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# Grunt Diplomacy: In the Beginning There Were Only Soldiers

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As he stepped out of the tiny smoke-filled meeting room, the American battalion commander<sup>[1]</sup> took a deep breath of the cold February air of the Posavina River Valley. Catching a glimpse of his executive officer's questioning look, the commander grunted, "Brian, I'm not built for this." He was almost out of patience and certainly the most frustrated he had been since crossing the Sava River into Bosnia shortly after New Year's Day 1996, six weeks earlier.

The Bosniac<sup>[2]</sup> city fathers of Brcko, ousted by force from that key crossroads city in April 1992, sat in a makeshift meeting room in the battalion's base-under-construction. Chain-smoking, shrugging their shoulders, and reminding the US officer that it was *they* who were ready for peace and not the Bosnian Serbs, the three politicians were ready to leave. At the battalion commander's invitation they had come to the base--purposely being built dead-center in the Zone of Separation to create a safe, neutral territory where Implementation Force (IFOR) soldiers could foster dialogue and keep their eyes on the factions--to speak with their Bosnian Serb counterparts who now controlled the city. It would be the first time the sides had spoken to each other since the war began.

He crunched through the frozen mud a few yards to another plastic and plywood enclosure, his fifth round trip in two hours across the battle-scarred pig farm that was fast becoming McGovern Base. There sat the three Serbs from Brcko, allegedly without permission to "be in the same room" with Bosniacs or Croats. They, too, chain-smoked and claimed to want peace, but they could not make a move without getting permission from their bosses in Pale, the capital of the Republic of Srpska.

The American officer sat down heavily, stared at their faces, uncomprehending. They would not face the other side--was it residual hatred, true bigotry, or just politics? Simply opening a dialogue would bring their town great benefits: nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were looking for any sign of moderation from the Serbs before they would commit substantial aid. The battalion commander had tried to reason with them; one would think a reliable power grid and new windows and heating oil from aid organizations for their hospital might be good incentives for simply discussing face-to-face local peace initiatives. Silently shrugging their shoulders, they pointed in the general direction of Pale, smoked, and drank Army coffee.

The American knew that he was out of patience for today and had exhausted whatever diplomatic finesse an infantry lieutenant colonel could muster, so he switched to light conversation. Leaning forward and smiling at the mayor, he said, "You know, your old office mate from the factory, sitting next door, told me some great stories about you, and the union picnics every May--right up on that hill over there . . . those sounded like great fun." The Serb mayor's eyes brightened. "He told you about that? What else did he say?" The commander related every story he had heard about the days of brotherhood and unity: the plum harvests, the watermelon festivals, service in the former Yugoslav army. The Serb in front of him and the Bosniac next door had, in fact, shared an office in the Brcko textile factory for many years before the war. They had attended high school together and played sports together, back when no one called attention to religion or ethnicity.

The mayor and his assistants joined in, gleefully telling stories about the old days, about the athletic and the romantic prowess of their old friends, foolish incidents, and poignant moments. The US officer listened, smiled, laughed, and asked questions, trying to sustain the first happiness he had seen in any civilians since his arrival. The stories came out fast at first, almost like a stream, a release, nearly too fast for the interpreter. But gradually the noise subsided, and soon it was quiet again in that little room, the three Serbs contemplating what once was. The commander broke the

silence and said, "Well, look, I must go back to the other party, and see what their position is about the future of any discussion . . . ," and the city council president cut him off. "Commander, we are making you look very foolish walking back and forth between two locations that are so close. We feel bad about that. We will talk to them ourselves."

The two groups came together. The icy looks and serious expressions broke as they all made fun of the battalion commander--making the powerful American Army officer bounce between their meeting rooms like a pinball--and shared the same low opinion of Army coffee when compared to their own. A few comments about the old days, and then a handshake resolution to meet together the following week if IFOR promised to bring NGO help. The meeting broke, the Serbs disappearing to the north and the Bosniacs to the south. The US commander gathered his staff, which was now reinforced with civil affairs, public affairs, and information operations personnel, and discussed what had just happened, what it meant, and how they would try to capitalize on it.

The afternoon's efforts produced the beginning of resettlement and reconciliation initiatives and a weekly civil-military seminar, well-attended by every aid organization and NGO that could be drawn to the area. For almost seven months, these meetings were the only place in Bosnia where officials from all three factions (local Bosnian Croats were also brought into the process) voluntarily sat together at the same table and discussed implementation of the peace accords.

But that particular February evening in a muddy forward operating base, all the soldiers knew at the time was that they had achieved a small victory. The civil affairs officer asked his commander incredulously, "How did you ever get them in the same room?" The battalion commander replied, "I have no idea. It just happened. I walked into it."

### **"Walking into it" Is Not a Method**

To say that US soldiers are unprepared to be armed diplomats is not accurate. Prior to the year-long deployment to Bosnia, the battalion had undergone challenging peace operations training at US Army Europe's Combat Maneuver Training Center. There its soldiers encountered myriad vexing problems dealing with military and civilian issues. All battalion commanders and higher leaders also received two days of outstanding political-military training that included negotiation techniques and a superb Bosnia primer. Prior to deployment, two of the key points of commanders' intent in brigade and division level orders were to "set the conditions for long-term success" and "facilitate non-military efforts toward infrastructure development, economic growth, and democratic practices." [3] Soldiers expected some interaction with civilians.

