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**Cooperation between National Armies:  
Evidence from the Sahel borders**

**Marion Richard  
Oliver Vanden Eynde**

**JEL Codes: D72, D74, L23.**

**Keywords: Counterinsurgency, Civil Conflict.**



# Cooperation between National Armies: Evidence from the Sahel borders\*

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November 27, 2023

## Abstract

The effectiveness of security operations often depends on cooperation between different national armies. Such cooperation can be particularly important when international borders are porous. In this project, we investigate how the creation of an international armed force that could operate across international borders (the G5-Sahel Joint Force) affected conflict dynamics in the Sahel region. Relying on a regression discontinuity design, we find that the G5 mission lowered the intensity of conflict locally in its zone of operation. Further analysis of geographical conflict propagation patterns indicates that the G5-Sahel force facilitated security operations in border areas.

**Keywords:** COUNTERINSURGENCY, CIVIL CONFLICT

**JEL Classification:** D72, D74, L23

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# 1 Introduction

Security operations are often constrained by international borders. Different countries may not share the same interests in conflicts, and armed groups can use neighbouring territories as a safe haven. Such safe havens have emerged along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, or the one between Venezuela and Colombia. However, even if the interests of neighbouring countries are broadly aligned, armed groups could exploit frictions in information-sharing between neighbours, legal constraints on armed forces crossing borders, or a failure to internalize the displacement of conflict across borders. A context that illustrates these frictions clearly is the ongoing Jihadist conflict in the Sahel. This conflict spans several West-African nations, which are each involved militarily in a fight against these groups. The conflict is particularly intense around the region's porous borders.

Our paper investigates if improved cooperation between national armies in the Sahel region makes security operations more effective. We focus in particular on the creation of a multi-national military force that could cross international borders, the so-called "G5 Sahel" mission. This mission started operating in 2017 and focused in particular on the 3-frontier region of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. A priori, the effect of this mission on conflict dynamics is unclear. On the one hand, the mission solved legal constraints on operations in border areas, it may have increased troop levels and improved communication between national armies. In addition, it could have led to an internalisation of the externalities that characterize security provision in border areas. On the other hand, the joint mission might have introduced new coordination frictions between the army units from different countries.

Relying on data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Database (ACLED), we assess the effect of the introduction of the G5 mission on the basis of two empirical exercises. First, we exploit the limitation of the zone of operation of the G5 mission to a 50 kilometer bandwidth around the concerned borders. Using a regression disconti-

nunity around the zone of operation, we show that conflict is less intense where the G5 mission is active. This result does not seem to be driven by geographical displacement. We observe less violence initiated by Jihadist groups, and less violence initiated by security forces against ethnic militia. As the mandate of the G5 mission was restricted to combating Jihadist groups, these results suggest that the G5 mission operated in line with its objectives and achieved a degree of effectiveness in the outcomes we measure. Heterogeneity analysis reveals that violence drops more strongly in the operating zone of the G5 Sahel force when the terrain favours the mobility of armed groups, i.e. when ruggedness is higher and the border does not overlap with a major river.

To shed more light on the underlying mechanism, we conduct a second exercise in which we try to assess more directly if the G5 mission facilitated security operations in border areas. We focus on major French attacks on jihadist groups. We expect these attacks to trigger the movement of jihadist groups and new security operations. In the aftermath of these trigger attacks, we do see less security operations in border areas when the G5 mission is not active. However, when the G5 mission is active, this effect disappears. These findings offer additional support for the idea that the G5 force facilitated security operations in border areas.

Our paper adds to a small literature in economics and political science that studies the effect of borders on conflict outcomes with granular conflict data. [Martínez \(2017\)](#) shows that the presidency of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela increased the presence of FARC rebels in Colombian municipalities along the border. Studying the geography of conflict, [Mueller et al. \(2022\)](#) argue that raising physical barriers at ethnic frontiers could reduce conflict. [Blair \(2023\)](#) provides evidence from Iraq showing how border protections reduce the victimization of civilians by rebel fighters. However, this paper does not look at how borders affect the propagation of groups whose objectives are not limited to one country. In addition, the role of a cross-national force is particularly interesting as a policy intervention, as the construction of fences is practically not feasible in many settings,

and may hamper with economic activity in border areas.

To our knowledge, our paper is the first to measure the effect of military cooperation between national armies on the conflict dynamics in border areas. We add to the large literature on the empirical study of conflict using econometric methods. This literature has studied the effects of economic shocks on conflict extensively (e.g. Miguel et al., 2004; Ferrara and Harari, 2018; Dube and Vargas, 2013; Berman et al., 2015; Eynde, 2016). The role of religious and ethnic diversity (e.g. Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2005; Esteban et al., 2012), as well as the role of political institutions as drivers of civil conflict (Besley and Persson, 2011) have also been studied at length.<sup>1</sup> In parallel, there is increasing evidence on how development interventions affect conflict (Berman et al., 2011; Crost and Johnston, 2014; Fetzer, 2020)). Finally, and closest to the current project, a very recent literature evaluates the effect of military interventions. For example, Dell and Querubin (2018) find that aerial bombing campaigns by the US in Vietnam increased the support for communist insurgents. There is not much work studying in the organizational aspects of war and military planning.<sup>2</sup> Fetzer et al. (2021) study changes in military cooperation in the context of the security transition from NATO to the Afghan National Army in Afghanistan. This paper finds that the security transition improved security in a first stage, but worsened outcomes when NATO troops were withdrawn physically. The authors argue that these patterns are consistent with the Taliban lying low strategically to facilitate of the withdrawal. Of course, this setting is distinct from the one of cooperation between neighbouring countries which we focus on in the current paper. Given the importance of international cooperation for the effective provision of security, the questions addressed by our paper are particularly relevant - for the Sahel

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<sup>1</sup>A number of recent papers have highlighted how specific sub-national institutions can spur or mitigate conflict (e.g. Shapiro and Eynde, 2023; Fetzer and Kyburz, 2023), or how institutional arrangements arise in war settings (de la Sierra, 2020; Dincecco et al., 2022).

<sup>2</sup>Exceptions are Ager et al. (2022), who study the role of incentives for fighter pilots in the German air force during World War II, and Acemoglu et al. (2020) who study the incentive for Colombian soldiers to target civilians and claim them as rebel fatalities. However, the focus of our paper is not on individual incentives, but on military cooperation.

region and beyond.

As far as work on the Sahel region is concerned, our paper is also one of the first quantitative empirical studies of conflict in the region. Focusing on the seasonal migration of herders (transumant pastoralists), [McGuirk and Nunn \(2022\)](#) find that rainfall deficiency has exacerbated the conflict between pastoralists and agriculturalists. While these authors do not explicitly restrict their analysis to the Sahel region, the processes they study are particularly important in the region we study. In Mali, [Richard \(2022\)](#) finds that the insecurity induced by the conflict hampers seasonal migration and, hence, reduces lean season consumption in villages usually relying on this type of migration and an income source. [Calvo et al. \(2020\)](#) study the effect of conflict in Mali on social capital. They find that conflict exposure increases engagement with political associations, which could deepen the conflict to the extent that these organizations act as interest groups for particular ethnic groups. [Premand and Rohner \(2023\)](#) study a large-scale conditional cash transfer scheme in Niger, and find that this programme increased conflict intensity. These recent contributions all shed light on important aspects of the conflict. However, our paper is the first to focus on the security operations in this conflict.

## 2 Background

The Sahel region has been plagued by conflict in recent years, with armed groups operating across borders and increasing violence since the 2012 Tuareg-led rebellion in Mali. This rebellion was followed by the proliferation of armed groups, including ethnic militias and jihadist groups. The concentration of violent events has been particularly high in the border areas, spreading from Mali to neighboring countries.

To address this instability, several international peacekeeping and counter-terrorism missions have been launched in the region. In January 2013, the French launched Operation Serval to regain control of the north of Mali, which was followed by the Barkhane

operation, which has maintained a lasting presence in the country until its complete withdraw in May 2022. In April 2013, the United Nations deployed the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

In February 2014, the G5-Sahel was created to facilitate military cooperation between Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania, and Chad. The G5-Sahel Joint Force was established by a UN resolution in June 2017,<sup>3</sup> and its command became active in September of that year. While the G5S initiative was strongly supported by France, analysts underline that the initiative came largely from the participating countries themselves (Touchard, 2018). Moreover, the G5S force was operationally independent from the French military mission.

The G5-Sahel force had a mandate focused on combating jihadist groups and trafficking gangs. It gave national armies the possibility to operate outside of the national territory, within pre-defined operation zones. In those zones, the force was also tasked with supported development interventions (Touchard, 2018). The activities of the G5 Sahel force were temporarily disrupted in June 2018, when a major suicide attack hit the G5 Sahel Joint Force headquarters. The resulting damage led to a suspension of activities until January 2019.

The Joint Force of the G5 Sahel was composed of 5,400 men across eight battalions. The battalions were distributed around three operations areas, with a Malian and a Mauritanian battalion operating jointly in the Western operation zone at the border between Mali and Mauritania, four battalions with troops from Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad based in the Central Zone, at the border between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso (the 3-frontier area), and a Nigerian and Chadian battalion based in the Eastern operation zone at the border between Chad and Niger. In G5 Sahel internal unclassified documents we have access to, 14 operations were reported in the Central Zone between 2017 and 2020, while only five and four operations were conducted respectively in the

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<sup>3</sup>UN Resolution 2364 (2017).



Western and Eastern operation zone during the same period. For each of the three zones, the G5S had a dedicated command. In theory, battalions also included a number of police and judiciary personnel to widen the capacities of the force (Touchard, 2018). More generally, the G5S mission also facilitated communication between army units along the border. For example, reports mention the creation of a phone book covering the border zones with mobile numbers of officers along the border, which improves the reactivity of forces in these areas (Boeke and Chauzal, 2017).

The operating zones for the G5-Sahel mission were initially defined as buffers of 50 km around the international borders the borders, but in January 2020, an announcement was made to extend the operating zone to 100 km.<sup>4</sup> As the implementation of this extension is unclear,<sup>5</sup> the focus in our empirical analysis remains on the 50km buffer zone in the time period between September 2017 and January 2020.

We do not have access to the exact geographical locations for all G5-Sahel operations. However, in figure A 1 we map all the events reported in the ACLED data that mention the G5-Sahel force explicitly or that involve G5-Sahel members operating outside of their national territories. The spatial distribution of these events is consistent with a focus of the G5 Sahel joint force on the 3-frontier region between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, and with a restriction of operations within the 50 km buffer zone around these borders. For most of our empirical analysis, we will hence focus on this Central zone.

From 2020 onward, two military coups in Mali generated tensions with the international community. The country finally left the G5-Sahel in May 2022, leading to the de facto end of the organization. Nevertheless, the G5-Sahel Joint Force was an essential part of international efforts to restore stability to the region for more than 5 years. Our

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<sup>4</sup>G5 Sahel, 26 January 2020, <https://www.g5sahel.org/les-chefs-d-etat-major-des-pays-du-g-5-sahel-rendent-plus-operationnelle-la-force-conjointe>.

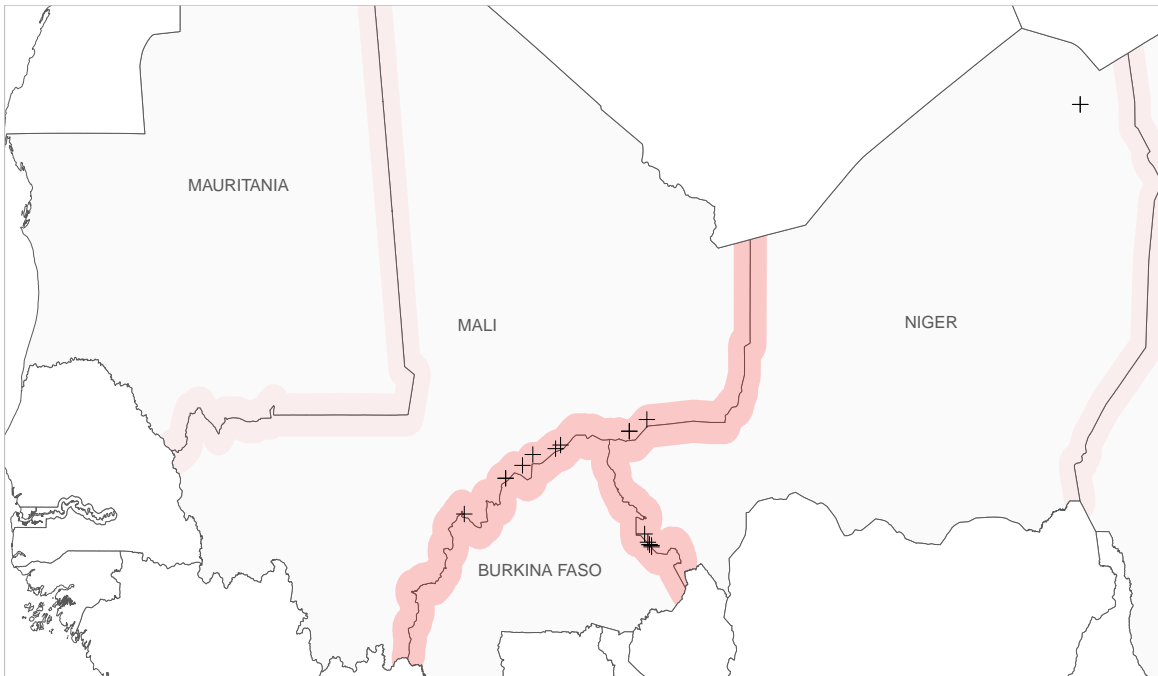
<sup>5</sup>We observe not a single trans-border operation outside of the 50km buffer in the ACLED data. As late as December 2021, the French UN delegation website described the G5 mission as being active in a 50km zone (<https://onu.delegfrance.org/france-s-action-in-the-sahel>).

Figure 1: Foreign Military Operations in Sahel regions

Panel A: Foreign Military Operations before G5-Sahel Joint Force Creation



Panel B: Foreign Military Operations during G5-Sahel period



Notes: Foreign Military Operations include all events involving G5 Sahel or G5-Sahel country members military forces outside of their national territory. The red shaded areas represent the 50 km operation zones around borders where the G5-Sahel operated officially between January 2017 and January 2020.

paper attempts to assess its effect on conflict dynamics.

### 3 Theoretical Framework

The provision of security in border areas entails specific challenges. Armed groups may be more mobile than security forces, who are not allowed to cross borders. Anticipating the possibility of armed groups to flee to safe havens, security forces may decide not to intervene in border zones.<sup>6</sup> In addition, investments in security in border areas may have externalities for neighbouring countries which are not taken into account when countries decide on how much investments to make in border zones. For all these reasons, security provision might be under-optimal in border areas.

