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# A Shrinking Humanitarian Space: Peacekeeping Stabilization Projects and Violence in Mali

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## ABSTRACT

While the peacekeeping mission in Mali is the deadliest active mission, aid workers are not a prominent target. This is puzzling because humanitarians argue that integrated missions aligning political, military and humanitarian goals impede their security. I argue that the fallacy of integrated peacekeeping missions is that the humanitarian space shrinks due to rising insecurity. This takes place when integrated missions blur the lines between civilian and military action and when they politicize humanitarian aid through biased mandates. I test the argument by comparing new data on peacekeeping stabilization projects with other aid projects, using a matched wake analysis that estimates a difference-in-difference model with sliding spatio-temporal windows. I find that peacekeeping stabilization activities increase violence against civilians on the ground in the short term, which ultimately decreases humanitarian access. Paradoxically, the UN names lack of humanitarian access as a key challenge to protecting civilians, but contributes to the access challenge itself.

**KEYWORDS** Peacekeeping; humanitarian space; UN integration; violence; Mali

## 1. Introduction

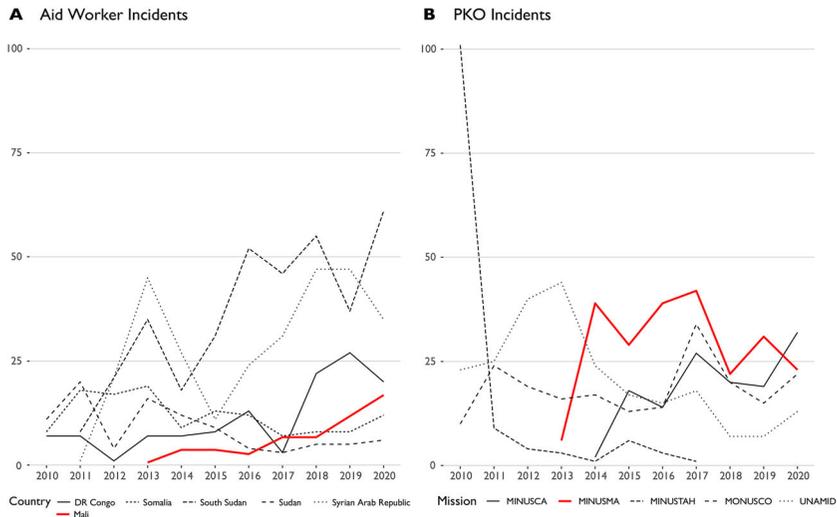
While the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is the deadliest active United Nations (UN) mission, aid workers are not a prominent target in the country. Between 2013 and 2020, 231 UN peacekeepers became victims of violent attacks in Mali, whereas only 55 aid workers were targeted during the same time period.<sup>1</sup> As the name indicates, MINUSMA is an integrated peacekeeping stabilization mission, meaning that political, military and humanitarian objectives should be aligned in order to stabilize the country. The low number of attacks against aid workers in Mali is puzzling because

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<sup>1</sup>Humanitarian Outcomes, *Aid Worker Security Database*; United Nations, *Peace Security Data Hub*.

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**Figure 1.** Attacks against aid workers and peacekeeping missions, top 5 places/missions.<sup>2</sup>

humanitarians repeatedly argue that integrated UN missions shrink the humanitarian space and hence impede the security of aid workers.

Comparing data on attacks against peacekeepers and aid workers during the last 10 years shows that the most insecure places for peacekeepers are not the same as for aid workers. Figure 1 presents the yearly count of attacks against aid workers (panel A) and peacekeepers (panel B) in the top 5 affected places. What stands out is that the most affected country in terms of violence against aid workers – Syria – has no active peacekeeping mission. Among the top 5 attacked peacekeeping missions, only two places are also among the top 5 countries in which aid workers are most attacked, namely MONUSCO (DR Congo) and UNAMID (Sudan). Neither MINUSCA (Central African Republic), MINUSTAH (Haiti), nor MINUSMA (Mali) show prominently in terms of violence against aid workers. In terms of aid workers affected, panel A shows an additional line for Mali (red) which is not among the 5 most affected countries.

The fact that attacks against peacekeepers and aid workers are not necessarily correlated is puzzling and undermines the theory that integrated UN missions endanger aid workers. In line with this data, previous studies have found no correlation between the presence of integrated UN missions and security incidents on aid workers.<sup>3</sup> These studies overlook what I refer to

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Hoelscher et al., “Conflict, Peacekeeping, and Humanitarian Security”; Stoddard et al., *Providing Aid in Insecure Environments*.

as the fallacy of absent incidents: integrated UN missions shrink the humanitarian space by increasing general levels of violence. Consequently, when aid workers have to stay at home, they cannot get attacked. The humanitarian space shrinks through two mechanisms. Firstly, integrated UN missions politicize humanitarian aid through biased mandates. The activities of an integrated peacekeeping mission are guided by political and military objectives. The subordination of humanitarian objectives behind political and military objectives is incompatible with humanitarian principles. Secondly, integrated peacekeeping missions blur the lines between humanitarian and military action. Through the integrated approach, the stabilization activities of peacekeeping missions have increased.<sup>4</sup> These peacekeeping stabilization projects are what blurs the line between the military and the humanitarians. As a result, these projects and the populations benefiting from them can attract violence.

I test the argument by using novel data on the location and timing of peacekeeping stabilization projects. The data from these so-called Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) were only recently published by the UN's new Peace Security Data Hub<sup>5</sup> and have not yet been used for other studies. I compare these peacekeeping stabilization projects with humanitarian aid projects and their impact on violence, to control for the fact that humanitarian aid projects may also influence violent dynamics on the ground. I use a matched wake analysis<sup>6</sup> to estimate a difference-in-difference design with sliding spatio-temporal windows. The results show that in the spatial vicinity of peacekeeping aid projects, violence against civilians increases. The fallacy of integrated UN missions is that whenever peacekeepers are engaging in stabilization activities, aid workers have to stay at home due to general security concerns.

This paper makes two crucial contributions. Firstly, it shows how the concepts UN integration, humanitarian space and violence are related and cannot be viewed in isolation. Previous studies and UN guidelines have recognized the challenges to humanitarian access posed by recalcitrant governments and Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs), but have not linked the UN itself to access restrictions. At the same time, humanitarians have long claimed that the presence of UN peacekeepers is shrinking the humanitarian space. This article links the voices from the field with existing theoretical concepts and shows in an empirical analysis the effect of integrated peacekeeping missions on violence. The UN named humanitarian access limitations as one of five core challenges to protecting civilians.<sup>7</sup> It would be

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<sup>4</sup>United Nations, *Peace Security Data Hub*.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Schutte and Donnay, "Matched Wake Analysis".

