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Evolution of UN peacekeeping in Africa: the case of United Nations Organisation, Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and its Force Intervention Brigade (FIB)[1]

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Abstract

The article traces evolution of peacekeeping in Africa and takes the DRC as a case-study of the UN activity from 1960 deployment of ONUC to the latest deployment of MONUSCO. The article aims to establish the impact of the evolution of the UN in peacekeeping efforts in the DRC. It will determine how the mandate has fared in enhancing peacekeeping efforts in the DRC and establish why the FIB has failed to neutralise the M23 after its resurgence. The article asserts that the evolution of peacekeeping operations in Africa, particularly the FIB case, highlights the changing nature of peacekeeping efforts on the continent. The FIB's establishment in 2013 as a part of MONUSCO represents a shift towards a more robust and proactive peacekeeping strategies. The authors found that although the evolution of peacekeeping in the DRC is viewed as a positive development towards the attainment of positive peace, it is not without its challenges. The lack of resources and continued interference of foreign players in African politics will always challenge the principle of African solutions to African problems. It is argued that some of the problems faced in the DRC are not African, but very much foreign or western due to the West's insatiable desire for African resources. The holistic approach to addressing DRC problems, or any other armed African conflicts should involve the P5 members of the UN Security Council since some of them should be held accountable for their double standards. Based on an interdisciplinary, historical and structural-functional approach, an interview method with AU experts, diplomats in the DRC and former MONUSCO staff, and a critical analysis of secondary sources and statistical data from the UN, AU, TNCs, this study examines the evolution of peacekeeping in Africa, with a particular focus on MONUSCO and its FIB.

Key words: MONUSCO, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); Africa, peacekeeping, peacekeeping mission, UN, UNSC

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Introduction

The evolution of peacekeeping can be viewed from various lenses such as the geopolitical environment of the Cold War and the general evolution of the nature of conflicts themselves such migration from interstate to intrastate conflicts. Peacekeeping has become a complex and multifaceted phenomenon as a result of non-traditional security threats and prevalence of intrastate conflicts [Ishaque, 2021]. This has witnessed a transition from traditional to hybrid peacekeeping models. Peacekeeping operations as those operations, which were deployed with or without the compliance of belligerent parties, depending on international legislation and mandate to sustain and implement a peaceful environment impartially and without using combat arms, if not necessary [Chan, 2011]. However, in the course of time, the definition and characteristics of peacekeeping operations underwent changes, and the importance of the evaluation of peacekeeping operations attracted more attention due to expenditures, costs and effectiveness. To fully comprehend the evolution of peacekeeping operations it is opined that part of this assessment should be done from the standpoint of the military who are major contributors of the peacekeeping force. The evolution of peacekeeping in Africa in general and DRC in particular has been observed in such facets as expansion of mandates, changes of peacekeeping practices from traditional to multi-dimensional to hybrid approaches.

The first part of the article will discuss the evolution of peacekeeping in Africa, basically by identifying the three phases peacekeeping has gone through and how these changes affected Africa. The second part will analyze in detail the notable changes that peacekeeping in DRC went through from ONUC to MONUC and then MONUSCO, which saw the introduction of a more robust peacekeeping effort through deployment of the FIB. An analysis of the discussion will be made to identify areas that need improvements so that positive can be attained and bring an end to the chronic conflict in that country. This paper will thus examine some of the significant areas which showed the evolution of peacekeeping in the DRC (MONUSCO with its FIB). Areas which have witnessed evolution include expansion of mandates, changing types of peacekeeping operations (multi-dimensional and hybrid), protection of civilians, peacebuilding and its sustenance, and lastly cooperation and partnerships. The aforementioned is testimony that the peacekeeping effort in DRC has reinvented itself several times in a bid to adapt to changing conflict dynamics and had to shift its posture due to demands from the UNSC, DRC government and regional countries that country belongs to and a plethora of other challenges such as cuts in funding and interference from neighbouring countries. There is also a huge emphasis on protection

of civilians especially after the Rwanda genocide experience.

Evolving Peacekeeping Operations: The African Experience

The evolution of peacekeeping operations in Africa has been significant in addressing complex security challenges on the continent, especially after noting that it has the highest number of conflicts in Africa. It is interesting to note as depicted in Fig. 1 below that the most staff-intensive peacekeeping operations are in Africa.

