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Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Peacekeepers: Understanding Variation

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While the literature on peacekeeping has mostly focused on whether peacekeeping actually keeps the peace, few studies have systematically addressed the question of what explains variations in unintended consequences of peacekeeping, such as sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). This study presents the Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Peacekeepers data, a new dataset covering the 36 international peacekeeping missions by the UN, NATO, ECOWAS, and the African Union, active in the years 1999–2010. Using this dataset, it also presents the first statistical study that explores the issue of what can account for variations in reported SEA across peacekeeping operations. The systematic analysis of this data indicates that SEA was more frequently reported in situations with lower levels of battle-related deaths, in larger operations, in more recent operations, the less developed the country hosting the mission, and in operations where the conflict involved high levels of sexual violence. Our discussion and conclusion highlights data restrictions and identifies key challenges for future research.

KEYWORDS *peacekeeping, military, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation*

The most recent wave of research on peace operations, starting around the turn of the millennium, has made significant progress in answering the question of whether peacekeeping is successful in the sense of actually keeping

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peace (see for example, Diehl 2008; Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Fortna 2004; Fortna and Howard 2008), largely reaching a consensus that peacekeeping works. However, studies have also pointed out negative consequences of peace operations (for example, Aoi et al. 2007; Pugh 2004), such as sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by peacekeepers.¹ These effects have received much less rigorous analysis. The literature on SEA in peacekeeping is dominated by policy reports and case studies that suggest factors associated with SEA or discussion of legal challenges, but no comparative empirical tests of the relationship exist between various potential risk factors and SEA reports. Such systematic analyses of SEA are needed in part because the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security demands more inclusion of women in all parts of peacebuilding. SEA by peacekeepers is likely to undermine this goal, and potentially also have detrimental effects on the success of peace operations more broadly. In the current study we therefore seek to address this gap by systematically identifying, through statistical analysis, contexts in which reports of SEA are more likely.

One of the first operations to become known for sexual violence and harassment toward local women by operative personnel was the United Nations operation in Cambodia 1992–1993 (Olsson 2009) and Somalia in 1992 (Kent 2007). Since then, reports have surfaced related to operations in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Haiti, Sudan, Guinea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Burundi. International peacekeeping missions have since been accused of sometimes creating a predatory sexual culture, where reports involve everything from peacekeepers coercing vulnerable individuals to provide sexual favors in exchange for food or meager pay, to reported instances of rape at gunpoint. Such abuses not only have negative effects for those directly affected, but can undermine the legitimacy and efficiency of the specific peace mission², and the credibility of the international actors engaged in them. It can affect local development and relations between local women and men, and it may involve an increased risk of spread of diseases (such as HIV/AIDS) and unwanted pregnancies (for example, Grady 2010; Higate 2007; Jennings 2008; Olsson 2009; Zeid 2005).

¹In this study, we utilize the definition of sexual exploitation and abuse given by the UN. Here, sexual exploitation is any “actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another,” and abuse is “the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions” (<http://cdu.unlb.org/FAQ3.aspx>).

²The terms *peace mission*, *mission*, and *Peace Operation* are used interchangeably throughout the text. Missions are operations aiming at serving peace by intervening in conflict-areas, including peacemaking, peacekeeping, peace-building, and peace enforcement. A list of the missions can be found in Table 1. In this study we focus on uniformed personnel—militaries and police.

In the current study we present a new dataset on sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations, and analyze the variation in reports of SEA across missions and over time. To date, few systematic analyses exist of the problem of SEA. Existing studies often have a limited scope in terms of coverage in space and time, and general patterns are therefore left uncovered. The new database on *Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Peacekeepers*, the SEAP dataset, is a first attempt to facilitate systematic comparative studies. The dataset contains the available (but limited) public information on SEA in all peace missions by the United Nations, NATO, ECOWAS, and the African Union (AU) from 1999–2010. The data is based on information from UN and NGO reports, media sources, and academic studies, and is the first of its kind. Given this new data, we can address our key research question: *What can explain variation in reported SEA across missions and over time?*

Despite the assumed prevalence of the problem of SEA, there seems to be considerable variation. Whereas some peace missions have a grim record, others have not been reported to have serious SEA cases. Although underreporting is likely to be a significant problem, case studies suggest that such reporting problems are not likely to explain away all the variation. To understanding the variation, we focus on both troop contribution country (TCC)/mission-specific factors and host-specific factors, and analyze to what extent they are conducive to or countering sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping.³

Our clearest finding is that the larger the mission (in terms of troops on the ground), the more likely SEA will be reported. Missions that have mandates that mention women are often associated with higher likelihood of SEA reports, although this finding is not very robust. Laws that protect women against unwanted sexual advances are also largely ineffective in SEA prevention, but missions in countries with higher development levels are less likely to be associated with SEA. There is an elevated risk of SEA report in cases where there was extensive sexual violence during the preceding conflict. In situations with a heightened security risk in the form of high conflict intensity, the risks of seeing reports of SEA are lower. We also find that there are more reports of SEA for the period after 2005. This could in part be due to a higher focus on SEA in these years. The effects of having laws prohibiting marital rape are also in the opposite direction of what previous literature suggests.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, we give a brief review of previous research, and identify some important knowledge gaps. We then present the SEAP dataset. Subsequently, we outline our theoretical framework and hypotheses. We then present empirical analyses of

³We do not include here so-called blue-on-blue violations, SEA occurring within a peace operation, between military and/or civilian members.

