A Synopsis of Theoretical (I.R) Perspectives on Peace Operations

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

Keywords: peace operations, theories, international relations, peacekeeping, training

Definition of Theory

The term 'theory' has many definitions in the discourse of International Relations. James Dougherty and Robert Pfaltzgraff define theory as "systematic reflection on phenomena, designed to explain them and to show how they are related to each other in a meaningful, intelligent pattern, instead of being merely random items in an incoherent universe."(Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff 1997, 15) Like all other definitions of 'theory' within the context of global politics, this definition assumes that there are patterns to international events and theorists of international relations strive to interpret those events as instances of a larger phenomenon or theoretical proposition.

Importance of I.R. Theories for Peace Operations

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

Limitations of Research

Since International Relations is a vast inter-disciplinary social science, the 'theories' in the discipline diverge sharply over their understanding of the global politics. The disagreements typically revolve around 'the nature of the being (referred to as ontology), how we know and acquire knowledge about being (referred to as epistemology) and what methods we should adopt in order to study being (referred to as methodology)' (Sterling-Folker 2006, 6). In addition, there exist multiple variants of each theoretical framework discussed in the present paper. An effort has been made only to delineate the main planks of a particular paradigm, with special reference to underpinnings of peace operations. Since 'states may sometimes choose to act alone or to lead others, *on the whole* peacekeeping operations tend to be organized and coordinated by *international organizations*'(Bellamy, Williams and Griffin 2004, 41, emphasis added), core emphasis will be kept restricted to role of international institutions in each theoretical framework being discussed. Overlap among theories is another limitation worth mentioning as the 'boundaries of each paradigm are somewhat permeable, and there is ample opportunity for intellectual arbitrage' (Walt 1998, 43)

Positivist versus Postpositivist I.R. Theorists

The intellectual spectrum of International Relations scholars can be broadly divided into two schools of thought: positivists and postpositivists. Positivists, also referred to as empiricists, are scholars who insist that there exists an objective state of being or 'reality'. This reality can be accurately and scientifically measured. In other words, the ontology is undisputable and 'a fact is a fact'. The goal of the IR theorist from a positivist's perspective is to empirically test competing IR theoretical perspectives against one another. The best known methodological or analytical tools to perform such tests are the 'levels of analysis'; the three primary levels being the individual, the nation-state and the system, also referred to, respectively, as the first image, the second image and the third image. The first image is the most micro, where causality is traced to the individuals making foreign policy and the psychology of human decision-making. The second image is the middle level and involves the examination of government structures, bureaucratic behaviour, interest groups etc., whereas the third image is the most macro level involving inter-state relations and other structural factors such as geography, relative power, governing system or capitalist interdependence that might affect or direct the conduct of all nation-states (Sterling-Folker 2006, 6-7). Realism, liberalism and constructivism are the three most prominent positivist theoretical paradigms.

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

Realism

Realism was the dominant I.R. theory throughout the Cold War. Realism developed out of the perceived failure of Wilsonian idealism which dominated the interwar period (Fetherston 1994, 89). It takes states as the primary unit of analysis, with main focus on territorial-based power politics. Great powers are assumed as rational actors who take security as a 'zero-sum' game which gives rise to the 'security dilemma'. The essence of the dilemma is that the measures a state takes to its own security usually decrease the security of other states (Mearsheimer 2001, 36). Relative power is assigned causal omnipotence in the realist framework. All outcomes in the realist analysis (human rights violations, military intervention etc.) are ultimately dependent on relative power, especially military power of the actors involved. The absence of a central authority which can impose limits on the pursuit of sovereign interests is labelled as 'anarchy'. Anarchy coupled with relative power give rise to a behavioural

pattern called 'balance of power' in which the relatively weak seek power to counter the relatively strong (Sterling-Folker 2006, 13-14).

