

# Keeping Peace while Under Fire

The Causes, Characteristics and Consequences of  
Violence against Peacekeepers

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### **Abstract**

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Peacekeepers are widely viewed as being at growing risk of direct and deliberate violence. Attacks are recorded in many and diverse contexts, targeting interventions deployed by both the United Nations and other organisations. This dissertation seeks to advance the understanding of such violence, studying its causes, characteristics and consequences. The impact of deliberate violence against peacekeepers can be severe; it often extends past those immediately affected and impacts interveners' ability to accomplish their aims. As a topic of scientific inquiry, however, violence against peacekeepers has only recently seen a growth in interest, and systematic study has so far been sparse. This dissertation makes a number of theoretical and empirical contributions to this emerging area of research. The dissertation contains four individual essays. To set the stage and provide foundations for further studies, Essay I specifies key concepts and maps the research field to date. It promotes a wider, and arguably more theoretically appropriate, conceptualisation of violence against peacekeepers than used in earlier studies. Essay II presents new, systematically collected event data on violence against UN and non-UN peacekeepers deployed to conflict-affected countries in sub-Saharan Africa between 1989 and 2009. Patterns from the data demonstrate that, while widely prevalent, violence against peacekeepers is not ubiquitous to peacekeeping and displays considerable variation within and across interventions. Drawing on this novel data, Essay III provides one of the first systematic studies on the time-varying determinants of rebel attacks on peacekeepers, showing its occurrence to be closely linked to rebel performance on the battlefield. Finally, Essay IV explores how operating in a challenging security environment can affect peacekeepers' ability to perform core mission functions, drawing on the case of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The analysis illustrates how such an environment may expose and further constrain already limited capabilities and willingness for robust and armed action in UN peacekeeping operations. Taken together, the essays advance our understanding of the causes, characteristics and consequences of violence against peacekeepers.

*Keywords:* peacekeeping, violence, conflict-data, peace operations, sub-Saharan Africa, civil war, MINUSMA

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*To Mark and Nils*



# List of Essays

This thesis comprises the following essays, which are referred to in the text by their roman numerals.

- I Lindberg Bromley, Sara (2016) Violence against Peacekeepers: Key Concepts and Causes. *Unpublished manuscript*, last presented at the 57th Annual International Studies Association Convention, Atlanta, USA, 16–19 March 2016.
- II Lindberg Bromley, Sara (2017) Introducing the UCDP Peacemakers at Risk Dataset, Sub-Saharan Africa 1989–2009. Forthcoming in *Journal of Peace Research*.
- III Fjelde, Hanne, Lisa Hultman & Sara Lindberg Bromley (2016) Offsetting Losses: Bargaining Power and Rebel Attacks on Peacekeepers. *International Studies Quarterly*, 60(4): 611–623.
- IV Lindberg Bromley, Sara (2017) MINUSMA and Mali’s Precarious Peace: Current-day United Nations Peacekeeping in Contexts of Insecurity. *Unpublished manuscript*, an earlier version was presented at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research Seminar, Uppsala, 27 October 2016.

Essays II and III are included with permission from the respective publishers.



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Sara Lindberg Bromley  
Uppsala, September 2017



# Introduction

[A]t the end of September 2007 a military camp of the African Union near Haskanita was attacked by rebels who were retaliating against what they saw as a lack of protection by the AU. Several African soldiers died in the attack, without any casualties being inflicted on the assailants, and the camp was eventually rescued by forces of the government of Sudan. This was a great humiliation, which showed that the mission had lost its credibility (Guéhenno, 2015: 205).

The assault on the Haskanita base, recounted here in the memoirs of then-Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations Jean-Marie Guéhenno, constituted a severe blow to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). Twelve peacekeepers perished in the attack that saw the base overrun by rebel fighters, and a large amount of military equipment was taken by the assailants (Berman & Racovita, 2015). The scale of destruction and subsequent looting rendered the premises uninhabitable, and the force headquarters ordered the evacuation of the remaining personnel (AU, 2007), thus reducing the mission's presence and its ability to operate effectively. Guéhenno recounts also the wider implications of the peacekeepers' inability to withstand or respond to the assault, suggesting that the mission's display of vulnerability had harmed the very credibility of the mission.

While a severe example, the attack on AMIS's Haskanita base is not unique in kind. Peacekeepers become the targets of deliberate violence in many and diverse intervention contexts, suffering serious injury, forcible detainment or even death as a result. In fact, a majority of the ongoing peace operations of the United Nations (UN) have recorded fatalities stemming from so-called 'malicious acts' over the course of their deployment (UN, 2017). Violence levelled against peacekeepers is arguably puzzling. Deployed as third party actors in contexts of armed conflict in order to restore security and improve the conditions for peace, peacekeepers are supposedly external to the conflict and have no immediate stake in its outcome. Moreover, attacking peacekeepers should be associated with costs for perpetrators, including the possibility of military retaliation or reputational damage, or legal consequences, also given that attacks on peacekeepers may constitute a war crime (UN, 1998; ICC, 2013; also UN, 1994; Bloom, 1995). Even so, peacekeepers regularly become the targets of deliberate violence. This dissertation seeks to advance our understanding of

the causes, characteristics and consequences of this violence against peacekeepers.

The implications of better understanding this feature of conflict and interventions are important. In cases where peacekeepers become the targets of violence, the consequences often extend past the repercussions for those immediately affected by an attack, including to conflict-affected communities. Restrictive security policies often follow for operations deployed in contexts where peacekeepers face the threat or risk of violence. Risk, or rather the efforts taken to minimise or evade risk, will often curtail peacekeepers' mobility and increase the degree of separation between peacekeepers and host communities, which is posited to reduce peacekeepers' ability to operate effectively (Autesserre, 2014a: 55–56, 226–230). Indeed, peacekeepers' exposure to violence has been described as one of the factors that inhibit peacekeeping success (Bratt, 1997). Widely noted peacekeeping failures in Somalia and Rwanda in the 1990s, both with catastrophic consequences for civilian communities in terms of large-scale violence, also featured egregious attacks on peacekeepers. In Rwanda, an incident in which ten Belgian peacekeepers were brutally killed led to the withdrawal of the entire Belgian contingent, leaving the UN mission poorly positioned to curtail the unfolding genocide (Adebajo, 2011: 71–75; Power, 2001). Not only is a better understanding of the conditions under which peacekeepers become the targets of violence crucial for devising preventive measures, but it also holds a promise to improve peacekeepers' performance and safeguard effective operations.

In spite of its expected significance for influencing both peacekeeping practice and outcomes, violence against peacekeepers has only recently emerged as a topic of specific scientific study, and systematic inquiry has been sparse. Reports produced by the UN indicate consistent increases in the number of hostile incidents targeting peacekeepers (e.g. UN, 2014, 2016), yet a lack of dedicated theorisation and fine-grained data to track this important phenomenon have hampered understanding of its causes and consequences. The dissertation makes a number of theoretical and empirical contributions to an emerging research agenda on this topic. First, the dissertation promotes a more comprehensive, and arguably more theoretically appropriate, conceptualisation of violence against peacekeepers than used in earlier studies on the topic. Second, data collected as part of this dissertation project suggests that, while widely prevalent, violence against peacekeepers is not ubiquitous to peacekeeping and as an empirical phenomenon it displays considerable variation within and across interventions. Scholarship has, however, only made limited headway towards systematically studying this variation. Third, findings from the essays that comprise this dissertation contribute to better understanding the determinants of violence against peacekeepers, showing that attacks on peacekeepers are linked to local conflict dynamics in important ways.

