Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance to Protect Civilians and Troops?

The Swedish ISR Task Force in MINUSMA 2015–2019

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Sammanfattning

Mellan 2015 och 2019 bidrog Sverige med ett underrättelseförband (ISR) till FN-insatsen Minusma i Mali. Bidraget var del i en banbrytande underrättelsefunktion avsedd att bistå Minusmas militära befälhavare med relevant underlag för operationsplanering. Den här rapporten undersöker huruvida och på vilka sätt det svenska ISR-förbandet därmed understödde två centrala prioriteringar i nutida FN-insatser: skydd av civila och egenskydd. Studien visar att dessa två teman var kontinuerligt närvarande i det svenska förbandets verksamhet. Kombinationen av en trovärdig våldskapacitet och ISR-verktyg stärkte enhetens upplevda egenskydd, vilket i sin tur underlättade vissa egna operationer inriktade på skydd av civila. Det var mer komplicerat att få underrättelserna att färdas genom insatsens olika delar och därmed för förbandet att uppfylla sin tilltänkta roll som möjliggörare för andra Minusmaenheter. Uppfattningar om vilken slags underrättelse som bäst passade insatsen varierade över tid, vilket speglade utvecklingen inom det svenska bidraget, säkerhetsläget i Mali samt förändringar i Minusmas organisation.

Nyckelord: Fredsfrämjande insats, underrättelse, skydd av civila, egenskydd, ISR

Summary

The United Nations mission in Mali, MINUSMA, pioneered peacekeeping intelligence by establishing a function that directly serves the Force Commander with intelligence aimed at improving operational planning. Between 2015 and 2019, the Swedish Armed Forces took part in this development through the deployment to MINUSMA of an Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) task force. This report explores how the activities conducted by the task force related to the protection of civilians and force protection. The study finds that these two themes were indeed present throughout the Swedish ISR experience. However, interpretations of which type of intelligence would best serve these prioritised needs varied largely between rotations. Due to the limited availability of MINUSMA troops who were able to embark on operations beyond the camp, the task force at times took on assignments outside of the strict ISR portfolio. Even on these occasions, though, ISR assets facilitated their action. Making intelligence travel through the mission and strengthen the force protection or operational activities of other units has proven to be more complicated.

Keywords: Peace operation, intelligence, protection of civilians, force protection, ISR

Preface

The Swedish Ministry of Defence has commissioned a study on the Swedish ISR contribution to MINUSMA to the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI). The study has been carried out within FOI's multiannual research programme on International Military Missions.

This report is the fourth FOI analysis of the Swedish ISR task force. It builds on and complements this prior research, by presenting a panorama of the Swedish ISR role in MINUSMA from 2015 to 2019.

The authors would like to thank the twenty respondents who have contributed to the study. Each one of you has generously shared your experiences and offered valuable reflections on the role of intelligence in peacekeeping. A big thank you also goes to Dr Chiara Ruffa for reviewing an early draft of the report, to Dr Richard Langlais for editing the text, and to Lena Engelmark for assisting with formatting and layout. Finally, we are also grateful for all the support and input we have received from our colleagues at FOI's Defence Analysis Division.

Stockholm, June 2022

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List of Acronyms

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
ASIFU	All Source Intelligence Fusion Unit
FAMa	Forces Armées Maliennes/Malian Armed Forces
FC	Force Commander
FHQ	Force Headquarters
FOI	Swedish Defence Research Agency
FP	Force Protection
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IMINT	Imagery intelligence
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ONUC	Opération des Nations Unies au Congo
OSINT	Open Source Intelligence
PKISR	Peacekeeping-Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
PMESII	Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure and Information
POC	Protection of Civilians
SIGINT	Signals Intelligence
SWHQ	Sector West Headquarters
TAG	Terrorist Armed Group
TCC	Troop Contributing Country
TF	Task Force
UAS	Unmanned Aircraft Systems
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UN DOS	United Nations Department of Operational Support
UN DPO	United Nations Department of Peace Operations
UN DFS	United Nations Department of Field Support
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UN PCRS	United Nations Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WIT	Weapons Intelligence Team

1 Introduction

This study analyses whether and how the presence and activities of Sweden's ten Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) contingents (2015–2019) in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) contributed to the protection of civilians (POC) and force protection (FP). It also explores what circumstances affected the Swedish ISR contingents' ability to do so. The report thus brings together three themes of significant relevance to contemporary United Nations (UN) peace operations: intelligence, the protection of civilians, and force protection. This conceptual triangle sheds topical light on the UN's strengths and shortcomings in exercising its primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

As the UN deploys to areas of ongoing conflict, where there is no peace to keep, concerns over how to protect civilians and peacekeepers have become increasingly pressing. Guaranteeing the safety of civilians and mission forces is not an easy task, certainly not in the complex Malian context of multiple conflicts with prevalent asymmetrical threats. A challenge for POC in Mali is the fact that not only terrorists and other armed groups but also state forces commit violent acts against the population (see, e.g., Uppsala Conflict Data Program 2021). As for force protection, MINUSMA is known for having the highest death toll among active UN missions (UN Peacekeeping 2021). Operating in a conflict environment spanning a territory almost three times the size of Sweden, large parts of MINUSMA are occupied with their own force protection, and do little else for mandate fulfilment. If force protection is lacking, or faulty, military missions will be severely impeded in their activities and ability to fulfil their given mandates, including the protection of civilians. To move beyond basic mission functionalities to prevent or even react to unfolding threats requires adequate resources and tools for this purpose.

Recognising the challenges in modern-day peacekeeping, the UN has developed peacekeeping intelligence with the explicit aim of strengthening POC and FP (see Chapter 2). Intelligence has an intuitive role to play in this regard, since high-quality threat assessments are essential to being able to prevent and stop violence. Yet, *how* the connection between intelligence and these two crucial potential outcomes works out in practice in the UN context is not a given (see Nordli and Lindboe 2017, 25, also 27). Features within the mission, such as the type of intelligence produced, or coordination between different levels of command, as well as conditions outside of the mission's direct control, such as the emergence of new antagonistic threats, influence the extent to which ISR lives up to expectations when it comes to POC and FP. This report offers a contextualised understanding of the role of ISR in the UN's efforts to protect civilians and troops, through an in-depth analysis of practical experiences as identified in first-hand accounts from the Swedish ISR task force (SWE ISR TF)

to MINUSMA as well as in relevant official documents. The overarching research question guiding this investigation is:

How does ISR in the context of UN peacekeeping relate to the protection of civilians and to force protection?

The report's interest in the role of ISR for POC and FP in MINUSMA stems from two observations. First, both POC and FP have an inherent value: providing physical protection in respect of life. Beyond the specific tasks and detailed goals of a UN mission, linkages to POC and FP thereby constitute a litmus test of a contribution's imprint. Second, both POC and FP are issues that feature strongly in MINUSMA, including in its pioneering intelligence function. As the very first UN mission with an advanced multi-sensor intelligence architecture directly under the Force Headquarters (FHQ), MINUSMA has been dubbed an "experiment", "laboratory", and "pilot" of peacekeeping intelligence (Rietjens and de Waard 2017; Rietjens and Dorn 2017; Nordli and Lindboe 2017, 5). Given the high investments made in ISR in MINUSMA, an absence of observable outcomes for FP and POC in this case would suggest that the hopes placed in this model of intelligence have been overstated.

1.1 Methodology

Instead of conducting an all-encompassing evaluation of the Swedish ISR contribution to MINUSMA, this study adds to previous research by prioritising scrutiny of activities of potential relevance to the spheres of POC and FP. Furthermore, whereas the Dutch contribution has attracted some academic interest (e.g., Van Willigen 2016; Rietjens and Zomer 2017), beyond FOI's own evaluations, the Swedish MINUSMA legacy remains fairly unexplored.

The present inquiry is concerned with empirical linkages between ISR and POC/FP, not with assessing the *performance* of the Swedish contingents (see discussion in Samii, Brown, and Kulma 2011). There are two reasons why this study does not evaluate performance. First, it is a retrospective analysis of the combined experience of Swedish ISR in MINUSMA, which terminated in 2019. This, along with resource and time constraints, rendered systematic performance evaluation over time methodologically unfeasible. Second, due to a number of contextual circumstances, it is possible to perform tasks in a mission impeccably without leaving an impact outside of the mission itself. Hence, what the study puts to the test is not the quality of the Swedish contribution, but assumptions regarding the role of intelligence in peacekeeping. In pursuing this approach, the goal is to contribute to "'evidence-based' policy-making", adding relevant pieces of knowledge to the equation of "whether a particular policy is worth pursuing" (Samii, Brown, and Kulma 2011).

Focusing on the role of ISR for POC and FP, the study illuminates two non-trivial aspects of MINUSMA's presence in Mali. POC and FP are examples of

what Scriven (e.g. 1991) calls "*demonstrated* needs" or "standards of merit": objectively valuable phenomena against which an intervention – in this case ISR provided by the Swedish taskforce – can be assessed. Clearly though, SWE ISR TF is but one small intervention in a vast web of interlinked factors driving the multiple conflicts in Mali and, by extension, the safety of civilians as well as military UN staff. Put in methodological vocabulary, the study object is a very open system, as opposed to a closed system, where experimental laboratory conditions in the best case enable the detection of causal patterns. In consequence, for reasons of methodological feasibility, this study is not concerned with the causal impact of Swedish ISR on POC and FP at large. Instead, the study aims to acquaint the reader with the role of the Swedish ISR task force when it comes to POC and FP in concrete situations on the ground.

1.1.1 Material

The report builds its analysis on three types of primary sources:

1. twenty interviews with officers deployed to the SWE ISR TF, as well as to MINUSMA FHQ, the All Sources Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU), and Sector West Headquarters;
2. official documents from the UN and the Swedish Armed Forces;
3. data from UN Peacekeeping and from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP).

In addition, the rich literatures on MINUSMA, peacekeeping intelligence, POC and FP have helped to contextualise the Swedish case and ensure the overall pertinence of the report's approach to the topic.

The interviews were conducted during online video meetings and by regular telephone, as well as in personal meetings. The duration of the interviews ranged between 60 and 120 minutes. Both authors were present for 19 of the 20 interviews, whereas one interview was conducted by one of the authors together with another researcher. The interviews were held in Swedish. All translations to English of excerpts from interviews and of Swedish language documents are by the authors. In the text, interviews are referred to with numbers (1-20), unless the information belongs to a specific time period. In that case, the reference is made without stating the interview number.

The interviews followed a semi-structured format. Reflecting the time available, as well as the respondent's role in MINUSMA, fifteen to twenty questions were prepared before each interview. All of the interviews centred on the respondents' understanding of the relationship between ISR and POC/FP and how this relationship was expressed in concrete activities. Depending on how the conversation evolved, other questions than those prepared beforehand were included during the interviews.

The interview material has been instrumental in clarifying the perceptions and practices of the SWE ISR TF regarding the potential role of intelligence in strengthening POC and FP. Information gained from the interviews has been triangulated with statements in official documents and previous research. The authors have also consulted the final reports of individual contingents, to gain insights into continuity and change as well as to triangulate indications from other sources. UN Secretary General Reports, considered "the most regular and visible reporting on mission operations" (UNGA 2014), have provided valuable supplementary perspectives on how POC, FP and intelligence unfold in MINUSMA's practice. Quantitative data from UCDP and from UN Peacekeeping has been used to illustrate how violence against civilians and MINUSMA troops has evolved over time.

In both written sources and interviews, there is a possibility that the communicated messages are biased in ways that distort reality. In acknowledgement of this issue, all documents have been analysed taking their institutional origin into consideration, and both openly perception-oriented questions and questions pinpointing actual courses of events were stated in the interviews. Since all respondents have been 'actors' taking part in the phenomenon under study, their perceptions are highly relevant, even if they contain elements of subjective reasoning. The flipside of this advantage is that the study only covers the intervention side, not how other stakeholders – the Malian population, armed groups, or fellow peacekeepers from other countries – perceived the Swedish ISR efforts. Since the material is filtered through the Swedish experience exclusively, the report gives no indication of whether civilians actually felt protected or not. When it comes to the force protection of the Swedish unit, the situation is different, since the respondents were in this case simultaneously implementers and recipients of FP-oriented ISR activities.

Another methodological aspect is that some parts of the ISR experience are bound by confidentiality. Technical capacities (or the lack thereof) that are relevant for national defence are one example. This is not a problem for the present report, though, since which specific sensors the SWE ISR TF employed and with what effect fall outside of its scope. A more substantial concern is that the interview material may provide a selective picture of activities out of concern to not disclose sensitive information. Triangulation with other official sources and previous research has been helpful in assuring that any such bias has not distorted the analysis.

1.2 Definitions

This is a report about linkages between ISR and the protection of civilians and force protection in the context of UN peacekeeping. Thus, the three most central concepts of interest are ISR, POC, and FP. Since no universally accepted

definition is readily available for any of them, this section provides a brief discussion of how each term is used in the report.

ISR

This study defines ISR as multi-sensor enabled collection, processing, analysis, and reporting of information for military purposes. Hence, in the following analysis ISR is understood both as a capacity and a set of activities. As noted in the UN's *Military Peacekeeping-Intelligence Handbook*, specific ISR capabilities in peacekeeping will vary between missions, but they have in common that they are "designed to support information acquisition and peacekeeping-intelligence production" (UN DPO 2019a, 15).[1] The three elements of ISR are *intelligence*, *surveillance*, and *reconnaissance*. From a chronological perspective, however, it would be more appropriate to speak of RSI, since the information collected through specific reconnaissance tasks and persistent surveillance is what eventually becomes a processed intelligence product (see definition in NATO 2021).

Protection of Civilians

POC in UN peacekeeping can be seen as one operationalisation of Article 3 in the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* (UDHR), which states that "[e]veryone has the right to life, liberty and security of person" (UNGA 1948). In the context of an ongoing conflict, all three dimensions of this right are at risk. Since this report is concerned with the role of a military component, the SWE ISR TF, POC primarily refers to the protection of civilians against threats of physical violence in a conflict setting. This corresponds to the primary task given to the military pillar of MINUSMA in its mandates. However, MINUSMA is an integrated mission, where the military pillar is expected to support the civilian part of the mission. For situations in which the SWE ISR TF acted to facilitate for the civilian pillar, the understanding of POC is expanded to cover applicable aspects of human security.

Force Protection

Military personnel deployed to a conflict zone face numerous dangers to their safety, ranging from malicious acts to accidents, illness and natural catastrophes (see United Nations 2021). This report draws on conventional understandings of force protection, (e.g., UN DPO 2021; NATO and UK MoD 2014) and narrows down the definition to measures and means taken to safeguard the military pillar of MINUSMA – its personnel and installations – against hostile threats and hazards. Thus, due to the study's focus on ISR, protection from non-antagonistic threats to personnel or installations are exempted. Besides the inherent value of protecting peacekeepers from harm, force protection is a condition for carrying out other tasks.

[1] This report thus follows the UN's understanding that ISR may, and indeed often does, include HUMINT. This differs from a definition of ISR as a specific method different from HUMINT and open source intelligence (OSINT) (see Nordli and Lindboe 2017, 10).

1.3 The object of study

The research question of this report is addressed through a case study of the Swedish contribution to MINUSMA between 2015 and 2019. The contribution offers a suitable empirical setting for exploring the role of ISR in a highly complex integrated peace-support operation where the need to protect both civilians and peacekeepers is pressing. The hitherto rarely studied Swedish TF was the biggest of the ISR companies in MINUSMA, and was active for a full five years, in MINUSMA's Sector West.[2]

As one pillar in ISR MINUSMA, the Swedish TF took part in a pathbreaking development in UN peacekeeping. MINUSMA broke new ground in three respects. First, with MINUSMA, peacekeeping intelligence, as opposed to military information, was for the very first time established as a function directly serving the FC level. The principal formal role of all SWE ISR TF rotations to MINUSMA was to provide the FC/FHQ with a qualified basis for decision-making and operational planning. To fulfil this role, the ISR units had overlapping sensors at their disposal, creating opportunities for triangulation and thereby enhancing the validity of intelligence.

The second novelty was precisely the systematic use of sophisticated technical sensors in a UN mission. The Swedish contingents were equipped with advanced surveillance technologies, such as imagery intelligence (IMINT) from small and tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) as well as signals intelligence (SIGINT), and a Weapons Intelligence Team (WIT) for investigating remnants from armed attacks (Nilsson and Tham Lindell 2015; Hull Wiklund and Lackenbauer 2017). The same units from the Swedish Armed Forces were in charge of the specific sensors even as the responsibility for setting up the rotation changed between different types of units in the national armed forces (see table 1, p. 16). The SWE ISR TF could also supplement other sensors with photography from the Salvadorian helicopter in Sector West (Swedish Armed Forces 2018a). Alongside collection through technical sensors, the contingents continuously carried out traditional human intelligence (HUMINT) operations through reconnaissance patrols.