variation in SEA. Last, we discuss data limitations, suggest future research, and conclude.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Research on peace operations has largely followed the waves in initiation of actual peace operations over the last decades (Fortna and Howard 2008). The third and most recent wave of peace operations started around 1999, when a series of large operations were initiated. Ensuing empirical studies demonstrated the success of peacekeeping in keeping peace, and this literature has been characterized by a stronger concern for systematic and methodologically rigorous analyses of the effects of peacekeeping than the literature up to that point (see Fortna and Howard 2008 for a review). Within this literature, however, the focus has been primarily on the ability of peacekeeping to prevent the recurrence of conflict. Alternative ways of evaluating peace operations success have received little attention, although the criterion for evaluating success is clearly relevant (for example, Diehl and Druckman 2010). Missions may arguably be evaluated on a broader set of criteria, particularly since demands on recent peace operations have broadened the mandates of the troops. In one account it's been argued that a peacekeeper must combine qualities of a soldier and a social worker (De Groot 2001: 33). Modern peace operations may therefore be at odds with traditional conceptions of what a military identity entails—particular in terms of gender roles and a “militarized masculinity,” argued by some to be premised on violence, aggression, and even misogyny (Enloe 1993; Whitworth 2004).

In a broader understanding of operation success, SEA can be an anathema to the missions' success, as it is at odds with the frequently stated goal of establishment of peace and security for the local population, and the fulfillment of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. Feminist research has focused on power-relations between men and women when discussing the role of peacekeepers. Within this literature, an important emphasis has been on different masculinities (what image of being a male is predominant), how they shape actions by peacekeepers (who are predominately men) (for example, Agathangelou and Ling 2003; Enloe 2000; Higate and Henry 2004), and contribute to increasing the likelihood of SEA, including trafficking (for example, Cockburn and Zarkov 2002). Some studies focus on masculine identities in militaries, and how patriarchy is an organizing principle for interpreting exploitation and abuse of women as the upholding male power. In Brownmiller's (1975) famous work, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, she calls rape's critical function as nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all* men keep all women in a state of fear. This rather static theoretical view of rape restricts our ability to understand variations across contexts. Accordingly, few studies within this literature are explicitly comparative, seeking to understand

variations in the prevalence or forms of sexual predation. Higate (2007:114) poses the rhetorical question: “How might we explain military men [. . .] who have never been involved in the sexual exploitation of others?” This question highlights the potential problem associated with some of the earlier literature, in that it often fails to explain “dogs that did not bark.”

The level of serious attention to the issue SEA in both policy and academic circles increased around the time Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security was passed by the UN Security Council in 2000, and the later release of the so-called Zeid report to the UN Secretary General (Zeid 2005) marked a more focused attention to stopping SEA in operations under UN auspices. The *Comprehensive Report* detailed allegations of sexual abuse by peacekeepers in the Congo, including women and girls being offered small amounts of money or food in exchange for (sometimes forced) sexual favors. In addition, the report revealed how commanders were actively obstructing investigations. The report revealed what Allred, a Captain in the US Navy, called the “weak underbelly” of the UN: its inability to control and discipline its troops in the field, due to *inter alia* legal and technical issues as well as lack of training (Allred 2006:6).

Over the last two decades, therefore, gender and issues related to sexual predation have received more consistent attention, both from those who are organizing and conducting peace operations, and well as from academics (for example, Allred 2006; Cockburn and Zarkov 2002; Gillard 2011; Higate 2004; Higate and Henry 2004; Hughes 2000; Jennings 2008; Koyama and Myrntinen 2007; Mackay 2001; Mazurana, Raven-Robets, and Parpart 2005; Olsson 2009; Olsson and Tryggestad 2001; Rehn and Sirleaf 2002; Spencer 2005; Whitworth 2004). Studies specifically on SEA consist mainly of single case studies (for example, Charlesworth 2008; Cockburn and Hibic 2002; Notar 2006) and NGO reports (see for example, Csaky 2008; Martin 2005), and some studies have focused on UN efforts to address sexual misconduct by UN peacekeeping personnel (Defeis 2010; Jennings 2008; Kanetake 2010; Lutz, Gutmann, and Brown 2009; Murphy 2006; Ndulo 2009; Quéniwet 2007). There has also been a considerable amount of attention to SEA in peace operations in the field of law, focusing on possible implications of legal regimes on persecution and prevention (for example, Miller 2006; Morris 2010; O’Brien 2011). Some studies have also taken a public health perspective on possible consequences of peace keeping on HIV/Aids (for example, Patel and Tripodi 2007). These approaches all bring important insights into various dimensions of the phenomenon. In general, however, existing studies are less concerned about explaining variation in occurrence—why it is more prevalent in some contexts than others.

Few if any studies try to compare variations in sexual exploitation and abuse across a series of peace operations and over time. This limits the ability to develop policies of prevention as well as our understanding of

peace operations. We therefore address this gap in the literature. A main contribution of the current article is to present a dataset on sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers. Despite the various explanations that exist on sexual predation, few studies have attempted to study this phenomenon across multiple cases and contexts. Those studies that have attempted to do so have focused on violations by state forces in war and peacetime (Butler, Gluch, and Mitchell 2007) or variations within conflict contexts between state and non-state actors (for example, Cohen 2010; Wood 2008). Cohen's (2010) study of sexual violence in civil war found that state armies were just as likely to commit sexual violence as were non-state rebel armies. Indeed, one of the most high profile cases of sexual abuse in recent years is the case of Abu Graib, where sexual abuse of male Iraqi inmates was a part of the repertoire of torture used by American military prison guards. In extension of this, it should not be surprising that state-based armies conducting peacebuilding or peacekeeping operations abroad, engage in this type of activity. However, as there have been no comprehensive studies conducted attempting to map this behavior across many peace operations, there is a noticeable gap in existing knowledge.