Fourth, the dissertation shows that peacekeepers' exposure to violence hinges also on their own performance, notably the activities that deployed peacekeepers undertake on the ground and in interpretation of their mandates.

The early stage of the research in this field has an impact on the methodological approach adopted in the dissertation. A paucity of systematic studies dedicated to the phenomenon of violence against peacekeepers has meant a short supply of the dedicated theories, concepts and data necessary for understanding this important feature of conflict and interventions. In order to fill a number of these gaps, the dissertation combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, including conceptual development, collecting and presenting new event data, and conducting both cross- and within-case studies. Drawing on a combination of analytical methods and empirical materials, the essays jointly provide a multifaceted contribution to understanding the phenomenon of violence against peacekeepers.

To set the stage, and in order to facilitate the accumulation of existing knowledge on the topic, the first essay specifies key concepts and maps the research field (Essay I). The next essay presents new, systematically collected event data on violence against peacekeepers deployed to conflict-affected countries in sub-Saharan Africa between 1989 and 2009 (Essay II). Together, these essays contribute to existing knowledge on violence against peacekeepers by depicting its conceptual and empirical characteristics and taking stock of existing knowledge to explain its prevalence. As such, the dissertation's first part contributes to the research field by providing the necessary foundations for further studies on the topic.

The second part of the dissertation makes theoretical and empirical contributions to understanding the causes and consequences of violence against peacekeepers. Drawing on the data presented in Essay II, Essay III (co-authored with Hanne Fjelde and Lisa Hultman) provides a systematic study of the time-varying determinants of rebel attacks on peacekeepers. It develops and tests an argument related to rebels' shifting incentives to attack peacekeepers as related to civil war dynamics; specifically, as closely linked to rebel performance on the battlefield. The final essay (Essay IV) explores how attacks on peacekeepers, as part of the broader security environment in which they operate, may impact their performance on the ground. Shifting the focus to study also the consequences stemming from attacks on peacekeepers, the essay draws on unique interview material collected in the context of an ongoing UN peacekeeping intervention: the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

In order to provide a wider context for the dissertation's four essays, the remainder of this introductory chapter proceeds as follows. The first section introduces important concepts and discusses the primary empirical scope of the dissertation to provide the parameters of study. The second section situates the dissertation in existing research, providing an overview of

previous studies on the topic and highlighting some important gaps. The third section introduces the four essays and discusses the contribution of each in relation to the research field. The concluding section draws together contributions from the essays and discusses their implications for policy and future research.

## Central concepts and empirical scope

This section introduces the central concepts necessary for studying the phenomenon of violence against peacekeepers – *peacekeepers* and *violence* – and discusses a number of delimitations that provide the dissertation’s primary empirical domain.

The dissertation applies an understanding of peacekeepers that includes all personnel types – civilian, police and military – attached to a peace operation.<sup>1</sup> The point of departure is therefore the operations themselves. As a subset of third party efforts and interventions to address situations of armed conflict, peacekeeping interventions constitute one of the most powerful, visible and often most intrusive such tool.<sup>2</sup> While interventions differ in form and function, the deployment of peacekeepers typically seeks to control or resolve armed conflict (Goulding, 1993; cf. Fortna & Howard, 2008), thus allowing conflict resolution to take place, take hold or be consolidated. Depending on the intervention, peacekeepers may draw on any number of a wide range of functions to that end. Where a ceasefire or peace agreement is in place peacekeepers are often tasked with verifying its terms, through for instance monitoring and reporting on compliance and progress. Peacekeepers frequently also undertake tasks to uphold or restore security, for instance through patrols or interpositioning. The dissertation departs from a broad approach to defining peacekeeping to subsume operations ranging from traditional peacekeeping missions, multidimensional operations, all-civilian presences and interventions oriented towards enforcement.<sup>3</sup> In order to meet the criteria set forth, moreover, a peace operation is deployed on the authority of a multilateral decision, typically

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Peace operations’, ‘peacekeeping’, ‘peacekeeping missions’ and ‘peacekeeping operations’ are used interchangeably throughout this dissertation, as is the wider term ‘interventions’. Unless otherwise specified, reference to ‘peacekeepers’, ‘peacekeeping personnel’, or variants denote all personnel types and includes also locally contracted staff.

<sup>2</sup> A situation or context of armed conflict denotes a country that is either presently, or has recently, experienced violent political conflict. A point of departure is provided by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) definition, which defines armed conflict as ‘a contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths’ (UCDP, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Numerous taxonomies exist that categorise different forms of peacekeeping intervention in categories on the basis of for instance core functions or level of authority. By way of example, see e.g. Fortna (2008: 6–7) and Doyle and Sambanis (2000: 781).



sanctioned by an international or regional organisation.<sup>4</sup> Notably, this definition captures peacekeeping operations deployed by both the UN and non-UN actors, such as regional or subregional organisations and ad hoc groupings and, thus, reflects today's peacekeeping landscape. While non-UN actors and coalitions combined deploy a greater number of operations than the UN, the peacekeeping literature has tended to focus on UN operations, ostensibly owing to the difficulty of accessing data on non-UN operations (see Diehl & Balas, 2014; Diehl, 2014; van der Lijn & Smit, 2017).

As a point of departure, a peace operation is conceived here as an essentially external actor, traditionally operating with the consent of the main conflict parties and with no immediate stake in the conflict. In practice, such distinctions are less exact. An operation's authorisation may at the outset position intervening peacekeepers in a way that is biased towards or against parties to the conflict (Benson & Kathman, 2014). Once deployed, peacekeepers may take on different roles, including in response to parties' behaviour and level of compliance, which may be seen to favour one side over another. In some intervention contexts, moreover, peacekeepers become directly involved in the interaction and violent contestation between conflict parties, making them all the more likely to be perceived as positioned with one side of the conflict. A West African intervention to Sierra Leone in the 1990s, for instance, engaged heavily in clashes to militarily reverse a coup and reinstate the country's elected government (Adebajo, 2011: 141). Thus while conceived of as third party actors deployed to situations of conflict, the research agenda promoted in this dissertation allows for studying questions related to peacekeepers' role in different contexts, and in relation to the use of force specifically, including to empirically track peacekeepers' own use of force across a set of interventions. In distinct ways, each essay also probes peacekeepers' 'positionality' in contexts where they intervene.

The violence that peacekeepers experience constitutes a second core concept. While probably linked to other forms of violence in contexts of conflict, acts of deliberate and serious violence targeting peacekeepers, as conceived here, constitute a particular subset of political violence in contexts of armed conflicts. Seeking to better capture and reflect variations in the level and type of risks facing peacekeepers, one contribution of the dissertation is to draw on a broad conceptualisation of violence against peacekeepers. While research on the topic to date has chiefly focused on fatalities recorded for peacekeepers, this is arguably an overly narrow

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<sup>4</sup> Providing a mission's mandate, such a decision typically follows from UN or regional organisation resolutions, but may also be provided by other multilateral agreement, such as a peace agreement (see Heldt & Wallenstein, 2006). This criterion serves to for instance exclude interventions based on bilateral defence agreements between two countries, or host state invitation alone. Essay I conceptualises peacekeeping in greater detail (see also Lindberg Bromley & Greek, 2016). While the dissertation as a whole is guided by a wide definition of peacekeeping, Essay IV narrows in on a specific subset of current-day UN interventions.

measure of the threat or danger facing peacekeepers (e.g. van der Lijn & Smit, 2017). This dissertation develops a definition that captures all acts of deliberate and serious violence targeting peacekeepers – resulting in fatalities, injuries or the forcible detainment of peacekeepers – and proceeds to track it empirically across a set of peacekeeping interventions. Within this wider context, a number of delimitations guide the individual essays included in this dissertation, in order to study the phenomenon of interest in a more focused way.

