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# When Do UN Peacekeeping Operations Implement Their Mandates?

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## Abstract

Under what conditions do UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs) implement the tasks in their mandates? Contemporary PKOs are expected to fulfill increasingly fragmented mandates in active conflict zones. Drawing on principal-agent and constructivist accounts of the performance of international organizations, we argue that these two trends—increasingly fragmented mandates, increasingly implemented amidst violence—hinder PKOs from pursuing mandated tasks, undermining their legitimacy in the eyes of the Security Council, troop-contributing countries, and host-governments. Combining new datasets on PKOs activities and mandates in Africa (1998-2016) and using instrumental variables and two-way fixed effects models, we find that that mandate fragmentation is negatively correlated with mandate implementation, especially for peacebuilding tasks. Ongoing violence is also negatively correlated with the implementation of peacebuilding, but not with security-related tasks. We show that this is likely due to the off-setting effects of violence perpetrated by governments and rebels, as PKOs are better equipped to respond to the latter.

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When the UN Security Council (UNSC) authorizes a peacekeeping operation (PKO), it creates the expectation that peacekeepers will do their best to implement the tasks specified in their mandate. Peacekeepers that fail to meet this expectation risk losing legitimacy in the eyes of the UNSC, troop-contributing countries, host governments, and civilians themselves. During a July 2016 outbreak of violence in South Sudan’s capital of Juba, for example, UNMISS peacekeepers at one civilian protection site “abandoned their posts rather than engage in fighting and protect civilians” (Burke, 2016). Their response “was nothing.... We thought they were here for protecting civilians and facilities, but [their response] was an indication that these peacekeepers aren’t doing their mandate.” In contrast, at the UNMISS base of Tongping, civilians witnessed peacekeepers attempting to repel rebel attacks. According to those who sought refuge at the base, peacekeepers were “not sleeping” and “trying day and night to protect us” (CIVIC, 2016, 50). South Sudanese civilians died at both of these sites. But UNMISS’s disparate responses to the violence provoked equally disparate reactions from stakeholders, including the civilians UNMISS is mandated to protect. At one site, peacekeepers were praised because they tried (but failed) to protect civilians from harm. At the other, they were condemned because they did not even try.

What explains these disparities in peacekeepers’ actions in the field? Under what conditions do PKOs actually implement the tasks assigned to them in their mandates? In this paper we posit and test an answer to this question that focuses on two factors in particular. First, PKOs are increasingly assigned what we call “fragmented” mandates—mandates that include not just *many* tasks, but many *dissimilar* tasks. In addition to implementing security-related tasks, such as protecting civilians and enforcing ceasefires, PKOs are now mandated to pursue a variety of peacebuilding-related tasks, such as organizing elections, as well as “cross-cutting” tasks, such as promoting gender equality and improving human rights (Paris, 2004; Paris and Sisk, 2009). Second, PKOs are increasingly deployed to active conflict zones, as in Mali or South Sudan, where peacekeepers are subjected to the almost daily threat of violence (Karlsrud, 2015). We argue that these two trends—increasingly fragmented mandates,<sup>1</sup> increasingly implemented in active conflict

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<sup>1</sup>We argue that the difficulty of implementing multidimensional mandates lies not in the number of tasks, but rather in the diversity of domains to which those tasks belong. Consider, for example, the contrast between UNMISS in South Sudan and UNMIL in Liberia. In late 2015, UNMISS’s mandate included 10 tasks, which were almost evenly divided between security and peacebuilding. UNMIL’s mandate in the same year included more tasks—17—but with

zones—hinder PKOs’ ability to meet the expectations set for them by the UNSC.

Our paper departs from existing research on PKOs, most of which focuses on theorizing and evaluating peacekeepers’ “outcome performance”—i.e. the extent to which they achieve goals such as preventing civilian deaths or promoting democracy. Variation in peacekeepers’ “process performance,” i.e. the extent to which they even attempt to achieve these goals in the first place, remains understudied and poorly understood. This is a significant blind spot in the peacekeeping literature. Like outcome performance, process performance is crucial to maintaining the legitimacy of peacekeeping, for at least three reasons. First and foremost, peacekeeping is hard. The difficulties peacekeepers face in fulfilling their mandates are such that success stories are far more surprising than failures (Autesserre, 2017). In some cases, failure is the result not of peacekeepers’ inadequacy in implementing specific tasks, but rather of factors that prevent them from even attempting to implement those tasks. As noted above, mandates generate expectations among a wide variety of stakeholders—including the UNSC and UN member states, host governments and populations, and the international community writ large—that peacekeepers are trying in good faith to implement mandated tasks in challenging environments. Failure to meet these expectations can be devastating for the reputation of PKOs. In the Central African Republic (CAR), for example, peacekeepers provoked both domestic and international condemnation when they “did not engage an attack by an armed group but instead retreated in an armoured vehicle” (Amnesty International, 2019). Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), “civilians are dying day in, day out while...nearby UN peacekeepers stay put in their camps” (Al Jazeera, 2019). In these cases, as in the case of South Sudan described above, a failure to fulfill mandated tasks such as protection of civilians (outcome performance) is made much worse by a failure to even try (process performance).

Second, mandates reflect general UN principles, which, in turn, are foundational to the legitimacy of particular PKOs. Process performance increases PKOs’ legitimacy through “adherence to the principle of the [UN] Charter and to the objectives of a mandate that is rooted in those Charter principles” (United Nations General Assembly, 2000b, para. 50). This is true even if UN mandates are partly aspirational or designed broadly to provide flexibility to PKOs in the field, as

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less diversity among them, since 13 of the 17 tasks were related to peacebuilding. We argue that UNMISS’s mandate was thus more fragmented than UNMIL’s, and therefore harder to implement. We develop this argument in further detail below.

some scholars claim (Bellamy and Hunt, 2019). Even if the UNSC does not expect PKOs to pursue *all* of the components of their mandates, unless UNSC members agree on *which* mandate components are more and less expendable, a PKO’s decision to prioritize particular tasks over others may nonetheless diminish its standing within the UNSC. PKOs that fail to abide by their mandates also risk aggravating tensions among UNSC members, and between the UNSC and host governments, by neglecting tasks that some stakeholders view as essential, or prioritizing tasks that other stakeholders find objectionable. Indeed, adherence to UN principles is central to the UN’s own understanding of impartiality in peacekeeping, as proposed in the 2000 Brahimi Report (United Nations General Assembly, 2000a, E.50).

Third, process performance matters because it is a fundamental metric for organizational learning (Campbell, 2008). It is difficult to learn which mandate components worked as desired without knowing which of them were implemented in the first place. Assessing which factors enable PKOs to implement difficult tasks is a first order concern for mission planning, and possibly an influential scope condition for successful outcome performance.<sup>2</sup> Process and outcome performance are distinct criteria, and both are important for maintaining peacekeeping legitimacy. While most scholarship has focused on outcomes, we instead focus on process as an important indicator of success in and of itself—one that has been all but ignored in the peacekeeping literature. As Barnett and Finnemore (1999, 699) asked over two decades ago, “do international organizations really do what their creators intend them to do?”. Answers to this question in the study of peacekeeping remain scarce. We help fill this gap.

Our theory draws on principal-agent and constructivist accounts of the process performance of international organizations (IOs) more generally. Principal-agent theories illustrate how asymmetric information and divergent interests create principal-agent problems between IOs (agents) and the states that created them (principals). Constructivist theories further demonstrate how cultural contestation and turf battles exacerbate coordination problems within IOs themselves. We apply these theories to understand variation in PKOs’ willingness and ability to implement their mandates, i.e. their process performance. We argue that principal-agent and coordination problems are

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<sup>2</sup>The relationship between process and outcome performance remains contested and ambiguous (Lipson, 2010). We leave this relationship for future research to explore, and instead focus on process performance as an important dependent variable in and of itself.

likely to be especially severe for PKOs with fragmented mandates. Fragmented mandates include many disparate tasks, making it hard for the UNSC—the primary principal for PKOs—to monitor implementation and increasing the risk that PKOs’ interests diverge from those of UNSC members. Fragmented mandates also involve multiple specialised agencies within the PKO, exacerbating turf battles and coordination problems, which in turn may lead PKOs to delay or abandon implementation of some mandated tasks. We theorize that mandate fragmentation therefore hinders mandate implementation.