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

The perspective of security as a fixed pie effectively closes doors for conflict resolution in the realist paradigm. Realists also downplay the role of institutions by considering them 'empty vessels' and 'little more than ciphers for state power' (Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal 2001, 762). A leading neorealist proponent Professor John Mearsheimer asserts that 'institutions have minimal influence on state behavior and thus hold little prospect for promoting stability in a post-Cold War period' (Mearsheimer 1994/95, 7) A question then arises as to why institutions are created in the first place and large amounts spent on their sustenance? Realists answer: 'Although U.S. leaders are adept at cloaking their actions in the lofty rhetoric of "world order", naked self-interest lies behind most of them' (Walt 1998, 43). In blunt and simple words, realists assert that institutions are created by great powers as smokescreens to camouflage their sinister self-interest.

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

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

Realist Perspective on Peace Operations

The most important repercussion for peace operations in the realist paradigm is its denial of a qualitative progress in International Relations (Sterling-Folker 2006, 16). Realists argue that much of international politic is 'life on the Pareto frontier', implying that states have already been able to cooperate to such an extent that no further moves can make all of them better off (Jervis 1999, 47). The Pareto concept in the realist world can be elaborated with the help of the following diagram:
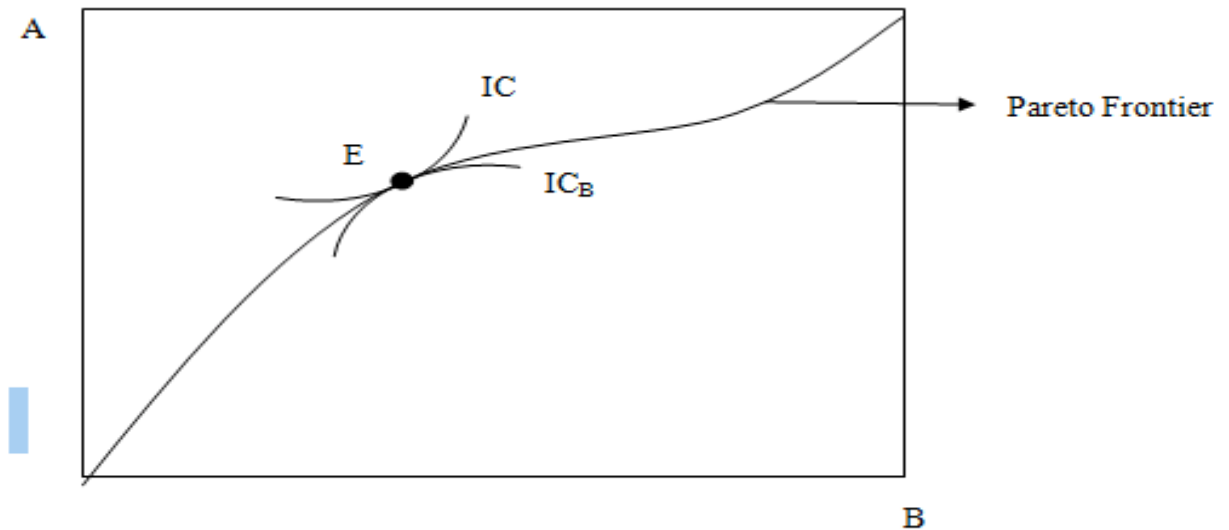
Figure 1

