(In)securing Humanitarian Space?

- A Study of Civil-Military Interaction in Mali

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- Pour l'Afrique et pour toi, Mali
Abstract

United Nations peacekeeping operations have been through notable changes during the last twenty years. Peacekeepers are now deployed in on-going conflicts were there are no peace to keep. This shift includes a robust turn, where the peacekeepers are mandated to use force for a longer-term involvement. In addition, UN’s role as an impartial actor has moved towards the political goal of stabilization. That the UN now is seen as an impartial actor has highlighted the conflicting interface between the peacekeepers and humanitarian actors, and also raised challenging questions about the preservation of humanitarian space in the new context of UN peacekeeping.

The on-going peacekeeping mission in Mali, known by its French acronym MINUSMA, serves as an example of the new category of UN peacekeeping operations. Often referred to as the deadliest peacekeeping mission today, MINUSMA has been faced with several challenges since its deployment in 2013, including the threat from jihadist groups.

In this thesis, I have studied to what extent a clear division between humanitarian actors and MINUSMA is a precondition for the preservation of humanitarian space in the context of northern Mali. This has been done through so-called analytical eclecticism, where different theoretical approaches on civil-military interaction have been deployed to answer the research question.

Based on interviews conducted during a fieldwork in Bamako, I find that that the civil-military interaction in Mali today is limited and challenging. The humanitarians perceive the UN peacekeeping force as an obstacle to their activities, as well as a threat to their security. This must be seen in relation to the volatile nature of the conflict, and the peacekeepers political involvement. The analysis also illustrates that it was easier to conduct humanitarian activities in northern Mali before the deployment of MINUSMA. Accordingly, a clear division between humanitarian actors and MINUSMA is to a large extent seen as a precondition to preserve humanitarian space.

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All faults and errors are alone mine.

Sofia Micael Tesfaghiorghis
Oslo May 23, 2016
## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFISMA</td>
<td>African-led International Support Mission to Mali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQIM</td>
<td>Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAR</td>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIMIC</td>
<td>Civil-Military Coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMA</td>
<td>Coordination of Movements of Azawad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMA</td>
<td>Malian Armed Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPKO</td>
<td>United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIPPO</td>
<td>High Level Panel on Peace Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IED</td>
<td>Improvised Explosive Device</td>
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<tr>
<td>IHL</td>
<td>International Humanitarian Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSO</td>
<td>International NGO Safety Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINUSCA</td>
<td>United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINUSMA</td>
<td>United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNLA</td>
<td>National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONUSCO</td>
<td>United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUJAO</td>
<td>Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCHA</td>
<td>United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<td>QIP</td>
<td>Quick Impact Project</td>
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1 Introduction

While the phenomenon of United Nations peacekeeping commonly is regarded to be as old as the UN itself, it has been through some notable changes over the last twenty years (de Coning, 2015). At a strategic level, this change includes a new approach to peacekeeping as expressed in the mandates given by the UN Security Council. The new tasks are more ambitious than previously, equipping the peacekeepers with robust mandates.\(^1\) The ‘robust turn’ includes a greater preparedness to use force, as it now is seen as a legitimate mean to establish order (Bellamy and Hunt, 2015: 1278; Tardy, 2011: 154). However, the use of force itself is not new. It is rather the fact that it is now mandated for a longer-term involvement, aiming at a clearly defined enemy. Additionally, the UN’s role as an impartial actor in peace processes has moved towards the goal of stabilization, which constitutes an obvious contradiction to the recommendations of The Brahimi Report (Bellamy and Hunt, 2015: 1278; Karlsrud, 2015: 42).\(^2\) These changes are important aspects of the abovementioned new approach to peacekeeping. Whereas peacekeeping formerly was perceived to be the overall goal of a mission, the UN peacekeepers of today are deployed in on-going conflicts, where there is no peace to keep (de Coning, 2015). In this way, the new peacekeeping environment appears clearly distinct from that of earlier conflict areas.

Peacekeeping has thus transitioned from a tool of conflict resolution to that of a conflict management. This involves a clear disruption with the core principles of traditional UN peacekeeping. More specifically, impartiality, consent from the involved actors in the conflict, as well as the minimum use of force are principles underlined in the Capstone Doctrine and the Brahimi Report (Karlsrud, 2015: 41). The shift away from these principles constitutes a doctrinal change, whose robust stabilization mandates are argued to have serious doctrinal impacts on a peacekeeping setting (Karlsrud, 2015: 41). This doctrinal change is consequently reflected in the academic debates questioning the ambition and capacity of the UN to carry out such operations (see Karlsrud, 2015; Kjeksrud, 2009; Peter, 2015).

\(^1\) There is a distinction between UN mandates given to peacekeeping operations conducted by the UN itself, and mandates from the UN given to a country or an alliance to carry out an operation (Nyhamar, 2015: 22). In this thesis, the concept of robust mandates refer to the former.

Equally important, several consequences of this doctrinal change also arise at the tactical level. Retaliatory attacks on the UN are seen as a response to the break of the core principles, as they now are perceived a partial force. This has also highlighted the contested relationship between civilian and military actors. Particularly, an ongoing area of conflict in the interface between civilian and military actors regards the level of interaction between the military and humanitarian actors (Gjørv, 2015: 131). This group of civilians strives for a clear separation from the military, as any association to them can jeopardize the four core principles humanitarian work is based on – humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Truly, this becomes increasingly significant in robust stabilization operations, which are understood as inconsistent with these principles.

In order to understand this contested relationship, there is a need to understand the concept of humanitarian space, which plays a crucial role in the interface between humanitarian actors and the military (Gjørv, 2014: 54). Humanitarian space can be understood as the operating environment conducive to effective humanitarian work (Ferris, 2011: 176). There are raised challenging questions about the maintenance of this space within the context of new UN peacekeeping (Bellamy and Hunt, 2015: 1288; Jumbert, Karlsrud and Sandvik, 2015). In particular, the argument is that the explicit association of humanitarians with the political involved peacekeepers would put humanitarian at risk, and thereby violates the humanitarian space (Lee, 2007: 90). Nevertheless, recent findings show that the military presence of UN peacekeepers increases attacks against humanitarian workers, which also increase the larger the UN forces get (Miklian, Hoelscher and Nygård, 2015). The more politicized the context is, the greater is the need for humanitarian space (Gjørv, 2014: 152). Accordingly, the greater is the humanitarian need to distance themselves from military actors. As such, the nature and scope of civil-military interaction become limited.

Acknowledging that the nature of the conflict and operation determines the scope of civil-military interaction, it is fruitful to explore how this takes place in the new category of UN peacekeeping operations mentioned above. More specifically, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, commonly known by its French acronym, MINUSMA, will be used as a case to study the impact of the new missions on civil-military interaction and humanitarian space in Mali. Three years into the conflict, the country still suffers from instability rooted in a deep conflict between black Malians and the Tuareg population. This flared up during a coup in 2012, where different jihadist groups...
overtook the Tuaregs’ fight for autonomy. In 2013, MINUSMA was deployed to support the government of Mali in a more complex and dangerous environment than ever before (de Coning, 2015). Together with the on-going peacekeeping operations in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), MINUSMA represents the new category of UN peacekeeping operations. We can therefore expect that the challenging civil-military interface is present in Mali.

### 1.1 Research Questions

With the highlighted tendencies in mind, this thesis will address the impact of the new peacekeeping missions on civil-military interaction and humanitarian space in Mali. In doing so, I use three explanatory factors presented by Gunhild H.Gjørv (2014), including the context, visions of politics and security, and the dimensions of legitimacy, authority and obligation.

The question that I seek to answer is:

*To what extent is a clear division between humanitarian actors and MINUSMA a precondition for the preservation of humanitarian space in the context of Mali?*

In order to answer this question, the thesis will discuss the following sub-questions:

- How are Gjørv’s explanatory factors of civil-military interaction expressed in Mali?
- How do humanitarian actors interact with MINUSMA?

The first sub-question seeks to analyze factors that generally limit, inhibit and constrain civil-military interaction. This will be done by using Gjørv’s three theoretical factors of explanation to highlight the circumstances in my case. Thereby, I use the findings from the first to answer the second sub-question, exploring the scope and nature of the interaction in Mali, in relation to humanitarian space.
1.2 Theories and Concepts

In order to answer the research question, I use what is commonly referred to as analytical eclecticism, where different theoretical approaches are deployed to answer the questions of concern (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010).

More specifically, I will use parts of de Coning and Friis´ model (2011) as an analytical tool to capture the scope and nature of civil-military interaction in Mali. In this study, three of their specified relationships between civilian and military actors will be used as ideal types to understand how humanitarian actors relate to MINUSMA in order to preserve the humanitarian space. Nevertheless, the nature and scope of civil-military interaction are expected to be influenced by various factors. Gjørv (2014) identifies three factors that are necessary to examine in order to understand the interaction. Particularly, this includes the context, visions of politics and security, as well as the dimensions of legitimacy, authority and obligation. Given the importance of these factors, they will be deployed to understand which of the abovementioned relationships that describe the case of Mali.

In order to map the preservation of humanitarian space, I use the safety of humanitarian workers and humanitarian access as measures, presented by Cynthia Brassard-Boudreu and Don Hubert (2010). In line with Séverine Autesserre, I use a situation specific definition of humanitarian space, which reflects the views of the respondents (2014: 23). Humanitarian space is therefore preserved when the actors views it as such, and is therefore dependent on the overall consensus among the respondents. Put in another way: Humanitarian space is preserved when the respondents view the measures of security and access as fulfilled. The information from the respondents will, however, be supplied with secondary literature. Indeed, this approach raises methodological challenges that will be discussed further in chapter three.

1.2.1 UN Peacekeeping in Change

The conceptualization of peacekeeping operations is continuously changing, as the UN mandates increasingly are getting wider. In general, UN peacekeeping operations refer to a type of activity that attempts to prevent or limit hostilities between states or parties within a
country (Bellamy, Williams and Griffin 2010: 14). They are often performed by the UN, through the deployment of traditional blue helmets soldiers, acting under a chapter seven mandate. Nevertheless, UN peacekeeping operations have changed over time. In order to understand this, it is necessary to explore the core principles UN peacekeeping is based on. According to Capstone, the principles are seen as the UN’s instruments in maintaining international peace and security (UN, 2008: 31).

**Firstly, consent is a requirement for the deployment of UN peacekeepers.** There must be given an approval from the main parties in the conflict prior to any deployment. The parties must therefore be committed to a political peace process the peacekeepers are mandated to support (UN, 2008: 31). Formally, this principle distinguishes chapter VI from chapter VII mandates (Johnstone, 2011: 169). The fact that peacekeepers need consent from the parties they are fighting against is hard to acknowledge for many actors, and consent is thus a highly disputed concept. Questions that arise regard *whose* consent we need to obtain in order to legitimately deploy peacekeepers (Kjeksrud, 2009: 9). This remains unclear in Capstone, which states that peacekeeping needs the consent of the main parties to the conflict (UN, 2008: 31). As conflicts are getting more complex, the overview of the different actors becomes increasingly challenging. Different militias and insurgents are fighting for various reasons (Beswick and Jackson, 2011: 25). Some of the groups are not acknowledged as a formal party, and the groups may not acknowledge the government itself. To abide the principle consent from the parties is therefore challenging, and arguably impossible. This means that the UN in one way or another eventually takes side. This leads us to the second bedrock principle of traditional peacekeeping.

**Secondly, in traditional peacekeeping, peacekeepers are not intended to favour one side over another.** This indicates that there is no designated aggressor. In addition, the implementation of a mandate should take place without discrimination (Diehl and Balas, 2014: 7). To highlight this principle, Diehl and Balas compare traditional peacekeeping with military operations. In the latter case, forces are typically biased. They are deployed with the purpose of namely reinforce the bias, and strengthen the allied. This is contradictory in UN

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3 UN Chapter VII mandates refers to "action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression" (UN, 2008: 13). Through article 39-51, the chapter allows operations the use of all necessary means to implement a mandate. This includes both economic sanctions and the use of deadly force (Kjeksrud, 2010: 155).
peacekeeping. Furthermore, impartiality should not be mixed with neutrality or inactivity. This means that peacekeepers can be impartial when interrelating with the parties, but not neutral in the implementation of the mandate (UN, 2008: 33).

_Lastly, the peacekeepers are only permitted to engage in operations with the minimum use of force._ Traditionally, this means that they only should use military force in self-defense (Diehl and Balas, 2014: 7). If we again draw lines to military operations, use of force is understood as an offensive tactic, usually controlled and constrained by a politically apparatus. This includes any attempt to deter the enemy from taking a particular course of action, or by using force to physically stop them (Kjeksrud, 2010: 157). When analyzing deterrence in traditional UN peacekeeping, however, Kjeksrud argues that it is more appropriate to talk about show of force instead of direct use of force (2010: 157). The use of force by the UN has namely been characterized by its absence rather than its presence (Findlay, 2002: 1). Even though the minimal level of use of force has been seen as important for both consent and impartiality, the UN has always indirectly recognized it as a necessary mean in managing conflict (Terrie, 2009: 26). A break with this principle, however, is the most controversial one. Particularly, it is often argued that the actual strength of UN peacekeeping precisely is its ability to not use force. This is believed to give the peacekeepers a unique and legitimate position, as well as an important role above the conflict (Findlay, 2002: 4).

The change in UN peacekeeping must firstly be understood as a break with these core principles it is based on. Moreover, it must also be seen in relation to the changing nature of conflict. The complex environment UN peacekeepers are deployed in requires new tools for intervention, where traditional peacekeeping is seen as insufficient. This was stated by the recent report from the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), which highlighted the need for UN peacekeeping to tailor the type of deployment to actual needs on the ground (UN, 2015: 23-24). As opposed to previously, current peacekeeping operations are deployed in areas with on-going conflicts. Indeed, this is challenging, and the core principles have been under pressure the last years. Especially, the peacekeepers ability to maintain impartial has been singled out as a difficult principle to fulfill. It is now common to refer to robust peacekeeping, where peacekeepers are involved in more permissive rules of engagement, including the use of force in defense of the mandate (Diehl and Balas, 2014: 11-12). It is these aggressive and political mandates that make the need for humanitarian space greater (Gjørv, 2014: 64; Jumbert, Karlsrud and Sandvik, 2015). However, this form of
peacekeeping is argued to make the need for coordination with humanitarian actors greater (Diehl and Balas, 2014: 14).

1.2.2 Civil-Military Interaction

The interface between civilian and military actors has been a subject of definitional confusion for two main reasons. Firstly, there exist several definitions and concepts, all depending on the approach of the study. Secondly, some definitions have presumptions about cooperation and coordination, although this might be absent in field. For instance, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) uses the term civil-military cooperation (CIMIC), and defines it as “(...) the system of interaction, involving exchange of information, negotiation, de-confliction, mutual support, and planning at all levels between military elements and humanitarian organizations, development organizations, or the local civilian population, to achieve respective objectives” (DPKO, 2006: 3). This definition includes various activities, but is still unsuitable for the purpose of this thesis. More specifically, it takes for granted that there already exists cooperation between the actors.

Since I with this thesis am seeking to understand the scope of the relationship, it is misleading to refer to it as cooperation from the outset without knowing how it is characterized. I therefore choose to use the concept of civil-military interaction. Gjørv defines this as “(...) a kind of “clash of civilizations” where ethics, ideals, practices and realities which deals with relations between the military and civilians meet and struggle with each others objectives, mandates and instruments” (Gjørv, 2015: 132). Further, she states that “Civil-military interaction refers to the nature and the scope of the communication, varying from coexistence to coordination and/or cooperation between national (local and international (foreign) civilians (from officials to humanitarian organizations, development organizations and locals)” (Gjørv, 2015: 132). In contrast to the former definition, this understanding of the relationship between civilians and military actors is broader. Instead of focusing on one particular interaction, it includes a range of interaction, between coexistence and cooperation as the two extremes. Hence, the use of this definition as a basis enables me to measure the extent of interaction, and thus answer the research question of the thesis.
1.2.3 Actors in the Civil-Military Relationship

Before continuing, it is necessary to clarify which actors this thesis will focus on. Civil-military interaction normally consists of two parts – civilian and military. As we will see in part three of this thesis, different performers have constituted the civilian actor in this relationship. This has changed with time.

Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz formed the earliest discussions of civil-military relations. Their research focused on the relationship between the military and the politicians within a national institution. In this regard, civilians were referred to as non-military political actors (see Huntington, 1957; Janowitz, 1961). After the Cold War ended, however, the number of civilians interacting with the military increased. Accordingly, the literature on civil-military relations started to focus on civilian actors at an operational level. This included Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) operating alongside the military in military operations, often referred to as NGO-military relations. In this context, it is common to distinguish between development actors and humanitarian actors. Although operating in the same space, there are considerable differences between them. This is mainly related to the condition for and the purpose of the aid (Beswick and Jackson, 2011: 75). Particularly, this becomes more apparent seen in the context of a conflict cycle. On the one hand, humanitarian actors enter a conflict during complex emergencies. They are concerned with relief-work, with protection of life by preventing and alleviating human suffering as an ultimate end (Barry and Jeffreys, 2002: 2). In addition, humanitarian work is often regarded as a short-term measure, exiting at the end of a conflict. In contrast, development actors contribute with assistance, both technical and financial, through long-term involvement (Beswick and Jackson, 2011: 75). Their work can also be understood as an attempt to prevent future conflicts. Thus, while humanitarian actors provide immediate aid during a conflict, development actors are linked with the post-conflict build-up of a society.

Dealing with a country like Mali, however, this division between humanitarianism and development becomes notable. On the one hand, the roots of the conflict in Mali can be seen as a consequence of the lack of precisely development, especially in the northern regions of the country. Similar to many other sub-Saharan countries in Africa, marginalization of the northern parts of the country seems to be an unfortunate situation that have led to long-lasting
conflicts. More specifically, the lack of development in the northern regions of Mali is often seen as a breeding ground for terrorism and insurgency. Thus, a focus on development actors seems like a natural base for the civilian actor in this thesis. On the other hand, the people of Mali are facing a humanitarian crisis. At the time of writing, it is estimated that 3.1 million throughout the country are faced with serious hunger, where 410 000 of whom are in the need of urgent aid (Guilbert, 2015). In addition, around 100 000 people are internally displaced (UNHCR, 2015). This is seen as a direct consequence of the conflict. In a country facing conflict and were the development is so slow, vulnerable people are not able to engage in normal daily activities, and thus rely on humanitarian aid (Bleck and Mitchelich, 2015: 609-611). For this reason, humanitarian actors become a relevant group of civilian actors in this case.

The relevance of both development and humanitarian actors in Mali makes the choice of focus more challenging. However, the final selection is based on one critical factor that distinguishes humanitarian actors from development actors. As mentioned initially, humanitarian actors are concerned with maintaining their impartiality and neutrality between the warring parts of the conflict (Ruffa and Vennesson, 2014: 588). From their perspective, this is seen as a key to preserve humanitarian space. Accordingly, it is less likely that humanitarian actors will interact closely with the military. In contrast, the long-term involvement of development actors makes them political as they have particular perceptions of what development is, and the structures and political systems needed to achieve this (Beswick and Jackson, 2011: 75). As opposed to humanitarian actors, this makes them less reluctant in coordinating with the military. With this in mind, it is expected that the humanitarian-military relationship will be more challenging and dynamic. I believe that this complex interaction makes the analysis more interesting. Thus, this can be understood as the justification of humanitarian actors constituting the civilian part of this thesis.

Since the focus is on civil-military relations during the presence of UN peacekeeping, the UN peacekeepers constitute the military actor in this thesis. However, this is not the only given military actor in Mali. Since 2013, French forces have marked their presence in Mali through operation Serval, later succeeded by Barkhane in 2014. This is a part of a larger counter-terrorism operation in the Sahel-region. In addition, the Malian Armed Government Force (FAMA) is present, which MINUSMA is mandated to assist. Although the focus is on UN
peacekeepers, I compare them with the French forces at one point in the analysis, to highlight an argument.

1.3 Why study Civil-military interaction in Mali?

Civil-military interaction is not a new concept. In fact, it is regarded as old as war itself (Kristoffersen, 2006: 6-7). Why then should this be a research area of concern? Firstly, a well functioning relationship between humanitarian and military actors is understood as essential in dealing with a conflict. Further, the study of civil-military interaction can be seen as both theoretically and empirically significant, as it contributes to strengthen knowledge and field gaps as missions change with time (Ruffa and Vennesson, 2014: 584).

Conventional studies on civil-military interaction usually analyze explanatory factors along two dimensions, including the organizational differences between the actors, as well as the context the actors are situated in. Later research has moved beyond the conventional factors, by focusing on the domestic institutional configurations the actors come from (Ruffa and Vennesson, 2014: 587). In a comprehensive study of civil-military interaction in Afghanistan, Gjørv (2014) introduces three factors that need to be assessed when understanding the relationship, including the context, visions of politics and security, as well as the dimensions of legitimacy, authority and obligation. By using this approach, the study includes the conventional explanations, at the same time as it covers some new aspects. I argue that this enables me to look at the interaction from different positions, rather than focusing on one explanatory factor.

Although humanitarian and military actors increasingly find themselves operating in the same environment, this does not necessarily reflect the literature. More specifically, the existing literature tells little about how the relationship functions in the field (Metcalf, Haysom and Gordon, 2012: 1). Rather, it is limited to conceptual issues, with less focus on the relationship’s impact on humanitarian space. However, the war in Afghanistan initiated several studies of civil-military interaction, through the use of different approaches (Duffield, 2013; Gjørv, 2014; Rietjens, Soeters and van Fenema, 2013). Seemingly, there is extensive research on civil-military interaction. However, studies of this form of interaction in Mali are limited, which justifies this as a research opportunity.
In a relatively recent study of civil-military interaction in Afghanistan and Lebanon, Ruffa and Vennesson points out the on-going operation in Mali as a case that “show the continuing importance of the capacity of NGOs and military organizations to work together” (2014: 585). The gap this thesis seeks to fill is related to the choice of precisely the peacekeeping operation in Mali as a case. MINUSMA is often referred to as “the deadliest peacekeeping mission” (Banco, 2015; Caparini, 2015: 8). More specifically, it is remarkable how the binary opposite words deadly and peacekeeping can appear in the same sentence. It is clear that the mission in Mali represents something new.

Several factors make civil-military interaction in Mali worth studying. Firstly, the presence of jihadists is not common in peacekeeping operations in Africa. In fact, this is the first time UN peacekeepers are being attacked by terrorist groups connected to al-Qaida (Tardy, 2013: 2). Secondly, MINUSMA represents a new category of UN peacekeeping operations. The peacekeepers are tasked to support the government in extending its state authority and control in northern Mali. This put the peacekeepers in direct confrontation with the terrorist threat, as well as other armed groups (de Coning, 2015). Clearly, this adds up to a more challenging interface between humanitarian and military actors, as the need for humanitarian space becomes greater.