The third innovative element of intelligence in MINUSMA was organisational, as between 2015 and 2017 the ISR companies – apart from the SWE ISR TF in Sector West, the Netherlands (2014–2016) and Germany (2016–cont.) in Sector East – were grouped in the All Sources Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU). ASIFU was a specialised intelligence function led from the FHQ, but placed

[2] MINUSMA is organised with the force headquarters in the capital Bamako, and the forces organised in sectors based on geography. At the start of the SWE ISR TF's deployment, there were three sectors (West, East and North) (UN DFS 2015), which had expanded to five by 2019 (South, Central, West, East and North) (UN DFS 2019).

outside of the conventional U-branches of the MINUSMA headquarters.[3] In 2017, ASIFU fused with the U2 branch of FHQ. This restructuring occurred for three main reasons: (1) ASIFU was a club of Western nations[4] in a multilateral mission, considered by many as undemocratic in the UN context, (2) there were frictions and ambiguities in the division of labour between different parts in the mission's intelligence architecture, and (3) the qualified intelligence delivered by ASIFU was rarely 'actionable' for the FHQ. Post-fusion, U2 expanded to become the biggest FHQ cell (interview 17) and was in charge of distributing UN-contracted UAVs according to needs across the mission. According to Rietjens and de Waard (2017, 550), ASIFU was both "over- and underdesign[ed]"; seeking organisational refinement at the expense of identifying pragmatic solutions that would have been apt for the multilateral mission context. The FC gave tasks to ASIFU, and ASIFU further tasked the Swedish ISR (interview 18), whereas the intelligence function at the sectoral level (G2) was organisationally under the U2 branch of the FHQ.

Since this report deals with the conceptual triangle of intelligence, POC, and FP, the empirical universe is delineated to the ten Swedish contingents that operated as ISR task forces; Mali 01–Mali 10. Each contingent was in Mali for approximately six months, including leave for deployed staff. Throughout the period, the Swedish Armed Forces also had officers deployed to the FHQ and SWHQ. During ASIFU's existence, Sweden held the positions of Deputy ASIFU Commander and Commander of U2. Sweden kept representation at the U2 leadership after ASIFU fused with U2 in 2017. Perspectives from ASIFU HQ, MINUSMA FHQ, and Sector West HQ have helped to situate the Swedish contribution in the mission at large, and have illuminated how communication between the levels of command unfolded.

Different units from the Swedish Armed Forces were tasked with establishing the ten rotations to ISR MINUSMA. The normal size of deployment was set to 320 individuals, with a possibility to temporarily expand the contribution to a total of 470 persons if needed (Government of Sweden 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019a). As shown in Table 1, below, the intelligence battalion from K3 was in charge of the first three rounds (Mali 01–03), whereas the successor rotations were set up by units not specialised in intelligence within the national structure. However, at no point did all personnel in a deployment formally belong to the same unit of the Swedish Armed Forces. Instead, due to the multitude of competences needed, one single rotation could include staff from 24 different organisational units. In late 2019, Mali 11 began to relocate the Swedish deployment to MINUSMA

[3] U structure refers to the organisation of staff functions at UN mission FHQ level. The following staff functions are typically included: U1 Personnel, U2 Military Information, U3 Operations, U4 Logistics, U5 Future Plans, U6 Communications, U7 Training, U8 Engineer, U9 Civil-Military Coordination (United Nations 2018b, 115).

[4] The Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Estonia, and Germany all deployed officers to ASIFU HQ in Bamako (Rietjens and Dorn 2019).

from Timbuktu to Gao.[5] The relocation marked the end of Sweden's five-year contribution of an ISR task force to the mission.

Table 1. Units in charge of SWE ISR TF MINUSMA rotations

Rotation	Period	Regiment	Type
Mali 01	Jan 2015–Jun 2015	K3 Karlsborg	Intelligence
Mali 02	Jun 2015–Dec 2015	K3 Karlsborg	Intelligence
Mali 03	Dec 2015–Jun 2016	K3 Karlsborg	Intelligence
Mali 04	Jun 2016–Dec 2016	P7 Revingehed	Motorised infantry
Mali 05	Dec 2016–Jun 2017	P7 Revingehed	Motorised infantry
Mali 06	Jun 2017–Dec 2017	I19 Boden	Arctic rangers
Mali 07	Dec 2017–Jun 2018	I19 Boden	Mechanised infantry
Mali 08	Jun 2018–Dec 2018	Amf1 Berga	Amphibian rangers and amphibian infantry
Mali 09	Dec 2018–Jun 2019	P4 Skövde	Mechanised infantry
Mali 10	Jun 2019–Dec 2019	P4 Skövde	Mechanised infantry

For the specific purposes of this report, the SWE ISR TF in its totality is the object of study. The aim is to clarify linkages between ISR and POC/FP, not to make a systematic comparison of how different rotations have behaved or with what results.

1.4 Analytical grid

As previously pointed out, this report conceives of ISR as not only something a military unit *has*, but also as something a military unit *does*. This action-oriented approach is helpful in reaching the practical meaning of ISR: a phenomenon that is sometimes hard to grasp, since it is dense with technical lingo and bound with confidentiality.

The focus on activities, thus, is a way to explore whether ISR matters for POC and FP, as expected in doctrine and previous research. However, even at this level of concretion, "observational evidence alone cannot establish causal uniformities between variables" (Dalkin 2015, 2). To account for this circumstance, the study explores through which mechanisms the activities conducted by the SWE ISR TF connect to POC and FP. Disentangling mechanisms carries potential for future generalisation beyond the specificities of the Swedish case, since mechanisms constitute a simple theorisation of an observed relationship.

[5] The Swedish deployment to Gao is scheduled to wind up from the autumn of 2022, with finalised withdrawal by June 2023.

Previous research has indicated that the Swedish contingent not only functioned as a qualified ISR resource but that it also acted in a more traditional peacekeeping role (see Hull Wiklund and Lackenbauer 2017). The report picks up on this insight by paying attention not only to the pure ISR activities (i.e., collection, processing, analysis and reporting of information) but also to other activities by the SWE ISR TF that are of potential importance for POC and FP. The role of ISR is, thus, assessed back to front by considering the degree of ISR in these activities (right column in the table below).

Together, these considerations add up to the following matrix, which displays the main analytical axes of the report:

Table 2. Analytical grid

	Type of activities	Mechanisms	ISR-element
POC	What the SWE ISR TF did	How the activity connects to POC	Direct/ Indirect/ Absent
FP	What the SWE ISR TF did	How the activity connects to FP	Direct/ Indirect/ Absent

There is a rich literature on peacekeeping effectiveness, which has elaborated on mechanisms that trigger outcomes, and which circumstances facilitate or hinder these mechanisms from operating (e.g., Di Salvatore and Ruggeri 2017; Fjelde, Hultman, and Nilsson 2019: Fortna 2004; Nomikos 2022). Some insights and vocabulary from this largely quantitative literature are also of relevance to the more narrow scope of this report. The process of formulating mechanisms that pinpoint *how* activities may connect to POC and FP was approached in three steps:

1. broad collection of information, through interviews and mission documentation, on POC- and FP-oriented activities conducted by the SWE ISR TF;
2. initial mapping and clustered analysis of *how* these activities connected to POC and FP, or not, including an estimation of the role of ISR in the activities;
3. elaboration of the core items identified in the clustered analysis with the help of relevant literature.

This iterative exercise resulted in six different mechanisms inspired by previous scholarship but tailored to the specific scope of this report. The mechanism are described below, and will be further exemplified in the empirical chapters. Since the relationship of interest here concerns ISR's capacity to protect civilians and troops from harm, five out of six mechanisms have to do with threat mitigation. The exception is "amelioration", which seeks to directly improve the situation of civilians or peacekeepers without altering the threat.

Detection

Whereas threat detection is not in itself sufficient to protect civilians or troops, it is necessary in order to manage threats in most other ways. Here, intelligence has a strong and intuitive role to play from the outset. The *Military Peacekeeping-Intelligence Handbook* discusses how intelligence can strengthen awareness of "threat actors" detecting their "activities and individuals", as well as "deviations from regular patterns of movement", and prediction of "intentions and actions" (UN DPO 2019a, 101, 45, 64, 7). For peacekeepers to be able to protect civilians, credible and precise indications of what threats they face in different time perspectives are essential. In this respect, threat detection enhanced by intelligence is instrumental to proactive POC. Detection is equally crucial for force protection, as operations can be planned so as to either avoid or confront the threat. In addition, though, one could also imagine that learning about threats in-field may make units *less* inclined to leave the camp, if they are unprepared to handle such threats when encountered.

Distance

Creating distance to the threat has a direct protective effect, but it may be short-lived. In classical peacekeeping, UN missions have used 'interposition' strategies to create physical distance between warring parties and thereby protect civilians from harm (Fortna 2004, 485; Nadin, Cammaert, and Popovski 2014, 111). In a conflict with many involved groups, where some hide among civilians on purpose, creating distance to the threat is more complicated and necessitates sophisticated knowledge of the antagonists. In this respect, intelligence can facilitate creating distance to the threat. When the goal is to protect civilians, distance to the threat is mostly created by establishing a UN presence in or near population centres; thus pushing away antagonists or shielding civilians from attacks (on presence and POC, see e.g. Fjelde, Hultman, and Nilsson 2019). In a context in which the mission itself is a primary target, creating distance from the threat for force protection purposes may rather imply withdrawal to the camp or avoiding confrontation during operations.

Dissuasion

Dissuasion refers to convincing the antagonist to refrain from taking a future hostile action. An antagonist may be convinced either through soft methods, aka ideational persuasion, or through the display of military capacity, aka deterrence (see Howard 2019, 29; Beadle and Kjeksrud 2018, 103). What is characteristic of both instances of dissuasion is that the peacekeepers do not actually carry out "the coercive threat" (Bjerg Moller 2013, see the next category). What Mueller (2018, in Biddle 2020) notes for deterrence, that it "happens in the mind of the potential aggressor", also applies to persuasion. Moreover, ideational and material bases of action are hard to disentangle empirically, since the MINUSMA soldier is both armed and equipped with the

'principles of peacekeeping'. This report therefore operationalises dissuasion to cover both ideationally based persuasion and materially based deterrence.

Coercion

A fourth possibility is that a threat is reduced or neutralised through the imminent threat of or actual use of force. This scenario contrasts with the just mentioned situation of deterrence in that the antagonist is coerced to cease with an unfolding hostile behaviour rather than convinced to reconsider future hostile behaviour. There can exist an element of choice also in these situations; not everyone will retreat even when confronted with the threat of violence (see discussions in Pallikkathayil 2011; Murray and Dudrick 1995). Even so, coercion characteristically shrinks freedom to the extent that the adversary either succumbs or is rendered incapable of proceeding with hostilities. Within the parameters of UN peacekeeping, the use of coercive force is a measure of last resort, expected to follow only if dissuasion has failed or not been an available option. With UN missions mandated to use "all necessary means" to protect themselves and civilians, this particular mechanism has received considerable attention in previous research (see critique in Howard 2019, 13). However, indications are that "peacekeepers have rarely employed force to protect" (Beadle and Kjeksrud 2018, 101; also UNGA 2014). As for force protection, the use of force for self-defence when facing hostilities is as a standard granted to peacekeepers across different types of missions, in analogy with national law (see Stephens 2005, 163).

Containment

A fifth mechanism is containment, a label which was used by Rupert Smith (2006, elaborated by Beadly and Kjeksrud 2018) to signify barriers to hinder something from spreading. In this study, containment pinpoints the possibility that the threat is kept under check, by depriving the antagonists of some means of attack or hindering threats from further escalating (see Beadle and Kjeksrud 2018, 103). Containment may, for instance, function through the destruction or confiscation of arms or other resources, by creating demilitarised areas, or by holding individuals that constitute a threat liable in court. In this category, the threat can be regarded as partially neutralised, since the threat may re-emerge through new resources or recruitment of new members to armed groups.

Amelioration

The sixth and final mechanism, amelioration, is also loosely borrowed from Smith's 2006 typology, as elaborated by Beadle and Kjeksrud (2018) for POC. In the interpretation applied in this report, amelioration refers to efforts that directly aim at improving civilian life or force protection, without relying on military force or seeking to diminish threats. A logic of amelioration is at play when peacekeepers facilitate for civilian counterparts to reach people in need, or when peacekeepers themselves carry out community-serving action

of non-military character. Examples from Smith (in Beadle and Kjeksrud 2018, 103) include to: “deliver aid, put up camps, provide communications, build bridges and all other such constructive activities in aid of civilian life.” Applied to the case of FP, amelioration may for instance cover activities that serve to improve the force protection of other units, or to assist fellow peacekeepers in need.

1.5 Outline

The next chapter (2) situates ISR MINUSMA in debates on peacekeeping intelligence, POC, and FP. Thereafter, Chapter 3 presents the empirical study of how activities conducted by the SWE ISR TF connect to POC (3.1) and FP (3.2), as well as a discussion of the circumstances shaping these connections (3.3). The concluding chapter (4) draws some broader implications from the Swedish experience of ISR in MINUSMA for the understanding of promises and perils of peacekeeping intelligence.

2 Intelligence in United Nations Peacekeeping

For most of its existence, the UN has had a reluctant approach to intelligence, avoiding the term and instead speaking of information (see, e.g., Eriksson, Rekkedal, and Strommen 1996; Abilova and Novosseloff 2016; Häggström 2020; Hull Wiklund and Elowson 2017). In the context of traditional peacekeeping, which typically oversaw an agreement between sovereign nations, intelligence collection was understood as putting the UN's impartiality, and by extension the peacekeeping operation itself, at risk (Eriksson, Rekkedal, and Strommen 1996). In addition, feeding confidential information into missions contradicted the idea that the UN is not supposed to have any secrets (Eriksson, Rekkedal, and Strommen 1996; Dorn 1999). A related concern, buttressed by the lack of technical infrastructure, methods and routines, was that intelligence would only be shared with a limited group of allied countries, thereby potentially undermining the UN's genuine multilateral character (Eriksson, Rekkedal, and Strommen 1996). At the same time, two of its early Secretary Generals, Dag Hammarskjöld and U Thant, had already identified informational shortages as a liability in UN peacekeeping (Martin-Brûlé 2020, 1-2). Yet, they both guarded the distinction between information and intelligence, and in 1960 Hammarskjöld rejected the formation of a permanent UN intelligence branch.

Thus, the UN's road to establish an intelligence function of MINUSMA's multi-sensor, NATO-inspired type has been long and winding. Whereas early peacekeeping intelligence focused on open-source information suitable for sharing across Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) as well as with civil society (Carment and Rudner 2006), MINUSMA rather placed high hopes on high-tech sensors, and shared its information restrictively (see e.g., Albrecht, Cold-Ravnkilde and Haugegaard 2017). In recent years, the UN has formalised its approach to intelligence, publishing a policy on peacekeeping intelligence (UN DPO and UN DFS 2017), revised in 2019 (UN DPO 2019b, see Martin-Brûlé 2020), and a handbook for military peacekeeping-intelligence (UN DPO 2019a), as well as a handbook on ISR in peacekeeping (UN DPO 2020).

A crucial starting point on this long journey was the end of the taboo of intelligence, which came after the UN's blatant failure to protect civilians in Bosnia, Rwanda and Somalia in the 1990s (UN DPO 2019a). These tragedies unveiled several severe shortcomings in UN peacekeeping, and the lack of situational awareness and foresight was one of them. Thus, for instance, the UN Force commander in Rwanda, Romeo Dallaire, felt "'deaf and blind' […] without a substantial intelligence capability" (Dorn 1999, 415). The third concept of interest in this report – force protection – also featured strongly in these contexts, as the UN's passivity was partly due to force protection's not being

commensurable to such challenging situations. Hence, rather than boosting the UN mission in Rwanda to protect civilians from the quickly unfolding genocide, the mission was scaled down to a minimum to protect peacekeepers from harm (see Barnett 1997, 560).

One of the UN's hard-earned lessons from the failure-shredded 1990s was that "special intelligence skills were required in order to uncover hidden plans for aggression, ethnic cleansing, genocide, or attacks upon UN peacekeepers" (Dorn 2010, 277). In 1999, UNAMSIL (Sierra Leone) became the first UN mission to receive an explicitly POC-oriented mandate (Hultman 2013, 62). The mission included a multi-sources military information cell and was supported by intelligence capacity from the British Armed Forces (Ucko 2016). A year after UNAMSIL's POC mandate, the Brahimi Report of 2000 stated that "peacekeepers may not only be operationally justified in using force but morally compelled to do so" (United Nations 2000: 9). Alongside this core message, the report also emphasised the need to improve knowledge about conflict actors in a mission area (Nordli and Lindboe 2017, 5). Hence, improving informational flows was identified as essential for POC. The idea was that "intelligence and analysis capabilities" should optimally "better enable preventive action by peacekeeping forces *before* crises occur that threaten civilians and the peacebuilding process" (Holt, Taylor, and Kelly 2009, emphasis added). Such characteristically forward-looking analysis, "predict[ing] events or possible futures" (Nordli and Lindboe 2017, 11), is crucial for peacekeepers to be able to lie one step ahead of the threat.

