

WORKING PAPER

WALK THE LINE:
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE
MICRO-PROCESSES OF A UN
PEACEKEEPING MISSION

Vanessa Newby



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WORKING PAPER #37

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OF A UN PEACEKEEPING
MISSION**

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Managing both inter and intrastate issues makes UNIFIL a complex mission despite the fact that it was borne of an era when peacekeeping missions tended to be kept simple. How do we understand UNIFIL today in the context of the changes that have occurred in peacekeeping over the past twenty years?

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INTRODUCTION

Since 2006, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has stationed up to 15,000 troops¹ to act as a buffer between Israel and Hizbullah. The challenges faced by UNIFIL troops on the ground can at times seem almost farcical. Wandering cows and goats are capable of putting forces on high alert, but this highlights the sensitivity to territorial violations felt by both parties to the conflict. On any given day, peacekeepers can be confronted with random rocket attacks from sub-state militias,² violent civilian protests, IED attacks or a confrontation between militaries that has the potential to trigger a regional war. Managing both inter and intrastate issues makes UNIFIL a complex mission despite the fact that it was borne of an era when peacekeeping missions tended to be kept simple. How do we understand UNIFIL today in the context of the changes that have occurred in peacekeeping over the past twenty years?

This research investigated the work of UNIFIL since the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 in 2006 in order to understand this question and how the UNIFIL mission continues to learn from developments in peacekeeping. In particular, how does UNIFIL negotiate a security role for itself in an environment where local civilians do not necessarily view it as being on the side of 'right', but yet need it to feel secure from attacks launched by either of the warring parties? This research asked two main questions:

1. How do peace operations influence their security environment at the local level?
2. What factors affect local engagement?

This working paper continues as follows: The first two sections provide a brief definition of traditional peacekeeping missions (of which UNIFIL is one), a description of the methodology of the research, and a short literature review in order to locate this research in the existing literature on the micro-processes of peacekeeping operations. Section Three then discusses the key findings of this research and with illustrative empirical examples. Section Four explores the checks and balances placed on UNIFIL, and Section Five highlights where UNIFIL has so far not succeeded.

A short conclusion is then provided in Section Six.

1 The mission mandate provides for up to 15,000. The current number of troops serving on the ground is 10,109 as at 8 September 2014.

2 For example: PFLP-General Command, Fatah Al-Islam, Jabha Shabiyah LiTahrir Falasteen and Jamaah Islamiyeh.



UN

الفرق البلجيكي للفرق الامم المتحدة
DANGER MINES
Belgian Demining Team

I. PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

UNIFIL is classified in the literature as a ‘traditional’ mission. This label refers to peacekeeping missions that adhere closely to the traditional principles of peacekeeping which are consent, impartiality and minimal use of force.³ These missions, established primarily before the end of the Cold War, often involved the imposition of a neutral force between the armies of two states at war.⁴ A number of these missions remain in the Middle East today given the absence of a resolution to the conflicts that triggered the interventions in the first place.

Traditional peacekeeping usually takes place in the period between a ceasefire and a political settlement and is comprised of activities that are suited to a holding phase or the creation of ‘a political space that will facilitate a political resolution of the conflict’.⁵ Such traditional missions typically monitor borders, verify demilitarization and establish buffer zones. However, Bellamy and Williams make the point that there is no consensus on what activities comprise traditional peacekeeping.⁶ This research argues that the UNIFIL mission has evolved to include both traditional and more modern peacebuilding activities.

It should be noted at this juncture, that the term ‘peace’ or ‘stability’ in this paper refers to what is known as a ‘negative peace’ i.e., the absence of conflict.⁷ Owing to the absence of a viable and on-going peace process at the political level between Israel and Lebanon, it would be unrealistic to expect more than this from a traditional peacekeeping force.

Currently in the peacekeeping literature two competing models of peacekeeping exist which are termed ‘heavy footprint’ and ‘light footprint’. Since the creation of more complex peace operations, there has been a debate about how involved peace operations should

³ United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, ‘Handbook on United Nations Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations’ (2013).

⁴ See MacQueen, Norrie, *Peacekeeping and the International System* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006). A number of traditional missions were based in the Middle East during the Cold War, which meant that certain areas were considered by the Soviet Union and the US to be ‘off limits’ for peacekeeping missions as they lay too close to their spheres of influence. The Middle East was considered not to be firmly placed in either sphere, but conflicts that took place there had the capacity to escalate and draw both the great powers into a war, which neither wanted.

⁵ Bellamy and Williams, *Understanding Peacekeeping*, p.175.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Charles T. Call and Elizabeth M. Cousens ‘Ending Wars and Building Peace: International Responses to War-Torn Societies’, *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol.9, No.1, 2008, pp.1-21.

be in the political and institutional structures of the states in which they intervene.⁸ This debate has come about as the result of the failure of more complex peace operations to achieve their goals.⁹

Traditional missions usually fall into the category of light footprint. This is in no small part due to the era in which they were born whereby Cold War politics meant that there was far greater emphasis on ensuring non-interference in the internal political structures of states in ideologically ‘neutral’ territory.¹⁰ This is the case with the UNIFIL mission as its work is based at the subnational level and it is largely uninvolved in the Lebanese domestic political processes.

In order to examine the details of the day-to-day work of peacekeepers, this research divided the praxis of the UNIFIL peace operation into three levels of engagement: the international, national and local.