At the top of this, MINUSMA is mandated to create a safe and secure environment for humanitarian assistance. Evidently, this mandate gives MINUSMA a role in the preservation of humanitarian space. How this takes place in the deadliest peacekeeping mission today is therefore worth analyzing.

1.4 Outline

Together with this introductory chapter, this thesis is built up by six main chapters. In the following chapter I present the theoretical approaches in this study. This includes de Coning and Friis’ possible relationships, as well as Gjørv’s explanatory factors. In the third chapter, I present the research design of the study, followed by the limitations of the methodological approach used in this thesis. The challenges encountered during the fieldwork in Bamako will also be presented in this chapter. The fourth chapter presents some background information
needed to understand the reason for the actors’ deployment, as well as the context they are operating within. Following, chapter five presents the analysis, and is divided into two main parts. The first part (5.1 -5.3) investigates how Gjørv’s explanatory factors are expressed in Mali. This part forms the basis of the second part of the analysis (5.4), which uses the findings to analyze how the actors interact. As such, the analysis is structured in accordance with the theory, starting with Gjørv’s explanatory factors. Lastly, the thesis concludes with a summary of the main findings of the study, whereby the extent of separation between the actors in relation to humanitarian space is clarified.
2 Theoretical Framework

Rosén (2010) distinguishes theory on civil-military relations into two different generations. As mentioned initially, Huntington and Janowitz formed the first generation of civil-military relations theory, in the early 60s. Their debate dealt with the degree of political interference in the military organization. While Huntington (1957) argued for the need of a sharp distinction between political and military actors, Janowitz (1961) stated that the military should be integrated with the society (Norheim-Martinsen, 2010: 203). Both the separation and the integration model serve as ideal types in civil-military theory.

The second generation of civil-military relations theory arose during the 1990s. This debate was rooted in international peacekeeping operations (Rosén, 2010: 30). The occurrence of complex humanitarian emergencies meant that “blue helmets” had to operate alongside a range of humanitarian actors, and accordingly, the traditional boundaries between civilian and military actors became blurred. According to Rosén, this debate focuses on three principal issues. First, the use of low-intensity multinational peacekeepers, deployed by a puzzled organization like the UN marked something new. This stood in stark contrast to previous warfare where armed forces were allocated to protect the motherland in heroic battles (Rosén, 2010: 30). The second debate was, and still is, centered on the tactical and operational issues in coordinating military and non-military actors in a peacekeeping setting. However, the most noteworthy discussions in this theoretical debate deal with the transformation of humanitarian space, where the line between military and humanitarian actors increasingly has been blurred. Although this debate flared up after the Cold War, it remains a relevant discussion sixteen years into the millennium.

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of this thesis. By using an eclectic approach, I extract the core of different theories, central to answer the research question. First, I lay out three different relationships that can occur between civilian and military actors, presented by de Coning and Friis (2011). This will be followed by a presentation of the Gjørv’s factors expected to influence the civil-military interaction.
2.1 Civil-Military Interaction.

Civil-military interaction refers to both the nature and the scope of interaction (Gjørv, 2014: 132). Taking this in consideration, the theory tends to separate between various categories of interaction that can be placed on a spectrum. De Coning and Friis distinguish between unity on the one end, and competition at the other end. The categories thus point to the extent of cooperation as well as the way it takes place. Three of the categories of interaction will be used as an analytical tool in the analysis of this thesis. By operationalizing the different forms of interaction, I seek to capture the scope and nature of the civil-military interaction in my case. This will help me place the case in a broader context, and thus understand the dynamics behind the calculations for preserving humanitarian space. In doing so, I develop a set of features, drawn from the theory, which characterizes a particular category. As a result, I will expectantly be able to place the data collected, on the interaction spectrum in the end of the analysis.

De Coning and Friis developed a model that distinguishes between four levels of coherence. This includes intra-agency, whole-of-government, inter-agency, and international-local coherence (2011: 253-254). For the purpose of this thesis, inter-agency appears to be the most relevant level, as I am studying the relationship between two distinct actors. Further, the authors address six types of relationship that influence the degree of coherence that potentially can be achieved. These are represented on a scale, ranged from unity to competition. In order to create a discussion in the analysis, I incorporate different theoretical views on the different relationships. Although this reviews different theoretical understandings, it also raises theoretical challenges that will be discussed in the last chapter.

The first type describes a relationship where actors cooperate. This means that they may choose to come together and collaborate, although having dissimilar mandates (de Coning and Friis, 2011: 256). Cooperation allows the actors to keep their organizational distinctiveness. In order to cooperate successfully, Spence (2002) presents key factors that need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, there is a need for a common understanding of the problem, as well as a common approach to solve it (Spence, 2002: 167). Accordingly, a

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4 This study excludes unity, integration and competition as ideal types. As de Coning and Friis argues, the two first are less likely on an inter-agency level, especially studying humanitarian actors who have no interest in being coherent.
shared analysis and communication becomes important tools. This involves information and knowledge sharing, and a clear understanding of each actors’ limits and roles in a given context. In addition, there is a vital need for a logical division of labor that respects the principles of the involved actors. Further, the actors need a detailed and holistic picture of the situation, which enables them to see “who, what, why, where, when and how” (Spence, 2002: 168). If these questions are answered, both actors will be able to operate effectively and thus smoothen the cooperation. One the one hand, humanitarians will be able to (re-)deploy rapidly and provide a more complete and balanced response. Giving humanitarians a better overview will correspondingly provide military actors at the other hand a better grasp of the situation. They will be better able to tailor the security aspects to the conflict in general. Spence believe that this will facilitate better conditions for unhindered humanitarian assistance, and at the same justify the military raison d’être (2002: 168). Next, the importance of early engagement must not be underestimated. As we will see in the next section, organizational differences are understood as source of poor cooperation. Spence argues that these differences should be understood as complementarities. Accordingly, the differences should be recognized and accepted early, as it will give a better situational awareness. He refers to this as a pool of a “minimum barrier people”, as they are well aware of limitations and differences in the operating environment (Spence, 2002: 170). In order to obtain this, the focus should be on joint planning and education with the different actors.

De Coning and Friis underlines that such interaction only is temporary or context based, and that it needs to be reestablished rather than being constant (2011: 256). Furthermore, cooperation is highly prioritized by agencies like the UN and NATO who includes this in their civil-military doctrines (Rollins, 2001: 123).

In addition to cooperation, actors can coordinate among themselves. This way of interacting refers to information sharing that will prevent conflict, duplication or overlap (de Coning and Friis, 2011: 256). Coordination implies a structure where various activities are directed toward a common goal. This occurs in spite of different actors with different mandates. They are different in nature and structure, but do to a certain degree have the same interests. Due to the differences, the actors see coordination as a necessity. The extent of coordination varies from context to context, where some are more loosely connected than others. De Coning and Friis refer to the UN humanitarian coordination system as an example of this relationship. The system is pre-arranged, but the actors can participate voluntarily. Unlike, cooperation,
which results in joint action, coordination ends with a separate or independent action. In addition, the former includes a more harmonious relationship, manifested by agreement.

Moreover, improved coordination is commonly understood as a key to operational success, as it is believed to increase the efficiency of the actors and possibly save lives (Friis, 2013: 14) Rietjens et al (2013) argue that interdependence is a primary driver for coordination (2013: 268). Accordingly, the greater the interdependence is, the greater is the actors need to invest in coordination. As opposed to this, Egnell (2013) argues that the understanding of coordination as something valuable in itself is misleading. Instead, he suggests that we have to ask what the aims of the operations are, which actors and activities that needs to be included to achieve the aims (Egnell, 2013: 250). This view is supported by Gjørv, who claims that we not should take for granted that all actors wish to be coordinated. Her study of the Norwegian civil-military model in Afghanistan showed that the emphasis on coordination appeared to be ineffective and impracticable (Gjørv, 2015: 132-133).

Lastly, actors can also interact by simply coexisting. When this occurs, the actors interact at a minimum level that is necessary to avoid tension in the same operating environment (de Coning and Friis, 2011: 256-257). The interaction is forced on actors who do not really want to engage with each other. The civil-military relationship occurs as a mirroring situation of this. In this relationship, humanitarian actors who strive to fulfill their principles try to avoid any involvement with the military. A more intimate interaction than necessary information exchange could jeopardize their core principles – humanity, impartiality and neutrality. Accordingly, coexistence can be understood as a norm among humanitarian actors (de Coning, 2008: 54). As a result, military doctrines which want to respect this, tries to draw a clear line by keeping a distance from humanitarians. However, Gjørv claims that this might lead to unfortunate consequences. Drawing on civil-military experience from a military perspective from Afghanistan, she holds that no or little contact may lead to a re-militarization of operations. It can also contribute to an underestimation of civilian actors, which she sees as a vital actor in a conflict (Gjørv, 2015: 138).
Cooperation
- Actors collaborate despite the differences between them
- Requires a common understanding of the problems and a common way to solve them.
- Interaction results in joint action

Coordination
- Information sharing necessary to prevent conflict, duplication or overlap
- Interdependence is understood as primary driver for coordination
- Interaction ends with separate or independent action

Coexistence
- Interaction at a minimum level necessary to avoid tension
- Interaction forced on actors who avoid each other
- Understood as a norm among humanitarian actors

Figure 2.1: de Coning and Friis’ (2011) range of likely relationships that may occur between civilian and military actors. (derived from de Coning and Friis, 2011).

2.2 Explanatory factors

Gjørv (2014) points to three factors that influence the civil-military interaction. These can be understood as factors that limit, inhibit, or constrain the interaction (de Coning, 2013: 52). They will now be further examined, and later used to explain the interaction in Mali in the analysis.

2.2.1 Context

Gjørv’s first argument is that the situation in which the civil-military interaction takes place influences the level of interaction (2014: 30). The particular dynamics of the place of intervention will most likely reflect the extent of interaction. She argues that the relationship between humanitarian and military actors becomes more controversial the more political the conflict is (2014: 30). In particular, the idea is that interventions due to natural disasters like hurricanes or earthquakes, not would impact the interaction in the same way as man-made conflicts. Situations characterized by vast displacement, violence, and urgent humanitarian needs are rooted in deep political and militarily complexities. Accordingly, intervening in
such complex emergencies will cause security constraints and risks for both humanitarians and military actors. This is what distinguishes natural disasters from war-like conflicts.

Within these complex emergencies, the line between war, organized crime and large-scale violence is highly blurred. Gjørv uses Mary Kaldor’s notion of “New wars” to highlight this (2014: 31). Her concept refers to trends in contemporary conflicts. A common pattern in these wars includes the range of fighting parties, not limited to national armed forces. Nevertheless, they often consist of militias, rebel groups and warlords (Beswick and Jackson, 2011: 25). Arguably, a reflection of the present conflicts can reasonably include the aspect of terrorism in the concept of new wars. The new wars are also fought in the name of identity, covering ethnicity, religion and tribes, as opposed to geo-political goals in “Old Wars”. Moreover, the different groups in the conflict are aiming to gain access to the state for their own identical groups, with no ambitions to carry out policies for the interest of the population as a whole (Kaldor, 2013: 2). Their economy is often directly linked to regional and global trafficking of drugs, humans, and other illicit goods (Beswick and Jackson, 2011: 25). In these conflicts, the distinction between civilians and combatants is often blurred, as combatants are deeply rooted in the societies. When it comes to methods of fighting, Kaldor states that battles are rare, and that population control is a mean of capturing territory (2013: 2-3). Gjørv states that the focus on population control by the interveners, rebel groups combatants, as well as the reactions of the local population in this environment, have led to a more blurred interaction between humanitarians and military forces (2014: 31). In this way, the study of civil-military interaction in accordance to its context is necessary.

Further, Gjørv points out that the way interveners characterize the conflict setting either can help or hinder the determination of context (2014: 31). In particular, this is important in determining the needs on the ground. The context may change rapidly, and the interaction will thus change along. Accordingly, the shift will challenge the relationship, as the needs on the ground are different from the intervener’s notion of the conflict. Consequently, the different characterization of conflict, and thus types of peace operations become important in understanding the demands on the civil-military interaction spectra (Gjørv, 2014: 32). Peace enforcement and peacemaking will lead to challenges because of the presence of force by

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5 Both peace enforcement and peacemaking take place during ongoing hostilities. While the former allows greater military capacity, the latter refers to a range of activities to create peace, including diplomatic action (Gjørv, 2014: 32).
the interveners as well as absence of consent and impartiality, as presented introductory. As a consequence, the interface tends to be characterized by weak, if not conflicting interaction. Drawing lines back to de Coning and Friis’ types of relationship, coexistence is more likely to take place in such operations, as the need to preserve humanitarian space becomes greater. This also applies for “robust” peacekeeping, where force may be used, and the peacekeepers are partial. On the other hand, cooperation is expected to take place in traditional peacekeeping operations where the intensity is low, and the core principles of UN peacekeeping are respected. As mentioned initially, however, both relationships assume the need for coordination, but to varying degrees and purposes.

In the same way, however, the level and nature of conflict should also be taken into account when addressing the civil-military interaction. Concepts dealing with the intensity of conflict are often used to characterize the context, or the level of conflict. While high intensity operations describe the traditional intergovernmental wars, where all parts of the society are engaged in war, low intensity conflict refers to political and military conflicts often restricted and limited to a geographical area (Gjørv, 2014: 34-35). Asymmetrical warfare belongs to the latter category, and can be defined as warfare outside the range of conventional warfare, where it is difficult to respond to the counterpart. Later definitions understand it as a fight between the state and non-state actors for the legitimacy and control over parts of the population (Malis, 2014: 187).

Gjørv state that the distinction between the concepts of conflict and operations is necessary to understand, as they determine the nature and potential of the civil-military interaction that will occur in a specific context (2014: 35). Furthermore, the combination of several actors as well as a fluctuating level of intensity will characterize future operations. Gjørv therefore underlines that it is impossible with a one-size-fits-all approach in civil-military interaction. Each context thus creates its own way of interaction. Hence, ideal goals, presented by organizations and agencies in so-called comprehensive approaches, do often not correspond with the realities on the ground where the interaction takes place (Gjørv, 2014: 35).

The relationship is expected to be less confrontational and challenging in traditional peace operations, as referred to above. Likewise, cooperation and unity will be less likely in intensive combats or complex emergencies (Ruffa and Vennesson, 2014: 588). The argument
is that it functions in accordance with the specific context it is deployed in (Gjørv, 2014: 31). In sum, an analysis of the context is therefore crucial in understanding the relationship.

### 2.2.2 Visions of the Political and Security

According to Gjørv’s second factor, the level of politicization of the context and the political positions of the actors will also have an influence on how humanitarian and military actors interact. In addition, it requires a better understanding of the security dynamics among the non-combatants on the ground. Gjørv therefore includes the notion of human security, where the focus is on how individuals perceive their security, and also how their security can be strengthened based on these perceptions (2014: 37). This factor is especially important in understanding how humanitarian understand and preserve humanitarian space. In her notion of human security of civilians, she includes the security dynamics of all noncombatants, including humanitarian actors and civilians. She underlines that the needs and capacities of civilians, and their understanding and management of security needs is necessary for every actor operation in the same environment (Gjørv, 2014: 37).

Ferris point to three ways in which humanitarian actors manage their security. Firstly, humanitarian actors may resort to an acceptance strategy, where they rely on good communication with the local population (Ferris, 2011: 184). In doing so, they build a good relationship with the local communities to make their space as safe as possible (Egeland, Harmer and Stoddard, 2011: 18). Secondly, actors may use remote management. This refer to the transfer of responsibility to local staff or organizations, who knows the area well, and are in less risk of being attacked than international non-governmental organizations (Ferris, 2011: 186). Lastly, Ferris points out deterrence, where the actors use armed escort for protection. This is the most controversial way of managing security, as it can be perceived as taking the side of the military force that provides security (Ferris, 2011: 186).

Further, Gjørv makes a distinction between positive and negative security, which is important in the civil-military relationship. While negative security can be constructed as the security from a threat, positive security is seen as an enabler, as security to something. The former thus relies on the use of force, while the latter is greatly linked with non-violent means.
Understanding these core assumptions of security will better explain the civil-military interaction.

The politics of complex emergencies is important and has affected the analysis of how civil-military interaction is understood or operationalized. Gjørv also pinpoint the issue by stating that the politics of the intervening actors themselves may be a source of the conflict, as they may be perceived as disturb and hinder the prevailing goals in the conflict (Gjørv, 2014: 39). Accordingly, the relationship between politics and the military actors needs to be examined. In complex emergencies, the interveners may be involved in the greater politics, assisting the one part or another to pursue their objective. On the other side of the equation, humanitarian NGOs strive to not be drawn into the politics as this may insecure the humanitarian space, by hinder their ability to access people in need, and even increase their vulnerability.

2.2.3 Legitimacy, Obligation and Authority

Lastly, Gjørv argues that the dimensions of legitimacy, authority and obligation should be taken into account when addressing civil-military interaction. Legitimacy is referred to as the general consent and approval of the target group, where authority is to be exercised (Gjørv, 2014: 43). The concept is often used to describe the relationship between the state and its citizens. However, Mersiades (2005), in line with Gjørv, argues that it also can be applied to understand the relationship between the military and civilians. From a peacekeeper’s perspective, legitimacy thus clarifies why the host population would be supportive of, as well as obedient to, an intervening force (Mersiades, 2005: 207). Further, the legitimacy of a force can also be understood as a result of a social contract between them and the society. The peacekeeper’s use of force and authority becomes legitimate as the local see their presence as beneficial, whether it is to provide security or to restore peace. This must thus be seen in relation to human security and the importance to assess the needs and perceptions of the local, as discussed above. However, Mersiades points out that the strive for legitimacy is challenged by the different expectations involved, by all the different actors. They have clear views of what a military force should be involved in, and not. While the local population may

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6 The concept of human security refers to the security dynamics at the level of civilian or non-combatants, and how they perceive their own security (Gjørv, 2014: 37). The concept was first introduced in 1994, in the Human Development Report. It emphasize the welfare of ordinary people, and encourage policymakers and scholars to think about international security as something more than hard-politics, such as military, state interests and territory (Paris, 2001: 87)
expect the forces to provide security, opposing groups and NGOs may see them as an obstacle to their own objectives. In addition, there will be fractions within the society in seeing the forces as legitimate. Mersiades states that these disagreed divisions might become spoilers that seek to undermine the presence, and thus the legitimacy of the peacekeepers (2005: 207).

At the same time, the legitimacy of peacekeepers can be challenged by the lack of compliance between the expectations of the local actors and the population on the one hand, and the actual performance of the peacekeepers on the other. From the perspective of the local population, failing to meet their needs of protection may lead to distrust that may have consequences for the operation, not least for other non-military actors on the ground. This inconsistency is often a result of expectations by the locals that are not reflected in the mandates by the UN Security Council (Mersiades, 2005: 207). In relation to non-military actors, however, the mandate can be conflicting. This can be linked to Gjørv’s notion on obligation. In particular, the actors’ mandates, principles and perceptions of what is needed in an area can be conflicting and create tensions (Gjørv, 2014: 45). Gjørv’s notion of obligation can be linked with one of the conventional factors in the theory of civil-military interaction that analyze the organizational differences between the actors. This is believed to complicate the interaction, as the differences come in to conflict with each other. For instance, humanitarian actors may be unpredictable and a difficult partner to work with, as they seldom “will be singing the same song in a given situation” (Slim, 1996: 128). On the other hand, military actors follow a strict working structure with standard operating procedures (Ruffa and Vennesson, 2014: 587). Nonetheless, Gjørv claims that complex operations not must be seen as black and white processes. These operations contain grey zones, where the obligations are not always fulfilled. For instance, humanitarian actors might compromise their principles to reach out to people in need, or military actors who engage in humanitarian activities (Gjørv, 2014: 45).

In addition, Gjørv defines authority as the legitimized power, and makes a division between political authority, moral authority, and legal authority. She claims that civil-military interaction is a mix of all the different types of authority. In particular, military forces can have legal and political authority to act through their mandates, but often lack moral authority and legitimacy from the local population. In worst cases, this lack of authority and legitimacy is met by confrontation (Gjørv, 2014: 44). NGOs on the other hand, are expected to have a
legal authority as committers to International Humanitarian Law. In addition, their moral authority is present due to their adherence to the humanitarian imperative, emphasizing the right to receive and offer humanitarian assistance (Slim, 2002: 162). Further, Gjørv claims that the extent of authority is linked to the level of legitimacy in the population. Moreover, the two factors must also be seen in relation to the context. Gjørv’s factors can be summarized as presented in the illustration below:

![Diagram showing the influence of context, legitimacy, and authority on civil-military interaction.]

Figure 2.2: Gjørv’s explanatory factors’ impact on the civil-military interaction

### 2.3 Humanitarian space

The concept of humanitarian space has no common definition, but is usually referred to as the operating environment conducive to effective humanitarian work (Ferris, 2011: 176). Initially, the concept was introduced to describe the operating environment of humanitarian actors in the politicized Cold War conflicts in Central America (Hubert and Brassard-Boudreu, 2010). Its later usage was put on the agenda in the late 1990s, when the former President of Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), Rony Brauman, used the concept to describe a space of freedom to evaluate needs, to freely monitor the distribution and use of relief, as well as the freedom to communicate with the people in need (Gjørv, 2014: 64). Since then, the concept of humanitarian space has been used by various humanitarian organizations to describe some common elements, but with different focus. For instance, the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) defines it as the conducive
humanitarian operating environment (2015:24). The perspective of this definition refers to the practical physical environment humanitarian actors operate in, like refugee camps, as opposed to the “military space” (Hubert and Brassard-Boudreu, 2010). On the other hand, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) understands the concept of humanitarian space as analogous with the respect of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) (Hubert and Brassard-Boudreu, 2010). This includes adherence to impartiality, neutrality and independence in meeting the humanitarian needs. A third approach to humanitarian space understands it as a highly complex political and military arena, in which humanitarian action takes place. More particularly, it sees humanitarian space as a “product of the dynamic and complex interplay of political, military and legal actors, interests, institutions and processes” (Collinson and Elhawary, 2012: 1; Hilhorst and Jansen, 2010: 1120).

As mentioned, this study uses the definition of Brassard-Boudreu and Hubert. They have reviewed different definitions of humanitarian space to land on a definition that sums up the various definitions. This includes the safety of humanitarian workers and their ability to access to people in need.

