Peacekeepers Against Ethnic and Criminal Violence. Unintended Consequences of UN Peacekeeping.

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Unintended consequences of UN Peacekeeping

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SUMMARY

This dissertation examines the unintended and collateral effects of third-party interventions in war-torn countries. Building on the most recent findings in peacekeeping literature that suggests an overall conflict-reducing effect of military interventions, this thesis this thesis explores ways in which this laudatory effect might be compromised by key features of conflict settings. It explores, in particular, four main questions about peacekeeping's unintended consequences. First, does the presence of armed ethnic groups constrain the effectiveness of peacekeeping efforts? Second, does irregular warfare and lack of demarcated frontlines make armed ethnic groups more likely to escalate violence against civilians when peacekeepers are deployed? Third, are peacekeepers as good in reducing criminal violence as they are in reducing political violence? And finally, which external interventions are more effective in tackling criminal violence and crime in conflict and post-conflict countries?

Given this set of questions, the dissertation distinguishes between ethnic and criminal violence, which exhibit specific dynamics that point toward a more complex relationship between peacekeeping and violence. To begin with, almost all studies on peacekeeping have looked at conflict violence on the aggregate level. This approach overlooks the possibility that armed groups shift from one type of violence toward another, in response to the arrival of peacekeepers. To shed more light on this problem, I first establish to what extent the territorial distribution of ethnic groups in conflict can explain the geographic location of violence. In the first paper entitled "Inherently Vulnerable? Ethnic Geography and the Intensity of Violence in Bosnian Civil War", in my analysis of the Bosnian conflict I argued that ethnic groups are more likely to escalate violence against ethnic minorities when they are sizeable and easy targets. Especially, since ethnic groups aim at achieving solid control over ethnically homogeneous areas, they will perceive isolated pockets of ethnic minorities as a threat. While ethnic minority settlements that are territorially contiguous to larger co-ethnic areas are easier to protect, isolated enclaves are vulnerable to ethnic cleansing. The measure of vulnerability proposed in the paper is derived from concepts such as geographic concentration and ethnic dominance, which are important determinants for ethnic violence. The findings support the proposed argument that micro-level ethnic patterns explain macro-level conflict dynamics.

Having established this relationship, I take a further step to explore the consequences of peacekeeping deployment on the groups' perceptions of territorial control. The second paper of this dissertation, "Peacekeepers against ethnic violence", investigates how the arrival of peacekeepers constraints the use of violence with potentially harmful consequences for civilians. Indeed, the armed groups' preference for battlefield combat over civilian victimization

is a function of territorial control and thus of the distribution of ethnic groups on the local level. An important implication of this finding is that in ethnically polarized areas armed groups will tend to fight along more or less defined frontlines. In this context, peacekeeping has an advantage because it is easier to interpose, separate combatants and monitor their behaviour. On the other hand, when territorial control is fragmented and power is distributed asymmetrically among groups, more irregular tactics will predominate. In particular, lack of clear frontlines, many involved parties and high level of ethnic intermingling makes it more difficult for peacekeepers to effectively separate armed groups. It is also very challenging to monitor their behaviours, especially in the rear guards. The risk of peacekeeping is that armed ethnic groups prevented from fighting along frontlines will try to impose costs on each other by escalating violence against civilians. I test this expectation using time-series, cross-sectional data from Sierra Leone. I analyse to what extent UNAMSIL peacekeepers succeeded in reducing civilian killings and whether their performances were conditional on local sources of violence, namely ethnic polarization. Notwithstanding UNAMISL is considered one of the most successful UN missions in terms of protection of civilians, ethnicity reduced UN blue helmets' capacity to curb one-sided violence. Peacekeepers are more successful in locations with high polarization, namely with two large and similarly sized groups. The statistical effect of their presence in low-polarized areas is at best insignificant.

The second part of this dissertation continues exploration of unintended consequences of peacekeeping, but turns to a focus on criminal violence and crime. Moving beyond political violence, I explore potential collateral effects of UN missions on violence perpetrated by non-politically motivated actors or for non-political reasons. Existing research has focused mainly on how peacekeeping affects conflict violence; peacekeeping's effects on criminal violence are unknown, even though both intuition and our understanding of political side effects of power vacuums suggest important effects. The third chapter of this dissertation, entitled "Peacekeepers against criminal violence," builds upon the intuition that the narrow focus of peacekeeping mandates on political actors and on security concerns may unintentionally spark increases in criminal violence. I outline three main possible mechanisms that can give rise to such increases. First, at the individual level, UN-peacekeeping programs focused on so-called "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) tend to create sizeable groups of unemployed individuals trained in violence. These individuals are vulnerable to join criminal groups in order to re-use their violent skills. At the group level, peacekeeping can have three major problems that accommodate or foster criminality. First, peacekeeping's focus on political groups and ignore or neglect attention to criminal groups; DDR programs, for example, do not target organized crime. Second, peacekeeping can provide the operational security that

organized crime needs to operate. Third, deployments are associated with the emergence of local peacekeeping economies, namely more or less informal economies that often entail illicit trafficking. Peacekeeping economies thus create more business opportunities for organized crime and, as consequence, more violent competition among different groups. The final mechanism is triggered by the fact that from the perspective of peacekeepers, crime is a domestic problem that national state or sub-national governmental institutions should deal with it. However, peace missions usually replace the state's monopoly of power in order to tackle armed group, but only "political" ones. This partial monopoly of power is harmful and leaves the state unable to effectively persecute criminals. Using a two-fold empirical strategy moving from country-year sample to subnational unit-month in South Sudan, I show that the stationing of UN troops is associated with higher homicide rates. However, the stationing of UN *police* and UN support for national policing is associated with *less* criminal violence, and has the added benefit of tending to mitigate the tendencies of UN troop deployments to spur criminal violence. The logic, here, is that UN police deals more directly with rule of law functions and national police training, yielding an important curbing effect upon criminal violence.

