

The United Nations mandate in Mali: The trouble with intrastate conflict

Frank R. Zarb

Abstract: The ongoing conflict in Mali started as an uprising of the Tuareg in the north of the country but soon spiralled into a complex struggle involving multiple parties. The Mali Theatre now involves the French military, the Malian government, forces loyal to the government, the Tuareg and numerous Islamist groups. In 2013 the UN Peacekeeping mission (MINUSMA) was created to stabilise and keep peace in the country. While a peace treaty has been signed by some members of the conflict, violence has continued between all parties, in addition to becoming the deadliest ongoing mission for UN personnel. If success is deemed to be measured in keeping and sustaining peace then to date MINUSMA has been a failure. This lack of success on the part of the UN in Mali can be attributed to the expanded mandates that have been developed in recent years to deal with complex intra-state conflict zones. This new multidimensional approach has allowed the UN to enter into conflicts for which it is ill suited, paving the way for it to move away from its core identity. The normative and strategic implications of this move will be explored in the context of the Mali conflict and the UN's diversion from their fundamental principles. The move away from their principles puts the UN in a position in which success is difficult to achieve while also causing damage to the reputation of the institution.

Keywords: Mali, intra-state conflict, United Nations, peacekeeping, Africa, MINUSMA

Author: Frank R. Zarb, MA in International Relations from Central European University, BA in Political Science from Queens College, City University of New York

Introduction

The ongoing conflict in Mali has raged on since January of 2012. A bloody civil war that started with a Tuareg uprising in the north and a call for independence has evolved into an increasingly complex conflict involving multiple parties. With the entrance of The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in April 2013, the hopes were to stem the violence and broker and enforce a peace. The Algiers Peace and Reconciliation Agreement has been negotiated and signed by some parties to the conflict, however, the violence has not ceased. While official death toll numbers are scarce, the instability in Mali has led to almost a quarter million individuals uprooted as both internally displaced and refugees (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2014). The MINUSMA operation has become the deadliest for UN Peacekeepers in all of Africa and violence between government forces, French Forces, Tuareg and terror groups persist (Dyer, 2016). Why has this MINUSMA operation been so unsuccessful? It can be argued that expanded peace-making mandates and expansion of UN actions to accommodate intrastate conflict zones simultaneously threaten the credibility of the UN as an institution in addition to limiting its utility as a peacekeeper.

The desire to bring peace within what has become an extremely complex conflict zone forces the UN Peacekeeping forces to engage in conflict that runs contrary to its design. The UN is well suited to deal with inter-state conflicts but lacks utility when in the context of intrastate conflicts. In particular, issues with impartiality have become apparent which has turned the Peacekeepers into peacemakers. The peacekeeping operations have transitioned from their traditional role to a more involved one. They have done this through expanded mandates which call for a multidimensional role in conflicts. However, these mandates have strategic and normative implications. As these mandates often depart in a significant way from the three principles of UN Peacekeeping, they have led to engagement into conflicts outside its expertise while also causing damage to the reputation of the institution.

The conflict in Mali has become emblematic of the issues within United Nations Peacekeeping operations. It provides an example of the increased scope of UN peacekeeping operations while also presenting a challenge in terms of the ability of the UN to deal with complex security environments. Often this is shown through their inability to effectively deal with multi-polar conflicts especially in intra-state war zones.

In order to see the evolution of the changes and departure from the UN's so called "bedrock" principles, this paper will look first at the three principles that guide UN Peacekeeping operations, recent changes to UN Peacekeeping doctrine and the recent deviations in approach. Second, a brief look at the background on the Mali conflict will be provided, with key players identified. The time frame outlined will start from the military coup of March 2012 until the present, July of 2016. As the recent conflict can be judged to start officially from the coup and the call for independence by the Tuareg in April of 2012, and the entrance of multiple Islamist elements into the conflict it is deemed to be a logical starting point. While conflict between Tuareg tribes in Northern Mali and the government held south have risen and subsided since Mali's 1992 move to democratic rule, the history of this conflict is outside the scope of this paper.

Third, this paper will look at specific departures between the mandate and principle which are occurring in the Mali. Looking at how the concept of "peacekeeping operations" is deployed in this specific conflict should allow for clarity in terms of what it means for both the United Nations as an institution and specifically their peacekeeping forces. The last section will look at the implications of expanded mandates, in terms of their departure from the core governing principles of UN Peacekeeping. Understanding the possible repercussions of actions in Mali and intra-state conflicts like it are crucial for future peacekeeping operations.