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

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

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

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

Liberalism

Liberalism is considered to be the primary theoretical competitor of realism in the positivist school of thought. In sharp contrast to the realist denial of qualitative progress in I.R., liberalists profess faith "in at least the possibility of cumulative progress" in human affairs (Sterling-Folker 2006, 55). Liberalists consider that much conflict in world politics is *unnecessary* and *avoidable*. This *unrealized* cooperation is a result of failure to employ institutions which results in a prisoner's dilemma or a market failure and produces suboptimal outcomes below the Pareto frontier for all concerned (Jervis 1999, 47; emphasis original). This phenomenon has been explained in Figure 2 below:
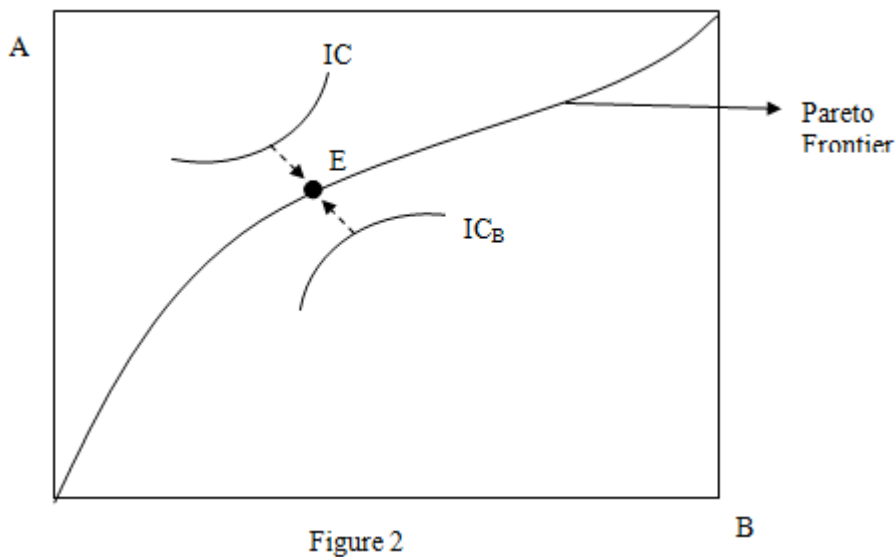

Figure 2

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

The cooperation literature in the liberal framework is based on the "Folk Theorem," which shows that decentralized cooperation is possible in repeated games. However, since decentralized cooperation is difficult to achieve and is often brittle (owing to distribution and enforcement problems, large numbers and uncertainty), states devise institutions to promote cooperation and make it more resilient. These institutions have been defined as 'explicit arrangements, negotiated among international actors, that prescribe, proscribe, and/or authorize behaviour' (Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal 2001, 764-6). The role of institutions in promoting peace is pivotal in the sense that these 'can provide information, reduce transaction costs, make commitments more credible, establish focal points for coordination, and in general facilitate the operation of reciprocity'(Keohane and Martin 1995, 42). Institutionalist liberals highlight the informational role of institutions in promoting transparency and believe that uncertainty or 'noise' is reduced through punishment of 'cheaters' in the system. Cooperation is cited to occur more easily in 'low' politics (economic, cultural, environment etc.) but liberals believe in the gradual evolutionary development of cooperation in 'high' politics (securitization) as well.

Liberal theorists however acknowledge that institutions are not always valuable or 'constitute a panacea for violent conflict' (Keohane and Martin 1995, 50). They recognize that considerable barriers exist to realizing collective action. Hence they assert that "institutions make a significant difference *in conjunction with power realities*" (Keohane and Martin 1995, 42; emphasis added). Liberal I.R. theorists consider that the job of I.R. theorists is to explore the impediments to collective action with underlying rationale that, in revealing such barriers, it might also be possible to overcome them in the future (Sterling-Folker 2006, 59).

Liberalist Perspective on Peace Operations

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

Critics have however pointed out that there are several qualifiers to this theory. First, states may be more prone to war when they are in the midst of a democratic transition, which implies that efforts to export democracy might actually make things worse. Recent experiences in Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Venezuela and Egypt are cited as support for the thesis that a US foreign policy that promotes democracy is misguided. Second, clearcut evidence that democracies do not fight each other is confined to the post-1945 era, and, the absence of conflict in this period may be due more to their common interest in containing the Red Threat than to shared democratic principles (Walt 1998, 39).

The public goods variant of liberalism provides important insights into initiation and continuation of peace operations. It theorizes that intervention in deadly conflicts is not possible without the "big guy" playing the major role. This is because the smaller states tend either to 'free-ride' or consider the burdens of peacekeeping and peacebuilding as too large and the potential benefits as too indirect for them to take action themselves (Boyer and Butler 2006, 77). Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) is a case in point which could not have been continued till today, let alone established in 2003, without Australia sharing the lion's share of the peace-building enterprise.