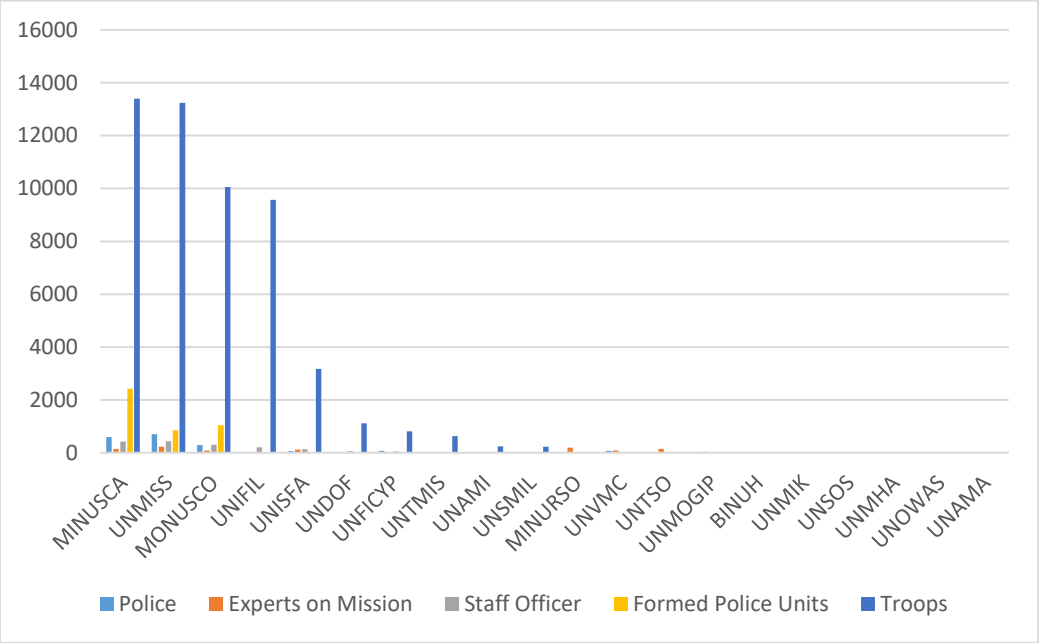


Fig.1. Contributions by UN missions and personnel types (as of 28 February 2025)

Source: compiled by the authors [UN Peacekeeping data, 2025].

The figure 1 shows top three deployments in terms of manpower deployed are the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) and MONUSCO. Rodriguez (2024) adds that UNAMID and MONUSCO (previously MONUC) have been the two most expensive peacekeeping operations in all UN history. This upward review of UN PKOs funding, mandate and numbers of peacekeepers marks a significant shift from traditional peacekeeping.

It is important to note that MONUSCO has served as a laboratory for testing the limits and effectiveness of the use of force in UN peacekeeping by using a robust posture, through the deployment of special forces, and use of new technologies such as unmanned aerial vehicles for reconnaissance and intelligence gathering. As an experiment results over time, the UN Mission in the DRC became synonymous with the difficulties inherent in managing a UN peacekeeping operation in a complex and dynamic crisis [Williams and McDonald, 2023]. In nutshell notable changes include regionalization of peacekeeping in partial fulfilment of mantra ‘Africa solutions

to African problems.' There is also a departure from traditional peacekeeping mandates and a shift towards a more robust and proactive approach to conflict resolution. Since the disastrous UN operation in the Congo in the early 1960s, Africa has become more primal in UN peacekeeping, so that today it is both the main object and subject: the continent absorbs more UN peacekeeping efforts than any other continent, but also contributes more, in terms of soldiers and police [Cawthra, 2016]. To this end it is noted that peacekeeping operations have evolved to meet several demands of political setting by enhancing their capabilities and character. Divergences among the main big powers exist on where and how best to consolidate peace in fragile states, yet peacekeeping is by and large protected from power politics and the paralysis it could entail [Green et al, 1998].

The evolution of peacekeeping in Africa is attributed to UN's delayed reaction to African problems, which led AU to come up with its own mechanism, marking a step in changing the outlook of PKOs in Africa [Bokeriya, 2022]. UN's reaction to African crises was delayed, which caused discontent on the part of stakeholders. This led African leaders to establish African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) a mechanism within the African Union to address threats to peace and security in a timely manner in 2003.

In addition to the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), Panel of the Wise, Peace Fund and the Peace and Security Department (PSC) the AU also included African Standby Force (ASF). The ASF which is headquartered in Ethiopia, has under its command RECs standby Forces with the SADC Standby Brigade being one of them currently involved in the DRC and Mozambique conflicts. A gigantic evolution in peacekeeping occurred in the DRC's MONUSCO peacekeeping efforts. The UNSC resolutions regulating MONUSCO, and its FIB constitute a major change in peacekeeping practice [Nystrom, 2015]. Currently that brigade is involved in the DRC under the command of MONUSCO as the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB).