What was surprising was the extent to which soldiers and leaders at platoon, company, and battalion level became involved as third-party actors. "Setting the conditions" and "facilitating" as directed in the commander's intent meant soldiers would assume roles as mediators and negotiators, and perform good offices. They soon became deeply immersed in the process of rebuilding relationships among the factions.

While the heaviest involvement was in the first few months of peace implementation, acting as a third party was a sustained role throughout the battalion's deployment. But in-depth preparation of junior leaders in third-party actor skills was very low on the training priority list. Lack of training time, that most precious of resources, coupled with a prevailing attitude among some senior leaders that a third-party role was "out of their lane," put those junior officers and young soldiers at a marked disadvantage when they confronted the reality of their circumstances.

The Bosnian conflict and similar interventions require a special approach to their resolution. A key to enforcing, restoring, or keeping the peace is the rebuilding of relationships. Those soldiers and their junior leaders who patrol between and among sharply divided populations find great value in sensible reconciliation efforts, mending relationships, and any activity that will help avoid a relapse into violence.

It is appropriate that the debate about the extent of the military's role in peace operations should continue, particularly in the implementation of a peace agreement. This article examines one unit's experience during the first year of peacebuilding efforts in Bosnia, linking theories of peacebuilding and effective third-party action to the practice of muddy-boots diplomacy. The analysis concludes that the military's participation as a third-party actor among factions in a conflict is, in fact, key to mission success. The challenges are to recognize the feasibility of such a role and to prepare our armed forces to take it on. We should get to the point where leaders understand this role and no longer acquire experience through on-the-job training. No soldier should have to admit "I'm not built for this."

## **The New Nature of Conflict**

There is little argument that on the eve of the 21st century, the great majority of armed conflicts in the world are *intranational*. At the beginning of 1996, more than 40 violent ethnopolitical conflicts were under way, at least one in every region of the world.[4] From 1945 to 1987, nine of 14 UN peace operations were interstate, whereas from 1987 through 1997, only six of 24 UN peace operations were even partially interstate.[5] Our challenge is to determine what these numbers mean for the troops on the ground in those operations.

Intranational conflict, which is significantly different from interstate conflict, is embedded in long-standing relationships among people who live in close geographic proximity. They act on deep-seated (often cross-generational) fears, passions, and hatred. In these conflicts, people seek security in and identify with something close to their control, perhaps a region, a religion, or an ethnic alignment, but many times not with their state.[6]

Power is diffused among many groups seeking collective rights along these reforming lines of identity. Among the most challenging conditions for an intervening force is the fact there may be no statist hierarchy, or if there is one, it may exercise little or no control. So-called national governments may lack legitimacy, may not even control their territory, and may descend to gross human rights violations and atrocities in their fight for survival.[7] To prevail, conflicting parties deny basic needs to their adversaries: food, shelter, physical safety, recognition, autonomy, and self esteem.[8]

There is little argument that the United States will continue to intervene selectively in intranational conflicts. The current National Security Strategy cites them as threats to regional and global stability, potentially affecting US interests.[9] What is debated is how, not whether, the US military will participate in peace operations.

Current thinking on the matter, reinforced in military doctrine, supports participation of the armed forces to create an environment in which other organizations do the peacebuilding once there is a peace on which to build. Military units themselves do not get involved in the civilian aspects of peacebuilding, as such involvement has nothing to do with their warfighting skills, erodes their readiness, and is done better by organizations that specialize in humanitarian and developmental work.[10] A counterpoint is that intrastate conflict resolution and peace operations in such an environment require military involvement as a third party for mission success. Therefore, the relevant awareness and skills should be added to the military's warfighting ability.

The reality is that peace operations rarely evolve in a predictable sequential manner, and this has significant consequences for all involved with them. Notwithstanding the theorists and their rhetorical exercises, on the ground there are no sharp divisions among peace enforcement, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. Conditions and requirements blur the lines between them, sometimes demanding concurrent activities in a single region in all three categories. The warfighter will find a population split between fear of implementation and demand for implementation. All sides in the dispute will need responses from military units committed to the intervention wherever they come in contact with soldiers on the ground.

## **The Nature of Peacebuilding**

In these intrastate conflicts, the traditional diplomatic approach of dealing with recognized military and political hierarchies will not work when power is diffused, when anarchy exists, or when those in power are reprehensible and unrecognized in the eyes of the world community. These circumstances describe a state that is out of control, unable to protect its citizens and from which elements of the population have withdrawn their allegiance.

Current theory and practice for the most part support an approach to these conflicts through an interactive social process to shape needs that have been threatened or denied. The goal is to transform the conflict from violent to peaceful relationships where reconciliation, reconstruction, and economic development can be sustained.[11] This approach is all about rebuilding relationships at the top, middle, and grass-roots levels of leadership within a state.

The *Agenda for Peace* defines peacebuilding as action to identify and support structures that will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.[12] Lasting success in such endeavors takes time.

Peacebuilding requires progressive rebuilding of relationships at all levels among the parties of these unique conflicts *to get things done*--resettlement, reconstruction, economic development--and to make improvements that have a chance of lasting. The process of reconciliation is central to rebuilding relationships, and reconciliation between groups fueled by hatred and fear needs a trusted agent, an "outsider." [13] The trusted agent in the reconciliation process is the third-party actor.