First, the safety of humanitarian actors is argued to be one of the most prominent measures of humanitarian space. In particular, the actors’ need to respond to crises has also put them at risk. This has been significant over the last decade, as the security of humanitarian actors has deteriorated (Egeland, Harmer and Stoddard, 2011: 1). The increase in humanitarian vulnerability must be seen in relation to the changing nature of conflict. As opposed to the conflicts during the cold war, humanitarians today operate in deadly conflicts, where the battlefield takes place amongst the people (Smith, 2005: 1). This measure goes hand in hand with the second one that addresses the degree of access to populations in need. Humanitarian safety can be understood as a prerequisite for humanitarian access. Evidently, the different factors are intertwined, and will therefore be discussed interchangeably.

To connect humanitarian space to the abovementioned literature on civil-military interaction, Gjørv claims that humanitarian space plays a significant role in the debate over civil-military interaction (2014: 64). Recent literature has pointed to the challenging practical maintenance of humanitarian space in the context of new UN peacekeeping (Bellamy and Hunt, 2015: 1288). In particular, the presence of political involved peacekeepers, with robust mandates, is
seen as a source of insecurity for humanitarian actors. Any association of humanitarian work with the robust peacekeeping is accordingly seen as unfortunate, and dangerous.

Furthermore, in order to get humanitarian access and to deliver the aid safely, humanitarian actors need to be perceived as apolitical by their beneficiaries and the various actors in the same area (Gjørv, 2014: 63). Being impartial, neutral and independent is understood as a way of creating and maintaining humanitarian space. Therefore, the respect for the humanitarian space requires a clear distinction between humanitarian and military actors, as the impartial and neutral nature of humanitarian assistance is incompatible with inherently political stabilization operations. Such operations are argued to blur the distinction between humanitarian and military actors (Collinson and Elhawary, 2012: 25). Particularly, the humanitarian space must be seen in relation to the political context. The more politicized the context is, the greater is the need for humanitarian space (Gjørv, 2014: 152). Accordingly, the greater is the need for a clear separation between military forces and humanitarian actors. This reasoning can be summed up in figure 2.3.

![Humanitarian space in context](image)

**Figure 2.3: Humanitarian space in Political context (Gjørv, 2014: 152)**
To sum up, I identified three different ways of interacting, ranging from cooperation to coexistence. How the actors interact is determined by the factors that following were presented, including the context, visions of politics and security, and the dimensions of legitimacy, authority and obligation. Lastly, I linked the two theoretical approaches to the concept of humanitarian space. This will be used as a theoretical framework in the analysis, to explore the scope and nature of interaction in Mali. Understanding this will also explain the extent of distance needed to preserve the humanitarian space.
3 Research design and Methodological considerations

This chapter will present a further elaboration of the choice of research methods and procedures in this thesis. By doing so, I first start (3.1) with an overview of my research design and the thoughts behind the choice of case. I will develop my argument by using Yin’s understanding of what a case study is. Secondly (3.2), I justify the appropriateness of the method chosen to connect the theory to the empirical findings of this thesis. Arguing that a qualitative approach is suitable for this study, I then give a presentation of my respondents. The challenges that arose during my fieldwork in Bamako will also be discussed here. The chapter then ends with a discussion of the methodological strengths and weaknesses of the thesis. This will be done by discussing reliability (3.3) and validity measures (3.4), in light of the use of semi-structured interviews as a tool for data collection in particular.

3.1 Research Design – Theory Guided Case Study

As Levy points out, a good starting point is to ask what your study is a case of (Levy, 2008: 2). For the purpose of this thesis, I intend to analyze civil-military interaction and humanitarian space in a complex peacekeeping environment. In explaining this, I use the peacekeeping operation in Mali as a case to gain deeper insight on the topic. This falls under the Levy’s typology of idiographic case studies, aiming to describe, explain or interpret a particular case (Levy, 2008: 3).

In order to get an in-depth knowledge of the nature of civil-military interaction in Northern-Mali, I interviewed key-informants during a fieldwork in Mali’s capital, Bamako. The relevance of this choice is further strengthened by the fact that the secondary sources of this topic are limited, if not absent. A fieldwork was therefore necessary to answer my research question, which evidently adds up to an interpretive study (Boolsen, 2005: 125). That means that I gain understanding by accessing the meanings actors assign to them.

Yin defines case studies as empirical research that (1) investigates a contemporary phenomenon, (2) within a real-life context; (3) when the boundaries between phenomenon
and real context are not clearly evident, and (4) in which multiple sources of evidence are used (1989: 23). His first point refers to demarcation in time and space. This point can be seen in relation to Gerring’s understanding of a case as “a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point of time or over some period of time” (2007:19). In this study, the civil-military interaction is delimited to interaction at a field level. Although the main focus of the analysis is on this level, I argue that we need to include and understand some of the dynamics on the strategic and operational level to get a comprehensive understanding of the interaction on the tactical level. The levels of interaction are intertwined, and the analysis will thus also shed light over interaction on the higher levels. The lens will nevertheless be aimed towards tactical interaction. Demarcation of time, however, can be more challenging to address in this study. The crisis in Mali started in 2012, and MINUSMA was subsequently deployed the following year. There has thus been an arena for studying interaction between civilian and military actors since 2013, and until the present day. As the peace operation is still on going, any form for demarcation in time can thus be challenging.

The second point revolves around the case being connected to the wider context. Andersen argues that this point separates a case study from pure variable-based analysis or the classical experiment (2013: 24). Seen in relation to this case, civil-military interaction is an important aspect of the peacekeeping operation in Mali. The fact that the actors are working in the same operating environment, and that MINUSMA are mandated to facilitate for safe delivery of humanitarian assistance strengthen this argument. Notably, I argue that it makes this side of the peacekeeping operation worth studying.

In a broader sense, however, MINUSMA is one out of several on-going peace operations today. This multitude also mean that there will be several interfaces between civilian and military actors, which makes the operation in Mali part of a wider context. As Andersen (2013) notes however, cases are not chosen randomly. The aim is to focus on an interesting empirical enquiry that either reflects or expand the theory by completing conceptual categories (Andersen, 2013: 25). The peacekeeping operation in Mali was selected based on its distinctiveness and remarkable characteristics. As mentioned initially, the operation represents something new in a UN context. The peacekeepers are deployed with a robust mandate, in a counter-terrorist setting with asymmetrical warfare. Clearly, this context has implications on the civil-military interaction, which I argue make the choice of case interesting. In fact, we can ask if the interaction would have been relevant studying in a
traditional peacekeeping context. This leads us to Yin´s third point, which underlines that a case study is about phenomena that may not always be sharply separated from the context. In his fourth point, he therefore suggests the inclusion of additional variables. The context is one of several independent variables in this thesis. Using the framework of Gjørv, I argue that the aspects of security and politics, as well as legitimacy, authority and obligation serves as important explanatory factors in studying civil-military interaction in addition to the contextual factor.

Not to mention, Yin also state that a case study relies on a multitude of sources, through triangulation specifically. Triangulation is seen as a criterion of good practice in qualitative research, as it may reveal contradictions reflecting back on the research process (Boolsen, 2005: 197). If we go back to the research question of this thesis, I initially stated that the measure of humanitarian space would be situation-specific, meaning that the humanitarian is preserved when the participants views it as such (Autesserre, 2014: 23). Again, the views of the actors are necessary, and are thus a further justification of the methodological approach of this thesis. On the other hand, as I also focus on access as a measure of humanitarian space, additional available sources will be used. This includes both OCHA´s numbers and figures on access-constraints and attacks against humanitarians. In addition, I supply with secondary literature when discussing the issues of MINUSMA´s legitimacy and authority, where the perceptions of the local population plays an important role. This will compensate the fact that I did not get the chance to talk to the local population of Northern Mali. However, some of my respondents are native Malians who grew up, have family and work in the Northern regions of the country. Therefore, I argue that their understanding of the local people´s perceptions of MINUSMA is trustworthy as they indirectly are a part of it. Nevertheless, it might be the case that their professional role as humanitarian workers also influences their perceptions of MINUSMA as a legitimate force, or vice versa. This is taken into consideration in the analysis, through triangulation of the sources. By using numbers, secondary literature as well as my own interviews, I ensure that my findings are cross-checked (Bryman, 2012: 392). Thus, it contributes to validation of the information, which will be discussed later in this section (Mikkelsen, 2005: 96)

Yin closes his forth point by arguing that a case study “benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (Yin, 2014: 17). This refers to what Levy calls theory-guided case studies. More specifically, it is a subtype of case
studies, which is based on a pre-developed conceptual framework that covers some particular theoretical aspects of reality, and excluding others (Levy, 2008: 4). Arguably, this subtype fits the purpose of my thesis. There are many interesting aspects of civil-military interaction. It can be studied on different levels, and explained through different factors. However, this study has chosen some specific, conventional aspects I argue are suitable in using Mali as a case. The study of civil-military interaction at a tactical level enabled me to easier get in touch with the actors, as opposed to an analysis on the strategic level, where access to information is more limited, talking to high-ranked policy-makers. Equally important, I seek to place the interaction in Mali in a specific ideal type through Gjørv’s explanatory factors. Accordingly, and seen in relation to Levy’s definition, I argue that the development of a theoretical framework (part 3.1-3.5) that is limited to some specific aspects of civil-military interaction, makes this thesis a theory-guided case study. In addition, Levy argues that this structured use of theory gives a better understanding of a case than less structured analysis, as it is anchored in broader system of concepts (2008: 5). However, theory-guided case studies are not trying to generalize beyond the data. Instead, the aim is to explain or interpret a particular phenomenon. This has methodological constrains that will be further discussed in the last methodological sections (3.4).

3.2 Respondents

Autesserre argues that much of the literature on peace building neglects the dynamics on the ground (2014: 8). Drawing lines back to the theory, I argue that the possible ways of interacting as presented by de Coning and Friis requires a grounded approach. A fieldwork was thus necessary to grasp the perception and practices of the actual actors involved in the interface I am seeking to explain. This becomes especially relevant as this study mainly focuses on the civil-military interaction on a field level.

Selection of informants

To gain deeper insight on the topic, I conducted a fieldwork in Bamako during two weeks in February and March 2016. Throughout this period of time, I managed to talk to 29

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Ruffa and Venesson’s (2014) analyze civil-military interaction by focusing on national politics of the troop contributors.
respondents through 27 semi-structured interviews. The respondents are primarily representatives from the humanitarian community. Two out of the 29 respondents however are representatives from MINUSMA. Although I decided to study the interaction from a humanitarian perspective, the interviews with MINUSMA gave me a more nuanced picture, yet not equally balanced. Again, the awareness of this imbalance must be taken into consideration when analysing the data.

The informants from both the humanitarian community and MINUSMA can thus be referred to as so-called key informants. They had particular insight and opinions about the topic, and highlighted important issues by simply describing their work and difficulties either as humanitarian workers, or MINUSMA personnel. They possessed knowledge about the interaction issues, situations and the context, which was not widely available (Andersen, 2006: 282).

Not to mention, as a reflection of the difference between humanitarian and development NGOs, I chose to interview a development NGO to see if they had the same relationship to MINUSMA as humanitarians. As we saw in part 3, the theory presumes that the humanitarian principles can affect humanitarian interaction with the military. By including the development NGO, I believe that it could help me assess the significance of the humanitarian principles humanitarian work is based on, in the analysis. Besides, I interviewed three military personnel from the Peacekeeping School of Bamako. They provide military training to peacekeepers from African states, aiming to build their capacity. Although they are not directly involved with the peacekeeping mission, they had noteworthy opinions about civil-military interaction in the context of Mali, where they all are originally from. The military trainers did also draw upon experiences from the UN peacekeeping in South-Sudan, where they had previously served. I argue that they, in addition to the key-informants, provided considerable information, from a military point of view, that will be included in the analysis.

Accordingly, I mainly used purposive sampling by choosing respondents based on their direct relevance to the research (Barbour, 2001: 1115-1116). Since both humanitarians and MINUSMA are the key actors in the interaction I am studying, it was essential for me to talk directly to the primary source. By using the purposive approach, I thus ensured that key

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8 The interviews with OCHA and Local NGO 1 were group interviews with two representatives from the same organization.
topics were covered, and that some diversity among my informants was included (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003: 79). In particular, I chose to include different humanitarian NGOs, where their activities ranged from Water and sanitation to medical help. The purpose of this was to see if differences within humanitarian organizations could have any impact on the interaction with MINUSMA.

Getting in touch with the respondents was not an easy task. Before arriving Bamako, I had barely five scheduled interviews. While some of whom I contacted did not respond to my e-mails, others found it difficult to pre-arrange a meeting. This was partly due to their uncertain working plan, with staff spontaneously travelling to the real field in the Northern regions of Mali. As soon as I arrived in Bamako, however, I started to call potential respondents, using OCHA’s list of humanitarian organizations in Mali. This had immediate results, and my schedule was slowly filled with appointments. After closing up interviews, I also made sure to ask if my respondent knew other relevant people for my research topic they could refer me to (Bryman, 2012: 202). To some extent, I thus identified my respondents through so-called snowball sampling. Willis argues that this approach may create a bias, as the respondents may come from the same network (2006: 148). Admittedly, as I was conducting interviews, I understood that many of my respondents were organized in several clusters and NGO-forum with likeminded actors. Through those meetings, NGOs come together and discuss important issues and shared information. This became apparent when many of my respondents used exactly the same wording to describe specific situations. For instance, three of the so-called security advisors used the word “collateral damage” to describe the accidents with humanitarian workers. Questionably, meetings in the security clusters shaped their way of understanding the security situation. Nevertheless, I tried to avoid this further by snowballing from several points that could help me expand my scarce network of respondents.

For my own convenience, I conducted most of my interviews with English-speakers, as I am not fluent in French - the official language in Mali. I thus found international NGOs more accessible. However, I saw it important to get the experiences and perspective of local NGOs. They often possess valuable knowledge of the local dynamics expatriates do not have. Although most of the NGOs I interviewed were international, many of the respondents were Malian, including Tuareg, Fulani and Dogon. I argue that the inclusion of both Malians and expatriates provide the research a more nuanced picture and rich insight from different viewpoints.
Ideally, the fieldwork should have been conducted in northern Mali, as that is where the interaction takes place. Due to the instability in the northern regions, the fieldwork was limited to Bamako. Travelling to Bamako itself was however carefully considered, because of the previous terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, being present in Mali provided me a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics in the country, through informal conversations with citizens of Bamako. This included the perceptions of MINUSMA as well as the overall political situation in the country.

According to Boolsen, it is common to reflect on and change the research purpose throughout the research process (2005: 151). The explanation of this often lies in the absence of data-material necessary to cover the intended project. She refers to this as “the non-representative sample that require change of focus” (Boolsen, 2005: 151). Indeed, this portrays this study. At the outset of this project, I sought to have a balanced approach of the civil-military interaction, by analyzing the effectiveness of both humanitarians and MINUSMA. This was going to be done by interviewing two equally numbered groups, consisting of MINUSMA and humanitarian actors, which I eventually could set up against each other in the analysis. Before travelling down to Bamako, however, I understood that getting in touch with MINUSMA personnel, and peacekeepers in particular, was challenging. It was easier reach out to humanitarians, due to their visibility online with both numbers and webpages that made them accessible. Consequently, my focus turned more towards operational effectiveness in the work of humanitarians merely. Nevertheless, the focus is still on the interface between humanitarian work and military activity in the same operating environment, but now with a humanitarian lens. Again, this bias towards humanitarian actors must be taken in consideration in the analysis.

Conversely, approaching the humanitarian respondents was not without difficulties. To begin with, I contacted them by introducing the topic and myself. However, being a student writing about civil-military interaction seemed to have the opposite effect than I was anticipating. To reveal the pattern of analysis, some potential informants rejected to participate as “they did not interact with the military”. Apparently, and as I understood throughout the interviews, this topic seemed to be highly conflicting and even sensitive for many of my informants. The use of the words civil-military interaction seemed to deter possible informants from participating in my project. While they saw themselves as irrelevant since they tried to keep a distance from MINUSMA, I found that highly interesting and relevant. I thus knew the
temperature among the respondents and which direction the research was taking at an early stage of the project. Consequently and with success, I started to approach them as a student writing about humanitarian access and space in Northern Mali. This followed me throughout the interviews. In particular, after asking more general questions about humanitarian space, I used the introductory question “how would you describe your relationship with MINUSMA” as an opening to the supposed conflicting topic. This question helped me establish the basic situation (Boolsen, 2005: 173). Nonetheless, such questions provided rich clarification of where we found ourselves at the interaction spectrum. So rather than assuming that there would be interaction, I attached more importance to this which enabled the respondent to shed light over the main aspects of the phenomena investigated (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009: 135). Through follow-up questions and so-called probing, I also got to understand how and why they chose to interact the way they did. This will be further examined when discussing reliability in the following sub-section.

3.3 Reliability

Lund states that we can never be sure of our inferences and interpretations. He therefore suggests that the best results can be achieved by being critical and systematic in our thinking and application methods (Lund, 2002: 80). Two ways to assess this is thus to consider the validity and reliability of the approach. In like manner, Andersen argues that any characterizations of a decent study raises questions about validity and reliability (Andersen, 2013:14).

King, Keohane and Verba refer to reliability as one of their criteria of improving the quality of data. In a narrow sense, my research is reliable if the same procedures and analysis used to collect and interpret data always produce the same results by other researchers (1994:25). This is known as inter-subjectivity (Bergström and Boréus, 2005:36). In qualitative research, however, it may be more fruitful to talk about reliability, meaning verifiability. In particular, this concerns the possibility of getting the same results when repeating the process. Transparency is thus a key, as it is important to open the analysis to explain the choices made towards the conclusion (Boolsen, 2005: 197).

It is common to distinguish between three types of interviews, including structured, semi-
structured and unstructured interviews (Willis, 2006: 145). Structured interviews are based on questions and response categories that are determined in advance (Bolsen, 2005: 172). The interviewer is thus leading the course of the conversation, and can at any point break off irrelevant answers (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 136). Indeed, this approach increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes the analysis simple. Aiming to maximize reliability, one should therefore seek to conduct a structured interview. It is important to note, however, that the flexibility is low as it may force the respondents to fit their experiences and meanings into the researcher’s categories (Bolsen, 2005: 172). Put in another way; a structured approach in this thesis would exclude examples of interaction. Examples tend to make the situation more understandable, especially in qualitative research, where in-depth understanding is an objective.

On the other extreme, we find unstructured interviews that have similarities to an informal conversation. The questions asked emerge from the immediate context without any predetermination of questions or topics (Bolsen, 2005: 171). Respondents are thus left with freedom to answer and talk in the preferred manner (Bryman, 2012: 471). Accordingly, the interview can be matched to individuals or circumstances, and vice versa. Nonetheless, this approach is less systematic (Bolsen, 2005: 171). Comparison of the data received from the respondents is thus challenging. As a result, the reliability is reduced.

As a middle ground, we find semi-structured interviews in between the two extremes. It can on the one hand provide details and the respondent’s perspective, at the same time as it allows hypothesis testing (Leech, 2002: 665). This approach also refers to a context in which the questions are open-ended. Topics and questions are prepared in advance, but the interviewer uses them flexible. For this study, a pre-developed interview guide was used. By doing this, I ensured that the topics of interest were covered, at the same time as digressions and unexpected aspects got through (Willis, 2006: 145). This must be seen in relation to the research design. As this study is theory-guided, there is a need to link the theory and the analysis. I thus developed questions by operationalizing the theory (see appendix 3). This provided comprehensiveness of the data, and enabled comparability of responses in the analysis (Bolsen, 2005: 171). Although trying to stick to the questions in the guide, I followed up relevant topics through so-called probing. Such questions lead to key issues and more depth about a topic (Berry, 2002: 681). One must note, however, that these questions fall outside the interview guide, and thus affects the reliability. Berry points out several
initiatives that can reduce the impact of probing. For instance, I created some stock bridges whenever the conversation moved in to irrelevant topics, and I needed to get back to the areas of relevance. In addition, I made a clear rule of what to focus on if time started to run out (Berry, 2002: 681-682). By doing so, I got a certain level of continuity and pattern that enabled comparison across interviews.

In sum, whereas structured interviews would have placed me in a situation limited by my own questions, unstructured conversation could have weakened the connection to the theory. I therefore argue that a semi-structured interview was the right tool of data-collection in this study due to its flexibility both dynamically and thematically. Despite the threats to reliability, I argue that it was necessary in order to get a better understanding of the issues raised by the respondent.

Nevertheless, I have tried to make the study as transparent as possible, through the inclusion of citations.9 Because of the sensitive topics this study covers, however, many of my respondents requested to be anonymous. Again, this will also undermine the reliability in this thesis. As we saw earlier, Lund argues that the best results are achieved through critical thinking in application of methods. This chapter has been an attempt to do this, and will continue throughout the analysis.

3.4 Validity

Validity measures whether the research is accurate and reflects the truth or reality (Boolsen, 2005: 195). I will raise the question of validity through Cook and Campbell’s validity system (in Lund, 2002). They developed four types of validity, including: statistical conclusion validity, internal validity, construct validity and external validity. Although their system is aimed towards causal, quantitative studies, I follow Lund’s argument that it also can be relevant in qualitative research. He claims that the validity differences between qualitative and quantitative research are apparent rather than real. Lund therefore suggests that Cook and Campbell’s validity system applies to qualitative research (Lund, 2005: 121). The applicability however depends on the relevance of the above-mentioned types. For instance,

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9 The interview-guide used during my fieldwork can be found in appendix 3. In addition, all of the interviews except one were recorded. The transcription can be provided on request.
construct measures and generalization are of higher relevance than statistical validity, which is irrelevant in this study (Lund: 2005: 122). Consequently, the focus will be on the two last forms of validity as presented in Cook and Campbell’s validity system, excluding internal and statistical validity.

Construct validity

Construct validity concerns whether the operationalized variables measure what they intend to measure (Lund, 2002: 106). This must be taken into consideration during the data collection phase (Gibbert, Ruigrok and Wicki, 2008: 1466). In order to identify the correct operational measures for the concepts studied in this thesis, the questions need to be accurate. Yin argues that this is challenging in case-study research (2014: 46).

