

Peacekeeping and counternsurgency essay sample

[Politics](#)



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Introduction

The contemporary political environment calls for making exact distinctions between peacekeeping and counterinsurgencies. Political professionals currently face the growing confusion between the two notions. Even in the light of the increasing similarities between the two different processes, peacekeeping and counterinsurgency are not the same. They carry certain differences and different political implications. Under the changing political conditions some attempts were made to connect these two doctrines, yet objectivity is the major concern in political science: even in the light of certain similarities, peacekeeping and counterinsurgency are inherently different.

The after Cold-War period was marked by the drastically changing conditions and challenges of military conflicts all over the world: military interventions have turned into being intrastate, and the military missions were mainly conducted in extremely volatile and complex environments. In that challenging environment, political research faced one of the major theoretical conflicts: whether peacekeeping and counterinsurgency could be held as similar doctrines, or whether they were different. "The difficulties of different UN missions led the majority of observers to conclude that the mechanism of traditional peacekeeping was only of limited utility in the managing of intrastate types of conflicts." [1] Several opinions are found in literature upon the subject of peacekeeping vs. counterinsurgency. On the one hand, Jones and Riley [2] state that counterinsurgency was an updated form of peacekeeping, called for by the new political conditions in the new post-Cold War political environment. These assertions were provoked by the <https://assignbuster.com/peacekeeping-and-counterinsurgency-essay-sample/>

similarities between counterinsurgency and peacekeeping. On the other hand, Lovelock[3] referred to the idea that peacekeeping was an outdated form of intervening military and civil conflicts, and that counterinsurgency was a totally new broader doctrine of supporting political stability in the world.

I would rather agree with the latter, because even despite the continuous misleading assertions about the similarity and identity of peacekeeping and counterinsurgency, these two processes are still different. The majority of the researched literary sources suggest that although many distinctions between the two political and military phenomena are concealed and require additional research, they can still be distinguished and analyzed through the prism of political and military factors.

“ The notion of assertive peacekeeping has been heavily influenced by the experience of the post-Cold War ‘ grey area’ operations. Few peacekeeping operations during the Cold War possessed the characteristics common to the post-Cold War environment. Although a consensus has emerged, the relatively few cases from which relevant principles can be drawn to guide the development of new doctrine undermines somewhat its empirical validity, this despite assertions that the doctrine has both empirical and theoretical support.” (Moskaitis 1999, 78)

In order to produce a relevant explanation to what counterinsurgency is, we have to clearly understand the characteristics of counterinsurgency operations, their principles and missions. These principles were described by numerous authors, and many of them intersect and are synonymic to each

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other.[4] First of all, counterinsurgency is closely connected with the need “ for a comprehensive plan and a clear overall objective that can guide the actions of all actors within the conflict zone.”[5] Peacekeeping is also a planned operation. This principle is absolutely similar to that of peacekeeping, yet there are some differences. Peacekeeping is the political aim in itself – it does not require having other similar aims, because one of its essential characteristics is neutrality. Simultaneously, counterinsurgency presupposes that before any actions are undertaken, the mission is clearly determined, because counterinsurgency is related to supporting only one side of the conflict.

In this aspect we may suggest that peacekeeping is the stage following counterinsurgency, aimed at supporting peace as soon as insurgency is suppressed. Certainly, one of the most widely spread and generalized political aims of counterinsurgency are to support a unified and an independent country, which should be stable both politically and economically.[6] This is where peacekeeping and counterinsurgency look very similar: the “ hearts and minds” approach[7] towards promoting this stability is the conjunction of attitudes and principles which make counterinsurgency and peacekeeping look almost identical. However, the difference is drastic. The new sophistication level of military propaganda in the recent counterinsurgency operations is aimed at conquering the hearts and minds of those, who oppose to the existing or the new regime (depending on which regime is supported by the counterinsurgents).

The political complexity of the counterinsurgency processes is in the fact that they are aimed at ceasing atrocities, and spreading the ideas of peace and stability that are very similar to the goals of peacekeeping. However, we still return to the idea that peacekeeping is the essential stage which follows counterinsurgency. It represents a political approach which is not absolutely similar to counterinsurgency. Peacekeeping is referred to as having the following goals: “ get the existing government or militias to cease atrocities, get opposing sides to agree to a cease fire or disarmament, and to restore some sense of civil law and order.”[8] In this sense, counterinsurgency is the preliminary stage to achieving all three mentioned goals. It is impossible to support the government without making it exist, which is performed through counterinsurgency operations and ceasing the military actions of anti-regime insurgents.