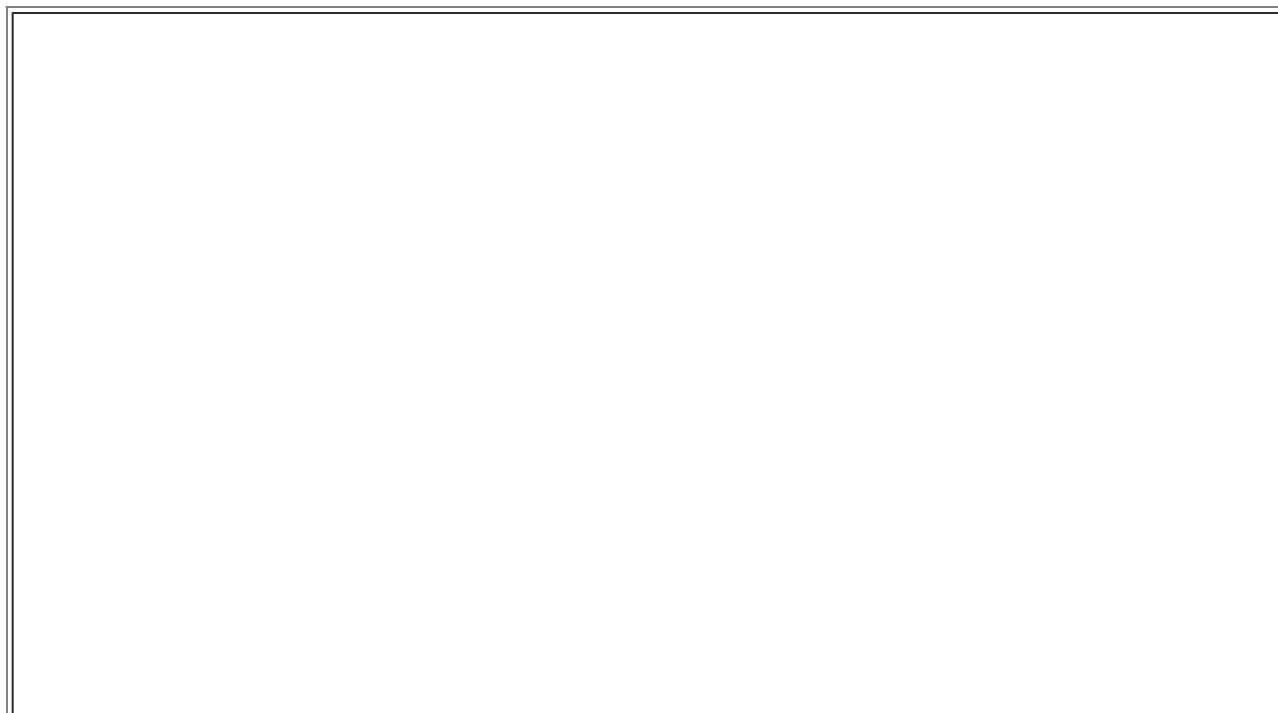
The importance of a third-party actor in peacebuilding is widely recognized among the current practitioners of conflict resolution. The special characteristics of internal (intrastate) conflicts make a third party even more valuable in such settings: it takes an outsider to facilitate and mediate among parties with deeply held animosity. During the post-conflict, peace settlement or implementation phase, third-party actors can help the antagonists see each other's needs and interests, and work to have the parties make gradual shifts toward compromise. [14] It is the third-party actors who "climb into the trench" with the former adversaries and do what's required to carry out the terms of a settlement agreement. Third-party actors foster, support, and husband reconciliation through confidence-building, changing perceptions, and building trust among the parties.

