

# Peacekeeping Effectiveness and Blue Helmets' Distance from Locals

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## Abstract

United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions are complex social organizations, with soldiers coming from several countries. In this environment, effective communication and interactions with local populations are often difficult, and establishing essential local support can be jeopardized when soldiers are culturally distant from local communities. At the same time, however, when local populations perceive peacekeepers as sufficiently distant or unbiased, the promotion of cooperation is enhanced. We explore whether cultural distance—in terms of geography, language, and religion—and social distance—in terms of economy and institutions—between the peacekeepers and the local population improve the operational capabilities of a mission. We use monthly information on UN peacekeeping missions' composition from 1990 to 2015. We find that higher geographic and cultural distances correspond to higher levels of violence against civilians and higher battle deaths, whereas institutional and economic differences have the opposite effects, although these are less robust.

## Keywords

peacekeeping impact, mission composition, cultural and social distances, popular support

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## Introduction

The post–Cold War period has been marked by diverse array of external interventions in civil conflicts, in particular those sponsored by the United Nations (UN) under the banner of UN Peacekeeping Operations. Since 1948, the UN has launched more than seventy operations, the majority of them after the end of the Cold War. Between 1989 and 1994 only, the Security Council authorized 20 new operations, increasing the number of peacekeepers from 11,000 to 75,000. The emergence of peacekeeping as the most important instrument of the international community to tackle civil wars is also evidenced by the sheer number of concurrent UN peacekeeping missions around the world today: as of December 2016, this number stood at 16, with almost 105,000 uniformed personnel. As part of this expansion, UN peacekeeping missions play a growing role in implementing, supervising, and enforcing peace agreements in civil war societies. The dramatic increase in the number of Blue Helmets is complemented by a parallel increase in the number of countries willing to provide peacekeepers: from 46 in 1990 to 120 in 2010 (Bove and Ruggeri 2016) with the average number of countries contributing troops to a UN African peacekeeping missions surging from just 8 in mid-1990s to 21 in the mid-2000s.

Large-*N* empirical studies have suggested that the net performance of UN peacekeeping may be effective for the recovery of war-torn societies, in particular by reducing the risk of conflict recurrence (Doyle and Sambanis 2000), the risk of armed conflict in neighboring countries (Beardsley 2011) and the likelihood of genocides (Melander 2009), or by increasing peace duration after ceasefire (Fortna 2004). Two recent contributions by Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon (2013, 2014) find the size of a UN mission can reduce the number of civilian casualties as well as the amount of battlefield deaths in African civil wars. They convincingly argue that additional forces are effective at separating and disarming the combatants, reducing the commitment problem between warring parties, or shrinking the incentives for continued fighting. The protection of civilians and the reduction in battlefield violence are core objectives for peace operations in the last few decades. Therefore, the number of civilians and combatants' casualties can be used as timely and tangible measure of the performance of a peace operation.

In this article, however, we move beyond the recent debate on whether the presence or the size of a mission influence its success. Instead, we investigate how the relative composition of a UN mission *vis-à-vis* the local population can affect operational outcomes in the field. A recent contribution by Bove and Ruggeri (2016) explores the internal dimension of peacekeeping and finds that diversity in mission composition increases the ability to provide civilian protection. This is partly because the mission's heterogeneity increases complementarity among donor countries by harnessing a portfolio of skills crucial to the mission. Concomitantly, composition diversity encourages a bottom-up and mutual monitoring where peacekeepers have disincentives to misconduct. In a similar vein, Haass and Ansorg (2018) find that when peace operations include well-trained and well-equipped

troops from advanced militaries, they are more likely to deter violence and monitor the implementation of peace agreements by affecting the costs of one-sided violence. However, it remains unclear whether the difference between Blue Helmets and local population can influence conflict resolution by decreasing the level of violence both between belligerents and against civilians. Whereas Bove and Ruggeri's (2016) theoretical framework focuses on the internal composition of a mission, that is, within the peacekeepers, this article explores how interactions and distances between peacekeepers and peacekept affect operational outcomes. This distinction entails distinctive causal mechanisms and very different expectations regarding the importance of composition in UN peacekeeping operations. Empirically, we do not operationalize the diversity of a mission *per se*, but we investigate the heterogeneity of a mission *in relation* to the local population. In fact, rather than using "classical" indexes of fractionalization or polarization, we operationalize weighted cultural and social distances. In the rest of this article, we use the terms distance and difference interchangeably. Moreover, we will distinguish between "cultural" and "social" distance. Cultural differences - in ideas, customs, and social behavior - are captured using geographic, linguistic, and religious distance. In referring to social differences, we mean more specifically differences in economic and institutional characteristics and we use appropriate measures accordingly.

Autesserre (2014a) has investigated the interactions and daily practices between Blue Helmets and local population—what we call the "horizontal dimension" of peacekeeping—and highlights that "all of the existing research on this topic is ethnographic and qualitative. As such, it presents little statistical evidence linking daily practice to peacebuilding outcomes. The work also tends to be very site specific. Thus, for many, it can appear anecdotal, overly personal or not rigorous enough, and lacking generalizability. Quantitative and experimental inquires could help to overcome these limitations by evaluating the strength and exportability of the qualitative findings" (p. 495). We aim to fill this gap by providing the first large-*N* research on how the differences between peacekeepers and local population can influence the mission's performance in terms of civilians' protection and conflict resolution between belligerent parties.

We claim that the composition of a mission—with regard to the countries of origin of peacekeepers—can affect the operation along a horizontal dimension, which connects the mission to the local population and captures the interaction between the locals and the peacekeepers. We can anticipate mechanisms that generate both positive and negative effects, as the degree of similarity between military personal and the local population bears directly on the quality of their interactions. Thus, we start by noting that a productive and trustworthy interaction with the local population is crucial as it provides peacekeepers with vital information about the situation on the ground which can improve operation efficacy in daily practice. At the same time, positive interactions with local communities can undermine support and might stem the flow of resources for radical or insurgent groups. In aggregate, this will likely improve or aid in maintaining security in strategically important

environments. Thus, the importance of ensuring functional local interactions presents critical dilemmas: should the UN deploy troops with similar social and cultural backgrounds? What are the consequences of deploying peacekeepers from culturally and socially distant societies?

On the one hand, lesser distances increase the odds that the Blue Helmets and local communities share norms, practices, and languages. These shared characteristics might strengthen the trust between the locals and the mission. In turn, this bond might better facilitate sharing of information and ensure a sufficient level of local support. On the other hand, cultural proximity is a double-edge sword as it directly affects the likelihood that international actors are perceived as biased enforcers. In fact, and on average, missions composed of peacekeepers from faraway and diverse locations tend to signal neutrality on the part of the peacekeeping operation and even hints at higher resolve (i.e., wider buy-in and support) from the international community. The alternative, where missions are composed of peacekeepers culturally or geographically proximal to the local population, may spurn perceptions that peacekeepers might be unable to credibly commit to enforcing violations by members of the favored group (be it the government or the rebels). The net effect is unclear, prompting the empirical question at the heart of this article.