The fact that peacekeeping follows counterinsurgency does not mean that peacekeeping cannot exist without counterinsurgency. The peacekeeping operations in Somalia (or better, their attempts) are the brightest example of the situation, when peacekeeping did not require any preliminary actions. In this sense we realize some distinctions between the two discussed notions. Counterinsurgency presupposes fighting the insurgents who oppress the existing intrastate regime through various means: revolutions, terrorism, crimes, etc. Somalia has rather experienced the total loss of any political power at all, in which military conflict and the fight for political power was replaced by mass starvation and chaos.[9]

Since 1991, the country has remained without any centralized governmental body or any similar body of centralized political power. Numerous attempts to bring peace into the country have failed due to massive opposition of the national population against foreign intervention. It is a rare example when counterinsurgency measures would not produce the desired effect: it is extremely difficult and is almost impossible to determine the exact political aim of such counterinsurgency operation. Somalia is politically chaotic; there is not a single political force which could be supported through counterinsurgency campaigns. As a result, counterinsurgency cannot be exercised as an effective tool of balancing Somalia and making it prepared to the more efficient process of peacekeeping[10].

Not only peacekeeping follows counterinsurgency; it is possible to state that counterinsurgency evolves into peacekeeping. Even through the prism of similarity between the two notions, they are different: peacekeeping is narrowly centered on decreasing the risk of military actions and violence between the opposing insurgents, the mission of counterinsurgency is much broader and reaches beyond the traditional borders. In order to make the conflict less severe and to prepare the country to peacekeeping operations, counterinsurgency principles presuppose suppressing the violent insurgents. [11] These principles are very convenient means of replacing counterinsurgency with peacekeeping explanations, which are beneficial for contemporary politicians. This is not a rare source of contradiction between the two notions. Political leaders view ' peacekeeping' as more attractive and understandable to people. The well-known events in Bosnia stemmed from

the desire of politicians to hide between the shields of peacekeeping, while counterinsurgency was the primary aim of those military actions.

“Factions broke out between Serbs, Croats, and Muslims, starting in Croatia,

spreading to Slovenia, and then to Bosnia. The Serbs were the minority group in all three countries, and with Yugoslavia backing, starting the artillery assaults on the cities of the majority groups. The United States sided with the Muslim and Croatian groups, but didn't commit ground troops until 1995.” (Tomes 2004, 18)

The key term of this citation is “sided with Muslim”, which means that Bosnian operations were predominately held as counterinsurgency and not as peacekeeping: the foreign interveners had a distinct political aim and were supporting only one side of the military conflict. In addition, not a single act of effective peacekeeping could be undertaken in that violent environment.

The assumption that counterinsurgency and peacekeeping are the two subsequent stages of one counter-conflict process is supported by the assumption that “force and military measures on their own will be insufficient to achieve a lasting solution; they will not resolve the underlying causes of the conflict.”[12] Thus, peacekeeping presupposes stabilizing the achievements of counterinsurgency measures which include various tools beyond the traditional use of military force. However, counterinsurgency

remains more military than peacekeeping operation. Jeong[13] states, that counterinsurgency follows the following goals:

“ it aims to cut off the sources of material and logistical support from the insurgents; it aims at receiving intelligence on the insurgency from sectors of the population; it attempts to isolate the insurgents geographically to be better able to apply fire power and other military means against them; it has the aim of antagonizing the population and insurgents against each other and thereby the insurgency politically; and it has the aim of addressing some of the causes and justifications of insurgency, to give the population ‘ hope’ in the future and incentives to cooperate.” (107)

There is one aspect inseparable from insurgency but noncharacteristic of peacekeeping: it is the use of intelligence. “ Because subversion and insurgency are carried out ultimately by individuals, the aim of intelligence gathering in the counterinsurgency context is to identify those individuals who pose a threat to the security of the country.”[14] In any political or military context intelligence cannot be connected to peacekeeping. As long as we come to discussing and analyzing the implications of both theories, we realize that intelligence is also aimed at determining the political aim of counterinsurgency actions. Intelligence is only indirectly connected to peacekeeping, and it is more closely related to the counterinsurgency’s aspect of conquering “ hearts and minds” of the suppressed nation. Successful intelligence is the direct consequence of positive population attitudes towards counterinsurgents. The successful determining of political

aim is also based on the intelligence outcomes, and ultimately, on population attitudes towards intervention.

