

Effect of research monitoring & assessment on nature & scale of violence or atrocities

RMA interventions assessing peacekeeping operations show a small positive effect on reducing violence and stabilizing post-conflict areas. UN military and police deployments deter attacks, enforce ceasefires, and protect civilians, while regional missions more effectively limit government violence but have limited impact on rebel atrocities.

Geographical Regions: Global, East Asia & Pacific, Latin America & Caribbean, South Asia, Sub-saharan Africa, middle east & North Africa

Effect: Small effect ($g=0.022$)

Confidence in the study assessment: Low on account of inconsistent findings between studies (9 studies with 44 effect size)

Short Summary

Research, Monitoring, and Assessment (RMA) interventions systematically evaluate the role of peacekeeping missions in reducing post-conflict violence. Evidence across multiple regions (1946–2018) shows that UN peacekeeping forces—particularly military and police components—reduce civilian fatalities, battle deaths, and geographic spread of violence. Larger deployments enhance security and deter both government and rebel violence. In contrast, regional peacekeeping missions are more effective in controlling government violence but have limited influence on rebel atrocities. Unarmed observer missions show minimal impact. Overall, well-resourced and strategically deployed peacekeeping missions contribute to reducing the scale of violence, though effectiveness varies by context and institutional capacity.

Long summary

The intervention

RMA interventions include systematic monitoring and assessment of peacekeeping operations, ceasefire mechanisms, and conflict resolution processes. UN and regional forces deploy troops, police, and observers to protect civilians, enforce ceasefires, and monitor compliance. Empirical data and case studies are used to evaluate intervention effectiveness, strengthen accountability, and refine conflict-prevention strategies.

How is the intervention expected to work

These interventions aim to reduce violence and sustain peace by altering incentives for compliance and deterring violations. Peacekeeping missions intercede between warring factions, protect civilians, and promote trust through consistent monitoring and communication. By enhancing coordination among actors, addressing governance gaps, and fostering credible commitments, RMA interventions are expected to prevent escalation and sustain post-conflict stability.

The Evidence base

The cell includes 11 studies—one medium-confidence systematic review and 10 impact evaluations—covering conflicts across Africa (Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, East Timor), South Asia (Nepal), and the Middle East (Syria), alongside global datasets on civil conflicts from 1946 to 2018.

One study was excluded from the meta-analysis due to limited data.

Evidence findings

Evidence indicates that UN military and police peacekeepers have a small but measurable effect on reducing violence, enforcing ceasefires, and supporting post-conflict stability. Regional missions are more effective in limiting government-led violence but show limited impact on rebel atrocities. Well-resourced deployments and coordinated institutional support modestly reduce conflict fragmentation and escalation, contributing to incremental but meaningful improvements in peace and security. Overall confidence is low due to inconsistent findings across studies. The wide effect size range ($g = -0.244$ to 0.334) exceeds the ± 0.1 threshold, indicating substantial variability. Despite including both IE and SR studies, with large sample sizes in IE, this variability remains.

The review evidence

The review evidence suggested that community-driven development and reconstruction efforts had mixed effects on violence, with some interventions reducing conflict, others failing, and some exacerbating violence due to misappropriation or sabotage, highlighting the need for rigorous evaluation.

Included studies

Akman (2010) examines the relationship between security and development in post-conflict peace operations, assessing different strategies for integrating these dimensions. The study categorizes peacebuilding strategies into three models: Security-Only (prioritizing security before development), Sequential (security first, then development), and Simultaneous (security and development pursued together). The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining logistic regression analysis on a dataset covering all civil wars from 1946 to 2006 and structured, focused comparisons of six case studies. The study falls under research, monitoring and assessments as it systematically evaluates different peacebuilding strategies through data collection and empirical analysis, identifying conditions under which peace operations are most effective. The study highlights that conflict intensity significantly impacts peace outcomes. Low-intensity conflicts (25-999 deaths) have a 42% chance of reaching peace within two years, compared to 12% for full-scale wars (>1,000 deaths). Over time, peace remains more achievable in low-intensity conflicts, while full-scale wars tend to prolong hostilities. Additionally, ceasefires and military victories are the most effective for lasting peace, with 77% of ceasefires maintaining stability for five years. In contrast, only 18% of peace agreements achieve the same durability, showing that negotiated settlements often struggle. The conflict resolution method plays a key role in sustaining long-term peace. The study is rated as a high-medium confidence study.