Using monthly data on national personnel commitments to twenty-one operations around the globe, we compute the weighted distances between the peacekeeper force and the local population and study whether higher or lower distances, along geographic, linguistic, religious, or institutional dimensions, correspond to higher or lower level of violence. We find that higher geographic and cultural distances correspond to higher levels of violence against civilians and higher battle-related deaths, whereas institutional and economic differences reduce violence, in particular against civilians.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. In the second section, we present a short analytical framework to understand how relations between the peacekeeping forces and local populations affect the mission's capacity to protect civilians and stop belligerents' fighting. In the third section, we operationalize the concept of "distance" between the peacekeepers and the locals and discuss the data set as well as the empirical strategy. The fourth section presents our empirical results, and the fifth section offers our conclusions.

## **Peacekeepers and the Local Population**

During a peacekeeping operation, the Blue Helmets interact, daily and locally, with a range of political and social actors, combatants, and otherwise. This diversity of these interactions is missed traditionally in studies of the conflict literature (i.e., beyond the rebels and the government) to encompass a multitude of actors. In fact, peacekeepers' primary interaction is with the local civilian population of the host state and they are frequently called upon to perform their duties within a nonmilitary environment. These daily interactions and practices between UN peacekeepers and

locals have been aptly studied by qualitative research (e.g., Autesserre 2014b), which identifies and explains how failures and tensions in the conflict resolution process are often triggered by daily practices and (mis)perception of them (see also Talentino 2007). Particularly important for this research, Autesserre (2014b) examines the everyday dimensions of peacebuilding and shows how interveners' everyday practices and habits are important in explaining the effectiveness of a mission. There are many damaging ways of acting or thinking, such as an overreliance on incomplete or misleading narratives, a lack of country-specific expertise, and, even, a disregard of local knowledge. This approach can severely limit peacekeepers' understanding of the dynamics on the ground. Moreover, foreign interveners often create boundaries between them and the host populations through dominant rituals, for example, by reinforcing a power disparity or perpetuating an image of moral superiority. These everyday elements create a distance between the two groups and in turn marginalize or antagonize local populations, generate resentment, and encourage local stakeholders to resist international assistance. Therefore, the ties to the areas of deployment and the distance between peacekeepers and peacekept are crucial for the success of the mission, yet the quantitative literature has substantially neglected this crucial aspect.

The relationship between peacekeepers and local populations is shaped by a variety of factors, including individual and collective attitudes, which are influenced by cultural prejudices and varying knowledge of the host country's population (Britt and Adler 2003). The issue of culture is not new in the study of peacekeeping, and several qualitative studies have emphasized how a broader cultural contextualization of peacekeeping is important for its outcome (see Rubinstein, Keller, and Scherger [2008] for a review). The importance of a positive and stable relationship between a peacekeeping force and the local population is particularly vital for the success of the mission, and the special issue of *International Peacekeeping*, edited by Tomforde (2010), emphasizes how a correct understanding of local culture is a key component of any peacekeeping operation. Interestingly, however, most of these studies look toward improving civil-military coordination by identifying organizational cultural differences between military and civilian actors operating in the country at war and usually in the context of nongovernmental organizations. According to Hatzenbichler (2001), complex missions require a composite response and the very success in future deployments depends on whether military and civilian personnel cooperate in the field. Similarly, Oliker et al. (2004) report several tensions between military and civilian assistance providers of humanitarian reliefs in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2002, leading to the mission's negative results, hence highlighting the importance of synergy between military and nonmilitary components.

Thus, peacekeepers' ability to effectively interact with local communities is both essential to the mission outcome and comparatively underexplored in the literature. The *Handbook on United Nations Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations* states that "all peace-keeping operation personnel must respect local laws and customs and maintain the highest standards of integrity in their personal conduct" (Department of

Peacekeeping Operations [DPKO] 2003, 58). While clearly in response to allegations regarding the conduct of UN personnel in peacekeeping operations, this remark highlights the importance respect of local concerns and traditions plays in this relationship. Yet, Rubinstein, Keller, and Scherger (2008, 545) warn about the use of stereotyped instruction, critically labeled “travelers advice,” which might take the form of a “list of facts about a group’s ways of dealing with the world, and a basic list of things a person engaging with them should or should not do.” Despite the importance of avoiding cultural mistakes, peacekeepers need to be able to interact with local populations “in ways that communicate genuine partnership and respect for the key symbols of their world view” (Rubinstein, Keller, and Scherger 2008, 545). Respecting cultural traditions and social mores is only part of the duty of an effective peacekeeper. As a recent report of the *Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations* (UN 2011, 39) states, the “interaction of UN military, police and civilian personnel with the local population is necessary for the efficient and successful action of peacekeeping operations.” There are few qualitative studies on these interactions between peacekeepers and local populations, including Heiberg (1991) on UNIFIL in Lebanon and Pouligny (2006), who explores the many ways local populations perceive and respond to peacekeepers in their day-to-day engagements. Both studies suggest that the success in rebuilding war-torn societies lies in the appropriate interface with the civilian population.

How does the diversity between peacekeepers and locals, what we label as “horizontal dimension” affect the success of an operation? There are at least two mechanisms at work: intelligence-gathering capabilities and local support. Clearly, both mechanisms fall within a rationalist explanation of war and, therefore, conflict resolution. While the core emphasis here is on minimizing information asymmetry and resolving commitment problems, our article also aims to introduce the role of cultural and social distances to extend this rationalist framework. Although this is not meant to be an exhaustive list, we believe that the cultural and social dimensions are important and can influence the outcome or performance of the mission. Most of the mandates of peacekeeping operations in recent years encompass the protection of civilians and the reduction in battlefield violence. However, reducing hostilities in a war-torn country is a challenging task requiring several tools, such as trained and well-equipped troops, a sufficient level of resources from the international community, willingness to fulfill the mission’s mandate, and, perhaps more importantly, an accurate knowledge of the situation on the ground. This latter quality is near impossible without comprehensive *intelligence-gathering capabilities*.

Information is crucial for two reasons: first, government and rebel leaders often lack information about their relative strength (see, e.g., Ruggeri, Gizelis, and Dorussen 2013). Providing information about their weapons, personnel and strategies, their position and level of determination, the political climate, or even just about the relative probability of different outcomes helps to mitigate the issue of asymmetric information, which has often been put forward by several scholars as explaining bargaining failures (see, e.g., Jackson and Morelli [2011] for a review).

Peacekeeping forces need to correctly identify armed groups, their structure, capabilities, behaviors, and goals for effective information sharing. Peacekeeping forces must also understand the boundaries between groups and of the existing hierarchies within each group, as UNSOM in Somalia clearly demonstrated (Sahnoun 1994). Second, peacekeeping forces need relevant and substantial information about local dynamics to accomplish their tasks, particularly in addressing immediate threats when the appropriate early warning systems can prevent violence. Only through engagement with the local population, including individuals in remote areas, can Blue Helmets estimate the range of threats that civilians face, their vulnerability to those threats, and any self-protection measure that they may have in place.

