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Former U.N. Peacekeepers Agents of Cultural Change in Pakistan's Police

Summary

- Former U.N. peacekeepers are an emerging cadre within Pakistan's police who are precursors of professionalization and other positive changes in police culture.
- Given their peacekeeping experience, they are torchbearers of human rights protection in policing, and believers in gender equality and the rule of law. They have also shown an ability to resist undue political pressure by government ministers, politicians and interest groups.
- They form a resilient force when it comes to fighting the tide of militancy and terrorism in Pakistan.
- This pool of trained resources may be utilized by the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) for the quick start of new peacekeeping missions.
- The Government of Pakistan could also utilize them for police-reform initiatives, imparting training and demonstrating best practices.
- Given the potential gains from police participation in U.N. peacekeeping, Pakistan's recent, self-imposed ban on police joining peacekeeping deployments in the future should be reversed.

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Introduction

The U.N. supports peace and stability in conflict regions around the world, and police are part of its peacekeeping deployments. The police perform several functions: operational support to the host-state police; support for reforming, restructuring and rebuilding of the host-state police; and interim policing. Together, the DPKO and the U.N.'s Department of Field Support (DFS) are responsible for the selection, deployment, training, management and direction of these peacekeeping missions, along with their logistics and operations in the field. After their tours of duty, police peacekeepers return to their home countries and resume normal police work. This Brief examines how Pakistan's national police services benefit from serving in peacekeeping missions and help to bring improvements to the local police culture. One implication of this experience is that the DPKO and member states, including Pakistan, should consider establishing systems for better utilizing these resources.

After India and Bangladesh, Pakistan is the third-largest contributor to U.N. peacekeeping missions; as of April 2014, 588 Pakistani police and 7,359 soldiers were taking part in peacekeeping

operations.¹ A total of 8,938² Pakistani police officers have been deployed in U.N. peacekeeping missions since 1992, when Pakistani police went to Cambodia. From 1992 to 2013, Pakistani police deployment increased from 35 to 766 annually. However, last November the Ministry of Interior froze the future deployment of police peacekeepers for U.N. peace missions under the pretext of the country's precarious internal security situation and a dearth of law enforcers to deal with domestic challenges. Pakistan's Army General Headquarters requested that the ban on police deployments be lifted in February, but no action has yet been taken.³

An Emerging Cadre

U.N. peacekeepers returning to Pakistan are replicating the best practices of peacekeeping at home. They continue to identify themselves as U.N. peacekeepers while serving in the police by displaying their U.N. police medals and insignia on their uniforms. These former blue helmets encounter a Pakistani police culture that is persistently resistant to change. For instance, Police Order 2002, a forward-looking reform agenda promulgated that year, called for functional specialization in such areas as crimes against women, forensic sciences and community policy, as well as for elected civilian control over the police and greater public input through public safety commissions and police complaint authorities. This system was never fully implemented, and the police service continues to operate under the control of the civil service bureaucracy in many areas. Through a series of amendments to the order, the spirit of the reform was undermined by political interference, and many aspects of the woefully dated, colonial-era Police Act of 1861 were reintroduced.⁴ However, former U.N. peacekeepers nonetheless function as agents of modernization in the police force. Owing to their international training and work with multiethnic police, they understand a democratic service model of policing that is missing from these traditional laws, originally enacted to "control" rather than serve the citizenry.

From Integrity to Human Rights Protection

Former U.N. peacekeepers generally enjoy financial stability due to the substantial mission sustenance allowance they received—between \$150 and \$170 per day compared to the \$14 to \$33 per day that their peers in rank would receive. The majority of former peacekeepers whom I've asked say that they volunteered in order to make more money and have an adventure. The financial independence makes them less inclined to accept bribes or to act out of political motivations. Also, they are familiar with the U.N. accountability and internal audit system. These two factors help develop leadership and reduce malpractice or a sense of impunity. "I am here to serve the people and to set a good example for my men; we are the custodians of the rule of law," said Kalam Khan, a celebrated officer and former U.N. peacekeeper who was later killed in a March 2012 suicide attack in Peshawar for which the Pakistani Taliban took responsibility. Malik Saad, another former peacekeeper, was awarded the highest civil award of gallantry, the Hilal-i-Shujat, by the government.