<sup>7</sup>Report of the Secretary-General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, S/2009/277, New York: United Nations, 29 May 2009, paras 5, 26, 58–60.

paradoxical for the UN itself to contribute to the access challenge. Secondly, this paper also advances the literature addressing the dynamics of violence associated with peacekeeping operations. Research has shown that UN peacekeeping missions can reduce violence.<sup>8</sup> Thus, this study also contributes to the literature dealing with the micro-dynamics of conflicts and their interaction with integrated mission activities. It also addresses a gap identified by Karell and Schutte's<sup>9</sup> paper on the effect of different types of military aid on violence. There is currently no research that compares military-driven stabilization projects with civilian aid projects.

## 2. Un Integration: A Shrinking Humanitarian Space?

During the 1990s, the UN proved unable to adequately respond to the changing nature of conflicts termed as 'complex emergencies'.<sup>10</sup> After the massacre in Srebrenica and the Genocide in Rwanda, the international community realized that the responsibility to protect civilians requires a more proactive use of force.<sup>11</sup> The stabilization of countries in asymmetrical civil wars needs humanitarian, military and diplomatic efforts, but the UN and its different agencies were not aligned in their approach and operated in isolated, parallel silos. Aspiring to maximize the individual and collective impact of all UN activities to consolidate peace, the concepts of 'stabilization' and 'integration' were introduced in 1997.<sup>12</sup> Most 'new' peacekeeping mandates involve the stabilization of the political context by integrating political, military and humanitarian actors.

Supporters of the integrated approach argue that humanitarians benefit from integrated activities, either through armed escorts, logistical support or coordination of activities. In areas where the presence of peacekeepers would bring additional danger to humanitarians, activities can be better coordinated and armed peacekeepers can stay away from aid operations or vice versa.<sup>13</sup> Critiques of the integrated approach argue that the blurred lines between humanitarian and military actors shrink the humanitarian space.<sup>14</sup>

There is no unequivocal definition for the term humanitarian space. Most discussions about humanitarian space focus on 'agency space' and thereof access concerns, referring to the ability of aid agencies to deliver

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<sup>8</sup>Fjelde et al., "Protection Through Presence"; Hultman et al., "United Nations Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection in Civil War"; Ruggeri et al., "Winning the Peace Locally".

<sup>9</sup>Karell and Schutte, "Aid, Exclusion, and the Local Dynamics of Insurgency in Afghanistan".

<sup>10</sup>Duffield et al., "Politics and Humanitarian Aid".

<sup>11</sup>Harmer, "Integrated Missions"

<sup>12</sup>Metcalfe et al., *UN Integration and Humanitarian Space*.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>14</sup>Glad, *A Partnership at Risk? The UN-NGO Relationship in Light of UN Integration*. Torrenté, "Humanitarianism Sacrificed"

humanitarian aid according to humanitarian principles.<sup>15</sup> Violence against aid workers is often linked to the narrative of a shrinking humanitarian space and has permeated the humanitarian sector at large. 22% of attacks against aid workers directly affect the humanitarian space by resulting in the withdrawal or suspension of humanitarian activities.<sup>16</sup>

Humanitarian action is the assistance, protection and advocacy in response to humanitarian crises, and guided by seven humanitarian principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality.<sup>17</sup> The first four principles are widely viewed as the core humanitarian principles. Many organizations and practitioners argue that adhering to these principles is the only way for aid organizations to gain access to people in need and operate safely.<sup>18</sup> Humanitarian principles are not without criticism. Proponents of the integrated approach argue that 'higher' goals such as peace, security and development are more important than upholding humanitarian principles.<sup>19</sup> The central issues in this debate are whether humanitarian neutrality is feasible and, if so, whether it is desirable.<sup>20</sup> Slim suggests that this discussion is based on a misconception of neutrality as a humanitarian principle.<sup>21</sup> While the decision of being neutral during a political conflict is a political statement per se, the purpose of humanitarian neutrality is operational, a tool to get access to all those in need.<sup>22</sup>

The principle of impartiality calls for non-discriminatory humanitarian action, i.e. action based solely on need. Some argue that impartial humanitarian action is unfair and biased in favour of the wrong actors. Someone who has killed, raped, or caused other forms of suffering may be in greater need than someone who has been a victim of these crimes at some point in their lives.<sup>23</sup> To counteract perceived partiality, some organizations implement a 'balance' policy, providing aid to all sides of the conflict, even those who are not in the greatest need.<sup>24</sup> Although this violates the impartiality principle, it can help an organization appear more neutral. When resources are limited, impartiality and neutrality may be at odds.

This is in contrast to peacekeeping missions, which are also guided by *impartiality, consent and defensive use of force*.<sup>25</sup> However, a major

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<sup>15</sup>Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*; Collinson and Elhawary, *Humanitarian Space*; OCHA, *Glossary of Humanitarian Terms in Relation to the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*.

<sup>16</sup>Stoddard et al., *Providing Aid in Insecure Environments*.

<sup>17</sup>Pictet, "The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross".

<sup>18</sup>Broussard et al., "Challenges to Ethical Obligations and Humanitarian Principles in Conflict Settings"; Donini, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place"

<sup>19</sup>Torrenté, "Humanitarianism Sacrificed".

<sup>20</sup>Terry, "The International Committee of the Red Cross in Afghanistan".

<sup>21</sup>Slim, "Relief Agencies and Moral Standing in War," 347.

<sup>22</sup>Slim, *Humanitarian Ethics*; Torrenté, "Humanitarianism Sacrificed".

<sup>23</sup>Torrenté, "Humanitarianism Sacrificed," 12.

<sup>24</sup>Slim, *Humanitarian Ethics*, 63–64.

<sup>25</sup>Lotze, "United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)"

peacekeeping reform based on the Brahimi report in 2000 has distinguished impartiality more clearly from neutrality. The principle of consent requires host governments to agree on establishing a peacekeeping mission. If the UN declared other actors than the central government as legitimate authorities, host governments would unlikely welcome the UN. While peacekeepers should continue to protect all civilians regardless of their identity, they do so in a non-neutral manner by supporting the implementation of their mandate, such as the restoration of state authority.<sup>26</sup> However, this does not imply that only established authorities will be recognized as the central government. If power changes, whether internationally recognized as legitimate or not, the peacekeepers need to collaborate with the new authorities. The central point is that non-state actors will not have the same level of support as the current actor in control of the government.

Following the recommendations of the Brahimi report, the UN adopted the practice to ‘triple hat’ the number two of the UN representatives in a country with a political/peacekeeping mission. Previously three different functions, the deputy chief of the peacekeeping mission is now at the same time the development coordinator and the humanitarian coordinator. The triple hatting is part of the integrated approach aimed at aligning political, military and humanitarian actors.<sup>27</sup> Although the UN reaffirmed that integrated approaches should respect humanitarian principles<sup>28</sup>, in practice this is almost impossible when a mission has a political mandate. Political mandates can lead to biased priorities of the triple-hatted humanitarian coordinator.<sup>29</sup>

Humanitarians have accused several humanitarian coordinators of valuing the mission mandate higher than humanitarian principles. For example, in Somalia, humanitarians were specifically asked not to engage with NSAGs that impede the mandate of the mission. This breaches the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality which should be overseen by the humanitarian coordinator.<sup>30</sup>

In short, while humanitarian organizations strive to adhere to all humanitarian principles, impartiality may occasionally be sacrificed for neutrality. Peacekeepers, on the other hand, are supposed to act impartial but not neutral. In an integrated mission, humanitarians are compelled to align their actions with the mission mandate. That means they may not be able to act neutrally.