Development and Principles of UN Peacekeeping

Current UN Peacekeeping doctrine stems from their three principles and through the Brahimi report, the Capstone Doctrine and the New Horizon process. Since its inception the United Nations Peacekeepers have been guided by three core principles meant to ensure their ability to keep peace and security in post conflict areas. The three principles are consent of parties, impartiality, and non-use of force, except in self-defence and defence of the mandate. Adherence to these principles has been cited consistently as crucial in maintaining credibility and reputation of the UN peacekeeping.

Consent of parties refers to the United Nations obtaining the consent of the main parties to the conflict to enter said conflict. This ensures the parties involved have a desire to move towards peace and are willing to show this by allowing UN involvement. This principle is important because "In the absence of such consent, a peacekeeping operation risks becoming a party to

the conflict; and being drawn towards enforcement action, and away from its fundamental role of keeping the peace.” (United Nations, 2016).

Not to be confused with neutrality, the second principle of impartiality refers to the UN Peacekeepers as a referee. They will be impartial in the post conflict zones and will penalise infractions on all sides without discrimination. This principle is a key component in maintaining consent of parties as well as maintaining the reputation of the United Nations. As stated “A mission should not shy away from a rigorous application of the principle of impartiality for fear of misinterpretation or retaliation. Failure to do so may undermine the peacekeeping operation’s credibility and legitimacy, and may lead to a withdrawal of consent for its presence by one or more of the parties.” (United Nations, 2016).

The third principle, Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate is meant to confirm the UN’s place as a defensive unit and not an “enforcement tool”. Peacekeepers are deployed into these conflict zones to keep peace and protect civilians; an offensive stance could again harm their credibility. However, this principal is prefaced with a disclaimer by the UN on their concept of “robust peacekeeping”. The UN states:

Although on the ground they may sometimes appear similar, robust peacekeeping should not be confused with peace enforcement, as envisaged under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. – Robust peacekeeping involves the use of force at the tactical level with the authorisation of the Security Council and consent of the host nation and/or the main parties to the conflict. – By contrast, peace enforcement does not require the consent of the main parties and may involve the use of military force at the strategic or international level, which is normally prohibited for Member States under Article 2(4) of the Charter, unless authorised by the Security Council.” (United Nations, 2016).

While these three original principles of UN Peacekeeping are still meant to guide their work, calls for reform started in the late 1990s. After multiple failures on the part of the UN in Bosnia and Rwanda where UN Peacekeepers stood idly by as civilians were slaughtered, a commission was formed to reform their approach in future conflicts. The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping, often referred to as “the Brahimi Report,” outlined an altered role and approach to peacekeeping. As stated in the report “the United Nations has bitterly and repeatedly discovered over the last decade, no amount of good intentions can substitute for the fundamental ability to project credible force if complex peacekeeping, in particular, is to succeed. But force alone cannot create peace; it can only create the space in

which peace may be built. (General Assembly Security Council, 2000). Advocating for the ability to “project credible force” is a change in the previous stance which was distinctly defensive.

The Brahimi report outlines multiple changes to Peacekeeping doctrine while also advocating for the continued adherence to the three principles. The first issue addressed is defining the term “Peacekeeping operations.” “United Nations peace operations entail three principal activities: conflict prevention and peace-making; peacekeeping; and peace-building. Long-term conflict prevention addresses the structural sources of conflict in order to build a solid foundation for peace.” (General Assembly Security Council, 2000). This was an expansion on peacekeeping as it was formerly known. Other important points that the report puts forward are the need for robust doctrine and mandates, including robust rules of engagement and deployment of appropriate strength to provide a credible deterrent. In addition, the call for an increased ability to gather and analyse information so as to become a force ahead of word events and not simply reactive to issues.

While the Brahimi report was arguably a large paradigm shift in Peacekeeping doctrine, the Capstone Doctrine builds even further on its changes. This report delves deeper into the concept of Peacekeeping operations, clarifying the term. Under the umbrella of “Peacekeeping operations” it also includes Peace enforcement where the Brahimi report did not (United Nations, 2008). Peace enforcement is quite different than robust peacekeeping in that enforcement did not require consent of all parties and could include strategic use of military force. Capstone was meant to be a comprehensive doctrine in which the entire history of peacekeeping and all of the lessons learned could be outlined for future operations.