- ▶ At the international level of engagement it investigates: How peacekeeping troops (that monitor the Blue Line) and Political Affairs Officers (PAOs) liaise with the named parties to prevent the resumption of conflict and provide solutions when incidents occur.
- ▶ At the national level: how PAOs and Civil Affairs Officers (CAOs) are engaged in confidence and capacity building two national institutions - the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the local government.
- ▶ At the local level: how CAOs and Civil Military Cooperation Officers (CIMIC) liaise with civilians in the area of operations to maintain local consent for the mission in order to ensure the security of peacekeeping patrols on the ground, and work to prevent and resolve problems that arise between the local population and the peacekeeping troops. This research ultimately examined the relationship between UNIFIL staff and those local actors who must engage with UNIFIL on a regular basis.

⁸ Krasner, Stephen D., ‘Sharing Sovereignty: New Institutions for Collapsed and Failing States’, *International Security*, 29/2: 85-120 (2004); Richmond, Oliver P., ‘The Romanticisation of the Local: Welfare, Culture and Peacebuilding’, *The International Spectator*, 44/1: 149 – 169 (2009); Chesterman, Simon, *Tiptoeing Through Afghanistan: The Future of UN Statebuilding* (New York: International Peace Academy, 2002); Barnett, Michael, ‘Building a Republican Peace: Stabilizing States After War’, *International Security*, 30/4 : 87 – 112 (2006).

⁹ See Paris, Roland, ‘Saving Liberal Peacebuilding’ *Review of International Studies*, 36/2: 337-365 (2010) p.343.

¹⁰ Although it should be noted that in international relations, the concept of state sovereignty was then and still is applied in a highly selective manner.

II. METHODS

This research employed an ethnographic approach,¹¹ which was taken in order to understand interactions, power relations and micro processes in the actual environment they occur to explore and understand the ‘why and how’ of processes in order to formulate a hypothesis for testing across multiple case studies.¹² Over the course of a year, fifty interviews were conducted, of which thirty-seven were face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with a cross-section of stakeholders.¹³ These included UNIFIL military staff, CIMIC officers and peacekeepers themselves from three battalions (Irish, Indian and Ghanaian). In addition, civilian staff, namely Political Affairs Officers (PAOs) and Civil Affairs Officers (CAOs) were interviewed and observed at work. Other interviewees included LAF officers; journalists, local academics, UNIFIL’s former spokesperson (1978-2006); and a wide variety of local civilians. Civilians interviewed ranged from agricultural workers and villagers, to local business owners, local municipality politicians, former local politicians and journalists from the area who still work and live there. Some respondents had limited interaction with UNIFIL and provided their impressions more through observations. Others were more involved with UNIFIL and had more to say about their dealings with them on a regular basis.

The ethnographic method identified within the structure of the UNIFIL peace operation, certain variables improved the opportunity for individuals to affect influence over their environment. In the case of UNIFIL staff, these factors were time, autonomy and local knowledge.

¹¹ Described by Bray (2008) as ‘a naturalistic approach whose main data-gathering and analysing techniques consist of participant observation and open-ended interviewing’ see Bray, Zoe, ‘Ethnographic Approaches’, in Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating, *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.314.

¹² Della Porta and Keating argue that qualitative methods enable the researcher to understand the ‘why and how’ of a research topic more than the ‘what, where and when’ obtained from quantitative methodology. See della Porta, Donatella, and Michael Keating, *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹³ These were recorded and transcribed.

III. LOCATING THIS RESEARCH IN THE LITERATURE

To date, there have been few in-depth and detailed studies published on the post-2006 UNIFIL mission (often referred to as UNIFIL II). Since the 2006 War and the revised mandate of Resolution 1701, there has been a small body of literature on South Lebanon which has looked at the revised UNIFIL mandate,¹⁴ and peacebuilding efforts in the post-conflict environment.¹⁵ Scholarship that has examined the work of the UNIFIL mission specifically is limited and mostly focused on technical aspects of the mission. For example, most research conducted on UNIFIL since the revised mandate has explored the legality and politics of the mission. Murphy (2009) examined the use of force and rules of engagement;¹⁶ while Hatto (2009) has examined the impact of the Strategic Military Cell (SMC) established in August 2006 to supervise the UNIFIL II mission in Lebanon.¹⁷ The character of the UNIFIL mission itself has received most focus from the perspective of how troops, from a variety of cultural and geopolitical backgrounds, navigate their roles and responsibilities with their rules of engagement. Vuga (2010), for example, used the UNIFIL mission to investigate the effect of cultural differences between troop contingents in multinational

peace operations.¹⁸ Liegeois (2012) used the example of Belgian peacekeepers to examine whether francophone peacekeepers deployed to francophone areas were more efficient.¹⁹ Ruffa (2013) analyzed the drivers of perceptions of security by different nationality troops in the UNIFIL mission and how this affected the way they behaved towards the local population.²⁰ In sum, there are currently no published studies that examine the interactions between the military and civilian UNIFIL staff, and local actors (civilian, military and political) from both perspectives.

