8 International Peace

Cross-national Tests of Impartiality

> Colonial exploitation, poverty and endemic famine drive [local populations] more and more to open, organized revolt. The necessity for an open and decisive breach is formed progressively and imperceptibly, and comes to be felt by the great majority of the people.
>
> Frantz Fanon (1925–1961)
> Speech at the Congress of Black African Writers, 1959

> For countries emerging from the horrors of conflict and looking to a better future – indeed for all countries – diversity must not be seen as a threat. It is a source of strength.
>
> Antonio Gutierres
> Secretary-General of the United Nations
> Secretary-General's remarks to the Security Council, October 12, 2021

My theory predicts that the presence of United Nations (UN) peacekeepers should improve intergroup cooperation, help peacefully resolve communal disputes, and prevent the outbreak of communal violence. According to localized peace enforcement theory, the UN's effectiveness should be attributable to domestic groups' perceptions of its impartiality. Peacekeepers from former colonial powers and neighboring countries with similar identity cleavages will struggle the most to convey their impartiality.

This chapter examines local-level peacekeeping operations in a cross-national context. Consistent with the theory's predictions, I demonstrate that increases in the number of peacekeeping troops deployed to local communities are strongly positively associated with decreases in the onset of communal violence. The patterns further vary in ways that confirm my theoretical intuitions. For instance, merely establishing a peacekeeping base is only weakly correlated with a decrease in communal violence, suggesting that peacekeepers require at least a minimal capacity to enforce the peaceful resolution of disputes. However, communities located closer to a peacekeeping base experience less communal violence because the peacekeepers are better able to protect them.

The analysis is also consistent with Hypothesis 3, which predicts that peacekeepers' effectiveness is based on local perceptions of their

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impartiality. Since I cannot directly measure local perceptions of peacekeepers cross-nationally, I tally the number of peacekeepers from former colonial powers and neighboring countries deployed to each area. I show that there is no relationship between the deployment of these two types of peacekeepers and levels of communal violence. I also detect a strong negative association between all other types of peacekeepers, grouped together, and the onset of communal violence.

These findings suggest that the theoretical mechanisms undergirding localized peace enforcement theory operate as Hypothesis 3 predicts. However, due to data limitations, the results reported in this chapter do not constitute definitive evidence in support of Hypotheses 1 and 2. Read in conjunction with the empirical evidence from Mali presented in Part II of the book, however, this chapter suggests that the findings from Mali apply cross-nationally. I begin by briefly reviewing the research design, which I outlined in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Research Design

Hypothesis 3 predicts that deploying UN peacekeepers to a community reduces the outbreak of communal violence. To measure the presence of such patrols, I need to operationalize peacekeeping presence to a high degree of geographic and temporal certainty since deployments in response to violence shift rapidly. In line with previous work (Ruggeri, Dorussen and Gizelis 2017; Fjelde, Hultman and Nilsson 2019), I divide each country into 0.5×0.5 decimal degree grids with month as the temporal unit of analysis; 0.5 decimal degrees are about 50 km at the equator, meaning that each grid is roughly 2,500 km^2 in size. I then aggregate peacekeeping deployments within each grid cell for each month. For each grid-month, I record the number of peacekeepers deployed and scale this number by 1,000 for ease of interpretation: One unit for each independent variable corresponds to 1,000 UN personnel. This approach assumes that peacekeeping effectiveness is contained within these grid areas, yet some peacekeepers patrol far from the capital or their base. To account for this possibility, I estimate the minimum linear distance between the center of a grid cell and the nearest UN peacekeeping operations (PKO) base.

Localized peace enforcement theory predicts that peacekeepers will be more effective when they are more able to impose a cost on the violent party. In addition, it predicts that peacekeepers will also succeed as the perceived probability that they will leverage this capacity to punish both parties increases. When local populations strongly believe UN peacekeepers are likely to punish both parties to a conflict, they perceive the UN peacekeeping contingent as relatively impartial. Since

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it is extremely challenging to measure perceptions of impartiality at a cross-national level using observational data, I rely on peacekeepers' nationality as an indirect measure of the degree of perceived impartiality.