Furthermore, a notable and significant trend in peacekeeping is the increasing regionalization of peacekeeping as well as cooperation between AU and UN [Khudaykulova, 2023]. This trend is most evident in Africa, where the AU and sub-regional organizations (Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) have become increasingly autonomous and authoritative in conflict resolution, putting into practice the once proclaimed approach "African solutions to African problems." In that regard it is noted that first cooperation between the UN and Africa started in 1990, following deployment of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Liberia, a move which marked evolution in peacekeeping in Africa. Figure 1 clearly shows the intensity of cooperation between the UN and

different RECs. This is one of the developments that has differentiated the traditional peacekeeping efforts with the contemporary third generation peacekeeping operations. The evolution of peacekeeping operations can be explained in three epochs or generations, namely traditional peacekeeping, multi-dimensional and hybrid peacekeeping processes. This can be traced from the first UN peacekeeping mission in 1948 to present day operations. The same involution can also be traced to Africa where the first mission was in the Congo in the 1960s and it is the sane Congo where the UN has decided to experiment peace enforcement using blue helmets as well as use of hybrid peacekeeping under Chapter VIII as was the case with UNAMID and UNMISS as outline above. The paper will unpack how this evolution has affected the UN in its peacekeeping efforts.

Evolution of MONUSCO and its Force Intervention Brigade

Contemporary UN peacekeeping operations have undergone a process of rationalization and professionalization suffice to say they are better planned and run than at the time when the Brahimi report was calling for their reform following the failures of the 1990s [Tardy, 2015]. The involvement of the UN in DRC can be traced back to 1960 when the first UN mission, ONUC was deployed period 1960 to 1964 in response to the Congo Crisis. The mission's goals were to help the Congolese government maintain law and order and to ensure the withdrawal of Belgian forces. At its peak, ONUC had nearly 20,000 military personnel, and 250 UN personnel died while serving on the mission, including Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold. This deployment was a first-generation peacekeeping operation. Due to continued sponsored armed insurrection in that country, the UN deployed for the second time after the second Congo war dubbed the World War of Africa in 1999. United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) was deployed in 1999 in a multi-dimensional peacekeeping approach. By its resolution 1925 the UNSC wanted to underline the new phase reached in the country by renaming MONUC the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). This time the mission was authorized to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate. Among other things, the mandate related to the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel and human rights defenders under imminent threat of physical violence. Moreover, the force was tasked to support the Government of the DRC in its stabilization and peace consolidation efforts. To this end, the UNSC decided that MONUSCO would comprise of a maximum of 19 815 military personnel (760 military observers, 391 police personnel, 1 050 members of formed police units and appropriate civilian, judiciary and correction components) [UN, 2013] It is worth noting that this strength had risen from initial number of 5537 military personnel under MONUC. This evolution saw a percentage increase of 258 % of military personnel deployed in DRC.

To address the underlying causes of the DRC conflict, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework was signed by representatives of 11 countries in the region, the Chairs of the African

Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations Secretary-General on 24 February 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Relatedly, on 27 February 2013, the Secretary General in his Special Report on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region proposed that a dedicated intervention brigade was to be established within MONUSCO [UN, 2013]. The report explicitly suggested that the brigade would have peace-enforcement tasks consisting of preventing the expansion of rebel groups, neutralizing and disarming armed groups.

Expansion of Mandates

When MONUSCO was given an extensive mandate to use force not only to defend itself, its mandate and civilians but also to "neutralize" rebel groups in DRC, this marked a significant deviation from the principle of the minimum use of force. Furthermore, peacekeepers executing this kind of offensive mandate inevitably take an active part in armed conflicts, actualizing international humanitarian law [Whittle, 2015].

Since active participation in hostilities implies taking a stand in the conflict against one or more parties, the practice also marks a deviation from the principle of neutrality. Finally, the third principle of host state consent becomes relevant. Although the government of the DRC has given its blessing to the UN forces, the reason for the force's being there emerges from the governments' lack of control over its own territory. This raises questions as to the ability of the government to represent all groups and individuals living on DRC's territory. Despite the major changes in UNSC practice since the first PKO, the UN has continued to maintain that the three basic principles of peacekeeping apply even to these hybrid forms of operations, as seen in the Congo [Sloan, 2011]. One month later that year, on 28 March 2013, the UNSC unanimously adopted resolution 2098 (2013) to support the objectives of the PSC Framework agreement. Apart from extending the mandate of MONUSCO, the resolution also created a specialized 'intervention brigade' to support and strengthen the peacekeeping operation. This was its first-ever "offensive" combat force, intended to carry out targeted operations to 'neutralize and disarm' the notorious 23 March Movement (M23), as well as 'other Congolese rebels and foreign rebel groups in strife-driven eastern DRC.' In contrast to earlier peace-enforcement missions where the enforcement tasks were delegated to 'mandated forces' outside of the UN, this intervention brigade would operate under the direct operational command of the MONUSCO Force Commander.

