



Peacekeeping in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1999 to 2013

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1. Introduction

UN peacekeeping is developing continuously. The most recent development can be found in the peacekeeping mission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The recent peacekeeping mission in the DRC has been transformed from a traditional observation mission to a multidimensional peacekeeping mission, and finally to a new type of peace enforcement mission. Therefore, I will analyze in this paper the different important steps of the peacekeeping mission in the DRC after 1999 to 2013.

The first UN peacekeeping mission started in 1999 during the civil war in the Congo and this mission continues today. The introduction of the United Nation Force Intervention Brigade in 2013 marked a millstone in UN peacekeeping and should be analyzed in other research projects. Due to this, this paper will only analyze the UN mission in the Congo between 1999 to 2013.

First, I will look at the constraints and requirements for the UN peacekeeping mission in general before I will give a brief overview of the situation and history of the Congo before 1999. After that, I will show different improvements and setbacks of the UN mission in the DRC and finally, I will draw a conclusion from the mission and make suggestions for future UN peacekeeping missions.

2. Constraints and requirements for UN Peacekeeping Missions

The first UN peacekeeping operation started in 1948, three years after the United Nations (UN) were founded.ⁱ Even though peacekeeping operations or Blue Helmet missions are nearly as old as the UN itself, this type of activity is not mentioned in the UN



Charter. Therefore, peacekeeping operations are referred to as “Chapter Six and a Half” missions. This name takes into account that any action under chapter VI is related to peaceful conflict resolution with the help of negotiation and mediation. In contrast, actions which are authorized by the UN Security Council (UNSC) under chapter VII of the UN Charta are much more focused on conflict solving by the means of force.

Over past decades, the peacekeeping missions have developed. From the founding of the UN till the end of the Cold War in 1990 the UN was paralyzed and peacekeeping missions tented to be authorized under chapter VI. This means that those missions are mostly observation operations and the use of force was only allowed in self-defense situations. This changed after the end of the Cold War and new types of peacekeeping missions emerged.ⁱⁱ

Nevertheless, UN peacekeeping missions follow three basic principles according to the UN itself. These principles are:ⁱⁱⁱ

- Consent of the Parties
- Impartiality
- Non-Use of Force except in Self-Defense and Defense of the Mandate

The interpretation of the three principles is not as clear as it might seem. *Consent of the Parties* means only the consent of the main conflict parties. The consent of the Parties is furthermore understood as a general agreement that peacekeeper will be deployed. It explicitly means that not every main Party has to agree to any tactical or operational decision made by the peacekeepers. Also, spoilers like militias or rebel groups are not always considered as main conflict parties and therefore their consent is not required. *Impartiality* is not an excuse for neutrality or inactivity. In case of conflict, the guiding principles for the peacekeepers is the UNSC resolution. They should treat the conflict parties equally according to the UNSC resolution. Staying neutral in case of conflict is therefore not an option. The principle *Non-Use of Force Except on Self-Defense and Defense of the Mandate* looks like a defensive approach and most of the time the peacekeeping operations use less force as possible. Under a so called “robust” mandate, the peacekeeping operations can act in a much more offensive way to enforce the UNSC resolution. In addition, some missions are authorized under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. These missions are referred to as peace enforcement operations, in contrast to



peacekeeping operations. Due to the fact, that this distinguishing characteristic is not always clearly identifiable and peacekeeping is often used as a common terminology, peace enforcement operations will be treated as a special subcategory of peacekeeping operations.

There are many definitions of different generations of peacekeeping operations. They do not differ much in their core understanding but nevertheless, there is no common agreement of how to categorize the different UN peacekeeping operations in different generations. The indicator is that there is no easy way to distinguish clearly between the different generations and that therefore peacekeeping missions have developed gradually instead of through generations. David Last writes about this problem in the following:

“The concept of generations does not help us to describe what has happened to peacekeeping. Air strikes and coercion by the RRF in 1995 looked a lot like the Congo operations in the 1960s. The Inter-communal violence in Bosnia and area deployments to maintain control looked like Cyprus in 1964. The most recent development of transitional administrations, with civilian police, NGO, and humanitarian operations, is that they today look like Western New Guinea in 1963. The concept of generations can blind us to useful precedents.”^{iv}

Therefore, I will outline in the following four different main characteristics of peacekeeping operations. It is important to see these characteristics as overlapping and rough guidelines. We will see that some peacekeeping operations consists of nearly all four main characteristics whereas some may consist only of one main characteristic. This is due to the fact that peacekeeping operations have steadily developed and a highly complex peacekeeping operation is likely to include elements of pervious development steps.