The institutional mechanism for peace operations is not a trouble-free phenomenon. As noted above, institutional peace operations create distributional, enforcement and organizational problems. During the Kosovo campaign, US leaders became increasingly frustrated with what they saw in NATO as a "war-by-committee". The 2003 Iraq crisis demonstrated that 'even tiny Belgium is willing to use NATO assets to block the will of the United States'. As a critical course correction, US took NATO

out of warfighting business but welcomed it in postcrisis peace support operations (Kay 2006, 72-3).

Constructivism

Whereas realism and liberalism tend to focus on material factors such as power or trade, constructivist approaches emphasize the impact of ideas (Walt 1998, 40). The true genesis of constructivism lies in the end of the Cold War, which came as a shock to both the realist and the liberal paradigms. The most striking aspect of the theory is its transformational logic and the feasibility of rapid and radical change (Sterling-Folker 2006, 115), symbolized by the title of Alexander Wendt's oft-quoted article: "Anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt 1992, 391). Contrary to realism, constructivists argue that actors are responsible for creating their own security dilemmas and competitions by interacting with each other in ways that these outcomes appear inevitable. 'Security dilemmas are not acts of God: they are effects of practice' (Wendt 1995, 77).

Constructivist IR scholars have borrowed ideas from other disciplines (literature, linguistics, sociology, etc) in order to build the edifice of constructivism. Since identities and interests are socially *constructed*, constructivists are of the view that if actors in international system were to start perceiving each other as friends instead of foes, the resultant outcomes have the potential to be very different. Even structures which are normally taken by I.R. scholars as "given" or "natural" (e.g. the Westphalian system and the sovereign nation-state) are not seen as immutable structures by the constructivists. They also explore the role of ideas, norms, culture, narratives, rhetoric, speech acts and discourse as contributory factors in producing particular identities and interests. Constructivism has thus broadened IR theoretical debates by incorporating philosophical and diverse range of topics within the discipline of international relations (Sterling-Folker 2006, 115-116).

Many constructivist scholars seek to occupy the middle ground between positivism and postpositivism. Constructivism seeks to legitimize 'certain subjects of inquiry that that had either lain dormant in the discipline or had simply been ignored, such as collective identity formation and culture (Sterling-Folker 2006, 118). John Ruggie, a leading proponent of constructivism is of the view that scholars do not even possess an appropriate vocabulary that can help describe the new factors and forces that are transforming global politics in the digital age (Walt 1998, 36).

Constructivist Perspective on Peace Operations

Constructivists argue that international institutions (including peacekeeping institutions) play a vital, independent and exogenous role in spreading global norms. They also contend that normative discourse is an important aspect of institutional life and that norms are contested within, and are sometimes propagated by, international institutions (Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal 2001, 762).

A crucial issue overlooked in the realist and liberal analyses of world politics is the issue of legitimation. A relational constructivist interpretation of peace operations would advocate that the debates and discourse involving various aspects of the peace process are (deliberately) framed in ways that mould, justify, reinforce or overturn

opinions. The interventionist and humanitarian discourses were merged by US policymakers in order to justify violation of sovereignty of nation-states in the Balkans in the 1990s. This led to what constructivists argue a clever jugglery of words enabling 'bombing in the name of civilized humanity' (Jackson 2006, 146-147). Their argument is further reinforced by the fact that similar, if not severe, humanitarian tragedy was allowed to occur in Rwanda in 1994 and now, Darfur is being 'talked to death'.

Social constructivists attach huge weight to ideas and are of the view that 'ideas put boundaries on what actors see as appropriate behavior and even possible behaviors' (Hoffman 2006, 137). The invention of the 'surge' tactic propounded by the Bush administration as an attempt to stabilize Iraq and also employed by Barrack Obama in Afghanistan, would be construed by a constructivist as either a manifestation of discourse or application of the norm (idea) life cycle.