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<sup>26</sup>Koops et al., “Introduction,” 2.

<sup>27</sup>Macrae and Leader, *The Politics of Coherence*.

<sup>28</sup>Secretary-General Decision No. 2008/24 (SG Decision 2008)

<sup>29</sup>Harmer, “Integrated Missions”.

<sup>30</sup>Metcalfe et al., *UN Integration and Humanitarian Space*, 15.

## 2.1. Blurred Lines Between Humanitarian and Military Activities

The narrative of blurred lines between humanitarian and military activities became prominent during the US-led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The narrative emerged with a shift in counter-insurgency military doctrine directed at winning the hearts and minds of the population. Targeted aid, in theory, should foster cooperation between the US-led coalition and communities who would potentially support insurgents.<sup>31</sup> Since then, aid agencies have become increasingly worried about the militarization of aid.

Since 2003, US military commanders in Afghanistan and Iraq have received a budget for implementing aid projects.<sup>32</sup> This practice blurred the line between humanitarian concepts of neutrality and impartiality with military objectives. The projects were used as direct reward systems in exchange for information to the extent that former US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, labelled NGOs as force-multipliers of the military.<sup>33</sup> These actions sparked widespread controversy in the humanitarian community, some of whose members accused the US military of endangering the impartial and neutral humanitarian space.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, some UN peacekeeping commanders received a budget from their home governments to spend on short-term relief efforts. Different resources and political agendas of the troop-contributing countries led to inequalities between the contingents. To better coordinate these military stabilization activities, the UN introduced the concept of QIPs, which have evolved into mission-wide efforts. These peacekeeping stabilization projects aim to secure the support of the population and therefore follow the ‘hearts-and-minds’ logic.<sup>35</sup>

Unlike foreign militaries, UN peacekeepers are guided by the principle of impartiality, so working with peacekeepers per se does not pose a problem for aid workers. However, UN stabilization missions have become more politicized and the integrated approach subordinates humanitarian to political objectives and forces humanitarian actors to conform to the mission mandate.

## 2.2. The Fallacy of UN Integration

The interplay between aid and violence has been researched extensively in Afghanistan. Some studies support the ‘hearts-and-minds’ theory insofar as development projects seem to positively impact economic well-being and attitudes towards the government.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, insurgents meet

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<sup>31</sup>Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 193.

<sup>32</sup>Spear, “The Militarization of United States Foreign Aid,” 30.

<sup>33</sup>Powell, *Remarks to the National Foreign Policy Conference for Leaders of Nongovernmental Organizations*.

<sup>34</sup>Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 193.

<sup>35</sup>Howard, *Power in Peacekeeping*, 84.

<sup>36</sup>Beath et al., “Winning Hearts and Minds? Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan”.

these programmes with violence.<sup>37</sup> Aid workers are more likely to become targets in areas in which the provision of their services could improve government support.<sup>38</sup> Karrell and Schutte analyze rebel activity in the proximity of military projects and find that social projects that target specific groups of the population, like protection projects, created more violence than more inclusive infrastructure efforts.<sup>39</sup> These studies show that, at least in the context of Afghanistan where aid went through an early militarization and politicization, the types of aid seem decisive when assessing its impact on violence. Aid projects that limit rebel capacities, or are exclusive to a certain group, seem to induce more violence.

Literature on violence against aid workers during humanitarian emergencies looks at the individual behaviour of humanitarians<sup>40</sup>, criminal violence driven by economic motivations<sup>41</sup> and political motivations<sup>42</sup>. This literature does not address how the presence of international actors contributes to the insecurity of aid workers. Security analysts and practitioners in the field alike repeatedly state anecdotal evidence of an increased security risk in environments where integrated missions operate.<sup>43</sup> The argument is supported by the growing number of violent incidents against aid workers. That being said, there is currently no clear evidence other than anecdotal stories from aid workers showing whether integrated UN peacekeeping operations affect the humanitarian space.

Research has shown that UN peacekeeping missions can reduce the duration of violence<sup>44</sup>, the intensity of conflicts<sup>45</sup> and violence against civilians<sup>46</sup>. Violence can be reduced by diversifying mission composition, personnel type and increasing mission size.<sup>47</sup> According to other studies, peacekeepers only reduce violence by non-state armed groups and not by state forces<sup>48</sup>, or when power is distributed evenly among armed groups<sup>49</sup>. Violence against civilians may increase if a peacekeeping operation only invests in observers rather than robust peacekeepers.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Sexton, "Aid as a Tool against Insurgency".

<sup>38</sup>Narang and Stanton, "A Strategic Logic of Attacking Aid Workers".

<sup>39</sup>Karrell and Schutte, "Aid, Exclusion, and the Local Dynamics of Insurgency in Afghanistan".

<sup>40</sup>Fast, *Aid in Danger*.

<sup>41</sup>Buchanan and Muggah, *No Relief*; Naylor, "Mafias, Myths, and Markets".

<sup>42</sup>Anderson, *Do No Harm*; Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries*; Narang and Stanton, "A Strategic Logic of Attacking Aid Workers"; Stoddard et al., *Providing Aid in Insecure Environments*.

<sup>43</sup>Glad, *A Partnership at Risk? The UN-NGO Relationship in Light of UN Integration*. Torrenté, "Humanitarianism Sacrificed".

<sup>44</sup>Ruggeri et al., "Winning the Peace Locally".

<sup>45</sup>Hultman et al., "United Nations Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection in Civil War".

<sup>46</sup>Fjelde et al., "Protection Through Presence".

<sup>47</sup>Bove et al., *Composing Peace*; Hultman et al., *Peacekeeping in the Midst of War*.

<sup>48</sup>Carnegie and Mikulaschek, "The Promise of Peacekeeping".

<sup>49</sup>Di Salvatore, "Obstacle to Peace? Ethnic Geography and Effectiveness of Peacekeeping".

<sup>50</sup>Kathman and Wood, "Stopping the Killing during the "Peace"".