Nowadays, almost all UN missions have a mandate to protect civilians (Nordli and Lindboe 2017, 25). The Security Council has placed protection of civilians at the forefront of increasingly robust mission mandates, in which 'all necessary means', that is, including deadly force if needed, may be used to protect civilians or mission troops. In linking POC to such robust action, the UN has diverged from the concept's origins in humanitarian non-armed protection of non-combatants (see Slim 2001, 326-327 for a critique; Karlsrud 2015 on robust peacekeeping). For peacekeepers to be able to proactively protect civilians, without putting themselves at unacceptable risk, they need a sophisticated understanding of antagonists and their modus operandi. This is where intelligence enters the picture, improving threat assessments and, potentially, facilitating mobility.

If the repeated failure to protect civilians in the 1990s sparked the UN's awareness of the need for enhanced information in missions, experiences from non-UN military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in the early 2000s informed the eventual design and implementation of advanced multisource intelligence in a peacekeeping context. According to Rietjens and de Waard (2017, 549), "[t]he main lesson derived from these missions was the need to not only gather intelligence that supports current military operations, but to also develop mid- to

long-term, comprehensive nationwide scenarios that take into account a broad range of societal influences, such as political, economic, and social dynamics". A central challenge in this regard, as identified in the Santos Cruz report on peacekeeper security, is to "transform intelligence into simple tasks and actions that boost security" (United Nations 2017, executive summary). Moreover, in Afghanistan and Iraq, as in MINUSMA, the intelligence concept included technologically advanced sensors. These are national assets that the TCCs do not wish to show to a broad audience, thus further complicating the transmission of insights for relevant parts of the mission to act upon.

The development towards advanced multi-sensor intelligence remains contested, with diverging positions reflecting "the 'division of labor' on UN peacekeeping between funders and troop contributors" (Martin-Brûle 2020, 5). Whereas the former states were in favour of NATO-style intelligence, the latter worried about the "'NATO-ization' of peacekeeping" and suspected "ulterior motives" from the Western initiators (Martin-Brûlé 2020, 5). As will be elaborated in the next section, despite the diverging understandings among UN members of the scope and role of intelligence in a UN mission, a NATO-inspired intelligence architecture, with ASIFU at the forefront, was established in MINUSMA (Nordli and Lindboe 2017, 5).

2.1 Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance in MINUSMA

The three interlinked trends of modern peacekeeping discussed above are all present in MINUSMA: (i) a robust mandate with (ii) a POC obligation and (iii) an innovative intelligence function. It is clear from the outset that intelligence was prioritised in MINUSMA "to help the mission counter the asymmetric threats faced by the mission personnel and the local population" (Karlsrud and Smith 2015, 4). At the same time, previous research has suggested that intelligence in MINUSMA has been more oriented to FP than POC (see Nordli and Lindboe 2017, 25). Whereas satisfactory FP is a necessary precondition for proactive POC, popular support suffers from a perception that "the blue helmets place their own security above that of civilians" (Tull 2019, 2). As reported by the Center for Civilians in Conflict (Smith 2021, 1), "the most common criticism of the Mission among Malians is that it does not protect civilians from armed actors".

According to Karlsrud's influential 2015 article on peace enforcement, intelligence is one of the capabilities that indicate that "the MINUSMA mission is becoming very robust" (2015, 47). Whereas MINUSMA has not become the "aggressive" counterterrorism mission that Karlsrud (2015) predicted some seven years ago (see Tull 2019), from the start it has been authorised to use "all necessary means" to carry out its mandate. Its mandate has expanded both

geographically and in substance over time. One important step was taken in Resolution 2295 of June 2016, requesting MINUSMA "to move to a more proactive and robust posture to carry out its mandate" (UNSC 2016c, §18). Whereas protection of civilians has consistently been a "priority task" in MINUSMA, until 2019 the mission had only one overarching "strategic priority": the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. With Resolution 2480 of June 2019, MINUSMA received a second strategic priority: "to facilitate the implementation of a comprehensive politically-led Malian strategy to protect civilians, reduce intercommunal violence, and re-establish State authority, State presence and basic social services in Central Mali, through the implementation of its mandated tasks" (UNSC 2019b, § 20).

As noted by Nordli and Lindboe (2017, 27), "intelligence is about supporting – in a relevant, timely, and reliable manner – the achievement of mission mandates." Hence, with POC as a part of MINUSMA's mandate, the intelligence function is "by definition" linked to POC (Nordli and Lindboe 2017, 25). Whereas FP is not foremost a goal but a condition of peacekeeping, the protection of UN personnel is a reoccurring task in MINUSMA mandates. Moreover, the Santos Cruz report on force protection (United Nations 2017), which discusses the importance of intelligence in some detail, was commissioned partly due to the high causality numbers in MINUSMA. The handbook on ISR in peacekeeping (UN DPO 2020, 29) provides the following concrete example of how ISR may promote POC and FP:

> "[W]atching a particular bridge using PKISR assets could confirm or deny if an armed actor intended to use it to cross with their forces. The continuous monitoring of indicators can help to prevent operational or tactical surprise".

Whereas intelligence has an intuitive role to play in supporting decision-making at all levels, there have been different views on which type of intelligence lends itself best to strengthening MINUSMA's mandate fulfilment. ASIFU was initially set up to provide big-picture assessments according to the so-called PMESII model, presenting mid- to long-term predictions based on developments in Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure and Information spheres. However, according to Rietjens and de Waard (2017, 537): "the Swedish unit featured a more military posture and preferred military intelligence to the other PMESII domains". In contrast to the Swedish "current intelligence", the Dutch ISR company stuck to protocol, focusing on broad information-gathering along PMESII lines, in Gao (Rietjens and de Waard 2017, 537). According to the commander of the first Dutch rotation (quoted in Rietjens and de Waard 2017, 542), assessing direct threats was of secondary importance:

> "Of course I would like to know when a bomb is going to explode, but what is more important for me is to find out who makes that bomb, who tasks that person, who creates the plan".

That the Swedish and Dutch contributions to MINUSMA interpreted the ISR role in different ways reflects that there was considerable room for manoeuvre, especially in the mission's early trial-and-error phase. At all levels, newly founded MINUSMA urgently needed to build awareness of the mission context. At the tactical level, taking decisions on how to conduct operations required precise knowledge about matters such as terrain, risk of improvised explosive devices (IED), or movements of antagonists. At the operational level, the allocation of troops necessitated insights into conflict trends, including where civilians were becoming exposed to increased threats. At the strategic level, the civilian and military leadership needed, inter alia, to follow developments in the implementation of the peace agreement or trends in the socio-political landscape. Hence, although the idea from the start was for ISR units to deliver actionable intelligence (a term further discussed below) supporting the FC's operational planning, the output of ISR units has alternated between intelligence of predominantly strategic, operational, or tactical relevance.

The creation of MINUSMA's intelligence function was not only a way to push this specific capability forward, it also stood for the return of Western states to UN peacekeeping (see Boutellis and Beary 2020; Karlsrud and Smith 2015; Karlsrud and Novosseloff 2020). In the peacekeeping literature, ISR is known as "high-end, low-risk capabilities" attracting Western TCCs (Boutellis and Beary 2020). Whereas these contributions began to decrease the gap between "those that finance and mandate UN peace operations and those that provide the boots on the ground" (Karlsrud and Smith 2015, 15), major asymmetries remain. Sweden was, for instance, the only European country deployed to Sector West (Boutellis and Beary 2020, 5). Other TCCs at the so-called super camp in Sector West included Burkina Faso, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Egypt, El Salvador, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Cambodia. As is further discussed below, as a well-trained unit with first-rate equipment, the SWE ISR TF came to act not only in its ISR capacity, but also in a more classical peacekeeper role (see Hull Wiklund and Lackenbauer 2017).

3 Sweden in MINUSMA 2015–2019

When the UN launched MINUSMA, Sweden at first intended to contribute an air transportation unit, an air security force [Sw: *flygsäkerhetsstyrka*], together with a national support element (Government of Sweden 2013). During the spring of 2013, the Swedish Armed Forces prepared for this assignment, aiming for deployment by October 2013. However, it turned out that the newly born UN mission was unable to receive the proposed contribution at that point in time. Instead, in February 2014, the UN Secretariat issued a formal query for Sweden to become part of ASIFU, MINUSMA's innovative intelligence function. Government proposal 2013/14:189 (Government of Sweden 2014), approved in Parliament on the 2nd of June 2014, answered positively to this request, making a long-term commitment to contribute to MINUSMA. This commitment was repeated in the government proposals of subsequent years (Government of Sweden 2015, 2016, 2017).

Thus, in the late autumn of 2014, the engineer company (from *Göta ingenjörregemente*) Mali 00 landed in Mali and began the logistically challenging construction of Camp Nobel, a section of the integrated 'super camp' in Timbuktu where the Swedish contingent would be based throughout the period. In early 2015, the first ISR contingent, Mali 01, took over. The Commander of the rotation, Carl-Magnus R Svensson, wrote as follows on the official blog (Swedish Armed Forces 2015a):

> "When I took over command of the Swedish contingent in Mali, I said that now we have the best camp in entire Mali, but now we cannot be too home-loving [Sw: *hemkära*] because the assignment needs to be solved outside of camp, where those who need our protection reside and live".

With Mali 01, the Swedish ISR experience began. As this chapter demonstrates, however, there is not one shared balance sheet for the ten rotations of SWE ISR TF. Instead, the Swedish ISR contribution to MINUSMA evolved and changed character over time, as did the mandates guiding its work, the organisation of MINUSMA's intelligence function and the situation for civilians and troops in Mali. Whereas there were some constants throughout the period, such as a challenging operational environment, vast distances, and an under-resourced mission, there was considerable diversity in how ISR TF handled its role.

The timeline below (Figure 1) presents a selection of milestones in the experiences of the ten SWE ISR TF rotations. These snapshots aim at giving an idea of the chronology of a few important operations and of some of the events that shaped the context in which the SWE ISR TF operated.

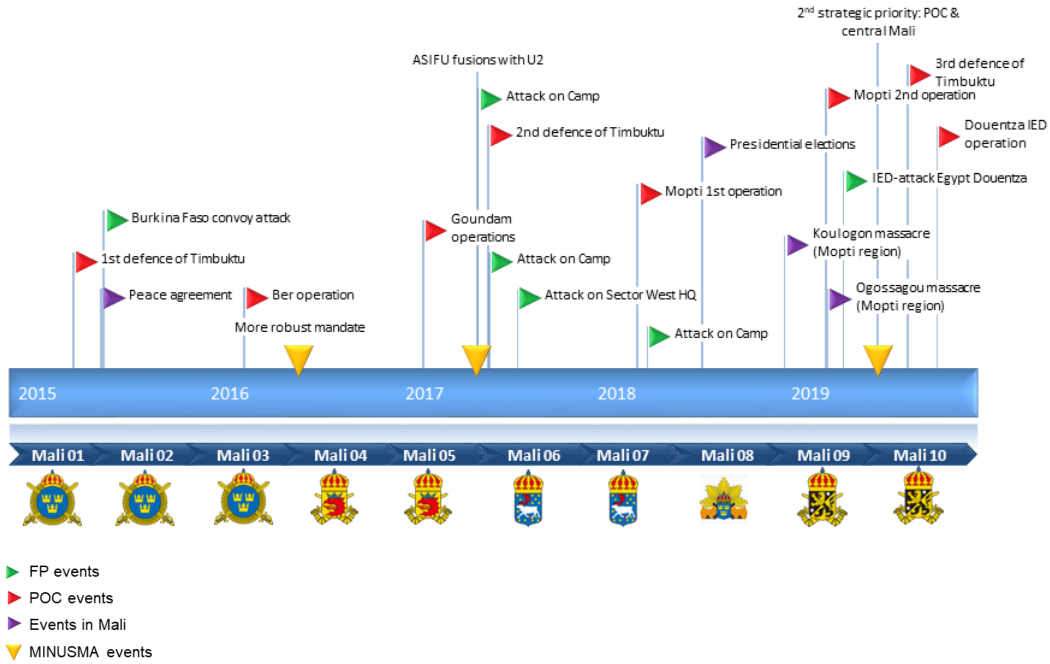

Figure 1. Timeline

3.1 Protecting Civilians

To protect civilians from physical violence is a core task given to MINUSMA in Security Council resolutions. It is also a measuring stick for the mission's ultimate real-world relevance, beyond ambitious mandates, handbooks and declared principles. Secretary General Reports provide numerous testimonies of concrete ways in which the mission seeks to exercise this duty. To give a few examples, civilians have been granted refuge at MINUSMA camps (UNSC 2015a; UNSC 2016d), MINUSMA has evacuated wounded civilians (UNSC 2015a; UNSC 2015b), as well as cleared public and private buildings from explosives (UNSC 2015b).

In addition, Secretary General Reports describe classical peacekeeping techniques employed by MINUSMA forces, such as establishing presence to deter attacks against civilians (UNSC 2015b), including through specific 'security zones' and 'safe havens', foot patrolling (UNSC 2016a; UNSC 2016d), and defusing tensions by communicating with local authorities and armed groups (UNSC 2015b). A central attribute of robust peacekeeping is the authorisation to use force to protect civilians. In a few instances, the Secretary General Reports describe situations in which MINUSMA "in accordance with the Mission's

mandate and rules of engagement" has used force to protect civilians or themselves (e.g. UNSC 2015a).

In conjunction with MINUSMA's development, and for reasons that may have little to do with the mission or its Swedish component, civilians have faced varying types and degrees of security threats during the period of study. These developments are relevant to the present study not as outcomes of the efforts of the SWE ISR TF, but as crucial aspects shaping the context in which they work. As elaborated by Beadle and Kjeksrud (2018), for POC efforts to stand a chance, they need to be matched to the type of threat that civilians face. For MINUSMA's first years, armed banditry was "the most significant threat against civilians" (UNSC 2015c; UNSC 2016a; UNSC 2016b). The Secretary General Report of December 2015 estimated that banditry stood for 75 per cent of all incidents around Timbuktu and Gao (UNSC 2015c). By 2019, threats against civilians had intensified in central Mali, where "activities of violent extremist groups and the increase in intercommunal violence" were the principal threats (UNSC 2019a).

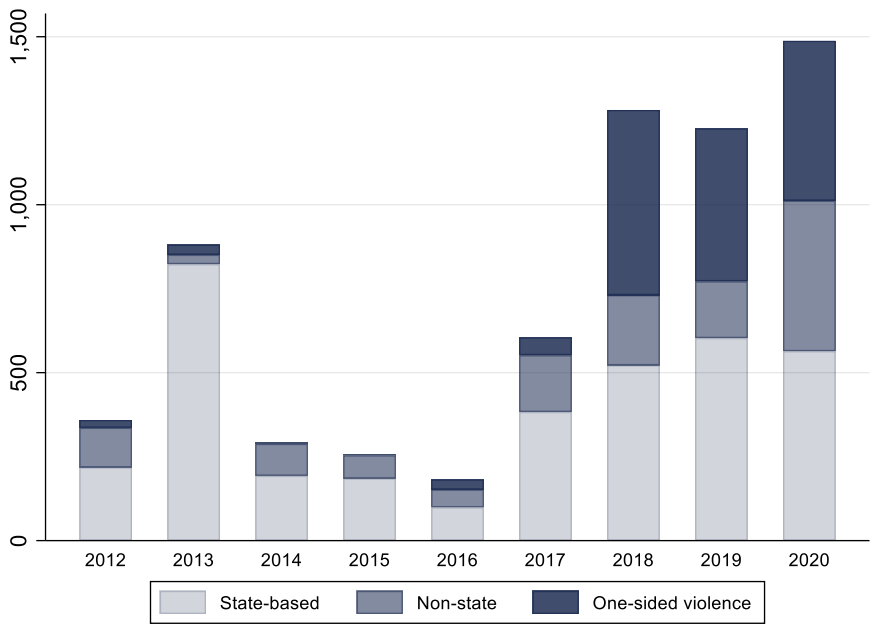

Figure 2. Number of fatalities per type of organised violence in Mali 2012–2020
Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Georeferenced Event Dataset v. 21.1 (Pettersson et al 2021; Sundberg and Melander 2013). Note: The bars indicate the total number of fatalities caused by organised violence per year as defined by the UCDP (Högbladh 2021). The graph allows for comparison between three types of violence: state-based, non-state, and one-sided.

As displayed in Figure 2, state-based conflict fatalities, that is, fatalities caused by conflict between the Malian government and organised groups, dominated at the beginning of the Swedish deployment to MINUSMA. All types of organised violence started to increase in 2017, and all types of organised violence led to civilian harm or even death. However, one-sided violence, that is, violent acts directed at civilians, has augmented especially sharply since 2017–2018. Notably, this category contains different kinds of perpetrators, including terrorist groups but also other armed groups and state forces targeting civilians. Fatalities caused by non-state violence have also seen a large increase since MINUSMA was established. This category captures fatalities caused by non-government groups fighting each other. In the case of Mali, this includes separatist and terrorist groups fighting each other, but also tit-for-tat intercommunal violence between ethnic groups, such as between Dogon and Fulani. Although most international political attention falls on terrorism, as noted by Smith (2021, 1), the spike in violence is largely driven by intercommunal conflict, especially in central Mali.

