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When Peacekeeping is Not Peacemaking: Syrian-Israeli Negotiations at Shepherdstown

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Abstract. This article contrasts peacekeeping and peacemaking not only as distinct denotations but also as functional antitheses.

There are simple denotative differences between peacekeeping and peacemaking. The former assumes that peace already has occurred and must be maintained. The latter assumes that peace has not yet occurred and must be effected. A less common observation is that peacekeeping may bear with it a psychology that may inevitably lead to the need for peacemaking--i.e., the loss of peace.

For example, one proposal--advanced by (among others) former US national security adviser Brent Scowcroft--is to handle significant security concerns between Syria and Israel by placing United States (US) military troops on the Golan Heights. This would be a peacekeeping force in that there currently is a de facto peace and the force's job would be to keep it that way. According to this proposal, the force would be sizeable enough and armed enough to deter a breaking of the peace and to re-make the peace as appropriate. In this lie the potential seeds of the problem.

Peacekeeping may stand in the way of the long-term goal (assuming this goal is embraced by Syria and Israel) of a so-called "warm peace" with extensive trade activities, flying the foreign flag over new embassies, and occasionally shunning vitriolic propaganda. How does this happen? Peacekeeping provides the psychological luxury of an excuse for not committing to the belief systems and acts that would contribute to the "warm peace." Without peacekeeping, there is a greater motivation to commit for without such committing there is a greater probability of war (assuming war is not desired by Syria and Israel). The probability of not committing leading to war is lessened with the peacekeeping force. Thus, both sides can defer the psychological entanglements of the warm peace without the significant risk of the bloody, potential consequences. When the US eventually decides to withdraw or scale back forces, the winds of war can blow strong indeed.

Peacekeeping may also serve as a biased element of a peace agreement that favors Syria. This observation is based on the assumption that, while the Israeli government views a "warm peace" as in its favor, the Syrian government may prefer a "cold peace"--colder than that between Egypt and Israel.

So far, most psychological research on peacekeeping and peacemaking has focused on posttraumatic stress disorders and other clinical issues concerning military forces involved in such activities and the many civilian victims caught up in tragedy. As a primary prevention approach to posttraumatic stress disorder and for peace, political psychologists face a huge research agenda: to delineate the causal and dynamic aspects of peacekeeping--the times when peacekeeping reinforces no need for peacemaking and the times when it is peacemaking's clarion call. (See Bobrow, D.B., & Boyer, M. A. (1997). Maintaining system stability: Contributions to peacekeeping operations. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 41, 723-0748; Kelman, H.C. (1998). Social psychological contributions to peacemaking and peacebuilding in the Middle East. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 47, 5-28; Langholtz, H.J. (1998). The psychology of peacekeeping: Genesis, ethos, and application. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 4, 217-236; Montiel, C.J. (1997). Citizen-based peacemaking in a protracted war: Two

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Philippine cases. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 3, 115-134; Orsillo, S.M., et al. (1998). Psychiatric symptomatology associated with contemporary peacekeeping: An examination of post-mission functioning among peacekeepers. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 11, 611-625; Safire, W. (January 10, 2000). Don't butt in. *The New York Times*, p. A23; Umbreit, M.S. (1997). Humanistic mediation: A transformative journey of peacemaking. *Mediation Quarterly*, 14, 201-213.) (Keywords: Israel, Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, Syria.)