Similarly, Hultman finds that only missions with a specific mandate to protect civilians can reduce violence.<sup>51</sup> For a detailed literature review on the interplay between peacekeeping and violence, see Walter et al.<sup>52</sup> These previous studies of peacekeeping operations show that their impact at the aggregate level can be different than at the micro-level. Furthermore, they focus on the presence of offices and troop bases but not on other peacekeeping activities. However, non-coercive activities such as community-based dialogues can also lead to a local reduction in communal violence.<sup>53</sup>

Unlike the troops from Barkhane or the G5 Sahel, MINUSMA is not mandated to combat terrorist threats.<sup>54</sup> In fact, the word ‘terrorist’ appears only in the preamble of the Security Council resolution of the Mandate, in which the Security Council ‘expresses concerns’ about terrorist attacks.<sup>55</sup> However, MINUSMA is mandated to protect civilians, and as such, peacekeepers are authorized to use force against terrorists if they threaten civilians. The blurring of lines between peacekeepers and French counter-terrorism forces may make peacekeepers a particular target in Mali.<sup>56</sup> As a result, if the distinctions between humanitarians and peacekeepers are also blurred, the situation is perilous for humanitarians.

Humanitarians outspokenly critique the militarization of aid in Mali. For example, Médecines Sans Frontières (MSF) argued that MINUSMA’s activities instrumentalize humanitarian aid for military activities.<sup>57</sup> Refugees International published a report on ‘Mali’s Humanitarian Crisis: Overmilitarized and Overshadowed’, calling for a clear separation between humanitarian and military actors.<sup>58</sup> International organizations usually use white 4×4 cars in the field. White is supposed to resemble the white flag, meaning no arms are carried. The vehicles of a peacekeeping mission all carry the black UN logo, while the UN agencies are marked with their respective blue logos. This can cause visual confusion, as some armed groups do not know or do not want to see the difference. MSF has mitigated the risk of visual confusion with non-humanitarian actors by painting its cars pink in some parts of Mali.<sup>59</sup> The underlying assumption of this action is that UN peacekeepers are the real target, while armed groups would not attack aid workers if they recognized them as such. There is currently no data or analysis to support this assumption.

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<sup>51</sup>Hultman, “Keeping Peace or Spurring Violence? Unintended Effects of Peace Operations on Violence against Civilians”.

<sup>52</sup>Walter et al., “The Extraordinary Relationship between Peacekeeping and Peace”.

<sup>53</sup>Smidt, “United Nations Peacekeeping Locally”.

<sup>54</sup>Charbonneau, “Intervention in Mali”.

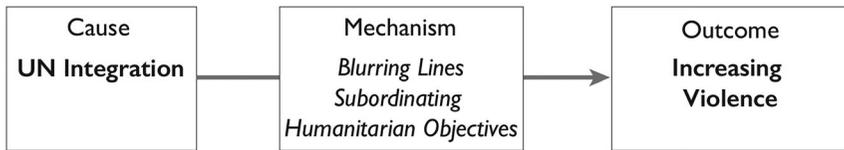
<sup>55</sup>S/RES/2584 (2021), page 1, 6.

<sup>56</sup>Bellamy and Hunt, “Using Force to Protect Civilians in UN Peacekeeping”; Charbonneau, “Intervention in Mali”.

<sup>57</sup>Pozo Marín, *Perilous Terrain*, 5.

<sup>58</sup>Lamarche, *Mali’s Humanitarian Crisis Overmilitarized and Overshadowed*.

<sup>59</sup>Pozo Marín, *Perilous Terrain*, 230.



**Figure 2.** Argument: A shrinking humanitarian space

At the same time, experimental studies show that the Malian population perceives UN peacekeepers as more impartial than French troops.<sup>60</sup> Peacekeepers in Mali are targeted because their efforts may boost trust in the government, and not because they are mistaken for counter-terrorists. Furthermore, peacekeepers are more likely to be attacked when they interact with civilians.<sup>61</sup> Integrated mission activities, such as peacekeeping stabilization projects aimed at improving the perception of the population, may thereby become targets of attacks. Because these projects benefit the population, it is likely that violence against the population also increases.

Based on these insights, [Figure 2](#) presents the fallacy of UN integration argument. I expect that integrated mission activities, such as peacekeeping stabilization projects, attract incidents of violence and thereby shrink the humanitarian space. Firstly, the political and military objectives of these projects follows a ‘hearts-and-minds’ logic, preventing impartial and neutral aid. Secondly, peacekeeping stabilization projects blur the lines between humanitarian and military activities. This leads to the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis:** Violence increases in the vicinity of peacekeeping stabilization activities compared to the vicinity of aid projects.

When peacekeeping stabilization projects are launched, the general level of violence escalates and humanitarians are increasingly being mistaken for peacekeepers, at which point they are no longer safe in the field. When stabilization projects attract violence, the humanitarian space shrinks. A limited humanitarian space forces aid workers to stay at home or in secured compounds. As a result, what I refer to as the fallacy of UN missions plays out: fewer observed attacks against aid workers lead to the conclusion that UN integration may be more secure for aid workers, although this is a mere consequence of less access.

### 3. Background on the Malian Conflict and the International Interventions

In this section, I provide background information on the Malian conflict and the international interventions and justify my case selection.

<sup>60</sup>Nomikos, “Peace Is in the Eye of the Beholder”, “Peacekeeping and the Enforcement of Intergroup Cooperation”.

<sup>61</sup>Hunnicut et al., “Non-Combatants or Counter-Insurgents? The Strategic Logic of Violence against UN Peacekeeping”.

In October 2011, Tuaregs from the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) launched the 4th rebellion in Mali's history with the aim of liberating the northern Tuareg-dominated areas. Many MNLA fighters were heavily armed returnees from Libya who had previously supported the Gaddafi regime. They joined forces with Islamist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Ansar Dine, a group with ties to AQIM.<sup>62</sup>

Meanwhile, in the capital, Bamako, the military was dissatisfied with corruption and the government's handling of the insurgency in the north. As the rebels gained more territory, part of the military ousted President Touré in a coup in March 2012. After the coup, the state plunged into a socio-political crisis, which in April 2012 gave the Tuareg the opportunity to declare independence over the Azawad territory in the north.<sup>63</sup> Ideological disagreements among the Tuareg shook group cohesion, and two new coalitions emerged, one supporting an independent Azawad state and the other advocating for the resolution of existing socio-political grievances within the Malian state. Parallel to the two coalitions, several Islamist armed groups are operating in Mali, turning the rebellion into a jihadist insurgency.<sup>64</sup>

As the insurgents pushed south and threatened the capital, the interim government asked France for military support. In January 2013, France launched Operation Serval, a military intervention aimed at stopping the rebellion in the north. In 2014, France expanded Serval into Operation Barkhane, which is tasked with fighting terrorists across the borders of the entire Sahel.<sup>65</sup> At the same time, in January 2013, the Security Council (SC) approved an African-led International Assistance Mission to Mali (AFISMA). In April 2013, under the leadership of France, the UNSC founded MINUSMA. The peculiarity about MINUSMA is that it was established before there was peace to keep. Their first mandate focused on stabilizing key population centres in the north, restoring state authority, and protecting civilians across the country.<sup>66</sup> In July 2013, AFISMA was integrated with MINUSMA which, at the time, made it the third largest UN peacekeeping mission.<sup>67</sup> In June 2015, the Algiers Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali (Algiers Accord) was signed. Subsequently, the Azawad groups became known as Signatory Armed Groups (SAG), in contrast to the jihadist insurgents, who were excluded from the peace talks.<sup>68</sup> The peace accord gives the SAGs substantial autonomy over the

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<sup>62</sup>Chauzal and Van Damme, *The Roots of Mali's Conflict*.