Building trust among the local population can reduce peacekeepers' exposure to attacks by armed groups. According to an exhaustive report by the UN DPKO (1999), a dearth of local support not only hinders the capacity of the operation to implement its mandate and conduct its daily activities but can also increase physical danger for the mission's personnel.<sup>1</sup> According to Howard's (2008) writing of the UNTAET mission in Timor-Lest, which is generally regarded as a successful mission, the peacekeeping forces engaged well and appropriately with the East Timorese. "The leadership judged that the best way to defeat the militia groups was to make sure that the local population would not provide the groups with support" (Howard 2008, 286). The UN missions in Liberia has also engaged in "hearts and minds" activities such as small-scale food distributions to improve the level of engagement with local communities (Thakur, Aoi, and Coning 2007).

Hence, the literature presents convincing arguments for why positive interpersonal interactions between foreign peacekeepers and the local population can improve mission capacity and more effectively achieve its objectives. Our second question, though, is how to achieve constructive and fruitful relations. All else being equal, should the UN deploy peacekeeping troops from culturally or socially similar countries?

## **Cultural and Social Distance and Operational Capabilities of a Mission**

The daily work and practices of peacekeepers is constrained by social and cultural barriers between the mission's forces and the local population. The presence of cultural, social, and economic differences between peacekeepers and host populations can create a visible barrier and discourage cooperation. Haddad (2010) examines the importance of cultural awareness in the French military doctrine and how intercultural skills are used by the French military in their daily life during UNIFIL II in Lebanon. Autesserre (2014b) recalls how a Pakistani intervener working in Somalia "resented the countless barriers that Somali people placed against the possible integration of interveners. By expecting female expatriates to wear the hijab and by making virtually no efforts to compromise on their strict cultural and religious requirements, his Somali contacts prevented the formation of productive

relationships with their international counterparts. In contrast, having fewer cultural and socioeconomic differences between the two groups diminishes the divide between them, as I observed in Cyprus and Israel, and as is reportedly the case in Colombia” (p. 181).

Moreover, regional interveners are more likely to come from countries facing similar challenges. Although nationality is the most consistent or obvious divide between peacekeepers and peacekeepers, divisions can also run along linguistic, religious, or institutional lines and can prevent the level of cooperation necessary to achieve the mission’s goal. Languages constitute significant barriers between outsiders and the local population, as “peacebuilders deployed in conflict zones usually speak, at most, one of the official languages of the country, but they very rarely know the local dialects” (Autesserre 2014b, 175). In fact, Autesserre (2014b) recalls how only 100 of the 1,700 UN police deployed in Haiti in 2005 spoke French or Creole and how the UN mission in Congo had to wait ten years to assign translators to the peacekeeping contingents.

As a result, we might expect that far-flung countries should be less capable of developing trustworthy ties with locals than regional interveners because the former are more likely to lack local knowledge. However, trustworthiness depends on several issues and more than knowledge of the surroundings. Recent research pointed out how impartiality, and importantly the perception of impartiality, can aid third-party interveners to push belligerents from violent strategies to nonviolent bargaining (Wallensteen 2011).<sup>2</sup> When local populations perceive an international peacekeeper as biased in favor of a specific group, they are less likely to trust them. In fact, there is plenty of evidence suggesting that biased mediators—those having links or shares preferences with one of the antagonists—are less credible trust-builders. Kydd’s (2006) theoretical model, for example, convincingly shows how mediators that are biased toward one side will be ineffective.<sup>3</sup> Rauchhaus’s (2006) model and quantitative analysis also indicate that mediation that targets asymmetric information is a highly effective form of conflict management and that impartial mediators generally outperform biased ones. In a similar vein, Favretto (2009) finds that peace is a more likely outcome when third parties are unbiased because they can seek agreements that both adversaries find acceptable. Similarly, Beber (2012) argues that mediation by biased third parties is relatively ineffective because they cannot credibly convey private, conflict-relevant information that they hold.

In theory, the diversity of countries and cultures in a peacekeeping operation and their distance from the host country is thought to preserve impartiality of peacekeepers. Regional peacekeepers, in contrast, quite possibly have a history of relations with local groups which might increase the likelihood they will favor one domestic group over the others. Moreover, neighboring countries are more likely to have a history of conflictual behavior. Although borders *per se* do not cause wars, they create structure of risks and opportunities in which different types of interactions can be more (or less) likely to occur (see Starr and Most 1978). In a similar vein, Vasquez (1993, 307) claims that territorial contiguity is the “source of conflict



most likely to result in war.” States that share borders are likely to have greater numbers of interaction opportunities. At the same time, there is a higher perceived risk of being attacked by neighbors than by distant countries. Distance also affects force projection capabilities. Thus, by changing threat perception and the willingness and opportunities for interactions, geographic proximity can increase the chances of interstate conflict. As bordering states face greater uncertainty in their relations than more distant states, troops from more proximate locations are more likely to carry with them greater historical rivalry.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of neutrality is very important for the composition and the cultural balance of the troops deployed. On the one hand, including peacekeepers with vested interests in the conflict or former “enemies” from neighboring regions can jeopardize the cooperation of the local parties. On the other hand, being perceived as impartial eases the peacekeepers’ relationships with the local communities by reducing distrust and improves the chances of acceptance cooperation. This, in turn, affects the amount and reliability of information that peacekeepers can gather from the local populations about the battlefield and improves their capability of working effectively with the locals. In summary, relationship building, smooth communication, and trustworthiness are contributing factors to the success of a peacekeeping initiative. These factors are shaped in a nonobvious way by the differences and cultural barriers between peacekeepers and local communities. To address this gap in peacekeeping literature, we consider the composition of a peacekeeping force, that is, the nationality of its donor countries, and its cultural and social distance from the host population.

In Table 1, we summarize some of the abovementioned mechanisms that could improve the operational capabilities of a peacekeeping mission. It should be recalled that the effect of high cultural and social distance is not necessarily unidirectional and can improve or worsen mission capacity to protect civilians and reduce battle death. In the top-left panel, we highlight an important trade-off between cultural similarity and neutrality: whereas high cultural distance could increase the perception of impartiality and neutrality, thus improving trust-building, it also reduces the chances of having troops with the right portfolio of intercultural skills that might be crucial to the mission. At the same time, an operational contingent with high levels of language proximity to the locals should reduce barriers and facilitate effective communication and interactions with local communities.

Another possible pattern is conditional upon the level of “institutional” and “economic” distance that we label under the term “social distance.” On the one hand, high social distance can imply the presence of contingents from countries with very different economies and institutions. This condition should improve cooperation and, in turn, reduce the level of hostilities because the UN signals resolve and commitment. In fact, in this scenario, local actors tend to cooperate more frequently given the risk of facing higher costs as the UN is heavily investing in the mission. On the contrary, high social distances could affect negatively the mission performance given the social deafness of the Blue Helmets (see Duffey 2000). On the other hand, low social distances could signal a biased intervention. This might result in

**Table 1.** Empirical Expectations and Mechanisms.

	High		Low	
	Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages
Cultural distance	Perception of impartiality or neutrality	Lack of local knowledge  Communication and coordination problems	Cultural awareness  Effective communication and coordination	Biased intervention
Social distance	Resolve  Perception of impartiality or neutrality	Social deafness  Lack of social/economic empathy	Social status empathy	Lack of commitment

deteriorating levels of trust and local support, and, absent other conditions, higher levels of violence against civilians and between combatants. However, peacekeepers coming from a country with similar economic and institutional features could have higher social empathy and, in turn, the mission could benefit from a low social distance. Of the many ways to operationalize cultural and social distance, we consider a battery of proxies of the differences in social practices, values, norms, economies, and institutions. This is the issue considered next.