The very word “ peacekeeping” presupposes “ keeping the peace” which was achieved through the long counterinsurgency operations. It is a narrower process aimed at “ freezing” the successful results of civil-military actions included into the set of counterinsurgency measures.[15] However, both counterinsurgency and peacekeeping rest on the three essential pillars. Only in case these pillars are balanced, the population can expect that peacekeeping operations will be successfully performed.[16]

The first pillar is the security pillar on which counterinsurgency rests. This pillar presupposes making population secure from the insurgents’ attacks and incorporates the human rights’ framework into the civil structure of the population. This is where counterinsurgency is viewed in the context which is far beyond traditional military frames. “ This pillar most engages military commanders’ attention, but of course military means are applied across the model, not just in the security domain, while civilian activity is critically important in the security pillar also.”[17] While we may refer to peacekeeping as the basis for economic development of the society after conflict, this is another distinctive feature between peacekeeping and counterinsurgency. Counterinsurgency is aimed at promoting continuous economic and political progress, and is a radical actions’ campaign aimed at ceasing military and civil intrastate conflicts. Counterinsurgency creates the basis for restoring the security structure of the civil society, and incorporates the social and security principles aimed at creating new social infrastructure

in the conflict environment. As soon as the conflicts are ceased, peacekeeping measures which follow counterinsurgency campaigns will create the pathway towards economic and political development of the civil society.[18]

Politics is the second pillar of counterinsurgency.[19] “ It comprises efforts to mobilize stakeholders in support of the government, marginalize insurgents and other groups, extend governance and further the rule of law.”[20]

Counterinsurgency prepares the ground for peacekeeping operations, which will allow incorporating the efforts of diplomats into society reintegration and the establishment of civil governance. Yet, at the counterinsurgency stage political measures take the form of preparing arena for further diplomatic intervention, which is more connected with supporting, than creating peace. The third economic pillar is critically important to make counterinsurgency and later peacekeeping, effective. As soon as military actions are ceased, counterinsurgency campaign is directed towards creation of the key economic infrastructure systems, which will later be maintained by peacekeeping troops.[21] All three pillars act in balance and presuppose putting insurgents under control – through actions and informing population counterinsurgency acts prepare the conflict parties towards the long process of restoring peace.

Objectively, there are the two essential similarities between counterinsurgency and peacekeeping, which should be taken into account when we create the system of political distinctions and similarities between the two notions. The first similarity is revealed through the nature of

intrastate peace operations in the contemporary political context.[22] In intrastate civil conflicts we face the devastation and total elimination of civil infrastructure, cases of starvation and suffering. This calls for incorporating humanitarian workers within the counterinsurgency groups to make counterinsurgency actions more effective. The similarity between peacekeeping and counterinsurgency in this case is very visible: both doctrines include military and civil actions which are aimed at resolving the military intrastate conflict and cannot be limited by military actions only. In this aspect peacekeeping and counterinsurgency have the same logical center and arise from the one politically reasoned center.

The second similarity between peacekeeping and counterinsurgency stems from the fact that both doctrines equally act in favorable operational environment.[23] This means that the conflict environment is referred to as operational, characterized by complexity and ambiguity. This complexity and ambiguity describe both the nature of the operations which frequently do not have clear geographical borders, and the nature of the conflicting parties, when it is difficult and sometimes impossible to determine the exact political aim of intervention.