<sup>63</sup>Lotze, "United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)".

<sup>64</sup>ACLED, Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset (ACLED).

<sup>65</sup>Lotze, "United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)".

<sup>66</sup>S/RES/2100 (2013), 16 (a), 16 (c), page 8.

<sup>67</sup>Bellamy et al., *Understanding Peacekeeping*.

<sup>68</sup>Tronc et al., *Perilous Terrain*.

northern territories on condition that they ensure the safety of civilians. After the signing of the Algiers Agreement in 2015, MINUSMA finally had peace to keep and the mandate refocused on the implementation of the peace agreement.<sup>69</sup> In 2016, a new wave of violence in the central region of Mali forced MINUSMA to expand its area of operations. Previously, MINUSMA and the SAGs were able to establish quasi-security in the northern areas, pushing terrorist armed groups (TAGs) south into the central area called the Mopti region. The TAGs fuelled a conflict between two ethnic groups, the pastoralist Fulani and the Dogon, who are mainly farmers.<sup>70</sup>

The exclusion from the peace agreement of several armed groups denounced as TAGs led to a vicious circle of conflicts. While Operation Barkhane ‘neutralized’ over 600 terrorists in the Sahel, between November 2018 and March 2019, violence against civilians increased by 46% compared to the same period a year earlier, with 4,700 civilians killed in 1,200 violent incidents.<sup>71</sup>

Mali is a peculiar case, with the highest death toll of any active peacekeeping mission, but relatively little violence against aid workers. The lack of large-scale attacks on aid workers, although more attacks could theoretically be expected, makes Mali an ideal case to examine the interaction of UN stabilization activities and humanitarian aid in the integrated mission context.

### 3.1. Minusmas Stabilization Activities

The main stabilization activities of integrated peacekeeping operations are QIPs. QIPs emerged in the UN lingo with the Brahimi Report, and the first official UN policy on QIPs was published in 2007.<sup>72</sup> These stabilization activities are humanitarian or infrastructure projects that can be implemented in the short term (up to 6 months) with a budget of up to US\$ 50,000.<sup>73</sup>

The primary goal of QIPs is not to contribute to the long-term development and well-being of the local population, but to improve the perception of the peacekeeping mission. UN guidelines on QIPs state that projects should ‘build confidence in the mission, its mandate, and the peace process’.<sup>74</sup> QIPs should further be ‘visible to the population, partners, and local authorities’.<sup>75</sup> Of particular importance are projects signs,

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<sup>69</sup>S/RES/2227 (2015)

<sup>70</sup>Benjaminsen and Ba, “Why Do Pastoralists in Mali Join Jihadist Groups? A Political Ecological Explanation”.

<sup>71</sup>Tronc et al., *Perilous Terrain*.

<sup>72</sup>DPKO, *Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)*, 3.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.



**Figure 3.** Public Display of MINUSMA Logo on QIPs. (a) Water project in Timbuktu area. Source: MINUSMA Website. (b) Water project in Mopti area. Source: Author's own picture.

banners or radio messages, for which appropriate funding should be included in the project budget.<sup>76</sup> MINUSMA uses QIPs specifically to improve local perceptions as they ‘should work with the Public Information Office to ensure that projects are appropriately publicized and the opportunities they represent to gain the support of the population’.<sup>77</sup>

The two pictures in [Figure 3](#) display two QIPs sites, one in Timbuktu area (panel a) and the other in Mopti area (panel b). Both projects funded a water pump for the local community. In panel a, MINUSMA installed a plate explaining the project and who financed it. In panel b, MINUSMA painted the entire building in its colours and attached its logo. Of particular note is that MINUSMA has opted for the colour blue, which is normally reserved for civil UN agencies. Peacekeeping operations operate under the black UN logo.

MINUSMA’s mandate outlines that QIPs should be implemented in support of the mandate’s core tasks.<sup>78</sup> QIPs are implemented strategically in areas where the mission is planning other activities aligned with the mandate, such as force patrols or the reinstatement of local authorities. As such, QIPs are not guided by humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality requiring aid goes to those most in need. QIPs are increasingly being used to win hearts and minds, projects that, with no long-term vision, buy local community support for peace-building efforts.<sup>79</sup> QIPs embody the blurring lines between civilian and military activities as they are planned and executed by uniformed

<sup>76</sup>DPKO, *Quick Impact Projects*, 7.

<sup>77</sup>MINUSMA, *Quick Impact Projects*, 4.

<sup>78</sup>S/RES/2584 (2021), 31 (a), page 12.

<sup>79</sup>DPKO, *Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)*, 3.

and civilian peacekeeping personnel and are clearly aligned with a mission's mandate.<sup>80</sup>

#### 4. Research Design

In order to study the effects of peacekeeping stabilization projects on subsequent conflict dynamics, I compare two types of projects: Military-driven peacekeeping stabilization projects operationalized as QIPs and humanitarian aid projects. I want to measure whether the frequency of incidents related to violence against civilians changes in places where QIPs are implemented. For that I need a baseline for comparison. I do this by establishing a 'baseline' level of violence against civilians in areas where humanitarian aid projects are being implemented.

I construct a treatment variable that locates all QIPs and a control variable that locates other aid projects. Following Karell and Schutte<sup>81</sup>, I use the start date of the projects as the decisive time-unit for both project types. The project initiation phase is decisive for the population to find out 'what's in it for them'.

Although MINUSMA was tasked to implement QIPs already in the 2014 mandate, the first project was implemented during the last quarter of 2016. Since this was only one QIP, my analysis runs from January 2017 to December 2020. Information on QIPs comes from the UN's newly established Peace Security Data Hub.<sup>82</sup> The geocoded data entails 364 QIPs for Mali. Between 2017 and 2020, QIPs received about 15 million US\$ of which more than 11 million went into infrastructure and equipment projects, for example building new roads or bridges (Table 1). This already shows that the primary goals of these projects are military or political and not humanitarian in nature.

Data on other aid projects comes from the d-portal of the International Aid Transparency Initiative that pools its own data with the OECD's Creditor Reporting System. The data includes development and emergency aid activities. A comprehensive list of the types of aid projects can be found in Table 2 in the appendix.

The data covers finances, locations, duration, sectors and more on each project. The database records all projects that are supported by international donors, which is probably the vast majority of projects. It may be that small local projects are not reported. But it can also be the case that the field offices do not always report all their QIPs to New York, where the peace security database is maintained. One should be aware of this when interpreting the results of the analysis.