In terms of the broader literature, the majority of research on peacekeeping in the past twenty years analyzing peace operations has researched intrastate war, rather than interstate war and research has also largely focused on heavy footprint missions in the post-Cold War era. Researching the UNIFIL mission is useful to help identify how light footprint missions affect their security environments, particularly in light of current debates about the right weight of a peacebuilding operation footprint.²¹

¹⁴ Makdisi, Karim, Timur Goksul, Hans Bastian Hauck, and Stuart Reigeluth, *UNIFIL II: Emerging and Evolving European Engagement in Lebanon and the Middle East*, Euromesco Paper, 2009); Makdisi, Karim, 'Constructing Security Council Resolution 1701 for Lebanon in the Shadow of the War on Terror,' *International Peacekeeping*, 18/1: 4-20 (2011); Hovsepian, Nubar, ed., *The War on Lebanon: A Reader* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2007); Nasu, Hitoshi, 'The Responsibility to React? Lessons from the Security Council's Response to the Southern Lebanon Crisis of 2006,' *International Peacekeeping*, 14/3: 339-352 (2007); Jones, Bruce, and Andrew Hart, 'Keeping Middle East Peace?,' *International Peacekeeping*, 15/1: 102-117 (2008).

¹⁵ Hamieh, Sylvia Christine, and Roger Mac Ginty, 'A Very Political Reconstruction: Governance and Reconstruction in Lebanon After the 2006 War,' *Disasters*, 34/S1: S103-S123 (2010); Zahar, Marie-Joelle, 'Liberal Interventions, Illiberal Outcomes: The United Nations, Western Powers and Lebanon', in Edward Newman, Roland Paris and Oliver Richmond, *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press 2009), Kingston, Paul, 'The Pitfalls of Peacebuilding From Below,' *International Journal*, 67/2: 333-350 (2012); Mac Ginty, Roger, 'Reconstructing Post-War Lebanon: A Challenge to the Liberal Peace?,' *Conflict, Security & Development*, 7/3: 457-482 (2007); Abi-Ezzi, Karen, 'Lebanon: Confessionalism, Institution Building, and the Challenges of Securing Peace', in Vanessa Shields and Nicholas D. J. Baldwin, *Beyond Settlement: Making Peace Last After Civil Conflict* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008).

¹⁶ Murphy, Ray, *UN Peacekeeping in Lebanon, Somalia and Kosovo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁷ Hatto, Ronald, 'UN Command and Control Capabilities: Lessons from UNIFIL's Strategic Military Cell,' *International Peacekeeping*, 16/2: 186-198 (2009).

¹⁸ Vuga, Janja, 'Cultural Differences in Multinational Peace Operations: A Slovenian Perspective,' *International Peacekeeping*, 17/4: 554-565 (2010).

¹⁹ Liégeois, Michel, 'Making Sense of a Francophone Perspective on Peace Operations: The Case of Belgium as a Minofrancophone State,' *International Peacekeeping*, 19/3: 316-332 (2012).

²⁰ Ruffa, Chiara, 'What Peacekeepers Think and Do: An Exploratory Study of French, Ghanaian, Italian, and South Korean Armies in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon,' *Armed Forces and Society*, Prepublished/04 April 2013: 1-27 (2013).

²¹ Paris, Roland, 'Saving Liberal Peacebuilding,' *Review of International Studies*, 36/2: 337-365 (2010), see page 343.

Attention to the importance of the local in understanding peace has however increased over the course of the last ten years within peace and conflict studies.²² The peacebuilding literature has also seen the growth of a small but emerging body of scholarship that investigates peace operations on the ground.²³ These studies have taken a micro-level approach that investigate the daily activities of peacebuilders and how they engage with civilians in the course of their work. The importance of this work is brought to the fore usually when peace operations do not work,

22 Whitworth, Sandra, *Men, Militarism and UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishing, 2004; Severine Autesserre, *The Trouble With the Congo. Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010; Adam Moore, *Peacebuilding in Practice*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013; John Karlsrud and Diana Felix Da Costa, 'Contextualising Liberal Peacebuilding for Local Circumstances: UNMISS and Local Peacebuilding in South Sudan', *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, Vol.7, No.2, 2012, pp.53-66; Diana Felix Da Costa and John Karlsrud, 'Moving Towards Local Level Peacebuilding? Contextualising Early Peacebuilding Activities to Local Circumstances: South Sudan Case-Study', Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2012; Niels Nagelhous Schia and John Karlsrud 'Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Friction Sites and Local Level Peacebuilding in Haiti, Liberia and South Sudan', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.20, No.2, 2013, pp.233-248; Jeni Whalan, *How Peace Operations Work: Power, Legitimacy, Effectiveness*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; Robert A. Rubinstein, *Peacekeeping Under Fire: Culture and Intervention*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008; Chiara Ruffa, 'What Peacekeepers Think and Do: An Exploratory Study of French, Ghanaian, Italian and South Korean Armies in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon', *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol.40, No.2, 2013, pp.199-225; Beatrice Pouligny, *Peace Operations From Below: UN Missions and Local People*, Bloomfield CT: Kumarian Press, 2006; Sandra Whitworth, *Men, Militarism and UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishing, 2004; Ole Jacob Sending, 'Why Peacebuilders Fail to Secure Ownership and be Sensitive to Context', Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2009; Cedric Deconing, John Karlsrud, and Marie Breidlid 'Turning to the South: Civilian Capacity in the Aftermath of Conflict' *Global Insights*, Vol.19, No.2, 2013, pp.135-152; Carolyn Hayman, 'Local First in Peacebuilding', *Peace Review*, Vol.25, No.1, 2013, pp.17-23; Roger Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011; Thania Paffenholz, *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment* Boulder, CA: Lynne Rienner, 2010.