The G5-Sahel mission could have increased or decreased conflict intensity, depending on the mechanism of influence. First of all, counter-terrorism forces could be a deterrent or neutralize armed groups, leading to a reduction in observed violence. However, counter-terrorism operations are also likely to result in greater fatalities among armed group members, and they could lead to violent escalation. Similarly, counter-terrorism forces could be an additional risk factor for civilians. These may become collateral victims, or could suffer from retaliation of armed groups against suspected collaborators. Moreover, organizational frictions between national armies could reduce the effectiveness of the joint force. Descriptive accounts point at severe coordination problems in terms of equipment and command structures (Touchard, 2018).

In thinking about the impacts of the G5 mission, the effects could be direct, involving the operations of G5-Sahel units, but also indirect when they involve other units whose behaviour changes in response to the presence of the G5-Sahel mission. For example, the improved communication between border forces that the G5S mission facilitated is

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<sup>6</sup>Theoretically, the possibility of displacement could also lead to a number of security operations in border zones that is above its optimal level, as neighbouring countries compete to try to push groups across the border. However, this mechanism seems most plausible when investments in security and displacement are long-lived, which is not the case in the context of the Sahel.

likely to affect all units.

Our empirical approach will not enable a fine distinction between all mechanisms. However, the sign of the net effects we estimate, in combination with a detailed analysis of different types of violence, will help us to narrow down the mechanisms underlying our findings. In addition, heterogeneous effects can shed some further light on the causal channels. If the G5 mission improves military coordination in border areas where militants are more mobile, we could expect the impacts to be most pronounced where it is also easier for armed groups to move without being detected or interrupted – for example in rugged areas.

## **4 Data**

Our main source of violence data is ACLED (Armed Conflict Location Event Data). ACLED is a database that tracks and records information on armed conflicts and political violence around the world. The data is sourced from a variety of sources, including traditional media, social networks, NGOs, international organizations, and local partners. For each violent event, the ACLED data records the number of fatalities that occurred. The events are also geo-coded, meaning that their location is identified and mapped. The locality of the events is coded at different levels of precision. This coding precision will be important for our study, as our regression discontinuity approach will exploit fine geographical variation. In addition to its localisation, each ACLED event is dated precisely. Further sub-categories are created based on the actors involved in each event. These sub-categories help to differentiate between different types of violence, such as conflicts between state and non-state actors or violence between different non-state actors. Overall, the ACLED data provides a comprehensive and detailed record of violent events and their associated actors, fatalities, and locations. While the reported fatalities are likely to be biased as underscored by the ACLED data description as "prone

to manipulation by armed groups, and occasionally the media”, this noisy measure may still contain some information about conflict intensity, and has been shown to correlate strongly with climatic shocks (e.g. Ferrara and Harari, 2018), population displacement (e.g. Tai et al., 2021). and child health (e.g. Tapsoba, 2018). As a robustness check, we also use a transformation of the fatality variables recording whether any fatality is reported.

We map the ACLED data and use information on the operation zones of the G5-Sahel mission that we obtained from official documents. To this mapped violence data, we add granular data on nightlight emissions and geographical features such as road access, urbanization, ruggedness and closeness to rivers. These additional variables will be used to support the validity of our empirical approach.

Figure A 1 shows the trends in violence, based on the ACLED data, in the “central operation zone”, i.e. the three border area of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. Violence is clearly trending upwards from early 2017 onwards. This increase is particularly pronounced in areas very close (within 15 km) to the international borders, while the broader operation zone of the G5 mission follows a trend that is similar to the one observed for the areas outside of the G5 operation zone. While this graph illustrates the overall conflict dynamics and is important for the context of our study, we do not think it allows us to identify the effect of the G5-Sahel mission. The low levels of violence before the launch of the G5-Sahel force in September 2017 make the setting ill-suited for a difference-in-difference approach. Moreover, the G5-mission was created in anticipation of the conflict becoming more gradually intense in the border areas, and the strategies of various actors may have contributed to this intensification. Hence, estimating the effect of cooperation between national armies necessitates a more granular approach. We develop such empirical strategies in the next section.

## 5 Empirical strategy

We will study the effect of the G5 Sahel mission through the lens of two empirical exercises. First, we will use a regression discontinuity design to assess whether violence levels are different in the operation zones of the G5-mission. We are interested in comparing areas where national armies cooperate to areas that are under the sole responsibility of national army units. The precise definition of the operation zone of the G5 mission offers a plausibly exogenous assignment to these two security environments. In particular, we leverage the spatial discontinuity created by the limitation of the G5-Sahel operation zone within 50 km of G5-Sahel countries' borders:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta Border_i + \delta (Distance_i - z_0) + \delta' Border_i \cdot (Distance_i - z_0) + \delta_b + \eta_c + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

In this specification, the outcome  $y_i$  is our measure of conflict at the grid-cell  $i$  level.  $z_0$  refers to the limit of the buffer zone, at 50 km.  $Distance_i$  measures the distance to the 50km buffer limit. We could expect this running variable to correlate with conflict outcomes - for example, conflict could be systematically more intense when we are closer to the international border. In our empirical approach, we want to control for such impacts, and evaluate instead whether the operation zone of the G5 creates a discontinuous change in conflict outcomes. The discontinuity is captured in the equation by  $Border_i$ , which indicates whether grid-cell is less than 50km from the border. We also include border segment fixed effects  $\delta_b$  and country fixed effects  $\eta_c$ . We allow for a data-driven choice of two bandwidths for optimal mean squared error (MSE) point estimation with Calonico-Cattaneo-Titiunik procedure (Calonico et al., 2014). As the RD approach relies on a fine coding of conflict events, we use granular gridcells (0.025 by 0.025 degrees), and we focus on ACLED events with the highest precision level for our main results. We

show findings for alternative coding as robustness checks. To support the validity of the RD approach, we will show continuity of geographical characteristics and pre-G5 levels of violence around the border of the operation zone.

To shed further light on the mechanisms underlying the RD results, we will rely on a second empirical exercise. Here, we study how the response of violence to trigger events differs in border areas and depending on whether the G5 mission is active or not. As trigger events, we focus on major French operations against Jihadist groups, which we identify as operations that claim at least 5 fatalities. These events are followed by a marked intensification of conflict, as shown in figure A 6 in the online appendix. In a triple difference approach, we will compare the response to trigger events between border and non-border areas, and when the G5-Sahel mission is active versus not active. We structure the data in 0.1 by 0.1 degree grid-cells. We restrict ourselves to trigger operations that are less than 250km from the three-border area. Then, we construct a window of 8 weeks, and a geographical circle of 100km, around each trigger operation. When gridcells are part of multiple event windows, we keep only the first window for that gridcell.<sup>7</sup> In total, our sample has 48 trigger operations, and 20 of these take place when the G5-Sahel mission is not active.

The resulting estimating equation is:

$$y_{i,p,t} = \zeta Border_i * Post_{t,p} + \chi Border_i * Post_{t,p} * G5_t + \eta_i + \gamma_{p,t} + \epsilon_{i,p,t} \quad (2)$$

In this equation,  $y_{i,p,t}$  is a measure of conflict at time  $t$  in gridcell  $i$  for a window around operation  $p$ .  $t$  is measured in two-week periods. The outcome  $Border_i$  indicates whether grid-cell is less than 50km from the international border, so within the operation zone of the G5-Sahel force.  $Post_{t,p}$  is one in the time periods after the trigger operation.  $G5_t$  is

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<sup>7</sup>This approach prevents us from using already treated gridcells as a control in future comparisons. As has been highlighted by the recent literature on difference-in-difference methods, such comparisons could introduce negative weights in the estimated treatment effect (de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfoeuille, 2022).

an indicator for when the G5 Force is active.<sup>8</sup> We also include operation by time fixed effects ( $\gamma_{p,t}$ ), as well as gridcell level fixed effects ( $\eta_i$ ). We cluster standard errors at the gridcell-level. While our main interest is in the triple difference specification above, we will also show results where we estimate time-to-operation effects in event study graphs.

## 6 Results

**RD results** Figure 2 compares fatalities in gridcells within the G5-Sahel central operation zone to those in gridcells just outside the operation zone during the period of activity of the G5 mission within 50km of international borders. The local linear regressions in Panel A and B shows a clear discontinuity in the number of total conflict fatalities and civilians fatalities caused by Islamist groups at the border of the operation. There are less fatalities where the G5 mission is active, especially for events involving Islamist groups whose containment was the objective of the G5 mission. The discontinuity appears stronger with the data-driven optimal bandwidth (Calonico-Cattaneo-Titiunik procedure to minimise bias and variance of the RD estimator) which mostly excludes cells closer to the international border.

The graphical patterns show a gradual increase in conflict as one moves closer to the international border. This effect can be due to the strategic importance of the border for the security forces, as well as the net benefits of operating in these areas from the perspective of armed groups. However, the RD results show a discontinuous jump in this pattern within the operation zone of the G5. The graphical patterns also suggest that the results are not driven by symmetrical displacement, where the reduction within the operation zone is offset by increased violence just outside the operation zone. Of course, it is impossible to rule out more gradual displacement. However, interpretationally, this

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<sup>8</sup>As we are interested in immediate response patterns, we will consider the period in which the G5-Sahel mission was incapacitated by a suicide attack on its headquarters as a period in which the G5 is not active, between June 2018 and January 2019.



would still provide evidence of the local effectiveness of the G5-Sahel mission. As we set out in the theoretical framework, it is far from obvious *ex ante* that the mission should have reduced violence - even locally.

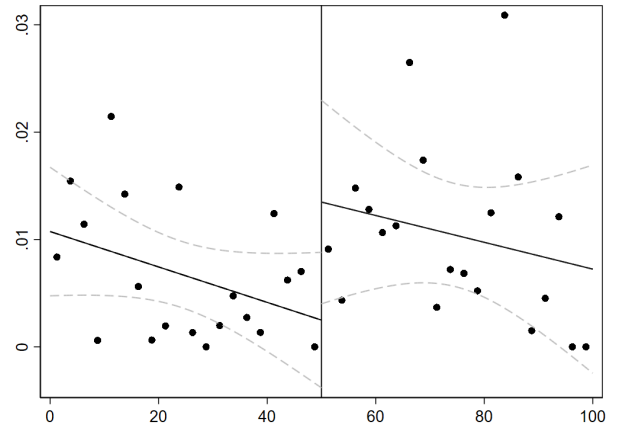
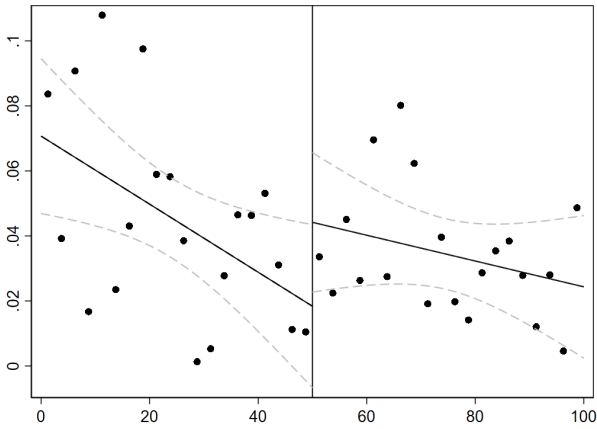
Figure A 2 in Appendix shows the comparison for the total number of fatalities during the G5 mission period and before September 2017, when the G5 mission was not active. There is no discontinuity in the pre-treatment period, which supports the validity of the RD approach.

Figure 2: Regression Discontinuity for G5 central operation zone

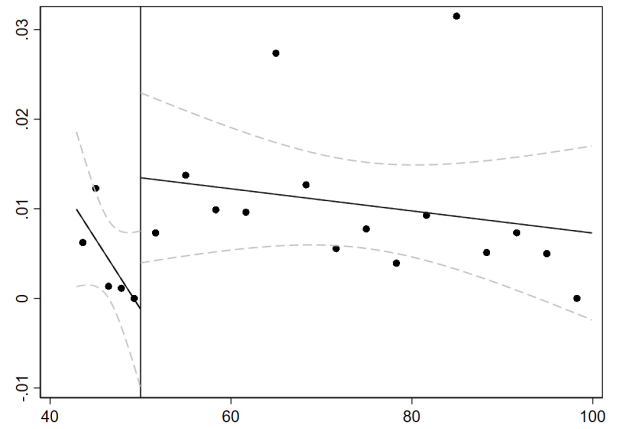
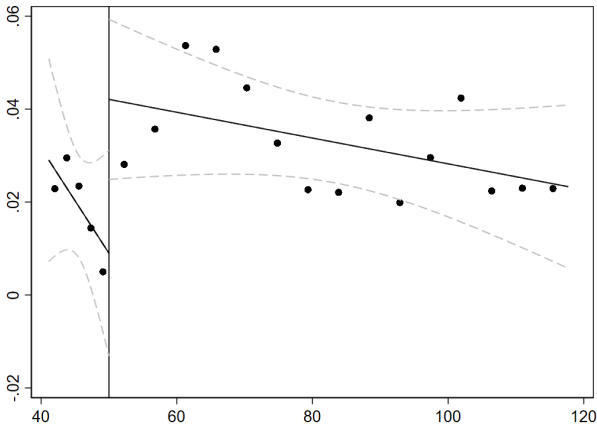
Panel A: All events fatalities

Panel B: Attacks on civilians by Islamist groups

*Symmetric full bandwidth*



*Optimal bandwidth*



Notes: Discontinuity estimated at 50 km. Data-driven choice of two bandwidths for MSE-optimal point estimation. Local polynomial of order 1. Additional country and border controls. All conflict events occurring within 200km of each considered G5-Sahel borders are included for the period between September 2017 to January 2020. The sample comprises the central Zone (Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso three borders regions). Included events are coded with geo-precision level 1.