Active armed conflict impedes mandate implementation as well, but we argue that the magnitude and direction of this effect likely depends on the types of tasks that PKOs are mandated to implement. We distinguish between security-related tasks (such as protection of civilians) on the one hand and peacebuilding-related tasks (such as democracy promotion) on the other. We argue that violence in the field of operations complicates implementation of peacebuilding-related tasks by aggravating principal-agent and coordination problems. During episodes of violence, the rapidly changing interests of PKOs frequently diverge from the more static interests of the UNSC as peacekeepers shift focus towards the short-term exigencies of protecting civilians (and themselves) from harm, and away from longer-term priorities such as elections, promotion of public health, or justice sector reform. Violence also hinders principals’ ability to monitor PKO activities, heightening the risk of agency slippage in mandate implementation. Furthermore, most peacebuilding-related tasks are implemented by civilian personnel. During periods of violence, civilian personnel must coordinate their efforts with the PKO’s military contingents in order to ensure their own safety and the safety of their beneficiaries. This exacerbates the risk of turf battles and cultural contestation. We theorize that violence therefore diminishes process performance on peacebuilding-related tasks while *enhancing* (or, at worst, having no effect on) process performance on security-related tasks.

We test our argument using two new datasets on all PKOs in Africa from 1998 to 2016. The first dataset captures the tasks specified in UNSC resolutions that authorize or extend PKO mandates. The second captures the extent to which PKOs actually implement those tasks on the ground, drawing on UN Secretary-General (UNSG) progress reports. We operationalize process performance as the share of mandated tasks that PKOs actually implement in the field. Following our theoretical framework, we distinguish between process performance on security-related tasks on the one hand and peacebuilding-related tasks on the other; the former seek to prevent violence, while the latter

seek to transform the political, social, and economic structures of host states.

Consistent with our expectations, we show that mandate fragmentation is strongly negatively correlated with process performance on peacebuilding-related tasks, and negatively but weakly correlated with process performance on security-related tasks as well. Also consistent with our expectations, we find that violence in the field of operations is negatively correlated with process performance on peacebuilding-related tasks, but is not correlated with process performance on security-related tasks one way or the other. We disaggregate this latter result in Appendix A.1, showing that the negative correlation between violence and peacebuilding-related process performance is driven by state-perpetrated violence in particular. State-perpetrated violence is negatively correlated with security-related process performance as well, but this is offset by a positive correlation between security-related process performance and rebel-perpetrated violence, resulting in a net null. We speculate that this disparity is a result of the fact that PKOs are uniquely reliant on the consent and cooperation of host states to implement mandated tasks.

While these are correlations rather than relationships of cause and effect, we use multiple identification strategies to address bias and mitigate potential endogeneity concerns. First, we control for some of the most important sources of confounding, including the size, composition, and length of each PKO, the duration of the conflict, and the demographic, political, and economic features of the host country (e.g. population, GDP, and regime type). Second, we use two-way fixed effects to address the potential endogeneity of both mandate fragmentation and conflict intensity to unobserved correlates of process performance that are fixed in time or space. Finally, we instrument the fragmentation of any given PKO mandate with the average fragmentation of all ongoing PKO mandates (excluding the instrumented PKO from our calculation of the average) to alleviate the concern that mandate design is endogenous to conditions on the ground. None of these identification strategies is flawless; our goal is to triangulate between them. Taken together they provide support for a causal interpretation of our results.

## 1 Process performance of international organizations

While focused on PKOs, our theory draws on several strands of research on the behavior of international organizations (IOs) more generally. We draw in particular on principal-agent and construc-

tivist theories focused on delegation and coordination problems, respectively. First, our argument builds on principal-agent theories that locate the sources of organizational dysfunction in the complex challenges of delegation that afflict the relationship between IOs and the states that endow them with particular roles and responsibilities (Hawkins et al., 2006). Principal-agent problems widen the gap between what IOs are expected to do and what they actually do. Principals set expectations, but agents take actions. Discrepancies between expectations and actions arise as a result of (1) divergent interests and (2) information asymmetries between agents and principals, especially when (3) the same agent serves multiple principals at the same time.

All of these sources of principal-agent problems are inherent to peacekeeping. PKOs, like other IOs, exercise a form of “delegated authority:” they play a prominent role in post-conflict reconstruction only because UN member states mandate them to do so (Barnett and Finnemore, 2005, 171-2). PKOs are also agents of multiple principals: most obviously the UNSC, which authorizes mandates, but also the UN Secretary-General (UNSG), who reports on mandate implementation, and troop-contributing countries, which provide financial and human resources to fulfill mandated tasks. As with other IOs, the interests of PKOs often diverge from the interests of these principals. For instance, a deteriorating security situation may shift the PKO’s interests from implementing ambitious, multidimensional tasks to protecting its own personnel from harm, while the interests of the UNSC, as specified in the mandate, remain unchanged. PKOs may also prioritize tasks which they believe (rightly or wrongly) are particularly helpful for achieving mission success, thereby neglecting tasks that reflect the interests of the UNSC.

The fact that PKOs are agents of multiple principals—the UNSC, UNSG, and troop-contributing countries—further compounds these principal-agent problems. While the principals are jointly responsible for drafting PKO mandates, they may have incongruent interests and thus make conflicting demands on PKOs. Multiple principals thus exacerbate interest divergence and invite agency slippage (Moe, 1984, 768-769).<sup>3</sup> At the same time, imperfect monitoring by the UNSG and troop-contributing countries begets information asymmetries, which make it easier for PKOs to hide agency slippage (Gailmard, 2009). If host governments’ preferences diverge from those of the

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<sup>3</sup>Pollack (1997) distinguishes *shirking*, whereby agents minimize the effort they exert on their principals’ behalf, from *slippage*, whereby agents shift policies away from their principals’ preferred outcomes and towards their own preferences.



UNSC and troop-contributing countries, this may undermine process performance even further. As we argue in further detail below, fragmented mandates and violence in the PKO’s field of operations are likely to reinforce all of these dynamics.

Second, our argument draws on constructivist theories focused on coordination problems that arise not *between* IOs and the principals they serve, but rather *within* IOs themselves. These theories emphasize how cultural contestation and turf wars over resources aggravate coordination problems and obstruct process performance. These challenges afflict many IOs, and PKOs are no exception (Paris, 2009). PKOs comprise both uniformed and civilian contingents, which, in turn, represent multiple sections and units, such as the Disarmament and Demobilization Unit, the Election Unit, and the Civil Affairs Section, among others. These entities pursue disparate goals that reflect equally disparate values—stability, democracy, reconciliation, etc. The units and sections that must coexist within multidimensional PKOs may also compete over budgets and staff, and may prioritize their own performance over the performance of the mission as a whole (Barnett and Finnemore, 1999, 717-18).

Moreover, sections and units within PKOs are required to coordinate with other entities in the UN system, which naturally also serve objectives defined by their “organizational cultures, histories, and competencies, and the interests and priorities of the organizational and member state principals to which they are accountable” (Lipson, 2010, 260). While the UN has adopted a number of mechanisms to improve coordination between units in the field, these are imperfect, and cannot fully eliminate turf battles and cultural contestation. Again, we argue that fragmented mandates and violence in the PKO’s field of operations are likely to exacerbate these coordination problems, thus diminishing process performance. We develop this argument in more detail below.