### Data and Empirical Strategy

As a starting point, we need to construct a measure of the distance between the peacekeepers and the host society. This is constructed as follows: assume that a mission in a host country  $m$  (e.g., UNISOM in Somalia) is composed of donor countries  $n = 1 \dots N$ . Denote by  $\pi_{nm}$  the share of peacekeepers from a country  $n$  in host country  $m$  and by  $d_{nm}$  the cultural distance between populations  $n$  and  $m$ . The weighted cultural or social distance between countries  $n$  and  $m$  is then:

$$WCD_{nm} = \sum_{i=1}^N (\pi_{nm} \times d_{nm}).$$

In other words, for every single mission, we sum up the dyadic distance between each contributor to the operation and the host country, weighted by the proportion of peacekeepers belonging to each donor country. We expect the ability to gain and foster the trust of local populations to be a function of the weighted cultural (or social) distance between the peacekeeper force and the local population. To capture possible differences between countries most effectively, we include an array of indexes. We first use information on direct contiguity relationships between

countries from the Correlates of War dataset, measures of linguistic and religious distances (see Spolaore and Wacziarg 2016), and our own indexes of economic, political, and institutional distance.

First, we look at whether peacekeepers come from neighboring countries to crudely characterize long-term cultural and historical proximity and therefore interactions across populations. Although this measure is straightforward, quantifying culture requires the comparison of diverse markers of identity and this measure may conceal the complex amalgam of customs, values, beliefs, and social organizations. Therefore, we complement it with a number of additional distances.

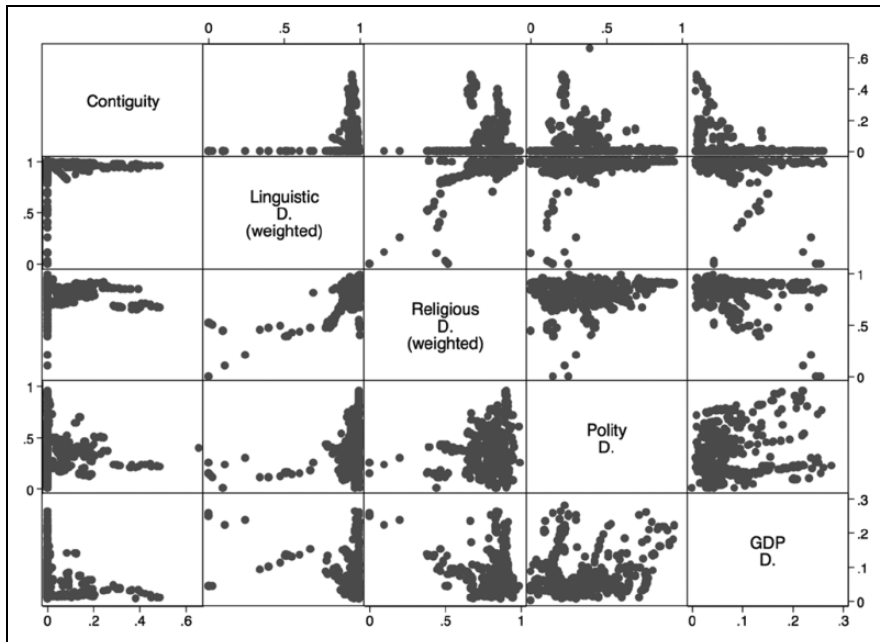
Second, we use an index of linguistic distance based on language trees (Fearon 2003). In this index, languages are grouped into families based on similarities between them and it is therefore based on a discrete number of common nodes. We rely on Spolaore and Wacziarg's (2016) to rank these distances ranging from 0 to 1, correcting with weighted values where subpopulations within each country are taken into account.

Third, we use a measure of religious distance also taken also from Spolaore and Wacziarg (2016). They base their indexes on the work of Mecham, Fearon, and Laitin (2006) on the prevalence of religion in each country. They calculate the number of common nodes between the dominant religions of each country in a pair and implement a simple transformation to obtain measures of religious distance bounded by 0 and 1. Religion has always played a central role in social and economic issues, and religious affiliations can affect the degree of cohesion within societies. We therefore use weighted distances accounting for the share of each religious subgroup within included countries.<sup>5</sup>

Fourth, we build our own measures of economic and institutional distance. Specifically, we aim to capture the extent to which countries are similar in terms of economic development. To construct this index, we take the absolute difference in per capita gross domestic product (GDP) and divide this difference by the highest value of per capita GDP in the sample. In this way, the index can potentially achieve any value between 0 and 1. Similarly, we build indexes of institutional distance using the polity score.<sup>6</sup> Figure 1 shows the correlation between our proxies of diversity distances. Although generally positive, the strength of the correlation is either weak or moderate, and the highest value, 0.6, is between religious and linguistic distance.

In Figure 2, using the UN peacekeeping missions in Angola and Burundi as example, we show that the variation of our different distances—in this case language and institutions—is not only between countries but has also a substantial within variation. The decomposition of the standard deviation of our distances into between and within variation also shows that distances vary between missions as well as over time within the mission.

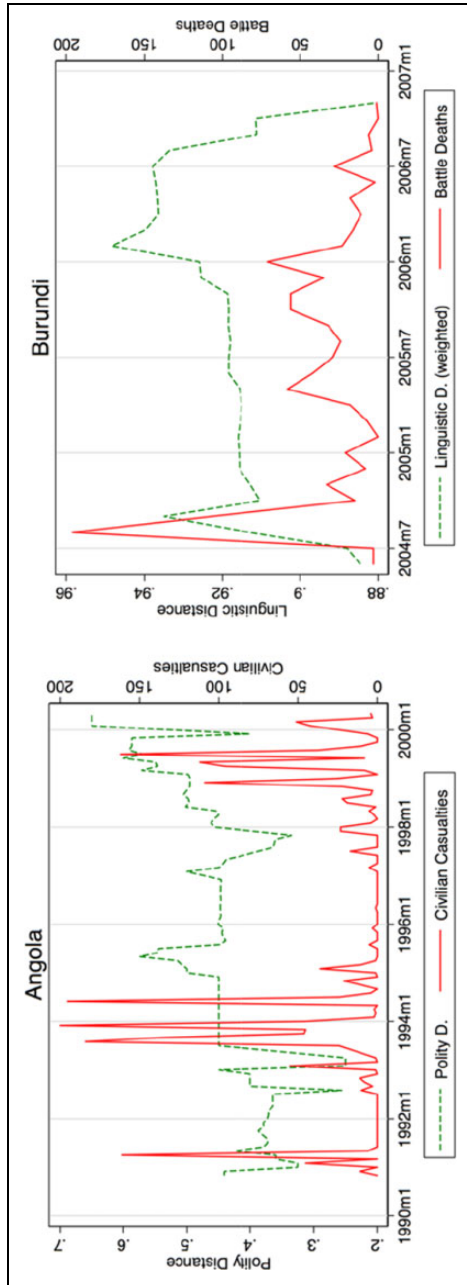
We evaluate peacekeeping operations according to two variables: the number of civilians killed each month (i.e., the one-sided violence against civilians) and the number of battlefield deaths produced by a government-rebel group dyad each month. Data one-sided violence against civilians are collected by the Uppsala