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<sup>80</sup>Howard, *Power in Peacekeeping*, 84.

<sup>81</sup>Karell and Schutte, "Aid, Exclusion, and the Local Dynamics of Insurgency in Afghanistan".

<sup>82</sup>United Nations, *Peace Security Data Hub*.

**Table 1.** Types of activities of QIPs in Mali, amount in US\$.

Activity Type	Funding
1 Conferences/seminars	52,993
2 Sport & cultural events	382,719
3 Other	485,899
4 Sensitization, advocacy & outreach	1,604,488
5 Training/workshops	1,673,577
6 Infrastructure & equipment	11,149,675
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,349,350</b>

**Table 2.** Conditional means of control variables. Distances in kilometres.

Event Type	Water Dist.	Road Dist.	UN Base Dist.	Pop. Dens.	Nightlights
Aid Projects	28	12	95	3.66	67.29
QIPs	19	10	59	3.53	70.89
Violence a. civs.	12	8	99	3.34	68.72
Battles	13	11	93	2.92	69.61

I estimate three models by constructing three dependent variables with data from the Armed Conflict Location Event Data Project (ACLED)<sup>83</sup>; 1) violent events against civilians (main model) and 2) battles between armed groups and 3) the presence of NSAGs (alternative outcome models). The first dependent variable counts all violent incidents against civilians, the second dependent variable measures all battles in which NSAGs were involved, and the third measures all activities of NSAGs. I focus on violence against civilians as an outcome because that is most closely related to the narrative of the shrinking humanitarian space.

Treatment, control and outcome events are point location. To compare spatio-temporal dynamics, the data needs to be aggregated to larger units, which leads to the the Modifiable Areal Unit Problem (MAUP). The number of events within a spatio-temporal unit depend on the choice of space and time window.<sup>84</sup> Hence, the results may be an artefact of a specific aggregation window.

Matched Wake Analysis (MWA) is a methodology that was specially developed for robust causal inference with point location event data.<sup>85</sup> Outcome events are aggregated into spatio-temporal circles around treatment and control events, such as the number of violent incidents against civilians within a 10-kilometer spatial radius and a 5 day temporal radius around the initiation of a QIP. With sliding spatio-temporal windows, MWA addresses the MAUP. Repeating these steps for different circle sizes ensures that the results are not driven by any particular aggregation rule.

<sup>83</sup>Raleigh and Hegre, "Population Size, Concentration, and Civil War. A Geographically Disaggregated Analysis".

<sup>84</sup>Cressie, "Change of Support and the Modifiable Areal Unit Problem".

<sup>85</sup>Schutte and Donnay, "Matched Wake Analysis".

The OLS regression is specified as:

$$\eta_{post} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \eta_{pre} + \beta_2 treatment + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

where  $\eta$  represents the count of *dependent events*. A difference-in-difference design estimates the average treatment effect  $\beta_2$ , that is the effect of project initiation of QIPs on the post-treatment count of violent incidents or armed group activity  $\eta_{post}$

MINUSMA's presence follows the conflict lines with regional offices including military bases in the central part of the country (Mopti), western part (Timbuktu) and northern areas (Gao, Menaka and Kidal). QIPs are usually planned by the field offices and only implemented in areas that fall under the mandate of the mission. The map in [Figure 4](#) projects all aid projects, QIPs and incidents of violence against civilians. The map shows that violence against civilians mainly takes place in the centre, which is also where most of the aid projects are based. QIPs are more prominent in the North, suggesting that MINUSMA implements QIPs where most of their troops are and not necessarily where the violence is taking place.

A comparison of conflict-free zones (without UN presence) with conflict areas could lead to an overestimation of the results. If most aid projects are in a non-violent area, the impact of QIPs on violence is likely to be overestimated. Therefore, I only include the administrative regions of Ségou, Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal that were affected by violence in the analysis (grey shaded areas in the map).

QIPs are not deployed at random, but rather in areas where the mission hopes to make a difference, such as increased stability or improved civilian perceptions. In empirical studies, this selection bias can prove problematic. MWA can solve the problem of selection bias. The number of dependent events prior to project initiation is used to calculate the momentum of violence (or pre-treatment trend) in both the treatment and control groups. By matching the pre-treatment trend, the model accounts for the different conflict dynamics in the treatment and control groups.

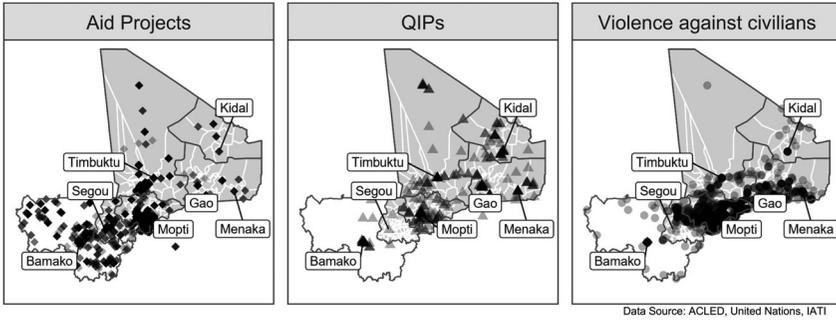
[Figure 5](#) shows the distribution of each event type in the sample. Control events (aid projects) significantly outperform treatment events (QIPs). To account for this imbalance, I weight the difference-in-difference regression for the number of treatment and control events.

I further match on a number of variables commonly associated with conflict dynamics, such as population density<sup>86</sup>, nighttime light emissions<sup>87</sup>, and distance to the nearest major road<sup>88</sup>. Although distance to the capital is

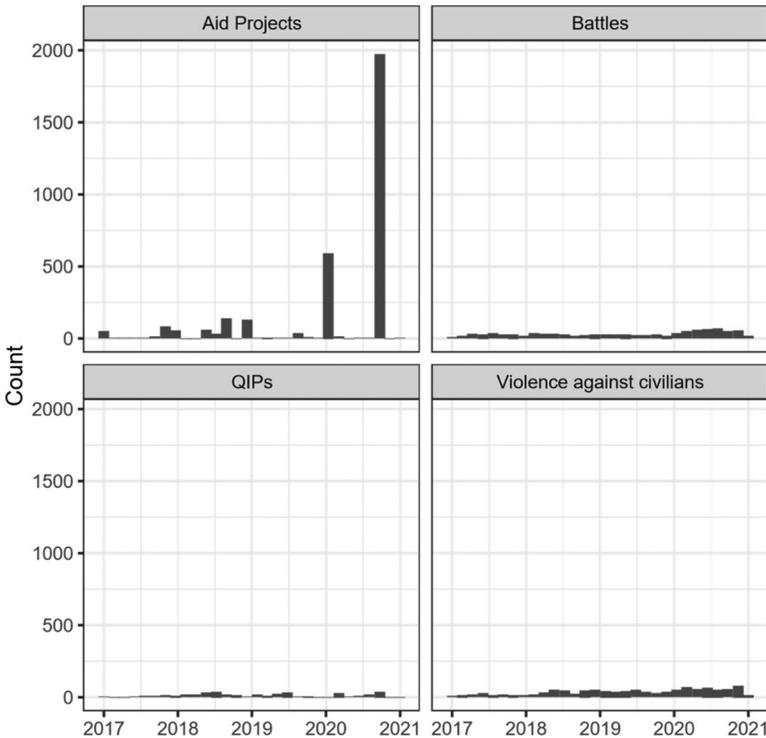
<sup>86</sup>Raleigh and Hegre, "Population Size, Concentration, and Civil War. A Geographically Disaggregated Analysis".