Regarding questions of scope, the dissertation's primary empirical domain concerns peace operations deployed in the post-Cold War period to contexts of intrastate conflict in sub-Saharan Africa (Essays II, III and IV). Peacekeepers are also present in, and experience violence as part of, deployments to other contexts. The focus on interventions in sub-Saharan Africa is driven primarily by data availability, with the scope set by the event dataset presented as part of this dissertation (Essay II). Moreover, the phenomenon of interest may be particularly relevant to study in this context. Sub-Saharan Africa not only hosts a large proportion of the world's peacekeeping operations overall, but these missions have also in many ways represented the forefront of peacekeeping policy and doctrine (e.g. Tardy & Wyss, 2013). Peacekeeping partnerships that draw regional and subregional organisations into different forms of collaboration with the UN have also been particularly prevalent in Africa (Koops et al., 2015). In addition, peacekeeping interventions to Africa vastly outnumber those to any other region in terms of total number of operations and personnel. Figures from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) show that 72 per cent of all peacekeeping personnel in 2016 were deployed to interventions in Africa.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the geographic focus allows for a major part of the (actual and prospective) phenomenon of interest to be captured.

In terms of temporal scope, the dissertation focuses on peace operations since the end of the Cold War in 1989, during which period peacekeeping as a policy tool has experienced exponential growth in terms of the number, scale and levels of ambition in deployed operations (Gizelis, Dorussen & Petrova, 2016). The post-Cold War period has seen considerably greater levels of international engagement in conflicts in general, but also a greater focus on intrastate conflict contexts and the emergence of so-called 'new' peacekeeping (Bellamy, 2004) – typically denoting expanded operations engaging in diverse sets of tasks with the aim of seeking lasting resolutions to armed conflict (e.g. Findlay, 2003: ch. 1). While the data collected as part of this dissertation is for the period 1989–2009 (which affects Essays II and III), analyses in Essays I and IV draw on information from more recent cases to discuss features of relevance for the phenomena under study.

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<sup>5</sup> Of personnel deployed as part of UN operations, 82 per cent were deployed to Africa (Smit, 2017).

Finally, a focus on civil wars, or intrastate conflict, follows from the dissertation's subject and the time period in question. The post-Cold War period has seen a steep rise in intrastate conflicts and a decline in conflicts between states. The transition from primarily interstate to intrastate peacekeeping also had important consequences for the conduct of peacekeeping. Centrally, intrastate conflict contexts bring peacekeepers into closer contact with local stakeholders and communities, inviting further interaction, which is relevant to the topic of this dissertation. While the focus on intrastate conflict is a selection criterion for the data collection effort (for Essays II and III), it also follows from a focus throughout the dissertation on the time period in question.

## Situating the dissertation in existing research

Research on peacekeeping has experienced considerable growth in the past several years. In a seminal review study, Fortna and Howard (2008) depict peacekeeping research in terms of 'three waves', largely matching developments in peacekeeping practice over time. The first wave focused primarily on peacekeeping in interstate conflicts. In the second wave, post-Cold War shifts in the practice of peacekeeping led research to increasingly focus on intrastate conflict interventions while retaining the focus on in-depth approaches and largely thematically oriented studies that characterised the first wave. Moreover, the literature of this period reflected the pessimism with peacekeeping prevalent in the 1990s, with studies of individual peacekeeping failures. The third wave of peacekeeping literature has been depicted as turning to focus on systematic study and causal explanation. Within this strand, studies have focused both on the 'sending side' of peacekeeping – for instance, studying where peacekeepers are deployed and why (Gilligan & Stedman, 2003) – and the 'receiving side', which focuses more on the impact of peacekeepers' presence on the local conflict context.<sup>6</sup> Central to the latter has been a set of quantitative analyses identifying a number of positive effects that stem from the intervention of peacekeepers and that improve the likelihood of durable peace following armed conflict (e.g. Doyle & Sambanis, 2000; Fortna, 2004, 2008). Studies have also focused on questions of how, in fact, peacekeepers can assist conflict parties by providing a 'credible commitment' to the terms of a peace agreement (Walter, 1999), and through what primary functions, or mechanisms,

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<sup>6</sup> Another way of depicting these strands is as 'supply' side' – 'economic and political factors affecting states' ability and willingness to contribute to peace operations' – and 'demand' side' – 'factors pertaining [to] the nature of the conflict'; in other words, the local conditions for peacekeeping (Bove, 2011: 26).

peacekeeping is expected to contribute to greater prospects for sustainable peace (e.g. Fortna, 2008).

Current empirical scholarship on peacekeeping continues to address many of these same, fundamental questions but is often characterised by greater levels of granularity. Reflecting a wider shift in peace and conflict research, scholars of peacekeeping have increasingly turned to study more micro-level characteristics and dynamics (e.g. Hultman, Kathman & Shannon, 2013; Costalli, 2014; Hultman, Kathman & Shannon, 2014; Bove & Ruggeri, 2016; Fjelde, Hultman & Nilsson, 2016; Ruggeri, Dorussen & Gizelis, 2017). This makes sense, propose Ruggeri, Dorussen and Gizelis (2017), because much of the available theory related to how peacekeeping works is best evaluated at the micro-level. To this end, scholars and analysts are also benefiting from recent expansions in the availability of systematically collected data on peacekeeping operations (Clayton, 2017).

In the wider peacekeeping literature, studies often note the problem of violence against peacekeepers, frequently associating its occurrence with challenges for peacekeeping performance and as an impediment in peacekeepers' work to reach successful outcomes. While the last couple of years have seen a growth in more policy-oriented analyses dedicated to the topic (Philips, 2016; Willmot, Sheeran & Sharland, 2015; also, Connolly & Johansen, 2017), academic studies focusing specifically on the problem of violence against peacekeepers have been sparse. The following two subsections outline two main strands in the literature related to the phenomenon of interest, highlighting central research gaps in each.

### Peacekeeper fatalities: Exploring patterns and trends

A first set of studies on the topic of violence against peacekeepers has oriented toward descriptive approaches, dedicated chiefly to the study of patterns and trends in an effort to trace developments in risks faced by peacekeepers. Such studies have predominantly focused on fatal outcomes recorded for peacekeepers deployed by the UN, drawing mainly on the UN's own fatalities data (see UN, 2017).

Seet and Burnham (2000), in the first quantitative study on the topic, present fatality trends over time for peacekeepers deployed in UN peacekeeping operations, separating fatalities with hostile causes, accidents ('unintentional violence'), and illnesses or other causes. Distinguishing between the Cold War (1948–1989) and post-Cold War (1990–1998) periods, they show that – contrary to popular conception at the time – the rise in the absolute number of deaths recorded for UN peacekeepers in later years did not reflect a rise in the relative fatality rate. In other words, when taking into account the greater number and scale of UN peacekeeping interventions deployed in the later time period, peacekeepers are not at a

greater risk of dying during deployment.<sup>7</sup> This finding was echoed by a contemporaneous study by Sheik et al. (2000), studying fatalities recorded for a wider set of intervening actors, including peacekeepers, deployed between 1985 and 1998.<sup>8</sup> In line with Seet and Burnham's study, Sheik et al. (2000) observe a rise in absolute numbers of fatalities over time. Yet since the study lacks a baseline for this broader set of intervening actors – equivalent to the number of peacekeeping interventions or associated staff – the authors cannot calculate rates to make an assessment regarding risks over time.