Although domestic populations are likely to view all UN personnel as less biased than peacekeepers from a single country on *average*, we should also observe variation in perceptions of peacekeepers from different countries – especially those from "Western" countries (i.e., Europe, North America, Australia, or New Zealand) versus countries in the region. While peacekeepers' country of origin does not exactly capture perceptions of bias, it is the best possible proxy at such a coarse level of analysis. I also expect that domestic populations are more likely to perceive peacekeepers from countries with relatively similar identity cleavages as biased. Locals may have *more* information about the biases of UN personnel from countries that they know more about, including neighboring countries. In this case, biases could work against those peacekeepers. However, as I discuss in a study of peacekeepers from Togo and Senegal in Mali in Chapter 7, such biases may vary depending on the troop-contributing country. To operationalize similar identity cleavages, I take the count of peacekeepers deployed from contributing countries in the same region as the country of deployment. For each setting, these countries are likely to be the most socioculturally proximate to social groups in Mali.

I use data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset (ACLED) (Raleigh et al. 2010) to operationalize outbreaks of communal violence. I aggregate this data at the grid-month level and code a binary dummy variable that indicates whether communal violence broke out in that grid in a given month. I match grids that have peacekeepers deployed to those that do not but are similar in every other way. This procedure approximates an experimental setup in which peacekeepers are assigned as-if randomly to certain locations. In addition to preprocessing the data through this matching protocol, I adjust the estimation for a set of time-variant and time-invariant factors that could be endogenous to the relationship between the local deployment of particular peacekeeping personnel and communal violence.

More Peacekeepers, Less Violence

Table 8.1 reports the relationship between the variables measuring peacekeeping presence and capacity and the onset of communal violence using the ACLED data. Each column has coefficients derived from separate ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions. My independent variables are a binary indicator for the presence of a UN base (columns 1 and 4),

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Table 8.1 *Association between peacekeeping capacity and communal violence*

	Onset of Communal Violence (ACLED)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
UNPKO Base Present	−0.008***			−0.001
	(0.001)			(0.002)
UN Peacekeepers (1,000s)		−0.010***		−0.007**
		(0.002)		(0.002)
Distance to Base (100s km)			0.005***	0.005***
			(0.001)	(0.001)
Time Trend Adjusted	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*
Mission Fixed Effects	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*
Year Fixed Effects	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*
Controls	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*
Observations	29,548	29,548	29,548	29,548

Note: Coefficients from OLS regressions with controls, time trends, and country fixed effects. The dependent variable is a binary indicator for the onset of communal violence. The independent variables are binary indicators for the presence of a UN base in a grid (Models 1 and 4), the number of UN peacekeepers deployed to a grid (in 1,000s, Models 2 and 4), and the minimum distance of a grid to the nearest UN peacekeeping base (in 100s of km, Models 3 and 4). $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$.

the number of deployed UN peacekeepers in units of 1,000 (columns 2 and 4), and the minimum distance to a UN peacekeeping base in units of 100s of kilometers (columns 3 and 4).

Localized peace enforcement theory predicts that the presence of UN peacekeepers should increase individuals' willingness to pursue cooperative solutions to disputes, stabilize communities, and prevent the onset of communal violence. It also predicts that these effects should increase as the capacity of peacekeeping forces increases. The results in Table 8.1 are consistent with these forecasts. The correlation between the presence of a UN peacekeeping base in a given grid-month and the onset of communal violence in that grid the following month is negative and statistically significant. This makes intuitive sense: Any UN peacekeeping presence should incentivize the peaceful resolution of communal disputes, thus making communal violence less likely. Also in line with my theory, the number of deployed peacekeepers is negatively correlated with the onset of communal violence. In other words, the more peacekeepers the UN sends to a given area in a given month, the less likely that area is to experience communal violence. Finally, the measure of a grid's minimum distance to the nearest UN base is positively associated with the onset of communal violence. That is, for any given grid-month, the further a grid is from the nearest UN peacekeeping base, the more likely it is that communal violence will break out. These findings align with the capacity