One type of peacekeeping mission is a simple observation operation like the first UN peacekeeping mission *United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)* in the Middle East.^v This type of operation requires most of the time only a small number of soldiers which are lightly armed, if armed at all. The only purpose of such a mission is to observe a truce or ceasefire agreement. This type of mission is called observation operation.



A second type of peacekeeping mission is an interpositional operation. This means that a larger number of peacekeeping troops are deployed between the conflict parties. The main purpose is to separate the conflict parties physically. All conflict parties have to agree to the deployment and the peacekeepers are only equipped with light weapons. Their mandate only allows the use of force for self-defense purposes. The *United Nations Emergency Force I* (UNEF I) mission in Egypt after the Suez Crisis is the first example for this type of mission.^{vi}

The third type of peacekeeping mission is the multidimensional operation, which have civil and military components. The purpose of a multidimensional operation is to strengthen the state in which they are deployed. Multiple terms referring to that task such as nation building, state building, and capacity building. An example for that type of peacekeeping operation is *United Nations Transition Assistance Group* (UNTAG) in Namibia.^{vii}

The fourth type are peace enforcement operations. In contrast to the other three types of peacekeeping operations, this type is mandated under chapter VII of the UN Charter. Therefore, the peacekeeping troops have a much larger variation of options to enforce the UNSC mandate. Commonly, peace enforcement operations can rely on a large number of soldiers, which are heavily armed and which are equipped with armored vehicles, attack helicopters, and airplanes. Even though, there is some uncertainty about the definition, it is clear that peace enforcement operations rely on force to act in an offensive way in order to fulfill the UNSC mandate.^{viii}

3. The Case of Congo

The recent peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République démocratique du Congo* (MONUC), and *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo* (MONUSCO) are good examples for peace enforcement operations because they are at the beginning on the edge of a “Chapter VI and a half” operation and later they are under a Chapter VII UNSC mandate. Furthermore,



MONUSCO can rely on the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade to act offensively against militias in the Congo.^{ix}

As I will show in the following chapter, in the case of the Congo, we will see that the UNSC resolutions have developed towards a peace enforcement operation as well as the mindset and the actions of the peacekeepers “on the ground” in the Congo. First, I will look at the precondition and the history of the Congo and the whole Central African region. Secondly, I will outline different important steps of the MONUC and MONUSCO operation. Finally, I will draw a conclusion and assess the peace enforcement operation in the Congo. The conclusion will include valid lessons for future peace enforcement operations.

3.1 Precondition

The DRC is a very rich country in regard to natural resources. In addition, the DRC has nine neighboring countries and a strategic position in the heart of Africa (a map can be found in the Appendix). In the last centuries, the Congo was exploited. First, by western slave traders which teared down the once functioning aristocratic state. Then, copper and rubber became the main resources extracted from Congo. These resources developed the Western industries, but they put Congo under the brutal and destructive regime of King Leopold II from Belgium. Any form of traditional statehood was extinguished and the country was brutally ruled by foreigners with no intent to develop Congo.