23 Severine Autesserre, *The Trouble With the Congo. Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010; Adam Moore, *Peacebuilding in Practice*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013; Jeni Whalan, *How Peace Operations Work: Power, Legitimacy, Effectiveness*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; Whitworth, Sandra, *Men, Militarism and UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishing, 2004; Beatrice Pouligny, *Peace Operations From Below: UN Missions and Local People*, Bloomfield CT: Kumarian Press, 2006; Robert A. Rubinstein, *Peacekeeping Under Fire: Culture and Intervention*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008.

in other words an explanation of what went wrong with the peace operation can usually be found by examining events and actors on the ground.²⁴ Equally, critical approaches to peace operations labelled a success, seek to identify whether or not the mission was successful at the local level.²⁵

The small but growing body of literature that examines peacekeeping missions at the local level has thus far described civilian reactions to peace operations; explained how peacekeepers fail to address violence and conflict at the local level; peacekeeper misconduct; the conflict between the role of a soldier and the art of peacekeeping; and described how peacebuilding systems often fail to facilitate more localized solutions in conflicts and post-conflict societies. Despite the growth in literature that examines the micro processes of peace operations, recent scholarship has argued that 'how peacebuilders actually interact at the local level is still significantly under-researched'.²⁶

24 Severine Autesserre, *The Trouble With the Congo. Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010; Adam Moore, *Peacebuilding in Practice*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013.

25 Oliver P. Richmond, *The Transformation of Peace*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005; Oliver P. Richmond, *A Post Liberal Peace*, London: Routledge, 2011; Roger Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.

26 Schia and Karlsrud, 'Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Friction Sites and Local Level Peacebuilding in Haiti, Liberia and South Sudan'.

IV. KEY FINDINGS

The main finding of this research was that at the subnational level, UNIFIL is able to influence its security environment and hence contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. Small incidents on the ground have the potential to trigger larger conflicts that would have repercussions across the Middle East. A war between Israel and Lebanon would undoubtedly impact regional and international security. As such, the monitoring and reporting mechanisms applied by UNIFIL make a real contribution to regional stability.

Through the work of sub-national actors who operate at three levels: the local, national and international, UNIFIL works to prevent small incidents from developing into larger conflicts. The UNIFIL mission achieves this by using three types of operational mechanisms: first by monitoring, reporting and intervening in Blue Line violations as a response, to avoid escalation. Second, through the preventative mechanism of liaison between the IDF and the LAF to encourage cooperation and produce micro-security agreements to prevent future misunderstandings. Third, UNIFIL has a very comprehensive local engagement program that enables the mission to maintain local consent for its presence.

This research then identified the existence of three concepts: time, autonomy and local knowledge that facilitate the agency of subnational actors in UNIFIL. These three concepts appear to be related to a number of sub-factors which enable UNIFIL officers at the sub-national level to employ the abovementioned mechanisms successfully. This research identified how these factors were demonstrated by UNIFIL officers in the course of their daily work: Time is linked to the sub-factors of trust, institutional memory and consistency of effort. Autonomy is linked to creativity and spontaneity. Local knowledge produces cultural sensitivity and contingency in emergency situations. These concepts and their related sub-factors are displayed here in a diagram for clarity.

Figure 1

The Concepts and their related sub-factors that facilitate agency amongst UNIFIL staff

▶ Time	▶ Trust ▶ Institutional Memory ▶ Consistency of Effort
▶ Autonomy	▶ Creativity ▶ Spontaneity
▶ Local Knowledge	▶ Cultural Sensitivity ▶ Contingency

1. Time in the form of continuity plays a big role in contributing to the management of smooth relations between the named parties. Long-serving UNIFIL staff has built trusted relationships which enable them to generate solutions and present themselves to the parties as an ‘honest broker’. Continuity also generates institutional memory which means PAOs understand ‘the rules’ that govern the perceptions of both parties. Because they have proved their impartiality to both sides over time, this facilitates swift communication and resolution at critical moments. This largely involves the tripartite meetings that take place once a month between the LAF, the IDF and UNIFIL, as well as liaison between the three parties on an on-going daily basis. Liaison can be as simple as making telephone calls to the other side to clarify any misunderstandings, to holding emergency meetings or providing regular updates. Time also generates consistency of effort which is all important in moving forward towards a sustainable peace. Low turnover of staff enables consistent (if albeit incremental) progress to be made on on-going projects and avoids the risk of having to ‘re-invent the wheel’ every few years. PAO efforts in capacity building the LAF are starting to reap rewards but this has been the result of years of effort and is not something that can be executed as a short-term goal. Evidence of this was found in the monthly tripartite meetings, micro-security arrangements with Israel and interestingly, a liaison protocol that has not been formally documented, but which operates smoothly and efficiently largely on the basis of goodwill.