It is important to both define the key variables in terms of specific concepts, and thus relate them to the main objective of the study. To satisfy this form of validity requires specification of the main parts that constitute humanitarian space and civil-military interaction. More precisely, the interview guide and questions need to cover all the aspects. Equally important, it is important that they are developed in an understandable manner. I tried to ensure this by learning from the interviews I already conducted. In the first interview, for instance, I found that my questions did not cover the theory evenly. The wordings initially used also seemed to create confusion. For instance, the use of the word military instead of MINUSMA created some misunderstandings. Reasonably, it could have been the Malian armed forces or Barkhane. Likewise, the use of the words civilians in the meaning humanitarian actors was unclear among the respondents. Some thought that it referred to the civilian population. Accordingly, I had to change my wordings after the first couple of interviews.

I tried to satisfy this by clarifying that my plan was to study humanitarian space by focusing on humanitarian access and security. Hence, my pre-developed questions tried to cover precisely the aspect of access and security. Similarly, questions were developed to cover the different aspects of the civil-military interaction spectra. Yin argues that construct validity can be increased through the use multiple sources of evidence (2014: 47). This can be done by developing convergent lines of inquiry. As mentioned earlier, triangulation of sources is used in this research, to meet this criterion.
External validity

The last type of validity refers to the ability to generalize the results to and across subjects, times and settings (Lund, 2005: 122). Hence, this is often also referred to as generalizability (Gibbert et al, 2008: 1468). However, neither single nor multiple case studies aim to make statistical generalizations by drawing conclusions about a population. Nevertheless, Gibbert et al argue that generalization also can be made analytically (2008: 1468). This refers to a process where generalization is made from empirical observations to theory.

Yin argues that the use of theory in single-case studies may contribute to strengthen external validity. The case should be seen as an opportunity to shed empirical light about your theory, rather than as a sample (2014: 40). By doing this, this study has an interest in moving beyond the case being studied. It is important to note, however that the aim still not is to generalize to other concrete situations, such as a new case (Yin, 2014: 41). The results in this study may then be used to highlight several aspects of my theory. At the same time, however, we can arguably expect that this thesis may be applicable for future civil-military interaction taking place in similar environment as the one in Mali.
4 Background

In order to understand the conflict dynamics in Mali, as well as the presence of both humanitarian actors and the UN, it is necessary with a short introduction to its historical background.

One cannot fully grasp the conflict dynamics in Mali, without understanding the regional dynamics in the West African Sahel. Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad are placed in between Sahel and Sahara. The countries have consequently been involved in ethnic tensions that occasionally have resulted in violence (Harmon, 2014: 15). In particular, the Arab nomads hereinafter referred to as the Tuaregs, have for a long time been in deep conflict with the various black African groups in the region.

During the French occupation between the end of the 19th century and 1960, the Tuaregs slowly lost their position in the desert. This became reality with the imposed postcolonial state system that changed the power dynamics and the region. The Tuaregs, who saw themselves as the “masters of the desert”, were now minorities in the countries constituting the West African Sahel (Boås and Torheim, 2013: 1281). Being ruled and subordinated the black population they previous had used as slaves, was perceived as humiliating. In Mali, this turned into an ethnical rivalry between the Tuaregs in the deserted North, and the black African population in the cultivated south, including the government. Differing in culture, language and heritage, the Tuaregs did not have any association to the rest of the population (Boås and Torheim, 2013: 1281). Nonetheless, these tensions were further triggered by Modibo Keita´s strive for a united Malian nationality. 10

In short, the Tuaregs refused to be a part of the black independent Mali, and have strived for independence ever since. Consequently, the country has been through several insurgencies, often referred to as Tuareg rebellions, resisted by the Malian state (Harmon, 2014: 16). 11 These insurgencies are understood as the greatest challenges to Mali´s stability.

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10 Modibo Keita was the first leader of the independent Mali. He sought to develop the country through an authoritarian model, but was later overthrown by Lieutenant Moussa Traoré in 1968 (Keita, 2007: 103).
11 The rebellions can be understood as organized movements aiming to overthrow the government, through the use of violence (Harmon, 2014: 24).
4.1 First Tuareg Rebellion - Alfellaga

The first Tuareg rebellion, also called Alfellaga, lasted from 1962 to 1964. The triggering cause must be seen in relation to the obtained independence earlier that decade, where the Tuaregs saw the growing Malian nationalism as a threat to their autonomy (Harmon, 2014: 24). It started with small attacks against the government in the north, but escalated into greater and more brutal clashes throughout 1963 (Bøås and Torheim, 2013: 1282). The rebellion was regarded as successful, but due to the lack of a clearly defined end state by the Tuaregs, and the lack of unity among themselves, they failed to achieve anything more than a desire to revenge (Harmon, 2014: 26; Keita, 1998: 108-109). The Malian army crushed the rebellion, and the former Tuareg provinces were subject to the Malian military administration. This caused a massive displacement, as thousands of Tuaregs ended up fleeing to Algeria and Libya (Bøås and Torheim, 2013: 1282).

During the 1970s and 1980s, the northern region of Mali was struck by droughts. The terrible conditions that came with affected the people of the desert badly. The proud blue people, who once had been self-sufficient traders, were now dependent on aid. In addition, it forced the pastoral Tuaregs to larger cities in Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso. The Keita regime’s successor from 1968, led by Moussa Traoré, was accused of ignoring the needs of the Tuaregs, by misappropriating the relief aid (Benjaminsen, 2016: 112). The economy in Mali was at that point of time generally weak, so whether the aid deliberately was withheld or not remains an unanswered question (Keita, 1998:110). Regardless, the combination of hatred from the Alfellaga, as well as this marginalization enhanced by the drought, formed the backdrop of the second Tuareg rebellion, or the so-called al-Jebha.13

The uprisings that started in 1990 and lasted until 1996 can be divided into four phases. During the first phase, between June 1990 and January 1991, the Tuaregs fought for an independent Azawad 14, and it was in similarity with Alfellaga, confined to the region of Kidal. The following phase of the rebellion took place between 1991 and 1994, and was characterized by factionalism between the opposing parties, as well as never-ending

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12 The Tuaregs are often called “the blue people”, which stems from their indigo dye which colors their traditional clothes (Keita, 1998: 105)
13 al-Jebha is the Arabic word for front or rebellion.
14 Azawad is a name used to describe the territory that overlaps with the northern territories of Mali, as well as parts of Algeria, Libya, and Niger (Wing, 2013: 6).
negotiations with the government. This also included the signing of the National Pact of 1992, where the government agreed to respect the Tuareg language and culture, and to return the refugees that earlier fled to the neighboring countries (Harmon, 2014: 99). Accordingly, the new Kidal region became a self-determinate area for the Tuaregs. The other promises, like autonomy in the north and preservation of the Tuareg language and culture were however never implemented. Many Malians, including Mali’s first democratically elected president, Alpha Konaré, saw the National Pact as surrendering to the Tuareg rebels.

When the rebellion reached its third phase, it had become an ethnic-based conflict, which differed from the previous phases featured by a war for national liberation (Harmon, 2014: 94). The last phase lasted from 1994 to 1996, and marked a gradual return to a peaceful period. During this rebellion, the Tuaregs had a clearer goal, and were better equipped.

After this rebellion, Mali developed into a relatively democratic state, and was from the outside seen as a model for African countries. On the inside, however, the bitterness from the previous rebellions remained simmering beneath the surface. In 2006, the national pact from 1992 fell apart, and the country experienced its third Tuareg rebellion (Bøås and Torheim, 2013: 1281). This time, the people of Mali, as well as the international community, understood that the democracy was fragile, in a rather poor country. This rebellion once and for all revealed the ethnic tensions, the corruption, smuggling issues, and the Islamic radicalism that slowly grew out from the marginalized northern region of Mali (Harmon, 2014: 109). However, compared to the previous rebellions, the third one was small and lasted until 2009 (Bøås and Torheim, 2013: 1281). Yet, the peace proved to be temporary this time, as previously. This time, however, the goal was no longer just about preservation of Tuareg culture and language in Mali. Rather, they wanted to break away from it, and create their awaited Azawad (Bøås and Torheim, 2013: 1281).

4.2 The Coup

When the Tuaregs returned from Libya with weapons after fighting for Gaddafi, the situation flared up to what was to become the fourth Tuareg rebellion. Both France and the United States put pressure on the Malian government to reinforce its presence in the north as they saw the rebels returning. When the government acted accordingly, the former Libyan soldiers responded with attacks, which led to the start of a new rebellion in January 2012 (Lecocq and Klute, 2013: 430). This rebellion was led by the secular Tuareg National Movement for the
Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). This separatist group was formed the previous year, and led by the prominent Tuareg figure, Iyad Ag Ghali (Wing, 2013: 7). As with the previous rebellions, the insurgency started in the northern regions. This time, however the instability gradually moved to the capital of Mali, Bamako. Particularly, a group of junior officers from the Malian army were tired of the then President, Amadou Toumani Touare (ATT), and accused him of enabling the fourth Tuareg rebellion (Harmon, 2014: 187). Accordingly, what the world had seen as a model for African democracies did on 21 March 2012 experience an unexpected coup against the democratically elected government (Shaw, 2013: 201).

The fall of the Malian government made it possible for MNLA to take over the three key territories in the north – Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu (Wing, 2013: 7). Many jihadist groups in the region supported this, including Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Dine and the breakout group Movement for Tawhid and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). However, the cooperation between these groups lasted shortly. Truly, both the separatist group and the jihadists wanted to overthrow the government. Nevertheless, their goals beyond this differed. Whereas MNLA was a secular movement, and accordingly desired to build a secular Azawad, the jihadists wanted to implement Sharia. Mali slowly became under Islamist occupation, and a rebellion for independence turned into a jihadist insurgency, as MNLA were expelled from the regional capitals in the north in January 2013 (Harmon, 2014: 191).

Although many of the members of these groups came from the neighboring countries, they were also deeply embedded in the Malian societies where they in some areas had support. For instance, AQIMs protracted presence in Timbuktu since 2002 created a relationship to the communities in the region. They offered the people protection from MNLA and other bandits, while spreading the words of Islam (Bøås and Torheim, 2013: 1287-1288). Likewise, MUJAO won parts of the population in Gao when making infrastructural repairs in the region (Harmon, 2014: 191). They should therefore not only be seen as an invading group of

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15 AQIM was formed in January 2007, but has it roots from the Algerian civil war, which ended in 1999. The current AQIM changed their battleground to Mali in 2002 (Bøås and Torheim, 2013: 1286). AQIM is seen as a Salafist terrorist organization, understanding the sacred texts of Islam in their literal sense (Harmon, 2014: 158).

Ansar Dine means “defenders of the faith”. The group is a salafist offshoot of MNLA, formed by Iyad Ag Ghali January 2012. Its ideology is closely linked with AQIMs, and the spread of Islam is seen as their ultimate goal (Shaw, 2013: 202; Lecocq and Klute, 2013: 431).

MUJAO was founded in 2011, after splintering from AQIM (Harmon, 2014: 180). It is believed that their income stems from drug trafficking, and that their religious agenda is a cloak for their criminal activities (Harmon, 2014: 181).
terrorists, but rather as groups that over time became a part of the community (Bøås and Torheim, 2013: 1287-1288). This must be taken into consideration when understanding the legitimacy of MINUSMA in the analysis.

However, the presence of jihadist in control of a larger territory worried the international community, and especially the former colonial master, France. When the jihadists then moved southwards and into central Mali, France got further concerned. The jihadist capture of the strategic town of Konna eventually triggered a French military intervention January 11, 2013.

4.3 The French Intervention

The French intervention is believed to be the most significant contribution to end the instability in Mali (Francis, 2013: 5). Its historical roots to the region and Mali enabled President Hollande to deploy French troops through Operation Serval, and the intervention was just as popular in Mali as in the international community. Few hours after the jihadists arrived Konna, France started to drop bombs, until the forces were present on the ground the day after. The French intervention also sparked the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) – a regional troop created by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Shaw, 2013: 206). The contingent from Chad accounted for a large proportion of AFISMA, as they were trained for desert warfare. In total, the intervention consisted of 4000 troops from Serval, as well as 6000 ECOWAS-led AFISMA-troops (Francis, 2013: 5).

During few weeks, the French forces, its allies, and the Malian forces managed to take control over the areas the jihadist had occupied. Gao fell to the French military January 26, with little resistance, followed by the smoothly fall of Timbuktu two days after (Harmon, 2014: 210; Daily Mail, 2013). On the contrary, the French forces themselves carried out the takeover of Kidal, as they feared that the inclusion of the Malian army would lead to retaliation attacks on MNLA who were present in the area. The French forces decided to cooperate with MNLA, who seized Kidal from Ansar Dine. This area was now under MNLA, who declared it as a part of their Azawad. Finally, they obtained the goal of the fourth rebellion in 2012, this time with the help of France (Harmon, 2014: 224). However, the
French forces’ relationship with MNLA was not supported by the Malians, who saw them as a terrorist group. In fact, the French forces and the Malians did never fully agree on the situation in Kidal. The region has thus been the most difficult area to secure. In addition, the jihadists have marked their presence in this area.

The fight over Kidal continued into June 2013, and Serval promised to stay until the election the month after. After the election, France withdrew two thirds of its troops, handing the responsibility over to the UN peacekeeping force MINUSMA (BBC News, 2015b). However, Serval was replaced with Operation Barkhane August 1, 2014. This contribution is a part of a broader French regional counterterrorism force in Sahel, aiming to stop the terrorist activity.

4.4 The Entry of MINUSMA

As the French forces chased away the terrorist, the idea was that MINUSMA could be deployed as an exit strategy for Serval. While the French forces cleared the area, it was thought that MINUSMA would hold and build Mali through stabilization (Boutellis, 2015: 3). The UN peacekeepers were also taking over the authority from AFISMA, by re-hatting the troops and integrating them to MINUSMA (Lotze, 2015: 861). Although the northern region more or less was cleared, there was no peace to hold. Despite this, however, the UN Security Council decided to support the idea and authorized MINUSMA on April 25, 2013 through Resolution 2100, followed by the deployment July 1 the same year (Bergamaschi, 2013: 1). Under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, MINUSMA was mandated to assist the government of Mali to stabilize key population centers; to re-establish state authority; support the electoral and political process; to protect civilians; promote human rights and to support humanitarian assistance (UNSC, 2013: 7-8). In order to implement the mandate, the UN force was authorized to use all necessary means.

By authorizing MINUSMA to use all necessary means, it is clear that this mandate is robust. The peacekeepers can use force to defend themselves, or to defend the mandate (Tardy, 2013: 1). However, it was underlined that peacekeepers were not in an enforcement mission, and that it nor was a counter-terrorist operation. Truly, the challenges on the ground make it difficult to implement the mandate. The peacekeepers are deployed on a more complex

16This election held July 28, 2013 was won by Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, and was described as suprisingly calm (Harmon, 2014: 225).
ground than ever before (de Coning, 2015).

Its first task, however, was to oversee the national election, which exceeded all expectations. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was elected, with a very high participation rate. MINUSMA played an important role in facilitating this, and therefore gained support among the population. The newly elected government also made it easier for the peacekeeping force to deploy their activities throughout the country (Bergamaschi, 2013: 2). Nonetheless, the implementation of the rest of the mandate has proven to be difficult. This must be seen in relation to the continuation of the instability on the ground. MINUSMA was deployed to hold and build Mali – a country where it not yet was peace.

Three year into the operation, MINUSMA still faces challenges, and three stands out as significant obstacles to a peacekeeping success. First, the operation itself is criticized for being deployed in the first place. A peacekeeping force, deployed in an extremely violent environment, including the threat from violent terrorism, have only shown the weaknesses of the mission, with the highest number of causalities in a UN peacekeepers in 20 years (de Coning, 2015). The fact that the force for a long time was half of its mandated strength complicated the situation further. Second, the peace process has been highly fragile. A peace agreement was signed in 2013 between the government and the Tuareg rebels, but was broken three months after. This highlighted the fragility of the peace, and remains a challenge. Last, the peace process is evidently dependent on the restoration of state authority. However, this has gone slow. Consequently, MINUSMA has been involved in government and development activities, which peacekeeping forces not are equipped to conduct (Lotze, 2015: 862).

4.5 Peace agreement of 2015

The operation was hoped to reach another phase when a peace agreement was signed by the government and an alliance of Tuareg-led rebels June 20, 2015. This agreement was meant to end the simmering turmoil that had been present since the uprising in 2012, but rooted in the first Tuareg rebellion in the 1960s. The Turareg-led alliance consisted of two groups that had been fighting against the government and each other: Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA)\(^{17}\) and The Platform of Armed Groups, commonly referred to as The Platform

\(^{17}\)CMA consist of three Tuareg-led movements, including MNLA, The High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA), Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA) (AFP, 2015b).
(Nyirabikali, 2015). This time, the government sought to give the Tuaregs more regional autonomy (BBC news, 2015b). However, this accord as with previous ones has often been criticized for the lack of representativeness. The Tuareg-led rebel groups consist of different fractions that have not present around the table. In addition, the groups that have a stake in the process are not necessarily seen as a representative for the divided communities in northern Mali (Pezard and Shurkin, 2015: 24).

As of March 2016, the strength of the force counted 11 948\(^{18}\) unformed peacekeepers, including 10 808 military personnel and 1 100 police officers, stemming from 48 countries (MINUSMA, 2016). The forces are deployed in the regions of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, but also have bases in the southern regions of Mopti and Segou, in addition to the headquarter in Bamako.

Starting with the first Tuareg rebellion, and ending with a fragile peace agreement, it is clear that Mali still is faced with challenges. Mali’s challenges remain MINUSMA’s, and the conflict has created a challenging context to work in for both the peacekeepers and the humanitarian community. This will be further examined in the analysis.

\(^{18}\) MINUSMA was mandated to consist of a force with 12 600 troops, and has since its deployment been understaffed (Harris, 2014).
5 Civil-Military Interaction in Mali

"I do not know if there are any other alternative places in the world where you can study this today. I think it is very special that you have a big UN force and a very complex conflict. And, that it is the deadliest peacekeeping mission in the world today".

(INGO 1a, 19/2-15)

MINUSMA represents something new in UN peacekeeping. The UN forces are deployed in a complex terrorist setting, breaking the principle of impartiality by assisting the government, at the same time as having a robust mandate. In addition, they work alongside humanitarian actors they are mandated to facilitate a safe and secure environment for. Indeed, this relationship is challenging, and this chapter seeks to explore the factors involved and to explain how they interact in this peacekeeping context. The analysis is divided in two main parts, structured in accordance with the theory. In the first part, I use Gjørv’s explanatory factors introduced in part 2.2, to shed light over and explain the circumstances in Mali. Depending on the findings, these will shed light over the choice of theory (the discussion of analytical generalization.) This includes a descriptive analysis of the context where the interaction takes place; the level of politicization of this context and the political position of the actors; and lastly, the dimensions of legitimacy, authority and obligation.

After the factors are examined, I use these empirical descriptions of the situation in Mali to explore how humanitarian actors interact with MINUSMA in Mali in the second part of the analysis. In particular, de Coning and Friis’ relationships will be deployed as an analytical tool to capture the scope and nature of civil-military interaction. Although the relationship is observed in part one, the second part tries to give an in-depth analysis of the interaction by going through the different relationships and discuss how they actually interact in Mali.

As previously stated, the empirical data in the analysis is based on the semi-structured interviews in Bamako.¹⁹ Their observations and opinions are mainly drawn from work experience in Northern Mali. Certainly, this provides the analysis with rich insight.

¹⁹To separate the respondents from secondary literature, they are referred to with an organizational acronym (Eg: NGO/INGO x), and by their position (Eg. Country Director). The list of respondents can be found in appendix 1.
Nevertheless, empirical studies and secondary literature on this topic will supplement the interviews. This also includes news articles.

Part I

5.1 Context

In order to answer my research question, I will in line with Gjørv’s theory examine the context in which the actors are situated. As one of my respondents put it when asked to describe the context, there is no overall situation in Northern Mali. Instead, he described it as numerous different critical situations, concerning armed conflict, inter-communal violence, humanitarian crisis as well as natural disasters (Cluster leader). Each aspect of the situation constitutes the complexity, and must be addressed to understand the context humanitarians and MINUSMA have been operating within over the last three years. The question I thus seek to answer is “What characterizes the context in Northern Mali?”

Armed conflict, terrorism and inter-communal violence

The previous chapter left us with an overview of the conflict in Mali, and ended with a presentation of the peace agreement. The period before the agreement was signed is often referred to as the “crisis”. During this period, most economic actors had already left the North of Mali. Rebel groups constituting the CMA were in control of the areas, taking advantage of the absence of government enforced law (Local NGO 1). Even though an agreement has been signed, the country still has a long way to go. The agreements are barely noticed at the local level, and the respondents described the situation as extremely volatile (MINUSMA CIMIC; Security advisor 2).

Moreover, there have been few positive changes since the outbreak of the crisis, and Mali still experience upswings as well as new conflicts on the communitarian level. When the state administration was re-established, it mainly returned to urban areas, leaving behind some rural areas affected by jihadists and separatist groups until the present day (Local NGO 1). When describing the current situation in the northern regions, many of my respondents referred to areas without clear structures, wherein armed rebel groups and jihadists are still in
control (Local NGO 1; Security advisor 1; Local NGO 2a). The main problem in Mali today, however, is related to the isolated groups that act outside the peace agreement. Particularly, the peace agreement has triggered the jihadists that strive for attention in the Malian society and worldwide. Consequently, the country has been experiencing an increase in terrorist activity throughout the northern regions of the country (RCSS, 2016). The jihadists, which include AQIM, MUJAO and Ansar Dine, have no interest in peace, and are neither involved in the process. The latter group even condemned the peace agreement, and saw the signing as a declaration of war against them (RCSS, 2016).

The increase in terrorist activity brings challenges to several actors in Mali, not to mention the local population. For international forces operating in Mali, this means more active opponents and greater needs for force protection. While this may be true for MINUSMA, humanitarian actors face challenges in the same environment responding to the vast needs of the local population. However, one cannot focus on the activities and movement of these groups without understanding the complex local dynamics in the Northern regions of Mali (Wilandh, 2015: 41). The outbreak in 2012 also provoked long lasting ethnic tensions in Mali, leading to inter-communal violence. This aspect has complicated the situation even more, and the respondents asserted that the issues nowadays to a large extent originate from such tensions (Security advisor 1; MINUSMA CIMIC; Country Director).

As we saw in the previous section, the armed groups and jihadists involved in the conflict have roots in the society, and one cannot talk about one group without mentioning another. Because of the connection to the armed groups, each tension on the local level has an armed group as backup. For instance, the Fulani people would be backed up by Front de Liberation du Macina (FLM), whereas Tuaregs will find their brothers in the different fractions of CMA (Security Advisor 1). If the problems are not solved, eruptions on a small scale between different communities therefore often result in greater armed conflicts. These fractions within the communities can therefore be seen as an obstacle to the rather fragile peace process.