Summary of Positivists for Peace Operations

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

SUMMARY OF POSITIVIST I.R THEORIES			
COMPETING PARADIGMS	**REALISM**	**LIBERALISM**	**CONSTRUCTIVISM**
Main Theoretical Proposition	Self-interested states compete constantly for power or security	Concern for power overridden by economic/political considerations (desire for prosperity, commitment to liberal values) ;	State behavior shaped by elite beliefs, collective norms and social identities; Transformational logic, Possibility of rapid, radical change
Main Units of Analysis	States	States	Individuals (especially elites)
Main Instruments	Economic and especially military power	Varies (international institutions, economic exchange, promotion of democracy)	Ideas and Discourse
Modern Theorists	Hans Morgenthau,	Michael Doyle, Robert Keohane	Alexander Wendt, John Ruggie

	Kenneth Waltz John Mearsheimer		
Representative Modern Works	Waltz, Theory of International Politics Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics	Keohane, After Hegemony Fukuyama, "The End of History" (National Interest, 1989)	Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It" (Int'l Organization, 1992) ; Koslowski & Kratochwil, "Understanding Changes in Int'l Politics" (Int'l Organization, 1994)
Post-Cold War Prediction	Resurgence of overt great power competition	Increased cooperation as liberal values, free markets, and international institutions spread	Agnostic because it cannot predict the content of ideas
Views regarding Peace Operations	Mainly as a vehicle to advance great power interests 'Life on the pareto frontier' closing doors for conflict resolution	As a symbol of growing cooperation among states can help move conflict states towards pareto optimal outcomes	Varies ; Emphasize independent or exogenous role of institutions; Ideas and discourse play important role in success of peace operations
Main Limitation	Does not account for International change	Tends to ignore the role of power	Better at describing the past than anticipating the future

Postpositivist Perspective on Peace Operations

Postpositivists, especially since the 1990s, have theorized across a broad spectrum of issues pertaining to peace operations. The normative purposes and the ontology of peacebuilding have, in particular, been subjected to scrutiny by postpositivists. Some of the leading postpositivist perspectives on peace operations are as under:

FEMINISM:
The word 'perspective' comes from the Latin word *perspectus,* which means 'look through, look into, see thoroughly, try out, investigate'. A perspective may then be defined as that which helps us see aspects of reality. Using a feminist perspective as an analytical tool means looking at the world through the eyes of women. While liberal feminists want women to get a bigger, preferably equal share of the pie, radical feminists do not want to assimilate to the society as it is, but to change it (Brock-Utne 1990, 148). Feminism is a multifaceted theoretical enterprise. Feminist I.R. literature criticizes gender-based oppositional hierarchies in which agency, control and aggression are associated with masculinity whereas dependence, vulnerability and

passivity are associated with feminity. Feminists insist that I.R. is about people-based hierarchies, not about states and that job of I.R. theorists should be to investigate how gender is ignored in political, economic and social processes (Sterling-Folker 2006, 246).

Feminist Perspective on Peace Operations

In societal terms, negative peace exists when there is absence of personal, physical and direct violence. Positive peace, on the other hand, exists when there is absence of indirect or structural violence. Radical feminists insist that the absence of violence against women is included in the peace concept itself and that attainment of positive peace can help achieve gender balance in society. This conception is especially relevant to post-conflict reconstruction, peacebuilding and stabilization phases of the peace processes (Brock-Utne 1990, 147-148):

Table showing negative and positive peace

	Negative Peace	Positive Peace	
	Absence of personal, physical and direct violence	Absence of indirect violence shortening lifespan	Absence of indirect violence reducing the quality of life
Unorganized	e.g., wife batterings, rapes, child abuse, street killings	Inequalities in micro structures leading to unequal life chances	Repression in micro structures leading to less freedom of choice and fulfillment
Organized	e.g., war	Economic structures built up within a country or between countries so that the life chances of some are reduced or effect of damage on nature by pollution, radiation, etc	Repression in a country of free speech, the right to organize, etc.