During their time as peacekeepers, the blue helmets operate within a system in which respect for human rights is seen as the cornerstone of police work, and they undergo human rights training for their missions. On returning to their home countries, local communities tend to respect former peacekeepers for their perceived integrity in an environment where human rights violations in regular police work are commonplace. In police-community meetings, people often request that ex-peacekeepers be posted in their areas. Though all police are supposed to receive training in the protection of human rights, the former peacekeepers demonstrate practical examples of such respect, particularly while conducting questioning or crowd control.

Not Political Favorites

Political interference in police work is, sadly, common in Pakistan.⁵ This can severely affect the quality and neutrality of police work. Politicians routinely interfere in the transfer and posting of police at every level. However, former peacekeepers perceive themselves as politically neutral and as agents of the rule of law—not serving any political party. Individual officers can pay a price for that neutrality. If a police officer operates without regard to the desires of political authorities, they could be transferred to a remote and difficult area of the country. The symbiotic relationship between politicians and many police creates a slippery road of police corruption and deviations from professional conduct.

The strongest indication of ex-peacekeepers' neutrality is how local politicians react to them: In most cases, those politicians do not favor ex-peacekeepers for important assignments. The police-politician nexus plays out most obviously during the elections. Police play a crucial role on three occasions, the first being when they provide security for political rallies. Trouble can also start when rival groups fight each other and the police favor one over the other. Later, post-election victory processions led by the winning party's candidates frequently become the scene of clashes, as well as the setting for police favoritism toward one of the groups of political-party supporters. Politicians and non-peacekeeper police officers sometimes discriminate against former peacekeepers and try to marginalize them as *Daftari* Police (office guys). However, former peacekeepers have often resisted such political pressure at the local level. Muhammad Ali Babakhel, then the Peshawar police chief, is reported to have refused to obey verbal orders of the chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regarding the posting of certain policemen to particular assignments and instead opted to go on a long leave. The chief minister's spokesman has denied those allegations.⁶

Using Technology to Foster Police Fraternity

Former U.N. peacekeepers continue to develop an international perspective on policing and criminal justice as they interact on the web. For example, former peacekeepers from Pakistan, Egypt and Jordan recently used social media to discuss the law-and-order situation in Egypt during the Arab Spring and the turmoil in Syria. Former peacekeepers also develop a capacity to work in multicultural environments, a tendency illustrated on their Facebook pages, which have friends ranging across regions, religions, genders and colors. This makes them naturally more inclined to accept cultural diversity that strengthens their commitment to democratic policing and reflects in their day-to-day professional competence. Key to their ability to maintain virtual global networks among blue helmets is the training they receive in the use of information and communication technology. U.N. police officers are also given short courses that include media and radio procedure, officer survival, transition planning and monitoring and codes of conduct.⁷ Otherwise, Pakistani police do not receive such training.

Promoting Gender Equality

Police departments are typically male-dominated and operate with hierarchies based on obedience that are similar to military organizations. They are generally averse to "civilianization." They also have been unwelcoming to women police officers, who are frequently assigned duties like serving tea, cleaning offices, answering phones and typing. As a result, women police officers lack role models. This is a feature of Pakistan's police culture. Again, since former U.N. peacekeepers have learned to work with women colleagues both as subordinates and supervisors, they tend to be far more progressive. Shahzadi Gulfam, a woman police officer who received the 2011 International Female Police Peacekeeper Award, achieved iconic status in Pakistan.

Promoting Institutional Partnerships

Further, the former peacekeepers have been sensitized to the importance of work done by other organizations in the areas of human rights, civil society and humanitarian efforts. They also work closely with the military in joint planning and exercises and information-sharing. This willingness to forge partnerships enhances their capacity for community policing as well. In Pakistan's Lower Dir district, a former peacekeeper raised platoons of volunteers in 2009-10 to fight the militants.⁸

Facility in English and Other Languages

Former peacekeepers are fluent in English; they are tested for proficiency in written and spoken English as part of their selection for peacekeeping contingents. In some crises, they have served as mediators and negotiators. Moreover, they often learn other official U.N. languages like French and Arabic during their missions. With their communications skills, former peacekeepers have also proven to be credible and effective police trainers, with many functioning as instructors or commandants in training units.

Learning Resilience

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) afflicts some peacekeepers, and many troop-contributing countries are taking precautionary steps to cope with the problem. However, surprisingly, there are no reported cases of PTSD among current and former Pakistani peacekeepers.⁹ Ex-peacekeepers grew accustomed to conflict environments and this exposure has proven useful in counterterrorism activities in Pakistan. They have had experience working with the military component of peacekeeping missions and learned about tactical aspects of counterterrorism. Many former peacekeepers have served in the insurgent hotspots of Pakistan, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, without showing any signs of psychological distress.

Recommendations for Action:

For the DPKO

- The DPKO should build a database of the relevant skills of former U.N. peacekeepers and create a liaison capacity with them to identify police officers who are suitable for quick deployment in new peacekeeping missions.
- Former U.N. peacekeepers, under the auspices of Pakistan's Ministry of Interior and the DPKO, could establish pre-deployment, crash-training programs for fresh police peacekeeping contingents.
- Ex-peacekeepers can also be used cost-effectively to assess the skills necessary for police recruits for new missions.
- Former peacekeepers could participate in information sessions for police officers about the benefits of serving with the U.N.

For the Government of Pakistan

- The subject of international peacekeeping and protection of civilians could be included in the curriculum of police training institutes.
- The experience of former peacekeepers needs to be utilized in police reforms initiatives, devising training modules, delivering training and demonstrating best practices.

ABOUT THIS BRIEF

Pakistan's police services play a crucial role in providing security, and often serve in a frontline capacity in counterterrorism operations within the country. The U.S. Institute of Peace's South Asia program has been focusing programming and analysis on Pakistan's police since 2010. This Brief, based on research conducted by the author during his time with the United Nations Foundation and the U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations, examines how Pakistani alumni of international peacekeeping operations can help transmit professional values and expertise to strengthen the Pakistani police services. Muhammad Quraish Khan is a police veteran of 13 years and currently serves in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as director of the police forensic division. Khan previously served as deputy secretary of the Home and Tribal Affairs Department in Peshawar, and as chief financial controller for the provincial police department. He received a Master's in Criminology from King's College, London, and was a Humphrey/Fulbright fellow at the University of Minnesota in 2011-12.

- Former peacekeepers can be more consciously tapped as agents of change to help cleanse the Pakistani police culture of undesirable traits.
- The present ban imposed by the Ministry of Interior on future participation in U.N. peacekeeping missions ought to be removed. With some 400,000 police at work presently, it is not credible to argue that allowing perhaps 700 police to participate in overseas peacekeeping at any one time would undercut Pakistani police capabilities.

For former police peacekeepers

- At the country level, former peacekeepers should form an UNPOL Alumni Association.
- Former women peacekeepers should encourage other female police officers to serve in U.N. missions and maintain an informal support network.

Notes

1. United Nations Peacekeeping, "Troop and police contributors," at www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml.
2. DPKO archives. See www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors_archive.shtml.
3. See www.dawn.com/news/1086869.
4. Hassan Abbas, "Reforming Pakistan Police and Law Enforcement Infrastructure." United States Institute of Peace Special Report, February 1, 2011.
5. Frederic Grare, "Political Dimensions of Police Reform in Pakistan." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 14, 2010.
6. See www.dawn.com/news/1046878/political-meddling-leaves-key-police-post-dormant.
7. Robert Rail, "Surviving the International War Zone" (Boca Raton: CRC Press, Taylor and Francis Group), 2011.
8. Mumtaz Zarin, a former U.N. peacekeeper, quoted in www.dawn.com/2011/02/11/jirga-opposes-termination-of-dir-dpo/.
9. Maria Kiani, "Pakistan's Contribution to UN Peacekeeping," Strategic Studies, Volume XXIV, No. 3, Autumn 2004, The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad.



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