Some of the respondents also pointed to the issue of smuggling as another reason for why the peace process is moving too slow (INGO 3; UN agency). The political absence and chaos during the crisis opened a ground for criminal activity, which has proven to be difficult to seal (Smith, 2014). My respondents from the humanitarian community often mentioned the “criminals” and the “bandits” as an obstacle to their activities. When probing about this, it
turned out that the line between the different informal actors in Mali is heavily blurred, and that the culprit always is an “unidentified armed person”. This must be seen in relation to the issue with smuggling, but also as a consequence of the fall of Gaddafi as mentioned in the background chapter. Small Arms Survey estimates that numerous of weapons, ammunition, and related materials from the arsenals of the former Libyan military are spread in the northern regions of Mali today (2013: 6). This accessibility of weapons has created an unsafe operating environment, beyond the armed conflict. As one of the respondents explained it:

“In Mali, it is really complicated to say that someone either belong to an armed group; a criminal group; or a terrorist group; because everything is so interlinked. I mean, someday you are in an armed group, and sometimes, you are just a criminal”.

(Civil-military coordinator 1, 03/03- 2016).

Recalling Gjørv’s theory, the intensity of the conflict is also of interest when understanding the civil-military interaction taking place in a given context. Describing the intensity of the conflict in Mali, can however be challenging. Based on the complexity and multitude of different actors, the level of intensity is shifting. This has been the case for the last four years, and must be seen in relation to the formation of MNLA. Accordingly, the period after was marked by clashes between government forces over important areas, where the triggering battle of Menaka was followed by attacks and battles in the larger cities, including Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao (ACLED, 2015: 4-5).

The uprising in northern Mali got further intensified as a consequence of the coup and instability in the capital later that year, where the final withdrawal of the Malian forces enabled MNLA to capture important towns (ACLED: 2015: 5). Alongside these events, the jihadist movements grew and caused further complications in the area, with increased violence. Now, MNLA were not only in clashes with Malian forces, but also with MUJAO and Ansar Dine (ICC, 2013: 17). Although the clashes primary targeted military positions, the number of displaced increased in pace with the intensity. In addition, the revival of Islamist movements equaled more violence against civilians (ACLED, 2015: 6). 2012 was therefore seen as the most violent year in the conflict (ACLED, 2015: 5). The intensity since the peaks in 2012 has been fluctuating, and reached a new severe period when the Serval was deployed (Al-Jazeera, 2013). This foreign offensive, in addition to already on-going clashes between government forces, rebels and jihadists raised the fatalities with 40 percent from
2012 to 2013. In 2013, however, the conflict entered its most peaceful moment after the signing of a peace agreement between MNLA and the government. However, this only lasted for 5 months, and was violated through two intense clashes with a high level of fatalities (ACLED, 2015: 7). Moreover, the clashes continued the following year, with the battle of Kidal being the most violent. During the height of the conflict (2012-2013), it was estimated around 3500 fatalities due to the war. Despite the peace agreement in 2015, 342 were killed in that year alone (IRIN, 2015).

Compared to many on-going conflicts today, the conflict-intensity in Mali has a relatively low number of causalities. However, the level of intensity must also be seen in relation to the overall complexities. As mentioned in the introduction, the conflict has had a serious humanitarian impact, where 200 000 Malians still are displaced (UNHCR, 2015). The continuation of attacks by the terrorist groups still affects communities, and has led to a crisis in which 3.1 million people lack food, and 410 000 are in need of immediate humanitarian aid (IRIN, 2015). The fact that the violence against civilians is not that severe does not make them less vulnerable than civilians in other conflicts. They have been both directly and indirectly affected through violence and displacement respectively.

What is clear, however, is that the conflict in Mali falls under the category of a low intensity conflict. The political and military hostilities have mainly been restricted to the northern regions. 20 Also, the difficulties in responding to the counterpart are an issue in Mali, especially after the terrorists became a part of the equation. One of my military informants portrayed this, by claiming that “we are not in peace, we are not in war, but in a terrorist war – you are not seeing anyone waging for war, but its not peace either” (Military trainer 2: 02/03-2016). This was further stressed by his colleague who claimed that it was “(…) not a real war when you are fighting against an unknown force” (Military trainer 1, 02/03-2016).

Within this volatile environment itself, there is an on-going UN operation. Theoretically, we saw that the type of peace operation is important in understanding the civil-military interaction. MINUSMA is categorized as a peacekeeping operation. Initially, however, I mentioned that the operation differs from traditional peacekeeping. This becomes evident if we again recall the core principles of Capstone. Firstly, the disputed question of consent

\[^{20}\] Some would argue that the conflict extends to the whole country, although the clashes mainly have taken place in the northern regions (ICC, 2013: 20).
requires that the MINUSMA must be given an approval from the main parties in order to be deployed. We saw that it can be challenging to address whose consent the UN force need to get. Clearly, MINUSMA is not an exception. The overview of the different actors is blurred, and the presence of spoilers acting outside the peace agreement makes this principle harder to fulfil. Furthermore, the peacekeeping force was initially only accepted by the government prior to the deployment, excluding the role of CMA. Evidently, this makes MINUSMA to a party of the conflict. However, this is something the UN deliberately is doing, rather than avoiding. In particular, MINUSMA is deployed in the support of the government of Mali to stabilize the country. This leads us to the second principle, regarding impartiality. It is clear that MINUSMA is far from fulfilling this principle, which was evident prior to the deployment. By doing this, however, MINUSMA is a party in the conflict with enemies. Being a party in the conflict also implies that MINUSMA is a target for the rebels and terrorists, which makes it the most dangerous peacekeeping mission today.

Deployed in the most deadly peacekeeping mission today, the UN has already suffered 81 fatalities (UN, 2016). When looking at the last principle, however, there seem to be a gap between what they are mandated to do, and the realities on the ground. Although the peacekeepers are tasked with a robust mandate, it does not mean that they act accordingly. In fact, there have been very few direct clashes where the UN has opened fire against the spoilers, although the insecure environment obviously raises the need of it. This must be taken into consideration when understanding the relationship, and will be further examined in part 5.3.

**Humanitarian crisis and displacement**

“Now it is gradually going back to normal, which is not the perfect state, because here in Mali, normal was already underserved…”

(Medical NGO, 26/02-2016)

In parallel with the armed elements, the Northern regions suffer from a humanitarian crisis caused and reinforced by the war. Mali has continuously been characterized by the lack of development and structural poverty (Medical NGO 1; French NGO 04/03-2016). The outbreak of the crisis in 2012 thus increased the vulnerable situation. All the social services were destroyed, and also the access to health centers. People depending on agriculture and
pastoralism in particular lost their means of production and livelihood, and are still dependent on humanitarian assistance (INGO 1a, 2015). However, the needs are constantly shifting. While food distribution previously was the most needed during the crisis, access to water and healthcare is the greatest humanitarian concern for the population nowadays (Refugee NGO 2).

Nonetheless, the crisis sparked a massive displacement where over 500 000 Malians fled from their homes. 150 000 sought refuge in the neighboring countries, while around 350 000 became internally displaced (NRC, 2015). After the crisis ended, people slowly started to return. The completion of this return, however, has been disrupted by several armed outbreaks, which remain a problem to this day. Accordingly, the volatility in the humanitarian needs in Mali must be seen in relation the return of the displaced, as people are returning to areas that lack government structures, or merely nothing as many of my respondents portrayed it. This spontaneously return of displaced people perturbs already vulnerable areas, and creates small crisis within the crisis (INGO 3). Nevertheless, displacement of people continues, as inter-communal conflicts remain a problem (Refugee NGO 1). Against this background, the respondents did not hesitate to call it an emergency situation (French NGO).

The situation has been further complicated by natural disasters. Annually, floods occur in the regions of Timbuktu and Gao, between July and September. The affected areas thus suffer from destroyed houses and property. On the top of this, the northern regions of Mali are geographically unfortunately located, often afflicted by droughts. Government structures are still not in place, and the population of northern Mali relies on help from humanitarian NGOs, both local and international. How that is done, however, is not without difficulties. Reaching out to people in the complex context of northern Mali is one of the greatest difficulties of humanitarian actors.

According to a majority of my informants, the notion of peace is misleading in the context of Mali. This is due to the fact that the security situation has not improved. Some even claimed that it deteriorated after the signing, linked with the increase in terrorist activity and unclear structures in the local society. Accordingly, support and aid to the civilian population remain as important aspects of the humanitarian activity in northern Mali.
Indeed, understanding the conflict dynamics in Northern clearly mirrors Kaldor’s description of a “New war”. The fact that armed conflict is not limited to national armed forces, but rather a range of fighting parties, deeply rooted in the local communities cause further complexities on the ground. In addition, the northern region of Mali suffers from a humanitarian crisis that constantly is being interrupted by new upswings in the conflict.

5.2 Visions of politics and security

Theoretically, we saw that the level of the politicization of the context and the political positions have an effect on the relationship between humanitarian and military actors. In order to understand this, it is firstly necessary to examine MINUSMA’s extent of involvement in the politics. Thereafter, I seek to analyze the security dimensions on the ground. By doing this, I ask the following question: To what extent is the context politicized? What are the political positions of the actors? How does humanitarian actors perceive and manage their own security?

Visions of politics

As we saw in the previous part, the context of Mali is highly complex. The Government of Mali is faced with rebel groups and jihadists, each actor with its own political goal. While the members of CMA have strived for autonomy over Azawad, the terrorist groups seek to spread the rules of Sharia over the whole region. Accordingly, these political and religious objectives are what the context in Mali is a reflection of. MINUSMA is mandated to assist the government of Mali in re-establishing its state authority and is thus situated as a party in this political chaos. The political position of the peacekeeping is therefore quite clear to the opposing parties and isolated groups who see the peacekeepers as an obstacle to their vision and world. Some of my respondents asserted that MINUSMA is as a force pursuing western core values and principles (Local NGO 1; INGO 3). One of them referred to MINUSMA itself as a dangerous label in the conflict. He exemplified this by making an argument out of the fact that the base of the peacekeepers from Burkina Faso recently was targeted, and that no mercy was shown to anyone bearing the signs of MINUSMA. He also claimed that every person working for MINUSMA would automatically become a target, being western or not (Local NGO 1). Clearly, MINUSMA’s political position in the conflict makes them a target
in the conflict, especially by the jihadists. This was something all of my respondents sooner or later would underscore during the interviews. Moreover, this leads us over to the discussion of the security dynamics on the ground.

**Visions of security**

Evidently, the security situation of MINUSMA is tense, being the deadliest peacekeeping mission today. As we also saw in the previous section, the intensity of the conflict has been shifting; with UN peacekeepers facing threats from several actors in a vast and incomprehensible territory, although an accord is already signed. As mentioned, 81 MINUSMA personnel have been killed so far in the mission, in addition to attacks on a regular basis (MINUSMA, 2016).

If we then move over to the security dynamics of the humanitarian NGOs, we saw that we in accordance to Gjørv’s understanding of security need to analyze how humanitarian actors perceive their security, and how they manage it. To examine this, the respondents were first asked whether they perceived themselves as targets or not. Theoretically, it is assumed that the political position and perceptions of the peacekeepers cause unintended consequences on humanitarian actors operating in the same environment. In particular, humanitarian NGOs can also become targets. The humanitarian respondents, however, had a clear and established opinion on this: they had not been targeted and were not targets in Northern Mali today.

One of the security advisors pinpointed this issue by sharing his analysis. He had been observing an incident where you first had a humanitarian vehicle passing a point without any problems. Behind, a second humanitarian vehicle passed the same point smoothly. When a following MINUSMA vehicle passed, however, it was attacked immediately (Security advisor 1). This was also supported by the second security advisor who referred to the multitude of French and international NGOs virtually working freely in Mali, without being direct targets of terrorists or other groups (Security advisor 2). When asking about the humanitarian fatalities I had found prior to the fieldwork, however, I was introduced to one of the main security issues humanitarian actors are facing today. To use Gjørv’s concepts, humanitarian actors’ negative security perceptions are related to the presence of criminal activity and IEDs. Firstly, all of the humanitarian respondents interviewed pointed out carjacking as something they all had been confronted with. Nonetheless, these incidents were
not perceived as being linked to them representing a humanitarian organization (Cluster leader). Rather, NGOs are seen as people with cars and money. For criminals, there is thus a purpose of attacking NGOs in the interest of their assets (Local NGO 1). There was however, one incident with a Malian Red Cross worker was ambushed and killed by MUJAO. The terrorist group later stated that they had achieved what they wanted with the attack (BBC news, 2015a). This incident clearly contradicts with the prevailing assumption among my respondents. But as one of the civil-military coordinators put it, “most of the time it is like; they have assets – we need assets” (Civil-military coordinator 1, 03/03-2016). She had been tracking these incidents since the very beginning, and confirmed that this belonged to rarity.

One of the security advisers compared MINUSMA, as being the deadliest peacekeeping mission today, to other on-going conflicts, and stated that the numbers were really small. If we in addition look at the statistics, there have only been reported six casualties of humanitarian workers since 2013 (Aid workers security, 2016). It is therefore reasonable to say that humanitarian actors not are direct targets in northern Mali today.

Compared to the overall security threats in Mali, most of them seemed to be used with the carjacking activity. What they fear the most, however, are Improvised Explosive Devises. These explosives are used by the terrorists to target military forces, especially MINUSMA. The problem with IEDs however, is that they do not discriminate (Romtveit, 2015). So although humanitarian actors are not targets in northern Mali, they easily find themselves at the wrong place, at the wrong time (INGO 2; Country Director). A respondent gave me an interesting answer to this, by saying that humanitarians not yet are targeted. This sheds light over an important aspect of the perceptions of their security. In particular, almost every respondent stressed the importance of not being associated with MINUSMA. This was also pointed out as a security challenge. For them, any assumed association with the peacekeepers would automatically put them at risk, and make them vulnerable of discriminate attacks (Spanish INGO). To understand this, we need to go back to Gjørv’s vision of politics. As she claims, the more political involved the forces are, the further the distance to the humanitarian get, as they strive to not be drawn into the politics. As we saw, MINUSMA is perceived as a party to the conflict and are therefore targeted by jihadists. A clear distance can therefore be understood as a way for humanitarians to manage their own security. This illustrates that a separation from the peacekeepers is vital in order to preserve humanitarian space in northern Mali. Particularly, and in accordance with Brassard-Bordreu and Hubert, keeping a clear
distance from MINUSMA evidently enables humanitarian actors to operate safely and to access people in need.

Captivatingly, to keep the distance from the peacekeepers was not only pointed out as a challenge. The de facto presence of MINUSMA on the ground in Northern Mali was by a majority of my respondents considered as a security challenge. In particular, this seemed to be one of their greatest challenges. As one of my respondents simply said: “wherever MINUSMA go, that is where insecurity is going” (Refugee NGO 1, 24/02-2016). Several other respondents who saw MINUSMA as a part of their negative security supported this statement (Cluster leader; Country Director; Local NGO 1). A humanitarian advisor explained that they easily could track the insecurity by looking at the movement of MINUSMA:

“What we see is that whenever they are in the field somewhere, it starts to be more difficult to move around in this area, because they are the targets of terrorist groups. So we have to keep a distance, because I am more secure when I am far away from MINUSMA”

(INGO 1b, 22/02 -2016).

His statement was further examined by a humanitarian country director who claimed that increased activity or presence of MINUSMA destabilizes an area. In particular, they would experience that there would be an increase in the spread of IEDs, and attempts to attack UN convoys. She exemplified this by making a reference to the increasingly exposed roads in Gao, which had become hugely unstable (Country Director). According to her, this was undoubtedly tied to the fact that the roads became a priority-monitoring zone for MINUSMA. If we look at the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali from September 2015, most of the attacks directed against MINUSMA were precisely in roads in Gao (UNSC, 2015). This is also confirmed by OCHA, who in a report over humanitarian access constraints designated Gao to the most affected region last year (OCHA, 2016). Clearly, there is evident to say that the insecurity follows MINUSMA. It is accordingly easy to understand why humanitarian actors see MINUSMA as a threat to humanitarian space.

When probing about this, several respondents went so as to say that it was easier to work in northern Mali before MINUSMA was deployed (Medical NGO; Local NGO 2b; Security
advisor 1; Cluster leader; Civil-Military Coordinator 1). To understand this controversial statement, we need to address how humanitarian actors manage their own security. Gjørv also stressed this as an important point. As we saw in the theory chapter, Ferris pointed to three different ways of managing security in complex emergencies. They can either turn to the military for support and what Ferris refers to as deterrence, or they may use acceptance as a source of protection. Due to the context, level of politicization of the conflict, as well as the fact that humanitarian do not see themselves as targets, it is understandable that humanitarian actors in Mali avoid military escort by MINUSMA. This could put them at risk, as they would be perceived as a party in the conflict at the same rate as the peacekeepers. In addition, this would also constrain their access to people in need. Nevertheless, most of my respondents claimed that they mainly managed their own security through acceptance and negotiation. For them, acceptance of the local population was their prior protection strategy (Local NGO 2a). To get accepted requires a transparent approach, where you need to explain the purpose of your presence.

In the areas where there is an absence of local Malian authorities, there would often be a main interlocutor the NGOs must adhere to. One of my respondents explained this by referring to Kidal, where this clearly appeared. In this region, there are mainly Tuaregs. As he explained it:

“We have something called chef du village. His authority is very strong. So if you want to work in Kidal, you have to talk to this guy. You cannot decide this in Bamako, and then go and operate in the field. No. You have to go to Kidal, meet with the old men, and define your program and make assessment with them”.

(Security advisor 1, 24/02- 2016)

Clearly, working in northern Mali requires a good relationship to the local communities. The security advisor elaborated further on this and said that they always had to explain and justify their presence. He claimed that acceptance amounted a large percentage of their security strategy, and that they always succeeded by using this approach. They also made sure that they at a certain point made them aware of the benefit of their presence. In particular, “you make them know that if you left today, the hospital would be closed tomorrow” (Security advisor 1). Accordingly, the communities would start to work for the safety of humanitarian actors in order to benefit from their assistance. For instance, a local interlocutor would warn
them whenever the security was unstable in an area, or when it was safe (Country director). Other respondents supported this, and pointed to the importance of neutrality and impartiality in this. They specifically highlighted the importance of assisting everyone, even if it entailed assisting wounded terrorists. One representative from a local medical NGO reported about a recent attack where this happened.

“Last month, there were attacks, and we even took care of terrorists by taking them to our camp. 10 people. Our team assisted some from FAMA and a group of 4 terrorists. We do not say that they are terrorists”.

(Local NGO 2b, 23/02-2016).

The area manager in one of the organizations made an argument about their fairly stable presence in the northern regions during the height of the crisis in 2014. They were able to assist people in a hotspot like Kidal, by communicating actively with the local leaders who controlled the different areas. Due to this relationship, they had been able to maintain their presence and continue to assist (Refugee NGO 1). In this case, he underlined the value of permanent neutrality, which he saw as crucial to ensure the security. The length of humanitarian presence did also seem to be something my respondents stressed the importance of. One respondent stated that the familiarity of their NGO made them more secure, as people knew them and what they could offer (Communication advisor).

Some respondents from NGOs without this advantage explained that they made use of what Ferris refers to as remote management (French NGO; Cluster Leader; INGO 4; INGO 1a). By doing so, the NGOs worked through local implementing partners who knew the area better and were more deeply embedded. The strategy was used to spare them from security difficulties and to easier access the populations in need (INGO 2). This was particularly the case for the international NGOs I spoke to. They were deployed in a late phase of the crisis, compared to other NGOs that had been there since the 1980s. Accordingly, they had not been able to build up a local network, which have made it more difficult to navigate in this complicated humanitarian environment (INGO 1a).

Further, the respondent were also asked how they respond to an attack or clashes in an area. This was an attempt to see which type of Ferris’ security measures they resort to, and if what Gjørv refers to as “grey zone activities” ever occurred in the case of Mali. Contrastingly, it
appeared that many NGOs would turn to MINUSMA in emergency situations. When explaining this, the respondents admitted that they benefited from the peacekeepers’ aircrafts and helicopters, but underlined that it only happened as a last resort. Clearly, this highlights another aspect of the interaction, where humanitarians actually seek security from what they also see as a source of insecurity. However, this should not be exaggerated, as it is not reflecting the predominant nature of the interaction. Rather, it must be understood as a “grey zone activity”, where humanitarian actors conduct activities they essentially firmly oppose. In addition, some respondents acknowledged that they to some extent relied on security information from MINUSMA, and that they weekly attended meetings with the peacekeeping force to get an overall update about the situation. This will be further examined when discussing the ideal types in the second part of the analysis.

If we see this in relation to the theory, this is what Gjørv defines as positive security – an enabler. In particular, community acceptance enables humanitarian actors to freely and securely operate in northern Mali, and thus decrease their negative security related to threat from violent groups. Nevertheless, many of humanitarian respondents to some extent saw themselves as respected by the isolated groups that otherwise creates an unsafe environment (Refugee NGO 1). This must be seen in relation to the mandate and core tasks of humanitarian actors, which will be further addressed in the next section. Clearly, this also illustrates that community acceptance is a way of maintaining the humanitarian space in northern Mali.

In understanding civil-military interaction, Gjørv also argued that the intervening force could be seen as a source of the conflict. Consequently, this would lead to a further distance to the humanitarian community. Truly, MINUSMA is perceived as an establishment against the goal of terrorists. However, they are a part of a larger conflict with many different actors involved. MINUSMA was also the last security actor to enter the conflict, and the conflict has not escalated. Rather, it has moved into a more peaceful period. What can be argued, however, is that the presence of MINUSMA can be seen as a source of insecurity, rather of conflict. Since the deployment of the UN peacekeepers, there has been an increase in IEDs. My respondents argued that these were specifically directed against MINUSMA (INGO 1a). However, as mentioned above, IEDs do not discriminate. Consequently, this has led to a more insecure humanitarian space.
Although some of the humanitarian respondents claimed that the increase in IED attacks was a direct cause of MINUSMA’s presence, this must be carefully examined before drawing any conclusions. As we saw, the signing of the peace agreement also seem to have triggered increased terrorist activity. Accordingly, it may be misleading to solely attribute this insecurity to MINUSMA. What is evident, however, is that MINUSMA is targeted on a regularly basis. Operating next to MINUSMA would therefore put you at risk, and thereby violate the humanitarian space.