The following year, on the 28 March 2014, the UNSC adopted its resolution 2147 (2014), prolonging the mandate of the force for another year until 31 March 2015. It opens with a reaffirmation of the basic principles of peacekeeping, "including consent of the parties, impartiality, and non-use of force, except in self-defence and defence of the mandate…" It is clear from the aforesaid that this was the evolution of peacekeeping in the DRC. Initially, the new

mandate seemed to bear fruit as the M23 was defeated by FIB. The East African Community (EAC) Force also entered DRC to engage such groups as ADF and FDLR. Civilian deaths have continued to rise despite the introduction of FIB and regional forces such as SADC Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC) and the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF) deployed under Chapter VIII [UCDP, 2023]. This development has put another test on the UN and challenged it to proffer other means of dealing with the rebels, since the Hybrid peacekeeping forces seem to be struggling in containing the M23. There is therefore a need to come up with a holistic approach led by the P5, in dealing with peacekeeping in DRC. What is required is a direct involvement of superpowers such as USA or Russia to whip the belligerents into line (especially Rwanda and Uganda which are directly involved in the conflict). It is believed with the unpredictable nature of President Trump and his desire to enter into mineral concessions with the DRC may see USA getting directly involved in the DRC conflict.

Multi-dimensional Approach

Changes in the nature of the conflict, rise of non-state actors, and dwindling state institutions have led to the multidimensional evolution of PKOs; also known as robust peacekeeping under Chapter VII [Sarte, 2011]. The evolved nature of PKOs positioned the peacekeepers as involved in self-defence and the defence of UN mandate. Thus, unlike traditional peacekeeping operations, contemporary peacekeeping operations authorise such forces to use force to defend themselves, unlike the ONUC and Rwanda genocide of 1994 experiences. Robust peacekeeping should not be interpreted as peace enforcement authorized under Chapter VII. Robust PKOs involve approval of UNSC and consent of warring parties on the use of force at the tactical level. Multi-dimensional PKOs involve monitoring ceasefire agreements, establishing a secure environment for humanitarian aid, and continuing the political process towards sustainable peace.

The action by FIB in the eastern DRC, specifically northern Kivu province, was the first offensive peacekeeping operation that the UN has authorised using blue-hatted troops (and white-painted armour). The peacekeeping force has been conducted under UN command with a security council mandate, but it was initially mooted as a SADC operation, the first real test of the African Standby Force and its RECs especially the SADC Standby Force and East African Force. Worth noting is that UNSC Resolution 2098 (2013) that created the FIB mandated it to "neutralize" armed groups in Eastern DRC such as March 23 Movement (M23), Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) among many other militia groups. It was presented by the UNSG as a milestone that "signaled the resolve of the Security Council to address the changing nature of conflict and the operating environment of UN peacekeeping" (UNSG, 2014). Although it was composed of three countries operating largely outside the UN umbrella, the Brigade was formally part of the MONUSCO. In theory, the FIB must not constitute a

precedent, yet many in UN circles see the Brigade as a possible model for more robust operations against spoilers.

It is observed that the politics behind the transfer of political and operational authority from SADC to the MONUSCO was complex but politically necessary. It is alleged that the M23, which is one of the numerous rebel movements in the DRC, is supported by Rwanda, and some regard it as an offshoot of the Rwanda armed forces. The result of an SADC force engaging with the M23 surely would have exacerbated conflicts between the regional organisation, which supports the powers-that-be in Kinshasa, and the regime in Rwanda which is not a member of SADC and has a history of efficient militarism.

Although the FIB has been hailed by many for its 'effectiveness' in fighting the M23 it has, however, faced its fair share of criticism for its failure and challenges as well. On being interviewed, previous commanders of the force have acknowledged the heavy involvement of the third force in undermining FIB's peacekeeping efforts. The challenges cited include involvement of Rwanda and Uganda in perpetuating the conflict as well as role of MNC involved in the looting of DRC resources. It has been suggested that more needs to be done, especially engaging the P5 members since these can use their muscle if they wish to end human suffering in the DRC.

Most troop and police contributing countries (T and PCCs) are reluctant to adopt a pro-active posture that could lead them to confront the armed rebels especially the M23 which is notoriously violent. Information from military points to the fact that some UN battalions lack basic equipment such as transport vehicles, which inherently impedes their ability to act in any robust manner. At the political level, robust peacekeeping is often perceived by the T&PCCs from the global South as a concept developed in Northern countries that for most of them are absent from peace operations. What has been called the North-South divide in peace operations has not so far impacted the above-mentioned consensus, yet it takes a particular resonance in the context of these new peacekeeping trends. While robust peacekeeping has created a lot of expectations, it tends to remain largely theoretical and is unlikely to see light in a truly UN context [Tardy, 2015]. This assertion is true considering the challenges.