Temporality (time) was found to affect all levels of engagement by UNIFIL officers. The constant rotation of peacekeeping troops is acknowledged to be a problem both on the ground and at the top when the Force Commander is rotated. This negatively affects long-term UNIFIL staff and civilians alike. Civilians complained that it was hard to get to know the battalions because no sooner had they arrived but they left again. The LAF, the institutional partner of UNIFIL noted that without the presence of certain long-term staff little progress would have been made. One LAF officer credited a long-term PAO with helping to prevent the outbreak of war when the wall was being built at Kfar Kila. Furthermore, the LAF dislike having to re-educate a new Force Commander every two years. At the local level, the need to constantly educate new troop rotations in the culture and customs of the regime was lamented frequently. New troops in the region are unfamiliar with local customs, for example, knowing that many religious Shi'a women will not shake hands with a man. Understanding where to go and where not to go is also a problem for new troops on patrol. For example, one altercation occurred with local villagers when a male patrol passed too close by a mosque where women were holding a Majlis. This triggered an aggressive reaction from the men in the village because they felt it was inappropriate to patrol in the area at this time.

The long-term appointment of CAOs enables them to see shifts in the local environment (such as the effect of the refugee influx) and build lasting relationships based on trust and genuine liking. This means that when new troops accidentally offend the civilian population, local CAOs are able to diffuse the situation based on their relationships with key local figures. This was most noticeable when CAOs had to deal with pro-Hizbullah factions of the population. For example, some Italian troops were observed taking photos of a village which included photos of bridges and the mayor's house. The local CAO was able to resolve the situation because he had a good relationship with the local mayor owing to regular and sustained contact.

The problem of short-termism also became apparent in the different relationship CIMIC officers have with the municipalities which is more instrumental and based on material factors, as compared to the relationship that CAOs have which appears to be based on relationships built over time which have generated genuine trust and liking. This is not just because CAOs are Lebanese;

PAOs, many of whom are international staff, also generated trustful relationships with the named parties. In contrast, CIMIC officers often described the quality of their relationship with civilians being based on what they provided the local population.

However, the issue of time and continuity is a double-edged sword. There is no doubt that financial concerns preclude the objective of longevity when establishing peace operations. Had there been a successful peace process in the last thirty years, the UNIFIL mission would not still be there. However, the experience of the last twenty years has shown that peace operations that simply aim for a quick exit are not always the most successful.²⁷

2. Autonomy, the second key factor, facilitated the agency of actors at all levels of engagement. This issue has been identified by other authors, who found that high levels of interference by the international community made officers less effective on the ground.²⁸ The autonomy of CAOs appeared to facilitate creativity and spontaneity in their approach to problem-solving which made them highly responsive to the needs of the local population. CAOs demonstrated the ability and willingness to go above and beyond their mandates and use their local contacts in order to assist anyone who asked for their help. This has also won hearts and minds across the area of operations because locals can see that CAOs are authentic – they are going out of their way to assist rather than simply throwing money at a problem. In situations where CAOs were unable to assist the local population through UNIFIL, they used their contacts to obtain assistance from other organizations, such as charities or by using the media to raise public awareness on a particular issue. At the international level of engagement, autonomy is provided by the fact that the UNIFIL mission is out of the international spotlight. This means staff are generally left alone by the international community and not micro-managed. This naturally facilitates

²⁷ Paris, Roland, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Jett, Dennis C., *Why Peacekeeping Fails* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000); Sending, Ole Jacob, *Why Peacebuilders Fail to Secure Ownership and be Sensitive to Context*, (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2009); Polman, Linda, *We Did Nothing: Why The Truth Doesn't Always Come Out When The UN Goes In* (London: Penguin, 2004).

²⁸ Howard, Lise Morje, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Moore, *Peacebuilding in Practice*.

quick decision-making (spontaneity) and creativity in seeking solutions to problems in particular when liaising with the IDF during security incidents. At the national level PAOs demonstrate autonomy (and creativity) by seeking funding for the LAF across the whole of Lebanon to enable them to receive the maximum amount of military equipment without triggering Israeli security concerns. This work is not strictly part of the mandate but it makes a major contribution to the larger peacebuilding project for Lebanon. Another example is the way in which UNIFIL staff work to increase the legitimacy of the municipality and local political processes. They maintain impartiality between all the political parties by adhering strictly to the laws of local government which in practice means working with local mayors on all UNIFIL funded projects and encouraging the local population to resolve local issues through the municipality wherever possible. When the municipality is unable to help, they work creatively to generate solutions outside of their day-to-day duties. For example, one CAO was able to assist a restaurant owner in getting the road next to his restaurant sealed (paved) by using his relationship with the LAF who also used the road.

3. Local knowledge has a strong impact on UNIFIL officers' ability to influence their security environment. At the international level of engagement, PAOs understand the concerns of both parties and know how to find a way through – the 'gap' as one respondent termed it – through which they can pass to avert military confrontation. At the national level, local knowledge is demonstrated by CAOs when they work with the municipalities. The CAOs understand the concerns of the people on the ground and the constraints faced by members of local government - the political context in which they operate. As such they ensure that they deal with all parties equally and do not allow international concerns about who are the 'right' parties to deal with to interfere with their behavior on the ground. This encourages communication between UNIFIL with villages that may be predisposed to think negatively of the mission and therefore facilitates a more secure environment for the troops. At the level of local engagement, CAOs train peacekeeping troops in local etiquette to reduce the risk of offending local sensibilities. In addition they use their extensive networks of local contacts to meet local needs – whether it is obtaining a scholarship for a young student, or helping a mayor manage a sudden refugee influx; providing free veterinary services or providing a free clean up for a church that suffered from a fire.

These small endeavors build up over time into social capital for UNIFIL. This eye for detail is borne of attention to the local.