Reflecting the changed character of conflict during the period, the interview material contains diverse assessments of the situation for civilians. One respondent regarded the threat against civilians as “rather small” (interview), comparing the situation in Mali around 2016–2017 to that in Somalia, where civilians were direct targets. Most respondents, however, testified to an extremely severe situation for civilians living under combined threats from poverty, climate change, smuggling, bandits, terror groups, and clan/ethnic tensions.

There is broad acceptance among the respondents of POC as crucial to the existence and legitimacy of the UN mission at large (e.g. interviews 1, 4). To protect civilians “was the mantra”, “this is why we are here” (interview 10; also interviews 2, 11, 18). The UN’s main task is “not to win a war” but “to protect civilians” or at least ameliorate their situation (interview 7). ISR has an intuitive role to play in this regard, by “finding out things before they happened”, thereby aiming to contribute to “peace and quiet in the entire country” (interview 9). So, for instance, SWE ISR TF in central Mali could map tensions between villages in order to predict attacks and provide early warning (interview 19). “The tasks were to map and gather intelligence” on militant groups, in order “to remove the threat and gain free movement for MINUSMA, for the Malian Armed Forces (FAMa), civilian parts of MINUSMA and the civilian population” (interview 5, also interview 13). Hence, much of the SWE ISR TF’s intelligence was “enemy-centric” (see discussion in Rietjens and de Waard 2017, 532).

Whereas all contingents sought to deliver intelligence that matched FHQ needs, some did not see POC as a direct task for the TF but rather as a job for infantry units with sectoral responsibility (interviews 5, 19). The SWE ISR TF did not, at least not regularly, stop ongoing harm against civilians (interviews 2, 17).

Instead, intelligence collected by the SWE ISR TF was understood to *indirectly* reduce civilian exposure to violence (interview 2; also interview 4). A respondent from the ASIFU period confirmed that "operative steering was rarely about POC directly", but about locating threats in order to protect civilians (interview 13).

3.1.1 Enabling Force Commander-led Protection of Civilians

As a matter of design, ISR in MINUSMA was supposed to indirectly contribute to POC by strengthening the knowledge base for FHQ-led operational planning and allocation of resources. Through different combined sensors, technical and human, broad situational awareness and specific threat assessments can improve and thereby enable decision-making and action (interview 4). By providing insights that would presumably have been difficult to get without ISR sensors, MINUSMA forces, the SWE ISR TF or another unit, could physically go to areas where civilians are under threat. This is what actionable intelligence often means in practice: information that justifies "moving a unit from a to b", where civilians are in need of protection (interview 17). In Mali, where armed groups move between villages, placing civilians under severe distress, UAV or reconnaissance patrols could help identify their arrival (interview 16). In the short term, establishing presence upon such indications is an effective way to push armed elements away, creating distance to the threat, or to dissuade them from pursuing further hostile activities, thereby calming the situation and protecting civilians (interviews 4-6, 13).

The concrete activities of the SWE ISR TF in this regard were to collect (with the help of various sensors described under 1.3), process, and analyse information and report the ensuing intelligence products to the FHQ in Bamako; first to ASIFU and later to U2. "We were a Force Commander unit" (interview 2, also interview 1), a force asset for the FC to use, as appropriate, Mali-wide. Indications in intelligence reports on where civilians were "more vulnerable to get in contact with terrorists or other bands of robbers" were supposed to result in peacekeepers' being deployed to these areas (interview 18). In short, threats of violence were to decrease through intelligence-driven operations against troublemakers (interview 2). Such operations could span from creating distance to dissuasion to coercion.

Some of the buzz concerning ISR in MINUSMA had to do with technologically advanced sensors being employed together systematically for the first time in a UN mission. However, technical sensors do not produce intelligence in themselves, but provide raw visual data that requires human processing and analysis to result in meaningful assessments. Therefore, linguistic, cultural, and geographical awareness are crucial qualities in any intelligence function (interviews 9, 16, 19, see Albrecht, Cold-Ravnkilde and Haugegaard 2017; Rietjens and Dorn 2017, 197; Rietjens and Ruffa 2019, 398). Western units tend to have poor knowledge of the different layers of conflict in Mali; "they cannot enter a village and know if they [the local inhabitants] are Dogo or Fulani"

(interview 19). In addition, intelligence is a function that requires perseverance and which thus mismatches with deployment periods of only six months, periods that perhaps also include two leaves (interviews 10, 19).

Whereas HUMINT was a pillar for SWE ISR TF throughout the period of deployment (interviews 5, 16; cf. interview 20), the information gathered from talking to people could be triangulated with other systems. For example, if someone had said that a weekly market takes place at a given location, this information could be confirmed with the help of other sensors (interview 12). In a classical intelligence cycle, the output of combined sensors was thereafter to be processed by a team of analysts, resulting in reports of a high analytical standard, often offering predictive risk assessments or scenario analysis. Such intelligence can potentially serve POC purposes, by identifying emerging threats to civilians at a point where they can still be contained. In addition, mid- to long-term intelligence on diverse topics may increase knowledge not only of the existence of threats against civilians, but also place them in a broader societal context. However, opinions diverge on whether this model of intelligence, or rather traditional reconnaissance units, best matches the needs of the UN.

Indeed, the type of intelligence that SWE ISR TF focused on varied over time. There are examples of rotations that focused on the situation in Timbuktu, producing 150-page reports with a bird's eye view on the security development there, whereas others zoomed in on narrow questions aiming for high precision (interviews 7, 10, 13). Table 3 lists some of the themes that drew the attention of SWE ISR TF:

Table 3. Examples of themes covered by the SWE ISR TF

- Tensions between ethnic groups
- The movements and capabilities of armed groups over time
- The paramilitary development
- The situation in Timbuktu
- Criminality
- The logistic function of terrorist groups
- Infrastructure
- Terrain
- Smuggling routes
- Harvests, food situation
- Schooling
- Health care
- Religious holidays
- Civilian wellbeing

As noted above (Section 1.3), the intelligence battalion from K3 in Karlsborg was only in charge of the three first rotations of SWE ISR TF. Opinions diverge on whether the successors – mechanised and naval infantry – even qualified as ISR or were "ordinary units playing navy seals" (interview 14, similar reasoning in interviews 6, 15). Some of the later rotations indeed adapted their activities from "fluffy and fancy" intelligence (interview 12) to basic information-gathering on present conditions, since "there is no reason to build a Ferrari if they [the UN] want a moped" (interview 6). This trajectory matches with indications from interviews in Hull Wiklund and Lackenbauer (2017, 52), according to which intelligence had a strategic leaning during MINUSMA's first couple of years, with actionable intelligence only being delivered as an exception, to thereafter begin striving for tactical relevance.

The variation in intelligence output also appears to partly reflect the needs and degree of steering of the FC in charge at the time. With little central direction from the UN system (UNSC resolutions and Secretary General), the FC has considerable leeway in leading the military pillar. The FC therefore has the possibility to leave an own imprint on the mission, but at the same time has to deal with conflicting expectations and interpretations of what the military part of MINUSMA can and should do. After MINUSMA's early trial-and-error period, the push for more actionable intelligence appears to have gained intensity with FC Michael Lollesgaard (2015–2016) and been further developed by Dennis Gyllensporre (2018–2021).[6]

With a FC who prioritised boots on the ground and basic information, highly processed intelligence that addressed long-term tendencies lost in currency (interview). However, even rotations that were oriented at delivering intelligence of high operational relevance had difficulty in providing sufficiently precise information for FHQ to know "where to hit" (interview). So, for instance, one ISR rotation was tasked to focus entirely on collecting actionable intelligence to reduce IEDs, a major threat to both peacekeepers and civilians. Their report, however, was not sufficiently fine-grained to be acted upon by another unit (interview).

Once operations led directly by the FC began in 2016 (from Mali 04), the possibilities for Swedish ISR TF to combine intelligence collection with partaking in POC-oriented operations increased. So, for instance, one SWE ISR TF rotation could play the envisaged role as a unit directly under FC and in this capacity contribute to securing an area in central Mali so that other parts of MINUSMA could enter (interview). This ground-breaking operation was called Operation Folon and took place in Mopti, where threats against civilians were on

[6] MINUSMA has had five FCs since its foundation: Major General Jean Bosco Kazura of Rwanda (2013 – 2014), Major General Michael Lollesgaard of Denmark (2015 – 2016), Major General Jean-Paul Deconinck of Belgium (2017-2018), Lieutenant General Dennis Gyllensporre of Sweden (2018-2021), Lieutenant General Cornelis Johannes Matthijssen of the Netherlands (2021-cont.).

the rise. Here, the Swedish TF's role became one of gathering straightforward information about matters such as schools, hospitals, infrastructure, ethnic groups, weapons, terrain, and road bombs (interview). This basic mapping of the situation "reassured other TCCs before they moved into villages in central Mali" (Boutellis and Beary 2020, 21; similar claim made in interview). Hence, in this operation, the SWE ISR TF served its envisaged role as a force enabler for other units of the mission, increasing their prospects to contribute to POC. Most of the TFs resources were devoted to the operation, which was carried out over the course of three months at the direct request of the FC. The situation for civilians was such that it would have been highly sensitive for the UN not to act (interview). Moving the unit 400 kilometres was already a considerable achievement, and the Swedish unit was the "only one that could imagine going there" (interview). Boutellis and Beary (2020, 17) argue that this availability, however, "came with a cost, because the Swedes asked to be airlifted from Timbuktu with their vehicles, while troops from other TCCs go by road".

Although the information of interest for this operation was more basic than what is usually associated with ISR, the high-tech components of ISR were decisive for the unit to be able to conduct the operation in the first place, from a force protection perspective. For an operation of this character, however, the analytical staff in Timbuktu was judged as less necessary. Operation Folon stands out as a positive example in the Swedish ISR experience in Mali, since the task force truly acted as a Force Commander unit *and* force enabler, managing to carry out a distant operation of longue durée for POC-purposes. The FC himself, Lieutenant General Dennis Gyllensporre, praised the contingent in the following words (Swedish Armed Forces 2019b):

> "The Swedish Mali force has been the backbone of the operation and I can say, with great confidence, that you have made a difference for MINUSMA and for the central region. SWE ISR TF has demonstrated how a modern peacekeeping mission should be conducted, not just in Mali, but in the rest of the world".

At any account, to protect civilians from direct physical threats is a highly time-sensitive matter. ISR in MINUSMA was supposed to contribute to POC by providing the FC with information to be used for operational planning and allocation of resources. For intelligence to promote POC in this way, the producing end (ISR TF) must push relevant intelligence upward in the system, and the recipient (FHQ/FC) must have available resources and other capabilities to allocate to POC-oriented operations. There are strong indications that there were difficulties in both these regards (see also Section 3.3.1). The loop from ISR to FHQ has oftentimes been too slow to fulfil this role. Instead, much reporting concerned incidents that had already happened (interview 17). Optimally, such assessments can also provide lessons for the future, but they do not protect the already harmed civilians. Thus, quicker and more precise reports are key to enabling POC-oriented intelligence-driven operations (interviews 4,

19). At times, the Swedish contingent started out spending around two weeks assessing an area, reporting the findings two months later. According to a FHQ respondent, the result in these cases was a “normal after action review”, rather than actionable intelligence (interview 17).

During at least parts of the study period, the intelligence function, particularly the ISR TFs, had difficulty delivering relevant reports the 6–8 weeks in advance that would have been needed for operational planning (interview 1). As put by one respondent, intel people “want to polish something until it is perfect, but 70% on time is better than that it becomes too late” (interview 14). ASIFU made prognoses 2–3 months ahead, in its “crown jewel”, the quarterly outlook (interview 3). In line with the intended role of ASIFU, these reports leaned towards broad analysis of political, economic, military and social aspects, (interviews; see Rietjens and Dorn 2017, 211). To boil down these panorama assessments to actionable intelligence for POC purposes turned out to be challenging (see 3.3.1).

One officer thought that it was improbable to see results of intelligence reports within one 6-month rotation (interview 10). Other respondents testified of having worked both in the short- and long-term perspectives (e.g., interview 8). Occasionally, though, the SWE ISR TF could foresee that something was about to happen, enabling FC to reallocate resources or a representative of civilian MINUSMA to even contact the person in question (interview 7). One rotation, in another example, foresaw that armed groups would take over Northern Timbuktu in approximately one month. When this actually happened, the value of the intelligence report was recognised, which was “a boost for the entire unit” (interview).

Sensitivities regarding the sharing of raw data likely limited the opportunities to deliver actionable intelligence and, by extension, the possibilities for operations serving POC, in MINUSMA. The concern that intelligence would undermine the UN’s plea to genuine multilateralism, which was discussed in Chapter 2, appears to have come true in MINUSMA. The different units in MINUSMA’s intelligence function largely organised themselves separately from other parts of the mission. According to Boutellis and Beary (2020, 21): “Because they do not see peacekeeping-intelligence products, many TCCs feel European ISR assets are mainly working for the force commander directly”. However, Rietjens and de Waard (2017, 548) claim that not even the FC was authorised to use ASIFU’s information-sharing system, Titaan. Moreover, the SWE ISR TF had especially strict instructions from home about information-sharing, and did not share single source data with ASIFU HQ (Rietjens and de Waard 2017, 547). Several respondents mentioned that they had been pressured, but refused, to share more than they wanted to, since “the UN has some difficulty in keeping secrets” (interview 3). Hence, there was distrust in the system (interview 16). As reasoned by one respondent, intelligence “in its character is about protecting national

capabilities; I do not know how we should solve that puzzle [*lösa den knuten*]" (interview 3; see discussion in Abilova and Novosseloff 2016, 4-6). Some respondents felt that the FHQ had trouble to understand why the SWE ISR TF only gave information in a processed version, "but I had a strong mandate from home and felt that I could stand up for myself" (interview 8; also interview 10). Hence, out of concern for information security, data quality, and informants' safety, much of the raw data stayed with the SWE ISR TF, whereas (heavily) processed analyses went on to the FHQ. Even the FC did not necessarily receive the reports in their full version, which led one SWE ISR TF commander to send reports directly to the FC office, "then it was up to him to read or not to read" (interview).

3.1.2 Acting on one's own intelligence

A second way of promoting POC as an ISR unit is to 'act on one's own intelligence'. This expression entails that an operation is conducted by parts of the SWE ISR TF, perhaps in collaboration with other MINUSMA units, on the basis of assessments made using the combined (human or technical) sensors of the task force. Since the FHQ lacked appropriate sources and sometimes had trouble coordinating operational planning (see 3.3.1), some of the Swedish rotations went ahead and acted on their own intelligence (interview 15). Although the TF rarely intervened in situations to stop ongoing violence against civilians, the connection between ISR and POC was, for intuitive reasons, more direct in this case than when it came to supporting the FHQ level's operational planning and allocation of resources.

Ultimately, the self-initiated operations were considered morally imperative, as they were carried out in acute situations that threatened both colleagues and civilians: "To sit twenty years later and [know] that we could have acted, that was not in line with my view on the task" (interview 15). Notably, that the SWE ISR TF did not run everything through Bamako does not mean that it went *against* FHQ directions, rather that it made use of the freedom of action given to it in a model of mission-type tactics.

Mostly, to act on one's own intelligence meant to collect more intelligence or to establish a presence based on one's own intelligence. So, for instance, the TF could go to locations where they had caught indications that Islamist terror organisations were beginning to pressure locals, forbidding music in the evening or putting a restaurant on fire (interview 1). Other examples include showing up at demonstrations, going to a neighbourhood in Timbuktu where there was unrest, or inviting oneself to a meeting between two different armed groups, all based on intelligence collected by the SWE ISR TF or by some other unit (interviews 8, 15).

As force assets with better conditions for being mobile than the other units in Sector West, SWE ISR TF could carry out two-sided operations, combining

collection and establishing presence so as to protect civilians (interview 18). By identifying indications (*Sw*: insteg) that motivated further attention, the contingent could follow up early indications with their own operations (interview 18). One such operation unfolded in Ber, where the SWE ISR TF had gathered information that key members of terrorists organisations were heading. Based on this intelligence, collected by themselves, the Swedish contingent could establish their presence and force terrorists to make a "detour" (interview); a clear example of creating distance between civilians and the threat. Another series of operations took place in Goundam, again seeking to expel terrorists from the area (interview). On this occasion, the local FAMa commander told the SWE ISR TF commander that a local leader of a terrorist armed group (TAG) had called him to ask what Swedes were doing in "their area". The terrorists then took off in the direction of Mauritania (interview). Unofficial mutual sharing of information between the SWE ISR TF and FAMa, Sector West, or the civilian components of MINUSMA, at times facilitated for SWE ISR TFs to take action. To take one example, it happened that the recipient of information about an antagonist actually had the telephone number of an identified individual, thus directly enabling contact, if appropriate.

However, not all contingents were equally prone to conduct their own POC-oriented operations. One respondent recalled that they never "left the camp to protect civilians, it was never an expressed task […]. What we did was to map the antagonists, to protect by extension" (interview 10)". Yet, the unit had prepared to always act in the event that they would encounter a direct military threat against civilians (interview 10). Whereas this rotation never confronted such a situation, they often witnessed civilians misbehaving against other civilians. In such instances, for instance street fights or abuse of women in public, they did not intervene, but sought to interrupt the situation by moving closer (interview 10).