Studies oriented toward patterns and trends have made important contributions to the understanding of the phenomenon of violence against peacekeepers, including by the presenting of findings that suggest possible explanations. A mission's character, for instance, is held to be important for understanding peacekeepers' exposure to risk (e.g. van der Lijn & Dundon, 2014). This is reflected in Seet and Burnham's study, which shows that the missions in their sample that are oriented towards peace enforcement and the provision of humanitarian assistance are associated with a higher level of risk of hostile fatalities. Blood, Zhang and Walker (2001: 14), propose factors such as an intervention's size, duration, and 'some measure of animosity toward the deployed force' that should be important for predicting peacekeeper casualties.

A set of recent studies has reinvigorated the debate regarding the prevalence of violence against peacekeepers and its variation over time. The perception that international intervention such as peacekeeping and aid work is becoming more fraught with risk appears to be widely held; indeed, the recent report of the High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations remarks that 'United Nations personnel, both civilian and uniformed, are increasingly the direct targets of intentional attacks' (UN, 2015a: 90). Recent work analysing patterns and trends of peacekeeper fatalities, however, cast doubt on the view that peacekeeping is becoming more dangerous (Bellamy, 2014; Henke, 2016; van der Lijn & Smit, 2015). Henke (2016), most recently, calculates fatality ratios related to the fluctuating size of peacekeepers' deployment, drawing on recently published monthly data on UN peacekeeping fatalities from hostile causes in the period 1948–2015 (Henke, 2017), alongside monthly data on UN mission composition drawn from Kathman (2013). Henke is in this way well placed to comment on developments in the risks facing UN peacekeepers over time. Among her

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<sup>7</sup> Notably, however, the study revealed a higher proportion of fatalities due to hostile causes in the later time period.

<sup>8</sup> In a wider categorisation of 'humanitarian workers' the authors study jointly staff of non-governmental organisation, the Red Cross, UN programmes and UN peacekeepers.

key findings is that overall fatality ratios for UN peacekeepers decline in the time period studied, including fatalities from malicious acts.<sup>9</sup>

Such findings provide important insights into the changing patterns of risk facing peacekeepers over time and may be seen to debunk popular perception regarding the increasing dangers of intervention. However, these contrasting research findings and accounts by policymakers and practitioners are not necessarily contradictory as, for instance, medical advances have made peacekeepers better equipped to respond to attacks and avoid death (Henke, 2016; also Fazal, 2014) and since fatalities are only a rough measure of risks facing peacekeepers (van der Lijn & Smit, 2017). If peacekeepers are, for instance, becoming better equipped and prepared to counteract or defend themselves against attack, it is possible that they are being increasingly targeted without this being reflected in fatality statistics. A recent report by the UN also makes this point, describing a rising number of attacks, yet fewer fatalities recorded for its personnel (UN, 2015b).

Addressing such questions, and mediating potential incongruities between diverse accounts, requires more comprehensive data, as well as further attention to conceptual foundations. Explicit conceptualisation to guide empirical research has been largely absent in earlier work. Among studies on the topic, a vast majority have focused on peacekeeper fatalities alone, even though other sets of outcomes could be seen to form part of the same theoretical class. Importantly, the available data records only fatal outcomes for peacekeepers and is thus unable to capture incidents resulting in other types of violence directed toward peacekeepers.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, fatalities data has chiefly been available for peacekeeping operations deployed by the UN; thus the ability to draw comparisons with other peacekeeping actors has been limited.<sup>11</sup> Finally, available data is largely provided in an aggregated format – until recently collating incidences of fatalities mainly on a yearly basis – which may obfuscate important patterns and sources of variation.

Better understanding patterns and trends will also require data on altogether novel features. A recent strand of studies in the wider peacekeeping literature, for instance, has turned to subnational variations to study peacekeepers' within-country deployment and localised effects (e.g. Costalli, 2014; Ruggeri, Dorussen & Gizelis, 2016, 2017; Fjelde, Hultman &

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<sup>9</sup> Similarly to Rogers & Kennedy (2014), the study also identifies a rise in peacekeeping fatalities stemming from illness. This result holds up also in relative terms but is not statistically significant (Henke, 2016: 10).

<sup>10</sup> Studies have on occasion also conflated fatalities from hostile and other causes, such as illness (van der Lijn & Dundon, 2014), even though these arguably constitute two distinct phenomena.

<sup>11</sup> The SIPRI Multilateral Peace Operations Database (available on file from SIPRI) records peacekeeper fatalities at the yearly level also for non-UN operations, but currently goes back only to 2000. An analysis contrasting peacekeeping fatalities by deploying organisation and size of deployment, find that UN interventions are less risk-exposed than other interventions, but it merges fatalities stemming from all causes (van der Lijn and Dundon, 2014).

Nilsson, 2016; Beardsley & Gleditsch, 2015; Powers, Reeder & Townsen, 2015). Recognising that peacekeepers cannot be everywhere, and that local dynamics often are distinct from the outcomes observable at the country level (Autesserre, 2014b), scholars need to continue pursuing such approaches to advance knowledge on peacekeeping. To date, however, no data source dedicated to violence against peacekeepers has provided information on its geographical features. Limited data availability has thus prevents the subnational study of risks facing peacekeepers.

### Targeting peacekeepers: A shift to causal arguments

A second set of studies has in recent years taken important steps to improve understanding of the phenomenon of violence against peacekeepers, marking a shift towards more systematic approaches and causal explanations, both in terms of determinant factors and, to some extent, in terms of its consequences.

First, scholars have identified features related to the local conflict environment and to local conflict dynamics as important for understanding the conditions under which peacekeepers are more likely to be susceptible to attack and why this happens. Salverda (2013) develops an argument related to the incentives of rebel groups to target UN peacekeepers deployed in civil war contexts, proposing that rebels should be more likely to do so where they are relatively stronger than their government counterpart in a conflict. Relatively stronger groups, she argues, should be more likely to see peacekeepers as an obstacle to defeating the government and may therefore target peacekeepers to constrain their ability or willingness to uphold a status quo that is against the rebels' interest. Salverda tests these arguments on a set of UN peacekeeping operations deployed in the period 1989–2003, recording a dichotomous measure denoting whether peacekeepers experienced systematic violence (defined as two or more incidents) in a given year. The main theoretical expectation related to rebels' strength relative to the government is supported by the empirical results.

In a similar vein, Ruggeri, Dorussen and Gizelis (2013) – studying observable acts of cooperation between peacekeepers, rebel groups and the government in the context of a UN peacekeeping operation – find that rebel groups are more likely to cooperate with peacekeepers deployed in a multidimensional operation when they are relatively weak and face a strong opponent in the government. Moreover, larger UN peacekeeping operations are more likely to elicit cooperation, from both rebel and government actors.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, Dorussen and Gizelis (2013) study local actors'

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<sup>12</sup> Salverda also theorises that rebels should be more likely to target sizeable peacekeeping interventions as they should constitute a greater impediment to their aims, yet the results are not conclusive.

responses, whether positive (cooperative) or negative (conflictual or hostile), in the context of multidimensional peacekeeping operations deployed by the UN. While not limited to violent acts, they find that rebel actors are more likely than government actors to respond to peacekeepers with hostility. Both studies draw on event data collected for a set of UN peacekeeping interventions deployed to civil wars in Africa in 1989–2005. Alongside Salverda’s work, these studies provide support for the idea that the relative distribution of strength between the main conflict parties – as well as the size of the peacekeeping presence – should be related to the prevalence in attacks on peacekeepers.