During the Second World War, it was the Uranium from the Congo which made the US Nuclear Program possible. But the importance of Congo made it vulnerable and shortly after independence, the former Sergeant Mobutu organized a coup d'etat with the help of the CIA. The purpose was to maintain western influence in this important country but the consequences were a corrupt and brutal regime which brought the Congo close to a collapse.^x

In the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda, tensions raised between Rwanda and Uganda on the one side and the Congo on the other side in 1996. Laurent-Désiré Kabila, the leader of the *Alliance of Democratic Force for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL)* advanced with the support of Rwanda and Uganda quickly. In 1997, the AFDL conquered



the capital of the Congo, Kinshasa. Mobutu fled the country and died later in exile. Kabila renamed the country as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and tried to get independence from his former allies in Rwanda and Uganda^{xi}

Rwanda and Uganda rejected the desire for independence and financed rebel groups in the eastern DRC. This led to a deadly civil war which shaped the future of the DRC and is still affecting the Congo today. This violent environment is where the first UN peacekeepers were deployed.^{xii}

3.2 MUNOC/MONUSCO

On July 10, 1999, the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement was signed between the DRC, Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, and Uganda. On August 6, 1999, the UNSC made the Resolution 1258. This resolution authorizes the deployment of up to 90 military liaison officers in the DRC to observe the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement.^{xiii}

This ceasefire agreement is also the basis of the UNSC Resolution 1279 of November 30, 1999, in which the UNSC expressed its concerns about the situation in the DRC. The UNSC also confirms the territorial integrity of the DRC and any country in the region, which is important due to the fact that Rwanda and Uganda are still active in the eastern part of the DRC. The UNSC Resolution 1279 established the MONUC in the DRC. MONUC was first a multidimensional peacekeeping mission with mainly observation tasks.

The situation in the DRC and especially in the eastern part remains catastrophic. Different militias exploited the power vacuum and foreign troops rejected to leave the DRC. The UNSC expressed its deep concern of human rights violations and the exploitation of the natural resources in the UNSC Resolution 1291. This resolution authorized the deployment of up to 5,537 military personnel. Moreover, Resolution 1291 states that MONUC is acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. This gives the peacekeepers more authority and the possibility to act in a proactive way to fulfill its mandate. It states, that MONUC should, “protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence”^{xiv}



Nevertheless, the atrocities and killing in the eastern part of the Congo continued. Rwanda and Uganda were still supporting rebel groups in the DRC and President Laurent Kabila demanded an urgent deployment of the promised 5,500 peacekeepers in the eastern part of the DRC^{xv}. In February 2000, only 83 military liaison officers were deployed.^{xvi} Therefore, attacks on civilians continued.

Due to continued fighting and involvement of Ugandans and Rwandans troops in the eastern part of the DRC, the UNSC called to, “withdraw all their forces from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo without further delay”.^{xvii} As a result, the emerging power vacuum was exploited by rebel forces and militias because MONUC was not able to project enough power into this region. As the numbers of deployed peacekeepers increased, attacks still took place even if they happened near by the camps of UN troops.

On April 2, 2003, the final act of the *Inter-Congolese Political Negotiations*, also known as *Sun City Agreement*, was signed. This was a formal approval of the *Global and All Inclusive Agreement* by all signatory parties. The Sun City Agreement officially ended the civil war in the DRC and outlined a way to integrate the main rebel groups into the DRC government structure.

Nevertheless, the Ituri Crisis in 2003 broke out, which was mainly a dispute over territory between the Hema tribe and Lendu tribe. An Uruguayan MONUC battalion was deployed in the Ituri province to prevent mass killings and atrocities against civilians. The MONUC troops were not able to stop the killings and 400 people were massacred in roughly two weeks. Nevertheless, the MONUC troops were able to protect approximately 11,000 people who were seeking refugee at the Bunia airport.^{xviii}

To support the overwhelmed MONUC troops in Bunia, the UNSC authorized in Resolution 1484 the deployment of an Interim Emergency Multinational Force in Bunia until September 1, 2003. The mission was authorized on a temporary basis and was operating under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.^{xix} The European Union (EU) was willing to lead this Interim Emergency Multinational Force and France became the Framework Nation of the ARTEMIS operation.^{xx} The European soldiers were well equipped and trained and could rely on more fire support and intelligence. Therefore, the mission was a success: the UN troops were able to secure the city quickly.



