

## Effect of peace support operations and peacekeeping operations on sexual and gender-based violence

Peace Support and Peacekeeping Operations show a harmful effect on sexual and gender-based violence, as they may inadvertently increase rebel-perpetrated violence while not affecting government violence.

Geographical region: Global

Effect: Harmful effect ( $g = -0.295$ )

### Short Summary

This cell examines the impact of UN Peace Support and Peacekeeping Operations on sexual and gender-based violence. Although these missions are designed to safeguard civilians under Responsibility to Protect (R2P) mandates, evidence from the single quantitative study shows a harmful effect, with disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) activities and PKOs associated with increased sexual violence by rebel forces. No significant effects were found for government-perpetrated sexual violence.

### Long summary

#### *The Intervention*

Peace Support Operations (PSOs) and Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) are:

1) PSOs encompass all multi-functional operations, conducted impartially, normally by States or by international or regional organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), involving military forces and diplomatic and humanitarian agencies, and are designed to achieve a long-term political settlement or other specified objective, and

2) PKOs are the deployment of UN peacekeepers into countries in a post-conflict setting. This involves the deployment of international troops and police, who work with local civilian peacekeepers to provide security to an area (UN Peacekeeping n.d.). Operations with primary or secondary objectives to prevent, halt or reduce the risk of atrocities are also considered within this category.

#### *How is the intervention expected to work?*

UN Peacekeeping Operations with R2P (Responsibility to Protect) mandates are intended to safeguard civilians in armed conflict zones including against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The UN Peacekeeping operations may have an ambiguous effect. Whilst there may be a protective effect, it may also be the case that there is a substitution effect whereby combatants use SGBV when opportunities for other violence are reduced.

### *The evidence base*

There is only one quantitative study in this cell. The author conducts quantitative analysis of UN peacekeeping mandates from 1990 to 2011. One-sided violence and sexual violence by rebels and governments were analyzed using georeferenced event data, employing instrumental variable estimation to address the non-random deployment of R2P mandates. The study is rated medium confidence as it is non-experimental and due to its partial description of the intervention, outcomes, and evaluation questions.

### *Evidence Findings*

Findings indicate a harmful effect: sexual violence by rebel groups increases when one-sided violence decreases, consistent with a substitution effect where rebels shift tactics as other violent opportunities decline. Government-perpetrated sexual violence shows little or no association with R2P mandates, with effect sizes close to zero.

### *Included Study*

Lloyd (2017) examines the outcomes of UN missions with Responsibility to Protect (R2P) mandates, which aim to safeguard civilians in armed conflict zones. The author suggests that these mandates may inadvertently incentivize violence as warring parties escalate attacks to signal their resolve in ongoing conflicts.

The study utilizes a combination of qualitative case studies (Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo) and quantitative analysis of a novel dataset on UN peacekeeping mandates from 1990 to 2011. One-sided violence and sexual violence by rebels and governments were analyzed using georeferenced event data and employing instrumental variable estimation to address the non-random deployment of R2P mandates.

R2P mandates exacerbate civilian killings in conflicts where rebels or governments are desperate (e.g., during protracted conflicts or after significant battle losses). In less desperate conditions (e.g., successful rebels or governments facing prolonged, stable conflicts), R2P mandates deter one-sided violence against civilians.

Sexual violence by rebels increases when one-sided violence decreases, as warring parties seek to maintain their strategic positions without appearing to violate international norms. Government-perpetrated sexual violence shows a weaker link to R2P mandates with only a small effect at any level of one-sided violence.

The study is rated medium confidence as it is non-experimental and due to its partial description of the intervention, outcomes, and evaluation questions.

### *Confidence assessment*

Overall low: the cell is rated low confidence as the finding is based on one study.

### **Other outcomes in the study/cell**

- Violence and Atrocity Prevention/Nature and scale of violence or atrocities