**Figure 1.** Correlation matrix between different indexes of distance.

Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and we take monthly events from the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED). The monthly number of battlefield deaths includes government soldiers and rebel fighters, as well as civilians and unknown victims killed in the crossfire by battle-related violence, and is also featured in the UCDP GED Dataset (see Sundberg and Melander [2013] for a description of the data set). Ultimately, our analysis covers a maximum of twenty-one UN peacekeeping missions in civil wars from 1990 to 2015.<sup>7</sup>

The empirical specification we employ builds on the recent work of Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon (2013, 2014) and we use a similar set of control variables, depending on whether the outcome variable—our measure of the operational performance—is civilian protection (i.e., Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon 2013) or a reduction in the level of battlefield violence (i.e., Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon 2014). Our main explanatory variable, the weighted distance between the peacekeeping force and the host country population, is constructed using the last version of the IPI Peacekeeping Database, with monthly information on which countries have sent their UN peacekeepers where in the post-Cold War period and what kind of uniformed personnel they chose to deploy (see Perry and Smith 2013). When more than one mission in each country is present, we take the sum of all uniformed personnel. The actors on the ground do not differentiate between missions and their mandates, and when there are multiple missions, their bases are usually close



**Figure 2.** Variation of diversity indexes within mission—Angola and Burundi.

enough. Moreover, when there are multiple missions, the main operation is usually much larger than the other(s) and makes their contribution negligible. True, our mechanical procedure may lead to some mistakes, but we do not have information on whether the type of interactions with local actors differs across missions. Our procedure is arguably better than opening the door to subjective coding. Our results do not significantly change when we consider only the largest operation in each country.

We include the lagged dependent variables to account for temporal dependence and temporal correlation in violence. We also include a cubic polynomial time trend to ensure that we explicitly model any residual temporal dependence (Carter and Signorino 2010). All the remaining control variables are lagged one month (with the exception of population, which varies every year) to mitigate issues of reverse causality. We control for the total number of armed troops because increasing numbers of military personnel reduces violence. We also include the total number of police units as well as the number of observers deployed (see Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon [2013, 2014] for a discussion). We control for the host country population as the number of casualties is affected by the size of the host society. To make sure that our results are not driven by the heterogeneity in the nationality of the contributing countries, and to further mitigate the issue of selection bias, we add the monthly number of donor countries. Moreover, to deal with the possibility of bias stemming from omitted variables, we estimate panels with mission-country fixed effects.

Note that the issue of nonrandom assignment could be unpacked into two aspects: whether peacekeepers are sent to specific types of conflict, often the difficult cases (see, e.g., Fortna 2004), and if the characteristics of the mission depend on specific conflict characteristics. The first type of selection bias does not directly concern our analysis as we are interested in comparing patterns of violence between different peacekeeping missions rather than between different conflicts with and without the presence of peacekeeping. To address the second issue, we explicitly control for some of the most salient features of a mission, namely, mandate and size. Yet it is possible that the average distance between peacekeepers and locals - that it is due to the mission's composition - partially depends on some of the conflict characteristics. We use fixed-effects models, include cubic polynomials, and control for a host of other confounding factors, such as the number of donor countries, which should partially mitigate this source of endogeneity. That being said, we still cannot rule out the possibility that other time-varying unobservable codeterminants of mission composition and violence—not explicitly controlled for—exist. In this case, our estimate will be biased, yet the direction of the bias is difficult to determine a priori.

Note that our approach is very conservative and our empirical strategy likely soaks up the effects of “slow-moving” control variables in either the country fixed effects or the cubic polynomials. Given the nature of the dependent variables—the number of civilians or combatants killed—we need a count model, as standard linear regression can produce inefficient, inconsistent, and biased estimates. Moreover, the

overdispersion of the dependent variables suggests the use of a negative binomial model. Finally, we control for groupwise heteroscedasticity and serial correlation by reporting robust standard errors clustered on country-mission.

## **Empirical Results**

Table 2 shows our result when one-sided violence is the dependent variable, whereas in Table 3, the dependent variable is the battlefield violence. We start our discussion by briefly summarizing the results with regard to the control variables.<sup>8</sup> The results are broadly consistent with Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon (2013, 2014), although there are two important differences: on the one hand, they only consider UN missions in sub-Saharan Africa whereas we use a larger sample; on the other hand, however, we restrict our analysis to cases when UN peace operations are deployed; otherwise, we would not be able to compute distances between peacekeepers and locals.

As we can see in Tables 2 and 3, the size of the peacekeeping mission, measured by the number of boots on the ground, is negative and significant, as one would expect. The number of donor countries is also negative, suggesting that more diverse operations are better at protecting the civilians and reducing battlefield violence, as Bove and Ruggeri (2016) find. The number of police officers and observers corresponds to larger number of casualties, although the latter is often insignificant. The size of the population is positive, as are the lagged value of battlefield violence and the lagged indicator for one-sided violence in the previous month. Finally, there seems to be a U-shaped relation between the duration of the mission and the number of combatant and noncombatant casualties echoing Ruggeri, Gizelis, and Dorussen (2013) on decline of local support to operations after a collaborative peak, as evidenced by the cubic polynomial.

Table 2 builds on the baseline model in Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon (2013) but adds a control variable for the number of countries contributing to the operation. We keep this important covariate in the other models. In model (i), we introduce our first explanatory variable, a weighted index of contiguity, which is positive and statistically significant at the 1 percent level. Therefore, missions with many peacekeepers from neighboring countries (e.g., the mission in Mali in 2014, with peacekeepers from Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, and Guinea) are correlated with higher numbers of civilian victims. In model (ii), we control for linguistic distance, which is positive and significant at similar levels. In model (iii), we include the religious distance between the peacekeepers and the host country's local population, which is also significant at conventional levels and positively signed. Note that as countries are fragmented into a multitude of linguistic and religious groups, the weighted version of linguistic and religious distance provides a more refined measure of cultural distance between countries. In fact, we are explicitly taking into account the relative weight that each group has in relation to the others within each country.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, it seems that when the mission on