## 2 Sources of process performance

While many factors may create principal-agent and coordination problems for IOs, we focus on two sources of variation in process performance that are likely to be especially influential for PKOs, and that have become particularly prominent in recent years: the fragmentation of mandates and the intensity of conflict in host countries. We address each in turn.

## 2.1 Mandate fragmentation

The end of the Cold War precipitated a shift from “traditional” peacekeeping, which involved monitoring belligerents and maintaining buffer zones between them, to multidimensional “peacebuilding.” PKOs’ mandates have since become increasingly fragmented into a complex web of disparate tasks. Beyond security-related tasks, such as protecting civilians and overseeing disarmament and demobilization, mandates also include peacebuilding tasks, such as reforming security sector institutions, as well as “cross-cutting” tasks, such as promoting the rights of women and children (Paris and Sisk, 2009). These tasks are ambitious, political, and sometimes deeply conflicting (Paris, 2004). The UNSC, however, has often ignored considerations about feasibility when designing fragmented mandates (Lipson, 2010). Scholars have suggested that fragmented mandates may be more difficult to implement (Howard, 2019; Paris, 2009). To date, however, the consequences of mandate fragmentation for either peacebuilding- or security-related tasks has not been systematically theorized or tested.

We argue that fragmented mandates are problematic because they exacerbate principal-agent problems between PKOs and their principals, and coordination problems within PKOs themselves. For PKOs’ principals, monitoring the implementation of even a few similar activities is challenging in the “fog of peace”—the unpredictable and rapidly evolving dynamics that accompany transitions from civil war (Guéhenno, 2015). Monitoring a much more diverse set of activities is much harder, exacerbating information asymmetries. More fragmented mandates may also require that peacekeepers pursue contradictory goals simultaneously (Jarstad and Sisk, 2008; Paris, 2004), increasing the risk that the interests of the PKO will diverge from the interests of its principals.

In Cambodia, for example, the UNSC tasked UNTAC with both peacebuilding- and security-related tasks, i.e. administering elections and disarming the parties to the conflict. These two tasks—elections and disarmament—worked at cross purposes, since elections raised the prospect of unfavorable shifts in power, which made some factions reluctant to disarm and others reluctant to participate in elections. UNTAC therefore focused more narrowly on holding elections (Stedman, 1997, 35); indeed, about half a year before elections were held, the Special Representative to the Secretary-General (SRSG) announced that the mission would suspend disarmament altogether (United Nations, 2019). Cambodia is by no means unique. Fragmented mandates often include

tasks that conflict with the priorities of PKOs at any given time, causing PKO agents to delay or abandon tasks desired by the principals (in UNTAC's case, disarmament before elections). Agency slippage of this sort is likely to impede process performance.

Mandate fragmentation also hinders coordination within PKOs. Fragmented mandates increase the number of PKO sections and units and other UN entities involved in mandate implementation. From a purely practical perspective, it is hard to coordinate the activities of a large number of agencies operating in the same mission in the same country at the same time. These practical problems alone may hinder mandate implementation. More fragmented mandates may also reflect disparate goals and values within the PKO, increasing the risk of culture clashes and aggravating coordination problems (Paris, 2009). For example, Civil Affairs units generally want to build close working relations with local authorities to resolve communal conflicts, at the same time that Human Rights units are tasked with monitoring and responding to human rights complaints lodged against these very same local authorities (Veit, 2011). In these situations, human rights promotion may undermine or delay implementation of communal conflict resolution, and vice versa.

Cultural contestation tends to be starkest between uniformed and civilian personnel, and fragmented mandates likely exacerbate the resulting coordination problems. For example, a range of demanding security-related tasks made NATO's military forces in Bosnia reluctant to lend their support to civilian peacebuilding initiatives, especially because the NATO mandate did not oblige military commanders to do so (Cousens, 1997, 805-808). A less fragmented mandate with a clearer focus on peacebuilding may unify civilian and military efforts and thus simplify mandate implementation. Fragmented mandates may also aggravate turf wars by instigating bureaucratic quarrels and fomenting ambiguity about who is responsible for which task. In sum, fragmented mandates exacerbate coordination problems by multiplying the number of entities whose actions must be coordinated (Lipson, 2010), increasing the risk of culture clashes and turf wars, and ultimately undermining process performance in both security- and peacebuilding-related tasks. We therefore expect that:

**Hypothesis 1:** Mandate fragmentation decreases process performance on security-related tasks.

**Hypothesis 2:** Mandate fragmentation decreases process performance on peacebuilding-

related tasks.

## 2.2 Violence in the field of operations

PKOs have long been authorized to use force under Chapter VII of the UN charter. But in recent decades they have increasingly been deployed to active conflict zones where there is no peace to keep (Karlsrud, 2015). The hostile environments in which PKOs now operate may undermine their ability to implement some of the tasks assigned to them. Much like mandate fragmentation, violence risks intensifying the principal-agent and coordination problems that are already inherent to peacekeeping. During ongoing conflict, PKOs often become targets of aggression (Fjelde, Hultman, and Bromley, 2016; Lindberg Bromley, 2018) because they are more likely to be perceived not as impartial forces but as warring parties in the eyes of belligerents, and perhaps the population as well (Howard and Dayal, 2018; Rhoads, 2016). Violence may exacerbate interest divergence between PKOs and their principals as PKOs shift focus away from peacebuilding and towards protecting civilians and their own personnel from imminent physical harm.

In the most extreme cases, violence may induce peacekeepers to privilege self-preservation over *all* mandated tasks, including even protection of civilians, as the incident in Juba (described in the introduction) illustrates. In most cases, however, violence is not so extreme as to cause the mission to “bunkerize” completely. Rather, conflict creates an incentive for the PKO to prioritize certain tasks over others. In particular, faced with the threat of violence, peacekeepers will reorient their attention away from peacebuilding-related tasks and towards the security-related tasks that they deem necessary to protect civilians and repel or respond to attacks. This shift in priorities may foment interest divergence between the PKO and its principals, and may cause disparate mandate components to work at cross purposes. For example, in DRC and South Sudan, PKOs have been tasked with supporting the expansion of state authority nationwide (a peacebuilding-related task) while simultaneously protecting civilians (a security-related task) from abuses perpetrated by the very same states whose authority is being expanded (Williams, 2011). In these cases, the UNSC’s interest in state consolidation may clash with the PKO’s desire to keep civilians safe. Perhaps unsurprisingly, in the case of South Sudan, the PKO decided to abandon statebuilding altogether and focus instead on civilian protection.

Violence also exacerbates coordination problems within missions by requiring civilian staff to

harmonize their activities with uniformed personnel. During ongoing armed conflict, civilian staff can implement peacebuilding-related tasks only by relying on protection from UN military and police contingents. Beyond the sheer logistical challenges of coordinating the actions of civilian and military personnel, close contact between a PKO’s military and civilian components increases the risk of organizational culture clashes—a perennial concern in the literature on civil-military relations (Baumann, 2008). Coordination may become especially fraught if civilian staff believe uniformed personnel are encroaching on humanitarian “space,” or, conversely, if uniformed personnel believe civilian staff are exposing soldiers to unnecessary risks. For example, when the military component of MONUC in the DRC started forcefully disarming rebel groups, humanitarian agencies within and outside the mission distanced themselves from MONUC troops, thereby hampering the implementation of humanitarian relief activities (De Coning, 2005). In sum, violence in the field of operations forces PKOs to shift focus from long-term peacebuilding priorities to the short-term exigencies of protecting themselves and civilians from harm. This shift exacerbates principal-agent and coordination problems when implementing peacebuilding-related tasks. We therefore hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 3:** Violence increases process performance on security-related tasks.