Existing (scattered) information on sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping is therefore systematized in the SEAP dataset. The dataset has been collected with the purpose of establishing a systematic account of what is known (from open sources⁴) of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations. The dataset is useful for studying how reported sexual predation varies across peacekeeping contexts, and needed to evaluate existing explanations and identify the contexts in which reports of SEA are more likely.

Sexual exploitation and abuse can come in many forms, and include a wide variety of sexual predation. The SEAP dataset and the current article follows the UN definition of sexual exploitation as any "actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another," and sexual abuse as "the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions." Hence, in a situation of unequal power, any sexual relations may fall within the categorization of sexual exploitation and abuse, not only those acts which are committed using brute force or under the immediate threat of such force.

Although a distinction could be drawn between SEA that involves direct physical force and violence (which may often be the case in rapes) and

⁴The limitation in terms of relying on open sources is based on the fact that reporting of SEA is politically sensitive to TCCs as well as the international actors responsible for peacekeeping operations. Numbers of incidents are therefore often not reported, or reported at an aggregate level without the degree of transparency needed to conduct empirical analyses of key assumptions about drivers of SEA.

transactional sex (which may typically be prostitution, or relations where sex is a means to gain some material or security benefit), this distinction is often not useful in situations of significant power differentials between the relevant actors.⁵ Still, wherever such distinctions can be made, this information is recorded in the SEAP dataset. In addition, the dataset includes variables on what actions were taken in response to the reported SEA (if any), and basic characteristics of the particular peacekeeping mission, such as TCCs, duration, and size.

The SEAP dataset uses mission-years as the unit of observation, and includes all international peacekeeping operations active in the years 1999 to 2010 (see Table 1).⁶ This time period allows us to assess, among other things, the impact of the UN Security Council's increased focus on the policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, and the mandatory training on preventing such abuse for all UN mission personnel, enacted since 2005.⁷ The focus is not limited to UN operations, however. Other organizations involved in peace missions have been accused of SEA, and as such we will also map sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations under UN mandate, by NATO forces, AU (African Union) forces, and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). This selection sums up to 36 operations in 28 countries and territories—half of them in Africa. The average mission lasts nearly 10 years, whereas almost 30% of the missions are longer than a decade.

Data for the SEAP dataset is collected through a comprehensive search of information on peace operations through open sources.⁸ Specifically, the data is based on coding of information from the following sources: (a) Peacekeeping mission websites, websites of the UN, ECOWAS, AU, and NATO, the UN record-keeping and data tracking system of allegations of misconduct and subsequent actions, annual UN reports since 2003 to the General Assembly, and reports by the UNHCR and UNICEF; (b) US State Department reports; (c) reports from human rights groups and NGOs (for example, Amnesty International, International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, Save the Children); (d) Media reports (identified through Keesings

⁵A coercive environment also makes the use of direct force superfluous in many instances. Furthermore, the degree to which women who engage in prostitution in the context of a peacekeeping operation are doing so out of their own free will—and the degree to which they have a real choice, is debated.

⁶This time period is the selection criteria, but we include also mission-years prior to 1999 for those missions that were ongoing in 1999.

⁷In July 2008, the UN launched the Misconduct Tracking System (MTS), a global database and confidential tracking system for all allegations of misconduct. This database will be useful for the tracing of problematic cases in the latter half of the project time frame. In 2008, there were 83 formal allegations of misconduct against Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) personnel, and 80 investigations by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (50 of which were for rape of a minor). Of those, 66 were substantiated and forwarded to the relevant state for action. The number of allegations was significantly smaller than for instance in 2006, when there were 357 formal allegations of misconduct.

⁸All sources used and coding decisions have been documented in a Coding Sheet document for each peace mission. The source list for each coding decision is available in the Online Appendix.

TABLE 1 SEAP Dataset: International Peace Missions Since 1999 (UN, NATO, AU, ECOWAS)

ID	Years incl.	Country of operation	Name	SEA types reported
1	1997–1999	Angola	MONUA	
2	1998–1999	Sierra Leone	UNOMSIL	
3	2000–2008	Eritrea/Ethiopia	UNMEE	Rape, prostitution, abuse of minor
4	2004–2007	Burundi	ONUB	Rape, prostitution, abuse of minor, other
5	1999–2010	DRC	MONUC	Rape, prostitution, abuse of minor, other
6	1997–2000	Haiti	MIPONUH	
7	1993–1996	Haiti	UNMIH	
8	1994–2000	Tajikistan	UNMOT	
9	1999	East Timor	UNAMET	
10	1999–2002	East Timor	UNTAET	Rape, prostitution
11	2002–2005	East Timor	UNMISSET	
12	1993–2009	Georgia	UNOMIG	
13	1995–2002	Bosnia/ Herzegovina	UNMIBH	Prostitution
14	1995–1999	Macedonia	UNPREDEP	
15	1996–2002	Croatia	UNMOP	
16	1991–2003	Iraq/Kuwait	UNIKOM	
17	1991–2010	Western Sahara	MINURSO	
18	2003–2010	Liberia	UNMIL	Rape, prostitution, abuse of minor, other
19	2004–2010	Côte d'Ivoire	UNOCI	Prostitution, abuse of minor, other
20	2005–2010	Sudan	UNMIS	Rape, prostitution, abuse of minor, other
21	2007–2010	Sudan	UNAMID	Unspecified SEA
22	2007–2010	Central Afr. Rep. /Chad	MINURCAT	Unspecified SEA
23	2010	DRC	MONUSCO	Unspecified SEA
24	2004–2010	Haiti	MINUSTAH	Rape, prostitution, abuse of minor
25	2006–2010	East Timor	UNMIT	Prostitution
26	1964–2010	Cyprus	UNFICYP	Rape
27	1999–2010	Kosovo	UNMIK	Prostitution, abuse of minor, other
28	2001–2010	Afghanistan	ISAF (NATO)	
29	1948–2010	Israel/Middle East	UNTSO	
30	1999– 2010	Kosovo	KFOR (NATO)	Rape, prostitution, abuse of minor, other
31	1996–2004	Bosnia/ Herzegovina	SFOR (NATO)	Prostitution, rape
32	1999	Guinea-Bissau	No name (ECOWAS)	
33	2003	Liberia	ECOMIL (ECOWAS)	
34	2007–2010	Somalia	AMISOM (AU)	
35	2004–2007	Sudan	AMIS (AU)	Prostitution, abuse of minor
36	1999–2005	Sierra Leone	UNAMSIL	Prostitution, abuse of minor, rape