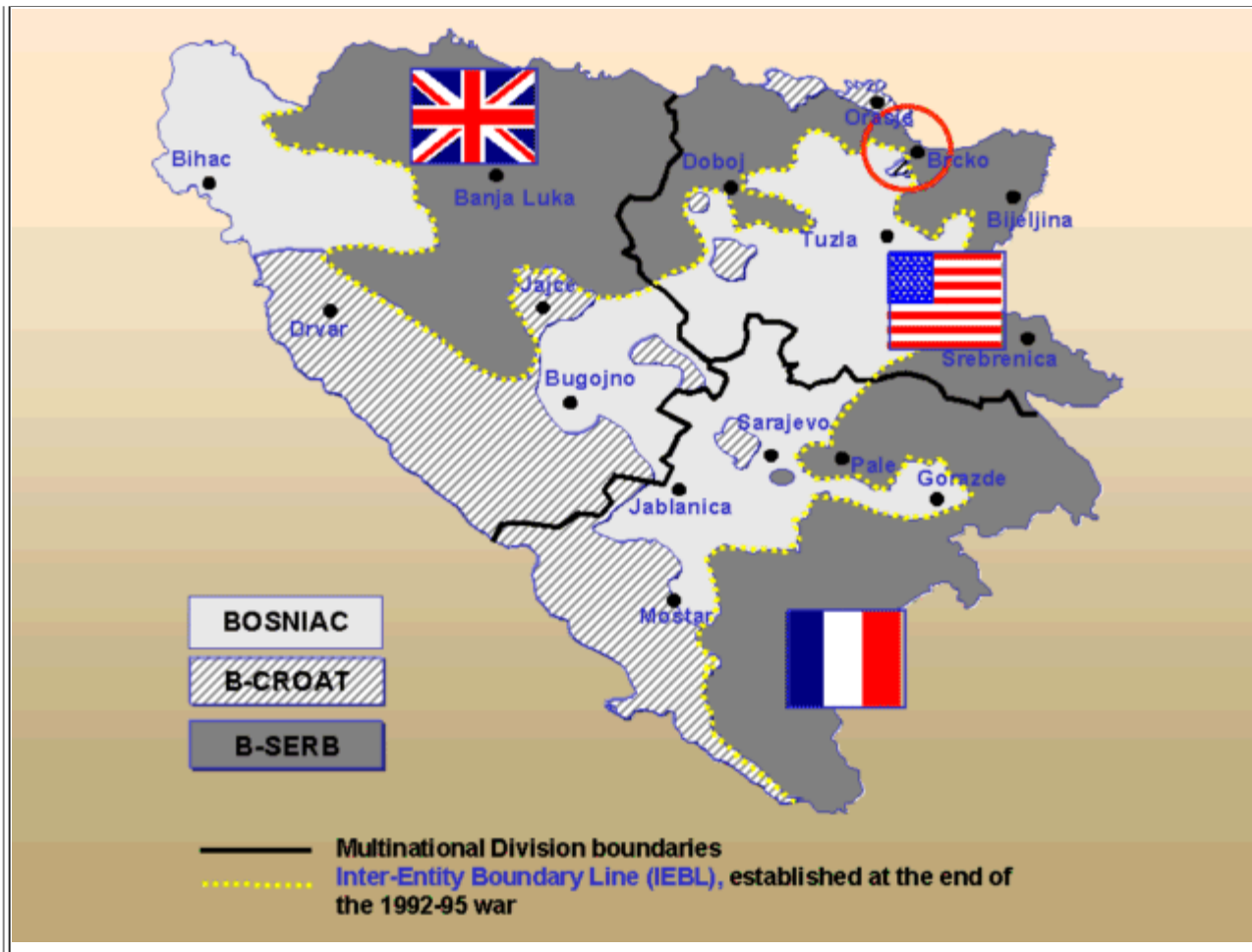
Third-party actors come from many different sources, including international organizations such as the UN, regional organizations, humanitarian and development agencies of various states, and nongovernmental organizations. The structure, capabilities, and culture of the US military also give its members unique capabilities to be credible third-party actors in the post-settlement phase of an internal conflict. Yet the overarching desire by the nation's civilian and military leadership to limit military involvement in these unique intrastate conflicts has left the military personnel at lower levels--those doing the patrolling and assigned to the checkpoints--uncertain about engaging in activity that appears to be non-military. The result is often reluctance to assume the role of third-party actor in a peace operation.

There is ample evidence of a credible third-party role for the US military from the Bosnia experience, where military units are dispersed among the warring factions with a mandate to implement the Dayton Peace Agreement in the face of pervasive ethnic hatred. In point of fact, acting as a third party in Bosnia was a key way to carry out the initial military mission. Many of the roles of a third-party actor highlighted by theorists and practitioners came to life and were reinforced for Task Force 3-5, an American battalion serving in and around the volatile city of Brcko.

### **Third-Party Actors in Flak Jackets: Grunt Diplomacy at Work**

Brcko is a fair and representative example of the Bosnian challenge. It is home to all three entities; it has a key location astride the Republic of Srpska corridor; [15] and large numbers of displaced persons of each ethnic group were seeking resettlement there during the period described. To this day, it is a highly contentious sector.





**Figure 1. Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Multinational Division boundaries. Brcko is in the narrow part of the Republic of Srpska corridor, in the circle at the upper right.**

Forty days after the signing of the Peace Agreement, combined arms Task Force 3-5 (TF 3-5), a reinforced heavy US infantry battalion of 1100 soldiers, arrived in sector. Initially, there were no NGOs operating consistently in the Serb area of Brcko, and only a few NGOs doing absentee work (sustaining the flow of relief supplies to safe areas) in the Bosniac and Croat villages on the opposite side of this region's now silent front line.

Brcko was thought by the NGO community to be too dangerous for direct contact in December 1995, and it was. The factions were still at war; there was simply no fighting under way. Trenches were still occupied. The few tanks and artillery pieces stood poised and ready. All border crossings were mined and overwatched by armed troops or police. The civilian population huddled in the few coffee bars away from the front lines, depressed and untrusting. It was under these conditions--from operational necessity--that the soldiers and leaders of TF 3-5 applied themselves in a variety of roles as third-party actors.

### *Confidence Building*

The greatest levels of success in peacebuilding activities are directly associated with the durability and comprehensiveness of the confidence-building measures put into place during the initial phase of a peace agreement. Third parties can help a society make the transition from war to peace by ending violence and civil strife and setting the conditions for reemergence of civil society.[16] Introduction of a capable, professional, and disciplined armed force is a de facto confidence-building measure, for despite the existence of any peace agreement on paper, the basic human need of physical security will still be in doubt.

The opposing armed entities in Brcko were postured for renewed conflict, but the arrival of the IFOR task force, with massive combat power, discouraged any resumption of hostilities. As small units occupied key terrain throughout the sector, the entity military units were coaxed out of their trenches and eventually out of the Zone of Separation.[17]

TF 3-5 was directed to supervise each faction in the simultaneous clearing of mines on key roads that crossed those old front lines. During the first mine-clearing operation, the local Serb commander whispered to the battalion's operations officer as they stood on a cleared road linking the two battle lines, "You must put someone here--they will attack tonight." At the same time, one kilometer to the south, a Bosniac officer was saying the same thing to the battalion commander. Of course, no one attacked; weeks passed without incident. Buoyed by IFOR's presence, patrols, and frequent "work coordination meetings" held by the task force's company commanders, the armies returned to their barracks ahead of the implementation schedule.