**Hypothesis 4:** Violence decreases process performance on peacebuilding-related tasks.

### 3 Research design

#### 3.1 Data

We examine the determinants of process performance for all 12 multidimensional Chapter VII PKOs in Africa deployed since the publication of the Brahimi Report in 2000, which triggered the addition of many more tasks to the peacekeeping portfolio.<sup>4</sup> Our unit of analysis is the country-month. We have constructed two new datasets for our analyses: the Peacekeeping Mandates dataset (PEMA)

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<sup>4</sup>These PKOs include MINURCAT in Chad, MINURCA and MINUSCA in the Central African Republic, MINUSMA in Mali, MONUC and MONUSCO in DRC, ONUB in Burundi, UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, UNMIS in Sudan, UNMISS in South Sudan, UNOCI in Cote d’Ivoire, and UNMIL in Liberia. We record mandates and activities for MINURCAT in Chad rather than Chad and the Central African Republic.

and the Peacekeeping Activities dataset (PACT). PEMA includes information on 39 different activities that UNSC resolutions mandate PKOs to pursue from 1998 to 2016. For each mandated activity, we record two categories of engagement: (1) monitoring and (2) assisting or implementing. The dataset includes “founding” resolutions that establish a PKO, resolutions that extend the mandate of a PKO, resolutions adding or subtracting activities, and resolutions completely overhauling the mandate. We assume that the UNSC still authorizes previously mandated activities if not otherwise mentioned in a new resolution.

PACT provides data on 37 different activities that PKOs pursue in the field. For each activity, we record PKOs’ level of engagement on an eight-point scale: (1) monitoring, (2) outreach (e.g. to civilians or civil society organizations), (3) meeting, (4) advocating, (5) assisting (e.g. through training), (6) providing material support, (7) implementing (without host state involvement), and (8) sanctioning. PACT draws on 476 UNSG progress reports, covering 25 PKOs in 17 countries in sub-Saharan Africa from 1989 to 2016. Progress reports are published three to seven times per year. If an activity is mentioned in a report, we assume that this activity is implemented throughout the reporting period, and record it for each month in the reporting period. To maximize data quality, over one-third of reports (selected at random) were double- or triple-coded. Inter-coder reliability checks indicate over 70% inter-coder reliability for all variables in our analysis and over 80% inter-coder reliability for 85% of the variables.<sup>5</sup>

These two datasets complement and extend recent efforts to better understand the dynamics of peacekeeping on the ground. Dorussen and Gizelis (2013) have compiled event data on PKO activities in Africa, but their dataset stops in 2005 and thus omits some of the most ambitious and innovative activities that PKOs have pursued over the last two decades, as well as some of the most multidimensional mandates. By including all post-Brahimi missions, our updated sample includes a more homogeneous group of missions belonging to the same “generation” of PKOs. Researchers have also collected data on mandated activities, but focus either on more aggregated sets of activities (Diehl and Druckman, 2017; Steinert and Grimm, 2015) or on particular activities, such as civilian protection (Hultman, 2010). Our data on mandated activities are both more detailed and more comprehensive.

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<sup>5</sup>The reports always follow a similar format, facilitating data entry and allowing for direct cross-country and over-time comparisons.

The PACT and PEMA datasets are not without limitations. For PACT, UNSG progress reports may exclude activities that are considered minor or routine (Sannerholm et al., 2012), or may emphasize activities that the PKO believes best reflect its achievements (Clayton et al., 2017), though we are unaware of any systematic evidence of such a bias. Bureaucratic language and overuse of the passive voice may also obscure the nature and intensity of the activities being pursued, or the identity of the actor pursuing them.<sup>6</sup> Fortunately, however, the structure of the UNSG progress reports used for PACT and the UNSC resolutions used for PEMA are very similar, facilitating comparison for purposes of this paper. UNSG progress reports describe the extent to which PKOs implement their mandates, and so are usually structured around mandated tasks. Progress reports and mandates are also written by UN bureaucrats who employ similar terms and expressions. These parallels are especially important for operationalizing our dependent variables, as described below.

Another potential limitation is that PKO mandates generally do not prioritize tasks in any discernible way. This is especially problematic for PEMA. In some cases there may be a tacit understanding about the rank order of priorities between the UNSC and the PKO, or between the PKO and the host government. PEMA will not capture these idiosyncrasies. As discussed above, however, unless this tacit understanding is shared by all relevant stakeholders (including the UNSC, troop-contributing countries, the host government, and the various UN agencies operating within the PKO), then failures of process performance may jeopardize the PKO’s legitimacy even if they are concentrated in tasks that one or more stakeholders view as lower priority. Nonetheless, as a robustness check, in Appendix A.3 we show that our results do not change when we exclude protection of civilians—a potentially high priority task—from our measure of process performance on security-related tasks.

### 3.2 Dependent variables

We operationalize our dependent variable using two indices designed to capture process performance on security- and peacebuilding-related tasks. We measure process performance by comparing mandated tasks as specified in UNSC resolutions (using PEMA) to actual activities on the ground as described in UNSG reports (using PACT). A total of 35 tasks and activities are recorded in both

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<sup>6</sup>In most cases we can infer whether the PKO itself was responsible for pursuing the activity described. We do not code more ambiguous cases.

PACT and PEMA. Our measure of process performance is constructed in three steps. First, we use PEMA to determine which of the 35 tasks a given PKO was mandated to assist with or implement in a given month. Second, we use PACT to determine whether the PKO actually implemented or assisted with each mandated task in that same month.<sup>7</sup> Third, we calculate the proportion of mandated tasks that the PKO implemented or assisted with in a given month.

We calculate this proportion for security- and peacebuilding-related tasks separately. Security-related tasks include disarmament and demobilization, reintegration, control of small arms and light weapons, demilitarization, arms embargo assistance, civilian protection, ceasefire assistance, and peace deal assistance. Peacebuilding-related tasks include police reform, military reform, justice sector reform, transitional justice, prison reform, border control, demining, natural resource management, extension of state authority, democratization, electoral assistance, voter education, political party assistance, civil society assistance, media assistance, assistance to reconciliation processes, economic development, humanitarian relief, public health, refugee assistance, and legal reform. This classification into security- and peacebuilding-related tasks reflects peacekeepers' understanding of their own mandates. Indeed, the UN's pre-deployment training programmes for civilian, police, and military personnel use these same categories to explain the nature of different peacekeeping activities (United Nations Integrated Training Service, 2017). Figures A.3 and A.4 (Appendix, Section A.7) illustrate temporal variation in security-related and peacebuilding-related process performances in all missions in our sample.

There is also a third category of tasks related to “cross-cutting” issues that PKOs are supposed to integrate into all of their security- and peacebuilding-related activities. The UN uses this category to refer to four tasks, namely human rights promotion, protection of children, prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, and gender mainstreaming. In practice, however, there is often substantial variation in how these cross-cutting tasks are operationalized. For instance, one mission may put human rights at the center of all of its activities, while another may address human rights in only a small subset of activities (e.g. police reform). Our measure of process performance—implemented activities as a share of mandated activities—cannot capture these nuances (i.e. the number of security- and peacebuilding-related tasks that also include cross-cutting tasks), and we

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<sup>7</sup>We omit other types of engagement recorded in PACT—monitoring, meeting, conducting outreach, advocating, and sanctioning—since these are less likely to be included in mandates.



opt to exclude cross-cutting tasks from our outcome measures.<sup>8</sup> We do, however, include cross-cutting tasks in our measure of mandate fragmentation, since these tasks contribute to the diversity of agencies involved and the variety of goals pursued in any given PKO. Cross-mission trends in tasks compositions across the three domains are described in Figure A.5 (Appendix, Section A.7).