Peacekeeping practices have evolved over the last two decades in a somewhat improvised manner, and with little reflection on the broad implications of these changing practices. It is assessed that the evolution in DRC has been reactive rather than being proactive, due to the improvised way modeled to deal with the current security challenges in Africa in general and the DRC in particular. In addition, any intervention force need not be restricted in the conduct of their duties by UN doctrines and principles [Tardy, 2011]. A military commander, given any task, knows well what he/she is expected to do, through conducting a Mission Analysis found in the Estimate process. This will enable the commander to come up with a Concept of Operation that will enable him/her

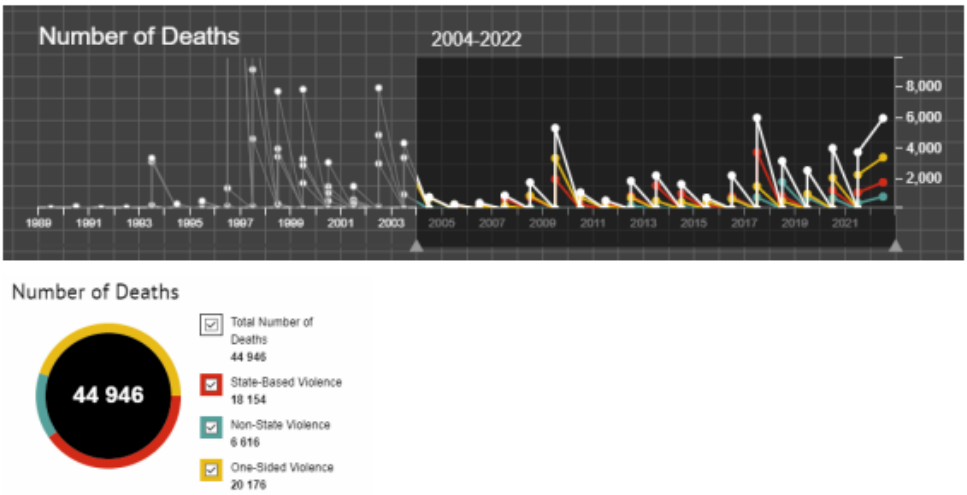
to execute the given Mission. Worth noting is that the Estimate Process conducted by the Military Commander gives him/her the latitude to clarify up or down in case there are issues that need to be clarified with superiors, suffice to say this allows superiors to proffer their suggestions or observations before any plan is executed.

Protection of Civilians

The protection of civilians in DRC was MONUSCO's central priority in peacekeeping operations, particularly in situations where civilians were at risk of violence, abuse, or displacement. Peacekeepers are now expected to take proactive measures to prevent harm to civilians and to respond swiftly to incidents of violence. MONUSCO continued with the multi-dimensional approach and was given a robust mandate where it could engage in joint military operations with Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) targeting national and foreign armed militia as mandated under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. It also worked with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Existing coordination structures reflect the UN's unique integrated approach to the protection of civilians in the DRC. Martin (2012) observes that representatives of OCHA and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) sit alongside the Mission's leadership in Senior Management Groups on Protection (SMG-P) at both national level and priority provinces. The Protection Working Group, a technical level body, has always assisted the SMG-P to make country-wide policy decisions on the protection of civilians. This approach has attempted to link both civil and military planning for the protection of civilians, a marked improvement and evolution in peacekeeping efforts in DRC. Relatedly, Martin (2012) further postulates that, in a bid to enhance civilian protection and response capacity, MONUSCO introduced Community Alert Networks (CAN) around its military bases to complement its human networks and leverage its response capacity.

Despite having scored some successes, MONUSCO faced its own challenges. It is criticized for having failed, sometimes to act, both proactively to thwart rebel attacks on civilians as well as report on such attacks. This monumental failure led the DRC government and general populace to stage demonstrations from the year 2022 against MONUSCO and demanded that it withdraws from that country. This led to the UN agreeing to this demand and directed MONUSCO to withdraw from DRC in phases up to end of year 2024. This development shows that there is more to be done to make UN peacekeeping mission successful, suffice to save evolution of peacekeeping is still work in progress. However, the year 2017 witnessed an increase of civilian deaths as shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Fatalities in 2004-2022 in DRC.



Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) (2024)

UN forces were unable to prevent a renewed spike in killings after 2017 from 2000 deaths per year to around 6000, despite retaining the same number of troops and the same mandate (including following the deployment of an intervention brigade in 2013). A former FIB commander who operated in the DRC stated that the challenges faced by MONUSCO despite initial successes was attributed to "lack of funding, an unclear mandate, and lack of political support from the P5 to sanction all those involved directly or otherwise in perpetuating DRC crisis especially Rwanda" Apparently Rwanda das been Christened the, 'Israel of Africa' due to its preferential treatment by the West [Musavuli, 2025]. Despite the limited resources availed to UNAMID unlike MONUSCO managed to provide protection to the civilians in Darfur and assisted and assisted in humanitarian aid operations. It contributed to the promotion of peace, addressed the critical roots of the conflict and helped end the violence by conduct of rigorous patrols. By 2018, UNAMID managed to reduce acts of violence against civilians leading to a dignified exit of the UN force [UNAMID, 2022]. This however cannot be compared to the situation in the DRC where the number of civilians killed has been astronomical, despite the presence of a UN forces. The high death rate in DRC could be attributed to the complex conflict dynamics which are mainly driven by ethnicity, issue of lootable resources and the involvement of external players in the form of Rwanda and Uganda which have been identified as sponsors of the rebel groups especially the M23. To date the two missions are classified as the two most expensive peacekeeping missions ever [Rodriguez, 2024, Ngwube, and Omede, 2024]. The major difference between the missions is that MONUSCO was given a robust mandate while UNAMID focused only on protection and not offensive operations. The outcomes of the two missions were different in that MONUSCO's relations with the host were sour due to accusations of its ineffectiveness in the protection of civilians while, UNAMID's relations led to gradual acceptance post -South Sudan independence. It is therefore argued that although FIB played a key role in partially neutralizing some rebel groups its actions alone should not have been

taken as an ultimate solution to ending the conflict. Its success should have been complimented by other means such as support of DDR programmes, security sector reforms (SSR), strengthening governance structures and the direct involvement of P5 to achieve positive peace. Had this opportunity been ridden on, it is likely that positive peace could have been attained in the DRC. It is noteworthy that peace enforcement is not an end but a means to an end which would facilitate the implementation of other conflict resolution mechanisms. Additionally, the presence of FIB did not deter the sprouting of numerous rebel groups in DRC. Conversely the number of rebel groups rose from approximately 24 since the introduction of FIB in 2013 as noted by Stearns et al [2013] to over 132 in 2024 [Global Conflict tracker, 2024]. This is testament that FIB was affected by the law of the reversed effect, the more it tried to fight the rebels the more they increased.

Cooperation and Partnerships

It is significant to develop partnership approach between the UN and regional organizations where they provide peacekeepers while the UN continues to retain the core responsibility of imparting legitimacy and financial support to various missions [Ishaque, 2021]. African conflicts require comprehensive and multidimensional approaches to successfully tackle emerging threats hence the need to continue nurturing the aforementioned partnerships and cooperation [Osabutey, 2011]. In the case of MONUSCO, the Mission was most successful when there was an alignment of political will among the Congolese Government, the UN, the region, and partners (e.g., during the transition and during the early FIB phase), and least successful when this political alignment was weak. This assertion testifies to the fact that cooperation is an important cog of peacekeeping operations because without it, no mission can ever be successful. In that regard is suggested that using the AU framework, MONUSCO should closely cooperate with Africans and let them lead the leading role so that locals don't feel alienated from the process and assume it's a foreign concept being pressured on them. However, for the force to be more effective, there is need to capacitate the peacekeepers before deployment through joint training to enhance interoperability, considering that each country has its own tactical doctrine. As of January 2025, MONUSCO had recorded a total of 303 fatalities among its personnel since its inception in 2010. This includes 179 military personnel (number includes 30 who were killed in 2025), 3 military observers, 18 UN police, 28 international civilians, and 71 local civilians killed by rebel groups [UN Operations and Crisis Centre, 2024]. M23 also managed to capture Goma, Bukavu and has continued to advance towards Kinshasa despite attempts by the FARDC supported by MONUSCO to stop them. This trend is worrisome and reflects negatively on the capacity of peacekeepers to protect civilians. One former peacekeeper noted that the losses were caused by lack of coordination due to different fighting doctrines and level of training, where some of the peacekeepers were labelled as 'civilians in uniform' due to their poor training. The force also lacked modern equipment such as attack

helicopters and attack drones. He added that the South African Roivak was only used in 2013 battles with M23 but were rarely seen flying in the conflict zone thereafter. He suggested that efficiency of the blue helmets could only be improved through joint training of forces before deployment, a suggestion the authors support and recommend the UN adopts if it is to have an efficient peace enforcement force.