The confidence built among uniformed personnel gradually extended to civilians. At every NATO outpost, gradually at first, then in greater numbers and frequency, groups of civilians began to move about and test the limits of the peaceful conditions. They began coming into the Zone of Separation to see houses and land they had not seen in four years. The local police chiefs and the task force commander brokered agreements for family visitation across boundaries because true freedom of movement was not yet a reality. Small successes in these early efforts increased confidence and eventually set the stage for the initial effort to move displaced civilians back to their original homes, the first such effort in Bosnia.

### *Performing Good Offices*

"Good offices," defined as the carrying out of specific requests, such as presenting one side's message to the other, is a mediating activity by a third party.[18] In a postwar environment, where phone lines, power lines, and postal links are still severed, performing good offices naturally falls to the first credible third party on the ground. Federation and Serb sides wanted to talk, at the local and grass-roots level, and soldiers were the conduit. On patrols and over strong coffee, sergeants, lieutenants, and captains listened and talked to the local civilians, gradually identified the informal and formal leaders, and determined the perceived needs of the people.

What started out as basic intelligence and information gathering became opportunities for good offices. A farmer on one side of the line wanted to know how his old neighbor across the minefield was--would the soldiers deliver his message? Then came the queries about the power lines, the phone lines, and the mail that had stacked up over the years.

After shuttling between police forces and getting to know them well, the next step was a joint meeting of area police chiefs, sponsored by the US brigade commander. Then there was a meeting between postal employees from both sides of the line, followed by one between local electrical engineers and the representative of an NGO with the expertise to help. Every one of these initiatives began with good offices performed by soldiers. Every one of these initiatives was also another step on the road to reconciliation and normalcy and contributed to the rebuilding of relationships.

### *Quasi-Mediator*

A quasi-mediator is not neutral; he has his own interests and point of view. He must be able to facilitate, negotiate, arbitrate, and manage multiple relationships between members and groups within his organization and between other parties. When he is negotiating, he is an advocate for his side. When he is mediating, he is managing and sustaining dialogue (facilitating), while influencing the agenda and format for talks, and formulating proposals for discussion. When he arbitrates, he makes decisions.[19] Quasi-mediator best defines the most dominant third-party role played by the leadership of TF 3-5.

Good offices created opportunities to meet. By the time these opportunities arose, the task force's soldiers were the most trusted agents in the Brcko sector. They had proven their impartiality through evenhanded enforcement of all aspects of the peace agreement, and raised the population's confidence that conditions were improving. It naturally followed that someone in battle dress uniform with an American flag on his right sleeve would facilitate the desired meetings.

Other considerations included the fact that the only meeting sites considered safe by all sides were IFOR checkpoints and bases in the middle of the Zone of Separation, and the fact that the military was pushing to open as many channels of dialogue as it could. "If they're talkin', they ain't fightin,'" was a popular saying. Perhaps most important, during the

first four months of the implementation there was simply no one else in the international community available to do it. By the fifth month personnel from the International Police Task Force (IPTF)[20] had taken over the increasingly important joint police meetings, and by the eighth month the chair of the task force's civil-military seminars was passed to UN Civil Affairs. In the beginning, however, there were only soldiers.[21]

A quasi-mediator role, though not stated as such, was clearly dictated for IFOR in carrying out the military aspects established for each high-level, regional joint military commission, and the TF 3-5 commander and his company commanders shaped the supporting agendas for military work coordination meetings at lower levels. The mandate for this was clear, and the effort helped develop close professional relationships with the local military leadership. It was simply the way to get things done on the military side and keep the factions on the schedule established by the Dayton Peace Agreement Military Annex.

The task force commander, however, quickly found himself in the role of quasi-mediator between civilian parties as well. NGOs began arriving in sector as the physical security situation improved, but no significant reconstruction could begin until the NGOs had assessed the requirements. When materials were available to begin reconstruction, the task force commander concluded that the best way to prevent local violence was to have the materials distributed equally among the Serb, Bosniac, and Croat communities.

The goal was to help the NGOs start projects without inciting violence. Success would bring more NGOs to the area and create activity that would give the local populace confidence that conditions were indeed moving toward full implementation of the peace agreement. To accomplish those goals, the task force commander had to take control of the agenda and guide the discussion of the weekly civil-military seminars.

He started building the agenda at each weekly seminar to lead the parties in the desired direction. First, he asked each mayor to determine the number of houses that needed reconstruction, prioritized by village. At the next meeting, the commander put those village names and the number of houses on a chart for all present to see, and gauged reaction. The Serbs were agitated about the number of houses targeted for reconstruction by Bosniacs on the Serb side of the Zone of Separation. The Bosniacs felt they should get all the materials because they had the highest number of destroyed houses, and the Croats wanted anything they could get. Listening to their concerns, the commander planned for the following week's seminar.[22]

The seminars were gaining popularity among the NGOs, UN, and IFOR staff. On the morning of this seminar crucial to reconstruction, the makeshift meeting room at TF 3-5's base was packed with more than 70 people, fewer than a dozen in uniform. The commander presented the agenda, and explained to the mayors, through a participatory chain of reasoning, that an equal sharing of materials would rebuild 120 houses--40 Serb, 40 Bosniac, and 40 Croat. The Serbs relaxed when they saw the first reconstruction target village was not in a contentious area. The Croats sighed in relief, as they were getting more than they expected. But the Bosniacs balked at not receiving a fair share relative to need. The commander stood firm on the agreements he had hammered out earlier in informal meetings with all three groups, and opposition soon dissolved. The mayors shook hands, and the meeting gave way (amid applause) to an NGO planning session. The first reconstruction effort in Bosnia had begun.