Second, other recent work has focused on characteristics related to the interventions themselves in order to understand variations in attacks on peacekeepers. Studying intra-mission composition, Morgan (2015) suggests that relatively more cohesive peacekeeping operations should suffer fewer fatalities.<sup>13</sup> Cohesiveness is characterised by higher levels of organisational similarity and measured by the within-mission composition in terms of nationalities of peacekeeping personnel. More cohesive interventions, Morgan argues, should be more likely to act efficiently, thus allowing for preventing attacks, including by projecting strength to would-be assailants to deter attacks in the first place. Drawing on UN data on malicious fatalities recorded for UN peacekeeping operations, he displays results consistent with this expectation.

In addition to this set of recent, systematic, studies contributing to the understanding of the causes of violence against peacekeepers, other work affords attention to its consequences. As noted above, attacks on peacekeepers are often associated with a range of adverse consequences. These have chiefly been studied from the ‘sender side’, where risks for peacekeepers are expected to be one of a number of factors related to the conflict environment to constrain some countries from contributing personnel to peacekeeping (Bove & Elia, 2011; Du Bois, Buts & Raes, 2015). However, results related to this expectation have been mixed, showing for instance different results for UN and non-UN interventions (Bove, 2011; also Bove & Elia, 2011). More widely, a number of studies have also associated risks facing peacekeepers with deleterious impacts for peacekeeping principles and practice (e.g. Autesserre, 2014a; Karlsrud, 2015; Hunt, 2016).

Notwithstanding the recent surge in interest in questions related to the safety and security of peacekeepers among policymakers, analysts and academic scholars, as a dedicated field of research it remains limited.

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<sup>13</sup> Peacekeeping scholars are pursuing increasingly disaggregated approaches to the study of the characteristics of operations, including to study various features of intra-mission composition – e.g. with regards to peacekeeping personnel (Kathman, 2013; Hultman, Kathman & Shannon, 2014), nationalities (Bove & Ruggeri, 2016) or leadership (Bove, Ruggeri & Zwetsloot, 2016).



Notably, available data has not allowed scholarship to develop theoretically and examine empirically important questions related to the types, scale, timing and location of violence against peacekeepers. This has not only limited the ability to chart and understand the characteristics of such violence in greater detail, but has also constrained scholars' ability to develop and test theoretical arguments related to its causes and consequences. Reflecting the fact that available data has not included information on the perpetrators of violence, moreover, existing studies have afforded only limited attention to the question of what sets of actors engage in violence against peacekeepers. As a result, little is known about how the targeting of peacekeeping personnel may fit into armed actors' wider repertoires of violence. Overall, dynamic features of violence against peacekeepers, including how it co-varies with other forms of political violence in contexts of conflict, are poorly reflected in systematic research to date. Finally, the fact that many peacekeeping operations are deployed with the authority and capacity to themselves draw on the use force is likely also to be important for understanding their susceptibility to violence, yet studies on violence against peacekeepers have not fully addressed this central feature.

## Presenting the essays

The dissertation is composed of four essays, each contributing in a distinctive way to the understanding of the phenomenon of violence against peacekeepers. This section introduces the four essays and situates the contribution of each in relation to the research field.

### Essay I: Conceptualising violence against peacekeepers

The first essay, 'Violence against peacekeepers: Key concepts and causes', sets the stage for the dissertation by further specifying key concepts and mapping the research field. With scholars and analysts increasingly turning to address this important feature of conflict and interventions, the essay is premised on the idea that an emerging area of research gains from making the conceptual foundations and the boundaries of study explicit. Against this backdrop, this essay sets out to advance understanding of the phenomenon of violence against peacekeepers in two steps.

First, the essay develops a conceptualisation of violence against peacekeepers as a specific subset of political violence, by identifying and mapping its key characteristics related to peacekeepers (the *targets*), violence phenomena (the *acts* and *outcomes* of interest) and actors involved in its enactment (the *perpetrators*). Capturing acts of deliberate and serious violence targeting peacekeepers – denoting violence that in direct interaction results in fatality, injury or forcible detainment to peacekeeping personnel –

the essay promotes a more comprehensive conceptualisation than has featured in most work on the topic. Extending the focus beyond peacekeeper fatalities, this wider conceptualisation allows for capturing a set of outcomes that may be linked or related, and thus interesting to study.<sup>14</sup> For a number of the arguments on the topic that scholars are likely to pursue, moreover, a wider conceptualisation may arguably also be more theoretically appropriate, by better reflecting the risks peacekeepers face from deliberate violence.

In a second step, the essay synthesises and presents important explanatory factors forwarded to date to explain why peacekeepers may become the targets of attack. It approaches explanations from two distinct vantage points, organising factors under two main clusters: explanations at the level of the peace operation and explanations related to the conflict environment. At the level of the peace operation, features related to the mission's type and mandate, as well as peacekeepers' capacity and commitment, are expected to be important for understanding the occurrence of violence. While there is some indication of certain mission types being more closely associated with risk for peacekeepers (e.g. Seet & Burnham, 2000), simple associations between largely static mission features and risk have to date not yielded conclusive results concerning what peace operations are more likely to experience attack. Explanations for violence against peacekeepers related to the conflict environment have seen less dedicated attention. A recent set of systematic studies that understand violence against peacekeepers as a product of the strategic bargaining between conflict actors make important advances in this regard (Salverda, 2013, Essay III; also Ruggeri, Gizelis & Dorussen, 2013), pointing to the centrality of local conflict context and dynamics for understanding the risks peacekeepers experience.

The essay makes a number of important contributions to the study of violence against peacekeepers. Owing to the early stages of the research field, efforts to specify and refine central concepts promote both accumulation and growth, including by improving the ability to develop theory and to guide the collection of appropriate data. Providing conceptual foundations also facilitates the study of violence against peacekeepers as a specific subset of political violence in contexts of conflict. While probably linked to other forms of violence, scholars may seek to understand such phenomena separately, as discrete forms of violence – allowing for more refined and precise theoretical arguments – but also jointly, to study how they relate to one another (cf. Cunningham & Lemke, 2013). Synthesising existing knowledge allows for learning about the phenomenon of interest more widely, and to take stock of explanations forwarded to date. Such efforts also provide direction for future research on the topic. To this end, the

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<sup>14</sup> Defining violence in this way is also consistent with how scholars and analysts have approached the phenomenon of violence targeting aid workers – constituting a different set of intervening third party actors – such as in the Aid Worker Security Database (AWSDB, 2017).

essay concludes by identifying two promising pathways for future work, thus providing the basis for a continuing research agenda. A first direction provides for scholars to pursue efforts to develop and test dynamic arguments. This may include studying risk in relation to what peacekeepers do in interpretation of their mandates, or how violence against peacekeepers may associate with different phases of intervention or important junctures in a peace process. A second direction for future work is to afford further focus to the perpetrating actors. Studying how such pursuits fit into actors' wider repertoire of violent (or non-violent) action, or by connecting actors and motives with particular forms of targeting, may contribute to better understanding the causes of violence against peacekeepers.

## Essay II: Presenting new data on violence against peacekeepers

Essay II, 'Introducing the UCDP Peacemakers at Risk Dataset, Sub-Saharan Africa 1989–2009', is forthcoming in *Journal of Peace Research*. The essay presents a novel dataset that systematically tracks reported incidences of violence directly involving peacekeepers in contexts of conflict, which constitutes one of the core empirical contributions of this dissertation.