### 3.3 Independent variables

Our theoretical framework focuses on two factors that we expect are especially likely to affect PKO process performance.<sup>9</sup> The first is the fragmentation of PKO mandates. To operationalize mandate fragmentation, we measure the degree of diversity in mandated tasks across three substantively disparate domains: security-related tasks, peacebuilding-related tasks, and cross-cutting tasks. We construct this measure by drawing on the “fractionalization” index used to estimate ethnic diversity, and originally designed to measure firms’ concentration and competition within a market (Herfindahl, 1950; Posner, 2004).<sup>10</sup> Overall, we expect that mandate fragmentation decreases peacekeepers’ performance on both security- and peacebuilding-related tasks (Hypotheses 1 and 2). Our second independent variable is the intensity of ongoing conflict, which we measure as the number of violent events—including battles, incidents of violence against civilians, and remote violence—from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset (ACLED) (Raleigh et al., 2010). We exclude acts perpetrated by protesters and rioters because these acts tend to be less severe. At least one violent event takes place in 69% of the country-month observations in our sample. In Figure A.6 and A.7 (Appendix, Section A.7), we show trends in mandate fragmentation and violence in all missions in our sample.

By way of illustration, Figure 1 depicts how changes in process performance for UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone relate to changes in mandate fragmentation and violence in the field of operations. The top graphs show trends in the fragmentation of UNAMSIL’s mandate over time (dotted line).

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<sup>8</sup>For completeness, we report results for cross-cutting process performance in Appendix A.2.

<sup>9</sup>Our hypotheses focus on the independent effects of mandate fragmentation and conflict. But fragmented mandates are likely to be even harder to implement in settings of ongoing conflict. In our exploratory analyses in Appendix A.4, we find suggestive evidence for such an interaction effect.

<sup>10</sup>Mandate fragmentation is thus calculated as  $\pi_j = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^N s_{ij}^2$ , where  $s_{ij}$  is the proportion of mandated tasks in each of our three domains, i.e. security-related, peacebuilding-related, and cross-cutting.

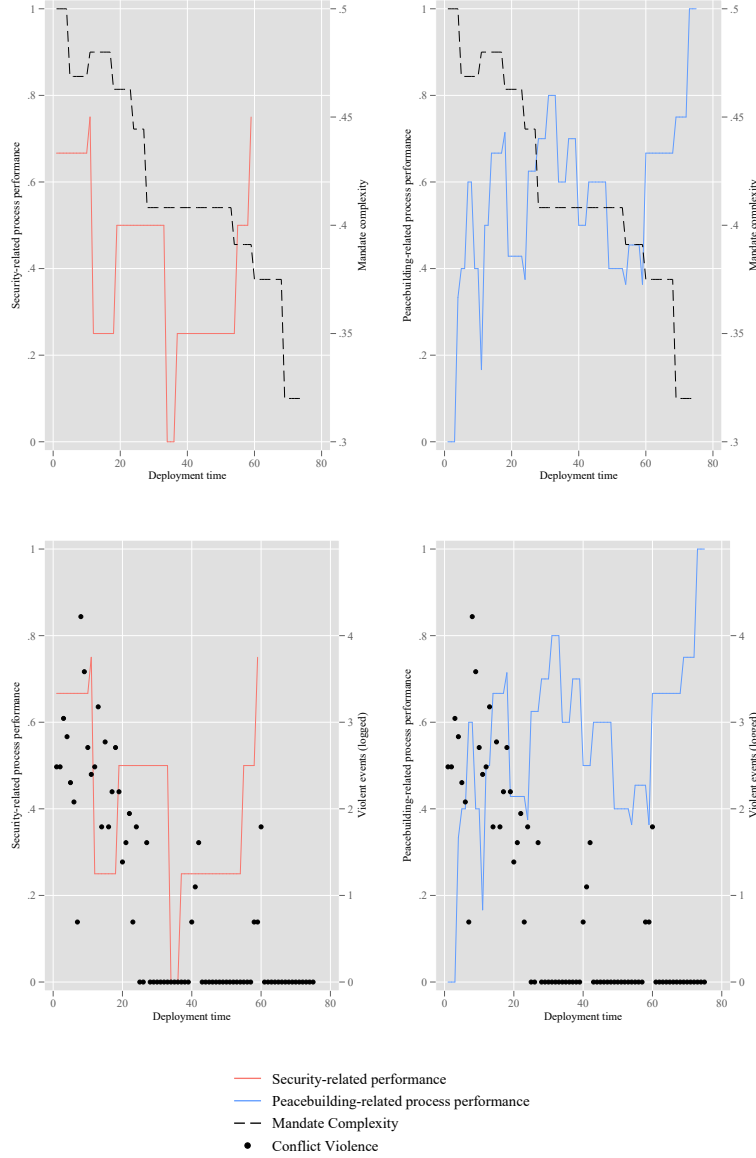


Figure 1: UN PKO process performance, mandate fragmentation and violence in Sierra Leone

UNAMSIL was given a roughly equal number of security- and peacebuilding-related tasks, but peacebuilding-related tasks steadily increased over the deployment period. Security-related tasks were dropped from the mandate in the 60th month. High mandate fragmentation in the first 40 months of deployment correlates with variable levels of security-related process performance and generally low levels of peacebuilding-related process performance. UNAMSIL's early years were characterized by a lack of internal cohesion and coordination (Porter, 2003). Conflicting goals and agents significantly affected the performance of the mission, which improved toward the end of 2002

(just before month 40) with the appointment of a Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and a restructuring of the mission toward fewer tasks and more integration across political, military, and humanitarian goals.

The bottom two graphs illustrate the relationship between process performance and violence. UNAMSIL was deployed during ongoing armed conflict between the government and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The bottom left graph shows that violence is positively correlated with process performance on security-related tasks; the bottom right graph, in contrast, seems to indicate that violence is negatively correlated with process performance on the (few) peacebuilding-related tasks in UNAMSIL's mandate. The period of instability that followed the RUF's kidnapping of UNAMSIL peacekeepers in 2000 also corresponds with a peak in security-related process performance, and with a mixed record of process performance on peacebuilding-related tasks. The drop around month 30 in security-related process performance and the relative improvement in peacebuilding-related process performance may be attributable to the new truce, at which point the government officially declared the end of the civil war.

### 3.4 Identification and control variables

We focus on two potential determinants of process performance in peacekeeping operations: mandate fragmentation and the intensity of violence. Neither of these variables is random, raising the possibility of selection bias. For example, if the UNSC assigns more fragmented mandates to missions in countries where civil war results in state collapse, and if process performance is harder to achieve in collapsed states, then we will be biased towards finding a negative correlation between mandate fragmentation and process performance. Alternatively, if the UNSC assigns more fragmented mandates to missions where the state remains intact (perhaps because the UNSC believes these countries will be more amenable to reform), and if state stability makes process performance easier to achieve, then we will be biased towards finding a *positive* correlation between mandate fragmentation and process performance.

There are, however, several reasons to believe the risk of confounding may be relatively low in our case, especially when we focus on mandate fragmentation. First, as discussed above, PKO mandates are the result of negotiations between members of the UNSC, which, in turn, may be driven as much by external factors (such as the interests of the P5) as by factors internal to the host

country itself (Higate and Henry, 2009). Second and related, the UNSC is sometimes criticized for drafting mandates that reflect broad trends in the UN’s priorities—for example, the relatively recent emphasis on corrections and justice sector reform as essential to peacebuilding (Blair, 2020)—rather than specific conditions on the ground (Carlson, 2006).