True to the role of quasi-mediator, the task force commander's actions in these meetings were driven by his interests and point of view. When Bosniacs decided unilaterally to increase the movement of people across the Inter-Entity Boundary Line,[23] and begin a massive and unregulated reconstruction effort in the Serb portion of the Zone of Separation, the Serbs countered with their own unregulated reconstruction effort, resulting in the establishment of what the task force called a "biological front line." The weapons were building materials, and the objective of both sides was mass resettlement of ethnic groups without regard to property ownership.

After informal bilateral efforts did not have the desired effect, the commander exposed the activities of each party at the weekly meeting and declared the Zone of Separation "closed" to factions. No reconstruction or resettlement of any kind would take place in the Brcko sector until the issues of ownership and building permits were sorted out. This was technically a responsibility of a joint personal property commission established by the peace agreement, but the commission was not yet capable of participating. The commander had to take action to avoid violent confrontations in the resettlement areas.



Closing the Zone of Separation brought these issues to the attention of the international community, and TF 3-5 sponsored the first joint personal property commission in Bosnia. Fortunately, the reservoir of good faith that had accumulated carried all sides through this difficult period; weekly meetings continued as scheduled, and channels of communications remained open.

Some things cannot be brought to the meeting table, and the negotiating maxim that declares more work is done "away from the table" is quite accurate. Even after the task force began weekly civil-military seminars, the commander would still meet once a week with the civilian leaders of each local faction. Until the International Police Task Force arrived in sufficient numbers, a similar meeting was held with each police chief. In these meetings, the commander heard the true feelings of the local leaders, tested their limits, passed messages, and determined a strategy for the next civil-military seminar that would keep things moving.

### *Adjusting Perceptions and Building Trust*

Providing good offices and acting as a quasi-mediator help to resolve disputes through sustained dialogue. Frequent contact can also help rebuild relationships. Key in the reconstruction of relationships is changing the perceptions one side has of the other, and the simple renewal of trust between the two.

The greatest success in changing perceptions and building trust occurred when the soldiers of the task force fostered grass-roots level contact. The first such contact was when the unit sponsored meetings for the return of remains. Again, the commander initially pursued this activity only because of its military benefit, specifically as a way to minimize the propensity for civil unrest in the sector. He had been accosted by organizations of families of those missing in action on both sides, demanding a full accounting of their relatives. The task force base was offered as a meeting place for representatives of the organizations from both sides, and the commander offered to facilitate the first meeting.

The common bond of searching for missing sons made these meetings cordial, and there was plenty of informal discussion before and after the meetings. Unfortunately, both sides brought local political officials with them, who were distrustful and sought reciprocity for every agreement. The commander and civil affairs officer broke through red tape just to get the discussions going. The result was a group of Serb parents going into a Bosniac-occupied village to recover remains, during which they shared experiences and described their current situations. Similar initiatives of this type included the task force surgeon's meeting with physicians and a meeting of local artists from both sides.

The military learned quickly that the greatest incentive for grass-roots contact is economic. Near one of the task force's checkpoints, the US brigade carved out and cleared a piece of land for roadside merchants that became known as the Arizona Market. Overnight, it acquired a reputation as the best four acres in the American sector for changing perceptions. There, Bosniacs, Croats, and Serbs mingled, shopped, bought and sold sugar, plum brandy, music, and livestock, and interacted with each other as though there had never been a war. It became a magnet for what can perhaps best be described as cross-boundary tailgate parties, and was a superb environment to begin rebuilding relationships and trust.

Another indirect role the military played as a third-party actor in this area was as an employer of local people at McGovern Base. Each day a busload of 35 Serb workers would arrive at the gate of the 1100-soldier encampment, at the same time as a busload of a near equal number arrived from the Federation. Together, they got in line, received their security badges, and spent almost 10 hours together working side-by-side in different areas of the base.

As the base was being built, the task force commander found the contractor assigned to the base was recruiting only Bosniac workers; going into Serb Brcko was considered "too dangerous." The commander convinced him to hire a balanced work force, protecting his recruiting effort in Brcko. The resultant mixed work force succeeded in changing the perceptions of area civilians. Work parties were mixed, they were recognized and rewarded together, and individuals were fired on the spot if their behavior was at all questionable. Work at the base was coveted by civilians on both sides; it was the closest thing to the pre-war relationship so many sought to restore.

### **Pitfalls, Limitations, and Drawbacks**

Ironically, the strengths of the military are also a source of its inherent drawbacks when assuming the role of third-

party actor. The credibility of the force to participate in peace operations is its warfighting capability. There is, however, a feeling within the military community that peace operations are *not* what the organization exists for and that participation in them will erode combat readiness. Once into the operation, some military leaders, particularly those in the combat arms, become third-party actors only out of necessity and under duress. Some believe that such a role is outside their range of competence and responsibility or best left to psychological operations and civil affairs units.[24]

Another potential problem may arise even before deployment: the nature of the role established for the military in the implementation agreement. Much of it is a matter of timing, based on questions such as who will arrive first and what must be accomplished. Unreasonable timelines and expectations can adversely affect the military's ability to act as a third party. A military annex to a settlement, one that has been developed more or less independent of the civilian annex, puts civilian and military efforts alike at a disadvantage before either arrives in the conflict area. "Expectation overload" within the local population--the desire for speedy implementation--will be difficult to counter unless military and civilian plans complement each other. If such expectations are left unfulfilled or unmodified, they can adversely affect the peacekeepers' work.