**Table 2.** Distance with Locals and One-sided Violence—Fixed Effects Negative Binomial.

Dependent Variable: Civilian casualties	i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi	vii	viii	ix
All OSV ( $t - 1$ )	0.003 (.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.003 (.003)	0.003 (.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.005* (0.003)	0.004 (.003)	0.003 (.003)	0.004 (0.003)
UN troops ( $t - 1$ )	-0.054*** (.013)	-0.063*** (0.013)	-0.056*** (.013)	-0.079*** (.015)	-0.053*** (0.015)	-0.048*** (0.013)	-0.043*** (.014)	-0.077*** (.015)	-0.052*** (0.015)
UN police ( $t - 1$ )	0.397*** (.059)	0.421*** (0.064)	0.473*** (.064)	0.512*** (.059)	0.425*** (0.063)	0.258*** (0.068)	0.310*** (.068)	0.456*** (.061)	0.368*** (0.067)
UN observers ( $t - 1$ )	0.482 (.364)	0.351 (0.375)	0.141 (.382)	1.527*** (.380)	0.138 (0.399)	0.077 (0.371)	-0.063 (.376)	1.530*** (.382)	0.106 (0.399)
Number donor countries	-0.031*** (.005)	-0.022*** (0.005)	-0.023*** (.005)	-0.023*** (.005)	-0.023*** (0.005)	-0.029*** (0.005)	-0.029*** (.005)	-0.029*** (.005)	-0.027*** (0.005)
Population	0.000*** (.000)	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (.000)	0.000*** (.000)	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (.000)	0.000*** (.000)	0.000*** (0.000)
$t$	-0.026*** (.005)	-0.025*** (0.005)	-0.022*** (.005)	-0.031*** (.005)	-0.038*** (0.005)	-0.021*** (0.005)	-0.019*** (.005)	-0.027*** (.005)	-0.034*** (0.005)
$t2$	0.000** (.000)	0.000* (0.000)	0.000 (.000)	0.000* (.000)	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000 (.000)	0.000 (.000)	0.000 (.000)	0.000*** (0.000)
$t3$	0.000 (.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (.000)	0.000 (.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (.000)	0.000 (.000)	0.000* (.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Contiguity ( $t - 1$ )	2.963*** (.677)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (.000)	0.000 (.000)	0.000 (0.000)	5.774*** (0.933)	5.709*** (.855)	2.809*** (.728)	2.588** (1.084)
Linguistic D. ( $t - 1$ )		7.020*** (1.759)				7.594*** (1.849)			
Religious D. ( $t - 1$ )			3.567*** (.728)				4.032*** (.759)		
Polity D. ( $t - 1$ )				-0.686** (.284)				-0.668** (.290)	
GDP D. ( $t - 1$ )					-8.048*** (1.492)				-7.034*** (1.534)
Observations	1,793	1,776	1,776	1,583	1,557	1,770	1,770	1,568	1,548

Note: Panel with fixed effects. Robust standard errors are given in parentheses clustered by country.  
\* $p < .10$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$ .



**Table 3.** Distance with Locals and Battle Deaths—Fixed Effects Negative Binomial.

	i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi	vii	viii	ix
Dependent Variable: Battle deaths									
All battle deaths ( $t - 1$ )	0.003 (.003)	0.003 (0.002)	0.003 (.003)	0.002 (.002)	.002 (.003)	0.004 (0.002)	0.003 (.003)	0.003 (.002)	0.003 (.003)
UN troops ( $t - 1$ )	-0.010 (.009)	-0.013 (0.010)	-0.003 (.010)	-0.043*** (.011)	-0.05 (.012)	-0.008 (0.010)	0.004 (.010)	-0.040*** (.011)	-0.007 (.012)
UN police ( $t - 1$ )	0.210*** (.053)	0.277*** (0.057)	0.306*** (.057)	0.449*** (.051)	.270*** (.056)	0.142** (0.060)	0.166*** (.059)	0.366*** (.052)	0.183*** (.058)
UN observers ( $t - 1$ )	-0.365 (.328)	-0.738*** (0.333)	-1.024*** (.337)	0.906*** (.339)	-.887** (.368)	-0.611* (0.335)	-0.938*** (.337)	1.073*** (.343)	-0.690* (.368)
Number donor countries	-0.034*** (.004)	-0.028*** (0.004)	-0.029*** (.004)	-0.024*** (.004)	-.028*** (.004)	-0.033*** (0.004)	-0.033*** (.004)	-0.031*** (.005)	-0.031*** (.004)
Population	0.000*** (.000)	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (.000)	0.000*** (.000)	.000*** (.000)	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (.000)	0.000*** (.000)	0.000*** (.000)
$t$	-0.019*** (.004)	-0.020*** (0.004)	-0.018*** (.004)	-0.036*** (.004)	-.028*** (.004)	-0.016*** (0.004)	-0.014*** (.004)	-0.032*** (.004)	-0.022*** (.004)
$t2$	0.000 (.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (.000)	0.000*** (.000)	.000* (.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (.000)	0.000*** (.000)	0.000 (.000)
$t3$	0.000** (.000)	0.000** (0.000)	0.000*** (.000)	0.000 (.000)	.000 (.000)	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (.000)	0.000* (.000)	0.000* (.000)
Contiguity ( $t - 1$ )	3.615*** (.540)	0.000 (.000)	0.000 (.000)	0.000 (.000)	0.000 (.000)	4.744*** (0.632)	0.000 (.000)	0.000 (.000)	0.000 (.000)
Linguistic D. ( $t - 1$ )		6.983*** (1.294)				7.911*** (1.426)			
Religious D. ( $t - 1$ )			3.178*** (.531)						
Polity D. ( $t - 1$ )				0.519** (.220)					
GDP D. ( $t - 1$ )					-0.83 (.951)				
Observations	1,924	1,907	1,907	1,714	1,671	1,901	1,901	1,699	1,662

Note: Panel with fixed effects. Robust standard errors are given in parentheses clustered by country.

\* $p < .10$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

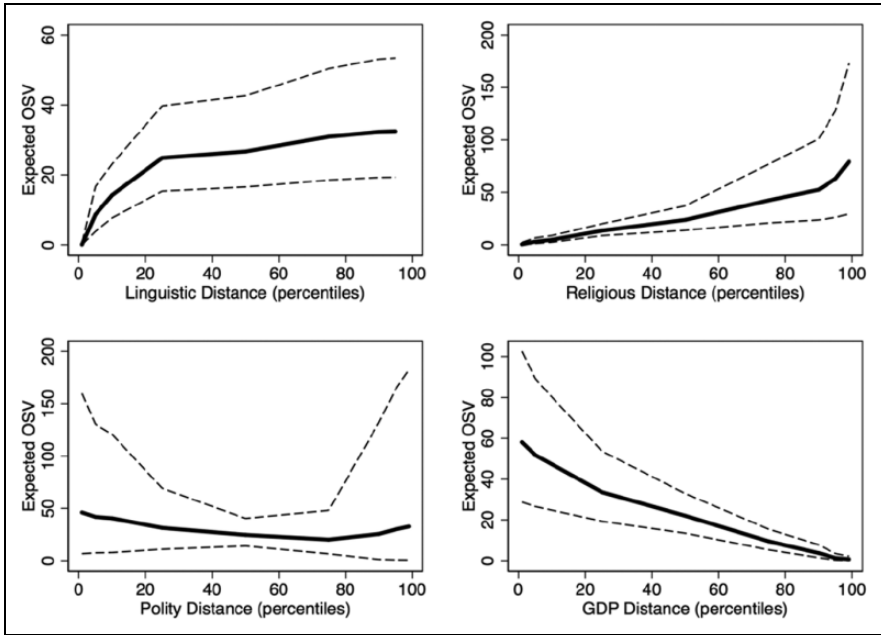
average is more distant linguistically and in terms of religion to the locals, there are higher levels of civilians' victimization.