The conclusion that criminal violence and crime can be tackled only if explicitly addressed is consistent with the argument developed in the last paper of this dissertation, "Containing crime: diffusion and counter-diffusion mechanisms of piracy in Somalia", where I look at maritime piracy as instance of transnational organized crime. The aim of the paper is to assess which theoretical mechanisms better explain the geographic diffusion of piracy in the Indian Ocean and the counter-diffusion effect of the EU maritime mission (EUNAVFOR). In other words, the paper tests which decision-making strategy is used by criminal actors, and it investigates the effectiveness of the EUNAVFOR counterpiracy initiative in reducing incidence. This is one of only a handful of studies on diffusion of social phenomena that simultaneously consider diffusion and counter-diffusion factors. Using very detailed data on the location of piracy attacks and EUNAVFOR interventions off Somalia from 2005 to 2013, the empirical results reveal several implications. First, piracy spreads not only in proximity to locations where attacks already occurred, but also in proximity to locations where more successful attacks occurred. Guided by learning-based decision-making that focuses on risk reduction, pirates prefer to attack locations associated with higher success rates. In addition, the EUNAVFOR mission established in 2008 has successfully decreased the incidence of piracy. Rescue operations of vessels under attack, in particular, are very effective and reduce the likelihood of future attacks also in the most at-risk locations. Hence the empirical research of this chapter unearths how crime can be deterred by external military intervention, but only if the latter explicitly targets criminal actors. This returns our attention to the theme of unintended consequences of

peacekeeping: In Somalia, as in South Sudan, focusing on conflict-related violence uniquely has not solved the piracy problem, but might actually have contributed to its exacerbation.

Taken together, the studies comprised by this dissertation contribute to existing understanding of peacekeeping in two important ways. First, by acknowledging that there are different "types" of violence with specific dynamics, it unpacks the effect of peacekeeping and reveals potentially worrisome patterns. In the case of ethnic violence, peacekeeping can backfire and lead to escalation of violence against civilians instead of their protection. In the case of criminal violence, while political violence is reduced the collateral effect is the creation of favourable conditions for criminal activities. These findings may cast a shadow on the recent optimism for peacekeeping as tool of conflict resolution; however, they do not undermine the general finding that peacekeeping is beneficial for alleviating conflict. Instead, the bottom line is that peacekeeping works at the aggregate level but in ways that are not homogeneous in the broader political settings they target, and not without collateral damage in those settings. Peacekeepers are not equally effective in all cases; their impact is mediated by local conditions that shape the dynamics of violence, such as distribution of armed ethnic groups. Similarly, physical security is not limited to political conflict but is also impacted by criminal violence. For this reason, it is widely acknowledged that peacekeeping should develop more comprehensive strategies to counter crime instead of adjusting mandates *ad hoc* when perceived as necessary (as in Kosovo).

The second contribution of the dissertation is methodological. Selection bias is always an issue when studying peacekeeping and external interventions. Peacekeepers are not randomly assigned across the globe, and this type of endogeneity needs to be accounted for to improve the statistical analysis and forecast of effects. Two main techniques are used in this dissertation, Coarsened Exact Matching (CEM) and Conditional Mixed Processes models (CMP). They do not solve the endogeneity problem but can contribute to alleviating it. CEM is performed on the sample to assign weights to observations that display similar observable features. Once the dissimilarity (or imbalance) in explanatory variables between control group and treatment group is reduced, the matched sampled can be used for regression analysis. CMP models, on the other hand, are used to model selection bias on unobservable factors. This is achieved by estimating two equations that are seemingly unrelated, meaning their error terms are correlated. For example, peacekeepers are usually sent to more violent conflict. Since violence intensity can be measured, CEM can match the sample based on conflict killings. But if peacekeepers are sent to conflict areas or countries for additional reasons that are not known and thus cannot be operationalized, we need to estimate the two equations, one that explain deployment and another that explains violence intensity. By relaxing the assumption of

uncorrelated disturbances, CMP adjusts the coefficients to account for this endogenous relationship, reporting the extent as a rho parameter. Another empirical approach reiterated in this dissertation is the subnational focus. Spatio-temporal disaggregation is commonly applied in conflict research, but only a few quantitative studies have utilized the subnational lens. The risk of country-level aggregations is that we cannot establish unambiguously to what extant peacekeeping actually reduced violence. It might be, for example, that violence as a whole decreased slightly in action areas because it shifted to regions without peacekeepers.

In the concluding chapter of the dissertation, I elaborate on a future research agenda that builds on the implications of the findings. In particular, I argue in favour of a shift in the study of UN peace missions toward a more political and long-term orientation. There are signs that peacekeeping will increasingly focus more on state-building processes as preconditions for sustainable peace. For this reason, there is a need for a more systematic assessment of the long-term political, economic and social implications of UN peacekeeping in host countries.