Third and also related, the UNSC has similarly been accused of adopting a “copy-and-paste,” “off-the-shelf” approach to drafting mandate language (Bellamy and Hunt, 2019)—an approach that is apparent in PKO mandates themselves, many of which prescribe virtually identical tasks for highly disparate countries of operation (Howard, 2019, 9). Finally and most important, mandates are sticky and tend to change only gradually over time; peace processes, in contrast, are highly dynamic, as are ongoing civil wars. In South Sudan, for example, it took the UNSC six months (until May 2014) to alter the mission’s mandate to focus on security-related tasks after violence erupted in December 2013. This suggests that mandate fragmentation is likely to be only weakly correlated with conditions on the ground.

Nonetheless, the threat of confounding remains. All model specifications include a set of control variables intended to mitigate bias. First, we include PKO-specific factors such as the total number of peacekeepers deployed to a country (International Peace Institute, 2019), as we may expect larger operations to perform better, all else equal (Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon, 2014). We add the number of months since deployment because we expect PKOs to learn over time, performing better as they become more familiar with their theater of operations (Howard, 2008). We also use the PEMA data to calculate the total number of security- and peacebuilding-related tasks in the mandate, and to code whether the mission had previous experience with a task (i.e. whether it was already mandated to implement security- or peacebuilding-related tasks in the past).

We also control for characteristics of PKOs’ operating environment. We include the duration of conflict using the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict dataset (Gleditsch et al., 2002; Pettersson, Höglbladh, and Öberg, 2019), since more protracted conflicts may create a particularly hostile environment for PKOs. We also control for population and GDP per capita using data from the World Bank (2019), and regime type as measured by Polity IV (Marshall, Jaggers, and Gurr, 2009), since more democratic regimes are more likely to accept third-party intervention (Russett, 2011), and thus to cooperate with the UN. We use country fixed effects to control for potential correlates of mandate fragmentation and conflict intensity that vary across countries but not over time (at least

not within our panel), such as colonial history or the infrastructural capacity of the state. We also include time fixed effects (yearly and then monthly) to control for unobserved time-varying factors that are common to all units in our sample, such as leadership changes at UN headquarters.

We also use an instrumental variables strategy to further mitigate confounding and better approximate the causal effects of mandate fragmentation on process performance. We use the average fragmentation of all PKO mandates in Africa as an instrument for mandate fragmentation in a given PKO, excluding that PKO from our calculation of the average.<sup>11</sup> Intuitively, despite the trend towards increasingly fragmented mandates overall, we expect the fragmentation of the average mandate to be negatively correlated with the fragmentation of any given mandate in any given year. Like the member states of which it is composed, we expect the UNSC to be reluctant to engage in too many complicated PKOs at the same time. Indeed, the debate about the dangers of “Christmas tree” mandates is motivated in part by concerns that the UN is engaging in more fragmented and thus more complicated missions than it can handle (Security Council Report, 2019).

The UN also seeks peacekeeping success stories,<sup>12</sup> and these are likely to become fewer and further between as mandates become more fragmented. Moreover, insofar as they involve politically contentious issues such as the rights of women and children, fragmented mandates may be more sensitive to negotiate. The UN may wish to avoid negotiating too many sensitive mandates at once. Fragmented mandates also typically require personnel from multiple UN agencies—not just troops, but also civil affairs officers, legal experts, human rights liaisons, etc. The UN has long struggled to mobilize even relatively small numbers of personnel to fill these positions (United Nations General Assembly, 2000a). With multiple fragmented mandates already in the field, the UN may opt to simplify new or revised mandates in order to avoid stretching its human resources too thin. Finally, fragmented mandates are expensive to implement,<sup>13</sup> and the UN may try to limit the fragmentation of new or revised mandates in order to contain costs. As a report from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) warns, financial constraints threaten the UN’s

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<sup>11</sup>In other words, if there are  $n$  PKOs in year  $t$ , then for any given PKO  $i$  we take the average fragmentation of the other  $n - 1$  PKOs in that same year.

<sup>12</sup>See <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/our-successes>.

<sup>13</sup>Mandate fragmentation and peacekeeping expenditure increase in parallel over time; their correlation is large ( $\rho=0.77$ ) and statistically significant ( $p\text{-value}=0.000$ ).

“capacity to effectively launch new missions and meet the needs of expanding missions” (United Nations General Assembly, 2011, 3).

The validity of this identification strategy hinges on two assumptions: independence and excludability. Independence will be violated if our instrument (average mandate fragmentation) is correlated with omitted variables that are also correlated with our dependent variable (process performance); the exclusion restriction will be violated if our instrument affects our dependent variable through some mechanism other than our endogenous regressor (individual mandate fragmentation). We view these violations as unlikely. As discussed above, a given PKO’s mandate is only loosely tailored to the conditions that complicate mandate implementation in the PKO’s theater of operations. It is even less probable that the mandates of *all other PKOs in Africa* are shaped by omitted determinants of process performance in a given PKO’s host country. Nonetheless, because there may be common omitted time trends that affect both mandate fragmentation and process performance (e.g. if both mandate fragmentation and process performance increase over time due to consensus-building in the UNSC and learning in the PKO), we control for these time trends with either year or month fixed effects.

The most obvious exclusion restriction violation is that as mandates become more fragmented and more expensive to implement, the resources available to any individual PKO shrink. In this case, average mandate fragmentation (the instrument) would influence an individual PKO’s process performance (our dependent variable) by reducing its budget (the possible exclusion restriction violation) rather than by influencing the fragmentation of its mandate (the independent variable of interest). However, the structure of PKO financing mitigates this concern. While average mandate fragmentation may increase the overall financial burden on UN member states, it is unlikely that this will affect the funding available for particular PKOs. Budgets are tailored to specific PKOs and their mandated tasks, and UN budgetary regulations do not allow cross-borrowing among PKOs (United Nations General Assembly, 2004, §12). In other words, PKOs do not have to divide a fixed pool of resources among themselves. As a result, the aggregate budget of all existing PKOs is unlikely to affect the budget available for newly mandated PKOs or PKOs with a revised mandate. If more PKOs with more fragmented mandates are deployed, the overall financial burden on the UN simply increases (Mir, 2019; United Nations General Assembly, 2004, 12). As a result, if average mandate fragmentation is already high, human and financial resource constraints, feasibility concerns, and

other factors will likely discourage the UNSC from adding more disparate tasks to newly issued or revised mandate. In other words, to the extent that average mandate fragmentation affects a specific PKO’s process performance, it is likely to do so through the fragmentation of that PKO’s own mandate.

## 4 Results

Our dependent variables are indices capturing the proportion of mandated security- and peacebuilding-related activities (from PEMA) that PKOs actually implement in the field (from PACT), ranging from 0 to 1. We first estimate OLS models of security- and peacebuilding-related process performance with country and year fixed effects, and with country and month fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the country level. Second, we present results from two-stage least squares (2SLS) models in which we instrument for mandate fragmentation in country  $i$  in month  $t$  using average mandate fragmentation for PKOs in all African countries other than  $i$  in month  $t$ . The 2SLS models are estimated using the Generalized Methods of Moments. We report results graphically for ease of interpretation. Corresponding tables are reported in the Appendix (Section A.5).

Figure 2 presents results from our two-way fixed effects regressions of process performance on mandate fragmentation. Consistent with our expectations (H1 and H2), we find that mandate fragmentation is negatively correlated with process performance on both security- and peacebuilding-related tasks. However, only the correlation with peacebuilding-related process performance is significantly different from zero at conventional levels. This suggests that peacebuilding-related tasks are more severely disrupted when PKOs are assigned a greater variety of tasks. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that peacebuilding-related tasks tend to be even more disparate than security-related tasks, and thus even more difficult to implement simultaneously. For example, promoting public health, reforming security sector institutions, advocating for reconciliation, and overseeing elections require entirely different forms of expertise and, potentially, entirely different personnel. While protecting civilians, disarming and demobilizing combatants, and controlling small arms and light weapons also require specialization, there may be more complementarities between these security-related tasks than exist between peacebuilding-related tasks.