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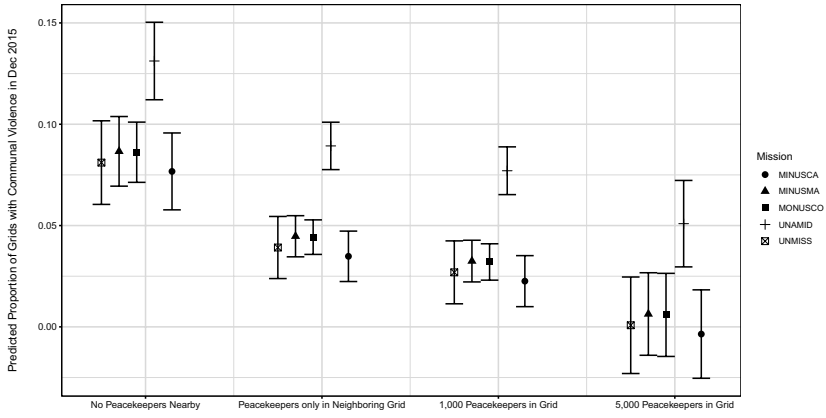


Figure 8.1 Predicted proportion of grids with communal violence in "Big 5" UN PKOs, December 2015
Note: Continuous covariates held at their mean for each country. Estimates derived from Model 4. Includes 95 percent confidence intervals.

aspect of the theoretical model as well as the results of other studies on local-level peacekeeping (Ruggeri, Dorussen and Gizelis 2017; Fjelde, Hultman and Nilsson 2019).

Although the estimates in the table may seem substantively small, they indicate the associated change for a single month for only one grid. Given that there are dozens of these grids in a country, the cumulative effects, especially over a period of multiple years, will be significant. To place the magnitude of these estimates into context, I use the model to predict what proportion of grids experienced communal violence in December 2015 for each of the UN's "Big 5" PKOs (see Figure 8.1). This approach allows us to simulate counterfactual scenarios by applying the estimates from the model to an actual case. This has the added advantage of allowing us to make predictions about scenarios that never occurred. For example, it is not the case that the *average* grid in December had no peacekeepers present. Indeed, many such grids had peacekeepers present or nearby. This approach also allows us to account for various conditions, observed or unobserved, in each country that likely affect both communal violence and the deployment of peacekeepers.

I predict the proportion of grids that will experience violence in December 2015 in four scenarios. First, I find that if there are no peacekeepers in the grid or nearby (within a 1,000 km radius), communal violence breaks out in approximately 0.05 to 0.15 of the grids. The highest proportion is in Darfur (UNAMID). Second, when peacekeepers

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are deployed to a neighboring grid (within 100 km), the predicted proportion decreases by about 0.05. In Mali (MINUSMA), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), South Sudan (UNMISS), and the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), this increase in peacekeeping presence halves the predicted proportion of violent grids. I observe a similar decrease when 1,000 peacekeepers are deployed to a grid. Finally, when 5,000 peacekeepers are deployed to a grid – the most deployed to a grid for at least a month in the sample is 6,600 – the predicted proportion of grids that experience communal violence is statistically indistinguishable from zero, except in Darfur.

More Impartial Peacekeepers, Less Communal Violence

Table 8.2 reports the relationship between the variables measuring the presence of peacekeepers from different sets of contributing countries and the onset of communal violence using the ACLED data. As before, each column contains coefficients from separate OLS regressions with mission and year fixed effects as well as controls. However, in this table, my independent variables are the number of deployed UN peacekeepers from the region (columns 1, 3, 4, and 5), the number of deployed UN peacekeepers from Western nonregional African countries (column 4), and the number of deployed UN peacekeepers from all troop

Table 8.2 *Association between perceived impartiality and communal violence*

	Onset of Communal Violence (ACLED)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Regional	0.007		0.008	0.007	0.007
	(0.006)		(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Nonregional African				−0.013**	
				(0.004)	
All Impartial					−0.009***
					(0.002)
Western		−0.006	−0.021	−0.013	0.002
		(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.037)
Time Trend Adjusted	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*
Mission Fixed Effects	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*
Controls	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*	*Y*
Observations	8,772	8,772	8,772	8,772	29,548

Note: Coefficients from OLS regressions with controls, time trends, and country fixed effects. The dependent variable is a binary indicator of the onset of communal violence. The independent variables are counts of peacekeepers from regional contributing countries, Western countries, African contributing countries outside the region, and all impartial countries. $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$.

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contributors likely to be perceived as relatively impartial (columns 2, 3, 4, and 5). All variables are scaled by 1,000 for ease of interpretation.