and Lexis-Nexus), (e) academic writings (identified through Google scholar and Google searches based on combinations of keywords on SEA and peacekeeping⁹ and subsequent searches for information about SEA in writings identified through these searches).¹⁰ Based on careful reading of the material derived from the searches, we coded a set of variables about each mission, as well as disaggregated information by mission year.

Due to the method of data collection used, the source material can vary from one observation to another. However, as finding sufficient systematic information on this issue in a single source (or a limited set of sources) was difficult, this was deemed the best option.

DEVELOPING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

What can explain variations in sexual exploitation and abuse? In developing a theoretical framework, we turn first to the literature on rape. Here, Russell (1984) developed a four-factor model which suggests preconditions that allow rape to occur. These are (1) factors creating a *predisposition* or a desire to rape, (2) factors reducing *internal inhibitions* against acting out this desire, (3) factors reducing *social inhibitions* against acting out this desire, and (4) factors reducing the potential victim's ability to *resist* or avoid the rape. Rape is also found to be more common when the individual who is the potential victim is devalued, and the perceived costs of rape are low, and by individuals with anti-sociality (menacing antisocial attitudes and beliefs, particularly hostility toward women and acceptance of interpersonal violence) (Lalumiere 2005; Malamuth 1986; Seto and Lalumiere 2000). Cost could be the punishment or social stigma associated with detection, risk of diseases etc. A man who is devaluing women in general and the women who he is interacting with in particular is therefore more likely to rape than other men with more favorable evaluations of the worth of women. From the general literature on rape we can therefore assume that the prevalence of sexual exploitation and abuse should be higher when the men in the population hold negative views of women in their surroundings, when there is social acceptance for the behavior, and when potential victims are vulnerable to targeting.¹¹ The peacekeeping operation context may sometimes influence these factors and generate an environment conducive of abuse.

⁹Keywords on SEA (? indicates truncated search terms): a. sex? assault? b. sex? violence? c. sex? abuse? d. exploit? e. abuse? f. rape? g. prostitution?. Peacekeeping keywords: a. UN; NATO; AU; ECOWAS b. peacekeeping? c. ["Name of mission"] d. Soldier

¹⁰The coding decisions are documented in a separate Coding Sheet for each mission, listing the sources consulted. This documentation is made available with the replication files for the empirical analyses.

¹¹Despite a general assumption about a power differential between peacekeepers and the local population in favor of the peacekeepers, the reality in many cases can be that the peacekeepers have limited actual power, and that the local populations (men as well as women) have considerable power and agency to affect the interaction with peacekeepers. There are certainly instances where local women (and sometimes

While recognizing both the different possible gender constellation and power-relations in SEA, (mostly male), peacekeeping operations (PKOs) are here referred to as perpetrators and (mostly female) local civilians as victims of SEA.¹² This is in part following from the UN definition of SEA as occurring in a situation of differential power, where peacekeepers are assumed the more powerful actor.

Below we outline various possible explanations for sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations based on these suggestions from the literature on rape, as well as factors highlighted in the case literature on sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping, and present testable hypotheses.¹³ We group explanations into mission-specific and host-specific.

Mission Factors

Peace operations come in different forms and have different mandates. For instance, it varies whether peacekeepers are tasked with protecting women in particular. If the mandate includes a mentioning of protection of women, the (naïve) assumption is that the peacekeepers focus on protection of women and do not engage in SEA. Hence, one should expect that there would be less SEA by peacekeepers in such operations. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1: Peace operations which mention women in the mandates are less likely to be associated with reports of SEA by peacekeepers, all else equal.

As an alternative interpretation, however, one could assume that women are mentioned because they are in a particularly precarious situation in the location of the mission, and that peacekeepers are more likely to take advantage of the vulnerabilities of women in these contexts, despite them being tasked to protect women.

From gender studies, as well as for psychological literature, we expect variations in sexual predation based on differing ideals of masculinity and gender relations. Peacekeepers do bring with them attitudes, ideologies, and social backgrounds that shape interventions (Agathangelou and Ling 2003;

men) may exert considerable agency in instigating transactional sex with a peacekeeper (most often male but sometimes women) as a survival mechanism.

¹²This shorthand is reasonable given extremely low rate of female military peacekeepers, and the impression of the typical gender and role (PKO-local) constellations in reported SEA in the SEAP dataset. We therefore find the focus in civilian women and male peacekeepers to be justified in its dominant prevalence. Still, we are mindful of the many and often multidimensional roles women take in conflict and postconflict settings, and the agency and room for negotiation of roles that women and civilians have even in situations of acute insecurity, something which has been emphasized by ethnographical research (for example, Denov and Gervais 2007; Moser and Clark 2001; Nordstrom 1997; Utas 2005).