While perhaps not as influential as the previous stated reports, the New Horizon process is meant to be an ongoing dialogue that would consistently address the current needs and reassess the capabilities of the UN Peacekeeping forces. The original “non-paper” as it is referred and its subsequent two progress reports focus on reinvigorating stakeholder’s investment in peacekeeping as well as unified vision moving forward (United Nations, 2011). Further, the “non-paper” aims at addressing lack of clarity; often the UN Peacekeeping doctrine can appear quite complex and conflicting. The “non-paper” calls for the UN Secretariat to “clarify concepts” in reference to civilian protection in addition to moving toward a “comprehensive definition” (Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support, 2009). This confusion tends to extend past the report pages and

into the field, as they often don't seem to completely align as will be shown in the Mali case study.

Mali: timeline of events

In order to understand implications of the United Nations position in Mali it is necessary to outline how the conflict evolved. Between 2007 and 2012, provocative acts by Tuareg tribes in northern Mali stoked fears amongst governmental and military elites. The incidents included Tuareg attacks on government positions and the killing of government soldiers (BBC News, 2016). As attacks escalated, a discord arose between the government of President Toure and the heads of the Malian military. The military believe the Tuareg are in open rebellion and the government is simply not doing enough to counter the threat. As a direct response to this perceived inaction, the military stages a coup, overthrowing President Toure. Upon the governments capture, the military junta appoints new civilian leadership in President Traore. Shortly thereafter a coup attempt by the former president and civilian protests ouster the interim government. It would take over a year for governmental stability to be restored and a democratic election to take place. In August of 2013 Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was elected President of Mali.

As the initial coup took place in the Malian capital of Bamako, in the North, the Tuareg were preparing a large scale move. After gaining control of northern Mali, in April of 2012 the Tuareg declare independence from the government held south (BBC News, 2016). The main Tuareg group (The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad or as they are referred by the French acronym MNLA) was the party of control during this stage of the conflict. The group named their independent state Azawad and was created on the platform that Malian Tuareg could not achieve equal rights under the status quo. After the Tuareg claim of independence, the MNLA allied with Islamist group Ansar Dine. But within the complex environment of the Mali conflict this alliance was short lived. After Ansar Dine and other Islamic groups such as the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) took control of the Tuareg uprising these Islamist group's main objective was to found this northern Mali as an Islamic state and to institute sharia law across the territory (BBC News, 2013). These groups had gained substantial ground, with MUJAO even capturing Mali's largest northern city, Gao. The group held the area and instituted sharia law in the city. While in control they carried out harsh penalties

against violators of the law such as extrajudicial executions and cutting off hands for minor infractions.

As the conflict spun out of control, the interim President Traore implored the French to intervene in the conflict. In January of 2013 French forces are deployed to retake Northern Mali. Just four months later in April of the same year, the French have retaken all cities in the north, while Islamist factions are scattered (BBC News, 2016). At the time, the victory seemed to be a swift and efficient end to the conflict. At this point, in April of 2013, the UN Security Council authorises the formation of MINUSMA in Mali with a mandate to stabilise population centers in the north, assist the transitional government, and to deter the return of violent elements to the recently liberated cities (Karlsruh, 2015). By late summer of 2013, an official hand over of the Mali mission from French and African Union troops to the United Nations takes place. While the official transition was meant to take place, the French were to stay on in a more limited capacity to continue fighting against all non-governmental combatants.

While Northern Mali was officially retaken and transitional control was given to MINUSMA, fighting did not stop between forces loyal to the government, the Tuareg and Islamist groups. However, talks for peace took place in Algeria between the Malian government and the Tuareg groups eventually culminating in a peace deal in June of 2015 (UN News Centre, 2015). Islamist groups were not a party to the peace accord and were not involved in peace talks. Since the peace deal was signed just over a year ago clashes between all parties have continued. Tuaregs and pro-government militias fight periodically; while Islamist groups attack UN Peacekeepers and state targets including the mass shooting at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako that killed 21 people (Hanna, 2015). Currently, peace in Mali has yet to be achieved regardless of the efforts by the UN and the warring factions. To a large degree, the unsuccessfulness of peace operations and the current situation in Mali can be attributed to involvement beyond its capacity.