Ari (2020) analyze the effectiveness of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations (PKOs) in managing civil conflicts characterized by actor fragmentation. They argue that fragmented conflicts, with multiple competing factions, tend to be longer and deadlier due to coordination challenges and spoiler violence. This study systematically evaluates the impact of peacekeeping on conflict fragmentation using empirical analysis, providing insights into the mechanisms through which international interventions reduce violence and hence fall under the research, monitoring and assessments category. Using the Conflict Fragmentation Index (CFI), the study finds that greater fragmentation increases conflict duration and violence. However, UN peacekeeping mitigates these effects by addressing commitment issues, discouraging spoilers, and improving coordination. Analyzing global civil conflict data (1990–2013) and African battle deaths (1992–2011) through statistical modeling, the study shows that UN interventions shorten conflicts and reduce fatalities, especially in highly fragmented wars. The study is rated as a low-confidence study.

Bara (2020) examines the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations in mitigating postwar violence, particularly violence perpetrated by actors other than the former warring parties. The study argues that while peacekeepers effectively stabilize postwar environments, their impact

varies depending on the type of personnel deployed. The study employs a quantitative research design, using a global dataset of postwar violence covering 71 postwar episodes between 1991 and 2016, analysed through statistical modelling. The study falls under the research, monitoring and assessments category as it systematically evaluates how different types of UN peacekeepers impact various forms of postwar violence using empirical data and a novel spatial approach. The study finds that UN police effectively reduce postwar violence by filling security gaps and supporting local law enforcement, while UN troops mainly deter attacks on civilians but have little impact on broader violence. UN police play a crucial role in stabilizing postwar societies by enhancing security and rebuilding institutions, making them more effective than military troops in managing ongoing violence. The study is rated as low - confidence.

Bara (2020) compares the effectiveness of United Nations (UN) and non-UN peacekeeping operations in reducing violence against civilians in civil conflicts. The study employs a quantitative research design, using a novel dataset covering monthly deployments of UN and regional peacekeeping personnel in civil conflicts worldwide between 1993 and 2016, analysed through statistical modelling. The study falls under research, monitoring and assessments as it systematically evaluates the impact of UN and regional peacekeeping on civilian protection using empirical data, providing insights into the relative effectiveness of different international actors. The study finds that both UN and regional peacekeeping operations effectively reduce violence by government forces. However, only UN troops and police significantly curb civilian targeting by rebel groups, while regional missions have no impact on rebel-perpetrated violence. UN missions are generally more effective due to their larger scale, diverse personnel, and better resources, whereas regional missions are more militarized and deployed in less severe conflicts. While regional forces often act as first responders, UN interventions play a stronger role in stabilizing high-intensity post-conflict environments. The study is rated as high-medium confidence.

Caplan (2017) investigate the factors that contribute to the long-term stability of peace following civil wars. Using survival analysis on 205 post-conflict episodes since 1990 with six in-depth case studies (Burundi, East Timor, El Salvador, Liberia, Nepal, Sierra Leone), they assess the impact of conflict termination type, UN peacekeeping operations, and socio-economic conditions on peace duration. The study finds that negotiated settlements are more likely to break down than military victories, and that UN peacekeeping operations do not significantly extend peace duration unless they support negotiated settlements. Economic development and governance quality also play a role in stabilizing peace. It falls under research, monitoring and assessments category as the study systematically monitors and evaluates factors influencing post-conflict stability using empirical data, identifying key risks for peace failure. The study is rated as a low-confidence study.

Hultman (2013) examine whether United Nations (UN) peacekeeping effectively protects civilians during civil wars. They argue that deploying large numbers of military troops and police significantly reduces civilian killings by interceding between combatants and imposing physical barriers to violence. Using monthly data from 1991 to 2008 on UN peacekeeping deployments and civilian deaths in African conflicts, The study employs a statistical analysis of conflict data across multiple civil wars in sub-Saharan Africa to assess the impact of peacekeeping forces. This research falls under the intervention category of research, monitoring, and assessments as it systematically evaluates the role of peacekeeping in mitigating violence through data collection and empirical analysis. By identifying how different UN personnel types influence civilian protection, the study provides insights into conflict risks and contributes to the development of more effective international intervention strategies. The study finds that larger UN military and police deployments significantly reduce civilian fatalities, while unarmed observer missions have little impact. An 8,000-troop deployment lowers deaths from 106 to fewer than 2 per month. Well-resourced missions enhance security, enforce ceasefires, and deter attacks, whereas understaffed missions fail to prevent violence. The study is rated as a low-confidence study.