Table 1: Discontinuity in conflict intensity for G5 Sahel Central operation zone by actors 2017-2020.

|   | All events                |                        | Military operations       |                        | Attacks by armed groups   |                        | Attacks on Civilians      |                      |
|---|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
|   | Fatalities (count)<br>(1) | Events<br>(2)          | Fatalities (count)<br>(3) | Events<br>(4)          | Fatalities (count)<br>(5) | Events<br>(6)          | Fatalities (count)<br>(7) | Events<br>(8)        |
| <i>Panel A: All events</i>                        |                           |                        |                           |                        |                           |                        |                           |                      |
| Robust  | -0.0449***<br>(0.0165)    | -0.0108<br>(0.0073)    | -0.0050**<br>(0.0025)     | -0.0022***<br>(0.0007) | -0.0359**<br>(0.0151)     | -0.0073<br>(0.0069)    | -0.0319***<br>(0.0113)    | -0.0033<br>(0.0051)  |
| Mean DV   | 0.027                     | 0.011                  | 0.003                     | 0.001                  | 0.024                     | 0.010                  | 0.016                     | 0.007                |
| Standard Deviation                                | 1.115                     | 0.220                  | 0.211                     | 0.033                  | 1.073                     | 0.198                  | 0.646                     | 0.123                |
| Observations within buffer                        | 3726                      | 5881                   | 7285                      | 4865                   | 3609                      | 6378                   | 3285                      | 7668                 |
| Observations untreated                            | 38392                     | 25505                  | 27652                     | 42229                  | 32315                     | 22713                  | 34083                     | 22389                |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)                          | 71.101                    | 46.514                 | 50.720                    | 78.387                 | 59.485                    | 41.264                 | 62.884                    | 40.734               |
| Bandwidth treated (km)                            | 6.499                     | 10.214                 | 12.582                    | 8.413                  | 6.280                     | 11.000                 | 5.684                     | 13.220               |
| <i>Panel B: Events involving Islamist groups</i>  |                           |                        |                           |                        |                           |                        |                           |                      |
| Robust  | -0.0244**<br>(0.0115)     | -0.0094***<br>(0.0035) | -0.0015<br>(0.0017)       | -0.0008<br>(0.0005)    | -0.0244**<br>(0.0115)     | -0.0094***<br>(0.0035) | -0.0132***<br>(0.0047)    | -0.0041*<br>(0.0021) |
| Mean DV   | 0.015                     | 0.006                  | 0.000                     | 0.000                  | 0.015                     | 0.006                  | 0.005                     | 0.003                |
| Standard Deviation                                | 0.875                     | 0.123                  | 0.067                     | 0.011                  | 0.875                     | 0.123                  | 0.273                     | 0.076                |
| Observations within buffer                        | 6957                      | 5243                   | 8599                      | 6298                   | 6957                      | 5243                   | 4079                      | 8771                 |
| Observations untreated                            | 37374                     | 39015                  | 30246                     | 28692                  | 37374                     | 39015                  | 25485                     | 45587                |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)                          | 69.241                    | 72.389                 | 55.643                    | 52.692                 | 69.241                    | 72.389                 | 46.456                    | 84.874               |
| Bandwidth treated (km)                            | 12.079                    | 9.105                  | 14.864                    | 10.868                 | 12.079                    | 9.105                  | 7.090                     | 15.092               |
| <i>Panel C: Events involving Communal militia</i> |                           |                        |                           |                        |                           |                        |                           |                      |
| Robust  | -0.0084<br>(0.0085)       | 0.0019<br>(0.0033)     | -0.0025<br>(0.0018)       | -0.0017***<br>(0.0006) | -0.0084<br>(0.0085)       | 0.0019<br>(0.0033)     | -0.0081<br>(0.0076)       | 0.0035<br>(0.0029)   |
| Mean DV   | 0.008                     | 0.002                  | 0.002                     | 0.001                  | 0.008                     | 0.002                  | 0.006                     | 0.001                |
| Standard Deviation                                | 0.573                     | 0.058                  | 0.195                     | 0.028                  | 0.573                     | 0.058                  | 0.516                     | 0.042                |
| Observations within buffer                        | 3270                      | 11604                  | 6942                      | 4750                   | 3270                      | 11604                  | 3114                      | 12034                |
| Observations untreated                            | 39963                     | 24751                  | 29184                     | 34175                  | 39963                     | 24751                  | 35309                     | 20710                |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)                          | 74.163                    | 45.224                 | 53.602                    | 63.075                 | 74.163                    | 45.224                 | 65.131                    | 37.586               |
| Bandwidth treated (km)                            | 5.664                     | 19.825                 | 12.034                    | 8.208                  | 5.664                     | 19.825                 | 5.421                     | 20.548               |
| <i>Panel D: Events involving civilians</i>        |                           |                        |                           |                        |                           |                        |                           |                      |
| Robust  | -0.0319***<br>(0.0113)    | -0.0033<br>(0.0051)    | -0.0020*<br>(0.0012)      | -0.0011***<br>(0.0004) | -0.0249**<br>(0.0104)     | -0.0004<br>(0.0046)    | -0.0319***<br>(0.0113)    | -0.0033<br>(0.0051)  |
| Mean DV   | 0.016                     | 0.007                  | 0.002                     | 0.000                  | 0.013                     | 0.006                  | 0.016                     | 0.007                |
| Standard Deviation                                | 0.646                     | 0.123                  | 0.191                     | 0.024                  | 0.600                     | 0.112                  | 0.646                     | 0.123                |
| Observations within buffer                        | 3285                      | 7668                   | 7553                      | 5101                   | 3190                      | 9994                   | 3285                      | 7668                 |
| Observations untreated                            | 34083                     | 22389                  | 16038                     | 33412                  | 27594                     | 21360                  | 34083                     | 22389                |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)                          | 62.884                    | 40.734                 | 28.872                    | 61.633                 | 50.602                    | 38.746                 | 62.884                    | 40.734               |
| Bandwidth treated (km)                            | 5.684                     | 13.220                 | 13.036                    | 8.807                  | 5.544                     | 17.149                 | 5.684                     | 13.220               |

Notes : Discontinuity estimated at 50 km. Data-driven choice of two bandwidths for MSE-optimal point estimation. Local polynomial of order 1. Additional country and border controls. All conflict events occurring within 250km of borders between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are included for the period between January 2011 and September 2017. Include events coded with geo-precision level 1 only. Empty cells means the discontinuity could not be estimated due to lack of variability in the dependent variable. Military operations involving islamist groups record fatalities from islamist groups only, whereas attacks by armed group and attacks on civilians involving islamist groups record fatalities caused by islamist groups. Idem for communal militia and unidentified armed groups. Robust Calonico-Cattaneo-Titiunik standard errors in parentheses- \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

Table 2: Continuity in conflict intensity and geographical variables for G5 Sahel Central operation zone before G5 Sahel first operation.

| Variables:                 | (1)                                    | (2)                 | (3)                    | (4)                  | (5)                 | (6)                | (7)                 | (8)                | (9)                 | (10)               |
|----------------------------|--|---------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
|                            | Conflict variables<br>before Sept 2017 |                     | Geographical variables |                      |                     |                    |                     |                    |                     |                    |
|                            | Events                                 | Fatalities(#)       | GHS pop                | Nightlight 2017      | Nightlight 2014     | NDVI               | Road                | Rivers             | Cities              | Ruggedness         |
| Conventional               | 0.0005<br>(0.0021)                     | -0.0004<br>(0.0020) | -0.3384<br>(4.1348)    | -0.0034<br>(0.0027)  | -0.0024<br>(0.0029) | 0.2634<br>(0.2451) | -0.3823<br>(0.4188) | 0.2758<br>(0.6033) | 0.1124<br>(0.6682)  | 0.0909<br>(0.4954) |
| Bias-corrected             | 0.0007<br>(0.0021)                     | -0.0006<br>(0.0020) | -2.2285<br>(4.1348)    | -0.0044*<br>(0.0027) | -0.0032<br>(0.0029) | 0.2521<br>(0.2451) | -0.6176<br>(0.4188) | 0.2674<br>(0.6033) | -0.0362<br>(0.6682) | 0.0989<br>(0.4954) |
| Robust                     | 0.0007<br>(0.0024)                     | -0.0006<br>(0.0028) | -2.2285<br>(4.7529)    | -0.0044<br>(0.0032)  | -0.0032<br>(0.0035) | 0.2521<br>(0.2928) | -0.6176<br>(0.4756) | 0.2674<br>(0.7200) | -0.0362<br>(0.7954) | 0.0989<br>(0.5605) |
| Mean DV                    | 0.004                                  | 0.010               | 36.676                 | 0.195                | 0.009               | 131.669            | 21.677              | 36.819             | 116.643             | 13.787             |
| Standard Deviation         | 0.357                                  | 0.920               | 214.323                | 0.262                | 0.260               | 16.791             | 36.265              | 33.116             | 101.818             | 20.645             |
| Observations within buffer | 5369                                   | 4476                | 7415                   | 10155                | 6911                | 6319               | 8565                | 11255              | 12201               | 6700               |
| Observations untreated     | 14332                                  | 6874                | 14654                  | 11793                | 11971               | 15691              | 9974                | 17162              | 18665               | 8946               |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)   | 25.662                                 | 12.131              | 26.330                 | 21.065               | 21.399              | 28.188             | 17.742              | 30.911             | 33.761              | 15.923             |
| Bandwidth treated (km)     | 9.389                                  | 7.804               | 12.804                 | 17.466               | 11.981              | 10.904             | 14.798              | 19.211             | 20.821              | 11.560             |

Notes : Discontinuity estimated at 50 km. Data-driven choice of two bandwidths for MSE-optimal point estimation. Local polynomial of order 1. Additional country and border controls. All conflict events occurring within 250km of borders between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are included for the period between January 2011 and September 2017. Include events coded with geo-precision level 1 only. Robust Calonico-Cattaneo-Titiunik standard errors in parentheses- \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

Panel A in Table 1 shows RD estimates for different estimation approaches and outcomes. We see that the general pattern of lower fatalities in the G5 operation zone holds across estimation methods and outcomes. The magnitude of the effect is large: crossing into the operation zone of the G5 mission reduces the number of fatalities in a given gridcell by 0.04, whereas the mean number of fatalities per gridcell is around 0.03. The reduction in violence is observed for security operations, attacks by armed groups, and violence against civilians. The effects are a bit more marked for the number fatalities than for event counts, but they go in the same direction.

To shed more light on the mechanisms underlying the observed reduction in violence, the subsequent panels in Table 1 show RD results for a finer classification of violent events based on the actors involved. Panel B focuses on violence involving Islamist groups. Interestingly, security operation against Islamist groups do not decrease significantly in the operation zone of the G5 region. However, there are less attacks by armed jihadist groups and less attacks against civilians. Strikingly, there is a more pronounced reduction in security force violence against ethnic militia groups, while these ethnic militias do not reduce their violence significantly. As the official mandate of the G5-Sahel force is focused on combating Jihadist groups, these findings suggest the G5-Sahel mission reduces violence initiated by the actor it is supposed to target. In this sense, the mission appears to be effective.

Table 2 presents important validity checks for the RD approach. It confirms the absence of discontinuities in pre-G5 conflict measures as well as geographical characteristics. Hence, we are confident that the regression discontinuity estimates are picking up the causal effect of grid-cells belonging to the operation zone of the G5 mission.

### **Heterogeneity analysis**

Table 3 show heterogeneous results by characteristics of the border. The reduction in violence is most pronounced in areas that are more rugged and areas that are further away from rivers. Rugged terrain makes it easier for armed groups to move without

Table 3: Discontinuity in conflict intensity for central G5-Sahel operation zones 2017-2020, heterogeneity by border segment characteristics.

|                            | Low rugged          |                     | High rugged            |                        | Close river          |                     | Far river              |                     | Close MINUSMA         |                       | Far MINUSMA           |                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
|                            | Fatalities<br>(1)   | Events<br>(2)       | Fatalities<br>(3)      | Events<br>(4)          | Fatalities<br>(5)    | Events<br>(6)       | Fatalities<br>(7)      | Events<br>(8)       | Fatalities<br>(9)     | Events<br>(10)        | Fatalities<br>(11)    | Events<br>(12)      |
| Conventional               | -0.0106<br>(0.0136) | -0.0024<br>(0.0097) | -0.0733***<br>(0.0245) | -0.0211***<br>(0.0070) | -0.0133*<br>(0.0078) | -0.0143<br>(0.0096) | -0.0559***<br>(0.0205) | -0.0049<br>(0.0082) | -0.0776**<br>(0.0324) | -0.0203*<br>(0.0108)  | -0.0275*<br>(0.0143)  | -0.0078<br>(0.0077) |
| Bias-corrected             | -0.0165<br>(0.0136) | 0.0002<br>(0.0097)  | -0.0688***<br>(0.0245) | -0.0229***<br>(0.0070) | -0.0139*<br>(0.0078) | -0.0155<br>(0.0096) | -0.0572***<br>(0.0205) | -0.0048<br>(0.0082) | -0.0698**<br>(0.0324) | -0.0218**<br>(0.0108) | -0.0317**<br>(0.0143) | -0.0095<br>(0.0077) |
| Robust                     | -0.0165<br>(0.0155) | 0.0002<br>(0.0111)  | -0.0688**<br>(0.0271)  | -0.0229***<br>(0.0084) | -0.0139*<br>(0.0082) | -0.0155<br>(0.0102) | -0.0572**<br>(0.0225)  | -0.0048<br>(0.0096) | -0.0698**<br>(0.0338) | -0.0218*<br>(0.0122)  | -0.0317*<br>(0.0163)  | -0.0095<br>(0.0088) |
| Mean DV                    | 0.019               | 0.007               | 0.035                  | 0.015                  | 0.009                | 0.005               | 0.037                  | 0.014               | 0.034                 | 0.011                 | 0.024                 | 0.011               |
| Standard Deviation         | 1.199               | 0.195               | 1.029                  | 0.241                  | 0.836                | 0.185               | 1.228                  | 0.235               | 1.454                 | 0.266                 | 0.869                 | 0.189               |
| Observations within buffer | 1762                | 3897                | 2649                   | 2484                   | 897                  | 1751                | 2715                   | 4121                | 1575                  | 2652                  | 2293                  | 3407                |
| Observations untreated     | 13548               | 12904               | 18614                  | 16068                  | 8351                 | 9764                | 24504                  | 12972               | 15627                 | 14709                 | 20820                 | 14782               |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)   | 50.896              | 48.364              | 67.359                 | 57.882                 | 49.290               | 57.831              | 65.951                 | 33.791              | 78.887                | 74.118                | 60.958                | 42.814              |
| Bandwidth treated (km)     | 6.443               | 13.852              | 8.814                  | 8.347                  | 5.222                | 10.297              | 6.685                  | 10.149              | 7.560                 | 12.593                | 6.250                 | 9.322               |

Notes : Discontinuity estimated at 50 km. Data-driven choice of two bandwidths for MSE-optimal point estimation. Local polynomial of order 1. Additional country and border controls. All conflict events occurring within 250km of each considered G5-Sahel borders are included for the period between September 2017 to January 2020. Include events coded with geo-precision level 1 only. Cells that intersect with the limit of the 50km buffer of intervention are dropped from the sample. Robust Calonico-Cattaneo-Titiunik standard errors in parentheses- \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

detection and hampers their pursuit or interception by security forces. In contrast, rivers create physical barriers that facilitate detection and interception. Hence, these patterns consistent with the hypothesis that the G5 is most effective where borders are most porous.<sup>9</sup> Figure A 5 in appendix illustrates the definition of border segments characteristics used for this heterogeneity analysis. The patterns are a bit harder to interpret for the distance to MINUSMA forces. The reduction in violence is larger in the vicinity of MINUSMA forces, which could capture complementarities between the G5 Sahel mission and MINUSMA. However, the difference in the magnitude of coefficients is small compared to the differences we see for ruggedness or overlap with rivers.

Table A1 in appendix further shows heterogeneity by border and country member, suggesting the G5 is most effective at the border between Mali and Burkina Faso.