3.1.3 Activities outside of the ISR portfolio

Finally, since Sweden provided well-equipped and well-trained units throughout the mission period, it was an important resource beyond its ISR capacity (interview 4). In the estimation of one respondent, SWE ISR TF was the *only* unit in the super camp that could "leave the camp to collect information and show presence"; […] "so, intel or not, we delivered" (interview 6). In addition, the contingent had few national restrictions from home (interview 5). Thus, the SWE ISR TF was sometimes given tasks that were only remotely related to ISR: "We got the feeling that it is great to send Sweden if it is a bit cumbersome… the rascals had a bit of respect for us" (interview 4). Hence, beyond pure ISR assignments, respondents found that SWE ISR TF broke new ground by acting further away from the camp; a seed of what was to become the Mobile Task Force (MTF) concept (interview 5). Increased mobility is a game changer when it comes to POC, since it makes it possible for the mission to reach civilians in danger.

An operation outside of the ISR job description but with a clear POC impact occurred on the 28th of April 2015, when the first ISR rotation was in Timbuktu (Swedish Armed Forces 2015bc). A rebel group advanced towards the town, aiming to expel FAMa. The Swedish TF entered partly into "battle command" (*Sw: stridsledning*) and hindered them from further approaching the population centre (interview). The official blog reported that parts of Mali 01 had been in action, that no one from the TF had been injured and that the occurrence of casualties on the opponents' side was unknown (Swedish Armed Forces 2015b).

On this occasion, the unit made itself available to the Sector West Commander, according to their own assessments making a decisive contribution to the defence of the town. Defending Timbuktu through the display of coercive force was possible since the task of the contingent had been broadened from the pure ISR domain in a second governmental letter of instruction. This early experience left an imprint on future rotations, being remembered as a situation where civilians would have been severely harmed had not the Swedish TF been there (e.g., interview 10). The contingent contemplated what would have happened if the antagonist had entered residential areas (interview):

> "What do we do then? […] Do we go home to the camp and tell civilians that you have to solve this yourselves? What would that have looked like for the UN, that is supposed to protect civilians? Or should we take the battle [in town] and accept collateral damage? Yes, I thought a lot about that."

Although the ISR component in the defence of Timbuktu itself was arguably limited, the contingent used its capacity to document the attack, securing evidence by taking photos, filming and collecting ammunition (interview). These are examples of measures that aimed to contain the threat. They were also able to identify who had led the attack and engage in an attempt at dissuasion:

> "So, we got in touch and said, 'Hi, you just shot at us'. 'No', he said. 'Yes', we said, and we could present information that showed what we know. So, we said that we will come to you tomorrow so that we can talk, and then you have to be home. And then we could call back again to say that 'We see that you are on the move, do not do that', because we are going to talk tomorrow. […] And then one is not so inclined to attack civilians if one thinks that one is under surveillance. So, that is an example of a soft kind of pressure" (interview).

On at least two more occasions, during Mali 05 (2017) and Mali 09 (2019), the Swedish contingent acted in a way that could be characterised as defending Timbuktu from aggression. On the 2017 occasion, it was the local FAMa chief who called the Swedish ISR TF commander and warned that armed groups were about to take control over the town. Members of the SWE ISR TF went to talk to the groups, sorted out a misunderstanding, took over the three checkpoints in question and handed them over to FAMa. In addition to dissuading the antagonists from further hostilities, the contingent increased their patrols in the city, thus creating distance between the threat and civilians. The official blog

describes this as action taken in order to “protect civilians” (Swedish Armed Forces 2017a).

A third example raised during interviews concerned an operation north of Timbuktu, where there were riots related to tensions between ethnic groups, as well as disputes over infrastructure and corruption. When the situation escalated, with a sizable armed militia standing outside of Timbuktu, the SWE ISR TF together with the Egyptian combat convoy company acted as a “shield”; again, an example of ensuring distance between the threat and civilians. An infantry unit would normally have carried out this type of operation. During this operation, the Swedish unit initially acted, indeed, as a motorised infantry unit under Sector West and later retook its role as an ISR unit under FHQ. Also in this situation, indications are that SWE ISR TF, this time together with Egypt, flexibly contributed to calming an escalating situation.

Also under less dramatic circumstances, SWE ISR TF carried out activities outside of the ISR portfolio, of potential importance for POC. A common activity in this regard is patrolling, which may present opportunities for HUMINT collection but is primarily a classical core peacekeeper activity. Several respondents highlighted patrolling as a key POC activity, which “created a safety bubble” (e.g. interview 8).

Another example of POC-oriented efforts outside of the direct ISR-role is a first operation in Mopti, where the SWE ISR TF established UN presence in an area where it had hitherto been absent. In this case, the SWE ISR TF was deployed to Mopti with the explicit task of protecting civilians (interview). The operation was not linked to ISR, as it would not have been feasible to deliver qualified intelligence upon arrival in a new location (interview). Consequently, under some circumstances there might be a trade-off between mobility, much sought after in the context of MINUSMA, and the level of intelligence delivered.

Moreover, in at least two ways, ISR units can support the POC efforts of civilian actors: by exchanging relevant intelligence and by offering military protection. Since insecurities in Mali extend beyond armed hostilities to the prevalent distress related to poverty and the absence of a functioning state, military/civilian cooperation can have an ameliorating effect without targeting the threat. Intelligence can unveil urgent needs among the population, such as the absence of clean water, flooding, or malaria outbreaks, as well as capture developments in internal migration, or how many fires are visible in villages (interviews 15, 17). Whereas some of these indications contribute to military assessments, others are primarily for the civilian part of MINUSMA to act on (interview 12). Military units have a role to play also in this latter regard, facilitating for the civilian actors to reach the local population, and overseeing activities such as the distribution of food aid (interviews 9, 12, 17-18; see Swedish Armed Forces 2019a). By partaking in such activities, or by seeking to avoid negative impact on other actors or on society at large (interview 7), SWE ISR TF intended to build trust with the local population, which may have indirectly facilitated both

HUMINT and FP. Several respondents underlined how the SWE ISR TF took care when approaching civilians to do so without wearing sunglasses, helmet or full military gear (interviews 2, 8, 16), and to certainly not point weapons at civilians.

Civilian representatives at times requested to take company with the Swedish unit on the field, to reach locations under reasonably secure circumstances (interviews 10, 18). Although this is not in itself an ISR activity, ISR played a role in providing enhanced protection that civilian MINUSMA staff also benefitted from. Escorting the civilian pillar in the field is a concrete core example of amelioration; it aims to secure non-military staff and enable their humanitarian work vis-à-vis local civilians. At the same time, escorting civilian staff placed a responsibility and a constraint on the SWE ISR TF's room for manoeuvre.

3.1.4 Summary: Protection of Civilians

The above exposé demonstrates that the protection of civilians amounts to a lot more than intervening to stop ongoing harm against civilians. Different facets of civilian well-being and safety featured continuously, though to varying degrees, in the intelligence collection and reporting of the SWE ISR TF. These efforts were not intended to directly protect civilians, but rather to support the FC's operational planning. For reasons that will be further discussed in section 3.3.1, the envisaged chain reaction in which intelligence from SWE ISR TF would eventually result in a POC-oriented operation by another unit rarely happened. Instead, at times, the SWE ISR TF acted on their own intelligence to carry out POC-oriented operations.

The SWE ISR TF performed a number of concrete activities with a POC dimension, alluding to all of the five mechanisms that operate through threat mitigation: detection, distance, dissuasion, containment, and coercion. Much of what SWE ISR TF did for POC was enemy-centred, focusing on *detecting* threats with the help of the ISR toolbox, creating *distance* between the threat and civilians, or *dissuading* the antagonist directly or indirectly leaning on ISR. As discussed above, the crucial POC strategy of establishing presence in practice often simply meant temporarily pushing the threat away from civilians rather than confronting it. To have an enduring effect on POC, the threat needs to be not only detected and put at a distance, but handled, either through dissuasion, containment, or coercion. Next to enemy-centred activities, SWE ISR TF also acted for POC through *amelioration*, which may directly affect civilian well-being without addressing the level of threat. For instance, civilian parts of the MINUSMA could at times travel under the protection of the SWE ISR TF, thereby reaching civilians in need. In this case, ISR capacity, together with other military capabilities, was instrumental in rendering the transportation reasonably safe.

Judging from the empirical material at hand, the most clear-cut impact on POC occurred outside of the proper ISR work description, such as when the SWE ISR TF contributed to defending Timbuktu. Even when acting in such more classical peacekeeping capacities, though, SWE ISR TF benefited from the force-protection-favouring aspects of ISR. In addition, the ISR toolbox played a direct role in containing some threats against civilians (e.g., IEDs, through WIT), as well as in potentially dissuading antagonists by showcasing peacekeeper presence through sensors (e.g., UAVs).

3.2 Force Protection

Force protection is a necessary condition for peacekeepers to be able to carry out tasks – including POC-oriented tasks – without facing an unacceptably high risk to their own safety. If there are doubts about FP, contingents may hesitate to embark on operations, or restrict themselves to acting only in vicinity of their camp. Yet, most fatalities occur in camp or when travelling in a convoy on regular roads, and not during operations in the field (interview 18, also interview 6). As commented by former FC, Lieutenant General Dennis Gyllensporre, in an interview with the International Peace Institute (IPI) (2021):

> "But the statistics are clear, when you are doing operations, when peacekeepers are in operations, they are seldom attacked, it is more often when they operate within the base or as a part of a convoy. So, a proactive posture by the peacekeepers is not only useful to advance the mandate, it is also helpful for force protection."

However, a proactive posture is only compatible with force protection if units have an acceptable level of equipment and training to start with. In practice, many MINUSMA forces lack these conditions and have gained a reputation of being occupied with their own protection instead of working for mandate fulfilment. In late 2015, for example, approximately two-thirds of the mission's infantry capacity was used for force protections measures, including convoy escort and camp protection, "seriously hampering the implementation of mandated tasks" (UNSC 2015c, 6).

As shown in Figure 3 below, between 2013 and 2020, 204 military UN personnel died in service in Mali. 64 per cent of them died in malicious acts. Accordingly, MINUSMA is frequently referred to as the UN's most dangerous mission (UN News 2019, UN News 2021). Peacekeepers face threats from different types of groups, spanning from bandits and drug traffickers who attack convoys (UNSC 2015c, 6) to militias and terrorist groups who use "complex attack tactics, suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, roadside bombs and mortars/rockets" to harm and kill MINUSMA forces (UNSC 2016e, 7). Attacks against Malian, French and MINUSMA forces have become more sophisticated and complex over time (UNSC 2016d,17; UNSC 2018a, 16; UNSC 2018b, 5), reflecting the increased presence and activity of terrorist armed groups in Mali.

Whereas force protection is a concern for any soldier and officer deployed to a conflict zone, fatalities are unequally distributed between TCCs. During the period of SWE ISR TF, 2015–2019, 92 military MINUSMA personnel died in malicious acts. Eighty of these were from countries on the African continent (UN Peacekeeping 2021). As noted by Boutellis and Beary, the only determined fatalities experienced by European TCCs during the same time period were the result of two helicopter crashes and one faulty mortar, causing the deaths of four Dutch and two German peacekeepers[7] (Boutellis and Beary 2020, 4; *BBC* 2015; *BBC* 2017; *Deutsche Welle* 2018; UN Peacekeeping 2021).

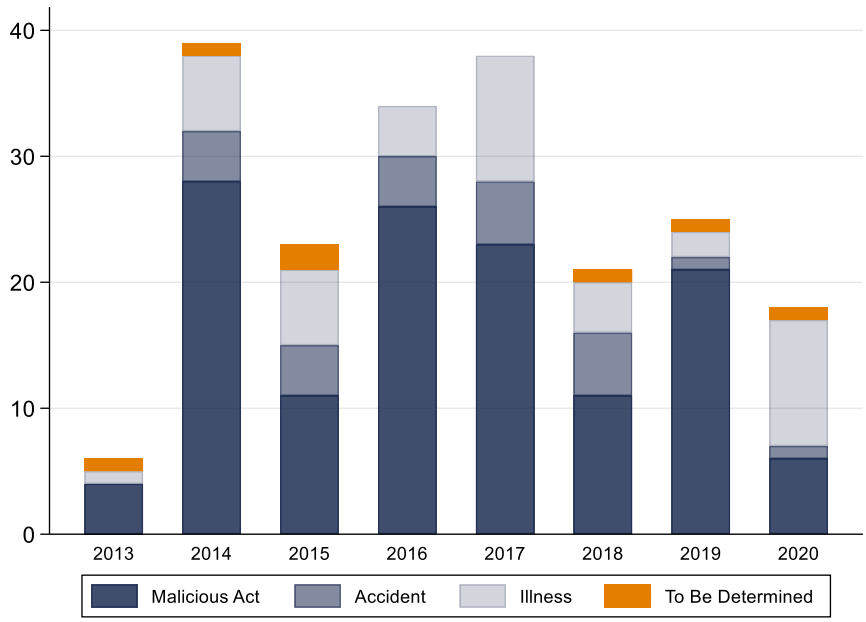

Figure 3. Number of deceased military personnel in MINUSMA 2013–2020
Source: United Nations Peacekeeping Fatalities Open Data (2021). Note: the bars indicate the total number of deceased UN military personnel presented in the following subcategories: malicious act, accident, illness and to be determined.

Force protection is a top priority when the Swedish Armed Forces participates in international military missions (interview 6). The fact that no Swedish personnel paid the ultimate price in Mali during the ISR era was attributed by our respondents to the equipment, training, and leadership of the Swedish

[7] One Dutch Apache crashed during an exercise in March 2015, killing two (*BBC* 2015). One German Tiger crashed because of mechanical malfunction in July 2017, killing two (*Deutsche Welle* 2018). The faulty mortar exploded unexpectedly during target practice in July 2016, killing two (*BBC* 2017). The UN has registered another Dutch peacekeeper as deceased in November 2015, but the cause of death has not been determined (UN Peacekeeping 2021).

contingents (interviews 6-7, 12). In addition, the modus operandi of SWE ISR TF included a coercive capacity that could dissuade antagonists or put already ongoing aggression to a halt in acts of self-defence (interviews 2-3, 7-8, 12). These are all central aspects of FP that would hold even without access to high-tech ISR sensors (interview 15). Yet, as this chapter further develops, access to multiple sensors and analytical capacity is perceived to have increased force protection *ceteris paribus* (interview 6; Swedish Armed Forces 2022).

One motivation for including an ISR component in a UN mission is that it should become a force multiplier (Center for Civilians in Conflict 2020), increasing the capacity of other units (United Nations 2017). A reoccurring understanding in our interviews was that the scope of ISR activities related to force protection included other UN companies (interviews 2-8, 10-13, 15, 18). The activities carried out by the SWE ISR TF, such as mapping IEDs and observing antagonists, served to detect, contain and dissuade threats; thus, this was also to the potential benefit of other parts of MINUSMA. The precise scope of the TF's force protection-related ISR activities is, however, difficult to establish. Although some activities could theoretically contribute to increased force protection for the entire mission, there were many hurdles in reaching such effect in practice.

Moreover, the place of force protection in ISR activities has varied between rotations. Some respondents described that their ISR activities, in general, were focused on groups that had the ability to pose a threat to the mission and its personnel (interview 6, 15, 18), groups that tried to reduce MINUSMA's mobility and groups that tried to get MINUSMA to leave specific areas. One respondent recalled how force protection was at times the most influential theme of the ISR function, as MINUSMA staff were under threat (interview 1). By contrast, another respondent reflected that it was not an outspoken task for his rotation to collect information that could contribute to other units' FP (interview 6). Some contingents described how intelligence relevant for force protection could be found in aggregated intelligence reports, for example indications of the location and modus operandi of armed groups (interviews 1, 7, 10). As mentioned in Section 3.1.1, another rotation was tasked to collect and report actionable intelligence on IEDs in a specific area, an operation that presumably served to contain this major threat against both civilians and peacekeepers.

Force protection must be ensured at all times, when out on an operation as well as in camp. The following sections first discuss the role of ISR in activities for operational safety, then proceed to activities for camp protection and conclude with FP-oriented activities that fall outside of these categories.

3.2.1 Operational safety

> "A military unit that lacks tentacles, to use a metaphor, is completely left to the opponent's behaviour" (interview 18).

ISR had the potential to contribute to operational safety in at least two ways. First, by increasing the understanding of the operational environment, including what the terrain looked like, where potential antagonists were located, and their modus operandi, as well as assessing the risk of encountering IEDs. These all fall under the mechanism of detection. Increasing the understanding of the operational environment has the potential to lead to long-term effects on force protection if units receive the intelligence and are able to act on it, including adjusting their modus operandi to meet or avoid the threat. Secondly, ISR matters for operational safety, as sensors offer real-time surveillance in the field. Whereas such threat detection can be decisive for those involved in an operation, the effect of, for instance, routine use of UAVs is mostly temporary and does not extend to other parts of the mission.