The UN reacted to the Ituri Crisis with the UNSC Resolution 1493, in which the overall strength of MONUC was raised to 10,800 soldiers. Also, the robust mandate of the Interim Emergency Multinational Force was adopted to MONUC in this resolution. Through the Resolution 1493, the tasks of MONUC were extended and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) were part of MONUC.^{xxi}

In June 2004 a rebel group under the dissident officer Laurent Nkunda attacked the city of Bukavu. Approximately 1,000 rebel soldieries conquered the city after the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo retreated and the UN peacekeepers did not engage the rebels, even though they were well equipped and could rely on air support. Dozens of civilians were killed and anti MONUC protests emerged.^{xxii}

The UN responded with the UNSC Resolution 1565 in which MONUC's strength increased by 5,900. The overall size of MONUC is therefore 16,700 in 2004. The resolution includes a more robust mandate and an explicit mention concentration on the provinces of North and South Kivu.^{xxiii}

In 2005, Patrick Cammaert become the new Force Commander of MONUC. He had a different approach than previous Force Commanders and was willing to use the UNSC Mandate to its full extend in order to maintain or restore peace.

“Being neutral means that you stand there and you say 'Well, I have nothing to do with it', while being impartial means that you stand there, you judge the situation as it is and you take charge” (Gen. Patrick Cammaert)^{xxiv}

In fact, he was able to turn the situation and fight back the militias, especially in the eastern of the DRC.^{xxv}

After the election in 2006, the DRC entered the post-transitional period. This means that the sovereignty of the DRC is restored and the government is taking over more and more tasks of MONUC. It also leads to changes in the operation on the ground. Following the report of the Secretary-General MONUC is assisting the DRC army more and is cutting down its own operations.^{xxvi}

The result was a quickly deteriorating security situation which lead to the reassignment of the new Force Commander General Vicent Diaz De Villegas. The



situation remained unsatisfied and approximately 250,000 people fled the fighting zones.^{xxvii}

The UNSC reacted in 2008 with Resolution 1843 and Resolution 1856 to this crisis. Resolution 1843 authorized a temporary increase of the military strength by up to 2,785 soldiers and can be seen as an immediate response to the situation in the eastern parts of the DRC. UNSC Resolution 1856 changed the priorities of MONUC and raised the maximum amount of military personal of MONUC to 19,815. Under the new resolution the UNSC, “*Requests* MONUC to attach the highest priority to addressing the crisis in the Kivus, in particular the protection of civilians”^{xxviii}.

With the arrest of Laurent Nkunda, the CNDP rebel leader in the eastern part of the DRC and the joint operations of MONUC and the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) MONUC was able to win momentum back. During offensive operations, with the purpose of protecting civilians, from a variety of rebel groups the FARDC committed massive human rights violations.^{xxix}

To provide MONUC with more leverage towards its critical partner, the FARDC, the UNSC introduced a conditionality policy under UNSC Resolution 1906 through which MONUC can stop the cooperation with parts of the FARDC if they did commit human rights violations.^{xxx}

In 2010, the UNSC changed the name of MONUC into *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo* (MONUSCO). The Resolution 1925 also changed the mandate and shifted the responsibility for protecting the population against human rights violation more towards the DRC government. The main task of MONUSCO under the new resolution was to continue the military operation in the Kivu region and to support the DRC with Security Sector Reform (SSR) and peace consolidation.^{xxxi}

At the end of July and early August 2010, massive gang rape occurred in North Kivu. It was mainly rebels from the group *Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda* (FDLR) and Mai-Mai militiamen who conducted the systematic rape and looting of approximately 200 women. The incidence took place near a MONUSCO camp but the troops decided not to act.^{xxxii}



In 2012, the Rwandan backed rebel group M23 captured Goma, a city located in North Kivu near the border to Rwanda. The FDLR fled and left the city undefended. More than 1,000 peacekeepers, which were stationed near the city, decided not to act even though they could have stopped the rebels due to the better training and equipment. The government of the DRC and the UN mission were embarrassed because there was evidence of failure of the government and MONUSCO to protect civilians against the militias in the eastern part of the DRC.^{xxxiii}

The UNSC reacted with authorization of the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade for the DRC and the deployment of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) in UNSC Resolution 2098 in 2013. The resolution is referring to the *Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region* signed on February 24, 2013 by 11 African nations.^{xxxiv} The United Nations Force Intervention Brigade was given a much more offensive mandate than the previous MONUSCO mission.