¹³Peace operations might constitute particular context that make SEA more likely, but since we are only studying peace operations in this paper, we cannot test that possibility empirically.

Higate and Henry 2004). This insight is, in some respects, reflected in the focus in the UN on internalizing codes of conduct against SEA, and by the introduction of women into peacekeeping forces to challenge the development of masculine cultures. Echoing the findings that male valuation of women is a key component for understanding rape, we should expect men who respect women's human rights, and who see women as of equal worth, as less likely to commit sexual violence than others. One indicator of such attitudes can be the legal and cultural norms of gender equality in the troop contributing countries (TCCs). Troops from countries which do not grant equal rights to women or protect the right of women to be spared from unwanted sexual advances could therefore be a particularly high-risk group. General impunity for sexual offences committed by peacekeepers from these countries could also make SEA more likely (Kent 2007). Based on this, we hypothesize that:

H2: There will be more SEA in missions when the troops come from countries that do not protect the rights of women to be spared from unwanted sexual advances.

At the most basic level, we can assume that the more individuals that are involved in a peace mission, the higher the likelihood that there will be sexual exploitation and abuse. Additionally, organizational studies explain variations at the group level in prevalence of sexual predation by variations in the internal control over agents (Butler et al. 2007). From principal-agent models, it is assumed that when leaders (principal) have limited ability to monitor soldiers (agent), the agent's behavior is likely to be driven by personal preferences. In such contexts, shirking as well as behavior serving personal preferences or gains are likely to be more common than in situations of supervisor oversight. Systems of monitoring and/or reporting about abuses are on the other hand assumed to prevent SEA, conditional on leaders having willingness to assure compliance with a zero-tolerance policy. This willingness is difficult to measure in a systematic way, but the ability to monitor and control soldiers could potentially be proxied by troop size. We can therefore assume that commanders in larger missions will have more substantial problems monitoring the behavior of the troops than those in smaller missions, and that this potential lack of oversight, might increase the risk of misconduct. Hence, we hypothesize that:

H3: The larger the missions in terms of troop size, the higher the likelihood of reports of SEA.¹⁴

¹⁴Larger missions might also have more NGOs and other present to report on instances of misconduct.

The UN and others have assumed that the presence of female peacekeepers could ameliorate the situation of sexual exploitation and abuse of local women (for example, Kent 2007). Various reasons have been stated: First of all, women peacekeepers are believed to be less likely than men to engage in SEA. Second, having women perform the cordon and search of women, for instance, would lead to fewer instances where there is an opportunity for males to commit SEA. Third, there could be attitudinal changes away from militarized masculinities to a more nuanced view of what a soldier identity is and can be, and that the group dynamics in gender mixed groups tend to have less development of overt chauvinist behaviors and attitudes. Fourth, with a mixed gender peacekeeping force there could be more opportunities for local women to report abuses and therefore increase the risk of exposure of unwanted behavior by peacekeepers. Last, it is possible that in gender-mixed missions, sexual relationships between male and female peacekeepers may act as a substitution effect to transactional sex with local women. Overall, however, although we can hypothesize that peace operations with more women troops have a lower propensity for SEA, there are very few women peacekeepers in the data material, and it is therefore not enough data currently to allow for a reliable cross-case comparison.

Host Factors

By host factors, we mean those local conditions that constitute the environment in which the peacekeeping mission operates. Local conditions can heighten the vulnerabilities of local women to sexual exploitation and abuse, and this could increase the “supply” of potential victims.

Poverty is a frequently used explanation of sexual exploitation and abuse (for example, Defeis 2009; Kent 2007). An unintended consequence of peacekeeping is to establish a “peacekeeping economy” and often a market for sex. Particularly in situations where local women have few alternatives for survival and security, the risk is increased that they will be forced into transactional sex. The local situation in terms of economic underdevelopment, food insecurity, and lack of economic rights for women can make transactional sex more necessary for local women to engage in. From this we hypothesize that:

H4: *SEA is more likely the lower the economic development of the host country.*

To assess the vulnerabilities of local population to sexual exploitation and abuse, one important factor to consider is whether there is a culture or practice of impunity for gender-based violence, or weak legal protection for women (for example, Miller 2006). If the legal protection of women is weak,

particularly for sexual offences or gender-based violence, there might be fewer protective mechanisms in place to prevent an escalation of SEA, and local women are less likely to report SEA by peacekeepers (for example, Kent 2007). We therefore hypothesize that:

H5: *SEA is more likely when the host country does not legally protect the rights of women to be spared from unwanted sexual advances.*

If sexual predation has become a “normalized” behavior during a preceding conflict, then the peacekeepers might be faced with an elevated “supply” of local women seeking out peacekeepers for transactional sex of various kinds—exchanging sex for protection, benefits, money, or material goods. High prevalence of sexual violence may have broken sexual taboos (for example, survival sex becoming a common practice), and norms and values may have been established that accept or overlook sexual abuse. Alternatively, if local women are shunned for being survivors of sexual violence, this could promote transactional sex by generating elevated supply. Sexual violence might therefore become institutionalized and the postconflict society an enabling environment for abuse (Defeis 2009; Kent 2007). If a conflict situation has involved high levels of sexual violence by the conflict actors, this could therefore potentially heighten the risk of continued sexual exploitation in the postconflict phase, involving also peacekeepers. We could therefore expect a heightened incidence of SEA by peacekeepers in contexts of high prevalence of wartime sexual violence. Hence, we hypothesize that:

H6: *SEA is more likely if there was extensive sexual violence during the preceding armed conflict.*¹⁵

Last, the general security situation might also have an effect. If missions are faced with a high-risk security situation where battles are still ongoing, this may limit troop mobility and therefore reduce the interaction points with the local population. This might limit the opportunity for engaging in SEA and hence reduce the probability of sexual exploitation and abuse, *ceteris paribus*. It might also decrease the probability that reports will surface. Hence:

H7: *The more intense the ongoing violent conflict, the less reports of SEA.*

¹⁵A possible confounding factor here could be if the mandate of peacekeepers is focused particularly on defending the local female population against sexual predation (see Hypothesis 1).