Generally speaking, having access to knowledge increases the prospects of being able to make informed decisions to reduce risks (interview 18). A military unit that lacks knowledge about the operational environment and the enemy is vulnerable. In theory, every MINUSMA personnel is a HUMINT sensor and all units should report observations to their sector headquarters. But, as identified in two previous FOI publications, in reality, most of MINUSMA's patrolling units had low capacity to report and verify observations (Nilsson and Tham Lindell 2015, p 32; Hull Wiklund and Lackenbauer 2017, p 32). With a lack of basic situational awareness and of a systematic grasp of the operational environment, there was a demand for insights from the ISR TFs not only from the FHQ, but also at the sector level.

The SWE ISR TF included a Weapons Intelligence Team (WIT) that could analyse weapons and ammunition and report their types and origin to the FHQ level (interview 3). The WIT team and the investigative capability of the SWE ISR TF could also be used to investigate specific events. One such example is from June 2015, when six peacekeepers from Burkina Faso were killed, 50 km from the camp in Timbuktu. Following the attack, the SWE ISR TF assisted in analysing what weapons were used and how the attack had been carried out (interview). The antagonist filmed the attack and later published it. The SWE ISR TF assisted in analysing the video and handed over the analysis to Burkina Faso (interview). The securing of evidence has an FP value, both in providing more sophisticated threat assessments, and, if applicable, containing the threat by potentially holding offenders liable.

One respondent with insights from working with ISR in Bamako described how the content of the ISR function's intelligence products varied from presenting the general security situation facing MINUSMA to very specific maps with

instructions on how to travel from points X to Y as safely as possible (interview 13). The same respondent reflected on how U3 and U5's interest in intelligence increased as the fatalities among peacekeepers increased (interview 13). The SWE ISR TF was also, together with other parts of MINUSMA, involved in collecting, analysing and reporting intelligence on IEDs, including how the IEDs were constructed and used (interviews 9, 18). A database was set up for systematically collected data on IED incidents, which was meant to be of benefit for all units (interview 18). Such IED operations can be considered a means to contain one of the most pressing threats to peacekeepers as well as to civilians.

Based at the super camp in Timbuktu, SWE ISR TF was in proximity of other Sector West units as well as of Sector West HQ. Throughout the period, there were Swedish personnel at the Sector West HQ, including four Deputy Commanders and one Sector West Commander. The Sector West Commander could and did ask the FHQ to use SWE ISR TF for operations in the sector, such as during the 2015 defence of Timbuktu, described in Section 3.1.3. The SWE ISR TF also took initiatives vis à vis fellow units in the sector. Although formally an FC asset reporting to Bamako, since the FHQ loop was sometimes slow, information of direct relevance to force protection were at times delivered in a parallel track directly to Sector West HQ and fellow units, to make sure the information would arrive on time (interviews 2, 7, 15). Sector West HQ did not have sufficient situational awareness and intelligence of its own, which increased the need for information of relevance to force protection to reach other units. Intelligence of immediate force-protection relevance could, for instance, concern a specific area that another contingent was planning to go to (interview 7).

Apart from passing on intelligence to others, the SWE ISR TF could make first-hand use of its intelligence on antagonists to increase its own safety. One such example occurred in a situation when the SWE ISR TF had been shot at. The commander of the rotation made a phone call to the "bandit" and told him straight out not to shoot at TF soldiers. After that, the situation calmed down (interview 9). This direct contact with an antagonist, aimed at dissuading him from further hostilities, was possible due to a combination of specific intelligence (the antagonist's whereabouts and telephone number) with credible military capacity.

Operational safety was also strengthened through the use of UAVs for surveillance, for example during patrols or when moving in convoy (interviews 8, 16-17; Hull Wiklund and Lackenbauer 2017, 37, 41). With the help of UAVs, the SWE ISR TF could observe the operational area and detect threats in real time (interview 16). Furthermore, antagonists may refrain from attacking UN personnel (and civilians) if they perceive themselves to be under surveillance. In combination with a relatively high military capacity, as was the case of SWE ISR TF, the visible presence of UAVs can thus have a dissuasive effect. Antagonists

avoided confrontation with the SWE ISR TF and instead aimed for less well-equipped units (interview 2).

3.2.2 Camp protection

> "The camps they are where they are, and they are not going anywhere" (Dennis Gyllensporre, International Peace Institute 2021).

For peacekeepers deployed abroad, the mission camp is a place for preparation and recovery. If safety is not ensured in this temporary home, it will have an impact on peacekeepers' morale and readiness, and thereby also have repercussions for the conduct of operations. In addition, if camp security is compromised, it sends a detrimental signal of weakness and vulnerability about the mission as a whole. A traditional basic strategy to protect the camp is to build different physical thresholds, for instance sandbags, traffic obstacles, or proper gates, all intended to create a distance to antagonists, as well as to dissuade potential attacks and render those attacks that are still carried out more difficult. Such strategies of fortification are certainly also relevant to MINUSMA (interviews 9, 20), where threats against the camp have been a continuous problem.

In addition to such physical protection, according to Lieutenant General Gyllensporre (International Peace Institute 2021), camp security has improved through "sensors, detectors, that would make this a very dangerous endeavour for the attackers". With the help of this technology, Gyllensporre further argues, complex attacks aiming to breach the camp have diminished, whereas indirect fire – grenades targeting the camps – remains a big issue. SWE ISR TF was able to use its sensors and analytical capacity to determine *where* antagonists must have been located to target the camp, *what* they fired, and *when* attacks took place. On this basis, informed decisions could be made on where and when to patrol outside the camp to reduce the risk of attacks (interviews 1, 3, 6, 8-9). This type of information was passed on to later SWE ISR TF rotations, which gave them a good understanding of what the threat consisted of and where it was likely to come from (interview 6). After analysing where antagonists would have to be located to fire grenades at the camp, SWE ISR TF patrolled these areas and could see people departing the area and leaving military materiel behind (interview 4). Patrolling near the camp was a way to show a presence and dissuade antagonists from attacking the camp.

Similar to how UAVs were used for surveillance during operations, with a direct effect on operational safety, the use of UAVs in close proximity to the camp was estimated to reduce the risk of camp attacks. One respondent recalled how the Commander of Burkina Faso's contingent at first was annoyed by the UAV, but how with time the sound of the UAV made him feel safe (interview 7).

During the first half of 2017, several attacks occurred on the integrated super camp. A Swedish soldier was lightly wounded by glass shards in one of the attacks, and medics treated some Swedish soldiers after they had been exposed to smoke during efforts to assist in putting out a fire at another TCC's camp (Swedish Armed Forces 2017b). After this series of camp attacks, a radar system able to detect incoming projectiles was added to the Swedish contingent in August 2017 (Government of Sweden 2019b, 18). Following the arrival of the radar, the Sector West Commander had apparently commented that he had started to sleep better, knowing he had at least 10 seconds to put on his equipment before the explosion (interview). The installation of this type of radar is thus an example of how 'high tech systems' may have a direct positive effect on perceived safety at the camp. The radar contribution remained as long as Sweden was based in Timbuktu (Government of Sweden 2019b, 16).

SWE ISR TF answered to the Sector West Commander for camp protection, and like all contingents based at the super camp, it contributed to camp protection in other ways than through its ISR capacity. One respondent described how the SWE ISR TF was the only mobile force at the super camp that, in the event of an attack against the camp, was meant to mobilise and fight the battle outside the camp (interview). During at least one rotation, the SWE ISR TF commander was in charge of coordinating the defence of the integrated super camp (interview; Swedish Armed Forces 2022, 43). A respondent who served in Bamako likewise described how the ISR TFs in both Timbuktu and Gao assisted with force protection activities at the sector level to support the sector commanders who lacked the capacity to handle the constant threats (interview 1).

3.2.3 Beyond ISR: assisting other units

> "If you look at who gets bashed, it is [countries like] Burkina Faso, that have inadequate training, equipment, leadership and thankless tasks" (interview 2).

Just as for POC, ISR is but one ingredient in force protection. The Swedish contingents promoted force protection not only in the capacity of an ISR TF but also as a well-trained and well-equipped unit. They did so in at least two ways: by training and supporting other contingents and by assisting other peacekeepers in need. One of the specified goals for SWE ISR TF in government proposals of recent years is, indeed, to support other TCCs so that they can, *inter alia*, become more able to protect civilians as well as themselves (Government of Sweden 2018, 2019a).

As previously mentioned, equipment, education and training are crucial for force protection (interviews 2-3). SWE ISR TF sought to support the force protection of other units by offering them training in, for example, how to detect IEDs (interview 7). This activity corresponds to a need MINUSMA identified to train

its uniformed personnel on IED threat mitigation (UNSC 2019a, 13)[8]. SWE ISR TF also trained other units in how to investigate where indirect fire originates, as well as other aspects of force protection, such as medical routines (interview 7-8, 15). One such example was to train Liberian soldiers in distance assessment (Swedish Armed Forces 2018b). Another example was to train officers from Burkina Faso on how to use air support (from the El Salvadoran attack helicopter unit) for reactive purposes in case of an attack (Swedish Armed Forces 2015e). The SWE ISR TF further held medical training for officers from Burkina Faso and Togo, with the aim that these officers would give the same training to their personnel (Swedish Armed Forces 2016a), and conducted patrols together with other nations, such as Burkina Faso (Swedish Armed Forces 2016b). Our respondents perceived that by training and supporting other contingents, SWE ISR TF could act as a force multiplier, strengthening the force protection of other contingents (interviews 7, 15). This perception is strengthened by the findings of other researchers. After interviewing representatives from Burkina Faso's contingent in Timbuktu, Boutellis and Beary wrote: "The Burkinabé contingent in Timbuktu indicated that cooperation with the Swedish ISR task force had improved greatly since 2015, making it safer" (Boutellis and Beary 2020, 21).

Assisting peacekeepers in need was another way to act for the purpose of force protection. One such example relates to the previously mentioned situation, in June 2015, when six soldiers from Burkina Faso were killed in an attack 50 km from Timbuktu. When this happened, SWE ISR TF assisted Sector West HQ with a rescue unit [*undsättningsstyrka*], including medical resources. The rescue unit travelled by helicopter to the site of the attack, where six Burkina Faso soldiers were killed and five where seriously injured (interview; Swedish Armed Forces 2015d). This case effectively illustrates how the SWE ISR TF, based on being a well-functioning contingent with ISR capacity, could be used for multiple purposes. First, the TF assisted peacekeepers in need and later it used its WIT and investigative capability to analyse the scene of attack.

3.2.4 Summary: Force Protection

ISR has been an appreciated but not indispensable asset for the force protection of SWE ISR TF. Assuring the unit's FP was an integral concern in all stages of the TF's activities. However, conventional strategies such as fortification, patrolling near camp, being well-trained and having appropriate personal protection equipment remain fundaments of force protection that ISR cannot compensate for. As put by one respondent: force protection "is more about military capabilities and equipment than about intelligence" (interview 13). Yet, ISR offered an additional layer of force protection, improving the level of

[8] According to Secretary General Reports, the ability of MINUSMA troops to detect IEDs improved over time, with more than 50 per cent of items found and cleared in 2018 compared to 23.5 per cent in 2017 (UNSC 2019a, 13).

sophistication and possibilities to adapt to different levels of risk. In this respect, ISR appears to have increased the mobility of Swedish peacekeepers and helped them to carry out tasks beyond the ISR-portfolio safely.

Just as for the protection of civilians, there are traces of all six mechanisms in activities oriented at force protection. However, the most central role of ISR for the safety of troops is threat *detection*. Both in camp and in the field, ISR sensors gave the TF an improved picture of the threat. The distance mechanism plays out differently for FP than for POC. Whereas creating a distance between hostile actors and civilians is crucial for POC, from a FP perspective it is crucial to be able to operate safely where the security situation is deteriorating. Thus, indications are that the capacity of SWE ISR TF to act at a distance from the camp, hence in proximity of antagonists, was facilitated by ISR sensors.

The use of different kinds of UAVs connects to FP both by *detecting* threats and by *dissuading* antagonists. The dissuasion effect of UAVs is understood to stem from the surveillance element of the UAV in combination with the SWE ISR TF's relatively high military capacity. Hence, the UAVs were thought to be associated with the TF's high ability to defend itself in case of attack. In addition, the ISR capability was used for *dissuasion* in other ways, as when a SWE ISR TF commander, based on intelligence, called an antagonist and asked him not to shoot at TF soldiers. *Dissuasion* was also an aspect when peacekeepers patrolled areas where they had reason to believe that antagonists had to be located to attack the camp. Just as for POC, the WIT team contributed to *containing* IEDs, a major threat against peacekeepers. There were also indications of *coercion* when SWE ISR TF confronted antagonists who had aggressive intent. Finally, the TF carried out non-ISR-based *amelioration* tasks linked to FP, such as training other units and assisting units in need.

MINUSMA's intelligence function was also intended to be an asset for the force protection of other units. In this respect, the outcome is less obvious. Just as for POC, the empirical material does not allow for a precise estimation of the extent to which FP-relevant intelligence actually travelled through the MINUSMA system to reach other units, especially outside of Sector West. For intelligence reporting to systematically facilitate the FP of other units, it would formally need to pass through the FHQ cycle and reach the sectors on time. Since the SWE ISR TF had little chance to follow whether and how their insights were put to operational use, it cannot be established how often such transmission occurred or to what extent other units were able to adapt to new information. However, there are indications that informal sharing of information, as well as the ISR capacity as such, helped secure the fellow TCCs in the super camp and improve operational safety in the nearby surroundings. To gain further insights into the role of ISR for other units, supplementary interviews with other parts of MINUSMA would be helpful.

3.3 Circumstances

When analysing empirical linkages between ISR and POC, as well as between ISR and the FP of other units, it soon becomes evident that these do not emerge automatically through the mere existence of ISR capacities. Instead, ISR is, in the best case, a lever for other capacities that may promote POC and the FP of other units. In consequence, the effect of ISR on POC as well as on the FP of other units will depend on circumstances, some of which are partly outside of the ISR units' control. This chapter deals with three contextual circumstances that appear to have influenced ISR's prospects for contributing to MINUSMA in the envisaged way: (1) the mission's absorption capacity, (2) Mali's vast geography, and (3) the risk that intelligence leads to negative unintended consequences.

3.3.1 Absorption capacity

> "It is not only a matter of the quality of the intel products, an understanding of how to use them is also needed. And that you practice." (interview 16).

A first circumstance affecting the outcome of ISR in MINUSMA is that the rest of the organisation has not always been equipped to absorb and make operational use of intelligence. SWE ISR TF was one cog in the complex machinery of an integrated UN mission in charge of a palette of highly challenging tasks. As noted in Section 3.1, ISR's envisaged role for POC in this machinery was to enable others to act rather than taking direct action oneself to protect civilians. If the TF faced hurdles to deliver intelligence that was quick and precise enough to be 'actionable' for POC purposes, the FHQ had some difficulties of its own. As expressed in the above quotation, to derive an effect out of intelligence is "not only a matter of the quality of the intel products". Several respondents argued that the UN could not make use of the intelligence that the ISR units delivered (interviews 5-6, 8-10, 15). Two sets of obstacles are highlighted as having been especially important in the interviews: (1) organisational hitches between levels of command, and (2) lack of resources to translate indications from ISR into operations.

One description was that the UN, a newcomer in the domain of intelligence (see Chapter 2), did not have the organisation or awareness to give directions to the SWE ISR TF (interview 2). This issue spanned from a general misunderstanding about what intelligence can offer in a peacekeeping context, to specific practical vulnerabilities, such as having to rely on an extremely slow satellite connection to communicate between levels and sectors (the latter example is from Rietjens and de Waard 2017, 546). In view of such deficiencies, a line of reasoning from the TF perspective was that Sweden was in MINUSMA to "teach the UN how to make use of intelligence" (interview 2) or "to win acceptance for the added value that intelligence could give" (interview 18; also interview 12). Several respondents confirmed that Swedish ISR started uphill and needed to prove itself

by delivering reports of a high level to establish a trustful relationship with the FHQ (interviews).[9] Having achieved that, expectations could shift to asking, "The impossible: can we get this tomorrow?" (interview 4).

However, prior studies suggest that adaptation issues run both ways. According to Boutellis and Beary (2020, 27), "[m]uch work remains to be done to educate European TCCs about UN peacekeeping and why and how it is different from NATO or EU operations". Karlsrud (2019, 66) claims that Western contributors have an "aversion to integrate into the UN mission". Some European contributors came to MINUSMA "relatively unprepared for the UN system"; instead, they still had an "ISAF mindset" (Karlsrud and Smith 2015, 15). This latter matter was acknowledged, in our material, by a respondent who reasoned about the difficulty in making Afghanistan veterans understand that "this is something else; we are here to be visible, to help civilians and help our colleagues" (interview 15).