We then include our institutional and economic distances. In model (iv), we check whether our GDP index, where higher values translate to higher GDP per capita diversity between locals and peacekeepers, affects one-sided violence. In model (v), we use an index of political regime diversity, based on the Polity scale, where the higher our index, the larger the weighted difference in level of democracy between locals and countries contributing to the UN peacekeeping mission. Both indexes are negative and statistically significant. Given that the average countries suffering civil war have usually low per-capita income and negative values on the Polity scale, taken together this last round of estimates would suggest that the greater the number of peacekeepers from democratic and richer countries, the lower is the levels of civilian victimization.

Finally, models (iv) to (ix) of Table 2 replicate models (ii) to (v) but simultaneously control for contiguity. In fact, it is important to check whether cultural, economic, and institutional distances have an independent effect on mission performances. As we can see, our previous results hold up well under this important additional scrutiny.

In Table A1, in our Online Appendix, we perform two important robustness checks: first, we note that our sample has two important outliers, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo, with extremely high levels of civilian casualties and violence more generally. We further test the robustness of our findings by replicating Table 2 and excluding these countries and results are consistent with previous findings. Second, given the assumptions that need to be met in fixed effects negative binomial models (see Guimaraes 2008), we simple negative binomial models without country fixed effects (see Table A2, Online Appendix). These models still account for the many zeros and for some extreme observations in the right tail of the distribution of the dependent variable and, by and large, the results carry over. We omit tables due to space limitations, although all additional models can be found in the Online Appendix and can be produced with our replication material.

In Figure 3, we provide graphical representations for the marginal effects of different distances on one-sided violence. Based on the estimates of our negative binomial regression in Table 2A, we simulate the effects of diversity on monthly civilians' victimization using Clarify (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000). The *y*-axis reports the expected count of monthly One-Sided Violence (OSV) during a UN mission and the *x*-axis the percentile (from the lowest to the highest) of the diversity proxy.<sup>10</sup> In the top-left quadrant, we report the effect of linguistic distance. Moving from the lowest percentile to the twenty-fifth leads to an increase of twenty-five in the expected count of OSV per month. After that point, we observe decreasing marginal returns. In the top-right panel, we report the expected count of OSV at different percentiles of religious distance between Blue Helmets and locals. Moving from the tenth to the seventy-fifth percentile increases OSV from four to forty-two civilians killed per month. The effects of regime distance, bottom-right panel, does not seem to have substantial effects on the level of civilians' victimization. On the



**Figure 3.** Monthly expected one-sided violence count over several distances.

contrary, in the bottom-right panel, we report the important effects of GDP distance on civilians' victimization. If we move from the tenth to seventy-fifth percentile, hence increasing the economic distance between Blue Helmets and locals, we observe a decrease in the level of violence from forty-seven to nine civilians killed every month.

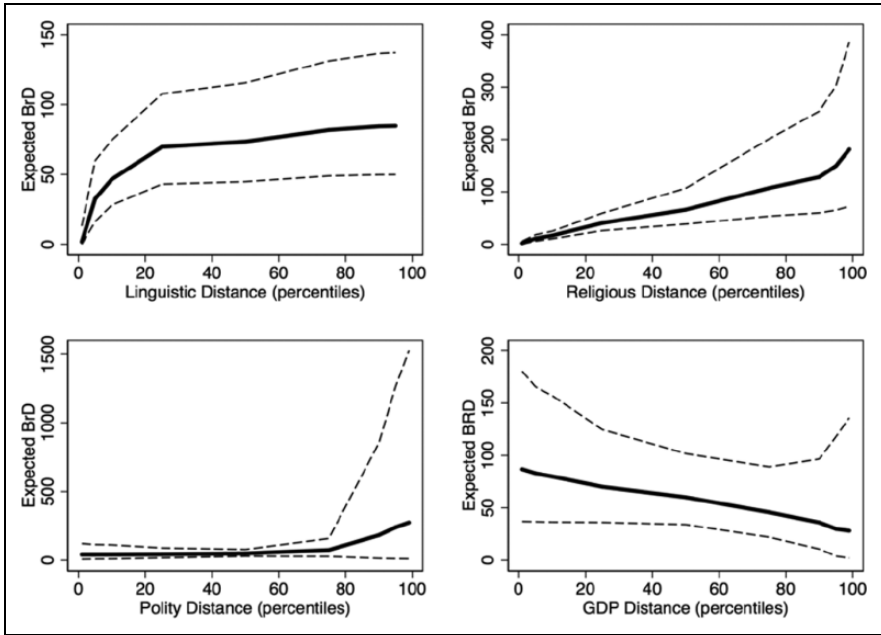
To explore our second measure of mission's performance—the level of battlefield violence—models in Table 3 borrow from the baseline model in Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon (2014). Overall, Table 3 mirrors the main results of Table 2: missions with peacekeepers from noncontiguous states seem to be more capable of reducing belligerent hostilities relative to those with peacekeepers from neighboring counties. At the same time, missions characterized by higher linguistic and religious distances with the local populations are associated with higher levels of violence. Moving from geographic and cultural differences to institutional and economic disparities, however, there are two notable exceptions. Although distance in per capita GDP is still negative, it is insignificant at conventional levels. Moreover, the distance in the Polity score is now positive and significant. Hence, higher number of troops from “institutionally similar countries” are associated with lower odds that the belligerents lay down their weapons. The other measures of distance all continue to add significantly to the fit of the model in the same positive direction. Interestingly, controlling simultaneously for geographic proximity does not affect our main results.

We then perform the same robustness exercises in Tables A3 and A4, both in our Online Appendix, by excluding Rwanda and DRC and by estimating models without fixed effects. We find that geographic proximity, linguistic, and religious distances, as well as differences in the GDP are all positive and statistically different from zero. We can conclude from these two tables that the previous findings are strongly borne out by this new set of empirical results.

Although our baseline equations control for a large set of confounding factors and include time trends, country fixed effects, and lagged values of our variables of interest, Table A5 in our Online Appendix tries to further alleviate concerns of selection bias. We run a battery of regressions of distances on battlefield deaths and one-sided violence and use a simple two-way OLS model with fixed effects and time trends. As we can see, none of our measures of distance are affected by our main outcome variables, except the Polity distance. The negative relation between one-sided violence and the Polity distance is consistent with results in Table 2, thus partially undermining our findings. Yet battle deaths have also a negative relation with this index, which runs counter to our results in Table 3. If anything, this suggests that we are underestimating the effect of institutional distance on battlefield violence.

In Figure 4, we report the graphical representation of the effects of distances on monthly battle related deaths. In the top-left panel, we show how linguistic distance affects the violence between belligerents. Moving from the lowest fifth percentile of linguistic distance between locals and peacekeepers to its median level, we see that the monthly count of battle deaths moves from thirty-one to seventy-two. Religious distance also appears to have a substantial effect, top-right panel. In fact, an increase of religious diversity from the fifth percentile to the seventy-fifth means a quite large increase of conflict violence from 11 to 109 monthly battle-related deaths. However, both institutional and economic distances do not seem to have meaningful effects. Polity distance seems to have substantive effects only at very high percentiles and, moreover, its confidence intervals are very large. The effect of economic distance is more substantive, although the curve is almost flat, thus showing little variation.

To sum up, we find that the composition of an operation vis-à-vis local populations matters and affects the performance of a UN mission. In particular, three basic results emerge: (i) UN missions with peacekeepers from neighboring countries are associated with more violence perpetrated against civilians and higher level of battlefield violence; (ii) higher cultural distances between the peacekeepers and the locals, populations, weighted by the shares of subpopulations within each country, are positively correlated with the number of civilian and combatant casualties; and (iii) there is a negative relation between economic and institutional distance and civilian protection, and higher development and institutional differences between the Blue Helmets and the locals seem to decrease civilian victimization.



**Figure 4.** Monthly expected battle-related deaths count over several distances.

## Conclusions

This article extends what Fortna and Howard (2008) define as the “the second wave of peacekeeping research.” We investigate a frequently neglected issue in the quantitative study of peacekeeping, the importance of mission composition, in particular the way it affects the relationship between the local population and the peacekeepers. We contribute to our understanding of how composition matters by exploring whether and how peacekeepers’ distances with respect to locals can impact the peacekeeping’s operational performance. As Autesserre (2014a) recently stressed, the study of distances and the effects of these distance on daily interactions between Blue Helmets and locals is vital to properly understand peacekeeping outcomes. This article is evidence that quantitative investigations are an important aspect of developing possible generalizations on the role of diversity between Blue Helmets and local population.

In fact, reliable and precise intelligence, proper understanding of local conditions, and a sufficient level of popular support have always been considered vital ingredients for peace operation success. As continuous interaction with local populations and rebel groups is the primary mode of gathering valuable information for the mission, information flows or any type of substantive support stemming from the locals would be severely constrained if locals do not trust the peacekeepers.

However, it remains unclear how the cultural proximity between the Blue Helmets and the locals can affect the success of the mission. Lower distances might imply the existence of shared norms, practices, and languages, and these qualities might simplify day-to-day interactions. Cultural proximity might also affect the perception of impartiality and unbiasedness of the Blue Helmets. We focused on the weighted distance between the peacekeeping force and the host country's population, which is expected to influence the quality of the peacekeepers–locals interaction, and in turn the mission's performances. We operationalize the connection between the peacekeepers and the host population using a variety of markers for cultural distances, including linguistic, religious, economic, and institutional differences.

Our results show that cultural proximity increases the level of protection of civilians and reduces the number of battlefield casualties, two tangible proxies for peacekeeping mission success. Therefore, optimizing peacekeeping deployments at lower levels of cultural distance seems to be beneficial in terms of mission performance. National militaries and the UN have started to reshape their training and practice to ensure all deployed personnel are aware of, and sensitive to, the cultures in which their operations are undertaken. Moreover, the development of peacekeeping training centers specifically focuses on deploying troops to places with a reduced cultural distance. For example, the UN is particularly keen for Indonesia to deploy Muslim forces to peace operations within Muslim countries. Including cultural elements in training protocols prior to peacekeeping deployment seems to be even more appropriate in light of our empirical results. Training in cultural awareness should be treated as a mission priority and strategic investment rather than a budgeted cost.

At the same time, however, we find that including non-neighboring donor countries in a UN mission has positive effects on both operational outcomes. Moreover, distances in economic development and democracy are associated to enhanced operational capacities for civilian protection. These last two results might be explained because such arrangements lead to higher levels of trust and stronger assumptions of impartiality from the local population. However, economic and institutional effects seem to be less stable compared to linguist and religious distance and the importance of their effects depends on the outcome we study.

Some important avenues for further research might emerge from our work. Although we provide a general interpretation of cultural, social, and economic distance in terms of barriers to the creation of trust and perception of neutrality, we remain largely agnostic about the prevalence of specific mechanisms of peacekeeping capacity. We cannot also state firmly the exact traits and characteristics that create these barriers. Moreover, a further disaggregation of actors and actions would be particularly important for more detailed policy prescriptions. Our analyses consider violence against civilians by both governments and rebels, but there are important differences related to who is perpetrating the violence. A better understanding of how and why governments rather than rebel groups decide to directly target civilians

will identify conditions under which the effects of peacekeepers' distance from the locals are stronger or weaker. Future work could also integrate new outcome variables that are crucial for understanding the interactions between peacekeepers and local actors, for example, whether the local actors use violence against peacekeepers. Violence against peacekeepers can severely jeopardize the purpose of a mission, making interactions with the local population more difficult. These patterns of violence often lock mission resources to force protection protocols, reducing the likelihood and effectiveness of humanitarian services. In a similar vein, an additional dimension of peacekeeping practices can be captured by looking at peacekeepers' misconduct against the local population. These wrongdoings can severely hinder productive and trustworthy interactions with the local population and, by extension, the mission's success. Because of the limited number of empirical works on what we call "the horizontal dimension of peacekeeping," and perhaps a new "organizational turn" in the study of peace operations, and the lack of consensus on several underlying mechanisms, there is certainly a crowded agenda for future research in this area.

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### **Supplemental Material**

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

### **Notes**

1. By one estimate, between 1948 and 2007, the UN has suffered a total of 2,400 fatalities of uniformed and civilian peacekeepers (Centre for International Cooperation 2009).
2. Note that the "impartiality" and "neutrality" are often used as substitutes in the literature, when they actually have different meanings. We use unbiasedness or impartiality to indicate a lack of alignment with one party. As the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operation recalls, "United Nations peacekeepers should be impartial in their dealings with the parties to the conflict, but not neutral in the execution of their mandate." See <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/principles.shtml>.
3. He also identifies which kind of unbiasedness is helpful (moderate ideal points) and which is harmful (indifference to the issue).
4. We thank an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this.
5. We cannot use data on ethnicity, such as the Ethnic Power Relations by Vogt et al. (2015) to gauge horizontal diversity because the data set measures within countries ethnic

relations rather than between countries features. Hence, the absence of a dyadic data structure does not allow use to use this innovative data set.

6. <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/p4manualv2015.pdf>
7. Due to missing values for some of our covariates, we focus on UN missions in Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Eritrea, Georgia, Haiti, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Liberia, Mali, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Sudan.
8. The control variables, except the number of donors and time trends, are expressed in thousands to improve readability of results.
9. The "unweighted" version of the above distances produce qualitatively similar results.
10. We report the values at the percentiles in order to account for the variables' distribution and avoid simulation based on nonexisting values of the variables. We report the marginal effect of all our weighted distances with the exception of contiguity, as contiguity can be conceptualize as a weighted percentage of Blue Helmets coming from contiguous countries rather than the contributors' distance.

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