The essay introduces the *Peacemakers at Risk* (PAR) Dataset, a large-scale data-collection effort developed and conducted in collaboration with the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). The dataset includes a broad cross section of peace operations deployed by UN and non-UN actors, such as regional and subregional organisations as well as ad hoc coalitions, authorised through multilateral decision. The dataset tracks a total of 62 interventions to 14 conflict-affected countries in sub-Saharan Africa, deployed between 1989 and 2009. For this set of interventions, the dataset records reported incidences of violence directly resulting in fatalities, injuries or kidnappings of peacekeeping personnel, which are presented in the dataset on an event basis. For each recorded event, moreover, the dataset provides detailed information related to the incident's timing, location and actors reported as being involved, as well as on the nationalities of violence-affected peacekeepers. Data collection for the PAR Dataset builds on UCDP coding procedures (e.g. Eck & Hultman, 2007; Sundberg & Melander, 2013), and adheres to a number of standards of 'best practices' in the collection of conflict data (on this theme, Salehyan, 2015; Davenport & Moore, 2015).<sup>15</sup>

In doing so, the dataset makes a number of contributions to filling some of the data gaps outlined above. First, it builds on a broad conception of violence (see Essay I) to record a set of non-fatal as well as fatal outcomes to

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<sup>15</sup> The essay introduces data collection procedures and efforts undertaken to mitigate potential sources of bias in the process. An appendix attached to the essay provides further detail.

peacekeepers, and includes a wide set of UN as well as non-UN interventions. Second, the dataset also tracks reports of fatal violence perpetrated *by* peacekeepers, where violent interactions directly involve peacekeeping personnel. As many peace operations are deployed with the authority to use force in pursuit of their mandated objectives, peacekeepers' wider engagement in violence is likely to be important for understanding their exposure to risk. This data may also, importantly, provide a wider lens for studying a wide range of associated questions related to peacekeepers' performance or effectiveness. Third, developed in collaboration with the UCDP, the PAR Dataset has been made compatible with existing UCDP geo-coded event data on organised violence. This feature allows scholars to study how violence against peacekeepers relates to other types of conflict violence and dynamics.

In terms of its specific findings, the essay draws on the new PAR Dataset to highlight key patterns related to the characteristics of the phenomenon of violence against peacekeepers in sub-Saharan Africa. It shows that levels of violence vary considerably across but also within interventions, suggesting variations that scholars may wish to study more closely. While sensitive to spikes, and while a small number of violent interventions appear to drive trend lines (see also Blood, Zhang & Walker, 2001; van der Lijn & Smit, 2015), all but one of the countries featuring in the data record violence events involving peacekeepers. A simple test studying the association between a peace operations' susceptibility to violence and its deploying organisation suggests that interventions deployed by regional and subregional actors in sub-Saharan Africa have seen somewhat greater exposure to violence than their UN counterparts. Among the local actors involved in direct violent interaction with peacekeepers, moreover, a clear majority of events can be attributed to named and organised groups (63%), and less than 2 per cent of all recorded incidents are specifically attributed to government actors – suggesting violence against peacekeepers is in large part a non-state actor phenomenon.

As the first event dataset of its kind, the PAR Dataset is expected to facilitate research on a range of questions on the topic that was previously not possible. Providing high-resolution data related to the timing and subnational location of violence, for instance, enables scholars to study specific causal mechanisms to better understand processes related to conflict or the interventions themselves. An actor-oriented approach may for instance draw on the dataset to study links between different forms of violence against peacekeepers and actor types, or to study its links to conflict actors' wider repertoires of violence. Accordingly, the dataset presented in this essay constitutes a resource with which scholars can pose and pursue research questions related to the causes or consequences of this form of violence, within and across peacekeeping interventions.

### Essay III: Attacks on peacekeepers and bargaining power

The third essay, 'Offsetting losses: Bargaining power and rebel attacks on peacekeepers', is co-authored with Hanne Fjelde and Lisa Hultman (both at Uppsala University) and was in 2016 published in *International Studies Quarterly*. Drawing on the new PAR Dataset presented in Essay II, this essay constitutes one of the first systematic studies to focus on the time-varying determinants of rebel attacks on peacekeepers.

Taking note of how violent contestation often persists after peacekeepers have deployed, the study develops an argument related to the importance of local conflict dynamics to explain attacks on peacekeepers. In situations where the balance of power turns against rebels in their armed struggle against the government, the study offers, targeting peacekeepers provides rebels with an alternative strategy in their conflict with the government. Suffering losses on the battlefield undermines rebels' bargaining position vis-à-vis the government, by offering information on rebels' relative capacity (e.g. Lichbach, 1995). Such setbacks may also reduce rebels' actual fighting capacity, by straining their resource base (Wood, 2014), challenging civilian support (Lyall, 2009) and making fragmentation of the rebel side more likely (Christia, 2012). In such a scenario, attacks on peacekeepers may serve to offset the impact of losses through two processes in particular. Externally, rebels may use such attacks to attempt to influence the peace process and prevent the freezing of a status quo that may not be in their favour, with the aim of improving their bargaining position. Internally, such attacks may strengthen the rebel side, by fostering in-group cohesion and preventing fragmentation. Seen in this light, attacks on peacekeepers may serve to signal strength and resolve to continue fighting. Incentives to do so should be greater when rebels have suffered battlefield losses, and should be all the more salient if rebels perceive peacekeepers as biased against them. Accordingly, the argument suggests that rebels are more likely to attack peacekeepers, first, when they are suffering battlefield losses against the government and, second, when peacekeepers actively side with the government, by taking armed action to confront rebels militarily.

To evaluate these arguments, the article draws on the new dataset on violence against peacekeepers deployed to intrastate conflict contexts in sub-Saharan Africa between 1989 and 2009 (Essay II), in combination with data on battlefield outcomes from the UCDP Geo-referenced Event Dataset (UCDP GED) (Sundberg & Melander, 2013). Using the country-month as the unit of analysis allows for evaluating how attacks on peacekeepers link to battle dynamics, and the shifts in power that battlefield losses are taken to indicate. To account for potentially confounding factors, a number of control variables related to the peace operation and conflict context are included in the models. Results of the statistical analysis reveal a positive relationship between rebel losses and violent attacks on peacekeepers, holding up also

across different model specifications. In support of the second argument, peacekeepers face greater risk of attack when they actively side with the government by confronting rebels militarily.

The essay speaks to a recent set of studies focusing on the strategic interaction between peacekeepers and local conflict actors (e.g. Ruggeri, Gizelis & Dorussen, 2013; Salverda, 2013). A joint implication of these studies, is that challenges to peacekeepers' authority should be more likely in contexts where relatively stronger and militarily capable rebel actors suffer setbacks on the battlefield. Combining datasets on violence against peacekeepers and battle activity between rebel and government actors in the context of civil war, the essay shows the promise of the combined study of different types of political violence in civil war contexts, highlighted in earlier discussions.

The essay makes a number of contributions to the study of violence against peacekeepers as a dedicated area of research. First, it develops theory related to the changing incentives of conflict actors to target peacekeepers deployed in their midst. Second, the study shows empirically how rebels are more likely to attack peacekeepers after suffering losses on the battlefield. Taken together, these contributions provide support for the idea that dynamic features of the local conflict environment matter for understanding also attacks on peacekeepers. This suggests that where they are present, peacekeepers are unlikely to remain external arbiters, but rather form part of the local bargaining process between conflict actors. In line with ideas forwarded in other parts of the dissertation, the essay also provides support for the idea that peacekeepers' susceptibility to attack hinges also on their own actions, finding that peacekeepers that actively side with a government actor on the battlefield are also more likely to suffer losses.

#### Essay IV: Current-day UN peacekeeping in contexts of insecurity

The fourth essay, 'MINUSMA and Mali's precarious peace: Current-day United Nations peacekeeping in contexts of insecurity' explores, in the context of one case, how challenges posed by the wider security environment shape peacekeepers' performance and may impact their pursuit of a set of core, coercive functions.