Cooperation and partnerships are viewed as a major shift from traditional peacekeeping, thus marking a major evolution in peacekeeping. According to the AU Peace and Security Report (2012), the organisation (AU) views peacekeeping "as an opportunity to establish peace before keeping it," and stresses that its peace support operation (PSO) is accordingly more robust and less risk averse than the UN operation. Another interesting development in UN peacekeeping was the introduction of such terms as PSO, operations other than war, nation building and stabilisation, suffice to say, these are some of the terms given to the mission in DRC. Relatedly, the definition of peacekeeping due to this evolution has been challenged by many critics who oppose the use of force.

The field of cooperation between the UN and AU is quite vibrant, with the aim of fulfilling the Silencing the Guns as well as broadly striving to protect civilians from the scourge of war [Bokeriya, 2022]. Additionally, it is worth noting that in the field of mediation it is one of the most sought-after areas of partnership. The UN and the AU have been formally and informally engaged in mediation efforts in Burundi, Darfur, the DRC, the CAR, Libya, South Sudan, among many other conflict areas.

In the DRC cooperation between and among various agencies has been witnessed where since 1999 the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and MONUC were tasked by the UN Policy Committee to develop an overarching UN System-Wide Strategy for the protection of civilians in the DRC. Adopted in January 2010, the strategy of protection of civilians set out a shared vision of the UN's protection objectives [Maeresera et al, 2018, Martin, 2012]. They further note that four strategies whose aim was to integrate humanitarian and peacekeeping approaches along with the overall strategy integrate both the humanitarian and peacekeeping approaches to protection: the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Strategy, the International Security and Stabilisation Support Strategy, the UN Joint Justice Support Programme and the Peace Consolidation Programme. These were also transferred from MONUC to MONUSCO which was renamed as such on 01 July 2010, marking another turning point in the evolution of peacekeeping in DRC. These strategies bring together the short-term emergency activities of humanitarian actors as set out in the Humanitarian Action Plan, with the longer-term development goals of the UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes. The latter are stated in the UN Development and Assistance Framework and MONUSCO's mandated activities on the protection of civilians. Resolution 2211, adopted on

26 March 2015, renewed the mandate of MONUSCO, including its FIB, until 31 March 2016. MONUSCO is still authorised to carry out targeted offensive operations through the FIB in cooperation with the whole of MONUSCO, either unilaterally or jointly with the FARDC, to neutralise armed groups. The resolution asks MONUSCO to maximise its interoperability, flexibility and effectiveness in the implementation of its mandate. Thus, as much as cooperation and partnerships are key in peacekeeping efforts in the DRC, it is argued that doing this with mutual respect and equality will yield better results. The current situation where SADC is playing second fiddle in its peacekeeping efforts will continue to undermine the desired results, suffice to say this has led the DRC government to demand that MONUSCO withdraws from that country by end of 2024. It is opined that the above argument has led to complications that have militated UN peacekeeping efforts in DRC suffice to say this gave an opportunity to an increase in numbers of rebel groups and resurgence of M23. The resurgence of M23 from the year 2023 duly complicated the Force's peace enforcement efforts. Additionally, the revival has been attributed to the lifting of support to Rwanda by UK government. This enabled Rwanda to once again provide M23 with advanced weapon systems and alleged deployment of its soldiers in support of M23 [Bokeriya et al. 2024]. This led to the capture of Goma, Bukavu and march on Kinshasa after January 2025.

Despite the presence of numerous Multinational corporations (MNCs) exploiting minerals in DRC violence has increased bringing to question the role of such entities in conflict zones. The table 1 below shows the number of MNCs from P5 operating in DRC.

Table 1. List of Companies in DRC

Country	Registered MNCs	List of Companies
People's Republic of China	56	Beijing Huayihuisheng Trade Co. Ltd, Chengtun Mining, China Molybdenum Company, CIC Mining Resources China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group, Huayou Cobalt, Zijin Mining, Sinohydro, China Railway Engineering Corporation, China-Congo Telecom (ZTE), Minerals and Metals Group (MMG), China Molybdenum's Tenke Fugurume, Sino Congolaise des Mines (Sicomines), plus 44 other entities.
United States of America	14	AmCham Congo DR, Freeport-Mcmoran, Tenke Fungurume Mining, Africa Wireless Network, American Eagle, Apollo Online SPRL, Arno SPRL, Bralima SARL, Tractafric Congo Sprl, Chevron Texaco Oil Congo, S.a.r.l., Citigroup Congo, Congo Core, Minerals Mining Company (MIMINCO) and Compangie Africaine d'Aviation
France	3	Perenco, TotalEnergies, *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD)
Britain	5	Atom DRC, Omexom UK, DP World, AngloGold Ashanti and SOCO
Russian Federation	1	Russian Mining Group Kazakh ERG, (ZNGS-Prometey company, Russia's oil company Lukoil – still agreements)