This research found that high levels of local knowledge facilitated contingency and sensitivity to local sentiment. The environment in which UNIFIL officers work has experienced both interstate and intrastate conflict in the past thirty years. Some tensions still exist between the different religious communities over the role of Hizbullah in South Lebanon. Although Hizbullah is a legitimate political actor in Lebanon, the continued presence of their military wing is largely popular in the south but remains a contentious issue for some groups in the local population. UNIFIL officers need to carefully consider local political and religious sentiment at the subnational level in the course of their interactions with the local population to avoid giving offence. Furthermore, contingency is facilitated by local knowledge when problem-solving and in crisis management situations with the local population.

One example of contingency and sensitivity to local culture was demonstrated in the actions of a CAO at the scene of a car accident between a UNIFIL APC and a school bus. The CAO took matters into his own hands and worked with the LAF to avert a confrontation between peacekeepers and the local population. The confrontation was caused by cultural differences in the way such an incident needs to be managed and a stand-off had emerged between the local population and the peacekeeping force involved which included a show of weapons. In order to defuse the situation, the peacekeeper needed to employ local knowledge as well as taking the initiative. This involved: promising to cover all medical costs for the children without prior approval from the mission; moving the discussion from the street to the LAF local headquarters; and persuading the local population to allow the peacekeepers to leave the area peacefully. This research found that these types of confrontations have the potential to destroy years of trust between the civilian population and UNIFIL if not correctly managed.



V. CHECKS AND BALANCES

“[T]here’s a balance to it. There’s definitely a balance between what we are trying to achieve out here and the mission mandate, you know?”²⁹

This research found that all the actors involved in the mission, peacekeeping troops, PAOs, CAOs, CIMIC, the LAF, Hizbullah and civilians, are engaged in a balancing act in their daily lives - walking the line - between defending local interests versus keeping international peace. More often than not, they walk this line together rather than separately but when there is separation it is invariably because UNIFIL staff has had to balance a need for the good will of the local population with the rules of their mandate. Equally, civilians who are deeply committed to the resistance movement have to balance their political affiliations with their friendship with individual UNIFIL officers.

One of the biggest balancing acts occurs when UNIFIL staff interacts with a local population that has to reconcile their need for peace with their political and religious affiliations. As one respondent informed me, ‘everything is connected’ in this part of the world. The problems between Lebanon and Israel are deeply connected with the Arab/Israel issue. The inherent power imbalance that exists between Israel and the states that surround it, and how Israel has exercised its power in the last thirty years has led to such deep, painful wounds in Lebanese society. But at the same time, this research exposed a deep-seated desire in the people of the South for sustained peace. This is what sustains local support for the UNIFIL mission - even when the presence of troops gives rise to local tension. One respondent expressed the deep contradictions felt by civilians about this issue:

Well I think the majority of the people, you know, irrespective of who they might support, I think the majority of people in every country you go to – they just want normality...When you take away the – how would you call it – the past difficulties. People just want to get back to normality. It’s just like everybody else – you know – you just want your kids to grow up and go to school, you want to go on a holiday, you want to be able to – you know. And that’s what most of the people in the south are striving for and they know I think realistically, in their heart and soul – that while the resistance is necessary in their minds, and probably is, necessary, they know that they have

to move beyond that too. They would like things to be normal and let the state cater for their security and their needs.³⁰

This research also revealed that the main constraints (checks) faced by UNIFIL currently are the named parties to the mandate, local-international legitimacy gap, local agency and the lack of international and national support for peacebuilding projects and the Middle East peace process. The effects of these constraints renders UNIFIL unable to improve the local security situation and serves to maintain the highly unstable status quo.

The Named Parties to the Mandate

One of the biggest constraints on UNIFIL is the presence of unnamed parties to the mandate who are capable of subverting the peace process at any time. This was demonstrated most recently on October 7th, when Hizbullah attacked an Israeli patrol in Shebaa Farms. These types of acts have the potential to render the mechanisms in place to maintain stability all but ineffectual. As Hizbullah are not a named party to the conflict, and as they agreed in principle to remove themselves from the area, UNIFIL are unable to communicate with them when a security incident arises, such as the one on October 7th because it is not part of their mandate. Hence, close coordination with LAF only works to prevent altercations between LAF and the IDF – such as weapons pointing incidents, shootings and the battle at Al-Addaïseh in 2010 – from escalating.

However, this issue of using liaison to maintain local security highlights an important finding of this research – that in many ways Israel has managed to co-opt UNIFIL as a way of managing its own security. The fact that UNIFIL are so quick to reassure Israel in the face of security incidents is a demonstration of this. A review of the Secretary General reports in 2013 shows how often Israel has violated international law in the past six years by conducting illegal sorties into Lebanese territory and until this year, in comparison, Hizbullah had conducted no known incursions into Israeli territory. The Israeli violations do not seem to receive the same concern from UNIFIL unless they engender a response from either the LAF or Hizbullah which has the potential to threaten Israeli security.

²⁹ Interview with Respondent F1, UNIFIL, Beirut, Lebanon, 15 November 2013.

³⁰ Interview with Respondent F1, UNIFIL, Beirut, Lebanon, 15 November 2013.

In which case, the protocols set up once again serve to reassure Israel rather than the local population. In light of the fact that Israel has invaded Lebanon no less than five times in the past thirty years, this arrangement serves to illustrate to the local population that UNIFIL exists to maintain Israeli security and not its own.

