materials (as seen above), as well as practical assistance including mobile training teams and support at headquarters.

This is significant, particularly when understanding issues of standardisation of training approaches. Although standardised training packages exist, they are implemented by a mosaic of national and regional peacekeeping training centres. As seen above, the article noted training centres in Ireland, Ghana, Austria and Spain, as well as online programmes offered by the Peace Operations Training Institute. As well as offering flexibility, it creates an underlying level of variation between the 122 countries who are contributing uniformed personnel. Broader surveys of training practice have noted that although the field has expanded substantially, there are little shared common approaches to questions of training, curricula development or quality standards (Wolter and Tunney 2022, p. 4).

Disparity exists in the financial and logistical capacity of a country's training capacities. At times, this can be a result of the resources that a state can put into training for peacekeeping, particularly those programmes based on resource intensive methods such as simulations and role plays. A 2016 study of EU capacities in training notes significant variation across the block. Here, the authors argue that although a better-resourced state can run a regular course in a chosen area, 'a smaller member state may not be in a position to provide a tailor-made pre-deployment course' for a bespoke mission (Dijkstra *et al*. 2016, p. 42). This has been also noted by Bellamy and Williams, who note on a wider level that the UN's desire for standardisation is 'squeezing the margins for some countries' (Bellamy and Williams, 2013b, p. 422). However, better resourced states may also make the political decision to reprioritise training away from peacekeeping. Dorn and Libben's (2018) review of

curricula from Canadian military training and education establishments found a significant reduction in activities devoted to the UN and peace operations, with the topic appearing in less than a quarter of courses than it did in 2005 (Dorn and Libben 2018, p. 259).

Even when a PoC training programme runs, there is no guarantee of elicitive forms of training being utilised effectively, as training institutes may prioritise effective transfer of the extensive amount of information about the PoC system. Studies focusing on the EU cited above also note that courses in PoC create awareness of the legal and normative frameworks of protection, yet are unable to match this with 'content and practical materials [. . .] on tools and methods of how to foster respecting, protecting and fulfilling laws' (Tunney *et al*. 2017, p. 39). As highlighted earlier in this article, the UN's *Comprehensive Protection of Civilians Training Materials* has a considerable range of topics. At the point whereby learners are asked to engage with the 'Operational framework' (where advice on how to engage with local actors can be found), they have engaged with almost 200 PowerPoint slides.[5] Specialised courses in PoC, including those run through international peacekeeping training centres rarely last over a two-week period, and are often set over no more than five days. The UN CPTM which covers PoC (highlighted above) indicates this tight timeframe. Although there are four exercises which cover group discussion and case study, the recommended time for each task does not exceed ten minutes (UN 2017a, p. 1). This has been identified in other studies, whereby the knock-on effect is that peacekeepers are benefitting from being given significant information but suffer with regards to developing the skills and attitudes in which to operationalise the knowledge. As Victoria Holt (2019, p. 27) argues:

> peacekeepers are often introduced to the UN concept of PoC as part of training for a UN mission. The tasks are familiar, but the strategic concepts and operational requirements are new, including how to assess risks and make the best choices about actions in the field. When that lack of knowledge is added to national caveats and other restrictions on contingents, you have a willingness and knowledge gap . . .

The challenge has been identified by the UN itself, with a 2018 Training Needs Assessment (TNA) of in-mission training providing an insight into the gaps in pre-deployment training and preparedness. The TNA identified that although there is understanding amongst mission personnel about what PoC is as defined by UNSCRs, there is a lack of 'necessary knowledge and understanding on how to apply it under mission-specific POC scenarios' (UN 2018, p. 2). The TNA builds on this gap between knowledge and skills by stating that surveyed peacekeepers 'lack the knowledge necessary to anticipate, plan for and respond to a variety of mission-specific POC threats, situations and challenges' (UN 2018, p. 3), and that in instances where personnel have

demonstrated inadequate performance of POC tasks', this has often been the result of the 'limited understanding on how to respond to complex POC situations, their relation to mission components and a lack of basic and necessary skills and attributes' (UN 2018, p. 2).