Now that we know how humanitarian actors manage their security, it is accordingly easier to understand why some of my respondents claimed that it was easier to work in northern Mali before MINUSMA’s deployment. As we saw when addressing the context, the armed groups and terrorists have their roots in the local communities in northern Mali. Getting the acceptance of the local community and traditional leaders, would therefore provide the actors with security, and even help them accessing people in need. The complex web of relationships between the local community, rebel groups, and jihadists is a part of an “organized disorder” with structures that some humanitarian respondents claimed that they benefited from. Before the foreign intervention and deployment of MINUSMA, these structures was according to my respondents easy to relate to, and humanitarian actors knew how and who to approach in the community. It was easy to operate as long as you introduced yourself.

“I mean, in Kidal it was easy. Now, it is getting a bit blurred. In Kidal, it was really clear for a while, and it was even safer there than in other regions, because the hierarchy was very clear for us in terms of rebel groups. They controlled the communities very well, with very organized Tamashek structures. It was easy to operate as long as you introduced yourself.

(Medical NGO , 26/02-2016)

This statement signifies the difficulties in getting community acceptance. Not only is the presence of MINUSMA argued bringing insecurity to the humanitarian space. It is also believed to spoil the positive security of humanitarian actors, by blurring the local structures in their attempt to restore state authority. This should not only be attributed to MINUSMA, however, as French forces also are heavily involved in the north, as we will see when discussing legitimacy later in this chapter. Besides, we should not underestimate the
significant role MINUSMA is believed to have played in the peace agreement. Certainly, the deployment of the MINUSMA and the effort of the government are precisely to restore the state authority and to stabilize what my respondent above refers to as an organized northern region. In addition, the humanitarian situation would probably not have been that critical if there was no political turmoil over the control of this region. However, we should not dismiss this observation entirely. Nevertheless, this view can arguably be theoretically underpinned by Morten Bøås’ analysis of the Mali-Sahel periphery. According to him, despite its instability and allegedly anarchic nature, this region has never been an ungoverned space. Instead, it should be understood as an area constituted by “different nodal points of governance that complete, collude, and also at times are in violent confrontations with another“ (Bøås, 2015: 314). In particular, Bøås uses this overlap of big men networks to shed light over the rather weakness of the government and its international partners.21 Prominent Tuareg leaders as well as terrorist groups like AQIM and MUJAO have been able to establish themselves strategically in this environment, with support in the local population. Based on this, it is thus comprehensible to understand the importance of community acceptance for security, but also the argument that it was easier to work in Mali before the deployment of MINUSMA who arguably have made their ties to the local communities weaker.

Although they somewhat acknowledged MINUSMA’s presence, nearly all of my humanitarian respondents seemed to be highly skeptical to what the clear structures of the rebel and terrorist groups they used to relate to had been replaced with. As one respondent similarly asserted:

“Before MINUSMA arrived, the armed groups had control of the north. And you could speak to them and convince them of the usefulness of what you were bringing to people - and they would let you work. So we could operate safely, because we had their green light. Now, they are not physically present, but they are virtually present. Now you have the MINUSMA there, but I am not sure if MINUSMA can secure the places”

(Communication advisor, 25/2-2016).

21 Big men networks refer to the informal and personalized patrimonial practices that still characterize the political culture of independent African countries (Chabal and Daloz, 1999: 1-2). This must be seen in relation to the fail of state institutionalization in sub-Saharan Africa. The patrons seek to constitute themselves as Big Men, controlling as many networks as possible (Chabal and Daloz, 1999: 15).
Again, MINUSMA is argued to be a source of insecurity by blurring the clear hierarchical and informal structures in northern Mali. According to one of the civil-military coordinators, this was a prevailing stance among many humanitarian organizations (Civil-military coordinator 2). Strikingly, an expected provider of security and stabilization is rather seen as a destabilizer for humanitarian actors and their security. Arguably, MINUSMA can be understood as a security threat for the humanitarian space of NGOs, and this goes back to the overall discussion about the impact of the new peacekeeping operations this thesis seeks to examine. Moreover, and as the quote above indicates, there also seems to be doubt around MINUSMA as a security provider in northern Mali. This leads us over to Gjørv’s next explanatory factor addressing how the legitimacy, authority and obligation affect the civil-military interaction that will be further examined in the second part of the analysis.

To sum up this part, I have examined how Gjørv’s second explanatory factor appears in Mali through an analysis of the visions of politics and security. Firstly, the level of politicization of the conflict was shown to be high and fluctuating, with several actors involved. In the midst of the political crisis, MINUSMA is deployed to assist the government in restoring state authority, and stabilizing the highly instable northern region. The position of MINUSMA in this conflict can thus be understood as highly political. In line with what Gjørv argues, this has an impact on how humanitarian and military actors interact. Due to this high level of politics, MINUSMA is also targeted by groups who see them as an establishment against their objectives. In line with the theory, I also examined the security perceptions of humanitarian actors and how they manage it. What seemed to deter my respondents most was the presence of IEDs laid out to target MINUSMA. Interestingly, this was also seen as a result of MINUSMA’s presence, and some of my respondents even argued that the peacekeeping force brought insecurity to the region, and thereby violating the humanitarian space. One of their way of coping with this is thus to keep a clear distance from MINUSMA. Indeed, this aspect sheds light over the extent of interaction, which will be further examined in the second part of the analysis. Nonetheless, humanitarian NGOs use community acceptance as their security and to access people in need. This, however, have become increasingly difficult, and some of my respondents argued that it was easier to work before the peacekeepers arrived.
5.3 Legitimacy, Authority and Obligation

In addition to the context (5.1) and visions of politics and security (5.2), Gjørv identifies the role of legitimacy, authority and obligation as a third explanatory factor when understanding civil-military interaction. Whether the peacekeeping force and the humanitarian actors have consent and approval of the targeting population is expected to have an impact on the civil-military interaction. Bad perceptions by the local population may create difficulties and can contribute to a more challenging relationship between humanitarian actors and MINUSMA. Moreover, the different duties proposed by the actors’ mandates and principles could also create tension, and thus affect the interaction. The last section in this part of the analysis examine how these aspects takes place in Mali, and thus address the following questions: Is MINUSMA seen as a legitimate force? Do the differences in the core tasks of the actors create any challenges?

Legitimacy

“When people saw MINUSMA coming, they thought that their arrival could stop the war”

(INGO 1b, 23/02-2016).

Historically, UN peacekeepers have enjoyed their comparative advantage of having the necessary legitimacy to coordinate and communicate with local and external actors. If MINUSMA lives according to UN’s legacy, however, can be argued. As mentioned earlier, the legitimacy of an actor is not constant, and changes throughout the mission depending on its actions. In 2013, Thierry Tardy wrote that the legitimacy of MINUSMA over time would depend on its capacity to ensure responsible act by the actors involved in the conflict (2013: 1). Have they been able to do this?

To understand the legitimacy of MINUSMA, the respondents were firstly asked how the local population perceives the peacekeeping force. Most of the respondent had a clear opinion about this, and their allegations can primarily be summed up in one sentence: “Communities in Northern Mali do not really accept the presence of MINUSMA” (Local NGO 1; Local NGO 2a & b). When the peacekeepers initially were deployed, they were well received by the local population (INGO 1a). The peacekeepers were gradually deployed, and people had high expectations to their presence. However, as Gjørv stated in the theory, the
The legitimacy of peacekeepers may be challenged by the lack of compliance between the expectations of the local population, and the actual performance of the peacekeepers. This has gradually been evident in Mali. According to one of my respondents from Timbuktu, the presence of the peacekeepers gradually started to confuse people. The locals of Northern Mali initially believed that MINUSMA was deployed to assist Serval (and what later became Barkhane) to fight the rebel groups and terrorists. As one respondent explained it:

“They have not done much for the local population. Because for them, to do something is to fight the rebel groups. And MINUSMA is not doing that. They are just here for peacekeeping. It is very difficult for the local population to understand that.”

(INGO 1b, 23/02-2016).

Apparently, the greatest concern when it comes to legitimacy is linked to the perception of MINUSMA being inactive among the targeting group. Repeatedly, respondents explained that the peacekeepers only stayed in their camps, without moving around among the local population. This is of course related to the highly insecure environment addressed in the context section (5.1). According to my respondents, MINUSMA’s mandate is not fully comprehended by the locals in Mali, which in turn lead to a lack of legitimacy. That MINUSMA just is in Mali for peacekeeping leads to mistrust, as the locals do not see their presence as beneficial. As my respondent further stressed:

“But the problem is that they cannot take any action! They are only here to see and report. There are no outcomes. They are just here. This is very difficult to understand”

(INGO 1b, 23/02-2016).

Clearly, being deployed as a peacekeeping force in this complex setting described in part 5.1 creates misperceptions. To understand this, we need to go back to the purpose of MINUSMA’s deployment. Theoretically, we saw that legitimacy is linked to the mandate of the peacekeeping force. If we look at MINUSMA, its mandate is often referred to as robust (de Coning, 2015; Tardy, 2013: 2). However, there seem to be a clear inconsistency between the expectations linked to its mandate and its actual performances on the ground. To recall, MINUSMA’s mandate is robust, whereby the peacekeepers may resort to force in self-defense, or in the defense of the mandate. More specifically, this means that MINUSMA are allowed to use force on a tactical level against spoilers who hinders the implementation of
their mandate (Tardy, 2013: 2). However, this should not be mistaken with war fighting or counter-insurgency. As Tardy claims, this distinction may not be apparent for Malians (Tardy, 2013: 2). One of my respondents supported this view and stated that:

“This is super challenging. They are deployed in an asymmetrical warfare, and they cannot be offensive, as it is not a part of their mandate. And MINUSMA and DPKO have never been engaged in this kind of operation. They are just evicting in this environment, as they cannot do anything. And Malian people see all these huge cars, and materials, but no action”.

(Civil-Military Coordinator 1, 03/03-2016)

Indeed, this confusion has evolved into a lack of legitimacy among the local population, and has thus been detrimental for the peacekeepers reputation. Besides, the fact that MINUSMA is operating alongside a counter-terrorist force may also have contributed to the obscurity around the peacekeeping force in Mali. By the time MINUSMA was deployed, the French forces and Operation Serval had already been heavily involved in the northern region for a while, by pushing back jihadists. With immediately results, the French forces gained support and legitimacy among the local population in Mali. When MINUSMA entered the picture at a later phase, the expectations were high, and people assumed that the UN peacekeepers were going to assist Serval with its enforcing activities (INGO 1b).

Not only is the mandate unclear, but there also seem to be a gap between what the peacekeepers are mandated to do, and what they are able to carry out. Some respondents pointed to incidents where there had been attacks against civilians, and MINUSMA was present, but not able to respond (Local NGO 2a). As one respondent stated:

“We have an attack were someone chase you with stones, and you cannot shoot a single bullet. And then people are kidnapped, and you cannot do anything. You have guns, but you say you cannot shoot. Well, it is just difficult to understand”

(Refugee NGO 1, 24/02-2016).

This view was supported by many of my respondents who in line with the locals doubted on MINUSMA´s efficiency on the ground. Two other respondents told about an incident were an NGO had been exposed to carjacking, with a MINUSMA unit that could not respond right beside (Medical NGO; Refugee NGO 2). Interestingly enough, some of the humanitarians expressed that they also wanted to see a more enforcing UN. One of the security advisors
justified this view by saying that a targeted force must have a means to respond. He wanted to see a strong mandate, which allowed them to attack instead of getting attacked (Security advisor 1). This view was shared by two others who clearly saw the peacekeepers as a force that “ate itself” by being present in this terrain without acting robustly (Local NGO1; Communication advisor).

These misunderstandings must be seen in relation to MINUSMA’s inability to communicate about their mandate (INGO 1b). Respondents from the humanitarian community asserted that MINUSMA should better express what their mandate is, and justify their presence. They believed that this could reinforce the rather poor legitimacy of MINUSMA. Accordingly, the civil-military interaction would have been less challenging. What can be questioned, however, is the significance of this explanatory factor. In particular, it might rather be that it is the challenging environment as described in part 5.1 that makes the interaction difficult. Indeed, the explanatory factors are intertwined, and it is not easy to measure the accurate effect of each and one of them. Nevertheless, in order to understand the significance of legitimacy better, some of the respondents were also asked to compare the perceptions of MINUSMA with the ones of Barkhane. Both of the civil-military coordinators argued that Barkhane had more legitimacy than MINUSMA. In explaining this, they pointed precisely to the confusion among the local population and humanitarian actors. People do not really seem to understand why MINUSMA is so inactive, as opposed to Barkhane, which is offensive, and thus shows results (Civil-military coordinator 2). As one of them stated:

“Barkhane is offensive, so of course, they (the population) see the results. They are killing terrorist, while MINUSMA is being killed by terrorists”.

(Civil-military coordinator 1, 03/03-2016).

Clearly, this strengthens the importance and inclusion of legitimacy as an explanatory factor in this case of civil-military interaction in Mali. The fact that Barkhane is seen as more legitimate, although working in the same environment as MINUSMA confirms this. When probing about this, the civil-military coordinator claimed that humanitarian actors preferred Barkhane over MINUSMA, also because they know their ability and strength. The French forces are better equipped, and are believed to have better information (Refugee NGO 2; INGO 5). She even explained that NGOs claim that an escort from MINUSMA would put them more at risk than not having any escort, which again reflects the previous discussion on humanitarian security. The coordinator agreed, and doubted on MINUSMA’s ability to
provide a safe and secure environment. This view was supported by a majority of my respondents. As one of the stated: “we just know their capacity. They only patrol around. Their presence is limited” (Local NGO 2b). However, this also suggests that there are different perceptions of MINUSMA, as some see them as partial, while other wants it to use more force. It is important to note that northern Mali do not consist of a unified population.

Notwithstanding, the respondents from MINUSMA clearly held different views on the situation. One of them believed that they had a very clear mandate, and that they evidently went beyond it. When probing about the alleged inactiveness of the peacekeepers, however, she pointed to the geographical obstacles. The vast territory of Mali is to comprehensive for the understaffed mission. She compared MINUSMA with the operation in Afghanistan and explained that:

“Mali is twice the size of Afghanistan, and in Afghanistan, the foreign forces were 150,000, and they lost. 10,000 troops in Mali? Really? It is impossible.”

(MINUSMA PoC, 01/03-2016)

Clearly, the big territories in the north make the scarce number of UN peacekeepers unable to be anywhere at any time. Especially when the conflict is so volatile. As she exemplified, when the peacekeepers were deployed, the region of Mopti, placed in the borderline to the northern region, was not conceived as a priority area by MINUSMA. Gradually, however, the region has experienced presence of terrorist activity (Human Rights Watch, 2016). This has resulted in a redeployment of peacekeepers from other regions (MINUSMA PoC). The respondent referred to this a waterbed, and said “when we move these troops to Mopti, then they will be missing from somewhere else. It is not like we have additional troops” (MINUSMA PoC, 01/03-2016). Even if they had troops, it would have been possible to fulfill their tasks. In particular, she pointed to the lack of willingness by the troop contributors to act robustly. This was supported by the military trainers who believed that this was a general issue in UN peacekeeping (Military instructor 1, 2 and 3).

Nevertheless, my respondent from MINUSMA also underlined that the peacekeepers are deployed in support of the government of Mali. In doing this, she referred to a recent episode where there had been clashes between two communities in the Menaka region. During the clashes, MINUSMA was asked to help humanitarian actors to make an assessment of the situation. Instead of doing it themselves, MINUSMA’s head of office called FAMA and
asked them to do the job. As my described it, this was a “fantastic decision”, as she believed that the Malian armed forces should take the lead (MINUSMA PoC 1, 01/03-2016). Again, she emphasized that the UN only was here in support of the government of Mali, and that they went beyond their mandate. Arguably, from a UN perspective, it seems like MINUSMA’s lack of legitimacy is rooted in the geography of Mali, rather than its willingness to operate. This was also supported by the second respondent from MINUSMA, who asserted that they regularly tried to make patrols in order to show their presence to the local population. However, he admitted that this was limited due to the security:

“If you do not show your face for a long time, because you are involved in a situation somewhere else, they will assume that you do not care about them anymore. It is really volatile. But maybe it is the contrary – maybe we do not have the capacity for that”

(MINUSMA CIMIC, 04/03-2016).

However, the peacekeepers’ need to visualize their presence seemed to bother some of the respondents from the humanitarian community. They saw this useless, and a part of the problem.

Nonetheless, the lack of legitimacy must also be seen in relation to its deviation from traditional peacekeeping as pointed to earlier. As we saw, MINUSMA’s enemies have deep roots in the societies of northern Mali. However, taking a side does not seem to be their biggest problems. Many of my respondents claimed that it rather was their inability to communicate about their presence and position in the conflict. They pointed to several unfortunate incidents that had led to confusion. For instance, during a period of ceasefire in 2015, MINUSMA instigated unofficial agreements with MNLA regarding withdrawal of areas. This caused a lot of confusion, as the parties initially had agreed on not to make any movements (INGO 1a). Although well intended, this was perceived as unpredictable and there was a lot of speculations and conspiracies. This inconsistency and confusion about MINUSMA’s presence have lead to serious mistrust, and thus lack of legitimacy among the locals in northern Mali. This argument was further strengthened when a respondent referred to instances with direct action by the local population against MINUSMA (Refugee NGO 1). As pointed to earlier, Gjørv notes that lack of legitimacy can be met by confrontation. In Gao, the population decided to stage a demonstration against the peacekeepers, and almost ran into their camp (AFP, 2015a; Military instructor 3). This has later and recently been repeated in other cities marked by mistrust (AFP, 2016). The demonstrations must be seen in relation to
MINUSMA’s confusing mandate, or its somewhat inability to communicate about it. As an analyst explained to AFP:

"It is both a military stabilization force that helps the Malian government to restore its authority and a facilitating force for negotiations between the parties in conflict, including the same Malian state. This multidimensional mandate is difficult to reconcile"

(AFP, January 27, 2015a)

Clearly, these misunderstandings are seen as the root causes for MINUSMA’s lack of legitimacy. Further, others also pointed to the composition of the peacekeepers as a problem. MINUSMA is constituted by peacekeepers from several countries, and there are regional perceptions involved. Accordingly, there are countries that are perceived to very much involved and tied to Mali, and are thus expected to be viewed in specific ways. In particular, peacekeepers from Niger or Mauritania are not necessarily only perceived as representatives from the UN body in northern Mali, but rather as people representing an ethnicity which conflicts with the locals (Country director). This raises the question about neutrality, and is arguably a source of UN’s lack of approval by the locals, as they see the different peacekeepers in specific ways. One respondent questioned the presence of the contingents from Niger and Chad, who he believed was indirectly involved in the trafficking problem (Cluster leader). As he claimed:

“They send Niger soldiers to Menaka area to provide security – but the soldiers from Niger are the ones who provide insecurity right now. They are not neutral.”

(Cluster leader, 25/02-2016)

Similarly, the civil-military coordinator referred to the contingents from Chad who are famous for their mistreatment of civilians and IHL. These statements have not been able to be supported by sources, others than the three respondents. Whether it is true or not, I argue that this tells us something about the overall perceptions about MINUSMA. Accordingly, these perceptions also make it easier to understand MINUSMA’s lack of legitimacy in Northern Mali. Understanding this is according to Gjørv necessary in understanding the interaction between MINUSMA and humanitarian actors that will be analyzed in the next section.
Authority

According to Gjørv, legitimacy decides whether an actor has authority or not, which she defines as the legitimized power (2014: 43). Based on the discussions above, it is reasonable to argue that MINUSMA lack what Gjørv refer to as moral authority. The prevailing perceptions of the peacekeepers as inactive weaken its social contract to the local population. To an extent, however, MINUSMA has political authority. Among the negative statements about the UN force, some respondents underlined the important role the peacekeepers have had in the political peace process in the country. One respondent claimed that it would not have been possible to have national authorities in Menaka and Timbuktu without the effort of MINUSMA (INGO 1b). Although fragile, some respondents also underlined that MINUSMA had contributed significantly to the overall stabilization of the northern region (INGO 4). However, the authority is in the end expected to be determined by the context. Evidently, the complex situations in Mali, with geographical challenges and security constraints, have obstructed the peacekeepers ability to perform in accordance with their mandate.

As opposed to MINUSMA, humanitarian actors possess more legitimacy. Unlike with the peacekeepers, the population in northern Mali clearly sees their presence as beneficial. They are fairly well received in a vulnerable region like northern Mali as providers of aid and basic needs. Few humanitarians pointed to access constraints, and even seemed to be respected by the armed groups. This must be seen in relation to the moral authority they possess, as working in accordance with the humanitarian imperative. Although Gjørv argues that the level of authority should be seen in relation to the context, the humanitarian actors did not seem to be directly affected by the complexities, as opposed to previous experiences from Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan, where humanitarians have been targeted (Ruffa and Vennesson, 2014: 584-585). However, during the interview with the civil-military coordinators, it was argued that the humanitarian actors in Mali often would lie about access constrains, in order to be funded (Civil-military coordinator 1). Whether the humanitarian actors have moral authority can therefore be questioned. In addition, the problem with carjacking questions their moral authority. As stated earlier, however, this challenge is not perceived as being linked to their profession or position in the conflict. Rather, they are attracted by criminals because of their physical resources.

Nevertheless, humanitarian actors in Mali also seem to have legal authority, as they are obliged to work in accordance with the humanitarian principles. Many respondents pointed to
precisely this as an enabler to work in the politicized context of northern Mali. Accordingly, they always ensured to be neutral when carrying out their tasks. Their moral authority must also be seen in relation to humanitarian space. Having moral authority enables them to access people in need, and to operate safely. However, this should not be taken for granted, and it is wrong to automatically assume the authority of humanitarian actors (Gjørv, 2014: 21). Humanitarian space needs to be negotiated and created, not only maintained. Similar to legitimacy, being associated with an actor who lacks any kind of authority can constrain and inhibit your own work. For humanitarians, this means that any interaction with MINUSMA could hinder humanitarian access, and also put humanitarians at risk. A way the respondents managed this was to keep a clear distance from the UN peacekeepers.

Interestingly enough, however, MINUSMA is mandated to facilitate safe delivery of humanitarian assistance, by securing the humanitarian space. Truly, this requires some form of interaction, and thus raises a dilemma. On the one hand, humanitarian actors are trying to be impartial, neutral and independent, as they are obliged to the humanitarian principles. On the other, however, we have a peacekeeping force that is obliged to provide the delivery of safe and secure assistance. These conflicting duties need to be further examined, and lead us over to Gjørv’s second factor, which looks at the role of obligation in the relationship between humanitarian and military actors.