However, past experience has taught UNIFIL only too well, that if they do not act fast to reassure Israel, there is always the potential for a larger conflict to break out and this will lead to unnecessary civilian suffering. Their role as peacekeepers is to maintain the peace, and the imbalance of power at the international level means that practically, their only option when incidents occur is to reassure Israel.

Legitimacy

The lack of international will to resolve the dispute between Lebanon and Israel emerges most strongly on the issue of the legitimacy of Resolution 1701. This research highlighted the gap between the international legitimacy of the mandate and its local legitimacy. Resolution 1701 is accepted by the international community as being a just solution to the 2006 War between Israel and Hizbullah. This view is not shared by the local population, who view it as not having taken into account the conditions under which the conflict began and is biased towards Israel – not least because UNIFIL only patrols on the Lebanese side of the line.

The conflict between local and international perceptions of the legitimacy of UNIFIL is caused by the lack of even-handedness of the mandate itself and also how it is being implemented. Another good example of the tensions caused by this dynamic is the Catch-22-like situation of capacity building the LAF. UNIFIL has been proactive in assisting the LAF in building up their resources in order to present as a fully equipped, modern military force. However, UNIFIL officers are often prevented from obtaining serious weaponry for LAF by the Israel lobby who argue it threatens their national security. At the same time, UNIFIL are being asked to securitize the border regions and eradicate Hizbullah. Why should the local population after five successive invasions, feel more secure if Hizbullah were eradicated and replaced by a national army incapable of defending them? This also raises the question of why one state is being allowed to interfere with the military

development of another. In sum, this is a clear violation of state sovereignty which UNIFIL, owing to international prejudices is forced to navigate and which it admits, it finds deeply frustrating.

The issue of low legitimacy amongst some sectors of the local population also affects UNIFIL daily patrols. This can mean that UNIFIL are hindered from conducting the full range of activities specified in the mandate owing to the lack of local cooperation.

Another way this issue is demonstrated is in the way that the local population talks about UNIFIL's use of force. As noted above, the local population regards security as important and often demanded more security, not less of UNIFIL peacekeepers. However, how the local population wanted UNIFIL to use force was the opposite of the mandate guidelines. Locals became particularly frustrated that UNIFIL were not willing to fight back against the IDF during the incident at Al-Addaisseh. Locals see themselves as impotent against Israeli aggression and believe that UNIFIL should exist to protect them from it. Of course, according to their mandate, UNIFIL are unable to use force against either of the named parties to the conflict. Conversely a large proportion of the population do not want to see UNIFIL use force against Hizbullah to drive them from the area of operations even though, to the extent of conducting weapons searches and preventing any activity from armed elements, this is actually part of UNIFIL's mandate.

Local Agency

Local agency acts to constrain UNIFIL physically, but also by subverting the goals of peacekeepers. This research discovered that there is a dual dynamic in the relationship between local civilians and international interveners: both parties have agency. Currently there has been a focus in the peacebuilding literature on the importance of local engagement. The importance of engaging with local actors on the ground is crucial, but it must be regulated somehow. Local actors are adept at pursuing their own goals and objectives in the relationship and this should be acknowledged more realistically in the literature on peace operations. Corruption and duplication need to be avoided, and therefore UN funded projects require mutual input from both local actors and those acting on behalf of international organizations. As noted by Barnett and Zurcher (2009), local elites can subvert the goals of

the peacebuilding project to their own interests.³¹ This research identified that this dynamic operates at the level of local government and citizens who will happily pursue their own interests using international resources but allow the structures that created the conflict in the first place to remain in place. This dynamic was particularly noticeable in the relationship between CIMIC and the local population. The quality of that relationship was found to be very instrumental owing to the short time frames of projects coupled with frequent rotations. How locals viewed the battalions as cash cows, as opposed to forces for change, can be attributed to the short-term postings of CIMIC officers. CIMIC did demonstrate institutional learning in terms of avoiding duplication and corruption, but this research found that soldiers regard the post of a CIMIC Officer as more of an opportunity to obtain public relations and media experience as opposed to getting to know the local population. The local population appears to understand this and as a result respond differently to CIMIC compared to CAOs. In other words, they are not deceived by financial reward; the personal relationship they have with an officer is important. Furthermore, as one respondent put it “they will smile and wave at UNIFIL but if they come too close to an area which is sensitive because of the activities of the resistance, they will do everything they can to prevent UNIFIL from entering that area.”³²

UNIFIL are physically constrained by local agency in that they need to balance pursuing the mandate and keeping the local population happy in order to retain consent. UNIFIL’s moral authority, that Rubinstein (2008) discusses,³³ is reasonably high because they do not use force against the local population. It does mean however that when local civilians attack their vehicles and steal equipment, peacekeepers have to stand back rather than defend³⁴.

National and International Support

At the national level, this research revealed that top-down input is key to success in institution-building. This was demonstrated by UNIFIL’s efforts in building up the capacity of the LAF, and local support for municipal governments. Both institutions require the financial support of the national government on a sustained basis if they are to convince the local population that they are superior to other actors in the area - Hizbullah and UNIFIL. At the moment, both UNIFIL, and Hizbullah at times, supplant government institutions in the south of Lebanon. In the case of the LAF, the international community can play an important role in ensuring that the LAF receives the necessary funding, training and support so that it can evolve into an effective deterrent force that convinces the local population that there is no longer any need for sub-state militias. At the political level, the international community needs to convince Israel that building LAF capacity does not present a threat to their national interests. At the national level, politicians need to work hard to ensure that the LAF retains its neutral image as a force that protects all Lebanese and whose interests will not be hijacked by interested foreign parties. The issue of the effectiveness of the LAF is highly interconnected with international politics and will not be easily resolved.