Critical Theories of Geopolitics and Media

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

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

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

Implications of Postpositivists for Peace Operations

The postpositivist perspectives on peace operations should be seen as a welcome development in the evolution of theory of peace operations. These should be taken as a challenging riposte to the existing theorization in the field of peacekeeping (Pugh 2003, 111). A critical evaluation and absorption of the various postpositivist strands can ultimately help mature the nascent theory of peacekeeping, for the increasingly demanding peace operations envisaged for conflict zones, in the 21st century.

Training as Bridge between Theory and Practice

Apart from integrating peace operations into major theoretical frameworks of International Relations, it is equally important to link theory of peacekeeping with practice thereof. Training of peacekeepers is the key factor in this process. Unfortunately, the training of peacekeepers continues to suffer from conceptual ambiguity and practical incoherence. In a majority of cases, it is not even considered worthwhile to adjust the peacekeepers from an essentially 'military/combat' culture to a 'third party/peace support' culture. Training of peacekeepers in a coherent and organized fashion carries the potential of not only fulfilling dissemination of guiding principles for successful third-party intervention; it can also serve as a vital link in the testing, revision and polishing of the conceptual basis of peace operations.
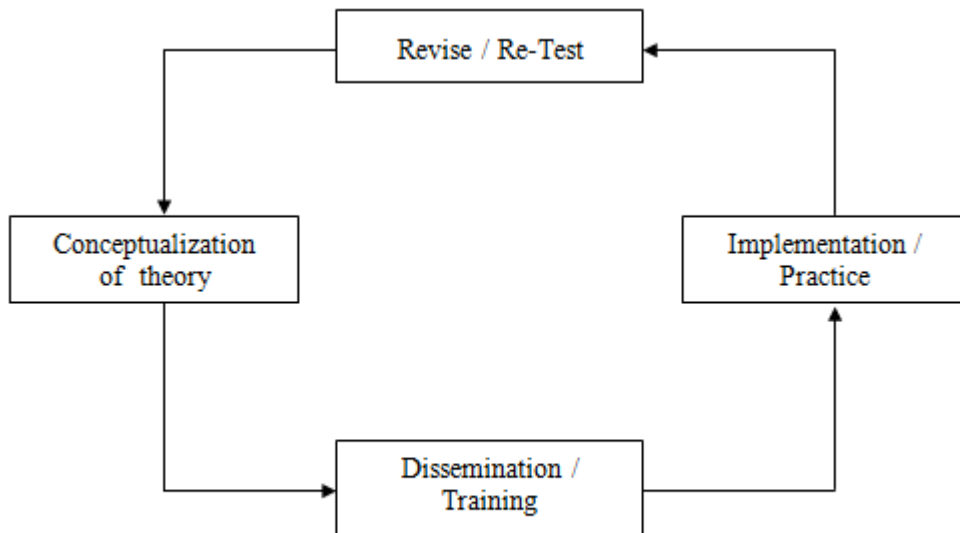
Figure 3

The cyclical development of the theory and practice of peace operations has been visually represented in the above figure (Fetherston 1994, 165). The conceptual analysis leads to refinements in training which leads to changes in practice. These changes then spark revision and re-testing which provide the crucial feedback into the conceptualization process. The need for a flexible theoretical foundation for peace operations with built-in provisions for constant re-evaluation of the on-going peace building enterprise, in light of practical feedback received from peacekeepers on the ground, cannot be over emphasized. It is only through such an exercise that workable and effective exit strategies can be arrived at.

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

Conclusion

The foregoing research has demonstrated that there exist multiple and equally legitimate perspectives on peace operations, thereby revealing the inherently political nature of peace operations. The research findings can serve the purpose of filling a theoretical gap in peace operations studies. We may conclude by a quote from Roland Paris who observes that 'building the study of peace missions into a mature academic subfield will require a concerted effort to move beyond the current preoccupation with practical operational issues and, instead, to use these missions as windows into larger phenomena of international politics' (Pugh 2006, 105).

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