**Obligation**

Recalling the theory, Gjørv states that conflicting tasks and activities of the actors may create tensions (2014: 45). This is also a conventional factor in the theory of civil-military interaction, which sees organizational differences as an inhibitor of interaction (Ruffa and Vennesson, 2014: 587). To examine this, the respondents were first asked to express how their organization differed from MINUSMA and vice versa. The humanitarian respondents primarily explained that their organizational values and principles stood in clear contrast to the partiality of the peacekeepers. The significance of the humanitarian principles became apparent when interviewing a respondent from the local development NGO. He asserted that there were no difficulties in interacting with MINUSMA, and that they rather had a satisfactory relationship with the peacekeepers (Development NGO). Truly, this also brings out the differences between humanitarian and development actors, which initially was used as a justification for studying the humanitarian community in northern Mali.
Moreover, the respondents from the humanitarian community seemed to be very frustrated by the fact that MINUSMA had no respect for the humanitarian profession, which led to further difficulties in interacting with them. One security advisor asserted that this was a result of the wrong perceptions they had of each other, and that these clearly made any interaction challenging. As he amusingly described it:

“We see that they do not know what an organization is – what we do, and what we are. When we speak with the military, how they see an NGO is that you are a hippie you know, you bring with you a bag of rice, and you smoke marihuana. And for us, when you speak about MINUSMA, it is big guys with tattoos everywhere. Of course it is cliché, but the problems with perceptions are right here”.

(Security advisor 2, 25/02-16)

This was somewhat confirmed by one of the military trainers, who stated the humanitarian community had an idealistic way of working, compared to the realistic nature of military organization (Military trainer 2). Throughout the interviews, many of the humanitarian respondents saw their profession and organization as misunderstood by MINUSMA. One of the country directors in a humanitarian NGO exemplified this, by referring to several incidents were MINUSMA had difficulties in understanding why humanitarians did not have their own helicopters or planes to evacuate their staff with. She saw this as a consequence of MINUSMA’s lack of understanding about humanitarian actors (Country Director). This became especially apparent in emergency situations, as humanitarians turn to MINUSMA as a last resort. When asking one of the respondents from MINUSMA about this, he had a different explanation to this, which I argue brings out the organizational differences clearly:

If we say that we provide and escort from point B, we will do it. But it might be that it is the 18th, and not the 16th or the 24th of March. Due to our limited capacity, we only can do so much convoy. So the answer is yes and no. So within our limited capacity, we will do it, but then we have to adapt – we do not have unlimited capacity

(MINUSMA CIMIC, 04/03-2016).

This is grounded in the organizational structures we saw in the theory. While humanitarian actors are unpredictable, and thus might easily find themselves at the wrong place at the wrong time, the military profession requires planning and strategy. To respond to the emergency needs of the numerous humanitarian actors in Mali, is understandably
challenging. This become particularly evident in the light of the previous discussion, where we saw that MINUSMA suffers from understaffing, caveats and geographical challenges.

Nevertheless, although acknowledging the organizational differences, the CIMIC officer understood the role of humanitarian actors, and believed that “(...) the area of Mali would have looked different” without them (MINUSMA CIMIC, 04/03-2016). His perceptions, however, did not seem to reflect the statements from the humanitarian respondent. Many of them believed that it sometimes was difficult to get them to understand their mandate and tasks as humanitarians (INGO 2). They claimed that this became clearly evident through the so-called Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) conducted by MINUSMA. QIPs refer to small-scale and low-cost projects implemented within a short timeframe, funded and/or implemented by UN peacekeeping operations (DPKO, 2012: 224). These projects vary and range from building lampposts to the set up of water points or medical care. It is the last category of projects that the humanitarian respondents perceive as an overlap of objectives, and thus as violating the humanitarian profession. This was described as dangerous and conflicting, and the respondents discussed the implications of it. As one respondent said:

“I find it dangerous – because they confuse themselves with those kind of people who actually risk their lives to go out and actually have an opportunity to do it. It is not their expertise. They should stay out of it”

(Country director, 03/03-2016).

By carrying arm, and at the same time conducting relief-like activities, a peacekeeping force that is risk blurring the line between humanitarians and military actors. Consequently, this could put humanitarians in an unfortunate consequence, as they could be targeted by armed elements that cannot distinguish between them. The moment aid is delivered with military uniforms and weapons, it is no longer perceived as humanitarian work (UN agency). According my humanitarian respondents, this did not seem to be understood by MINUSMA. From a peacekeepers´ perspective, QIPs are seen as a way to get local acceptance, and also moral authority. The fact that MINUSMA is mandated to this is evidently conflicting with humanitarian values. Particularly, nearly all of the humanitarian respondents pointed to MINUSMA´s lack of expertise on this area, which they saw as reserved to the humanitarian profession. As one respondent saw it, military engagement in humanitarian activities was the
same as “if you asked a truck driver to land a plane” (Communication advisor, 25/02-16). As he further elaborated:

“I used to ask my friend in the military: what would you say if you saw me as humanitarian actor, carrying a gun, and coming beside you to fight? He would say: ‘this is for professionals’. So consider humanitarian action is also for professionals”.

(Communication advisor, 25/02-16)

However, the problems with QIPs are not unique to the case of Mali, but rather a recurrent issue in peace operations. These are activities characterized as being humanitarian, but that essentially are serving political purposes. Previous studies from earlier peacekeeping missions show that such stabilization initiatives often are undertaken without consultation and coordination, and that they risk blur the line between humanitarian and military actors (Gjørv, 2014: 82; Harmer, 2008: 531). Based on these differences and perceptions, the humanitarian respondents stressed the importance of a clear separation of activities. As the security advisor further expressed:

“If you do not believe in the differences and the humanitarian profession, there will be confusion. And who will pay the bill for that? Humanitarians. Because we have no guns, or nothing to protect ourselves. Except our acceptance. But if the community start to doubt on you and confuse you with MINUSMA, you become a non-grata person”.

(Security advisor 2, 25/02-16)

When asking my respondents from MINUSMA about this, they understood that it was not ideal, but necessary in order to be accepted by the local communities. According to one of my respondents, the force commander of MINUSMA saw QIPs as force protection through better acceptance by the locals (Civil-military coordinator). However, the respondents from MINUSMA claimed that QIPs also was a way of filling gaps humanitarian actors did not cover (MINUSMA PoC; MINUSMA CIMIC). However, their argument was disproved by the humanitarian respondents, who saw QIPs as pure duplications of already established humanitarian activities in certain areas. This must again be seen in relation to the organizational differences of the actors. While humanitarian actors act according to the humanitarian imperative and assist people in need, MINUSMA view humanitarian assistance as a tool gain community acceptance. As we saw, the force commander also supported this.
As opposed to humanitarians, MINUSMA has no intention of providing humanitarian assistance because of the actual needs. This becomes evident by observing the intermittent nature of their activities, without any consistency in responding the overall needs of a rather vulnerable region. To recall Gjørv’s notion of competence, the military involvement is not appreciated by humanitarians in northern Mali, which again must be seen in relation to the politicized context. Rather, their discriminate way of only assisting some groups is understood as a violation of humanitarianism. Consequently, the alleged politicization of humanitarian aid would put humanitarians at risk. Some of the respondents claimed that they had to move their activities, because if MINUSMA started a QIP somewhere, this place would be targeted (Medical NGO). Further, they seemed to be provoked by the fact that MINUSMA put humanitarian safety at risk, for their own force protection. Truly, this underscores the need for a clear separation between the activities of humanitarian actors and MINUSMA, as any association could violate humanitarian space.

Moreover, when addressing the authority of MINUSMA, we saw that the peacekeepers are mandated to create a secure environment for humanitarian assistance. To examine this, the respondents were asked which role they see MINUSMA having in securing the humanitarian space, and facilitate civilians-led delivery of humanitarian assistance. Most of the humanitarian respondents saw this mandate as conflicting to their own principles. As we saw in part 5.2, what protect humanitarian actors are their own strategies, like acceptance. Reasonably, MINUSMA’s role in this is not desired by humanitarian actors. Nevertheless, the respondents again stressed the problems with IEDs and wondered how a source of insecurity could bring security to humanitarian actors. As one answered:

“We cannot say that MINUSMA guarantee security for humanitarians. We would say that it is the contrary”

(Local NGO 2b, 23/02-2016)

This was supported by another respondent who stated that:

“To me, it is a problem. Because you know – wherever they go, that is where insecurity is going. Because they are targeted. So there is no way that they are going to secure our humanitarian space”

(Refugee NGO 1, 24/02-2016)
One of my respondents who had worked for a humanitarian NGO highlighted this by comparing MINUSMA with the UN mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). During her time there, it was easier as a humanitarian NGO to work alongside the peacekeepers precisely because they were not targeted (INGO 2). Similarly, another respondent explained that the securitization of areas was easier with the peacekeepers from MONUSCO (Spanish NGO). However, as she further claimed:

“As a humanitarian organization, we are not dependent on them. But that is not the same as saying that they are useless. They are here for a reason – but in this context, I think the reasons not necessarily are compatible”

(Spanish NGO, 03/03-2016).

Some also pointed to MINUSMA’s lack of capacity to actually fulfill this mandate, which mirrors the previous discussions on obligation. So whether they intend to secure humanitarian space, does not mean that they actually have the capacity to do so. What we can draw from this is that the mandate of one actor, clearly conflicts with the security needs of the other. This is also the core argument in organizational explanations of civil-military interaction, which must be taken in consideration when understanding the interaction.

Truly, the issue with QIPs in northern Mali, as well as MINUSMA’s mandate to secure the humanitarian space highlights how Gjørv’s notion of obligation is a source of conflict between the actors in this case. In particular, it shows that the overlap of activities has created tensions, and that the two organizations differ in both motivation and core tasks. Equally important, this discussion also raises important questions about the preservation of humanitarian space in Mali. In accordance with Brassard-Boudreau and Hubert, safety of humanitarian workers, as well as humanitarian access are significant measures when addressing humanitarian space (2010). Arguably, the use of QIPs can be seen as a violation of humanitarian space in Mali. The fact that humanitarian actors see the need to move their activities due to the QIPs, and that the lines between themselves and MINUSMA are getting blurred, support this argument. Equally questionable is their mandate to secure humanitarian space, when humanitarian actors see them as a source of insecurity. Understanding these dynamics is necessary when analysing the interaction in the second part of the analysis.

To sum up, this first part of the analysis has examined how Gjørv’s explanatory factors were expressed in the case of northern Mali. Starting with the context, the situation was
characterized as volatile despite the signing of a peace agreement. The complex combination of inter-communal violence and terrorist threats constitutes a challenging operating environment for both MINUSMA and humanitarian actors. The fact that the context was highly politicized, which appeared when addressing the second explanatory factor, has had severe impacts on the humanitarian space. In fact, the humanitarian respondents claimed that MINUSMA was a source of insecurity, which they strived to distance themselves from. Lastly, Gjørv’s dimensions of legitimacy, authority and obligation were examined. The peacekeepers inability to fulfill their mandate has led to a lack of acceptance among the Malian population, as opposed to the presence of humanitarian actors they clearly benefits from. Additionally, the organizational differences and overlapping mandate seemed to be a source of conflict between the actors, which became particularly evident through the QIPs. In line with Gjørv, I argue that the outcomes of these factors have led to a challenging humanitarian space and interface between the actors. This will now be further examined in the second part of the analysis.

This chapter has also shown that Gjørv’s contextual factors to a large extent are intertwined. Hence, I argue that it is difficult to measure the relative effect each and one of them have had on the civil-military interaction. This will be further addressed when discussing the explanatory value of the theory in the conclusion.

Part II

5.4 Civil-Military Interaction and Humanitarian Space

So far, I have identified Gjørv’s explanatory factors in the case of northern Mali. The context is characterized by a highly politicized conflict, composed by a number of actors with different goals. The aspect of inter-communal violence and terrorism complicates the situation even more. Further, we saw that the political position of MINUSMA, which has made them a sought target for terrorists, deters humanitarian action. In particular, they see MINUSMA as a source of insecurity, as a result of the increase of IEDs and political directed attacks. At the same time, however, we also saw that they resort to MINUSMA in emergency situations. Notwithstanding, MINUSMA’s lack of legitimacy and authority, as well as the conflicting obligations has also shaped the interaction, forcing humanitarian actors to mark a clear distance from the peacekeepers. Taken all this in consideration, this part will focus on
the notion of humanitarian space. In particular, I use de Coning and Friis’ relationships to examine how they interact. I thus address the following question: How do humanitarian actors interact with MINUSMA?

Thus far, it is obvious why integration and unity was omitted from this study. However, the nature of civil-military interaction in Mali seems to have aspects and elements that can be placed in all of the relationship, ranging from cooperation, to a lesser extent, on the one end, to coexistence on the other extreme. This will now be further examined.

5.4.1 Cooperation

As we have seen, cooperation describes an interaction characterized by voluntarily collaboration, despite the differences between the actors (de Coning and Friis, 2011: 256). Based on the findings in the previous chapter, however, there is little evidence to claim that humanitarian actors and MINUSMA voluntarily come together to collaborate. However, there were some instances where this occurs. The extent of it, however, can be discussed. This will now be done by going through Spence’s key factors of cooperation as presented in the theory, including a common understanding of the problems, logical division of labor, and a holistic picture of the situation.

Firstly, cooperation requires a common understanding of the problems as well as a common approach to solve it. Truly, all of the respondents seemed to have a shared understanding of the overall context in northern Mali today. They all pointed to the same threats, including terrorist activity and inter-communal violence. At the same time, they highlighted the complexity of the humanitarian crisis. When moving over to the visions of security, however, it did not seem like the actors shared the same analysis. One of the civil-military coordinators described this quite accurately, when asking if the actors have a shared understanding of the problems:

“No, not at all. According to humanitarian actors, MINUSMA is a part of the problem. According to MINUSMA – MINUSMA is a part of the solution. So that makes them very different”

(Civil-military coordinator 1: 03/03-2016)
According to the respondents, MINUSMA did not seem to comprehend the security needs of humanitarian actors, and their way of managing it. While one of the respondents from MINUSMA clearly understood the humanitarian need to separate themselves from MINUSMA, the other one believed that they only could operate effectively due to the security MINUSMA provided. This view was also supported by the military trainers, who believed that humanitarians “(...) relied on security and military forces to do what they wanted to do” (Military trainer 2, 02/03-2016). Moreover, some of the humanitarian respondents expressed their frustration over MINUSMA’s lack of understanding, and pointed to their provoking way of communicating about this. According to one informant, MINUSMA’s analysis of the situation is that the peacekeepers are targeted. Correspondingly, they increased the security to protect themselves, which both sides agreed on. The problem is, however that MINUSMA include humanitarian actors in this analysis (Medical NGO). In particular, MINUSMA would express that it provide security for NGOs, and that humanitarians too are targeted (Cluster leader). This view was supported by one of the civil-military coordinators, who saw the inclusion of humanitarian actors in their communication as a way to make up for their inactiveness, and to gain legitimacy (Civil-military coordinator 1). This is provoking the humanitarian community, as it is contradictory to their acceptance strategy reviewed in part 5.2. When MINUSMA includes humanitarian actors in their communication, it also sends out signals about a non-existing relationship, which in turn can harm humanitarians. Clearly, this weakens the ground for a common understanding.

Likewise, as two different actors from to dissimilar organizations, there will accordingly be different approaches to solve the problems. As one humanitarian explained it: “They are trying to build peace with Kalashnikovs, while we try to assist people without weapons” (Local NGO 1, 22/02-2016). As we saw, MINUSMA is politically involved in the conflict, and has a stabilizing mandate that requires another approach than humanitarian actors who focuses on directly assisting people in need. Truly, this inconsistency makes cooperation more difficult to obtain.

Secondly, Spence stresses the need for a logical division of labor that respects the principles of each actor (2002: 170). As we saw, MINUSMA has been engaged in humanitarian activities through the QIPs. From a humanitarian perspective, this is perceived as a violation of humanitarian space and the core values of humanitarians. However, the humanitarian need for distance does not seem to appeal to MINUSMA, who see engagement in humanitarian
activities as a necessity for legitimacy. In addition, MINUSMA does not seem to understand the capacity or flexibility of humanitarian workers. An example of this was stressed by a humanitarian NGO who had been trying to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for four months with MINUSMA, without success. In particular, the NGO wanted to ensure a worst-case scenario understanding, implying that the peacekeepers would evacuate the staff during an emergency in Menaka (Country Director). The city is remote, and does not allow the NGO to access with cars. Due to MINUSMA’s misinterpretation of the humanitarian capacity however, the actors had not reached an agreement yet. Again, this underlines the actors’ lack of a shared understanding, or specifically; the difficulties in reaching one.

Thirdly, Spence underlines the importance of a detailed and holistic picture of the situation. Indeed, this requires information and knowledge sharing. The humanitarian respondents expressed that there were information exchange between them and MINUSMA, but the extent of it varied between the different NGOs. While some acknowledged that they weekly attended security meetings with the peacekeepers, others claimed that they barely had contact with them. What is interesting, however, was that no one saw the information exchange as something highly needed. Some claimed that they attended the meetings due to formalities, whereas other described them as useless. There were no dependence on this information, and the NGOs would rather cooperate among themselves. Some even claimed that they possessed more information about the dynamics on the ground, than MINUSMA did. One respondent summed up the overall opinions on this:

“I would say that there is very little direct interaction with MINUSMA. From a security perspective, there is some communication, in terms of rallying information on security incidents; where the presences of international forces are, just for a minimum security. Obviously, communication of movement, when possible, to ensure that we avoid their movements, and know what general operations are going on in an area”

(Country director, 01/03-2016).

Interestingly, the information sharing they saw as necessary was the type that ensured a clear distance from MINUSMA. Again, this must be seen in relation to the perceptions of MINUSMA as a security threat. As opposed to this, we also saw that several humanitarian organizations had used peacekeeping helicopters and means of transport. Also, some told that they sought refuge in a MINUSMA camp during clashes in Kidal. Arguably, this could be
seen as a form for security cooperation, where humanitarians clearly benefit from MINUSMA’s advantage with security assets. However, this is not something that characterizes the primary interaction. Nor is it a form of interaction that occurs on a daily basis. Rather, it should be seen as an expression of grey-zone activities, where the actors resort to each other when their moral authority is under pressure. However, it should not be fully excluded, as it is a part of the relationship between the actors. As mentioned in part 5.1, the situation in Northern Mali is volatile. This also means that humanitarian actors will easily found themselves at the wrong places at the wrong time. During these incidents, many of them rely on security cooperation, precisely with MINUSMA.

Based on this, it is reasonable to claim that cooperation does not characterize the civil-military interaction in northern Mali today, given the circumstances addressed in the previous parts (5.1-5.3). Truly, the actors have the same understanding of the overall problems in the country. However, this consensus does not seem to apply for the understanding of the security situation. Whereas MINUSMA include humanitarians in their analysis of targets, humanitarians seek to distance themselves from what they see as a threat to their security, and thus a violator of humanitarian space. Accordingly, the actors also have different approaches to solve the problems. Further, MINUSMA’s interference in humanitarian activities seems to undermine what Spence refers to a logical division of labor. The fact that nearly all of the humanitarian respondents saw MINUSMA as an obstacle to accessing people in need, as well as ability to operate safely, excludes cooperation as a civil-military relationship in Mali today.

5.4.2 Coordination

“I think the main challenge as a coordinator is to coordinate people who do no not want to bee coordinated”

(Civil-military coordinator 1, 03/03-2016).

According to the theory, coordination entails information sharing that prevents conflict or duplication. Unlike cooperation, coordination results in separate action. This way of interaction can thus be seen as more appropriate when analyzing the civil-military conditions in Mali. As we saw when describing Gjørv’s point of obligation, the actors are differing in
both nature and structure. Joint action is therefore neither beneficial nor desired. As de Coning and Friis also points out, OCHA is an example of a functioning coordinator between humanitarian and military actors in UN peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, this applies in Mali, where one cannot mention coordination without talking about OCHA. In particular, the agency serves as an actual interface between the humanitarian and military community, based on the civil-military coordination guidelines. OCHA’s coordination function is meant to facilitate the essential dialogue between the actors during conflict, in order to promote and protect humanitarian principles and avoid competition (de Coning, 2007: 102). However, as the quote above indicates, this did not seem to by an easy task in Mali. The interview with the civil-military coordinators was thus noteworthy in understanding the coordination dynamics in Mali.

When the respondents were asked how they interact with MINUSMA, most of them would refer to precisely OCHA’s civil-military coordination function. Accordingly, they underlined that their interaction with the peacekeepers only happened indirectly. Although they acknowledged the work of OCHA, many respondents did not see the current practise as efficient. The fact that OCHA is a part of the UN structure was described as inefficient, as it was perceived as a way of working with MINUSMA. As one respondent explained it:

“OCHA is within the MINUSMA – this is not effective. You will never have a separated OCHA, and as long as you have a mix of politics and security, and military and humanitarian, you will never be able to look clearly at the humanitarian principles”.

(Medical NGO, 26/02-2016)

This view was supported by several respondents, and also confirmed by the respondents from OCHA who saw themselves as misunderstood by the humanitarian NGOs. One of the coordinators stated that MINUSMA’s entry to the conflict resulted in a need by the NGOs to distance themselves from the UN system. Accordingly, the coordinators did no longer see themselves as representatives for the humanitarian community, which they previously had been doing (Civil-military coordinator 1 & 2). Indeed, this suggests that the coordination in Mali has deteriorated, and that the need for segregation from a humanitarian perspective also colors this level of interaction. The coordinators therefore expressed that it was easier to coordinate with MINUSMA, than the humanitarian community. As opposed to this, they also stated that it was easier to coordinate the actors before the peacekeepers entered the picture.
Before the deployment of the peacekeepers, it was only the French troops and the Malian army on one side, with humanitarians on the other side. This changed completely when MINUSMA arrived and was targeted. As a consequence of this, NGOs immediately started to distance themselves from the UN system, whether they were humanitarians or military (Civil-military coordinator 1 and 2).

Before going deeper into the nature of coordination in Mali, it is necessary to clarify the extent of it. When the respondents were asked to describe the coordination, they underlined that it was limited to information sharing in the areas of security and avoidance of duplication. However, most of them underlined the importance of it, as they were “sharing the same area” (Cluster leader, 25/02-2016). As mentioned, humanitarian actors got updates from MINUSMA about security incidents and upcoming operations in certain area. In other words, this was mainly the information necessary to avoid the peacekeepers in the field. Three respondents also pointed to the need to use coordination as a tool of arresting MINUSMA whenever they went too far and provoked the humanitarian community (INGO 3, Cluster leader, Medical NGO). As Rietjens et al. state, *interdependence* is perceived as a driver of coordination. However, the respondents denied that there were any interdependence between the humanitarian community and MINUSMA. A program advisor in an INGO exemplified this by stating that they had been operating before MINUSMA’s deployment, and during the crisis. At that time, they were able to work without the information from the peacekeepers. He admitted, however, that they to some extent dependent on information about the peacekeepers’ patrolling – in order to avoid their movement. Truly, it seemed like the respondents had a duplexed relationship to this. While they refused that there were any dependence on MINUSMA, they all somewhat acknowledged that they needed the peacekeepers for security information.