DATA AND VARIABLES

The empirical analysis used to test the hypotheses consists of multivariate regression models of the existence of reported incidences of sexual exploitation and abuse. Sexual exploitation or abuse types found through searches come in three main categories: rape, sexual abuse of minors, and prostitution (including transactional sex, such as sex for food, and trafficking). Other forms of sexual exploitation and abuse have also been reported in some, but fewer, cases, such as sexual harassment and forced pornography.

Due to the relative lack of data on sexual exploitation and abuse, we are not able to construct a count measure or ordinal scale of the prevalence of sexual exploitation and abuse per peace operation or mission-year, or to disaggregate types of sexual exploitation and abuse by type for the empirical analyses. Instead, we are using as our dependent variable a dichotomous variable coded 1 if there were reported incidence(s) of sexual exploitation and abuse in a particular peace operation year and 0 otherwise, from the SEAP dataset. While this measure has its limitations, such as not indicating the full scale of the problem in each case, the more aggregate variable is likely to reduce problems of reporting bias influencing the results.¹⁶

From the SEAP mission-year dataset, in 84 out of 311 mission-years sexual exploitation or abuse was found to be reported. Due to missing data, particularly related to which countries are the largest TCC in each mission-year, there is some listwise deletion, and most models therefore have a smaller N .

Explanatory Variables

There are no previous studies that have conducted a systematic analysis of variation in sexual exploitation and abuse. We therefore consider the analyses in this paper explorative. In the following we outline the variables used to test each hypothesis.

In terms of mission factors, we hypothesized that if women are mentioned this is indicating that protecting women is a more central part of the task of the peace operation, and hence there should be less sexual exploitation and abuse by peace operation personnel when this is the task of the mission.¹⁷ A dummy variable is gained from reading of mission mandates searching for the words *women* or *woman*, assigning the value 1 to those

¹⁶When a mission-year scores a 1 on SEA we are reasonably confident that SEA actually took place in that mission year, but some unreported cases of SEA in the zero category is possible. Nevertheless, extensive SEA should be more likely to be reported on than less prevalent abuse, *ceteris paribus*.

¹⁷An alternative proposition would be to assume that protection of women is an acute problem in the missions where women are mentioned, and that these factors that make women vulnerable also would increase the risk of them becoming victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, *ceteris paribus*.

cases where women are mentioned and 0 otherwise. This is used to test Hypothesis 1.

Second, we hypothesized that when the troops come from countries that do not protect the rights of women to be spared from unwanted sexual advances, this will increase the likelihood of sexual exploitation or abuse in peace operations. One indicator of how women's sexual rights are respected and treated in a country is the legal protection against rape in marriage. To test Hypothesis 2 we therefore use a dummy variable "Spousal rape law (TCC)" indicating whether the dominant troop sending country (in terms of having the largest contingent in the mission that year) has a law recognizing and prohibiting spousal rape (1) or not (0). The data comes from the US State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (2008).

Our third hypothesis concerned mission size. To test this, we use the log of the average monthly troop size in terms of uniformed personnel (military and police) in the mission-year.

Among host country factors, we hypothesized that SEA is more likely, the lower the economic development of the host country (Hypothesis 4). We therefore include a measure of the log of GDP in the host country, from the World Bank Indicators.¹⁸

We also theorized that SEA is more likely when the host country does not legally protect the right of women to be spared from unwanted sexual advances. We measure this for the host country in the same way as the "spousal rape law" dummy variable for TCCs (described above). This is used to test Hypothesis 5.

Hypothesis 6 stated that SEA is more likely if there was extensive sexual violence during the preceding armed conflict. To measure this, we use a measure of the highest reported prevalence in the previous conflict in the host country, from Cohen (2010).¹⁹ We construct a dummy variable with the value 1 for "several" or "systematic/massive" levels of sexual violence occurring in a conflict year and 0 otherwise.

The security situation in the host country (Hypothesis 7) is measured as whether there was no active conflict (0), minor conflict (1), or full-blown war within excess of 1000 annual battle deaths (2) ongoing, based on the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict dataset (Gleditsch, Wallensteen, Eriksson, Sollenberg, and Strand 2002).

Control Variables

There are few if any existing systematic studies of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping. Hence, there is no established list of normal controls

¹⁸Online at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD>.