**Robustness of the RD results** In the appendix, we present RD plots for a wider range of outcomes in figures A 3 and A 4.<sup>10</sup> Table A5 offers a detailed comparison of alternative

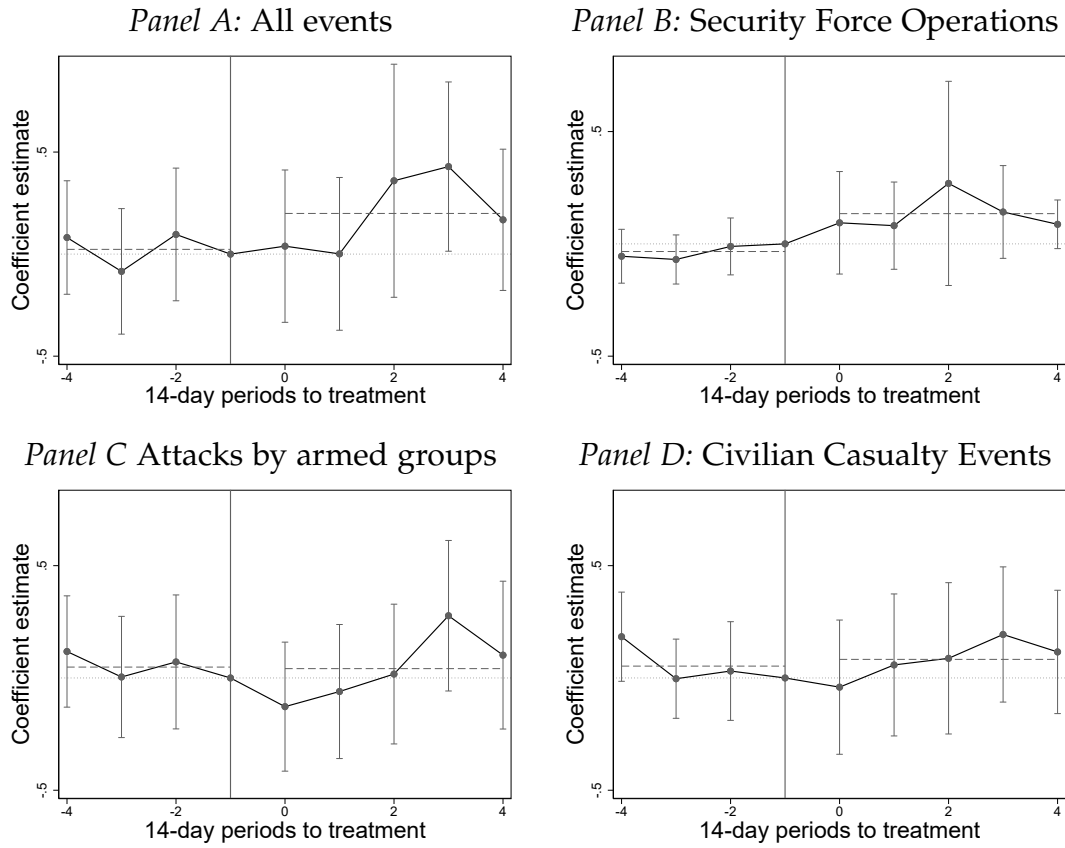
<sup>9</sup>Modern RD methods are not set up to estimate heterogeneous effects, so we do not formally test the difference between coefficients. Another caveat to this interpretation is that that some of difference between these regions already appears in the mean of the dependent variable.

<sup>10</sup>One issue highlighted by the graphs in figure A 3 is the small number of security operations against Islamist groups in the optimal RD bandwidth. Figure A 4 shows this number increases when including less precisely coded events. Table A5 provides results for coarser geographical precision levels.

coding approaches for the main violence outcomes. It includes results where the fatality numbers are subject to an inverse hyperbolic sine transformation. It also considers measures that include violence events that are coded less precisely (level 2 in ACLED). Including these less precisely coded violence events tends to make the RD estimates less precise too. However, the broad patterns we found in our main results are generally robust to these alternative measurement approaches. Table A2 replicates the main RD results over the Western and Eastern operations zones and finds no discontinuity in any outcome, which is consistent with the lower treatment intensity in these areas.

Table A3 further shows that the results are also robust to dropping cells crossed by the 50km buffer line, top-coding the 1% top fatalities and transforming the fatalities variable to a dummy indicating any fatality. Table reproduces the RDD results with manually set bandwidth and a standard linear estimation of the G5 area effect while controlling for several transformations of the distance to the border and flexible controls for longitude and latitude, with stable coefficients across specifications.

Figure 3: Reaction to trigger events - border areas under G5



Notes: Observations at the grid-cell level, binned in two-week periods, in two-month windows around major French operations (2010-2020). Results are based on the estimating equation (2), in which we estimate time-to-treatment effects around the trigger operation for the interaction term  $Border_i * G5_t$ . Standard errors are clustered at the grid-cell level, and grey bars represent 95% confidence intervals.



Table 4: Reaction to trigger events

|                    | All events                |                  | Military operations       |                   | Attacks by armed groups   |                 | Attacks on Civilians      |                 |
|--------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
|                    | Fatalities (count)<br>(1) | Events<br>(2)    | Fatalities (count)<br>(3) | Events<br>(4)     | Fatalities (count)<br>(5) | Events<br>(6)   | Fatalities (count)<br>(7) | Events<br>(8)   |
| Border x Post      | -0.50<br>(0.50)           | -0.16*<br>(0.09) | -0.52*<br>(0.30)          | -0.13**<br>(0.06) | 0.02<br>(0.41)            | -0.03<br>(0.06) | -0.70**<br>(0.30)         | -0.06<br>(0.06) |
| Border x Post x G5 | 1.40**<br>(0.67)          | 0.17*<br>(0.10)  | 1.46***<br>(0.47)         | 0.19***<br>(0.07) | -0.07<br>(0.49)           | -0.01<br>(0.07) | 1.41***<br>(0.50)         | 0.03<br>(0.07)  |
| Mean DV            | 0.797                     | 0.199            | 0.370                     | 0.062             | 0.427                     | 0.138           | 0.412                     | 0.108           |
| Standard Deviation | 5.260                     | 0.638            | 3.846                     | 0.412             | 2.901                     | 0.423           | 2.814                     | 0.368           |
| Observations       | 2538                      | 2538             | 2538                      | 2538              | 2538                      | 2538            | 2538                      | 2538            |
| Clusters           | 282                       | 282              | 282                       | 282               | 282                       | 282             | 282                       | 282             |

*Notes:* Observations at the grid-cell level, binned in two-week periods, in two-month windows around major French operations (2010-2020). Results are based on estimating equation (2). Standard errors are clustered at the grid-cell level and presented in parentheses; stars indicate \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

**Response to trigger events** We now turn to our second empirical exercise, which compares responses of violence events to trigger operations. Figure 3 shows the differential violence in border areas when the G5 mission is active, split up in 2-week time periods around each trigger event. Panel A shows that relatively more violence events occur in border areas (so, within the G5-Sahel operation zone) when the G5-Sahel force is active. The split-up by type of violence in Panels B to D suggests that it is mostly the violence initiated by security forces that is driving this intensification. Focusing on panel B alone, this intensification is visible relatively soon after the trigger event. Table 4 confirms these patterns. Interestingly, it also shows that when the G5 mission is not active, there are less security operations following a trigger event in border areas.<sup>11</sup> This finding supports the hypothesis that security forces are hampered in their operations when the G5-Sahel mission is not active. However, this relative reduction in the intensity of operations is entirely off-set when the G5 mission is active. This result suggests that the G5-Sahel mission did achieve its goal of facilitating operations in border areas. This pattern is mirrored by violence against civilians. Additional analysis in table A6 suggests that this effect is mostly coming from violence by security forces against the civilian population.<sup>12</sup>

**Robustness of the trigger event analysis** In the appendix, we test the sensitivity of the results to an alternative criterion for the trigger event, where we focus on operations in which at least 10 (instead of 5) people died (Table A7). These results are noisier, as the more selective criterion reduces the sample, but the pattern on military operations is the same and significant (at 10%) for the event measures. In Table A8, we present

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<sup>11</sup>Figure A 7 presents event studies around trigger events, comparing border and non-border areas, and showing these patterns separately for periods in which the G5-Sahel mission is active or not. Panel C shows the relative reduction in security operations in border areas after trigger events, and Panel D shows how this pattern reverses when the G5-Sahel mission is active.

<sup>12</sup>In this table, military operations against Islamist groups and communal militia respond in a similar way, which may appear at odds with the results of the RD analysis, where security force attacks against militia groups declined more than against Islamist groups. It should be kept in mind that the trigger events always involve Islamist groups, so that the nature of security force operations against communal militias may be different in trigger analysis. Indeed, it is impossible to disentangle the ethnic and religious dimensions of the conflict fully. In addition, it is also worth keeping in mind that there are limitations to the coding of actors (a substantial share of events involves unknown actors).

results for an alternative coding of the G5 operation period, treating the entire period from September 2017 onwards as "active". In this coding, we ignore the incapacitation of the G5 mission after the 2018 suicide attack. Compared to table 4, we find similar patterns for military operations - they are lower in border areas before the G5 is active, and increase afterwards.<sup>13</sup> While the reductions in violence by armed groups are not immediately observable, the response estimates are not set up to capture the longer-term dynamic impacts of security operations in border areas. For such global effects, we think our earlier RD results are more insightful.

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<sup>13</sup>In contrast to the main results, the coefficient on attacks against civilians is significantly positive before the G5 is active in the alternative coding. Low levels of violence before September 2017 hamper the comparability of violence patterns between the pre- and post-periods, so we do not want to emphasize this result. However, it is possible that the nature of violence against civilians changes over time. Before 2017, they could have suffered from poor security in border areas, whereas the intensification of the conflict might have them more vulnerable during military operations.

## 7 Conclusion

This paper examines how the establishment of an international armed force capable of crossing borders, known as the G5-Sahel, influenced the intensity and spatial distribution of conflict in the region's porous border areas. Our analysis indicates that the G5 mission reduced the intensity of conflict, at least locally, within its operation zone. By studying how the spatial distribution of violence responds to trigger events, we also find that the mission facilitated security operations in border areas. In this sense, our results offer a coherent narrative, whereby improved cooperation between national armies contributes to a reduction in equilibrium levels of violence. It should be kept in mind that the armies that are part of the G5-Sahel mission are regularly accused of human rights abuses, and we see that fatal violence against civilians mirrors their activities in our data. Hence, the welfare implications of our findings are far from clear in the context we study. In addition, the local effects that we estimate do not allow us to evaluate whether the G5 mission has helped to reduce levels of conflict at the aggregate level. The geographical spread of jihadist groups and the ongoing security challenges in the Sahel region put the local improvements we document in sharp perspective. In spite of these limitations, we think it is important to document that establishing zones in which national armies share security responsibilities can change conflict dynamics. These findings are particularly relevant for the many border regions in which armed groups exploit coordination frictions between national security forces.

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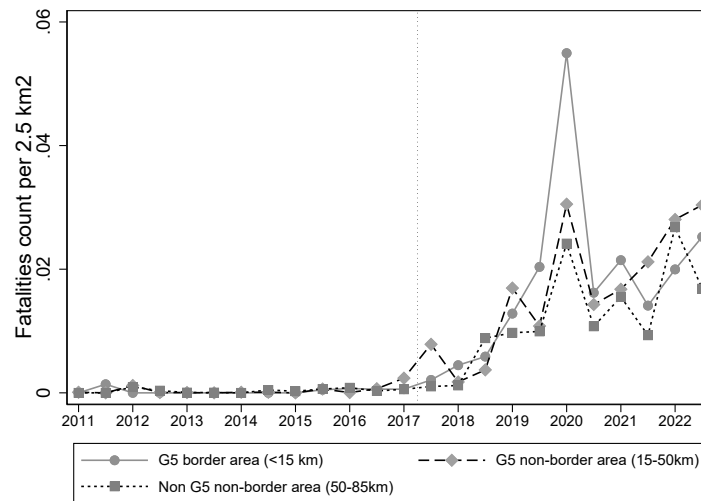
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# Appendix to Cooperation between National Armies

For Online Publication

Figure A 1: Time trends in conflict intensity in G5 Sahel central operation zone

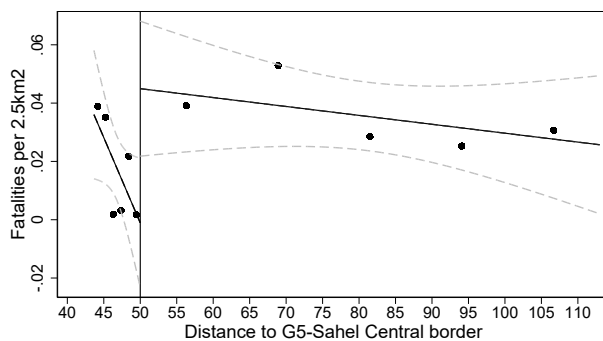


Notes: Observations at the grid-cell level, binned in six months periods (2011-2022). The sample comprises the central Zone (Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso three borders regions). Included events coded with geo-precision level 1 only.

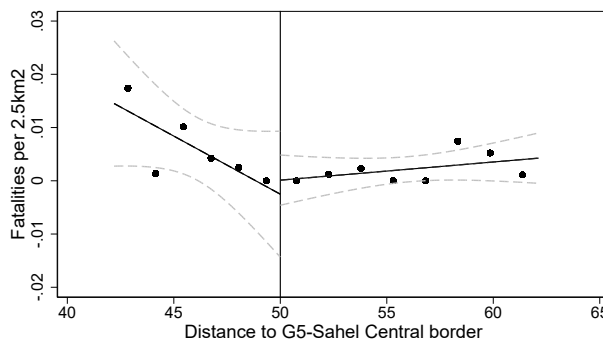


Figure A 2: Regression Discontinuity for G5 operation zone

Panel A: All events (after Sept 2017)



Panel B: All events (before Sept 2017)

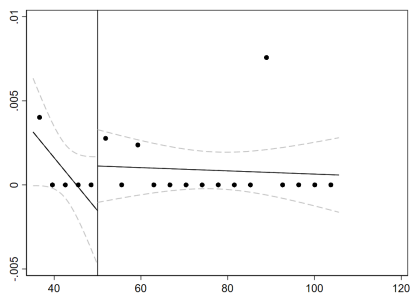


Notes: Discontinuity estimated at 50 km. Data-driven choice of two bandwidths for MSE-optimal point estimation. Local polynomial of order 1. Additional country and border controls. All conflict events occurring within 200km of each considered G5-Sahel borders are included for the period between September 2017 to January 2020. The sample comprises the central Zone (Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso three borders regions). Included events are coded with geo-precision level 1.