3.3 Lessons for future UN Missions

In this paper, I only analyze the UN involvement between 1999 and 2013, because the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade marked a turning point in the development of peacekeeping missions and is a genuine new phenomenon. Therefore, the Intervention Brigade should be analyzed in a different paper.

In this chapter, I will look at the lessons which can be learned from the UN engagement in the DRC between 1999 and 2013. In order to do so, I will look closely at the reasons for the several crises in the given time period.

In the early stage of MONUC till the Ituri crisis in 2003, we see that some UN troops were not aware of the authority given by the mandate and the mandate in general was interpreted very conservatively. The Rules of Engagement (RoE) were narrowly understood in some cases. The Uruguayan battalion, which was deployed in the conflict zone, was not aware that they are operating under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In addition, some force commander tried to get clearance from their government before following an order from a UN head quarter.^{xxxv}



In the Bukavu offensive in 2004, we see a disagreement between the MONUC military command and the civil mission leadership. Whereas the military command wanted to engage, the civil mission leadership denied any military actions because it viewed to conflict an internal affair of the DRC.

In the 2008 crisis, the peacekeepers did not intervene because they lacked both capability and knowledge about the ongoing killings. Without proper intelligence and very little contact to the local population, the deployed peacekeepers had no valid information to plan any preventive operations.^{xxxvi}

The capturing of the city Goma in 2012 through M23 rebels, shows that without a clear mandate and a courage leadership even superior UN troops cannot stop rebels and militias from violating the international agreements. The example of Patrick Cammaert showed how leadership and courage can make the difference.

Therefore, future peacekeeping missions should take attention to the following points:

- As soon as the UN troops will show weakness, this weakness will be exploited by spoilers, militias, and third parties.
- A clear UNSC mandate is necessary.
- Either the UN or the home countries of the soldiers have to ensure that the officers are well aware of mandate. Changes in the mandate should be communicated very clearly. This is even more important if the mission type changes from a Chapter VI to a Chapter VII mission.
- A mutual understanding about the interpretation of the mandate within the UN is necessary. Conflicts and misunderstanding between the military command and the civil mission leadership can lead to a deadlock of the mission.
- Military equipment and training of the peacekeepers have an important effect on the success of the mission, as we have seen during the EU engagement ARTEMIS.
- Intelligence and contact to the local population is critical for the success of a peacekeeping mission. Therefore, the UN should make sure that enough interpreters are available to make communication with the local population possible.



- The personal commitment and courage of the mission leadership is crucial for the success of the mission.

4. Conclusion

We have seen that MONUC started as a simple observation mission which turned into a multidimensional peacekeeping mission and become a peace enforcement mission later on. This transition, through the different types of peacekeeping operations, as outlined in chapter 2, caused some trouble for MONUC/MONUSCO.

Nevertheless, the concept of the different types of peacekeeping missions can help to prevent misunderstandings and therefore failed missions in the future because every type has its own implications for the troops on the ground and a clear labeling can prevent misunderstandings in the future.

We also have seen that peacekeepers can make a difference and can actually prevent atrocities and human right violations, but only if the mission is well equipped, has the proper leadership and mandate, and enough resources to fulfill its mandate, as I outlined in the chapter 3.3 *Lessons for future UN Missions*.

The whole time, between 1999 and 2013, was a permanent change between reinforcing of the UN peacekeepers and advancing and backing down of the rebels. The lesson we can learn is that any power vacuum will be exploited. Therefore, and under consideration of the failed states like Somali, the UN should always project enough power into unstable regions to maintain a stable environment. This is not easy to be done and it needs effort and the willingness to sacrifice money and soldiers of every member state of the UN. There is a lot of resistance, especially in Western countries to contribute more to the UN, but hence the negative downsides contributions should be made.

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