Figure 3 shows the relationship between process performance and violence in the field of oper-

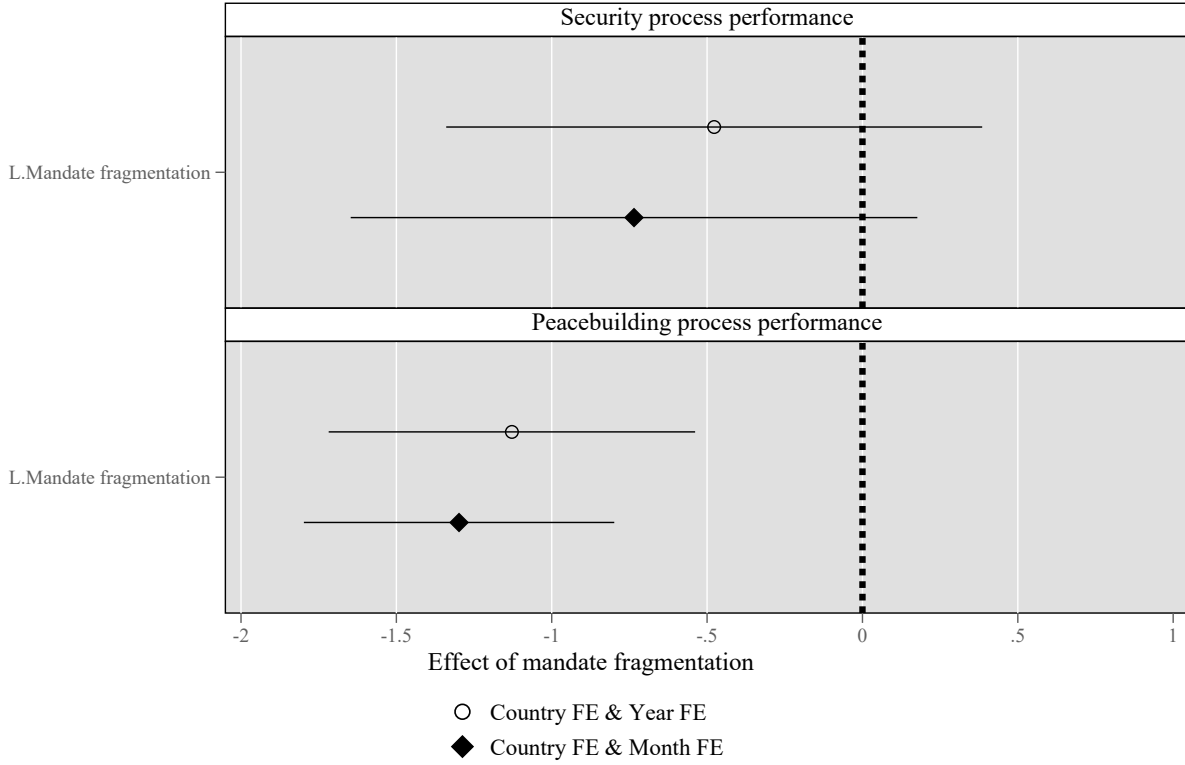


Figure 2: Effect of mandate fragmentation on process performances

ations. Our results are consistent with H4 but not H3. Consistent with H4, violence is negatively correlated with process performance on peacebuilding-related tasks. Inconsistent with H3, however, the correlation between violence and security-related process performance is substantively close to zero and not statistically significant at conventional levels. We investigate this further in Appendix A.1 by disaggregating violence by perpetrator. We find that violence is negatively correlated with process performance on peacebuilding-related tasks regardless of perpetrator, though only the coefficient on government violence is statistically significant. More illuminating, we find that rebel-perpetrated violence is positively correlated with security-related process performance while government-perpetrated violence is *positively* correlated with security-related process performance, resulting in the net null we observe in Figure 3.

One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that PKOs rely on the consent and cooperation of host governments to implement their mandates, and are almost always deployed with the expectation that they will engage host state officials and institutions in their operations. This creates



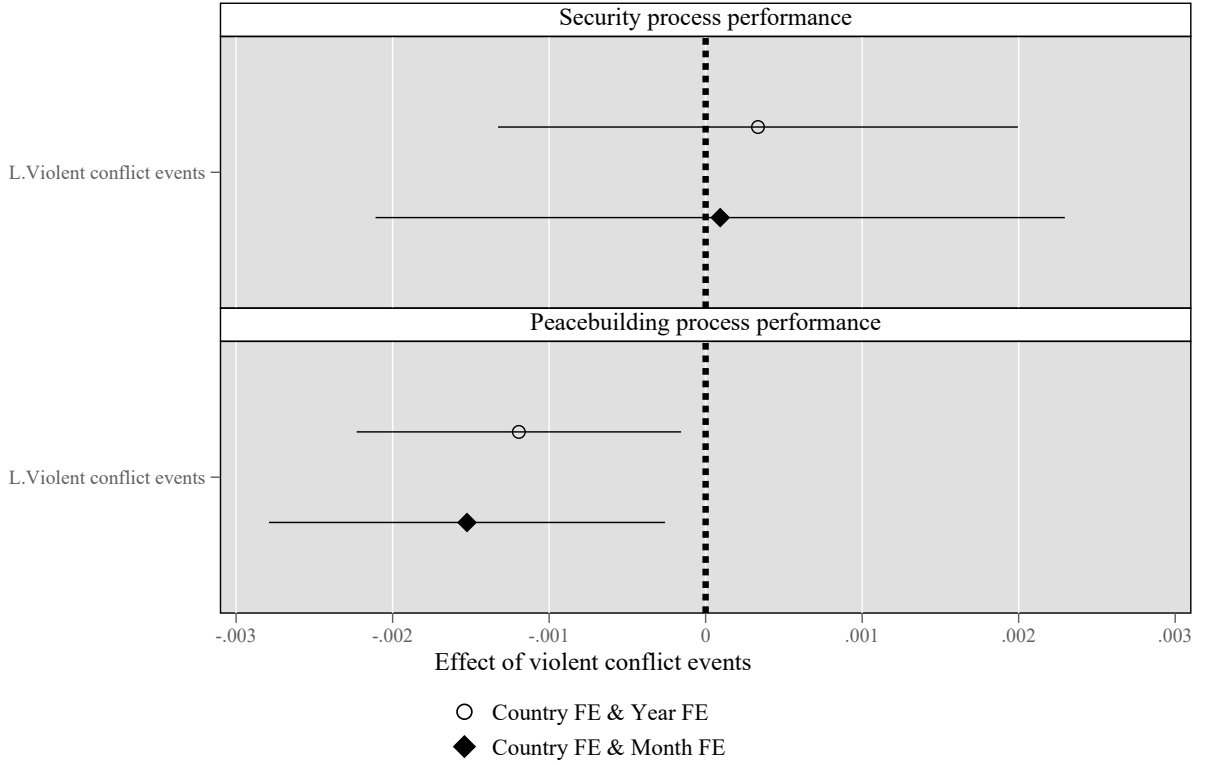


Figure 3: Effect of violent conflict on process performances

a dilemma for PKOs: attempting to control the actions of host government security forces (for example through forced disarmament or demilitarization) may jeopardize consent, but failing to do so may jeopardize the peace process itself. This helps explain why, “[w]hile the mantra may be of impartiality, the reality in a post-war country is that coercion is only used by peacekeepers against non-state actors, not normally against state actors” (White, 2015, 51). This also helps explain why PKOs are generally more effective at deterring rebel- rather than government-perpetrated violence (Fjelde, Hultman, and Nilsson, 2019). Given these trends, it is perhaps unsurprising that government-perpetrated violence diminishes process performance on security-related tasks, while rebel-perpetrated violence improves it.