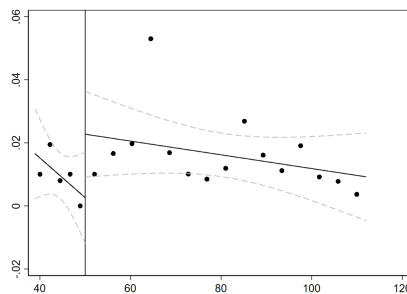
Figure A 3: RDD plots with optimal buffer for sub-groups, geo-precision level 1

Panel A: Events involving islamist groups

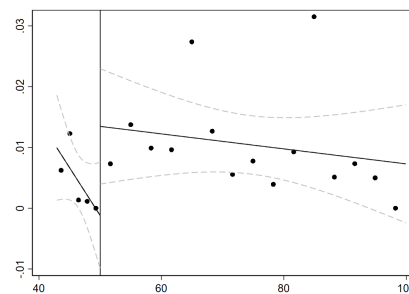
Panel A1: Military Operations



Panel A2: Attacks by armed groups

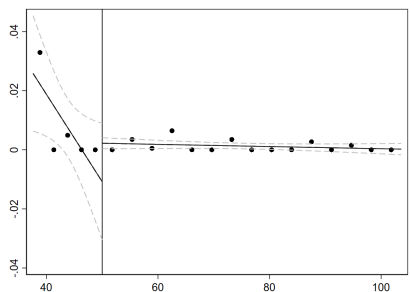


Panel A3: Civilians

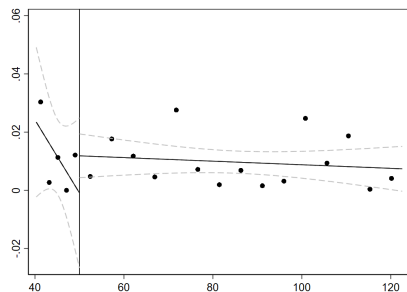


Panel B: Events involving communal militias

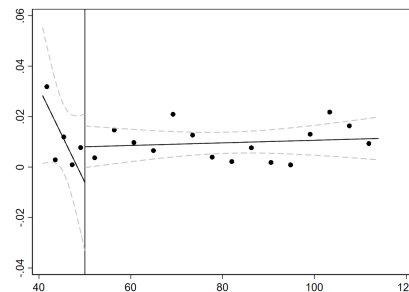
Panel B1: Military Operations



Panel B2: Attacks by armed groups

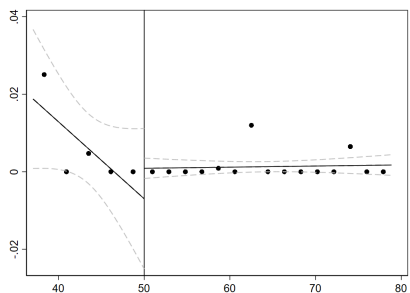


Panel B3: Civilians

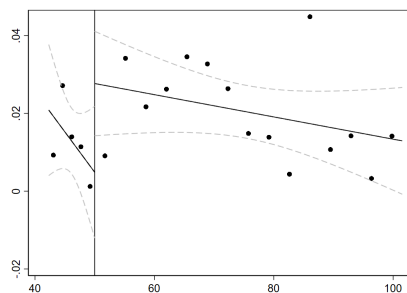


Panel C: Events involving civilians

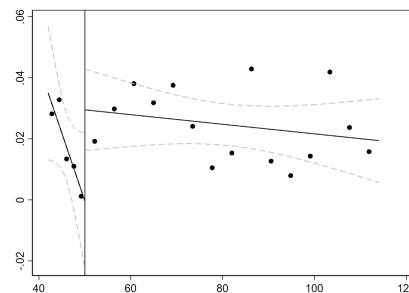
Panel C1: Military Operations



Panel C2: Attacks by armed groups



Panel C3: Civilians



Notes: Discontinuity estimated at 50 km. Data-driven choice of two bandwidths for MSE-optimal point estimation. Local polynomial of order 1. All conflict events occurring for the period between September 2017 to January 2020. Include events coded with geo-precision level 1 only.

Table A1: Discontinuity in conflict intensity for central G5-Sahel operation zones 2017-2020, by country /border.

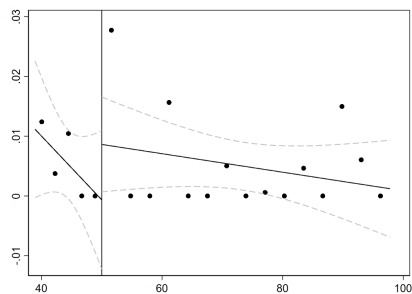
|                            | Mali              |               | Burkina Faso      |               | Niger             |               | MLI-BFA           |               | MLI-NER           |                | NER-BFA            |                |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
|                            | Fatalities<br>(1) | Events<br>(2) | Fatalities<br>(3) | Events<br>(4) | Fatalities<br>(5) | Events<br>(6) | Fatalities<br>(7) | Events<br>(8) | Fatalities<br>(9) | Events<br>(10) | Fatalities<br>(11) | Events<br>(12) |
| Conventional               | -0.0399*          | -0.0088       | -0.0842**         | -0.0246**     | -0.0042***        | -0.0052***    | -0.0813*          | -0.0124       | -0.0198***        | -0.0056        | -0.0073            | -0.0064        |
|                            | (0.0213)          | (0.0109)      | (0.0369)          | (0.0114)      | (0.0016)          | (0.0017)      | (0.0460)          | (0.0119)      | (0.0066)          | (0.0053)       | (0.0104)           | (0.0077)       |
| Bias-corrected             | -0.0499**         | -0.0081       | -0.0802**         | -0.0271**     | -0.0042***        | -0.0054***    | -0.1031**         | -0.0169       | -0.0150**         | -0.0063        | -0.0029            | -0.0066        |
|                            | (0.0213)          | (0.0109)      | (0.0369)          | (0.0114)      | (0.0016)          | (0.0017)      | (0.0460)          | (0.0119)      | (0.0066)          | (0.0053)       | (0.0104)           | (0.0077)       |
| Robust                     | -0.0499**         | -0.0081       | -0.0802**         | -0.0271*      | -0.0042*          | -0.0054**     | -0.1031*          | -0.0169       | -0.0150**         | -0.0063        | -0.0029            | -0.0066        |
|                            | (0.0246)          | (0.0125)      | (0.0382)          | (0.0139)      | (0.0021)          | (0.0022)      | (0.0613)          | (0.0141)      | (0.0074)          | (0.0065)       | (0.0109)           | (0.0083)       |
| Mean DV                    | 0.026             | 0.011         | 0.045             | 0.020         | 0.013             | 0.004         | 0.033             | 0.014         | 0.021             | 0.008          | 0.028              | 0.012          |
| Standard Deviation         | 0.999             | 0.243         | 1.213             | 0.270         | 1.197             | 0.085         | 1.081             | 0.253         | 1.077             | 0.199          | 1.205              | 0.198          |
| Observations within buffer | 1592              | 4393          | 1736              | 1489          | 950               | 1475          | 2852              | 3114          | 7180              | 3559           | 3871               | 3364           |
| Observations untreated     | 16791             | 14490         | 8179              | 7730          | 11640             | 9115          | 35848             | 27757         | 30602             | 38130          | 6194               | 14467          |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)   | 72.991            | 63.214        | 52.278            | 49.213        | 73.416            | 57.273        | 130.390           | 102.342       | 126.416           | 154.848        | 49.630             | 115.350        |
| Bandwidth treated (km)     | 6.800             | 18.233        | 9.986             | 8.625         | 5.728             | 8.952         | 10.506            | 11.491        | 31.853            | 15.773         | 30.229             | 26.307         |

Notes : Discontinuity estimated at 50 km. Data-driven choice of two bandwidths for MSE-optimal point estimation. Local polynomial of order 1. Additional country and border controls. All conflict events occurring within 250km of each considered G5-Sahel borders are included for the period between September 2017 to January 2020. Include events coded with geo-precision level 1 only. Cells that intersect with the limit of the 50km buffer of intervention are dropped from the sample. Robust Calonico-Cattaneo-Titiunik standard errors in parentheses- \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

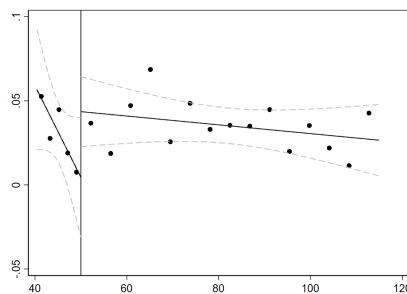
Figure A 4: RDD plots with optimal buffer for sub-groups, geo-precision level 1 and 2

Panel A: Events involving islamist groups

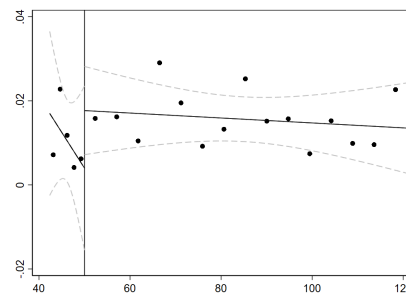
Panel A1: Military Operations



Panel A2: Attacks by armed groups

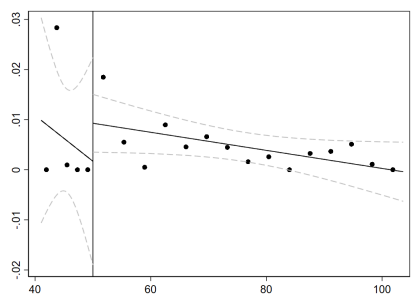


Panel A3: Civilians

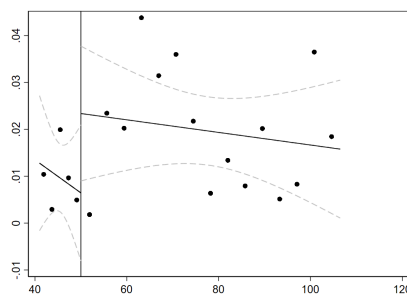


Panel B: Events involving communal militias

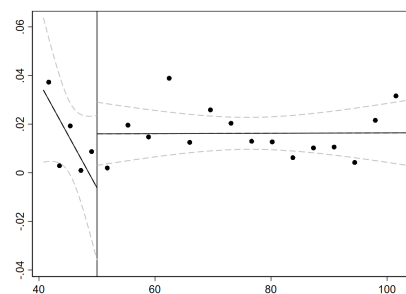
Panel B1: Military Operations



Panel B2: Attacks by armed groups

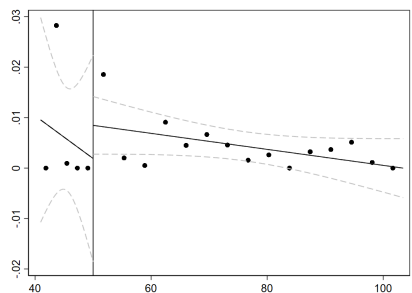


Panel B3: Civilians

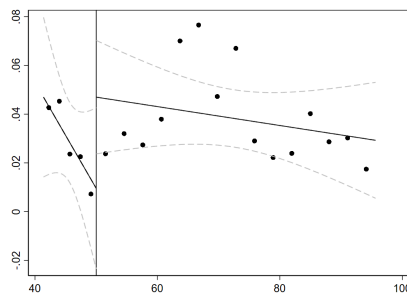


Panel C: Events involving civilians

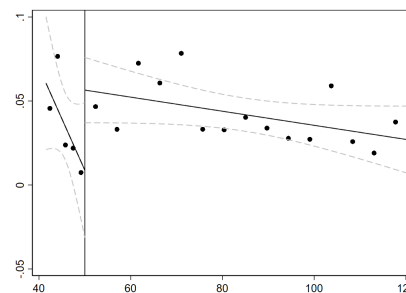
Panel C1: Military Operations



Panel C2: Attacks by armed groups



Panel C3: Civilians



Notes: Discontinuity estimated at 50 km. Data-driven choice of two bandwidths for MSE-optimal point estimation. Local polynomial of order 1. All conflict events occurring for the period between September 2017 to January 2020. Include events coded with geo-precision level 1 and 2.

Table A2: Discontinuity in conflict intensity for all G5-Sahel operation zones 2017-2020, all regions.

|  | All events             |                     | Military operations  |                        | Attacks by armed groups |                     | Attacks on Civilians   |                     |
|--|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
|  | Fatalities (count)     | Events              | Fatalities (count)   | Events                 | Fatalities (count)      | Events              | Fatalities (count)     | Events              |
|  | (1)                    | (2)                 | (3)                  | (4)                    | (5)                     | (6)                 | (7)                    | (8)                 |
| <i>Panel A: Central Zone (Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso three borders regions)</i> |                        |                     |                      |                        |                         |                     |                        |                     |
| Robust   | -0.0452***<br>(0.0161) | -0.0092<br>(0.0067) | -0.0045*<br>(0.0024) | -0.0022***<br>(0.0007) | -0.0356**<br>(0.0143)   | -0.0056<br>(0.0063) | -0.0321***<br>(0.0114) | -0.0024<br>(0.0047) |
| Mean DV  | 0.026                  | 0.010               | 0.003                | 0.001                  | 0.022                   | 0.009               | 0.015                  | 0.007               |
| Standard Deviation   | 1.071                  | 0.200               | 0.211                | 0.032                  | 1.030                   | 0.178               | 0.640                  | 0.119               |
| Observations within buffer   | 3641                   | 5821                | 7214                 | 4863                   | 3570                    | 6358                | 3201                   | 7491                |
| Observations untreated   | 34378                  | 21575               | 29292                | 44030                  | 29242                   | 19120               | 29838                  | 18975               |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)   | 63.484                 | 39.229              | 53.794               | 81.883                 | 53.718                  | 34.596              | 54.787                 | 34.321              |
| Bandwidth treated (km)   | 6.347                  | 10.099              | 12.443               | 8.409                  | 6.189                   | 10.973              | 5.569                  | 12.931              |
| <i>Panel B: Eastern Zone (Niger-Chad border)</i>                             |                        |                     |                      |                        |                         |                     |                        |                     |
| Robust   | -0.0138<br>(0.0148)    | -0.0003<br>(0.0045) | -0.0018<br>(0.0016)  | -0.0003<br>(0.0002)    | -0.0108<br>(0.0120)     | -0.0005<br>(0.0043) | -0.0035<br>(0.0044)    | 0.0011<br>(0.0045)  |
| Mean DV  | 0.004                  | 0.002               | 0.001                | 0.000                  | 0.003                   | 0.002               | 0.002                  | 0.002               |
| Standard Deviation   | 0.332                  | 0.098               | 0.142                | 0.015                  | 0.256                   | 0.085               | 0.137                  | 0.080               |
| Observations within buffer   | 3904                   | 8375                | 3587                 | 3587                   | 3935                    | 8259                | 3927                   | 8598                |
| Observations untreated   | 13977                  | 24559               | 9555                 | 8462                   | 18746                   | 22374               | 9858                   | 17576               |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)   | 45.304                 | 78.924              | 30.996               | 27.498                 | 60.539                  | 72.039              | 32.022                 | 56.787              |
| Bandwidth treated (km)   | 12.819                 | 27.554              | 11.753               | 11.753                 | 12.904                  | 27.168              | 12.884                 | 28.231              |
| <i>Panel C: Western Zone (Mali-Mauritania border)</i>                        |                        |                     |                      |                        |                         |                     |                        |                     |
| Robust   |                        | -0.0002<br>(0.0003) |                      |                        | -0.0003<br>(0.0003)     |                     | -0.0002<br>(0.0002)    |                     |
| Mean DV  |                        | 0.002               |                      |                        | 0.001                   |                     | 0.001                  |                     |
| Standard Deviation   |                        | 0.058               |                      |                        | 0.055                   |                     | 0.038                  |                     |
| Observations within buffer   |                        | 2750                |                      |                        | 2750                    |                     | 2589                   |                     |
| Observations untreated   |                        | 11367               |                      |                        | 13264                   |                     | 14096                  |                     |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)   |                        | 20.655              |                      |                        | 24.049                  |                     | 25.824                 |                     |
| Bandwidth treated (km)   |                        | 4.771               |                      |                        | 4.771                   |                     | 4.521                  |                     |