The Lebanese Government has the ability to influence local perceptions of the municipal governments if it chooses to invest more money in them to enable them to take over the work of UNIFIL in rebuilding the infrastructure of the south. Municipal governments, as with the LAF, do have legitimacy with the population of the south, owing to the fact that democracy as a system of government is accepted in Lebanon. But without sufficient financial support, municipalities simply cannot offer as much support to locals as UNIFIL currently does. At the national level too, there is a need for more national offices to be placed down in the south to ensure that a vacuum does not emerge in the provision of government services that sub-state actors in the region would be only too happy to fill. The effectiveness of actors within the UNIFIL mission engaging at the national level is constrained by actors at the national and international levels.

³¹ Barnett, Michael N., and Christoph Zurcher, ‘The Peacebuilders Contract: How External Statebuilding Reinforces Weak Statehood’, in Roland Paris and Tomothy D. Sisk, *Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge, 2009).

³² Interview with Respondent C, Blat, South Lebanon, 18 June 2013.

³³ Rubinstein, Robert A., *Peacekeeping Under Fire: Culture and Intervention* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008).

³⁴ See for example United Nations Secretary General, *Report of the Secretary General on the Implementation of Security Council 1701 (2006) 2006 - 2016*.



VI. WHERE UNIFIL DOES NOT SUCCEED

There is no doubt that UNIFIL has been dealt a difficult hand when it comes to balancing local versus international interests, perhaps even more so after the events of 2006. In the UNIFIL mission, this research identified what particular factors have worked best for the mission's engagement at the local level - in an environment that is relatively hostile to the mandate that includes disarmament of actors who many civilians view as defenders of their land. However, this research illustrated how an international institution can be constrained by both international and local interests.

One problem is the issue of UNIFIL sustaining the conditions that necessitated their presence in the first place. This is due to Israeli interference and the blatant inequalities in the terms and implementation of the mandate which expose the biases of the international community in relation to Israel's rights and responsibilities in the region. UNIFIL responds to international concerns in terms of reassuring Israel of its own security, but not to local concerns about the need to respond more forcefully to Israeli incursions. Furthermore, UNIFIL has been tasked with ridding the area of 'illegal weapons' which largely refers to Hizbullah's military activities. Thus UNIFIL is being asked to remove the one security measure that many civilians rely on to feel safe from further Israeli invasions. UNIFIL understands the impossible contradiction between the local and international interests that they are faced with and as a result attempts to clear the area of weapons are relatively benign. UNIFIL relies on national laws about private property to avoid seeking out weapons and aggravating the local population in any way. As a result, those in the area who do support this endeavor often refer to UNIFIL as 'tourists' and ineffectual.

Whilst sustaining this imbalance of force, UNIFIL needs to work extremely hard to maintain local support for its presence, by avoiding situations of conflict with the local population, and providing as much economic support as possible. This encourages local dependence on UNIFIL investment and indirectly allows the Lebanese Government to avoid investing in local infrastructure projects.

VII. CONCLUSION

So is UNIFIL helping or hindering the South of Lebanon? There is no doubt the UNIFIL mission has acted as shock absorber for local tensions and maintained a negative peace, that is, it has prevented the escalation of minor incidents into large-scale conflict. But its presence appears to be sustaining the conditions of conflict more than it is resolving them. Having said that, two further points need to be made in regard to this. First, it is not the job of a traditional peacekeeping force to resolve international conflict. Second, there is no doubt that UNIFIL do a great deal of good on the ground and at the national level: they have provided in the past thirty years life-saving healthcare, and many economic benefits to a neglected region. The results of this research showed that many of the officers in the mission genuinely care about the local population and go out of their way to assist in any way they can. Furthermore, at the national level, UNIFIL works incredibly hard to capacity-build the LAF even to the extent of securing equipment for them to use across Lebanon, not just in the area of operations.

The final criticism of UNIFIL is related to their inability to prevent the outbreak of another war. But this is a critique true of most peacekeeping missions in that there has to be a peace to keep in order for a peacekeeping force to function. Should one of the parties choose to resume hostilities again there is little that UNIFIL can do to prevent this. As such, it was all the more interesting to observe the degree to which mandated parties respected the processes and efforts put in place by UNIFIL since 2006 to build trust amongst all parties, and to make the mission the place that people should turn to if they wish to prevent a return to conflict.

This research argues that sub-national actors within a UN mission are able to influence their security environment and the factors of time, autonomy and local knowledge play a role in facilitating agency. For now, the area of Lebanon south of the Litani remains stable, ten years after the implementation of Resolution 1701. This research acknowledges the important role key regional actors play in the maintenance of peace: should any party choose to recommence hostilities, there is little UNIFIL can do. But thus far a resumption of war based on the escalation of a security incident has not occurred. This has been achieved in large part by the actions of a small group of highly committed staff that operate at the subnational level that are often held hostage to both international and local interests.

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