Finally, consistent with our results above, our instrumental variables models in Figure 4 suggest that mandate fragmentation is negatively correlated with process performance on peacebuilding-related tasks. Mandate fragmentation is *positively* correlated with security-related process performance in our instrumental variables model, but the relationship is substantively small and not

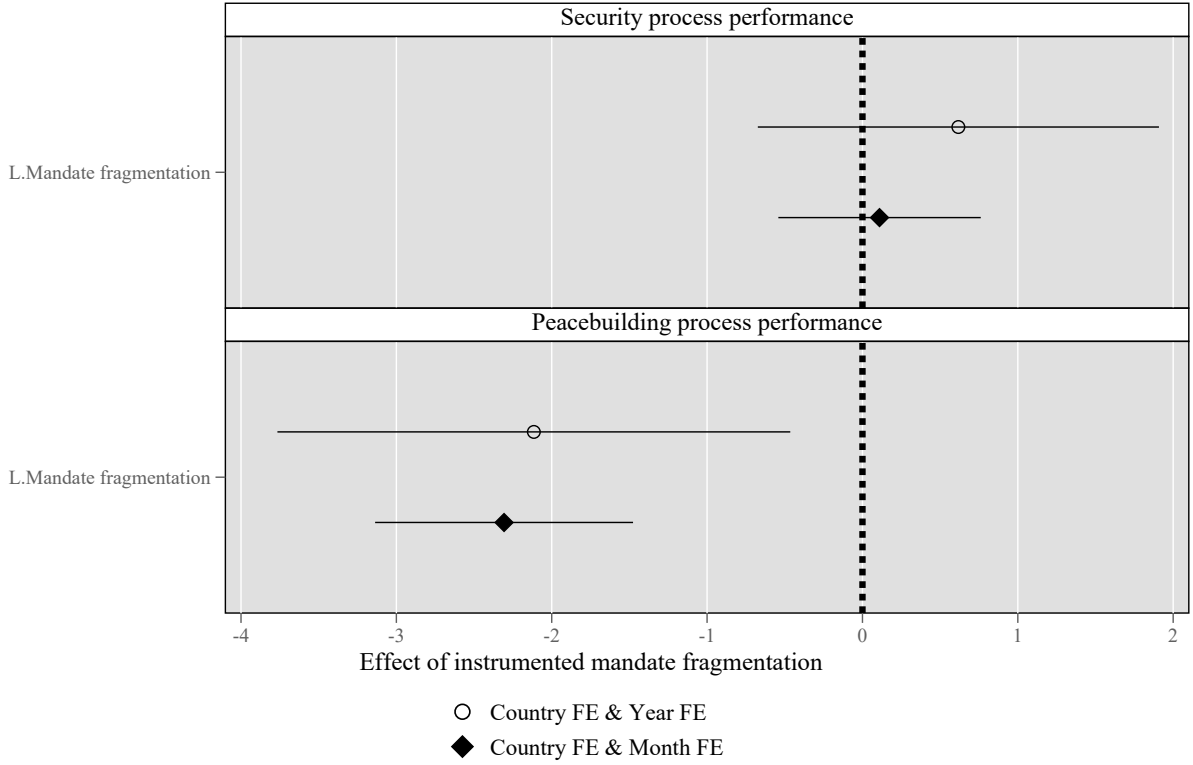


Figure 4: Effect of instrumented mandate fragmentation on process performances

statistically significant at conventional levels. As we show in the first stage regressions in Appendix A.5 (Table A.7), a given PKO’s mandate is negatively and statistically significantly correlated with the average fragmentation of all other PKO mandates, with a sufficiently large first stage  $F$  statistic to support the relevance of our instrument.

## 5 Robustness

In the Appendix, we include additional models to support our argument and the results we have presented so far. First, as mentioned above, in Appendix A.1 we distinguish between government- and rebel-perpetrated violence in the field of operations. Second, in Appendix A.2 we include results for process performance on cross-cutting tasks. Third, in Appendix A.3, we exclude the civilian protection task—a potential high priority task—from our measure of security-related process performance and results do not change. Fourth, in Appendix A.4 we explore the potential interactive effects of mandate complexity and violence. We find some suggestive evidence that violence strengthens the

negative effect of mandate complexity on peacebuilding-related process performance. Finally, to account for the possibility that PKOs are not able to implement their mandates effectively in the period immediately following deployment, in Appendix A.6 we subset our sample by excluding the first 12 months after mission authorization. Our results are substantively similar to those presented here.

This last robustness check also addresses potential concerns about the endogeneity of mandates to conditions on the ground (e.g. conflict). It is possible that mandates are more tailored to the security situation and other social, political, and economic circumstances in the host country when a mission is first deployed. Over time, however, mandates become increasingly detached from conditions on the ground, as indicated by the very small number of adjustments to PKOs' mandates over the lifespan of their deployments, even as the situation in the host country evolves, often dramatically so. Our results hold when we exclude these initial months of PKO deployment, when endogeneity concerns are potentially more problematic.

## 6 Conclusion

Under what conditions do international organizations adhere to their mandates? Under what conditions do they pursue the tasks they are authorized and expected to pursue? IOs like the UN are both autonomous actors and agents for the states that created them (Whalan, 2014, 22). Often their legitimacy depends not just on whether they produce particular results—what we call outcome performance—but also on whether they attempt to produce those results in the first place, by faithfully executing the tasks assigned to them in their mandates. Despite the importance of process performance for the legitimacy of these institutions, it remains understudied and poorly understood. Our paper aims to help fill this gap.

Focusing on UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs) in particular, we draw on principal-agent and constructivist accounts of organizational dysfunction to develop a new theory that helps explain variation in process performance both across PKOs and over time. While there are many factors that may affect process performance, we focus on two trends that have had arguably the most profound implications for the practice of peacekeeping in recent decades. PKOs are increasingly expected to implement fragmented mandates consisting of many disparate tasks, including in active conflict

zones where there is no peace to keep. We argue that these two trends are likely to diminish process performance. We test our theory using two original datasets on PKO mandates and activities, gleaned from publicly available UN records.

Our results are generally consistent with the predictions of our theory. First, we find that mandate fragmentation is strongly negatively correlated with process performance on peacebuilding-related tasks, and more weakly (and not statistically significantly) negatively correlated with process performance on security-related tasks. The negative correlation between mandate fragmentation and peacebuilding-related process performance holds when we use instrumental variables estimators to mitigate potential selection biases.

Second, we find that violence is negatively correlated with process performance on peacebuilding-related related tasks, but not security-related tasks. A more exploratory analysis suggests that the null effect on security-related tasks may be due to the countervailing effects of government- and rebel-perpetrated violence. We find that government-perpetrated violence is negatively correlated with security-related process performance; for rebel-perpetrated violence, we find the opposite. We speculate that this difference may reflect the constraints that PKOs face when attempting to curb government-perpetrated violence—in particular, their reliance on host state cooperation and consent. When rebels initiate violence, PKOs can more easily redirect effort and resources towards security-related tasks.

Taken together, our results suggest that the trend towards increasingly fragmented mandates implemented in increasingly unstable settings may have adverse unintended consequences for PKOs’ ability to execute the tasks that are expected of them. This does not imply that the UNSC should no longer assign challenging or ambitious mandates. Instead, our findings indicate that in settings where obstacles to implementation are likely to be especially severe, mandates should be adapted to context and avoid raising expectations that cannot be met. While observers both inside and outside the UN have warned of the risks associated with “Christmas tree” mandates implemented in ever more volatile conflict situations (Karlsrud, 2015), to our knowledge ours is the first study to analyze these risks systematically. Our results suggest that if these two trends continue, PKOs are likely to find themselves increasingly unable to implement the mandates assigned to them, potentially diminishing their own legitimacy in the eyes of both domestic and international stakeholders.

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