Notes : Discontinuity estimated at 50 km. Data-driven choice of two bandwidths for MSE-optimal point estimation. Local polynomial of order 1. Additional country and border controls. All conflict events occurring within 250km of each considered G5-Sahel borders are included for the period between September 2017 to January 2020. Include events coded with geo-precision level 1 only. Empty cells means the discontinuity could not be estimated due to lack of variability in the dependent variable. Robust Calonico-Cattaneo-Titiunik standard errors in parentheses- \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

Table A3: Discontinuity in conflict intensity for central G5-Sahel operation zones 2017-2020, Robustness checks.

|   | All events                |                        | Military operations       |                        | Attacks by armed groups   |                        | Attacks on Civilians      |                        |
|---|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
|   | Fatalities (count)<br>(1) | Events<br>(2)          | Fatalities (count)<br>(3) | Events<br>(4)          | Fatalities (count)<br>(5) | Events<br>(6)          | Fatalities (count)<br>(7) | Events<br>(8)          |
| <i>Panel A: Splitted cells dropped</i>      |                           |                        |                           |                        |                           |                        |                           |                        |
| Robust                                      | -0.0525**<br>(0.0237)     | -0.0284***<br>(0.0090) | -0.0023<br>(0.0048)       | -0.0031***<br>(0.0009) | -0.0449**<br>(0.0224)     | -0.0232***<br>(0.0082) | -0.0231<br>(0.0148)       | -0.0144***<br>(0.0047) |
| Mean DV                                     | 0.028                     | 0.011                  | 0.003                     | 0.001                  | 0.024                     | 0.010                  | 0.016                     | 0.007                  |
| Standard Deviation                          | 1.122                     | 0.220                  | 0.213                     | 0.033                  | 1.080                     | 0.198                  | 0.648                     | 0.123                  |
| Observations within buffer                  | 1930                      | 3069                   | 2646                      | 4005                   | 1833                      | 3280                   | 1463                      | 4178                   |
| Observations untreated                      | 42957                     | 38014                  | 41047                     | 49234                  | 37312                     | 32178                  | 34938                     | 33698                  |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)                    | 81.727                    | 72.396                 | 78.116                    | 93.936                 | 70.949                    | 61.274                 | 66.506                    | 64.139                 |
| Bandwidth treated (km)                      | 4.944                     | 6.966                  | 6.113                     | 8.479                  | 4.765                     | 7.291                  | 4.218                     | 8.756                  |
| <i>Panel B: Top-coded fatalities (0.01)</i> |                           |                        |                           |                        |                           |                        |                           |                        |
| Robust                                      | -0.0394***<br>(0.0144)    | -0.0110<br>(0.0073)    | -0.0054**<br>(0.0025)     | -0.0022***<br>(0.0007) | -0.0315**<br>(0.0130)     | -0.0074<br>(0.0069)    | -0.0320***<br>(0.0117)    | -0.0034<br>(0.0051)    |
| Mean DV                                     | 0.024                     | 0.011                  | 0.003                     | 0.001                  | 0.020                     | 0.010                  | 0.014                     | 0.007                  |
| Standard Deviation                          | 0.748                     | 0.220                  | 0.203                     | 0.033                  | 0.687                     | 0.198                  | 0.474                     | 0.123                  |
| Observations within buffer                  | 5131                      | 5878                   | 7379                      | 4865                   | 5089                      | 6358                   | 4621                      | 7606                   |
| Observations untreated                      | 35693                     | 25267                  | 27394                     | 43013                  | 29074                     | 22521                  | 33368                     | 21791                  |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)                    | 65.999                    | 46.142                 | 50.227                    | 80.011                 | 53.424                    | 40.894                 | 61.575                    | 39.637                 |
| Bandwidth treated (km)                      | 8.874                     | 10.204                 | 12.752                    | 8.414                  | 8.789                     | 10.976                 | 7.997                     | 13.119                 |
| <i>Panel C: Any fatality</i>                |                           |                        |                           |                        |                           |                        |                           |                        |
| Robust                                      | -0.0049**<br>(0.0023)     | -0.0110<br>(0.0073)    | -0.0010***<br>(0.0004)    | -0.0022***<br>(0.0007) | -0.0042*<br>(0.0023)      | -0.0074<br>(0.0069)    | -0.0042**<br>(0.0020)     | -0.0034<br>(0.0051)    |
| Mean DV                                     | 0.004                     | 0.011                  | 0.000                     | 0.001                  | 0.003                     | 0.010                  | 0.003                     | 0.007                  |
| Standard Deviation                          | 0.060                     | 0.220                  | 0.020                     | 0.033                  | 0.058                     | 0.198                  | 0.051                     | 0.123                  |
| Observations within buffer                  | 5586                      | 5878                   | 6355                      | 4865                   | 5613                      | 6358                   | 5166                      | 7606                   |
| Observations untreated                      | 34557                     | 25267                  | 41484                     | 43013                  | 31794                     | 22521                  | 32913                     | 21791                  |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)                    | 63.862                    | 46.142                 | 77.063                    | 80.011                 | 58.605                    | 40.894                 | 60.730                    | 39.637                 |
| Bandwidth treated (km)                      | 9.714                     | 10.204                 | 10.965                    | 8.414                  | 9.737                     | 10.976                 | 8.955                     | 13.119                 |

Notes : Discontinuity estimated at 50 km. Data-driven choice of two bandwidths for MSE-optimal point estimation. Local polynomial of order 1. Additional country and border controls. All conflict events occurring within 250km of each considered G5-Sahel borders are included for the period between September 2017 to January 2020. Include events coded with geo-precision level 1 only. Cells that intersect with the limit of the 50km buffer of intervention are dropped from the sample. Robust Calonico-Cattaneo-Titiunik standard errors in parentheses- \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

Table A4: Discontinuity in conflict intensity for central G5-Sahel operation zones 2017-2020, OLS estimations with flexible controls for coordinates.

|   | All events                |                     | Military operations       |                       | Attacks by armed groups   |                     | Attacks on Civilians      |                     |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
|   | Fatalities (count)<br>(1) | Events<br>(2)       | Fatalities (count)<br>(3) | Events<br>(4)         | Fatalities (count)<br>(5) | Events<br>(6)       | Fatalities (count)<br>(7) | Events<br>(8)       |
| <i>Panel A: 15-100 km buffer</i>                          |                           |                     |                           |                       |                           |                     |                           |                     |
| Linear distance ctrl                                      | -0.0297**<br>(0.0137)     | -0.0053<br>(0.0043) | 0.0023<br>(0.0034)        | -0.0005<br>(0.0006)   | -0.0297**<br>(0.0128)     | -0.0049<br>(0.0039) | -0.0162*<br>(0.0090)      | -0.0010<br>(0.0023) |
| Linear lat. lon. ctrl                                     | -0.1247*<br>(0.0740)      | -0.0105<br>(0.0233) | -0.0170<br>(0.0182)       | -0.0055*<br>(0.0030)  | -0.1078<br>(0.0691)       | -0.0035<br>(0.0211) | -0.0616<br>(0.0486)       | -0.0029<br>(0.0127) |
| Linear dist. lat. lon. ctrl                               | -0.0301**<br>(0.0137)     | -0.0055<br>(0.0043) | 0.0022<br>(0.0034)        | -0.0005<br>(0.0006)   | -0.0301**<br>(0.0128)     | -0.0051<br>(0.0039) | -0.0165*<br>(0.0090)      | -0.0011<br>(0.0023) |
| Linear dist. sq lat. lon. ctrl                            | -0.0295**<br>(0.0137)     | -0.0053<br>(0.0043) | 0.0023<br>(0.0034)        | -0.0005<br>(0.0006)   | -0.0296**<br>(0.0128)     | -0.0049<br>(0.0039) | -0.0161*<br>(0.0090)      | -0.0010<br>(0.0023) |
| Linear dist. lat. lon. & flex. lat. lon. ctrl             | -0.0296**<br>(0.0137)     | -0.0053<br>(0.0043) | 0.0023<br>(0.0034)        | -0.0005<br>(0.0006)   | -0.0297**<br>(0.0128)     | -0.0049<br>(0.0039) | -0.0162*<br>(0.0090)      | -0.0010<br>(0.0023) |
| Linear, sq and cubic distance ctrl & flex. lat. lon. ctrl | -0.0278<br>(0.0274)       | -0.0081<br>(0.0086) | -0.0077<br>(0.0068)       | -0.0018<br>(0.0011)   | -0.0134<br>(0.0256)       | -0.0052<br>(0.0078) | -0.0176<br>(0.0180)       | 0.0000<br>(0.0047)  |
| Mean DV   |                           |                     |                           |                       |                           |                     |                           |                     |
| Standard Deviation  |                           |                     |                           |                       |                           |                     |                           |                     |
| Observations within buffer                                | 74332                     | 74332               | 74332                     | 74332                 | 74332                     | 74332               | 74332                     | 74332               |
| <i>Panel B: 50 km buffer</i>                              |                           |                     |                           |                       |                           |                     |                           |                     |
| Linear distance ctrl                                      | -0.0266**<br>(0.0129)     | -0.0034<br>(0.0037) | -0.0002<br>(0.0035)       | -0.0006<br>(0.0005)   | -0.0241**<br>(0.0119)     | -0.0027<br>(0.0034) | -0.0227***<br>(0.0082)    | -0.0006<br>(0.0021) |
| Linear lat. lon. ctrl                                     | -0.1259*<br>(0.0683)      | -0.0049<br>(0.0198) | -0.0258<br>(0.0186)       | -0.0062**<br>(0.0029) | -0.1010<br>(0.0631)       | 0.0019<br>(0.0178)  | -0.0738*<br>(0.0436)      | -0.0011<br>(0.0110) |
| Linear dist. lat. lon. ctrl                               | -0.0274**<br>(0.0129)     | -0.0036<br>(0.0037) | -0.0003<br>(0.0035)       | -0.0006<br>(0.0005)   | -0.0247**<br>(0.0119)     | -0.0029<br>(0.0034) | -0.0232***<br>(0.0082)    | -0.0007<br>(0.0021) |
| Linear dist. sq lat. lon. ctrl                            | -0.0265**<br>(0.0129)     | -0.0033<br>(0.0037) | -0.0002<br>(0.0035)       | -0.0005<br>(0.0005)   | -0.0240**<br>(0.0119)     | -0.0026<br>(0.0034) | -0.0226***<br>(0.0082)    | -0.0005<br>(0.0021) |
| Linear dist. lat. lon. & flex. lat. lon. ctrl             | -0.0268**<br>(0.0129)     | -0.0034<br>(0.0037) | -0.0002<br>(0.0035)       | -0.0006<br>(0.0005)   | -0.0242**<br>(0.0119)     | -0.0027<br>(0.0034) | -0.0229***<br>(0.0082)    | -0.0006<br>(0.0021) |
| Linear, sq and cubic distance ctrl & flex. lat. lon. ctrl | -0.0240<br>(0.0258)       | -0.0061<br>(0.0075) | -0.0047<br>(0.0070)       | -0.0016<br>(0.0011)   | -0.0139<br>(0.0239)       | -0.0038<br>(0.0067) | -0.0120<br>(0.0165)       | -0.0001<br>(0.0041) |
| Mean DV   |                           |                     |                           |                       |                           |                     |                           |                     |
| Standard Deviation  |                           |                     |                           |                       |                           |                     |                           |                     |
| Observations within buffer                                | 84395                     | 84395               | 84395                     | 84395                 | 84395                     | 84395               | 84395                     | 84395               |

Notes : Manual choice of bandwidths. Additional country controls, no border segment controls. All conflict events occurring within 250km of each considered G5-Sahel borders are included for the period between September 2017 to January 2020. Include events coded with geo-precision level 1 only. Only estimate of coefficient of interest "Cell within G5 operation zone" reported. Control variables include distance to the G5 central border, latitude, longitude, and squared and cubic transformations of latitude and longitude. Distance to the border and its transformation and are allowed a different slope within and outside of the operation zone while the effect of latitude and longitude is assumed to be the same within and outside of the G5 area to avoid overfitting. Robust standard errors in parentheses- \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

Table A5: Discontinuity in conflict intensity for G5 Sahel Central operation zone 2017-2020 , robustness checks.