The UN in Mali: partiality and diversion from principles

Multiple contradictory issues present themselves when looking at the diversion from the governing principles of peacekeeping by recent mandates for ongoing missions. The three principles are inherently linked, meaning violation of one often has an effect on another.

Violations of the concepts of impartiality and consent of parties are particularly troublesome. This is to say that the UN is required to obtain the consent of the main parties, without consent they risk their own credibility in reference to their adherence to impartiality. Although an important and grounding principal for successful operations, it is not always practiced on the ground to the extent the core guidelines would dictate. Often how the UN defines its terms can be a way to circumvent their principle position as shown in a recent article by Peter Mateja;

“the problem of spoilers has always existed in peacekeeping, the new operations take an additional step away from seeking consent of the main parties. 32 Missions such as the ones in the DRC, Mali, and Somalia are deployed to empower the state’s government and help it defeat one of the parties to the conflict. “Expansion of state authority” is now often part of a mission’s mandate. Importantly, the targeted parties possess enough political and military power that governments are unable to defeat them by themselves. These groups therefore cannot be thought of as anything else but a main party to the conflict.” (Mateja, 2015)

This has specific relevance where the many Islamist groups operating in the north are concerned. Multiple implications arise when looking at the designation of spoiler versus party to the conflict. The first is that while the Mali conflict certainly started as the result of division between the government and the Tuareg, the Islamists and terror groups quickly rose above the Tuareg as the more relevant party to the conflict. By most measures, the Islamist groups are a main party to the conflict but they have not been involved in the peace process. As a result of these groups being left out of the peace process the UN shows partiality by not working to gain consent from this faction and only engaging with two of the main parties in the conflict. Admittedly, gaining consent of parties and negotiating with what are considered “terror groups” is a difficult proposition; however the lack of involvement on the part of the Islamist groups continues to cause problems. The lack of consent and their unwillingness to engage in the peace process implies the conflict zone is not one where the UN Peacekeepers can succeed; Mali is a hot conflict zone and not a peacekeeping situation.

The second implication is how to react to these groups as they are declared terrorists and not a party to the peace treaty. With no real peace to be enforced the attentions of the multiple forces on the ground, including the UN, have been diverted to peace creation and enforcement. They have taken on new methods in combating the groups in the North which reflect the reality that UN peacekeeping is now in a position to make peace rather than keep it.

Offensives occur regularly with Peacekeepers conducting “pre-emptive strikes” in Mali against forces believed to be a threat to civilian populations (Gaffey, 2016). This presents a challenge as it moves missions into a proverbial grey area in terms of their third principle. Pre-emptive strikes infer an offensive rather than a defensive posture in addition to operating on an assumption that something will occur that must be defended against. While intelligence on the ground and previous experience may in fact show that this posture is warranted, it does present a moral quandary for peacekeepers as they are acting as a party to the conflict rather than impartial mediators. As can be seen by these points, this particular conflict presents many fundamental challenges as “UN peacekeeping missions aren’t designed to take sides and target specific actors in a conflict: How can you have a UN peacekeeping mission that is also tasked with conducting a counterinsurgency?” (qtd. in Dyer, 2016). This position in which the Peacekeepers have taken sides and which is offensive in approach has resulted in peacekeepers finding themselves in a role for which they are ill suited. Many of the Peacekeepers have varying levels of training and are not properly prepared for this sort of conflict. In addition, UN forces have become a target for Jihadist groups. As stated in the beginning of this paper, this conflict has become one of the deadliest for UN Peacekeepers in the world.

The third implication is that without adherence to the principles of consent and impartiality in the context of Mali, the UN will have issues achieving success. As previously stated, while a peace agreement was signed between the Malian government and the Tuareg factions, the Islamist groups were not party to the deal. If only two out of the three main parties to the conflict have agreed to peace, then there is no peace to enforce. “They are peacekeepers in what is generally not a peacekeeping mission,” said Andrew Lebovich, visiting fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. “It is still an active insurgency.” (qtd. In Dyer, 2016). This is an issue for a peacekeeping force which is conducting a mission outside its realm of expertise in addition to being a ground situation where it is ill suited to conduct its mission. This situation could have been foreseen though given that The Brahimi report discusses the ideal contexts in which the UN forces should be used and which contexts lead to success;

the missions of the past decade would be particularly hard to accomplish: they tended to deploy where conflict had not resulted in victory for any side, where a military stalemate or international pressure or both had brought fighting to a halt but at least some of the parties to the conflict were not seriously committed to ending the confrontation. United Nations operations thus did not deploy into post-conflict situations but tried to create

them. In such complex operations, peacekeepers work to maintain a secure local environment while peacebuilders work to make that environment self-sustaining. Only such an environment offers a ready exit to peacekeeping forces, making peacekeepers and peacebuilders inseparable partners. (General Assembly Security Council, 2000).