<sup>87</sup>Koren and Sarbahi, "State Capacity, Insurgency, and Civil War".

<sup>88</sup>Hammond, "Maps of Mayhem".



**Figure 4.** Aid Projects, QIPs and violent events against civilians in Mali, 2017–2020. The grey shaded area marks the conflict lines and MINUSMA’s presence in the field. The black lines represent first order administrative division.



**Figure 5.** Distribution of control, treatment, and dependent events for the study period.

commonly used as a proxy for state reach<sup>89</sup>, this would make little sense given Mali’s generally limited statehood. Instead, I construct a new measure of the distance to the nearest major MINUSMA base (Bamako,

<sup>89</sup>Buhaug et al., “Geography, Rebel Capability, and the Duration of Civil Conflict”.

Gao, Kidal, Menaka, Mopti, Timbuktu). The Sahel is repeatedly plagued by droughts, which are considered to be one of the causes of intercommunal conflicts.<sup>90</sup> To control the violent dynamics around water sources, especially during the hot season, I measure the distance to the nearest river or lake (all map data are extracted from Open Street Map data). [Figure 1](#) in the appendix shows the distribution of matched control variables.

[Table 2](#) shows the conditional means of the control variables. It is striking that QIPs are closer to UN bases than aid projects, which is not surprising as it is logistically easier for the UN to implement QIPs in its vicinity. However, this proximity could also mean that the peacekeepers try to win the hearts and minds of civilians in closer vicinity to their bases, or that aid organizations are trying to stay as far away from UN bases as possible.

## 5. Results

[Table 3](#) and [4](#) presents the significant spatio-temporal windows of the matched wake analysis and their effect size of the first model that estimates the effect of QIPs on civilian targeting. Violence against civilians surged 20 to 60 days after QIPs were initiated, possibly for even longer periods. The spatial window is most consistent 3–9 km away from the QIP location, but extends up to 15 km. The increase in effect size from 0.27 to 1.61 in the number of violent events against civilians is impressive. In the initial project phase of QIPs, armed peacekeepers are present to clear and secure the area, which may explain why the effect does not start until 20 days after the start of the project.

The visual representation of the results in [Figure 6](#) is easier to interpret. Panel a) represents the spatio-temporal estimates of the main model on violence against civilians. The lighter the shading, the greater the effect and diagonally crossed areas are not significant. The effect size appears to be steadily increasing, but the MWA method cannot properly assess effects for larger spatio-temporal windows. Overlapping treatments could skew the treatment effect upwards, or overlap of treatment and control event could negate the effect.<sup>91</sup> The overlap of treatment and control events ranges from 0.3% to 9% in the largest spatio-temporal windows. To address this potential bias associated with the stable treatment value assumption (SUTVA)<sup>92</sup>, I match on the previous number of overlapping treatment and control events. Panel b) in [Figure 6](#) shows the alternative outcome model: the effect of QIPs on battle activities of armed groups. Only a very small spatio-temporal window at around 40 days and 6–9 km shows a slightly significant but negative effect of QIPs on battles. Peacekeeping

<sup>90</sup>WFP, *Fighting Hunger in the Sahel*.

<sup>91</sup>Schutte and Donnay, "Matched Wake Analysis," 4.

<sup>92</sup>Cox, "Two Further Applications of a Model for Binary Regression".

**Table 3.** Effect of QIPs on violence against civilians. Only space-time windows with statistically significant ( $p \leq 05$ ) effects are presented.

Time[days]	Space[km]	Effect Size	p-value	Adj. R2
20.00	3.00	0.27	0.03	0.21
20.00	6.00	0.27	0.03	0.21
20.00	9.00	1.01	0.00	0.24
20.00	15.00	0.67	0.02	0.16
30.00	3.00	0.42	0.04	0.56
30.00	6.00	0.42	0.04	0.56
40.00	3.00	0.53	0.01	0.55
40.00	6.00	0.53	0.01	0.55
40.00	9.00	1.11	0.00	0.54
50.00	3.00	1.00	0.04	0.12
50.00	6.00	1.00	0.04	0.12
50.00	9.00	1.49	0.00	0.44
60.00	3.00	1.46	0.00	0.34
60.00	6.00	1.46	0.00	0.34
60.00	9.00	0.95	0.00	0.30
60.00	12.00	1.48	0.00	0.38
60.00	15.00	1.61	0.00	0.53

stabilization projects do not seem to attract more NSAG activity than non-militarized relief projects.

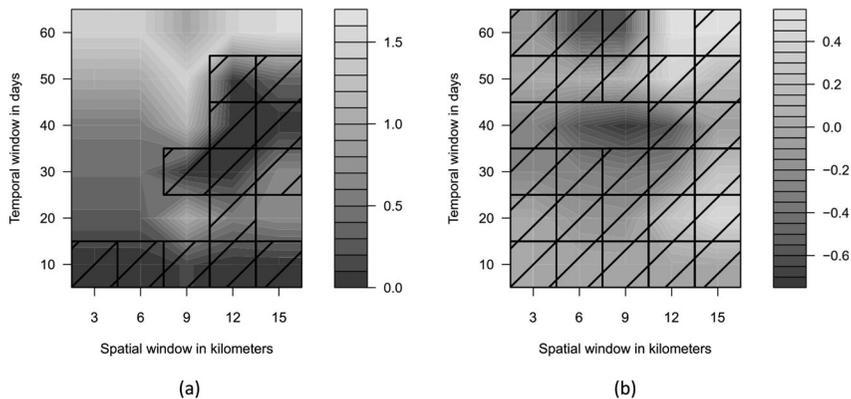
The results of the third model with all NSAG activities as an alternative outcome can be found in the appendix. The result is similar to that of the battle model. There is no increase in NSAG activity. But 30 days after the start of the project, NSAG activities are slightly declining.

## 6. Discussion

This empirical analysis measures the impact of peacekeeping stabilization projects on violent dynamics. The results show that violence against civilians increases in the spatio-temporal vicinity of QIPs in contrast to humanitarian aid projects. The UN's approach to combined political, military and humanitarian objectives in an effort to stabilize a country can have unintended consequences resulting in insecurity and a shrinking humanitarian space.