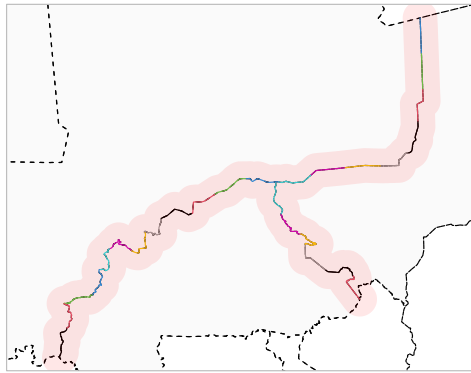
|   | Military operations    |                       |                        |                        |                        |                        | Attacks by armed groups |                        |                        |                     |                         |                       | Attacks on Civilians  |                         |                        |                     |                         |                       |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
|   | Geo1                   |                       |                        | Geo2                   |                        |                        | Geo1                    |                        |                        | Geo2                |                         |                       | Geo1                  |                         |                        | Geo2                |                         |                       |
|   | Events<br>(1)          | Fatalities(#)<br>(2)  | Fatalities(IHS)<br>(3) | Events<br>(4)          | Fatalities(IHS)<br>(5) | Fatalities(#)<br>(6)   | Events<br>(7)           | Fatalities(IHS)<br>(8) | Fatalities(#)<br>(9)   | Events<br>(10)      | Fatalities(IHS)<br>(11) | Fatalities(#)<br>(12) | Events<br>(13)        | Fatalities(IHS)<br>(14) | Fatalities(#)<br>(15)  | Events<br>(16)      | Fatalities(IHS)<br>(17) | Fatalities(#)<br>(18) |
| <i>Panel 0: All Events</i>                        |                        |                       |                        |                        |                        |                        |                         |                        |                        |                     |                         |                       |                       |                         |                        |                     |                         |                       |
| Conventional                                      | -0.0020***<br>(0.0006) | -0.0046**<br>(0.0021) | -0.0018***<br>(0.0007) | -0.0032**<br>(0.0015)  | -0.0280**<br>(0.0119)  | -0.0056***<br>(0.0014) | -0.0054<br>(0.0055)     | -0.0349***<br>(0.0135) | -0.0085**<br>(0.0034)  | -0.0013<br>(0.0090) | -0.0194<br>(0.0174)     | -0.0025<br>(0.0050)   | -0.0019<br>(0.0041)   | -0.0299***<br>(0.0099)  | -0.0087***<br>(0.0030) | 0.0005<br>(0.0066)  | -0.0499***<br>(0.0180)  | -0.0081*<br>(0.0043)  |
| Bias-corrected                                    | -0.0022***<br>(0.0006) | -0.0045**<br>(0.0021) | -0.0021***<br>(0.0007) | -0.0036**<br>(0.0015)  | -0.0355***<br>(0.0119) | -0.0064***<br>(0.0014) | -0.0056<br>(0.0055)     | -0.0356***<br>(0.0135) | -0.0092***<br>(0.0034) | -0.0015<br>(0.0090) | -0.0187<br>(0.0174)     | -0.0023<br>(0.0050)   | -0.0024<br>(0.0041)   | -0.0321***<br>(0.0099)  | -0.0095***<br>(0.0030) | -0.0002<br>(0.0066) | -0.0530***<br>(0.0180)  | -0.0085**<br>(0.0043) |
| Robust  | -0.0022***<br>(0.0007) | -0.0045*<br>(0.0024)  | -0.0021**<br>(0.0008)  | -0.0036**<br>(0.0018)  | -0.0355**<br>(0.0151)  | -0.0064***<br>(0.0018) | -0.0056<br>(0.0063)     | -0.0356**<br>(0.0143)  | -0.0092**<br>(0.0040)  | -0.0015<br>(0.0104) | -0.0187<br>(0.0192)     | -0.0023<br>(0.0058)   | -0.0024<br>(0.0047)   | -0.0321***<br>(0.0114)  | -0.0095***<br>(0.0036) | -0.0002<br>(0.0075) | -0.0530***<br>(0.0206)  | -0.0085*<br>(0.0051)  |
| Observations within buffer                        | 4863                   | 7214                  | 5751                   | 5789                   | 5058                   | 4798                   | 6358                    | 3570                   | 5053                   | 6298                | 4142                    | 6011                  | 7491                  | 3201                    | 4391                   | 7558                | 3829                    | 5759                  |
| Observations untreated                            | 44030                  | 29292                 | 39076                  | 33127                  | 27298                  | 42675                  | 19120                   | 29242                  | 24499                  | 14974               | 19095                   | 17148                 | 18975                 | 29838                   | 27214                  | 15163               | 32646                   | 24930                 |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)                          | 81.883                 | 53.794                | 72.495                 | 61.152                 | 50.043                 | 79.308                 | 34.596                  | 53.718                 | 44.758                 | 26.884              | 34.538                  | 30.886                | 34.321                | 54.787                  | 49.873                 | 27.252              | 60.108                  | 45.535                |
| Bandwidth treated (km)                            | 8.409                  | 12.443                | 9.997                  | 10.051                 | 8.738                  | 8.282                  | 10.973                  | 6.189                  | 8.726                  | 10.868              | 7.238                   | 10.403                | 12.931                | 5.569                   | 7.665                  | 13.044              | 6.734                   | 10.013                |
| <i>Panel A: Events involving Islamist groups</i>  |                        |                       |                        |                        |                        |                        |                         |                        |                        |                     |                         |                       |                       |                         |                        |                     |                         |                       |
| Conventional                                      | -0.0006<br>(0.0004)    | -0.0012<br>(0.0012)   | -0.0006<br>(0.0005)    | -0.0013<br>(0.0010)    | -0.0129<br>(0.0084)    | -0.0023**<br>(0.0010)  | -0.0083***<br>(0.0029)  | -0.0238**<br>(0.0104)  | -0.0077***<br>(0.0034) | -0.0048<br>(0.0063) | -0.0222*<br>(0.0126)    | -0.0040<br>(0.0035)   | -0.0035*<br>(0.0019)  | -0.0120***<br>(0.0040)  | -0.0058***<br>(0.0013) | -0.0022<br>(0.0035) | -0.0153*<br>(0.0088)    | -0.0035<br>(0.0025)   |
| Bias-corrected                                    | -0.0008*<br>(0.0004)   | -0.0014<br>(0.0012)   | -0.0007<br>(0.0005)    | -0.0015<br>(0.0010)    | -0.0162*<br>(0.0084)   | -0.0026***<br>(0.0010) | -0.0086***<br>(0.0029)  | -0.0233**<br>(0.0104)  | -0.0082***<br>(0.0016) | -0.0047<br>(0.0063) | -0.0199<br>(0.0126)     | -0.0041<br>(0.0035)   | -0.0039**<br>(0.0019) | -0.0127***<br>(0.0040)  | -0.0062***<br>(0.0013) | -0.0024<br>(0.0035) | -0.0165*<br>(0.0088)    | -0.0037<br>(0.0025)   |
| Robust  | -0.0008<br>(0.0005)    | -0.0014<br>(0.0016)   | -0.0007<br>(0.0006)    | -0.0015<br>(0.0013)    | -0.0162<br>(0.0107)    | -0.0026**<br>(0.0013)  | -0.0086**<br>(0.0034)   | -0.0233**<br>(0.0110)  | -0.0082***<br>(0.0019) | -0.0047<br>(0.0074) | -0.0199<br>(0.0139)     | -0.0041<br>(0.0041)   | -0.0039*<br>(0.0022)  | -0.0127***<br>(0.0045)  | -0.0062***<br>(0.0015) | -0.0024<br>(0.0041) | -0.0165*<br>(0.0100)    | -0.0037<br>(0.0030)   |
| Observations within buffer                        | 5862                   | 8375                  | 7966                   | 8043                   | 6400                   | 5318                   | 5216                    | 6358                   | 4362                   | 6216                | 5476                    | 6227                  | 8805                  | 4082                    | 4305                   | 10042               | 4433                    | 7214                  |
| Observations untreated                            | 29991                  | 31396                 | 33112                  | 39346                  | 26259                  | 36853                  | 31051                   | 33063                  | 31190                  | 18758               | 24261                   | 23732                 | 31039                 | 22979                   | 34691                  | 22650               | 33467                   | 35520                 |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)                          | 55.143                 | 57.782                | 61.133                 | 72.892                 | 48.054                 | 68.135                 | 57.037                  | 61.027                 | 57.349                 | 33.943              | 44.218                  | 43.266                | 57.018                | 41.878                  | 64.116                 | 41.144              | 61.729                  | 65.589                |
| Bandwidth treated (km)                            | 10.167                 | 14.412                | 13.678                 | 13.835                 | 11.047                 | 9.272                  | 9.051                   | 10.971                 | 7.606                  | 10.709              | 9.587                   | 10.729                | 15.159                | 7.100                   | 7.507                  | 17.238              | 7.726                   | 12.443                |
| <i>Panel B: Events involving Communal militia</i> |                        |                       |                        |                        |                        |                        |                         |                        |                        |                     |                         |                       |                       |                         |                        |                     |                         |                       |
| Conventional                                      | -0.0015***<br>(0.0005) | -0.0024*<br>(0.0014)  | -0.0013**<br>(0.0005)  | -0.0022***<br>(0.0007) | -0.0145*<br>(0.0080)   | -0.0029***<br>(0.0009) | 0.0018<br>(0.0028)      | -0.0071<br>(0.0078)    | -0.0007<br>(0.0022)    | 0.0031<br>(0.0033)  | -0.0126<br>(0.0091)     | 0.0012<br>(0.0027)    | 0.0028<br>(0.0024)    | -0.0073<br>(0.0068)     | -0.0007<br>(0.0021)    | 0.0042<br>(0.0028)  | -0.0096<br>(0.0079)     | 0.0008<br>(0.0023)    |
| Bias-corrected                                    | -0.0017***<br>(0.0005) | -0.0023*<br>(0.0014)  | -0.0016***<br>(0.0005) | -0.0023***<br>(0.0007) | -0.0191**<br>(0.0080)  | -0.0034***<br>(0.0009) | 0.0025<br>(0.0028)      | -0.0087<br>(0.0078)    | -0.0005<br>(0.0022)    | 0.0036<br>(0.0033)  | -0.0134<br>(0.0091)     | 0.0012<br>(0.0027)    | 0.0036<br>(0.0024)    | -0.0086<br>(0.0068)     | -0.0010<br>(0.0021)    | 0.0047<br>(0.0028)  | -0.0105<br>(0.0079)     | 0.0007<br>(0.0023)    |
| Robust  | -0.0017***<br>(0.0006) | -0.0023<br>(0.0018)   | -0.0016**<br>(0.0006)  | -0.0023***<br>(0.0008) | -0.0191*<br>(0.0109)   | -0.0034***<br>(0.0012) | 0.0025<br>(0.0034)      | -0.0087<br>(0.0088)    | -0.0005<br>(0.0026)    | 0.0036<br>(0.0039)  | -0.0134<br>(0.0100)     | 0.0012<br>(0.0031)    | 0.0036<br>(0.0029)    | -0.0086<br>(0.0078)     | -0.0010<br>(0.0024)    | 0.0047<br>(0.0034)  | -0.0105<br>(0.0088)     | 0.0007<br>(0.0026)    |
| Observations within buffer                        | 4755                   | 6890                  | 5476                   | 5091                   | 5229                   | 5338                   | 10870                   | 3309                   | 9967                   | 10823               | 3303                    | 8302                  | 11883                 | 3130                    | 6965                   | 10822               | 3246                    | 6980                  |
| Observations untreated                            | 34435                  | 30027                 | 38051                  | 28846                  | 28834                  | 46875                  | 20431                   | 34722                  | 27457                  | 14629               | 25405                   | 14983                 | 19491                 | 32549                   | 23613                  | 13150               | 24587                   | 15319                 |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)                          | 63.599                 | 55.228                | 70.365                 | 53.008                 | 52.982                 | 87.325                 | 37.051                  | 64.177                 | 50.360                 | 26.269              | 46.299                  | 26.905                | 35.277                | 59.875                  | 43.029                 | 23.576              | 44.910                  | 27.519                |
| Bandwidth treated (km)                            | 8.221                  | 11.943                | 9.588                  | 8.793                  | 9.080                  | 9.306                  | 18.590                  | 5.764                  | 17.098                 | 18.525              | 5.735                   | 14.268                | 20.289                | 5.447                   | 12.098                 | 18.521              | 5.619                   | 12.137                |
| <i>Panel C: Events involving civilians</i>        |                        |                       |                        |                        |                        |                        |                         |                        |                        |                     |                         |                       |                       |                         |                        |                     |                         |                       |
| Conventional                                      | -0.0010***<br>(0.0003) | -0.0023<br>(0.0022)   | -0.0007**<br>(0.0004)  | -0.0017***<br>(0.0005) | -0.0133*<br>(0.0080)   | -0.0026***<br>(0.0008) | 0.0005<br>(0.0037)      | -0.0215**<br>(0.0092)  | -0.0065**<br>(0.0029)  | 0.0032<br>(0.0059)  | -0.0226<br>(0.0151)     | -0.0035<br>(0.0041)   | -0.0019<br>(0.0041)   | -0.0299***<br>(0.0099)  | -0.0087***<br>(0.0030) | 0.0005<br>(0.0066)  | -0.0499***<br>(0.0180)  | -0.0081*<br>(0.0043)  |
| Bias-corrected                                    | -0.0011***<br>(0.0003) | -0.0023<br>(0.0022)   | -0.0010***<br>(0.0005) | -0.0018***<br>(0.0005) | -0.0179**<br>(0.0080)  | -0.0031***<br>(0.0008) | 0.0005<br>(0.0037)      | -0.0232**<br>(0.0092)  | -0.0072**<br>(0.0029)  | 0.0033<br>(0.0059)  | -0.0243<br>(0.0151)     | -0.0037<br>(0.0041)   | -0.0024<br>(0.0041)   | -0.0321***<br>(0.0099)  | -0.0095***<br>(0.0030) | -0.0002<br>(0.0066) | -0.0530***<br>(0.0180)  | -0.0085**<br>(0.0043) |
| Robust  | -0.0011***<br>(0.0004) | -0.0023<br>(0.0015)   | -0.0010**<br>(0.0004)  | -0.0018***<br>(0.0007) | -0.0179<br>(0.0109)    | -0.0031***<br>(0.0011) | 0.0005<br>(0.0043)      | -0.0232**<br>(0.0102)  | -0.0072**<br>(0.0033)  | 0.0033<br>(0.0068)  | -0.0243<br>(0.0165)     | -0.0037<br>(0.0047)   | -0.0024<br>(0.0047)   | -0.0321***<br>(0.0114)  | -0.0095***<br>(0.0036) | -0.0002<br>(0.0075) | -0.0530***<br>(0.0206)  | -0.0085*<br>(0.0051)  |
| Observations within buffer                        | 5133                   | 7755                  | 5965                   | 5004                   | 5258                   | 5342                   | 9893                    | 3114                   | 4497                   | 9816                | 3758                    | 6347                  | 7491                  | 3201                    | 4391                   | 7558                | 3829                    | 5759                  |
| Observations untreated                            | 35314                  | 19556                 | 25090                  | 30217                  | 28488                  | 48181                  | 17759                   | 24679                  | 23498                  | 14268               | 20983                   | 19806                 | 18975                 | 29838                   | 27214                  | 15163               | 32646                   | 24930                 |
| Bandwidth untreated (km)                          | 65.140                 | 28.706                | 45.821                 | 55.599                 | 52.221                 | 89.869                 | 32.063                  | 45.074                 | 42.811                 | 25.545              | 38.073                  | 35.807                | 34.321                | 54.787                  | 49.873                 | 27.252              | 60.108                  | 45.535                |
| Bandwidth treated (km)                            | 8.884                  | 13.360                | 10.330                 | 8.659                  | 9.149                  | 9.323                  | 16.967                  | 5.422                  | 7.829                  | 16.837              | 6.566                   | 10.943                | 12.931                | 5.569                   | 7.665                  | 13.044              | 6.734                   | 10.013                |

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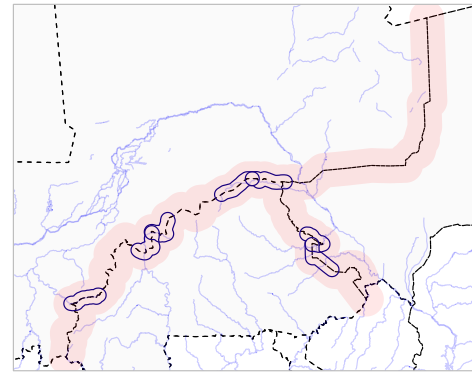
Notes : Discontinuity estimated at 50 km. Data-driven choice of two bandwidths for MSE-optimal point estimation. Local polynomial of order 1. Additional country and border controls. All conflict events occurring within 250km of each considered G5-Sahel borders are included for the period between September 2017 to January 2020. Military operations involving islamist groups record fatalities from islamist groups only, whereas attacks by armed group and attacks on civilians involving islamist groups record fatalities caused by islamist groups. Idem for communal militia and unidentified armed groups. Empty cells means the discontinuity could not be estimated due to lack of variability in the dependent variable. Robust Calonicio-Cattaneo-Titiunik standard errors in parentheses- \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.