This is precisely what happened throughout the area assigned to Multi-National Division North, including the Brcko sector. The military implementation plan, with realistic timelines and expectations, was completed ahead of schedule. The civilian implementation plan, which included freedom of movement and resettlement, made no early progress. The patience of Brcko's citizens quickly waned, resulting in great potential for explosive civil unrest. It was for this reason, actual operational necessity, that TF 3-5 assumed a leading third-party role. Some would refer to the expanded third-party role as mission creep, while others would call it mission evolution; for the unit on the ground, however, it *was* the mission.

When implementing a peace process after a cease-fire, the "No Winner" factor is in effect: absolute impartiality is the key to success. Parties will watch closely for any reason, real or perceived, to question the fairness of implementation. The banner of impartiality must be displayed through thoughtful action by soldiers at all levels. The nation's flag worn on the sleeve of the uniform immediately causes bias and prejudgment. A particular burden for US units at the time was the "Equip and Train" program, an independent US effort to assist the Federation military through private sources. The distinction was lost on Serbs in and out of uniform; what they perceived was the US Army in Bosnia training their Bosniac and Croat adversaries.

There is also a danger of allowing dependency to develop within the local population. People can get very comfortable with someone else making the effort; over time, problems and reasons for inaction can and will be transferred to those third parties. People develop trust in credible mediators and depend on their reliability. Soldiers acting as quasi-mediators must get the parties to shift their trust from individual mediators to the process. This can happen only through a combined and coordinated effort at all levels by the organizations and agencies charged with the implementation.

Dependency is also dangerous because it can stifle the initiative of local entities to help themselves, or slow the assumption of leadership duties by the appropriate local or international organizations. This is a significant problem in establishing the rule of law. Soldiers with automatic weapons and armored vehicles become a tempting resource for dealing with civil complaints. While recognizing that the rule of law involves a wide range of institutions, including an independent judiciary and a penal system, the military must insist that trustworthy local law enforcement organizations assume that role as soon as possible. Establishing the rule of law can take time, and in the initial phases of implementation the military may be the only law. In this, as in other activities, the military will have to balance its operational needs to fill voids while preventing the emergence of dependency.

Finally, being overly concerned about taking casualties could lead to a "bunker mentality." Units affected with this malaise will sacrifice the information gathering that can take place only when they are out, on foot, in direct contact with all parties in sector. Intelligence gathering as a process (and the information gathered) flow up the organizational structure; this vital requirement cannot be met without direct daily contact with the local people. A bunker mentality also sacrifices the opportunity to engage leaders from all sides, which could eventually deprive the intervention force of credibility, essentially rendering those "in the bunker" ineffective as third-party actors. At the extreme, the military

could become mere spectators to peacebuilding efforts.

## **Conclusions**

The nature of intrastate conflicts and the requirements for lasting success require an open-minded approach to the roles and limits of military participation in peacebuilding. Initial implementation missions may place US units in some of the most contentious areas of the post-conflict environment. The tactics, techniques, and procedures of implementation operations--patrolling, monitoring, and engaging entity security forces on compliance issues--place the soldier at the grass-roots and middle-range leadership level of all the parties in conflict. Several aspects of the experiences of TF 3-5 suggest the kinds of work needed to keep the Army abreast of requirements emerging from intervention operations.

. The first relates to early and continuous association of military and civilian organizations in the development of the peace settlement so that provisions important to each are understood and complemented by the other. Implementation will always be civilian-led, but this is not practicable on the ground at the outset. No civilian organization exists with the planning and execution capability of the military. No other organization has the pragmatic flexibility to incorporate the variety of non-state actors required for this type of conflict resolution. We need to find ways to accommodate the requirements of military and civilians when developing strategy and the associated planning of such operations.

. Second, the mission in Bosnia continues to show the role of the military as valuable third-party actors and as catalysts for the reconciliation process. The US military in Brcko was the key player in issues of resettlement and reconstruction. So although they stumbled into them, soldiers and leaders grew into their roles as third-party actors. Soldiers built confidence in the region and were approached for good offices based on trust developed over time. This trust and confidence moved them to greatly expanded roles as quasi-mediators.

Initiatives as third-party actors arose from requirements to prevent violence and protect the force. They were fueled and reinforced by small victories, discrete steps forward in the process of reconciliation and the rebuilding of relationships. The task force organizational structure supported unity of effort among other third parties. This led to a comfortable working relationship and a functional interdependency between the unit and nongovernmental organizations in the area.

To be truly effective third-party actors, the military should seek assistance from other third parties. They should bring the largest nongovernmental and private volunteer organizations into the planning process as early as possible, and provide liaison representatives, if not coequal planners, throughout the initial implementation phase until leadership can safely be handed over. Serving as a third-party actor is an operational necessity for the military in peace operations.

. Third, the Army should take a close look at its doctrine in conjunction with lessons learned from operations in the Balkans. Institutional fear of distraction from warfighting is denying the force necessary doctrine, guidelines, and techniques that could be applied in training to make implementation forces more effective.

Although the US Army Europe training model was appropriate, current doctrine in joint and service publications avoids, and by lack of inclusion discourages, the role of third-party actor for units implementing peace. And while doctrine is primarily a guide for leaders, there is still inconsistent interpretation of requirements and lessons learned about the utility of the military as third-party actors. Some commanders will use doctrine as a constraint rather than as a point of departure. This outcome will have a telling effect on the ground: there is a general difference of opinion at varying levels of command as to which third-party activities constitute operational necessity and which are considered outside operational limits.