The situation on the ground in Mali does not reflect this logic as the platform for a peace does not currently exist. This is a departure from how the Peacekeeping operations are meant to work.

In the context of Mali, the United Nations works closely with both government and French troops. The French are there to support the government and to fight these terrorist groups while the UN is meant to “stabilise” Northern Mali. The UN mission is in direct synchronicity with the French, which implies the principle of impartiality is again simply a façade. Therefore, these Islamist groups have been declared enemies by the UN and are being treated as such. Further are present in reference to impartiality when looking at civilian backing of Islamist groups. As these actors do not operate on their own, or within a vacuum, they do have local and civilian support for their presence. Many in northern Mali are proponents of their ideology and methods. How can the United Nations enforce a peace when segments of the local population support radical Islamist elements that the UN has declared enemies? By positioning themselves with the state they alienate other segments of the population. This inherently impartial position is the product of involvement in intrastate conflicts where populations are divided.

There is a need for consent and impartiality to keep peace, however their mandate is in direct opposition to the principled position. As stated in “New Horizon,” “A mission’s political, rule of law and security sector components also have important roles to play in assisting host authorities in building national capacity to protect civilians and in promoting early national responsibility for protecting the population” (Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support, 2009). This concept is extremely problematic in intra-state conflict as the state is generally a party to the conflict as is the case in Mali. This shows a clear departure between doctrine and the reality of this type of conflict. A distinctly partial position in favour of the state which cannot be relied upon to protect the people they are fighting. The mandate in Mali and extension of this doctrine and is therefore a diversion from all three principles. This separation from the core of what the UN peacekeeping forces are meant to do has implications for the institution.

Implications

Success may be unachievable when major departures between principles, current doctrine and practice occur. As shown in Mali, UN involvement has not resulted in peace, while reputational damage is occurring. As the United Nations was established with the intent that it be a force for good, the role of keeping the peace and ensuring stability post-World War II was a trademark of the organisation. The institution has relevance for all nations whom comprise its membership as they all can take part and have their voices heard. At least in doctrine, the United Nations is meant to also be an impartial institution. Peacekeeping operations have been a very important part of projecting the values of the UN on the world stage. Adherence to the core principles is meant to ensure those values remain intact and that their credibility will not be questioned. Recently, with the expanded mandate in Mali, (which can also be seen elsewhere in Africa) the United Nations credibility can certainly be questioned.

As mentioned previously, “the capstone doctrine highlights three success factors: legitimacy, credibility and local ownership. The legitimacy of UN peacekeeping operations is derived from its unique position in international law, the UN Charter and UN Security Council authorisation. This legitimacy is rightly seen as one of the key assets, and comparative advantages, of UN peacekeeping operations. UN operations can lose legitimacy when perceived to be serving national or regional interests, and when it fails to secure local ownership.” (de Coning, et al., 2008) The expanded mandates that are required to properly deal with intra-state conflicts certainly go against the previous quoted statement implying that legitimacy is in danger, if not completely lost; If these mandates run contrary to gaining consent of the main parties, to impartiality and to non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate, what can be inferred by onlookers?

The example set forth by the Mali case is important not only because it is a failed operation in and of itself, but, because it has lasting implications for future peace operations and credibility. The main point that one can garner when looking at the departure between doctrine and practice is that without adherence to the core governing principals, the UN becomes a party to the conflict and not an impartial body attempting to protect civilians and keep the peace. As a result, the credibility of the United Nations ability to continue to keep peace and be an impartial mediator is lost. In conflicts that have yet to arise, some parties to the conflict may not consent to the UN Peacekeepers given their recent history. If they cannot

be guaranteed to be impartial or if they are viewed to simply be an extension of government control, then why give consent to what could become their opposition within the conflict. This issue is already pervasive in the collective conscious of the global south, where some believe the UN is not only a conduit of governments but also of the global North. “The conceptual debate that underlies terminology issues in the UN is driven, in part, by a North-South tension, where the South is concerned about the North misusing UN Peacekeeping operations as a Trojan horse through which it is shaping the world system according to its own interests.” (de Coning, et al., 2008). Considering this potential mistrust the UN should tread lightly in these situations.