Kathman (2016) examine the effectiveness of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions in reducing post-conflict civilian victimization. They argue that although wars officially end, civilians remain vulnerable to targeted violence from former combatants and emerging armed groups. Using a quantitative research design, analysing monthly data from African post-conflict settings (1992–2010) using statistical models to assess the impact of different types of peacekeeping personnel on civilian victimization, The study falls under research, monitoring and assessments category as it systematically evaluates the role of peacekeeping forces in protecting civilians through empirical analysis, providing insights into how different personnel types influence violence reduction. The study finds that larger UN troop deployments reduce civilian deaths by up to 75% by deterring reprisals and enforcing security. UN police help curb rebel-led violence but have little effect on government-led killings, while UN observers may increase civilian deaths due to their lack of enforcement power. The findings emphasise that well-equipped, military-backed peacekeeping missions are essential for postwar stability, whereas weak or symbolic interventions can worsen civilian victimisation.

Lundgren (2020) examines the causal mechanisms of international organization (IO) interventions in civil war mediation. It employs a structured case comparison of the Arab League and UN interventions in Syria (2011–2012), using qualitative interviews, fatality statistics, and IO reports to trace causal mechanisms. The study explores how institutional capabilities and member state preferences shape the effectiveness of mediation and ceasefire monitoring. Using interview data, fatality statistics, and organizational documentation, the study finds that while both IOs pursued similar mediation and monitoring strategies, the UN's superior institutional resources allowed it to temporarily reduce violence. However, both interventions ultimately failed due to member state divisions, which undermined their credibility and enforcement capacity. The study falls under research, monitoring and assessments category as it systematically evaluates the effectiveness of international mediation and monitoring strategies, providing empirical evidence on the causal mechanisms that influence conflict resolution outcomes. The study is rated as high-medium confidence.

Pinaud (2021) investigates the role of civil society in ceasefire monitoring and its impact on peace processes. The study examines how civil society actors contribute to ceasefire implementation by reducing violence, fostering cooperation between conflict parties, and influencing broader political transitions. Using a mixed-methods approach, including survival analysis on a dataset of ceasefires from 1990 to 2018 and an in-depth case study of Nepal's Maoist insurgency, the study finds that civil society involvement can help prevent ceasefire breakdowns by altering incentives for compliance, preventing escalations, and reducing opposition from spoilers. However, its effectiveness is limited by political constraints, lack of resources, and impartiality concerns. The study under the research, monitoring and assessments category as it systematically evaluates the role of civil society in ceasefire monitoring through empirical data collection and analysis, identifying. The study is rated as low confidence.

Hoeffler (2019) - examines post-conflict stabilization in Sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on the effectiveness of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs). Using survival analysis, it finds that military victories lead to more stable peace, whereas negotiated settlements and ceasefires have a higher risk of breakdown. UNPKOs significantly improve peace duration, reducing the risk of failure by about 15%. However, their effectiveness depends on troop strength and mission mandates. The study highlights Africa's higher post-conflict instability, with conflicts causing over 10,000 battle-related deaths on average. Many conflicts do not formally end but continue at lower violence levels, increasing recurrence risks. Economic conditions play a crucial role, as lower-income countries experience more conflict relapses. Poor governance, natural resource exploitation, and unresolved grievances further fuel instability. While peacekeeping operations help stabilize settlements, their success is contingent on adequate resources, strong local government partnerships, and regional support. The study is rated as a low confidence.

Confidence assessment

Overall confidence is low due to inconsistent findings across studies.

Link to review summaries

Cramer Christopher (2016).

The study may be accessed via the EGM.

Other outcomes under this cell

Violence and atrocity prevention/ Diplomatic relations + Peaceful dispute resolution

Human security/Physical security

Social cohesion/Feelings of trust & acceptance of diversity