Training Attitudes

The extent to which expanded forms of training are (or are not) operationalised could be because of the preference of those who lead training institutes. Marco Jowell's account of a training exercise at the 'multimillion dollar' PSO village at the International Peace Support Training Centre in Kenya highlights this. The experience Jowell encounters indicates the potential for missed opportunities if scenario-based exercises are undertaken more to demonstrate a military's capacity as opposed to training personnel:

> [T]he PSO village is used for a single scenario looking at Protection of Civilians. It is completely unrealistic to PSO situations. It involves an IDP camp with national police protecting it. A rebel group suddenly comes in waving weapons demanding medicines. A UN patrol swoops in guns raised and after some shouting the rebels disperse cordially … After the demonstration there is no attempt to discuss what has just been shown or to tease out some of the crucial points to take back. When asked about filming the demonstration to use as a training aid instead of wasting so much time for such a limited demonstration IPSTC staff commonly replied 'but we want to showcase the Centre, we want them to go to the village'. It seems showcasing the Centre trumps effective training. (Jowell 2018, p. 122)

Research from the training field identifies variation in attitudes towards core concepts of the training itself. This has been explored with regard to training in gender for military peacekeepers. Georgina Holmes' contribution on norm implementation in peacekeeper training notes how the Rwandan Defence Forces 'partially complied' with UN Gender mainstreaming norms (Holmes 2018, p. 25). Lisa Carson's study of the gender training for Australian peacekeepers notes inadequacies in pre-deployment gender training, partly because the term 'gender' is 'generally understood in a very limited way and is not covered in relation to the attitudes and behaviours of peacekeepers themselves' (Carson 2016, p. 276).

Underpinning this are national security and defence strategies, which influence how a troop contributing country approaches peacekeeping broadly, and PoC specifically. As Marco Jowell (2018, p1) points out succinctly in his study of training, peacekeeping is seen as 'second best' to the intended role of the armed forces, as '[a]fter all, soldiers are trained in the management and machinery of organised and legitimate violence, not in issues of developing peace through non-violent activities'. This can be seen in country-specific cases. Writing about the French Military approach to peacekeeping,

Thierry Tardy (2014, p. 771) notes that although it has been involved in a number of peacekeeping operations since the end of the Cold War, France has been 'keen to maintain the primacy of the combat functions of its soldiers which were not to be jeopardized by the contribution to peace operations'. In the case of the UK, this question has been examined in the context of the UK's role in the NATO *ISAF*[6] operation in Afghanistan. Here, Anthony King's analysis highlights how the warfighting ethos of UK military personnel would trump 'careful political consideration' of longer term priorities such as stabilisation and political processes (King 2010, p. 325). Training in the South African National Defence Force, according to Alchin, Gouws and Heinecken's study of South African Women Peacekeepers, is predominantly about 'combat readiness, physical strength, endurance and weaponry' (Alchin *et al*. 2018, p. 13). Although the authors acknowledge that the SANDF has shown an interest in understanding the challenges and value of women peacekeepers, its training models are critiqued for being 'steeped in hegemonic masculinities, wherein feminine traits are suppressed and undervalued by men and women alike' (Alchin *et al*. 2018, p. 13).

Conclusion

The analysis presented above outlines that progress has been made with regard to PoC training for military personnel preparing to deploy on peacekeeping operations. Yet it also notes that this progress is embedded in a fragmented peacekeeping training system. This concluding section will explore this dilemma, whilst outlining its contribution to literature on PoC, peacekeeper training and preparedness for peacekeeping.

In terms of PoC, the article identifies progress in the implementation of PoC policy at the UN. The expectations gap is closing between UN policy, which asks peacekeepers to engage in a participatory manner with actors from the host community, and UN training programmes, which prepare peacekeepers to do so. This is no easy task when the agenda for PoC is set by the Security Council, and the rest of the UN system adapts consequently.[7] In addition, the analysis finds that UN pre-deployment PoC training programmes demonstrate an evolution of PoC beyond purely military measures and direct protection, reflecting the multidimensional nature of the activity. As Felicity Gray argues there is no 'cookie cutter' approach to civilian protection, as 'protection architectures . . . do not exist in a vacuum, but interact with social, political, and relational forces' (Gray 2022, p. 168). Elicitive training may not provide the answers but will facilitate adaptability in uncertain context-specific PoC environments.