¹⁹Cohen (2010) measures this for large-scale civil wars. Not all missions in the SEAP dataset are preceded by such a conflict, and hence, the variable has a few missing observations.

that need to be included. Still, in the current analysis, we test a series of control variables—that is, independent variables that are less theoretically interesting. These are: A dummy for years post-2005 to control for time trends given heightened attention to SEA problems; and a count variable indicating the number of years a mission has been in operation. It is possible that both SEA practices and reporting mechanisms take some time to develop and therefore that the longer a peace operation has been in place, the more likely SEA will be reported to have occurred.²⁰

ANALYSES

We first conduct a preliminary investigation of the bivariate²¹ relationships between our explanatory variables and reports of SEA (dependent variable) (see Online Appendix 3). This reveals that all but one of the explanatory variables (conflict severity) shows a statistically significant relationship with SEA. In the case of the mentioning of women in the mission mandate, the relationship is the opposite of the hypothesized direction. For those cases where women are mentioned, there is a heightened likelihood that there will be reports of SEA. This is perhaps not surprising, however, as the mentioning of women in the mandate could indicate a particularly problematic situation for women in the host society, which could be associated with other factors related to SEA risk. For the other variables, the signs of the coefficients are in the hypothesized direction.

Next, we turn to the empirical investigations of the likelihood of finding reports of sexual exploitation and abuse, by peace mission-year. As the dependent variable is dichotomous, we use multivariate logit regression with robust standard errors clustered on peace operation to test the propositions. Here, we also include controls for the post-2005 period and the duration of peace missions in terms of mission years in all models.

In Table 2, Model 1 and Model 2 focus exclusively on mission factors. In the first model, we include the variable indicating that women are mentioned in the mandate (H1) and a dummy for whether there is a law acknowledging spousal rape in the main TCC (H2). We run these variables separately first, as the inclusion of the mission size variable involves a large listwise deletion. Model 1 reveals the opposite to the hypothesize relationship between the mentioning of women in the mandate and reported SEA—those cases where women are mentioned have a *higher* probability of also

²⁰It is also possible that the situation stabilizes more as a mission becomes more established, which facilitates more interaction with the local population overall and thereby might increase SEA risk.

²¹See Online Appendix for correlation matrix, descriptive statistics, and bivariate analyses, as well as the background documentation for coding SEA cases.

TABLE 2 Multivariate Logit Regression: Reported SEA in Peace Mission Years, 1999–2010

	(1) Mission	(2) Mission	(3) Host	(4) Host	(5) All
<i>Mission</i>					
Women in mandate	1.206*** (0.430)	0.623 (0.682)			1.751 (1.141)
Spousal rape law, TCC	-0.087 (0.489)	0.597 (0.567)			-0.345 (0.743)
Mission size, ln		1.204*** (0.189)			1.854*** (0.482)
<i>Host</i>					
Ln GDP/capita, host			-0.745*** (0.225)	-0.863*** (0.310)	0.830 (0.719)
Spousal rape law, host			0.955* (0.562)	1.903** (0.751)	0.678 (1.124)
Conflict sexual violence				1.789** (0.729)	1.910*** (0.593)
Conflict level				-0.677** (0.308)	0.938 (0.671)
<i>Controls</i>					
Post 2005	2.139*** (0.645)	1.622** (0.725)	2.170*** (0.660)	2.668*** (0.759)	1.322 (1.121)
Mission years	-0.123*** (0.032)	0.101* (0.057)	-0.082** (0.036)	0.013 (0.061)	0.342*** (0.109)
Constant	-1.130** (0.467)	-10.797*** (1.930)	3.404*** (1.241)	2.106 (2.198)	-23.688*** (8.447)
Pseudo R^2	.350	.474	.335	.292	.557
Missions	31	23	33	27	20
<i>N</i>	315	161	278	157	124

Robust standard errors in parentheses, S.E clustered on mission.

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$.

having reports of SEA than missions that do not mention women in the mandate. This could be because those missions where women are mentioned have particular problems with women being targeted for sexual abuse, or that there is already widespread transactional sex in the location, which acts as an inducement for peacekeepers to commit SEA; or that reporting on SEA is particularly meticulous due to the focus on women's security. The variable indicating spousal rape laws in the main TCC is in the expected negative direction, but is not statistically significant, contrary to Hypothesis 2.

Including the mission-size variable in Model 2, the statistical significance of the finding for mentioning of women in the mandate disappears. However, this could to some extent be due to sample effects. When running Model 1 with the considerably reduced sample in Model 2, we find that the "mentioning of women in mandate" variable drops to only a 10% level significance. We do not find an effect of spousal rape laws in the main TCC in Model 2. However, Model 2 shows a significant effect of (log of) mission size in terms of uniformed troops on the ground. This is a strong predictor of the probability of reports of SEA, significant at the 1% level. The larger the

missions, the more likely to see reports of SEA emerge in any given year, as expected from Hypothesis 3.

In Model 3 we look at host factors by first including a poverty/development variable measured as the log of GDP per capita in the host country and a dummy for whether there is a law against spousal rape in the host country. We run these host factors separately first, to avoid problems of listwise deletion. The result for GDP per capita is as expected, supporting Hypothesis 4: we find that less developed host countries have a higher likelihood of having reports of peacekeeping SEA than more developed countries. This could be because the local populations in more developed countries have more alternative means of economic survival than populations in less developed countries, *ceteris paribus*, and that this could imply that the market for transactional sex is relatively smaller. In terms of the dummy for spousal rape laws, the direction is in the opposite of the expected—there is a slight positive relationship between such laws in the host country and reports of SEA. This runs contrary to our expectation in Hypothesis 5. An explanation could potentially be that those countries that have a law prohibiting spousal rape are more attuned to uncovering sexual exploitation and abuse, and that this will increase the chances for such abuse being reported. Host locations in our sample that have such laws include Bosnia and Kosovo which have both had quite well known instances of sexual exploitation and abuse, particularly trafficking-related misconduct.²²

In Model 4 we include also the other variables measuring host-specific factors (conflict sexual violence and conflict level). The significant findings for GDP per capita and spousal rape laws are upheld. We still find that missions in host countries that have laws prohibiting spousal rape are slightly *more* likely than countries that do not have such laws to see reports of SEA, and this relationship is significant at the 5% level.