Source: compiled by authors (2025)

It is common knowledge that companies normally prefer to operate is secure political environment. Alas, the same cannot be said for the DRC. Despite the addition of a robust mandate marking a clear sign of evolution of peacekeeping efforts, it has been noted MNCs (such as those from China)

have paid a very passive role in the peacekeeping efforts in the DRC. Peacekeeping efforts would have been enhanced through the support of MNCs, but due to lootable resources the opposite is true. Batware (2011) claims that China's entrance in Africa through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is guided by interests in mineral resources and this is corroborated by presence of many Chinese MNCs as noted in the above Table. He further asserts that the operations of Chinese companies have been noted to be no different from former colonial masters who came for minerals to develop their nations. Their complacency and doctrine of non-interference in affairs of other states is worrisome especially in DRC where Chinese activities are flourishing in the face of bloodshed and poverty of Congolese. This assertion corroborates Findley and Marineau (2015) that MNCs play a particularly significant role in the continuation of the DRC conflict, suffice to say China has not done much to help peacekeepers pacify the DRC crisis [Batware, 2011]. Thus, African Union should take the international community to task ensuring enhanced security in the countries they are operating.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Expansion of MONUSCO's mandate through the introduction of the FIB is assessed to have marked a great shift from yesteryear's traditional peacekeeping operations. The evolution of the principle of the minimum use of force in peacekeeping operations made the peacekeeping effort in DRC move towards a more permitting and extensive mandate. Critics however believe that although MONUSCO's FIB is explicitly authorized to carry out targeted offensive operations, regardless of its counterparty's actions, its use of force can hardly be squeezed into the otherwise ever-expanding notion of PKO's traditional right to use force. On the contrary, the force successfully used by the FIB against the M23 resulting in its military defeat rather states a clear example of a strategic use of force, belonging to a peace enforcement mission. Rebels in DRC can only be defeated if adequate force is imposed on them and its Centre of Gravity dismantled. This assertion is supported by the fact that M23 was defeated in 2023 because Rwandans had been pressured not to support the group. It is recommended that stifling funding of rebels as was the case in 2013, which led to subsequent shortages of weapons will incapacitate M23 and led to their subsequent defeat by FIB. Furthermore, all illicit trade in weapons of war and placing all companies supplying weapons to DRC be made a priority since these are known by the UN.

The argument about conflict can be closely mapped in Africa to the presence of lootable valuable mineral and other resources clearly shows that the problems faced by Africans are not purely African but are sponsored and propelled by external third forces. This fact thus challenges the principle 'African solutions to African problems'. It is therefore opined that the international communities should be held accountable for the problems it is piling in Africa. All MNCs and superpowers exploiting Africa due to the neo colonialism agenda should be taken to task, however

this is only possible when African countries are united in the true sense of the word. A new breed of African leaders who put Africa and their people first must reignite the United States of Africa agenda, vision championed by the founding fathers like Kwame Nkrumah, Marcus Garvey, Sekou Toure, Julius Nyerere among many others. In the short to medium term, the emerging consensus is that RECs and the AU should be the first to respond, but the wider international community needs to be brought in to find sustainable solutions through peacebuilding and other initiatives.

From an African point of view, the importance of 'partnerships in peacekeeping' cannot be overemphasized, but the nature of such partnerships must continually be interrogated given that the playing field is not level. The cited cases of intervention in Africa, especially the case of FIB in DRC, best exemplifies this line of thinking. Furthermore, to increase the level of efficiency, it is recommended that Joint Training of peacekeepers from various regions and countries be done so as to enhance interoperability. As both objects and subjects of peacekeeping, African actors especially those in the ICGR and SADC where 'the resource curse phenomenon' has hindered peacekeeping efforts and a perpetuation of the conflict by the third force must be more active in the politics, the mandates, the deployments and the outcomes of peacekeeping. This is no more important than in relation to military interventions, which are becoming gradually more common under the rubric of UN peacekeeping [Cawthra, 2016].

Thus, a holistic approach, which should involve the UNSC, especially the P5 and MNCs looting DRC resources is required to sanitize the situation in that country. It is therefore important to continue capacitating FIB, which will continue with peacekeeping efforts after the withdrawal of MONUSCO at the end of year 2024 so that other conflict resolution mechanisms can ride on its successes. To also fully assist in protection of civilians, it is suggested that Rwanda and Uganda which have been identified as 'spoilers' due to their role as conduits of looted DRC resources and their continued interference in DRC politics must be sanctioned and taken to task so that they may stop supporting the rebels especially M23.

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