“ The similarity between the operational environment and the nature of the problems characteristic of the two types of operations, has resulted in a convergence between the developing principles guiding peace operations in such an environment and those of counterinsurgency.” (Grennan 2000, 86)

Nevertheless, the reasons for which we confuse counterinsurgency and peacekeeping lay much deeper. There are a number of factors which

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contributed into traditional misunderstanding between peacekeeping and counterinsurgency, making them almost identical. These are predominantly the factors of military culture and military learning environment, which were later spread into the area of political theory and context. Learning what counterinsurgency is, it is essential to understand that “ foremost amongst the major factors is the perception that political and military professionals have about counterinsurgency.”[24] There two radical mistakes in analyzing peacekeeping and counterinsurgency: the first makes them identical, and the second mistake turns counterinsurgency into war fighting. Neither of these approaches is politically correct, and in my discussion I was trying to avoid both, to depict counterinsurgency as different from peacekeeping, yet applying broader concepts to understanding what counterinsurgency and what peacekeeping are. “ The first, the supreme, the most-far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking: neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.”[25]

This is the basic principle to be followed in distinguishing peacekeeping from counterinsurgency. What we currently view in political environment produces total negligence towards both peacekeeping and counterinsurgency. The two terms are interchanged, replaced, and are used as the two determinants of the one process of war fighting. Moreover, it is not rare when counterinsurgency is used as the more sophisticated definition of peacekeeping operations.[26] It is difficult to deny that contemporary military and political environment makes the delineations between the two doctrines too neat. These delineations are erased even more, when several

types of operations are involved into one intervention campaign. “ Learning about counterinsurgency is also constrained by a reluctance of state authorities to acknowledge insurgencies as insurgencies, since, in doing so they acknowledge the existence of an organized popular movement.”[27] In this aspect we arrive to vivid political contradiction, when one of the notions is intentionally replaced by another to create less organized and more terrorist picture of the intrastate conflict. This is why we have been used to using the two notions as the synonyms.

Objective political research reveals both distinctions and similarities between peacekeeping and counterinsurgency. This objectivity also emphasizes the two essential aspects of this research: on the one hand, there are solid reasons to make the two discussed doctrines seem identical – at certain stages of military operations (e. g., “ heads and minds”) they become too close and risk being confused. On the other hand, there are much more reasons why these two doctrines are confused through unawareness or political intent, which should be eliminated to create the proper system of military and political notions.

Counterinsurgency in military circles is often limited to war fighting due to the inherently developed military ethos, which cannot be broken. This ethos cannot allow broadening the context of counterinsurgency to the military-civil stage of intervention campaign followed by peacekeeping. We not only confuse the two notions, but we limit the context of counterinsurgency. The nature of counterinsurgency and peacekeeping comprises several essential features, some of which have been discussed already: these are “

complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty, politics, an inherent resistance to short-term solutions, problems that military cannot solve requiring cooperation with other highly diverse agencies.”[28]

There is one essential element which is characteristic of counterinsurgency, but which peacekeeping lacks: it is politics. Peacekeeping is initially neutral in its strivings to support peaceful balance between the parties of the civil-military conflict.[29] While the broad role of counterinsurgency is to cease violence and to anchor the roots of new social infrastructure in the society through vivid support of only one conflicting party, the goal of peacekeeping is to continue the line of counterinsurgency campaign through overcoming social constraints, but remaining neutral.[30] Counterinsurgency and peacekeeping are simultaneously similar and different, and they are the two indispensable parts of contemporary military operations, in which the two doctrines should be differentiated and viewed in the broader political context.

Conclusion

Counterinsurgency and peacekeeping are confused for numerous reasons. These confusions occur either intentionally or due to being unaware of fundamental differences between these two doctrines. It is possible to agree to Kilcullen[31], who asserts that there are no peacekeeping and counterinsurgency doctrines in reality. This may become the core reason of the discussed theoretical and practical contradictions between the two theories. Modern political context has shifted emphasis from peacekeeping towards counterinsurgency, making it narrower in geographical aspect, but

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much broader in its social and military impact. Peacekeeping starts where counterinsurgency ends: these are the two essential stages of restoring the piece in conflict environment. In the discussion of peacekeeping and counterinsurgency the two significant mistakes are to be avoided: one should not make counterinsurgency and peacekeeping identical, though they are very similar, and limit the scope of counterinsurgency in supporting intrastate political balance to war fighting. The researcher, who tends to be politically objective, will have to recognize the essential similarities between the two doctrines, but these similarities do not change the reality: peacekeeping and counterinsurgency are different and the changing political conditions tend to create even more drastic discrepancies between them.

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