

# Making Peacekeeping More Effective

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## ***Making Peacekeeping More Effective***

Last, David M. *Theory, Doctrine and Practice of Conflict De-Escalation in Peacekeeping Operations*. Cornwallis Park, NS: Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 1997.

Morrison, Alex and Dale Anderson, eds. *Peacekeeping and the Coming Anarchy*. Cornwallis Park, NS: Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 1996.

Both *Theory, Doctrine and Practice of Conflict De-Escalation in Peacekeeping Operations* by David M. Last and *Peacekeeping and the Coming Anarchy* edited by Alex Morrison and Dale Anderson highlight the complexities of peacekeeping missions as well as the study of these operations. Both volumes examine the specific activities undertaken by peacekeepers in order to improve their effectiveness in restoring stability in shattered regions. Last's book is an effort to consolidate strategic, operational and tactical recommendations to peacekeepers by integrating conflict theory, military doctrine and actual field experiences. He emphasizes the importance of combining offensive and defensive strategies, as well as contact and combat skills. These different techniques have been addressed in various bodies of literature on peacekeeping but have rarely been linked. He establishes a conscientious research design and provides strong references for those hoping to expand upon the practical topic of how peacekeepers can de-escalate violent situations.

*Peacekeeping and the Coming Anarchy* is a report in the The Pearson Roundtable Series resulting from a conference that took place in March 1995. It addresses the changing conditions under which peacekeepers operate. The Roundtable defines four phases of a descent into anarchy and characterizes each phase in terms of military, social, political and economic conditions that threaten further instability. The participants then make recommendations for intervention actions that are appropriate to each phase of anarchy. These actions are taken by a variety of actors, including the military, police, NGOs, UN agencies, diplomats and the media. The Roundtable's emphasis on the importance of these many actors and on the coordination of their efforts points to a new dynamic in peacekeeping in the post-Cold War era, a New Peacekeeping Partnership.

Last begins his study by examining conflict theory and derives a range of options available to peacekeepers based on the causes of violence and models of de-escalation. He emphasizes that theory focuses on offensive steps such as conciliation and mediation to resolve conflict. Last notes that these offensive steps need to be combined with a separation of forces, the meeting of basic needs of the population, and the acceptance of a third party intervention force. This leads Last to examine military doctrine which focuses largely on defensive actions available to peacekeepers. These actions are derived from the principles of clarity of intent, use of force, impartiality and consent. Last explains that the response of peacekeepers to a violent incident is to defend and negotiate for self-defense and to maintain a separation of forces. He points out that this focus on defense does not allow for long-term resolution of conflicts in most cases.

After examining theory and doctrine, Last explores the actual experiences of peacekeepers in the former-Yugoslavia and Somalia to determine how offensive and defensive actions are combined. He analyzes the characteristics of the violent incidents experienced by peacekeepers and their responses to these incidents by conducting interviews and by reviewing surveys conducted by the Canadian military. He concludes that soldiers at the tactical level have little control over their environment and must rely on the contact skills of their commanders to help de-escalate violent incidents over time. This is not to say that the soldiers do not play a significant role, simply that they cannot negotiate with a land mine or a sniper. Their superiors must be skilled in contact to negotiate the removal of such threats, and the soldiers must be skilled in combat techniques to defend against them.

In contrast to Last, who focuses solely on military actors with their combat and contact skills, the Roundtable discusses the roles of actors ranging from diplomats to the media. The participants recommend specific actions to be taken for each phase of anarchy that they define. For example, during phase one when there are military, social and political threats to a society, the Roundtable report recommends preventive diplomacy and macroeconomic adjustment programs with only minimal military involvement. Only during phases three and four does military intervention become prominent in efforts to restore stability.

Although Lasts study provides good examples of peacekeepers response to a variety of violent incidents ranging from air attacks to hostage taking, the focus of the research is sometimes lost as the discussion begins to read more like a list of variables affecting operations than an analysis of them. Last establishes a clear distinction between the responsibilities and capabilities of peacekeepers at each level, and the importance of coordination. It would be useful, however, to have more specific analysis of how these levels coordinate their actions. The Roundtable report supplements Lasts work well in this area. The final discussion point of the Roundtable investigates mechanisms for cooperation between the variety of actors in the New Peacekeeping missions. Some of their recommendations include: formalizing liaison positions between government and nongovernment organizations, maintaining routine interagency contact at all levels, and establishing civil-military operation centers to share information and coordinate efforts.

By incorporating theory as well as doctrine and experience, Lasts book is of interest to those studying peacekeeping operations as well as those engaged in them. His work emphasizes the importance of considering both contact and combat skills as well as offensive and defensive strategies when planning or evaluating a peacekeeping mission. The Roundtable report should also be of interest to practitioners of peacekeeping, particularly the non-military components of missions. The Roundtable encompasses a broader timeframe that makes it particularly useful for those studying the early stages of conflict and regional instability prior to full-scale peacekeeping operations. An additional element to be considered, which is not addressed by either study, is the link between politics and peacekeeping operations. It may be critical that a mission have a clear mandate, but political considerations may prevent such a mandate from being

incorporated in an operation. Politics may also impede the implementation of other important aspects that have been recommended in these studies.

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