Doctrine is slow to develop. Institutional gaps are bridged by non-doctrinal publications such as the Joint Task Force Commander's Handbook, white papers from Europe's Combat Maneuver Training Center, the rewriting of the heavy task force field manual to include stability operations, and the efforts of the US Army Peacekeeping Institute. But we need to do more. Additional predeployment resources should be directed to training leaders from company to brigade level in successful techniques for executing third-party roles.

. Fourth, the military should make no apologies for or degrade its warfighting capabilities or force protection efforts. Both are inherent in command responsibility and are hallmarks of a credible force. One can negotiate quite well in a helmet and flak jacket, but one cannot be effective from inside a bunker. The bunker mentality must be avoided. One way to do so is to validate the mission of third-party actor as an appropriate behavior for soldiers committed to certain kinds of peace support operations.

Soldiers secure the peace in this environment and set the conditions for other organizations and agencies to build on it. But we are not tapping our full potential. The military should seize the role of third-party actor, understand that the role is key to success in accomplishing its objectives, and embed it in the guidance, mission, and intent of the initial phases of peace operations at all levels of command.

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## NOTES

1. The author commanded the unit whose experience is described in this paper. The nucleus of the unit was the 3d Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, a Germany-based mechanized infantry battalion of the 1st Armored Division. For duty in Bosnia, the battalion was organized with three infantry companies, one tank company, and a variety of combat support and service support attachments. This organization was designated Task Force 3-5. After eight months, the unit was reorganized, redeploying the tank company to Germany and accepting an airborne military police company. Throughout the paper, the terms *task force* and *battalion* are interchangeable.

2. *Bosniac* is a term used to describe a citizen of the former Republic of Yugoslavia who supports a united Bosnia-Herzegovina and who prefers not to be labeled by his or her religion--Islam. This article refers to the parties in conflict as Serbs, Croats, and Bosniacs vice Christians, Catholics, and Muslims. *Bosniak* is another accepted spelling of the term.

3. *Task Force 3-5 OPLAN 96-09 (Black Knight Endeavor)*, Headquarters, 3-5 CAV, 15 December 1995.

4. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996), p. 54.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

6. John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), pp. 9-10. See also P. H. Liotta and Anna Simons, "Thicker than Water? Kin, Religion, and Conflict in the Balkans," *Parameters*, 28 (Winter 1998-99), 11-27.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

8. William I. Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, eds., *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), p. 195.

9. William J. Clinton, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century: National Security Strategy of the United States, May 1997* (Washington: The White House, 1997).

10. Crocker, Hampson, and Aall, p. 563.

11. Zartman and Rasmussen, p. 41.

12. Boutros Boutros Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace* (New York: United Nations, 1995), p. 46.

13. Lederach, pp. 40-47.

14. *Joint Task Force Commander's Handbook for Peace Operations* (Ft. Monroe, Va.: Joint Warfighting Center, June

1997), p. IV-25.

15. The corridor is a narrow strip of land, five kilometers wide, controlled by Bosnian Serbs, between the Sava River and the intrastate boundary with the Federation of Bosniacs and Croats. The corridor was once home to approximately 65,000 Bosniacs and Croats, displaced by force in the spring of 1992. The corridor is seen as strategic for the Bosnian Serbs, as it links the eastern and western halves of their republic and gives them unconstrained access to the border with Serbia proper. The city of Brcko sits astride the corridor at the narrowest point, and sovereignty of the area and the city was left undecided in the Dayton Peace Agreement, pending a later arbitration.

16. Fen Osler Hampson, *Nurturing Peace: Why Peace Settlements Succeed or Fail* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996), pp. 9-10.

17. The Zone of Separation is a special area, measured and marked by IFOR troops, two kilometers north and two kilometers south of the final battle line when the last cease fire was declared in Bosnia. It is a 4km-wide strip of land, subject to specific standards of demilitarization and exclusion in Annex 1-A of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

18. Cameron Hume, *Ending Mozambique's War: The Role of Mediation and Good Offices* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1994), p. 25.

19. Thomas R. Colosi, *On and Off the Record: Colosi on Negotiation* (Dubuque, Ia.: Kendall/Hunt, 1993), p. 26; and Hume, p. 26.

20. IPTF personnel were unarmed, UN-sponsored law enforcement professionals from a variety of nations. Their primary role was to monitor faction police activity and educate faction police on proper law enforcement practices.

21. Multi-National Division North had a very capable Political Advisor, with a small administrative support cell. This individual had responsibility for the entire division area, and dedicated as much effort as possible to assist the TF 3-5 commander. Though UN Civil Affairs established a permanent office in Brcko in April 1996, it, too, was a small office (one individual and one interpreter). TF 3-5 was the only organization resourced and staffed to affect civil implementation for the first six to eight months of the intervention.

22. Every week the TF 3-5 commander conducted very tough "away from the table" bilateral discussions with each local faction leader. These discussions set the stage for the moderate success "at the meeting table." Each party wanted assurances that its concerns were accounted for in any decision. The commander, as civil-military seminar chairman, could give credible assurances and gain consent from all for a workable outcome.

23. Also known as the IEBL, it is the physical boundary line between the Federation and the Republic of Srpska. It is in the middle of the Zone of Separation.

24. Crocker, Hampson, and Aall, 328.

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