Concerning the peacekeeping training field, the paper's focus on training process identifies that elicitive forms of training for UN peacekeepers exist in the PoC domain. Training in this manner has the potential to change the

mindset of military personnel who undertake UN peacekeeping, particularly with regard to understanding of their role in a conflict situation, appreciation of the role of other non-military actors, attitudes to potentially violent situations and building effective community relations with local actors. Consequently, PoC training has the potential to take peacekeeping training beyond only offering 'standardized levels of competence' (Holmes 2018, p. 14), and towards a framework which could inform what Dietrich calls the 'transnational soldier' (Dietrich 2013, p. 173). The article makes this claim cautiously, and for reasons that will be outlined below, notes that the term 'potential' has a great deal of heavy lifting to do. From this, there exists room for further research into roles such as Community Liaison Assistants, and Engagement Teams (Henigson 2020, Baldwin 2021). These both represent a specific role specialisation from within uniformed contributions, whose focus is on some of these Tier I activities. Here, it would be worth investigating deeper the extent to which such personnel are trained for this type of activity, and the effect that their specialism will have on the requirement for other components of the mission to undertake contact skills related training.

It is through offering its contribution in the context of overall peacekeeping preparedness that this paper notes systematic challenges which limit the initiatives outlined above. As PoC is a headline activity of UN peacekeeping, training in this context offers a solid case study of the contemporary environment of preparedness for peacekeeping more generally. With this in mind, the article demonstrates that although UN PoC training programmes are embedded in the wider UN system, the same cannot be said about how these programmes are accommodated by a peacekeeping training system in which implementation is largely devolved to each member state. As a result, the dynamics of the training system are no different to broader dynamics in UN peacekeeping provision, which span across political, security, economic, institutional and normative concerns (Bellamy and Williams 2013a, p. 418–423). The variation across these concerns in the training domain (which this article highlights) means that there are no guarantees that the peacekeeping training system can provide a reliable pipeline of prepared peacekeepers which meet the expectations outlined by UN PoC policy, guidance and resolutions.

Those who have charted the evolution of peacekeeping do, however, speak of how peacekeeping training can facilitate 'path-dependency' within national institutions and create 'peacekeeping habits' which help sustain a member state commitment to peacekeeping (Bellamy and Williams 2013a, p. 431). Potentially this more bottom-up approach can complement top-down initiatives such as the commitments offered at the Peacekeeping Ministerial-level Meeting, cited at the top of this article, to overcome the challenges outlined above. If this continues, then there exists the potential that elicitive approaches which aim to

embed contact skills at the micro level will be supported financially and logistically. In turn, this will positively impact peacekeepers in understanding and engaging with PoC mandates in complex environments.

Notes

1. Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Lithuania, Slovak Republic, Switzerland.
2. This article works on the understanding that there is considerable variation in the term 'local'. As noted by *Van Leeuwen* et al, the term 'local' is an ambiguous category, and what 'local' means is as much a reflection of the attitudes of interveners as it is the conditions in an area of deployment. This may lead to a tendency to romanticise the local, essentialise the local, and underplay the power dynamics inherent when defining who a 'legitimate' local may be (Van Leeuwen *et al*. 2020, p. 281). Although the article will replicate the language in quotations and examples, it will do so whilst remaining cognisant these critiques.
3. In this case, Lederach's understanding of indigenous knowledge was informed by his engagement with Church leaders in Central America (Lederach 1996, p. 37)
4. Data came from a survey of peacekeepers who went through the ACCORD Course. There is no geographical data as to where the respondents encountered these situations.
5. The First module contains 114 slides, the second 78.
6. International Security Assistance Force.
7. This dynamic has been explored in other aspects of the UN peacekeeping system. See Riis Andersen (2018).

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Notes on contributor

David Curran is an Associate Professor at the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations where he heads the Research Theme '*Security and Resilience*'. His primary research investigates the interaction between the fields of conflict

resolution and military peacekeeping. He has investigated this in his monograph *More than Fighting for Peace?: Conflict Resolution, UN Peacekeeping, and the Role of Training Military Personnel*, published with Springer Press. He has authored articles on the evolution of peacekeeping training, stabilisation in UN peace operations, civilian protection, and the United Kingdom's relationship with UN peacekeeping. David has recently co-edited a book entitled '*Multidisciplinary Futures of United Nations Peacekeeping*', which was released in September 2023.

ORCID

David Curran http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2836-5496

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