Current-day UN peacekeeping operations are typically authorised under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to use 'all necessary means' in pursuit of mandated tasks, including through robust and armed action. While peacekeepers' role in providing a secure environment has become more pronounced, the 'peace' that they are tasked to uphold is often tenuous or even absent. At the same time, studies suggest that peacekeepers may struggle to operate effectively where they are, or perceive themselves to be,

exposed to risk (e.g. Autesserre, 2014a: 226–230). Deployed in Mali since 2013, MINUSMA is in some regards characteristic of the type of large-scale, multidimensional peacekeeping the UN increasingly engages in, but it also joins a small group of UN operations deployed with so-called stabilisation mandates and missions oriented towards enforcement duties (Boutellis, 2015; Karlsrud, 2015). In Mali, persistent insecurity plays out with noticeable effect, also in the presence of UN peacekeepers. Moreover, MINUSMA also experiences a pronounced threat against its peacekeepers.

Against this backdrop, and in the MINUSMA case, the essay explores implications stemming from insecurity in general, and attacks in particular, for peacekeepers' core, coercive functions. Peacekeepers' coercive authority should be central to the logic of current-day, robust peacekeeping operations. To this end, the study focuses specifically on the leverage peacekeepers may derive from the threat or use of force through activities linked to deterrence and enforcement. To highlight interaction between intervention context and peacekeeper performance in the case of MINUSMA, the study draws on a range of primary and secondary materials, including interviews conducted with peacekeeping practitioners and other key experts in Bamako.

The MINUSMA case illustrates a number of ways in which a complex security environment may challenge UN peacekeepers' performance in relation to core, coercive functions and overall mission objectives. In particular, the threat-environment serves to constrain, but also expose, already limited capabilities and willingness for coercive action in UN peacekeeping operations. In Mali, the insecure environment has drastically reduced MINUSMA's capacity to conduct operations, with a vast majority of troops tied down to tasks related to the protection of mission personnel or assets. The deliberate targeting of peacekeepers has also caused the mission to draw back, focusing on minimum activity to limit their exposure to risk. In this way, the insecure environment also serves to create separation and distance between peacekeepers and host communities, which complicates peacekeepers' pursuit of coercive as well as other functions. The creation of these longer-term challenges to effectiveness may also contribute to further insecurity in the short term for peacekeepers. Additionally, the security challenges expose tensions that exist within a single, multilateral intervention, as well as between the level of policy and peacekeepers' performance on the ground, including by highlighting tension between the principles of impartiality that have traditionally underpinned UN peacekeeping and the mission's mandate and practices.

In wider terms, the analysis suggests that current-day UN peacekeepers may struggle to implement robust mandates in non-permissive environments (see on this theme also Hunt, 2016; Karlsrud, 2015; Howard, 2015). The analysis also contributes to a better understanding of what peacekeepers actually *do* on the ground. With potential implications for theory, the MINUSMA case suggests that even peacekeeping operations provided with

wide-reaching authority for robust and armed action, may operate primarily on the less coercive end of the spectrum. The study, thus, makes a number of contributions to the study of UN peacekeeping. Theoretically, it affords attention to the central functions through which current-day peacekeeping operates, including its micro-foundations, thus feeding into ongoing efforts to refine theories of UN peacekeeping. Empirically, in-depth insight from a timely and potentially formative case for UN peacekeeping is provided. Finally, the study highlights the constraining effect that violence has on peacekeepers capacity and willingness to undertake coercive functions. As such it underscores one of the central tensions that face the increasing number of robust peacekeeping missions.

## Conclusions

The essays herein make a number of empirical as well as theoretical contributions to our understanding of the causes, characteristics and consequences of violence against peacekeepers, and advance the research agenda on this topic of study. Two more overarching findings emerge as a result, each with implications for future research.

### Peacekeeper performance and links to risks

Emerging from the essays in the dissertation is the association between peacekeepers' performance and their exposure to violence. For understanding observable variation in the occurrence of violence against peacekeepers, the findings point to the importance of looking beyond simple measures of mission- and mandate-types to afford further attention to what peacekeepers *do* on the ground and in pursuit of their aims. The merit of such approaches is underlined by recent research related to patterns of violence-outcomes for peacekeepers and prevalence over time. Notably, if the relative ratios of malicious fatalities recorded for UN peacekeepers are not increasing over time (Henke, 2016; van der Lijn & Smit, 2015) – even in light of changes in peacekeeping towards more robust and intrusive mandates – then the often noted association between current-day peacekeeping and peacekeepers' growing risks does not immediately seem to hold true.<sup>16</sup> One path towards bridging this gap is to look more closely at variations in how different operations act in interpretation of their mandates, and how such action is associated with risk.

The dissertation begins to set the course towards a more systematised understanding of how peacekeepers' engagement in diverse sets of activities may be linked to the risks they experience. Accounts provided in Essays I

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<sup>16</sup> Bellamy (2014), for instance, draws a similar conclusion.



and IV illustrate different situations in which peacekeepers have come under attack that could feed into such efforts. A pervasive expectation holds that where peacekeepers confront or engage armed actors militarily, this is likely to be associated with risks for peacekeepers. Experiences recorded in the context of interventions to Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for instance, suggest that risks for peacekeepers may be elevated in connection with more proactive efforts to disarm and demobilise conflict actors (see Terrie, 2009; Lorch, 1993). Providing support for the expected association with military engagement and risk, Essay III finds that peacekeepers siding with the government through the active use of armed force are more likely to experience attacks by rebel actors. The analysis is made possible by the PAR Dataset (Essay II), which enables the assessment of a wide range of dynamic explanations. By systematically accounting for peacekeepers' use of force, the data provide one such important frame for future studies to approach peacekeeper performance on the ground. Thereby, the dissertation contributes to and complements recent scholarly efforts to systematically track peacekeepers' activities or operations in the field to get closer at what peacekeepers actually do in interpretation of their mandates. Such efforts include the previously noted Dorussen and Gizelis data on individual events implicating peacekeepers (2013), and Hultman's (2016) ongoing effort to chart peacekeeping activities oriented toward civilian protection.<sup>17</sup>

Findings from the dissertation also illustrate the flip-side of this association, showing that where peacekeepers experience risk they may be compelled to take *less* action, whether on account of more restrictive security-procedures put in place, constraints on mission-capacity and capabilities, or decisions motivated by risk-aversion (Essay IV). In line with arguments forwarded in some recent work (see Matanock & Lichtenheld, 2017), findings paint a picture of how some sets of peacekeepers – perhaps in particular in the context of UN operations – relatively rarely pursue coercive approaches and the use of armed force, even when provided with such authority. This echoes accounts from recent UN interventions describing how peacekeepers deployed in operations authorising the use of robust action to protect civilians have been reluctant to do so, even in situations where civilians have been at risk (UN, 2014b). Thus, while an operation's mandate provides information on its authority to act, how the mandate is subsequently interpreted and the extent to which this is translated into action, does not necessarily follow directly from the mandate. Findings presented herein point to peacekeepers' susceptibility to risk as forming an important factor where peacekeepers are reluctant to undertake more

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<sup>17</sup> Such efforts complement a range of qualitative studies devoted to understanding practice of peacekeeping, through in-depth, often ethnographic, approaches (e.g. Autesserre, 2014a; Henry, 2015).

proactive engagement (Essay IV, also Essay I). There is also reason for concern that such a tendency to withdraw or ‘bunkerise’ may constrain peacekeepers’ effective practice, for instance through rupturing links to communities (see Autesserre, 2014a). An implication that follows is the importance of continuing to study what peacekeepers do but also what they do not do, and how these decisions may be linked to assessments related to risk.