**Table 4.** Effect of QIPs on Battles. Only space-time windows with statistically significant ( $p \leq .05$ ) effects are presented.

Time[days]	Space[km]	Effect Size	p-value	Adj. R2
40.00	3.00	-0.08	0.01	0.62
40.00	6.00	-0.10	0.01	0.56
40.00	9.00	-0.11	0.01	0.54
50.00	3.00	-0.15	0.00	0.52
50.00	6.00	-0.18	0.00	0.46
50.00	9.00	-0.15	0.00	0.39
50.00	12.00	-0.13	0.01	0.34
60.00	6.00	-0.09	0.02	0.49



**Figure 6.** Point estimates of the effect of QIPs. Statistically significant ( $p \leq .05$ ) combinations are shown without any overlay. (a) Outcome: Civilian Targeting (b) Outcome: Battles.

The distribution of QIPs is not random, which could pose a problem for inference. The MWA method accounts for this selection bias by matching the pre-treatment trend of the dependent variable. The calculated effect is the difference between treatment and control group after project initiation.

Is it true that humanitarian access is being limited as a result of this insecurity? Because these security events are included in OCHA's access assessments, the answer is yes. Disruptions to humanitarian access can manifest in various forms and degrees. The ambiguous concept of humanitarian access makes it challenging to measure. The UN defines humanitarian access as 'humanitarian actors' ability to reach populations affected by crisis, as well as an affected population's ability to access humanitarian assistance and services'.<sup>93</sup> For Mali, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)'s quarterly access overview names violent incidents against civilians as well as the presence of armed groups as the main impediments for humanitarian access.<sup>94</sup> These reports show where all humanitarian organizations operating in the country can and cannot travel. In addition, UN agencies and their subcontractors have to follow the Department of Safety and Security's rules (UNDSS). Still, organizations that are not affiliated with the UN adhere to UNDSS guidelines.<sup>95</sup> In fact, most agencies work in areas where their resources and expertise have the best chance of producing outcomes and where they can assume security for their personnel. As a result, organizations have deviated not just from the humanitarian imperative, but also from the ideal of impartiality.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>93</sup>OCHA, *Glossary of Humanitarian Terms in Relation to the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, 13.

<sup>94</sup>OCHA, *Accès Humanitaire Au Mali*, 4.

<sup>95</sup>UNDSS, *Safety and Security of Humanitarian Personnel and Protection of United Nations Personnel*.

<sup>96</sup>Stoddard et al., *Providing Aid in Insecure Environments*, 42.

The UN has produced a wealth of guidelines and recommendations on how militaries are to engage with humanitarian actors. The publications address the use of military assets during natural disasters, complex emergencies and the use of armed escorts in hostile situations. The common view is that the military ought not directly engage in humanitarian assistance during conflict, and that humanitarians should not use armed escorts, unless it is a last resort.<sup>97</sup> There is no coherent policy framework that defines when and how these stabilization projects can be applied without endangering humanitarian access. At present, the projects are planned at the discretion of the regional peacekeeping offices and are not coordinated with the humanitarians

In the case of Mali, OCHA's access evaluation show that certain areas are inherently difficult to access for humanitarians.<sup>98</sup> If the UN itself is partly responsible for these access restrictions, it is all the more important for humanitarians to coordinate their activities with the peacekeepers. When tasks overlap, for example when the military is involved in humanitarian activities, humanitarians may perceive this intrusion as a threat to their existence or 'turf'. This results in competition instead of coordination.<sup>99</sup> The question is the extent to which the unintended consequences of UN integration affect the relationship between humanitarians and the military.

## 7. Conclusion

This article argues that the activities of integrated UN missions can result in increased violence. Integrated UN missions are blurring the lines between civilian and military activities and politicize humanitarian action with biased mandates. The fallacy of UN integration is that there are fewer attacks against aid workers because the humanitarian space shrinks, and not because aid workers are more secure.

The matched wake analysis shows that peacekeeping stabilization projects attract violence against civilians in spatio-temporal proximity to project sites. Compared to humanitarian or development aid projects, QIPs worsen the security situation for the civilian population. Does this affect the humanitarian space? Yes, if we follow OCHA's guidelines for measuring access restrictions based on the number of security incidents against civilians, QIPs directly restrict humanitarian access. This analysis shows that humanitarian space and security cannot only be evaluated based on the absolute number of violent incidents against aid workers.

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<sup>97</sup>IASC, *Non-Binding Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys*; OCHA, UN-CMCoord - Guide for the Military 2.0.

<sup>98</sup>OCHA, *Accès Humanitaire Au Mali*.

<sup>99</sup>Ruffa and Vennesson, "Fighting and Helping? A Historical-Institutionalist Explanation of NGO-military Relations," 588.

The absence of attacks, in fact, tells us more about the restricted access. Therefore, one should be careful when looking at cases where a phenomenon is not widespread.

The analysis also fills a gap outlined by Karell and Schutte<sup>100</sup> insofar as it compares military-driven stabilization projects with humanitarian aid projects and their impact on incidents of violence. The limitations of this study are that it cannot distinguish between the specific micro-mechanisms that link peacekeeping stabilization projects to violence. Is violence increasing as NSAGs seek to punish civilians who benefited from the projects? Or do they attack civilians simply because they want to take their share of the projects, or because they see these projects as proxy targets for the peacekeepers? The answer to this question will likely require more case-specific fieldwork.

The crucial implications of this analysis are twofold. The first implication concerns aid workers. When military actors implement aid projects, uncertainty increases for all involved, both aid workers and civilians who should benefit from these projects. It is therefore fair to say that when peacekeepers engage in aid projects, the humanitarian space shrinks. Peacekeepers only carry out aid projects that also have a military use. In the end, the civilian population suffers because they no longer receive neutral and impartial aid. The implication that is critical for humanitarians trying to predict access restrictions in their work is the need to focus not only on unruly governments and NSAGs, but also on where peacekeepers plan their stabilization activities.

The second implication concerns peacekeepers and the UN as a whole. The general military doctrine of ‘hearts-and-minds’ has serious consequences for other actors. Peacekeepers should be aware that QIPs are a dangerous game for civilians and humanitarians. The hearts and minds of some civilians can be won but at the expense of others. The UN must be aware that the integrated approach has unintended consequences and is partly responsible for humanitarian access challenges. Can the findings of this study be generalized to other countries with peacekeeping missions?

The integrated peacekeeping mission in Mali is not unusual in that it is structured similarly to all new missions deployed in active conflicts. All integrated missions implement stabilization projects, including QIPs. What makes Mali unique is that, until recently, French troops were conducting counter-terrorism operations. This may further blur the lines between French counter-terrorism, UN peacekeeping, and humanitarianism. Future research should investigate different contexts in which peacekeepers are deployed, as well as the impact of their activities on violent dynamics.

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<sup>100</sup>Karell and Schutte, “Aid, Exclusion, and the Local Dynamics of Insurgency in Afghanistan”.

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