Moreover, the interviews confirm observations in previous studies that "intelligence dialogue" (Nordli and Lindboe 2017, 10) between providers and recipients was inefficient. This was a matter that complicated mutual adaptation and likely influenced the impact on both POC and the FP of other units. FHQ was understood to communicate very generic needs to the ISR units (interviews 14, 17). Staff turnover in Bamako was high and there was no explicit methodology for guiding intelligence collection. During some periods, the FHQ was understood to have had difficulty both in giving orders and incorporating ISR reports in operational planning, especially with foresight. Also, respondents had limited possibilities to follow what happened to the intelligence once they had shipped it upward in the system (interviews 4, 10, 12). One respondent had the suspicion that the report was read in a confined circle. He put considerable effort into "selling" the product, since: "If I should put the life and health of Swedish soldiers at risk for this report – all information leads to a report of 15–20 pages – if no one then reads it, then there's no point [*Swe: det spelar ingen roll*]. Either someone reads, or we lock ourselves up at the camp" (interview 8). Some respondents, though, did identify traces of reported intelligence in quartile reports, in FC's recommendations to the Secretary General, in operations months later, or even years later in Secretary General reports (interview 5). As previously explained, to avoid getting stuck in the FHQ loop, it happened that SWE ISR TF delivered "tailor-made" information directly to partners, for instance to Sector West HQ, fellow SW TCCs, or civilian MINUSMA representatives in the Timbuktu area (interviews 4, 12; see Hull Wiklund and Lackenbauer 2017, 17–18).

[9] The same applied to establishing confidence among the local population. Mali 01 already had a hotline where locals could call with information. Calls started to come in only after the Swedes had taken part in defending Timbuktu on the 28th of April 2015.

However, the relationship between FHQ and SWE ISR TF varied greatly over time. During rotations when systematic direction or feedback was lacking, contingents defined their own tasks and priorities (interviews 2, 16, 19). Based on such impressions from earlier rotations, the commander of one contingent expected – prior to departure – to define the unit's tasks himself, but instead met with the FC early on and received a clear order: "'I want you on this location to solve this task', and that's what we did. We did not choose ourselves" (interview). However, due to coordination issues within the FHQ, much of actual implementation was left to the unit (interview). Another respondent remembered "constant meetings" with U2 about which questions to answer. The contingent nonetheless prioritised on their own, since "the problem was that they needed so much, so whatever we said [proposed], it was needed" (interview 12). Besides the organisational aspects, that demand exceeded supply likely influenced the chances of ISR to fully live up to its intended role in the mission.

Some respondents (interviews 3, 7) experienced well-functioning mission-type tactics (Swe: *uppdragstaktik*) for the first time when deployed to MINUSMA. One deputy commander of ASIFU recalled that the commander of ASIFU worked according to "centralised steering, decentralised execution", giving direction on which groups and areas to focus on, not "how they should go about". "We could not say what they should collect because then we would already have had the information", the same respondent reasoned. The steering from FHQ could, for instance, point out a geographical area of interest, leaving to the unit to pick which question in a long list to seek to answer (interview 13, 17). This freedom has a potential downside, since "it can be that the questions that one does not want to answer are those that are important to answer" (interview 17).

Even when needs and expectations were successfully anchored between FHQ and SWE ISR TF, optimally resulting in intelligence reports of relevance for operational planning, the final condition for intelligence-driven POC-oriented operations to materialise was frequently lacking: someone to do the job (interviews 2, 20). It is well established that many of MINUSMA's peacekeepers are mainly occupied with protecting themselves (see Section 3.2). The widespread "operational paralysis" among other units is not without reason, since the African peacekeepers who constitute the bulk of MINUSMA often lack appropriate personal protective equipment and armoured vehicles (interview 12; see Section 3.2).[10] Hence, they face a much higher threat of attacks than the Western units, who have better force protection (interview 12). In addition, national caveats impede mobility and by extension the possibilities to protect

[10] That some African TCCs, despite these challenges, are *more* operationally active than Western contributors has been attributed to a different 'combat culture', or 'military doctrine' (high-ranking African officer quoted in Cold-Ravnklide, Albrecht and Haugegaard 2017). The most cited example is Chad, which is a top contributor to MINUSMA, deployed to Sector North, where it "has shown a willingness to go into direct combat with armed groups" (Karlsrud 2015, 47).

civilians (interview 17). With no one available to act, even the parts of intelligence delivered by SWE ISR TF to FHQ that in theory were 'actionable' rarely left an imprint on operational practice in the short term. For instance, a regrouping of troops to Mopti only occurred with a considerable time lag after intelligence had indicated a deteriorating situation for civilians (interview 15). In sum, the time factor works against ISR's potential in promoting POC.

In conclusion, although the mandate is permissive when it comes to pro-active POC and FP, organisational frictions and a lack of available resources limit the effect of intelligence in both domains.

3.3.2 Geography

A second circumstance that affects ISR's prospects in promoting POC and FP is geography. As indicated above, establishing presence is a core strategy for POC. ISR sensors matter for presence in at least two ways: they expand the territory that the UN can observe and move into, and constitute a type of presence in and of themselves. ISR sensors are useful in mapping patterns from above (interview 17), in so-called pattern-of-life analysis, thereby improving situational awareness. In addition, UAVs can, for instance, fly so low that they make it obvious that "big brother" is watching (interview 17). In this capacity, UAVs not only made fellow peacekeepers feel more secure (see Chapter 4); respondents had the impression that the population also felt more secure when the UAVs were out flying (interview 9). A similar line of reasoning is found in the Secretary General Reports, which under the heading of "Protection of Civilians" mentions "the use of its aviation assets and unmanned aerial vehicles to monitor remote areas and deter violence". Moreover, "In Timbuktu region, MINUSMA conducted an average of four reconnaissance flights per week over Ber, Goundam and Gourma-Rharous to monitor the movements of armed groups and reassure the population" (UNSC 2015c, UNSC 2016a).

Yet, as noted by Fjelde, Hultman, and Nilsson (2019, 127), a general problem in peacekeeping is that "missions do not have the capacity to operate in all areas where civilians are at risk". In a country as big as Mali, there is no scenario in which MINUSMA can have the resources to secure the entire territory solely through the presence of peacekeepers. Instead, as put by one respondent: "An hour outside of Timbuktu, there was no [other] UN presence, there were only us" (interview 10). Technological tools cannot fully compensate for geographical distance. To take again the example of UAVs, they have a visual scope similar to looking through a "straw" (interviews 3, 16). As noted above, SWE ISR TF was comparably mobile, with few national restrictions. Yet, largely for FP reasons (see discussion on MEDEVAC later in this section), the SWE ISR TF was most of the time confined to acting in relative proximity to the camp. According to Boutellis and Beary, SWE ISR TF generally operated within a forty-kilometre radius of Timbuktu (Boutellis and Beary 2020, 16).

Especially in the second half of the study period, MINUSMA units were often based far away from the course of events, which made reallocation of resources a daunting task: “To bring a unit to Aguelhok [North] or Gao [East], that was a trip of four to five days, and then the question is how much foresight can intelligence have” (interview 11). Even a contribution as well-equipped as the Swedish one could only make three-four larger operations per rotation (interview 10).

The expansion of the conflict into new areas of the country has made the geographical circumstance even more important. For the first rotations of SWE ISR TF, the constellation of actors from the civil war, originating in the 2012 separatist Tuareg rebellion in Northern Mali, still dominated the conflict. MINUSMA’s locating of big camps in Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao mirrored the security situation at that time. Armed groups, though notably not TAGs, were active in proximity to the camps and could be confronted in person (interview 10); at the very best dissuading them from further hostile activities. A few years later, the threat dynamics had changed and the signatories to the 2015 Algiers peace agreement were no longer the most relevant actors: “Then the UN was on the totally wrong place, geographically wrong and in addition grouped in the wrong way in big camps” (interview 10). The same respondent argued that, with TAGs influencing the entire Malian society, increased mobility would have been needed to have a chance to protect civilians.

Feeding the system with intelligence relevant to the force protection of other units was likewise constrained by the geographical factor. One of our respondents, with insights from Bamako, recalled how the SWE ISR TF made efforts to identify roadside IEDs, which are among the primary threats against MINUSMA forces that can actually be contained if detected. However, these roadside bombs were predominantly located in areas that the SWE ISR TF never entered (interview 9). This limited geographical reach thus clearly diminished the possibilities SWE ISR TF had to contribute to the operational safety of other units through its intelligence collection. As for camp protection, geographical distance could have the opposite impact. When the SWE ISR TF was away on operations in other areas, it could understandably not deliver intelligence in direct support of the camp (interview 20).

The basic geographical circumstance means that the threat often simply moves away from where the UN, or other military missions, for that matter, is present. Several respondents labelled this the “plough effect” (interview 2). Notably, in the Sahel this effect goes beyond national borders, which is why the French forces as well as G5 Sahel, but not MINUSMA, have had an operational area that extends beyond national borders. That opponents quickly adapt to MINUSMA’s moves raises the question of whether civilians are really protected, if the threat simply goes somewhere else (interview 3). POC, through presence, is a short-term solution, since armed groups tend to return once the UN has left.

The fact that MINUSMA has systemic vulnerabilities when it comes to MEDEVAC and helicopter support strongly accentuates the challenge of geography (e.g., interview 20). This had implications for how and where the SWE ISR TF could operate in meeting their own FP standards. Without transportation suitable for large distances, the prospect of conducting POC-oriented operations suffers. Since there are few helicopter resources, and MEDEVAC helicopters are managed by MINUSMA's civilian part (interview 20), the "capacity to conduct casualty and medical evacuations" is likewise insufficient, directly impacting on operational availability and performance (UNSC 2016d, 17). In the absence of UN medical guarantees, Sweden brought its own forward medical teams to Timbuktu, allowing the TF to be accompanied during, for instance, the previously discussed Operation Folon 1, in February 2019 (Boutellis and Beary 2020, 9).

3.3.3 Double-edged intelligence

A third circumstance is that in some situations intelligence may produce unintended consequences for civilians as well as for the operational mobility of troops. Thus, the worst imaginable outcome of ISR in Mali is not that it has no effect, but that the effect is negative.

This applies especially to POC, where a significant limitation is that ISR activities may put civilians in peril rather than protect them. In military operations of other kinds than UN peacekeeping, POC has often been equated with avoiding collateral damage. UN missions with POC mandates have a higher bar than that: they are tasked to proactively defend civilians against threats. Yet, when the UN enters new areas, it sometimes causes local turbulence and exposes civilians to a transmitted threat (interview 2). In addition, civilian informants who cooperate with the UN risk being punished for that.[11] To take one example (from interview 20), if peacekeepers travel to a village during the day only to leave at dusk, armed or terrorist groups may quickly pressure inhabitants to disclose who has spoken to MINUSMA: "In the best case they get beaten up, in the worst case they die" (interview 20). To reduce these types of risks, it would be necessary to establish more long-term presence.

The interview material gives the impression that the SWE ISR TF was well aware of the risk of putting civilians at danger by either its mere presence or by approaching civilians for HUMINT collection (interviews 2, 8, 10, 16). In one concrete example of "tactical adaptation", SWE ISR TF deliberately chose to drive in the desert, to avoid that civilian vehicles travelling on the paved roads would be hit by IEDs targeting the UN (interview 8).

[11] The UN has developed concrete guidelines on how to ensure informant safety, for instance in its ISR staff handbook (UN DPO 2020, 27-28).

In the case of MINUSMA, one problem is that collecting intelligence for POC purposes has been the most hazardous – including for civilians themselves – where it is the most needed. Several respondents pointed out that the rise of TAGs as a main threat against civilians (and MINUSMA troops, see Section 3.2), from around 2017, reshaped POC-oriented ISR.[12] On the one hand, advanced peacekeeping intelligence that combines different sensors was born precisely to deliver sophisticated threat assessments apt to asymmetrical conflicts. On the other hand, especially with TAGs in the picture, SWE ISR TF had to take extreme care to not put civilian informants at risk when conducting HUMINT collection.

Civilians, especially in the countryside, became more reluctant to talk to the UN when TAGs were in the picture. One respondent described how civilian attitudes were used as an indicator to estimate the level of TAG presence. If TAGs were around, "people did not even want to talk to us about the weather". Different hostile groups, from criminals to terrorists, can pressure civilians for having interacted with the UN, in the worst case even leading to reprisals (interviews 4, 7, 8, 12). That the willingness to share information with MINUSMA is in decline due to fear of reprisals is confirmed by Smith (2021, 12). In addition, the fact that TAGs sometimes hide among civilians makes both locating their whereabouts and taking action difficult and potentially dangerous for civilians.

Thus, the SWE ISR TF's selection of actors to focus on was influenced by, among other things, care for civilian safety. One understanding goes that the UN's role is to "influence those who can be influenced", leaving TAGs for other military actors (interview 7). Intelligence is instrumental in determining which type of approach is most suitable for dealing with an antagonist. Towards armed groups other than TAGs, "soft" strategies such as disciplinary talks – "Would it not be better if you did like this, and participated in the peace process?" – may be available (interview 7).

Despite the 'robust' mandate, the UN does not conduct targeted operations against terrorist leaders who constitute threats against civilians (interviews 9, 19). This follows from the division of labour between missions active in Mali (see Hellquist and Sandman 2020; also UNSC 2013, 10). With terrorists hiding among civilians in urban areas, there is a considerable risk of collateral damage if the UN were to use force. To collect and report personal information on individual terrorists was thus considered both futile, "since no one can act on it", and risky for troops and informants (interview 10).

This is not to say that TAGs were not of interest to SWE ISR TF, only that they adapted their practical approaches to these groups, with the safety of civilians in

[12] One respondent rather thought that the ISR repertoire was quite similar across different types of antagonists (interview 12).

mind. FAMa, by contrast, was deliberately not covered by POC-oriented ISR efforts, since "you only move on the red side, you do not gather intel on the blue side" (interview 2; also interview 10). Yet, the UN DPO's POC policy covers a range of possible perpetrators: "non-state armed groups, self-defence groups, domestic and foreign state defence and security forces and other state agents and state-sponsored armed actors, as well as extremist groups and communities" (UN DPO 2019c, § 23). That FAMa was not a target of active intelligence collection for SWE ISR TF is unsurprising, since MINUSMA is in Mali to help, among other things, re-establish state authority. Hence, its political goal, and long-term strategy for securing the Malian population, is that the Malian state should be a provider of security and not a threat to civilians. Intelligence that unveils politically unpopular facts may not always be welcome (interview 13). In developing peacekeeping intelligence, the UN has sought to prevent missions' ending up "gathering intelligence on the host government in violation of state sovereignty" (Martin-Brûlé 2020, 5). In addition, MINUSMA mandates consistently state that POC is the main responsibility of the Malian state.

Nonetheless, non-coverage of FAMa implies that a main perpetrator of violence against civilians falls outside of the scope of ISR-based POC activities. This is in line with findings from Fjelde, Hultman and Nilsson (2019, 103), that "UN peacekeeping struggles to protect civilians from government forces". According to ACLED (2021), state forces in Mali were behind more civilian casualties than TAGs during 2020, and according to UN data, state forces were guilty of more human rights violations than TAGs during three of four quarters in 2020 (United Nations 2021, 15). The strict focus on the red side implies that the UN has limited the potential reach of POC-oriented intelligence to a subset of the threats that civilians in Mali encounter. Thereby, it cannot fully live up to expectations to impartially protect every non-combatant's right to life. This does, however, not mean that the UN disregards the flaws and misdeeds of the Malian state forces. These concerns are regularly raised in Secretary General Reports on Mali, as well as in other UN fora.

In theory, intelligence should enable proactive operations, by increasing threat awareness and thereby the ability to prepare for hostilities in the field. In the best case, thus, an increased knowledge of threats leads to better-prepared and safer operations. There is also a possibility, however, that intelligence-based considerations result in a decision *not* to embark on operations that are considered too risky. In contrast to POC, which always requires a proactive stance, from a FP perspective there is also the option not to act (e.g., interviews 2, 10). At least one rotation had a written protocol that stated beforehand the situations in which they would be willing to take higher risks (interview).

Whereas it is well-known that some units in MINUSMA conduct few operations due to FP concerns, it is unclear whether intelligence provided by SWE ISR TF and others have had an impact (in either direction) on the readiness to operate

outside of camp. One respondent reasoned that the intelligence that reached other units in Sector West was so scarce that it could not indicate where it was too dangerous to go (interview 20). In the absence of intelligence that pointed out specific threats, everything seemed dangerous ‘out there’. According to the respondent, it was this general insecurity that made units hesitant to leave the camp (interview 20).

For intelligence to be operationally empowering within the boundaries of an acceptable level for force protection, not only must the information be at a sufficient level of concretion to be applicable, it must actually reach relevant units; and these units must also be able to adjust their modus operandi (interviews 1, 4, 19). Regrettably, those most in need of improved force protection often have such a low standard of equipment and training that they would not have the capacity and resources to adjust operationally to intelligence-based threat assessments (interview 13). Concerns over the operational capability of a number of units due to the lack of equipment, education, and training reoccur in Secretary General Reports. While there are indications that the situation improved over time, following various calls for improvement, including the Santos Cruz report (United Nations 2017) and Action for Peacekeeping (United Nations 2018a), even in 2019 deficiencies remained “in personal equipment availability and basic soldier skills, such as radio procedures and ammunition storage” (UNSC 2019c, 14). Some contingents suffered ammunition shortfalls that affected their capacity to conduct operations and participate in training (UNSC 2019c, 14). As long as contingents are untrained and lack appropriate equipment, including vehicles, the effect of ISR on force protection will be limited to informing about threats, rather than enabling operational adaptation.