In fact, some of the respondents emphasized that the information they got from the peacekeepers was “old news”, rather than necessary information. The information they got was also believed to be a small part of what the peacekeepers knew. As one respondents believed:

“\[You know MINUSMA. They have information, but they are not sharing. They may share ten percent, and they will keep the ninety percent for themselves\]

(Security advisor 1, 24/02-2016)
The sharing of information goes both ways, but the humanitarian respondents claimed that they also hesitated to share information with MINUSMA. Again, this must be seen in relation to the differences between the actors. Sharing information with the UN force was understood as a break with the core principles humanitarian work is based on. This was highly significant as the NGOs work through a community-based acceptance approach (Communication Advisor). Nonetheless, the humanitarian respondents argued that they possessed more information about the communities than MINUSMA. This was also confirmed by the coordinators, who pointed to the presence of NGOs in areas MINUSMA would not enter. To recall the theory, we saw that the greater the interdependence is, the greater is the need for coordination. Due to the small degree of interdependence, it can be argued that coordination is not needed. However, it should not be completely dismissed. Truly, the need for security updates was by everyone seen as necessary. To explore this argument further, it must be seen in relation to humanitarian space.

As we saw in the theory chapter, both Gjørv and Egnell argue that coordination not necessarily translate into something exclusively positive. Seen in relation to humanitarian access, it was evident that the NGOs only relied on themselves and their community-based approach. Like in the previous discussion of cooperation, any close association with MINUSMA could harm them, and even put them at risk. Nonetheless, we saw that the humanitarian claimed to possess more information about the communities in the north, than MINUSMA itself. However, talking about security makes the relationship different. When addressing the security threats of humanitarians, and their way of managing it, we saw that the presence of the peacekeepers brought security to an area, as they are perceived as targets in the conflict. This included the spread of IEDs on the road, as well as purposeful attacks. The humanitarian way of coping with this was to keep a clear distance from MINUSMA, and to avoid their movement. In such case, information sharing about the peacekeeper’s movement becomes vital for their own security. Understandably, the actors expressed the need to coordinate. It is therefore reasonable to say that some extent of coordination in terms of security is necessary for the preservation of humanitarian space.
5.4.3 Coexistence

“The further away, the better. That is how I would describe it”.

(Medical NGO, 26/02-16)

When OCHA established the rules for civil-military interaction in Mali in 2013, they decided to use the so-called coexistence strategy. However, the civil-military coordinators acknowledged that there was difficult to draw a line between coordination and coexistence. They therefore described it as “(...) coexistence with a lot of coordination” (Civil-military coordinator 1 & 2, 03/03-2016). When the humanitarian respondents were asked to describe their relationship MINUSMA, most of them had answers reflecting coexistence. As the quote above indicates, a clear segregation from the peacekeepers appeared to be the ideal. Some respondents even claimed that there was not enough distance (Medical NGO, Security advisor 2, Cluster leader). Due to the ambiguity in the previous relationship, coexistence can arguably better mirror the civil-military relationship in Mali. This refers to the minimum level of interaction necessary to avoid tension in the same operating environment. More particularly, the actors are aware of each others’ actual presence in the same operating environment, but refuse to interact, as this would be negatively perceived by the beneficiaries (Military trainer 2). As one respondent described it:

“It is very much based on coexistence on the local level. It is possible. From a NGO perspective, we completely respect MINUSMA. We know their objectives and why they are here. However, we do not ask for many things – just few things to ensure the separation between us.”

(Country Director, 01/03-2016)

Truly, the quote above draws the line between the previous relationship and coexistence. As de Coning and Friis put it, and as we saw in the previous discussion, coordination describes a relationship where the different actors more or less are coordinated towards the same goal. In this case, however, the actors use a minimum level of coordination to distance themselves from MINUSMA. Thus, coordination is used as a tool to avoid the peacekeepers in the field. Based on this, it is more fruitful to talk about coexistence in the case of Mali.
To understand this, we need to go back to the expressions of Gjørv’s explanatory factors in northern Mali. Firstly, we saw that the complex context in Northern Mali includes various actors in a low-intensity conflict with threats from jihadists. Because there is a risk of being drawn into the conflict dynamics, the humanitarian actors strive to keep a clear distance from MINUSMA, who are perceived as a party to the conflict, and targeted. Any association with the peacekeeping force is therefore seen as an obstacle to the preservation of humanitarian space, as their security and ties to the local communities is at risk. This must again be seen in relation to the way humanitarian actors manage their own security, through community acceptance. Coexisting in the same environment must therefore be seen as a prerequisite for the maintenance of humanitarian space in the case of northern Mali. As one respondent said:

“...In relationship to MINUSMA, we have been operating quite separately from them. We do not use their convoys, and we do not do anything in relation to them. We make sure that we are not associated with them, because for us, MINUSMA is a security threat – funny enough. And operating separately from them, we have been able to do quite a lot of things”.

(Spanish NGO, 04/03-16)

As the quote above indicates, it is more fruitful to talk about coexistence as an enabler. By coexisting, humanitarian actors are able to firstly preserve their relationship with the communities and the local leaders. In doing so, they gain support through their moral authority, which gives them access to vulnerable communities. This must also be understood in relation to Gjørv’s notion of positive security, where the actors see community acceptance as a security to get access. By having a minimum level of security exchange with MINUSMA, humanitarian actors are also able to protect themselves, by not being associated with the peacekeepers. However, the avoidance of MINUSMA truly has a dual effect. On the one hand, humanitarians are safer the further away they are from MINUSMA. On the other hand, however, by avoiding the roads MINUSMA is using, they also avoid the roads to physical access the communities in need. Indeed, this underlines the complexities of humanitarian space in the deadliest mission today.

Moreover, as de Coning argues, there is a need for coordination, whether there is coexistence or cooperation (2010: 41). The extent of it, and how it is used, differs between the relationships. In this case, coordination is by the humanitarian actors used to keep a distance from the peacekeepers in the field. This must be seen as a way of maintaining their
humanitarian space, by not being regarded as MINUSMA´s extended hand in the field. That the actors are coexisting was also confirmed by the respondents from MINUSMA, who had little or no contact with humanitarian NGOs in northern Mali (MINUSMA CIMIC; MINUSMA PoC). Looking back at the theory, the coexistence is seen as the norm for humanitarian actors. Based on Gjørv´s factors examined in the previous part, it is reasonable to claim that a high level of coexistence describes the interaction between humanitarian actors and MINUSMA in Mali. The overall discussion can be summed up by a state from one of my respondents:

I do not think we should interact. Coordinating, yes – working together, no. There is a definite distinction between a military actor and a humanitarian actor. At least in a context like Mali. We are not in Somalia, where you have to be under armed escort to go anywhere in the country. That is the most extreme case, and we are not there. We still find ways of access and protection of humanitarian space without military assistance. As long as we are on that side of an operation, I do not see there being any need for MINUSMA. What we fight for is the maintenance of the distance between the UN, mainly MINUSMA, and humanitarian space.

(Country Director, 01/03-2016)

In sum, the second part of the analysis has gone through three relationships of civil-military interaction, as presented by de Coning and Friis. Firstly, I argued that it was misleading to refer to the relationship as cooperation. This was due to the lack of a common understanding of the problems, as well as the differences between the actors. Most importantly, however, is the fact that cooperation with MINUSMA is understood as a violation of humanitarian space, as it would put humanitarian actors at risk, and also hinder humanitarian access. Through a discussion of coordination, I showed that coordination only was needed to avoid the peacekeepers. Accordingly, the chapter concluded that coexistence describes the civil-military interaction in Mali today, and that this can be seen as a way of preserving humanitarian space.
6 Conclusion: Civil-Military Interaction in Mali

This study has discussed to what extent a clear division between humanitarian actors and MINUSMA is a precondition for the preservation of humanitarian space in the context of Mali. In doing so, I have looked at three explanatory factors of civil-military interaction, which later was used in the explanation of how humanitarian actors interact with the UN peacekeepers. Accordingly, I have so far dealt with the two sub-questions, leading to the main research question of this study. In this chapter, I will summarize the main findings of this study, and answer the main research question. In addition, some considerations around the explanatory value of the theory will be highlighted.

6.1 Summing up the study

In chapter two, I presented the theoretical framework of this thesis, starting with de Coning and Friis’ possible relationships between civilian and military actors. Each relationship was supplied with related literature, in order to get a review of the existing arguments on the topic, as well as adding up to discussion in the analysis. Thereafter, I presented Gjørv’s explanatory factors of civil-military interaction, which formed the basis of the first sub-question. This included the context, visions of politics and security, and the dimensions of legitimacy, authority and obligation. Lastly, this was seen in relation to humanitarian space, where the main theoretical lesson was that the more politicized the context is, the greater is the need for humanitarian space. Accordingly, the humanitarians need to distance themselves from the military becomes greater.

The third chapter laid out the research design, by going through Yin’s definition of a case study. Specifically, I argued that the study fell under the category of a theory-guided case study, using a pre-developed conceptual framework to guide me through the analysis. In order to answer my research question, I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews during a fieldwork in Bamako. This was considered to be the expedient methodological approach, as there is limited secondary literature on the case of Mali. Although this methodology provides
the study with in-depth knowledge, it also compromises the ability to generalize the findings beyond this study.

After the background of the conflict was presented in chapter four, the following chapter addressed the two sub-questions guided by the theoretical framework. More specifically, the first part of the analysis mapped Gjørv’s explanatory factors specific to the case of Mali. These empirical findings were then used to explain and understand how the actors interact, by going through the three relationships.

6.2 Main Findings

Based on the semi-structured interviews reviewed in the analysis of the civil-military interaction in Mali, what are the main findings of this study?

Firstly, when expressing Gjørv’s explanatory factors, the context provided an overall picture of the conflict the actors are situated within. The situation itself was described as extremely volatile, with continual eruptions in the conflict, although a peace agreement has been signed. These outbreaks of conflict must be seen in relation to the inter-communal clashes that still create tension in the northern regions of the country. Equally significant, the context has a very political nature, including various armed actors with different goals. This political nature of the conflict was further emphasized when exploring the second factor. Specifically, MINUSMA’s political role in the conflict has made the peacekeeping force frequently targeted by various terrorist groups, as they are seen as a party to the conflict.

When addressing the humanitarians’ visions of security, notable findings were made. In particular, humanitarian actors in Mali today perceive the presence of MINUSMA as a threat to their own security. This must be seen in relation to the increase in terrorist attacks on MINUSMA, which increased after the deployment of the peacekeepers. Interestingly, many humanitarian respondents also asserted that it was easier to work in Mali before the deployment of the UN peacekeepers. This argument is rooted in the community-structures humanitarian actors relate to, in order to get access. After MINUSMA marked their presence in northern Mali, these structures became blurred, and access has become more challenging.
It is therefore reasonable to argue that the presence of the UN peacekeepers in Mali has a serious impact on the humanitarian space.

Gjørv’s third factor stressed the dimensions of legitimacy, authority and obligation. In this sub-section, I found that the UN peacekeepers lack legitimacy from the population in northern Mali, who do not see the utility of their presence. Similar to other peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the UN, MINUSMA’s ability to carry out its mandated tasks is limited. Seen in relation to interaction, this can be understood as a factor that has inhibited civil-military interaction. Particularly, the population MINUSMA lack legitimacy from is also the one humanitarian actors depend on acceptance from to be able to work freely and secure. Therefore, any association with the peacekeepers will violate the humanitarian space. However, it is important to underline that the population in Mali is divided in terms of the perceptions of the peacekeepers. What is clear, however, the negative perceptions of the peacekeepers are prevailing in northern Mali today.

Through an analysis of obligation, MINUSMA’s interference in humanitarian activities seems to be a source of conflict between the actors. This overlap of activities is by the humanitarian perceived as a violation of humanitarian space. However, military humanitarianism is a general issue in military operations. The findings in this study therefore support empirical findings from other operations, as well as the theory. Otherwise, the organizational differences as well as MINUSMA’s lack of understanding of the humanitarian profession seem to bother the humanitarian community in Mali. However, I argue that the explanatory value of this factor was weak, relatively to the previous one. One could therefore question whether this dimension would have been of greater significance, if the context was less politicized.

These findings formed the basis of the part two of the analysis, which reviewed three of the relationships guided by de Coning and Friis (2011). This part sought to answer the question: How do humanitarian actors interact with MINUSMA?

Cooperation between the actors was shown to be difficult, if not impossible. This is due to the lack of a common understanding of the issues, as well as different approaches to solve the problems. This was particularly significant in light of Gjørv’s explanatory factors, were the conflicted relationship became apparent. Further, it is more fruitful to talk about coordination
when discussing the interaction in Mali. However, this way of interacting involves interdependence through information sharing. According to the respondents, this is not in accordance with the realities on the ground. Among the humanitarian respondents, coordination with MINUSMA is limited to information sharing in the areas of security and avoidance of duplication. The coordination is thus used as a tool to avoid MINUSMA’s movement in the field, due to the security concerns addressed in part 5.2. As such, the analysis shows that it is more fruitful to talk about coexistence when describing the civil-military interaction in Mali. To answer the second sub-question, humanitarian actors interact with MINUSMA through a limited level of coordination, by coexisting with the peacekeepers. This refers to the minimum level of interaction necessary to avoid tension in the same operating environment. By coexisting with MINUSMA, humanitarian actors have been able to access communities and to work safely in Mali. In other words, coexistence has enabled them to preserve humanitarian space.

Although the answer to the main research question has been developed quite clearly throughout the analysis, it is necessary to answer it separately:

*To what extent is a clear division between humanitarian actors and MINUSMA a precondition for the preservation of humanitarian space in the context of Mali?

In the context of Mali, where the conflict is highly politicized, and the peacekeeping force is political involved, there is a significant need for a clear distinction between humanitarian actors and MINUSMA in order for humanitarian actors to preserve their humanitarian space.

If we wrap up Brassard-Bodreu and Hubert’s’ (2010) understanding of humanitarian space that was introduced in the theory, it refers to humanitarian access as well of the security of humanitarian workers. In Mali, humanitarian actors get access to vulnerable communities through a community-based approach, which requires acceptance from the local population. This is also seen as their way of managing their own security, and thus a way of preserving humanitarian space. Consequently, any form for close interaction with MINUSMA would insecure the humanitarian space. Drawing lines back to the fieldwork, the moments I regarded as most vulnerable was when waiting outside the MINUSMA headquarter for interviews, or visiting cafes with a UN parked outside.
Through a minimum level of interaction with the peacekeepers, the humanitarian actors are therefore able to maintain humanitarian space. It is fruitful to ask whether the interaction would have been less conflicting if the context was less politicized, and if MINUSMA was a traditional peacekeeping force. Or put in another way, would cooperation and close coordination have been more likely in a less politicized environment? In such cases, I argue that the organizational differences and obligations would have become more evident. What is clear, however, is that the context of Mali, with a political involved peacekeeping force that is targeted, creates a need among humanitarian actors to further distance themselves from the peacekeeping force, in order to preserve their humanitarian space.

In sum, this study shows that there to a large extent is a need for a clear distinction between humanitarian actors and MINUSMA in the field of northern Mali, as any association with the peacekeepers can bring insecurity to the humanitarian space.

6.3 Theoretical Implications and Explanatory Value

In terms of the capacity the theory possesses to explain the questions of matter, some aspects must be highlighted. Did the theory help me to answer my research question?

As we saw, putting together the framework of Gjørv (2014) and de Coning and Friis (2011) provided a comprehensive lens to the field of civil-military interaction. First, Gjørv’s explanatory factors provided an opportunity to look at the relationship from different perspectives, ranging from a macro approach when discussing the context and legitimacy, to micro factors when obligation and organizational differences was reviewed. What can be argued, however, is that this approach entailed three different ways of explaining exactly the same phenomenon. Truly, the factors are intertwined. For instance, the contextual factor described the very volatile situation, and covered some of the security aspects that later was further elaborated in the second factor, visions of politics and security. I argue that it is difficult to measure the relative explanatory value of each factor, although some aspects seemed to have a greater impact on the relationship than others. For instance, the highly volatile context and MINUSMA’s political involvement are clearly the reasons why there is limited interaction between the actors. This was an argument that was developed from the very beginning, deriving from theoretical assumptions. However, the dimension of legitimacy
also touched upon some important points, which was strengthened through a comparison of MINUSMA and Barkhane. Authority is to a large extent linked with legitimacy, but due to the difficulties in operationalizing this factor, the discussion unfortunately remained limited.

Obligation, in terms of organizational differences, however, did not seem to be direct cause of the lack of interaction. What can be argued, however, is that organizational differences would have been more apparent if there were any interaction in the first place. However, the conflicting mandates, due to the QIPs had a more explanatory value, as it was understood as a violation of humanitarian space, and thus a source of conflict between the actors.

When it comes to de Coning and Friis’ relationships, it is worth asking whether it was necessary to include cooperation as a way of interacting. Particularly, the research question is rooted in theoretical assumptions arguing that the more politicized the conflict is, the greater is the need for distance between humanitarian and military actors. The starting point of the study was thus critical about the interaction. Arguably, it would have been more reasonable to rather include the last relationship in the interaction model, the so-called competition relationship. For instance, the UN turned the airfield in Kidal into a military airport, forcing humanitarian actors to find another ground. Similarly, some respondents saw the QIPs as a way of competing with the military. However, I argue that the inclusion of cooperation highlighted the differences between the two distinct actors, in a complicated relationship. In addition, the analysis showed that cooperation not exclusively represents something positive, which Spence’s theoretical contribution argues, but that is rather is context dependent. In this case, cooperation was neither preferred nor advantageous.

Despite the theoretical limitations, however, bringing out the core of two different theoretical frameworks helped me answer my research question. Thus, this theoretical combination arguably serves as a good framework for similar studies of civil-military interaction.

### 6.4 Future research and concluding remarks

In the methodology chapter, I mentioned that the initial purpose of this thesis was to explore the relationship from both a peacekeepers perspective, as well as from the humanitarian side. Due to the limitation in time and the difficulties in approaching MINUSMA, this study has seen the civil-military interaction through the narrative of humanitarians. Accordingly, a
study of this relationship from a military lens would be a future ground for research, giving a more balanced and nuanced understanding of the relationship.

Although my findings are limited to the case of Mali, I argue that they to some extent are applicable beyond this case study. As the HIPPO report recommends, the UN needs to tailor its operations to the specific needs on the ground in future operations. Indeed, the threats the UN faces in Mali stands out in a peacekeeping context, but this does not preclude that the peacekeepers may find themselves in similar environments in the future. Accordingly, there will be another ground for complex civil-military interaction. What can be drawn from the experiences in Mali, however, is that the deployment of political involved peacekeepers, in a volatile terrorist setting, bring challenges to the humanitarian actors working in the same area. Clearly, this strengthens the claim about the serious impact of robust stabilization peacekeeping on humanitarian space, and that it accordingly, and to a large extent, is a need of a clear distinction between humanitarian actors and peacekeepers.
Bibliography


Karlsrud, J. (2015). The UN at war: examining the consequences of peace-enforcement mandates for the UN peacekeeping operations in the CAR, the DRC and Mali. Third World Quarterly, 36(1), 40-54.


Appendix 1: List of Respondents

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<th>Respondents Reference</th>
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* The letters a and b are used to separate between two respondents from the same organization.

** Protection of Civilians officer (PoC).
Appendix 2: Request

Request for your participation in a research project:
*A study of Civil-Military Interaction and Humanitarian Space in Northern Mali*

With this letter, I invite you to participate as a respondent in my research project about civil-military interaction in Mali. The overall question addresses humanitarian-military (MINUSMA) interaction, and the challenges of the relationship. Thus, my purpose is to describe the type of interaction that takes place in a peacekeeping setting like Mali, drawing from experiences in field. In order to study this, I depend on interviews from the humanitarian community, as well as MINUSMA. Therefore, I see your organization as an appropriate source.

The interview will be conducted as a semi-structured conversation with duration of one hour or less. Please note that you at any time can withdraw your participation from the project.

The data collected will be treated in confidentiality and interviewees referred to anonymously in the final product. All data will be deleted after the end of the project. This project is conducted independently by me.

The project is part of my Masters’ degree in Political Science at The University of Oslo, which is expected to be finished within May 2016.

If you have questions or remarks, do not hesitate to contact me sofia.tesfaghiorghis@hotmail.com / Sofia@nupi.no, or my supervisor Karin Dokken at Karin.dokken@stv.uio.no. In addition, the project is approved and registered at the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD).

Yours Sincerely,

Sofia M. Tesfaghiorghis
Appendix 3: Interview Guide

1. General questions to the respondents
   - What is your position?
   - How long have you been working in this field?
   - Can you describe your work in northern Mali?

2: Gjørv (2014)

Context
   - How would you describe the context in Northern Mali?
   - Can you describe the conflict?
   - How would you describe the humanitarian situation?
   - How does the context impact your work?

Visions of Politics and Security
   - How politicized is the context?
   - Do you think that humanitarian actors are targets in northern Mali today?
   - What are your security threats?
   - How do you respond to an attack in an area?
   - How do your organization manage your own security?
   - Do you ever rely on escorts from MINUSMA? (H)

Legitimacy, Authority and Obligation
   - How do the local population perceive MINUSMA? (H)
   - How do the local population perceive you? (H/M)
   - In which ways does your organization differ from MINUSMA/ humanitarian actors?
   - Are your core tasks and mandates conflicting?
   - Which role do you see MINUSMA having in securing the humanitarian space?

3: Civil-military interaction (de Coning and Friis, 2011).
   - How would you describe your relationship with MINUSMA/Humanitarian actors? (H/M)

Cooperation
   - Do you share the same understanding of the problems?
   - Do you have a common way to solve it?
   - To what extent do you cooperate?
   - Is there a logical division of labor?

Coordination

---

22 H and M are used to separate between the questions that were asked specific to either humanitarian respondents, or the military respondents.
- To what extent do you coordinate with MINUSMA/Humanitarian actors?
- Do you see coordination with MINUSMA/humanitarian actors as necessary in northern Mali today?
- Is there any interdependence?

Coexistence

- To what extent is a minimum level of interaction necessary between the actors?
- Are you able to coexist in northern Mali today?

Do you recommend any other relevant people I can talk to?