## The importance of the local conflict context

A second central finding concerns the importance of taking into account the local conflict context, including its dynamic features, for studying the phenomenon of interest. The dissertation shows that attacks on peacekeepers are linked to local conflict dynamics in important ways; notably, to battles between rebels and government actors in civil war contexts, whereby rebels suffering losses on the battlefield are more likely to level attacks on peacekeepers (Essay III). Accounts from the MINUSMA case also suggest that attacks on peacekeepers may be linked to other dynamic features of the conflict environment, where the timing of attacks on peacekeepers appears to be connected to particular developments or junctures in the peace process (Essay IV; also Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). Taken together, findings from this dissertation support an understanding of peacekeeping as closely related and interlinked to local conflict actors’ political or violent bargaining process, in line with some other recent studies (e.g. Ruggeri, Gizelis & Dorussen, 2013; Salverda, 2013). To understand the targeting of peacekeepers thus requires nuancing of peacekeepers’ role in relation to events and processes taking place on the ground, to explore how peacekeepers’ deployment and actions influence the dynamics and balance of power of parties on the ground. Studying attacks on peacekeepers as divorced from the conflict environment in which they intervene, thus, will likely yield an incomplete account.

Providing additional support for the view that local conflict dynamics should matter for our understanding of the risks peacekeepers face, the dissertation indicates that too simplified analyses of the conflict may obfuscate important drivers of attacks on peacekeepers (Essay IV). In the case of MINUSMA, a narrative attributing peacekeepers’ insecurity exclusively to the presence of a set of religiously-oriented extremist groups would risk missing potentially important information, for instance regarding these actors’ connections to other armed groups, wider developments related to the peace process, organised crime, and the role and actions of the peacekeepers themselves. Factors that can be revealed at different levels of analysis probably converge to create the conditions and causes for violence to target peacekeepers. Furthering the research agenda on violence against peacekeepers will thus require pursuing a mix of analytical approaches as well as different types of data.

## Broader implications and directions for future research

Scholars can continue to build on these findings, and extend the efforts undertaken as part of this dissertation project. To this end, further efforts to develop theories to explain the phenomena of interest are warranted. First, having recognised the centrality of local conflict context for understanding attacks on peacekeepers, gains may be made by further studying the timing of attacks in relation to local conflict dynamics – a course identified in Essay I and laid out in Essay III. To begin, the timing of violence in relation to the broader peace process, or to particular, triggering events, could reveal important insights. Studying timing in relation to specific peacekeeping activities may also constitute a fruitful approach. Experiences from the MINUSMA case suggest that unintended, adverse consequences may follow where peacekeepers engage militarily (Essay IV). Also short of such activity, however, a range of other unintended, adverse consequences have been recorded in connection with peacekeepers' intervention. Peacekeepers' presence and actions have been associated with impacts ranging from skewing the local political economy (Bellamy, 2004; Jennings & Bøås, 2015; see also contributions in Aoi, de Coning & Thakur, 2007) to, at the extreme end, freezing a negative status quo and counteracting the ultimate aim of conflict resolution (Luttwak, 1999). Peacekeepers have also displayed behaviour on the ground ranging from negligent (Al Jazeera, 2016) to inappropriate (Kolbe, 2015; Beber et al., 2017), and even directly criminal. For instance, recurrent reports of peacekeeper involvement in trafficking (Boubacar, 2017), and sexual exploitation and abuse (Nordås & Rustad, 2013; Kovatch, 2016), have sullied the reputation of peace operations and associated interventions with harm rather than protection for some local communities. Not only does such behavior add to the insecurity of conflict-affected communities, it may also contribute to creating insecurity for the peacekeepers themselves, by leading to a wider loss of credibility and disaffection that may contribute to igniting violence targeting peacekeepers specifically (Philips, 2016: 5). Finally, timing may also be studied in relation to a mission's duration; in other words, when in a mission's life cycle it is particularly susceptible to attack. Scholars have suggested that later stages in a mission's presence may reveal harmful mismatches between what peacekeepers should deliver and what they actually do deliver, which may lead to dissatisfaction or even violence (Galtung & Eide, 1976; Talentino, 2007).

Second, further theoretical gains may be made by studying different sets of motives for attacking peacekeepers, in particular. The recent set of systematic studies on the topic has given primacy to the strategic functions violence against peacekeepers may serve for prospective perpetrators of attacks (see in this regard, Essays I and III, in particular). To build on these contributions, future work may link to a recent set of studies focusing on the

strategic logic of aid workers, as another set of third party actors (Narang & Stanton, 2017; Murdie & Stapley, 2014).

Empirically, scholars may wish to build on and expand the event data presented as part of this dissertation, for example by extending the time frame or including also interventions from other parts of the world. Moreover, more remains to be learned about the risks peacekeepers often experience during the deployment. While the PAR Dataset represents a large leap in this regard to track not only fatalities but also injuries and kidnappings, any effort to track risk on outcomes alone will necessarily be an incomplete measure of hostility or opposition (see e.g. van der Lijn & Smit, 2017), which may also include manifestations such as threats, obstruction or non-cooperation. The UN, for its part, increasingly collects detailed information on a wide range of incidents related to armed conflict and violence in peacekeeping contexts (see de Waal et al., 2014), yet such data sources are typically not in the public domain. More widely, further efforts to track a fuller range of peacekeeping activities and interactions in relation to risk will be important. Risks for peacekeeping personnel should be studied also in relation to effectiveness, weighing the risks of violence-exposure for peacekeepers against the achievement of key peacekeeping objectives, such as civilian protection.

## Implications for policy

A number of more specific implications for policy may also be distilled from the findings outlined herein. First, findings support the dominant view that where peacekeepers deploy, it should be with the willingness and requisite resources to act in accordance with, and with the aim to implement, the mission's mandate. In challenging security environments, deficits that often appear to shape the conduct of peacekeeping operations may be further highlighted (Essay IV; also Berdal & Ucko, 2015). Continued efforts to ensure that peacekeepers deployed to non-permissive contexts are appropriately trained and equipped may reduce vulnerability but also susceptibility to acts of targeted violence, and that such measures are in place in advance of deployment (see Essay IV). In wider terms, the inability or unwillingness of peacekeepers to perform in concert with the authority provided in their mandates may be seen to reflect sometimes fundamentally divergent views on the political and strategic levels of what peacekeepers *should* do. As a notable example, while the UN's 2015 High-Level Independent Panel on Peacekeeping asserted the 'primacy of politics' in peacekeeping (UN, 2015), the language in the UN's current-day mission-mandates implies that more coercive approaches are required and indeed envisaged. Findings suggest that needs to reconcile these aims are manifest also in terms of operational impacts (Essay IV).

In addition, the findings emerging from this dissertation support the view that peacekeeping in the context of active and ongoing armed conflict is associated with a range of difficulties for peacekeeping practice. Where violent contestation persists also in their presence, peacekeepers risk becoming drawn into, and also party to, conflict actors' sometimes violent bargaining (Essay III), frequently with consequences also for peacekeepers' own security. Persistent insecurity may also serve to constrain peacekeepers' capacity as well as willingness to act robustly and enforce armed actors' compliance. In wider terms it is possible that exposing such deficits on the side of interveners may also risk reducing confidence in the wider peace process. Seen alongside the costs often associated with peacekeepers' own use of armed force (Essays III and IV), findings point to the importance of premiering other forms of non-coercive peacekeeper leverage, suggesting that efforts to shift violent contestation away from the battlefield and to the political arena should be prioritised.

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