

NON-COMBATANTS OR COUNTER-INSURGENTS?

The Strategic Logic of Violence against UN Peacekeeping

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Abstract

As UN multidimensional peacekeeping operations have proliferated over the past two decades, violence against peacekeepers has increased as well. Yet there exists substantial sub-national geographic variation in patterns of violence. What explains this variation? We contend that much of the violence against peacekeepers stems from strategic motivations. Peacekeepers in multidimensional PKOs serve as substitute providers of governance and security, working to bolster perceived state capacity and legitimacy in areas where the government cannot send its own forces. Insurgents target peacekeepers in expectation of a PKO unit's capacity to win over the support of local civilians. We argue that insurgents rely on three primary heuristics to predict the downstream efficacy of peacekeeping forces: personnel composition, peacekeeper nationality, and local levels of insurgent control. We test our theory using an original dataset of geocoded United Nations multidimensional peacekeeping deployments. Using primary documents sourced directly from the UN covering 10 multidimensional peacekeeping operations from 1999-2018, we present comprehensive time-series data on UN peacekeeper deployment location by type, gender, and nationality.

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