3.3.4 Summary: Circumstances

The circumstances just discussed significantly shape the impact that ISR capabilities can have on POC and FP. Thus, awareness of these circumstances is important to understand how to strengthen the positive linkages in the conceptual triangle of ISR, POC, and FP. As illustrated in Figure 4 below, whereas ISR can be argued to have had a direct effect on FP for the SWE ISR TF (solid arrow ISR to FP, see also Section 3.2), ISR’s role for POC has mostly been indirect (dotted arrow, see also Section 3.1). When the SWE ISR TF was involved in operations of direct POC-relevance, it acted more in a classical peacekeeper role than as an ISR unit strictly speaking. However, even on these occasions, ISR assets were important since they contributed to making the operations feasible from a FP perspective (solid arrow FP to POC, see Section 3.1.3). The three circumstances absorption capacity, geography and double-edged intelligence affect all connections in the triangle. For awareness of circumstances to strengthen the linkages in the triangle, both adaptation and transformation is called for.

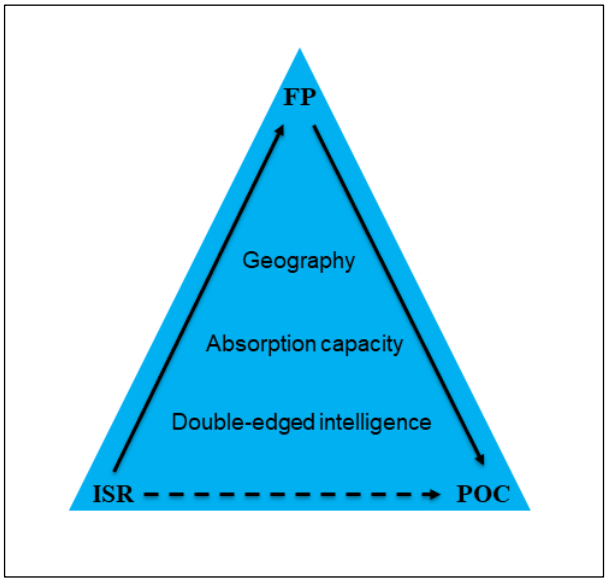

Figure 4. Revisiting the conceptual triangle

MINUSMA's fragile absorption capacity, including communication difficulties horizontally and vertically as well as a chronic lack of troops available for operations, has profoundly impeded ISR's possibilities to become the intended force enabler. This circumstance is an enormous challenge to MINUSMA, but it is a circumstance that lies within its own control. Thus, at least in theory, it can be changed. Strengthening the channels for communication and exchange of information between FHQ and ISR units, as well as between ISR units and other units in the sectors, is one concrete step for improving absorption capacity. As for the question of troop availability, it can only be solved by raising the FP level of the many units that are presently fixed on camp, alongside continued efforts from all levels of command to stress the importance of a proactive stance to work for mandate fulfilment.

In contrast, to attempt to change the geographical circumstance per se would be a futile endeavour: Mali will remain a vast country with a partly impenetrable terrain, incomplete infrastructure and a challenging climate for the foreseeable future. What MINUSMA can and must do is to adapt to these fundamental conditions, which do not only shape the daily life of peacekeepers and civilians, but also matter for how the conflict develops. As discussed above, the relationship between ISR and geography can be seen from two different angles. On the one hand, ISR assets increase the area in which threats can be detected, thus favouring peacekeeper mobility under reasonably safe conditions. Since improving the mobility of MINUSMA units is an absolute necessity to advance towards mandate fulfilment, it is a non-trivial achievement if ISR can catalyse

this development. On the other hand, geography also constrains the potential effect of ISR. As noted by several of our respondents, although assets such as UAVs expand the area that can be observed, only a small slice of the vast territory can be visually covered through these means. For peacekeepers to be able to respond to quickly escalating threats against civilians across the Malian territory, a holistic set of capabilities working closely together is needed. MINUSMA's Mobile Task Force concept is an early attempt in this direction, combining ISR, infantry, military enablers, air assets, and specialised ground units (UN PCRS 2020).

If MINUSMA units prove their relevance to protect civilians, this can impact positively on popular support and by extension on their force protection. Hence, in the best case, Figure 4 could be supplemented with an arrow running from POC to FP. However, there is also the possibility that peacekeepers expose civilians to risks, thereby undermining the mission's legitimacy and in the long-run hypothetically severing force protection. Intelligence activities are especially sensitive in this regard, since they risk exposing civilians to additional threats; thereby harming rather than helping them. For intelligence to mature into fulfilling its intended purpose in peacekeeping, it is of outmost importance that the circumstance that intelligence is 'double-edged' is taken seriously. If civilian wellbeing is compromised in the course of intelligence collection, the very concept of peacekeeping intelligence will be damaged.

4 Conclusions

> "The end state of intelligence should be action and results that increase security, not a written report" (Santos Cruz Report, United Nations 2017).

Throughout the five years of the SWE ISR TF, the protection of civilians and force protection were central themes in the daily work of the deployed soldiers and officers. In addition, POC and FP were sometimes the explicit focus of specific operations. Thus, the study has confirmed that ISR relates to both the protection of civilians and to force protection, conceptually as well as practically. Moreover, the study indicates that intelligence connects most strongly to these goals by detecting threats, dissuading from hostile action, and facilitating mobility.

But has, in the end, intelligence in MINUSMA lived up to the expectation, as phrased in the Santos Cruz report, and delivered "action and results that increase security"? There are different answers to this question. At the macro level, the combined international military engagements have evidently not succeeded in shifting the negative security development in Mali; on the contrary, all conflict estimates continuously worsen. However, this does not say much about the legacy of intelligence specifically. At the organisational level, MINUSMA attempted an intelligence structure directly serving the FC, which was intended to increase security by improving operational planning. Reaching the desired state of actionable intelligence, however, has been difficult, due to institutional teething problems as well as the chronic lack of resources available for operations. Judging from the empirical exploration in this report, ISR has yet to fully blossom as a force enabler. Instead, the security-enhancing effect has been most visible at the micro level, through POC and FP-oriented measures and activities conducted by the SWE ISR TF itself. On a few occasions, specific operations that were outside of the core ISR undertaking had a decisive impact on either POC or FP. Contributing to the defence of Timbuktu, bringing UN presence to central Mali, and assisting fellow MINUSMA units under attack, are three concrete examples of how SWE ISR TF has left a direct meaningful security imprint.

This concluding chapter seeks to expand the insights from SWE ISR TF MINUSMA to peacekeeping intelligence more broadly. It does so by presenting three observations, three recommendations, and three questions for future research.

4.1 Three observations

(i) Intelligence is a hygiene factor in contemporary peacekeeping

Rather than a panacea for civilian insecurity or threats against MINUSMA forces, access to appropriate intelligence is a basic condition for peacekeepers to be able to carry out their duties in the complex and dangerous realities of contemporary peacekeeping. This does not mean that all units in a mission should have qualified intelligence skills or access to advanced technical sensors. Instead, dissemination is key. Hence, the main role envisaged for ISR in MINUSMA was as a force enabler, helping other parts of the mission to perform. The effectiveness of such a role depends on its ability to deliver relevant information to other parts of the mission, vertically and horizontally, as well as the ability of other parts of the mission to make use of intelligence. There are strong indications that intelligence had trouble to make its way through the mission system within reasonable time, if at all. The systemic vulnerabilities when it comes to sharing and using intelligence are a non-trivial obstacle to mandate fulfilment. In view of the elevated threats against both troops and civilians in Mali, intelligence is not a luxury good, but a necessity good for peacekeeping to be feasible at all.

(ii) MINUSMA's intelligence experiment was short-lived

MINUSMA's original attempt to support the FC with advanced intelligence delivered in a parallel track to U2 survived less than three years. After the fusion of ASIFU with U2 in 2017, the SWE ISR TF gradually adapted to more basic intelligence collection. This adaptation in organisation and activities appears to have been warranted in view of imminent needs. However, opinions diverge on what type of intelligence best supports decision-making at different levels of a peace operation. What place do technologically advanced sensors have in making peacekeeping intelligence meet missions' needs? Can sophisticated long-term analysis of complex matters help missions build security, or should intelligence units prioritise sharing basic information of imminent relevance to operations? Should we strive for all peacekeepers to be sensors, or is intelligence rather a job reserved to specialists? Such remaining questions are signs that, despite the effort put into conceptual development, peacekeeping intelligence remains a loosely institutionalised work-in-progress. On the one hand, this can be an advantage, as it allows for adaptation to a quickly changing conflict environment. On the other, the diverging interpretations of the ISR role impede accumulative learning and may render its effects less sustainable over time.

(iii) Actionable intelligence

The key for ISR to be relevant for POC as well as for the FP of other units has a name: actionable intelligence. The concept of actionable intelligence is demanding on both sides of the equation: the type of intelligence required and

the ability to make use of it. There is no such thing as 'half-actionable' intelligence; intelligence is either actionable or not. To be actionable, intelligence must be of a sufficient quality and precision to give concrete guidance on how to approach situations that require MINUSMA's prompt attention. The output of the SWE ISR TF varied in this respect, as discussed above. The other side of actionable intelligence is the ability to plan and man operations that match the security problems at hand. *Action-ability* only works if there are resources and capacity to do what is necessary. The fact that only some MINUSMA units are available for operations is a major impediment to the prospect of actionable intelligence. Moreover, as hard as the mission leadership has worked to promote a proactive stance, there is a risk that operational paralysis relapses when TCCs long active in MINUSMA depart from Mali. After Sweden left Camp Nobel in 2019, no ISR unit came to fill the void in Sector West. Still, in mid-2022, Sector West stands without an ISR capacity. Indications are that during these two years, the FHQ's ability to take initiatives and to foresee courses of events has declined, due to the combined drop in ISR resources.

4.2 Three recommendations

(i) Adapt to needs on the ground

Contributing to conceptual development and acceptance of intelligence in UN peacekeeping was an important part of the Swedish ISR experience (interviews 3, 14; also, e.g., Government of Sweden 2018, 14). In parallel to the New York-led processes of elaborating UN peacekeeping intelligence, SWE ISR TF experienced what the introduction of an advanced intelligence function meant in practice. Insufficiencies when it comes to training, education, and equipment of TCCs, as well as systemic deficits, such as a heavy bureaucracy, the absence of confidentiality arrangements suited to the multilateral setting, and alleged corruption, all put limits on the ability to absorb qualified intelligence in a UN mission. These basic shortcomings are all matters that need to be addressed for UN peacekeeping to live up to its assigned role in defending international peace and security. However, for ISR to strengthen peacekeeping here and now, it is important to work with the current conditions and needs rather than wait for the flaws of the UN system to perhaps be corrected one day. In addition, especially those Western TCCs that are strongly formed by experiences made in ISAF and other NATO operations must gain awareness pre-deployment of what it means to be a peacekeeper in a contemporary UN mission. Given the severity of the security crises that UN missions such as MINUSMA operate in, it is imperative that each deployed unit adapts to needs on the ground, and is responsive to the meaning and purposes of intelligence in a UN context. The fact that SWE ISR TF has acted in other roles than as ISR specialists, strictly speaking, can be interpreted as an adaptation to this reality.

(ii) Combine competences

The SWE ISR TF brought a technically advanced, highly qualified and well-trained resource to MINUSMA, but these are not the only characteristics that are valuable in a military mission. Peacekeepers from the region stand for the vast majority of those deployed to MINUSMA, and they often have skills and experiences that can be valuable for intelligence collection and analysis. Yet, MINUSMA's innovative intelligence function was formed as an all-Western club that aimed to cluster advanced intelligence expertise in ASIFU and ISR TFs. In consequence, ISR units struggled with the crucial linguistic and cultural elements of intelligence collection and analysis, while TCCs with better awareness of such aspects remained unacquainted with the craft of intelligence in a peacekeeping context. Focusing on the interaction between MINUSMA's intelligence components, Rietjens and Ruffa (2019) find that aligning capabilities and developing cross-cultural competences between Western and African TCCs is critical to improving coherence and by extension the chances of mandate fulfilment. Indeed, making basic intelligence training as well as (mutual) socio-cultural awareness standard components in pre-deployment preparation would facilitate cooperation between units and incorporation of intelligence-derived insights at the tactical level. In sum, for reasons of both effectiveness and legitimacy, intelligence functions in the context of peacekeeping should strive for mixing a broader set of relevant competences from different TCCs. This would require a commitment to mutual learning and go hand in hand with a less technical and more human-centred approach to peacekeeping intelligence.

(iii) Create conditions for continuity and sustainability

For ISR to reach its full potential in UN peacekeeping, it is of utmost importance that the capability is seamlessly available over time and across the entire mission area. As the Swedish experience shows, it can be trying for one TCC to deliver the same level of ISR capacity over time. Furthermore, MINUSMA has never had full ISR capability in all sectors, and this shortage became more pronounced the moment SWE ISR TF left Timbuktu without being replaced. Since intelligence is a function intended to serve the entire mission, sudden downturns in this capacity risk negatively affecting operational readiness and mobility. If TCCs are unable (or unwilling) to make long-term commitments to contribute technical sensors and intelligence specialists, there is a risk that both practical and conceptual advances are lost in gaps between providers. Thus, the longstanding question of how to incentivise TCCs to deploy advanced assets must be approached with renewed vigour (see Smith and Boutellis 2013, 13). In this regard, the argument that ISR supports FP merits to be highlighted. In addition, to become less vulnerable to fluctuating TCC availability, the UN is recommended to continue its efforts diversify providers of ISR capabilities. At present Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) are procured along three different paths: (i) through commercial providers, (ii) UNHQ-contracted capabilities, and (iii) TCC offers (see UN DPO and UN DOS 2019, 13).

4.3 Three questions for future research

(i) To what extent do insights from MINUSMA generalise to other military missions, as concerns the relationship between ISR, POC, and FP?

MINUSMA's multi-sensor function serving the FHQ level was the first of its kind in UN peacekeeping. However, throughout history, intelligence has been an indispensable resource for military command at different levels. With the blue helmets expected to fulfil robust mandates in ongoing conflicts, the UN has become more similar to 'ordinary' military actors and, as a matter of necessity, has had to reconsider its intelligence taboo. This conceptual development was first tried out in MINUSMA, but the urgency of strengthening POC and FP extends to other robust UN missions. To further clarify which aspects of intelligence are most decisive for POC and FP, a systematic comparison of how different models of intelligence perform when it comes to triggering the six mechanisms discussed in this report (detection, distance, dissuasion, containment, coercion, and amelioration) would be welcome. Examples of cases that would be worthwhile to look more deeply into include the UN mission to Congo (ONUC), which in the 1960s already featured peace enforcement supported by a military information branch (Dorn and Bell 1995); the UN mission to Haiti (MINUSTAH), which pioneered intelligence-based operations against violent gangs in Cité Soleil between 2006 and 2007 (Dorn 2009); or even the NATO operation, ISAF (International Security Assistance Force), in Afghanistan, where ISR that strived for actionable intelligence was combined with a 'population-centric approach' in a counterinsurgency setting.

(ii) Which role can intelligence have in ensuring peacekeeper mobility?

For peacekeeping to play its envisaged stabilising role in conflicts that span vast and partly inaccessible territory, mobility is key. For mobility to be feasible and reasonable, though, a number of other factors need to be in place. Vulnerabilities in logistics and MEDEVAC are among the most central known impediments to MINUSMA's mobility.[13] As important as these are, mobility without situational awareness will be inherently hazardous. At present, lacking intelligence hampers mobility, and lacking mobility simultaneously hampers intelligence collection. A central challenge ahead is to transform this vicious circle into a virtuous relationship, where intelligence facilitates mobility and mobility enables better

[13] The departure of the more mobile French counterterrorism forces in Barkhane will further add to these vulnerabilities, unless duly replaced. Barkhane has played a crucial role for MINUSMA's force protection, inter alia through air support, and have been authorised by the United Nations Security Council to intervene in support of the mission units that are under imminent threat (Hellquist and Sandman 2020).

intelligence collection. A second domain of future research is thus to analyse under which conditions such a transformation can take place.

(iii) What prospect does peacekeeping intelligence have in increasingly distrustful international relations?

The UN's deep-rooted hesitation to incorporate intelligence in peacekeeping reflected a commitment to transparency and impartiality. Asymmetrical conflicts and robust mandates have made the UN more directly involved as a conflict party, partly cancelling out these reservations. Consequently, in the past decade, the UN has taken a giant leap in its official attitude to peacekeeping intelligence. However, not only have the conflicts where the UN is involved become messier in recent years, so have international relations at large. Ideally, the UN should be a counterforce to disharmonious international relations, standing steadily by the universal principles of international peace and security. However, peace operations are not decoupled from the big picture of world politics, on the contrary. In practice, UN missions are constituted by TCCs that may not always be on fully friendly terms with each other in other capacities. Given that intelligence-sharing is a sensitive matter even between partners, any contagion of tensions into the mission area risks undermining the idea and practice of peacekeeping intelligence. A third path of future inquiry would break with the tendency to treat UN missions as isolated organisms, to scrutinise instead how cleavages in international relations find their way into peacekeeping, intelligence being a case in point.

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