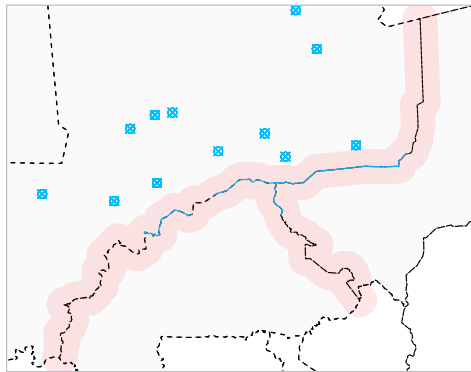
Figure A 5: Border segments characteristics



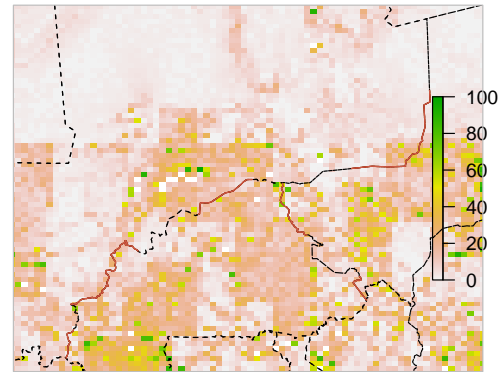
(a) Segments IDs



(b) Segments overlapping with rivers



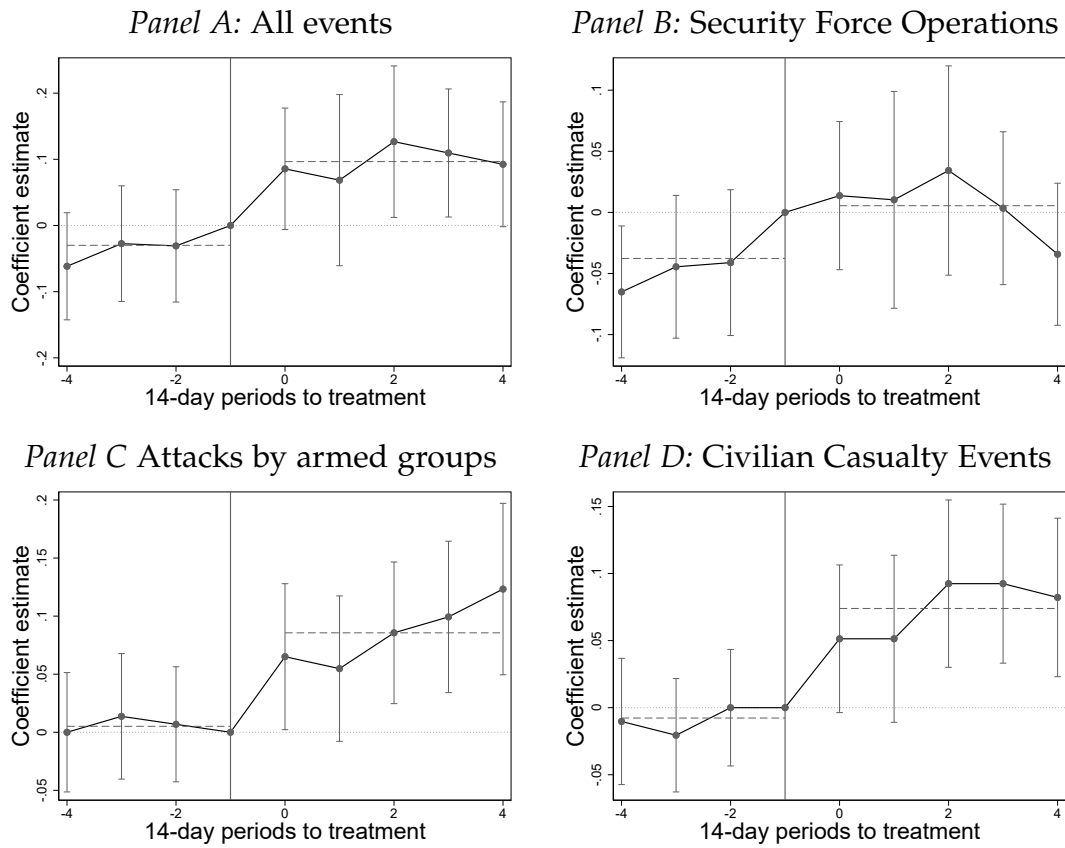
(c) Segments close to MINSUMA bases



(d) Segments in high rugged areas

Notes: Segments overlapping with rivers are defined as those segments within five km of a river over 40% of their total length. Segments "close" to MINSUMA are segments for which the minimum distance between a MINSUMA base and the segment is lower than the median distance. Segments in "high rugged" areas are segments for which the average ruggedness of cells crossed by the segments is above the median ruggedness of cells crossed by the other segments.

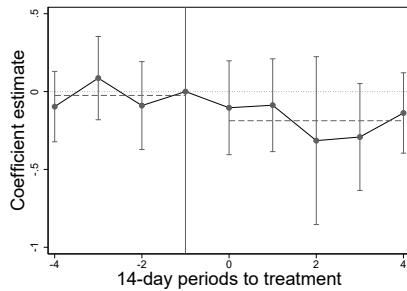
Figure A 6: Reaction to trigger events - time patterns (no differences)



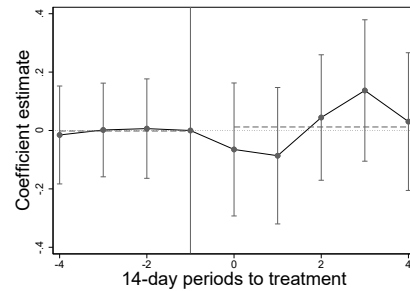
Notes: Observations at the grid-cell level, binned in two-week periods, in two-month windows around major French operations (2010-2021). The graph show coefficients on time-to-treatment dummies around the trigger operation. The model includes operation fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the grid-cell level, and grey bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Figure A 7: Reaction to trigger events - comparison of border areas

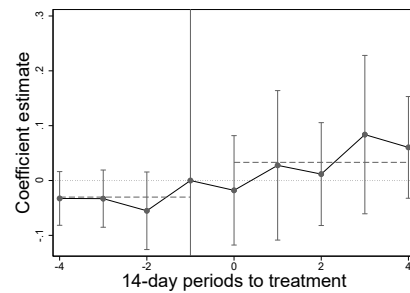
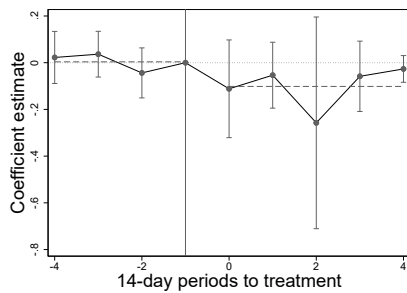
Panel A: All events (no G5)



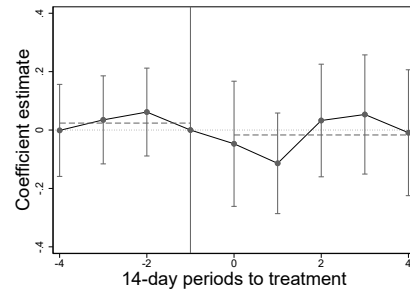
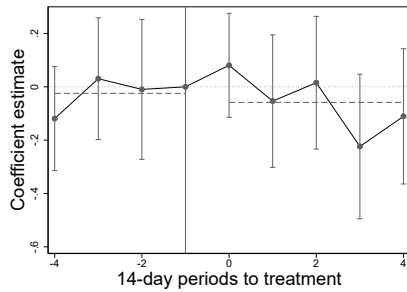
Panel B: All events (G5 active)



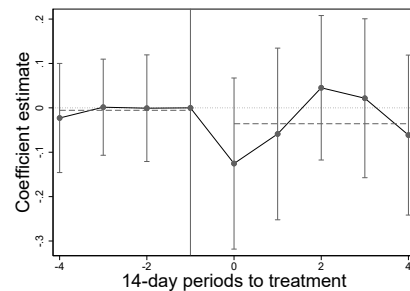
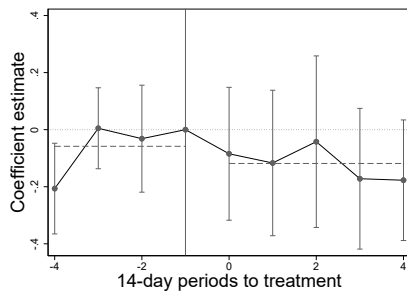
Panel C: Security Force Operations (no G5)    Panel D: Security Force Operations (G5 active)



Panel E: Attacks by armed groups (no G5)    Panel F: Attacks by armed groups (G5 active)



Panel G: Civilian Casualty Events (no G5)    Panel H: Civilian Casualty Events (G5 active)



Notes: Observations at the grid-cell level, binned in two-week periods, in two-month windows around major French operations (2010-2021). The graph show coefficients on time-to-treatment dummies around the trigger operation. The model includes operation fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the grid-cell level, and grey bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Table A6: Reaction to trigger events - by Actor

|  | All events         |                 | Military operations |                 | Attacks by armed groups |                 | Attacks on Civilians |                  |
|--|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|
|  | Fatalities (count) | Events          | Fatalities (count)  | Events          | Fatalities (count)      | Events          | Fatalities (count)   | Events           |
|  | (1)                | (2)             | (3)                 | (4)             | (5)                     | (6)             | (7)                  | (8)              |
| <i>Panel A: Events involving Islamist groups</i>               |                    |                 |                     |                 |                         |                 |                      |                  |
| Border x Post  | -0.09<br>(0.19)    | -0.04<br>(0.05) | -0.10<br>(0.19)     | -0.06<br>(0.05) | -0.16<br>(0.19)         | -0.04<br>(0.05) | -0.17<br>(0.16)      | -0.00<br>(0.04)  |
| Border x Post x G5   | 0.46<br>(0.28)     | 0.01<br>(0.06)  | 0.44<br>(0.28)      | 0.09*<br>(0.05) | 0.02<br>(0.25)          | 0.01<br>(0.06)  | 0.20<br>(0.20)       | -0.04<br>(0.04)  |
| <i>Panel B: Events involving Communal militia</i>              |                    |                 |                     |                 |                         |                 |                      |                  |
| Border x Post  | -0.39<br>(0.48)    | 0.01<br>(0.04)  | -0.20<br>(0.16)     | -0.05<br>(0.04) | 0.18<br>(0.36)          | 0.01<br>(0.04)  | -0.10<br>(0.10)      | 0.00<br>(0.03)   |
| Border x Post x G5   | 1.10*<br>(0.62)    | -0.03<br>(0.05) | 0.86**<br>(0.35)    | 0.08*<br>(0.04) | -0.09<br>(0.43)         | -0.03<br>(0.05) | 0.18<br>(0.24)       | -0.02<br>(0.04)  |
| <i>Panel C: Events involving Security Forces and civilians</i> |                    |                 |                     |                 |                         |                 |                      |                  |
| Border x Post  |                    |                 |                     |                 |                         |                 | -0.06<br>(0.04)      | -0.43*<br>(0.24) |
| Border x Post x G5   |                    |                 |                     |                 |                         |                 | 0.09*<br>(0.05)      | 1.03**<br>(0.40) |
| Observations   | 2538               | 2538            | 2538                | 2538            | 2538                    | 2538            | 2538                 | 2538             |
| Clusters   | 282                | 282             | 282                 | 282             | 282                     | 282             | 282                  | 282              |

Notes: Observations at the grid-cell level, binned in two-week periods, in two-month windows around major French operations (2010-2021). Results are based on the estimating equation presented above. Standard errors are clustered at the grid-cell level and presented in parentheses; stars indicate \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

Table A7: Reaction to trigger events - alternative criterion

|                    | All events                |                 | Military operations       |                  | Attacks by armed groups   |                 | Attacks on Civilians      |                 |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
|                    | Fatalities (count)<br>(1) | Events<br>(2)   | Fatalities (count)<br>(3) | Events<br>(4)    | Fatalities (count)<br>(5) | Events<br>(6)   | Fatalities (count)<br>(7) | Events<br>(8)   |
| Border x Post      | 0.22<br>(1.12)            | -0.12<br>(0.17) | -0.54<br>(0.48)           | -0.24*<br>(0.13) | 0.77<br>(1.02)            | 0.12<br>(0.12)  | -0.05<br>(0.34)           | 0.02<br>(0.08)  |
| Border x Post x G5 | -0.21<br>(1.20)           | 0.05<br>(0.18)  | 0.68<br>(0.57)            | 0.23*<br>(0.13)  | -0.89<br>(1.06)           | -0.18<br>(0.13) | 0.11<br>(0.48)            | -0.11<br>(0.09) |
| Mean DV            | 0.839                     | 0.215           | 0.358                     | 0.065            | 0.480                     | 0.151           | 0.379                     | 0.114           |
| Standard Deviation | 5.530                     | 0.677           | 3.958                     | 0.435            | 3.110                     | 0.445           | 2.551                     | 0.377           |
| Observations       | 2169                      | 2169            | 2169                      | 2169             | 2169                      | 2169            | 2169                      | 2169            |
| Clusters           | 241                       | 241             | 241                       | 241              | 241                       | 241             | 241                       | 241             |

*Notes:* Observations at the grid-cell level, binned in two-week periods, in two-month windows around major French operations (2010-2020) claiming at least 10 lives. Results are based on estimating equation (2). Standard errors are clustered at the grid-cell level and presented in parentheses; stars indicate \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

Table A8: Reaction to trigger events - alternative "G5 treatment period"

|                                    | All events                |                 | Military operations       |                  | Attacks by armed groups   |                  | Attacks on Civilians      |                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
|                                    | Fatalities (count)<br>(1) | Events<br>(2)   | Fatalities (count)<br>(3) | Events<br>(4)    | Fatalities (count)<br>(5) | Events<br>(6)    | Fatalities (count)<br>(7) | Events<br>(8)   |
| Border x Post                      | 0.73<br>(1.68)            | -0.09<br>(0.27) | -0.70<br>(0.77)           | -0.34*<br>(0.20) | 1.43<br>(1.53)            | 0.25<br>(0.17)   | 0.34**<br>(0.16)          | 0.10<br>(0.10)  |
| Border x Post x G5 (post Sep 2017) | -0.32<br>(1.71)           | 0.05<br>(0.28)  | 1.24<br>(0.82)            | 0.36*<br>(0.20)  | -1.56<br>(1.54)           | -0.31*<br>(0.18) | -0.12<br>(0.35)           | -0.15<br>(0.10) |
| Mean DV                            | 0.797                     | 0.199           | 0.370                     | 0.062            | 0.427                     | 0.138            | 0.412                     | 0.108           |
| Standard Deviation                 | 5.260                     | 0.638           | 3.846                     | 0.412            | 2.901                     | 0.423            | 2.814                     | 0.368           |
| Observations                       | 2538                      | 2538            | 2538                      | 2538             | 2538                      | 2538             | 2538                      | 2538            |
| Clusters                           | 282                       | 282             | 282                       | 282              | 282                       | 282              | 282                       | 282             |

*Notes:* Observations at the grid-cell level, binned in two-week periods, in two-month windows around major French operations (2010-2020) claiming at least 10 lives. Results are based on estimating equation (2). Standard errors are clustered at the grid-cell level and presented in parentheses; stars indicate \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .