

The Problem with Modern Peacekeeping: A Geographically Disaggregated Analysis of MINUSMA

By Ryan Hironaka

Advised by Professor Neil Narang with Thanks to Professor Kathleen Bruhn

Introduction – Does Peacekeeping Work?

Broadly speaking, peacekeeping is thought to be a worthwhile and effective tool in the fight for peace. In dozens of peacekeeping missions throughout the decades, despite a few failures of the catastrophic magnitude, there have also been many laudable successes as well. What is most important, perhaps, is finding exactly how to achieve these successes and avoid such failures. This paper seeks to understand how the regional deployment of peacekeepers in Mali, both in type and volume, is linked to violence on a monthly basis.

Hypotheses

In any given month and region:

1. The simple presence of peacekeepers will reduce violence. Peacekeeper presence above 1k will also reduce violence.
2. The greater the total number of peacekeepers the more effective they will be at reducing violence.
3. The greater the total number of police battalions the more effective they will be at reducing violence.

Methodology in Brief

To test these three hypotheses, I conducted a simple bivariate regression model with the variations of deployment data as the independent variable, and monthly regional violent events and casualties as the dependent variables. The model is lagged by one month to attempt to account for the delay between the deployment of peacekeepers and their subsequent effect. The approximate number and location of peacekeepers in Mali was found using data from United Nations' Secretary General Reports while conflict data was cross referenced from independent searches conducted by myself, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, and The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED). These were then all combined into a single dataset that the models would be sourced from. An example entry for the month of April 2015 can be seen below.

admin.loc	admin.num	date.mot	pko.tot	pko.pres.1k	pko.pres	pol.dep.bat	ACLED.E	ACLED.C
Bamako	1	4/1/15	1169.6821	1	1	2	1	1

Results – Troubling but Not Telling

The results indicate that simple peacekeeping presence and the total number of peacekeepers actually appears to be correlated to an increase in violent events and casualties. In short, the simple presence of peacekeepers on average led to an additional 1.2 violent events and an additional 3.4 casualties in a region per month. Meanwhile, every month in each region, an additional 788 peacekeepers will on average result in one additional violent event while only an additional 287 peacekeepers will on average result in one additional casualty. This is not altogether unexpected as there is literature that indicates that peacekeepers are routinely deployed to the most violent areas; however this would be far less worrying without knowledge of what happened after 2017, when this study ends. In the 31 months between the end this paper's analysis in September 2017 to April of 2020, 2,059 events and 5,134 casualties have occurred in Mali. In comparison, during the 43 months used in this paper's models, there were only 835 events and 1,848 casualties, less than half during a time frame an entire year greater in length. With MINUSMA just passing its seventh year anniversary on the 24th of April, it also has claimed the title of most dangerous active mission with over 200 peacekeepers losing their lives over its duration. Though the relationship found in this paper is in no way causal, it is indicative of a systematic failing of the mission. Regardless of the size of the deployment, there is a lack of support, leadership, and coordination that ensures that MINUSMA will not find success in its current state. This must change if MINUSMA wishes to find success to stabilize Mali and avoid yet another failed mission.

MINUSMA	ACLED.E	ACLED.C
Peacekeeping Presence	1.172591**	3.404961*
Peacekeeping Presence _{1k}	-0.690719	-3.378777
Peacekeeping Total	0.001270***	0.003492**
Police Battalions	0.005776	-0.345949