Localized peace enforcement theory predicts that the presence of UN peacekeepers who are perceived as impartial should increase individuals' willingness to pursue cooperative solutions to disputes, stabilize communities, and prevent the onset of communal violence. The results in Table 8.2 are consistent with these predictions. The correlation between the presence of peacekeepers likely to be perceived as impartial in a grid-month and the onset of communal violence in the following month in the same grid is negative and statistically significant. In other words, the more peacekeepers from countries likely to be perceived as impartial that the UN sends to a grid in a given month, the less likely it is that communal violence will break out. Also in line with my theory, there is no relationship between peacekeepers likely to be perceived as biased and communal violence.

Although the estimates in the table may seem substantively small, they indicate the associated change for a single month for only one grid. The cumulative effect for the entire country over time would likely be substantially larger. To put these numbers into context, I use the estimates from Model 3 to predict what proportion of grids in Darfur will experience communal violence in December 2015. I focus on Darfur since the previous analysis suggested it experienced the highest levels of communal violence. I predict the proportion of grids that will experience violence in December 2015 as a function of increases in the number of peacekeepers

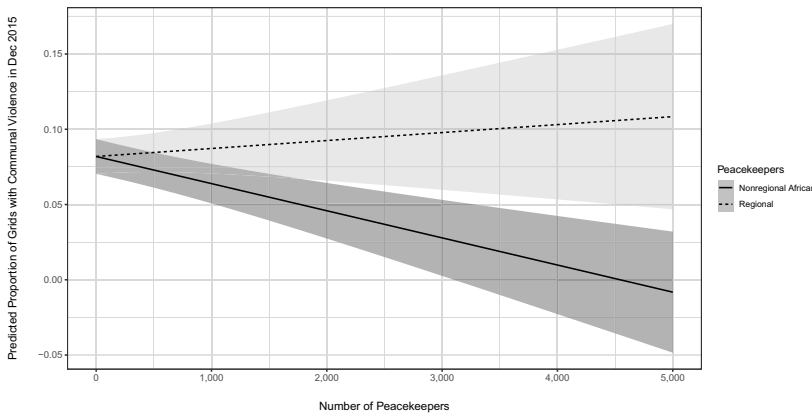


Figure 8.2 Predicted proportion of grids with communal violence in Darfur as a function of peacekeeping deployments, December 2015
Note: Continuous covariates held at their mean for each country. Estimates derived from Model 5; 95 percent confidence intervals.

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from the same region as Darfur (East Africa) versus those from elsewhere in Africa. Figure 8.2 demonstrates that the predicted proportion of grids that will experience communal violence decreases to a substantive and statistically significant event due to the deployment of more peacekeepers from outside the region. The figure shows that the predicted proportion of grids that will experience communal violence *increases* slightly as more peacekeepers from the same region are deployed and *decreases* to a substantive and statistically significant extent due to the deployment of more peacekeepers from elsewhere in Africa.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined my theory's plausibility using cross-national data, which demonstrated that the capacity and identity of UN personnel deployed to conflict and postconflict settings matters. An increase in peacekeepers' capacity and the proportion of peacekeeping deployments perceived to be impartial is associated with a predicted decrease in communal violence. The chapter thus offers evidence in support of Hypothesis 3. More generally, these findings align with the book's core theoretical proposition: UN peacekeepers who are perceived as impartial can limit the long-term impact of local-level violence.

This cross-national analysis permits me to estimate how deploying UN personnel influences the escalation of communal disputes across several different cases while controlling for factors that may otherwise be associated with violence against civilians. Since I gathered the data from actual UN deployments and actual violent events, the data is closely tied to events on the ground as they unfolded. This gives me confidence in the external validity of the results.

The observational data has at least three shortcomings, particularly across cases. First, the breadth of the data prevents me from analyzing individual deployments in depth, which makes it difficult to isolate any individual causal mechanisms. Second, the evidence presented here is purely associational in nature; therefore, it is difficult to entirely rule out threats to causal inference caused by endogeneity. Finally, there is a significant loss in precision associated with operationalizing micro-level variables at the subnational level, which is exacerbated by including data from multiple cases.

For these reasons, we should read the evidence in this chapter in conjunction with the in-depth examination of a single case, the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, in Part II. Focusing on a single case permits better data collection at a more fine-grained level. It also allows me to better distinguish between the existing explanations I reviewed in Chapter 3 and my own proposed argument, which highlights the importance of perceptions of bias.

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