Supporting Hypothesis 6, we also find that countries with a previous conflict that involved high levels of sexual violence are more likely than other countries to have peace operations with reports of SEA, a finding that is significant at the 5% level. In line with Hypothesis 7, we find that in missions responding to more intense conflicts (in terms of annual battle deaths) reports of SEA are significantly less likely. This expectation was based on an assumption that the interaction with the local population might be lower in such contexts for security reasons.

Model 5 includes all the variables—both those indicating mission factors and host factors.²³ Here, the *N* drops quite significantly to 124 observations

²²For example, see the Human Rights Watch report from 2002: http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/2002/bosnia/Bosnia1102-10.htm#P1070_228688.

²³We have also tested measures of combination of mission and host factors, such as the development disparity between the main TCC and the host country, as well as a measure of conflict severity. These have no statistically significant effect on SEA.

(20 missions), which means the results should be interpreted with caution. The model shows that the average mission size is still the strongest predictor of SEA in peacekeeping, and that this variable is significant at the 1% level. A high level of sexual violence in the preceding conflict is also predicted to increase the probability of reports of SEA by peacekeepers, significant at the 1% level. The remaining variables are not statistically significantly related to SEA in the full model.²⁴ In other words, the finding on development level in the host country as well as the effects of spousal rape laws and conflict level drop out.

Of the controls, we find that the measure for post-2005 years is positive and strongly statistically significant in all models but the last. Sexual exploitation and abuse reporting has become more common in the later years, possibly as there has been more focus on sexual abuse of women related to peace operations. 2005 was chosen as this was the year of publication of the Zeid report (Zeid 2005) which put sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations more strongly on the international agenda and increased awareness about the problem. Running split sample models as a robustness test show similar results to the ones reported here.²⁵ The time that a peace operation has been ongoing has less of a clear relationship to reports of SEA, as the findings revert between a positive and a negative effect.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Despite recent international awareness of the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping, few studies have studied this issue comparatively. By presenting a new dataset on SEA in peacekeeping and analyzing this data, this study addresses this gap in the literature, and represents the first statistical comparative study of factors that may explain variations in SEA across missions and over time.

To date, the study of drivers of SEA in peacekeeping has been severely hampered by a lack of systematic data. However, studying SEA in peacekeeping presents significant challenges, related in particular to data reliability. Many instances of sexual abuse are likely to go unreported. For one, there is likely a culture of silence in many peacekeeping operations (Defeis 2009:192). Sexual exploitation and abuse is also often underreported due to taboos and reporting obstacles. Instances of abuse and exploitation

²⁴How much of this is a direct result of missing observations due to listwise deletion is not known, but this is likely to be at least part of the explanation.

²⁵Only the variable for sexual violence drops below an acceptable level of statistical significance in the period 2005 onwards, while religious differential is significant and positive at the 10% level.

may go unreported to protect the reputation of the peacekeepers, and so-called “whistle-blowers” could be stigmatized. International peacekeeping is therefore likely to limit “naming and shaming” to assure that TCCs will be willing to commit troops to peace operations. In addition, there might be reporting biases depending on *inter alia* the location of SEA, the existence of reporting mechanisms, as well as international media and NGO attention. For these reasons, the reported SEA might be the “tip of the iceberg.” We feel quite certain, however, that the incidences reported are mostly accurate in that the mission where reports have surfaced, there was likely SEA going on. As the current analysis uses a dichotomous dependent variable of occurrence of SEA reports in a year, we are less vulnerable to biases than if we were trying to assess relative frequencies across cases.²⁶

In general, we find more reports of SEA from 2005 onwards.²⁷ This could be due to a higher focus on sexual exploitation or abuse, but possibly also a result of more complex and larger peace operations. For the entire period 1999–2010, we find that larger peace operations in terms of the number of uniformed troops are associated with reports of SEA. This is the most robust finding across models, which is to be expected, as there are more potential perpetrators in larger missions. Second, as expected, we find some support that the poorer the host country in terms of GDP per capita, the more likely there will be SEA reports. The mentioning of women in the mission statement seems to have a weak but inconsistent association with *more* reports of SEA. A high level of sexual violence during the previous conflict is associated with a heightened probability of reports of SEA, as expected. However, contrary to expectations, a law against marital rape in the host country is not associated with a lower probability of SEA, rather the opposite.

To conclude, we find that despite having assembled and analyzed the relevant information on SEA by peacekeepers from open sources, many questions remain, and many of these cannot be answered without more and more reliable data. One potential future source of data is the reporting by the UN of the number of SEA allegations per mission, which reports figures starting in 2007. This source has the advantage of providing a number of cases of reported SEA. However, it is only available since 2007 and for UN missions. To make further headway in the systematic study of the causes of SEA in peace operations, it should also be a priority for future research to conduct systematic data collection at the micro-level to acquire more data on the characteristics of individual perpetrators and victims, as well as the context in which SEA takes place. This is, however, probably only feasible in

²⁶If variations in reported incidences follow a significantly different pattern than being the tip of the iceberg, however, this is a more serious concern—though perhaps not as likely—but which the current analysis is not able to account for.

²⁷With the exception of model 5.

a limited set of cases, but could potentially be used for simulating reporting biases in a broader sample and uncover more reliable estimates of variations in prevalence of SEA in peacekeeping across time and space.

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