Ultimately, if the global south loses trust in the UN, or it is deemed illegitimate, it will not be in a position where it can keep peace or their entrance into the conflict will be as an invading force. The UN Peacekeepers need to protect their institutional identity, being careful not to become an offensive force but simply an organisation that protects civilians and keeps peace in a post conflict space. The institutional credibility and the ability to provide peace should not be tainted by actions that will call into question whether they are an entity which exists for the greater good.

A common retort to this logic would be to simply question how the UN should approach conflicts such as Mali. Currently the UN is ill equipped to deal with complex intra-state conflict. It is much better suited to deal with state actors in the context of inter-state conflict. While the United Nations and its member states have the ability to deal with unruly or uncooperative states through sanctions and other means, they have no such recourse against non-state actors. As intrastate conflict is generally composed of non-state actors this lack of recourse becomes problematic. It is very difficult for the UN to engage in peacekeeping missions in intrastate conflict without becoming a party to the conflict. When using force their role instead turns into conducting counterinsurgency which should fall to state governments and their allies. States do not have as much of an institutional need to remain impartial, do not require consent, and can declare enemies.

However, the UN could have a role in Mali and conflicts like it if adherence to the three principles is kept. The concept of peace enforcement runs contrary to UN doctrine. This should be a job for other actors as previously stated. The UN role as an impartial mediator is too important and cannot be sacrificed for activities outside their expertise. Many of these activities wind up doing more harm than good in terms of cessation of hostilities and in terms

of the lives of peacekeepers. Therefore, enforcement mandates should be abandoned as they conflict with the principle of impartiality and impede long term peace building. This also goes to speak to when and what sort of conflicts the UN should be involved. The answer itself has been stated by UN officials in previous reports: They should be involved in keeping a peace, not making it. For this to be possible in multiparty conflicts, the peace process has to include all factions. Unfortunately, as is the case in Mali having all factions present and involved in the peace process is a virtual impossibility given the nature of some of the Islamist elements. If there is no peace to keep then they will be a party to the conflict.

Conclusion

While Mali is only a single case study one can see the issues that can arise in conflicts of a similar nature. The Mali engagement has presented many challenges for the United Nations. Like some of the other conflicts in Africa where Peacekeeping operations are underway, the challenges manifest both on the ground and with respect the core identity of the institution. While the doctrine of the United Nations Peacekeeping has changed over time so that it may reflect the changing realities of conflict in the modern world, it has also lost something key to its credibility. If the UN is deemed to be partial or to be an extension of western power over the global south, then the institution risks an existential crisis. This leads to questions about the UN identity moving forward. Their ability to keep the peace and be an impartial mediator is important in the current world system. They are the only current organisation that can provide this peacekeeping service globally while providing the possibility of impartiality.

The issues present within intra-state conflicts and the tactics necessary to combat those issues threaten the core identity of the United Nations. If they want to continue providing a peace-making presence, being more selective in what conflicts they are to become involved and changes in how they are approached is necessary. Peace enforcement is a concept that is outside the core identity of the UN. Peacekeepers should not take an offensive stance or a stance that would violate their principles such as pre-emptive strikes. While these actions may be correct from a strategic and/or tactical standpoint, the normative repercussions from such actions may be severe. Therefore, involvement and action in Mali runs counter to UN identity, as what is required of Peacekeeping forces in these complex security environments often forces them away from their core principles which will only inhibit future peacekeeping efforts.

Keeping the trust of the global south through the adherence to the three principles is crucial especially considering the vast majority of current peacekeeping are deployed in the developing world. Remaining relevant in an ever changing world is dependent on the unique role which they can provide. The loss of institutional credibility will only harm their ability to bring actors to the bargaining table and stifle their ability to keep peace in post conflict zones.

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Zarb, F. R., 2016. The United Nations mandate in Mali: The trouble with intrastate conflict. *Cultural Relations Quarterly Review*, Vol. 3. Issue 3. (Summer 2016) pp.23–37.

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