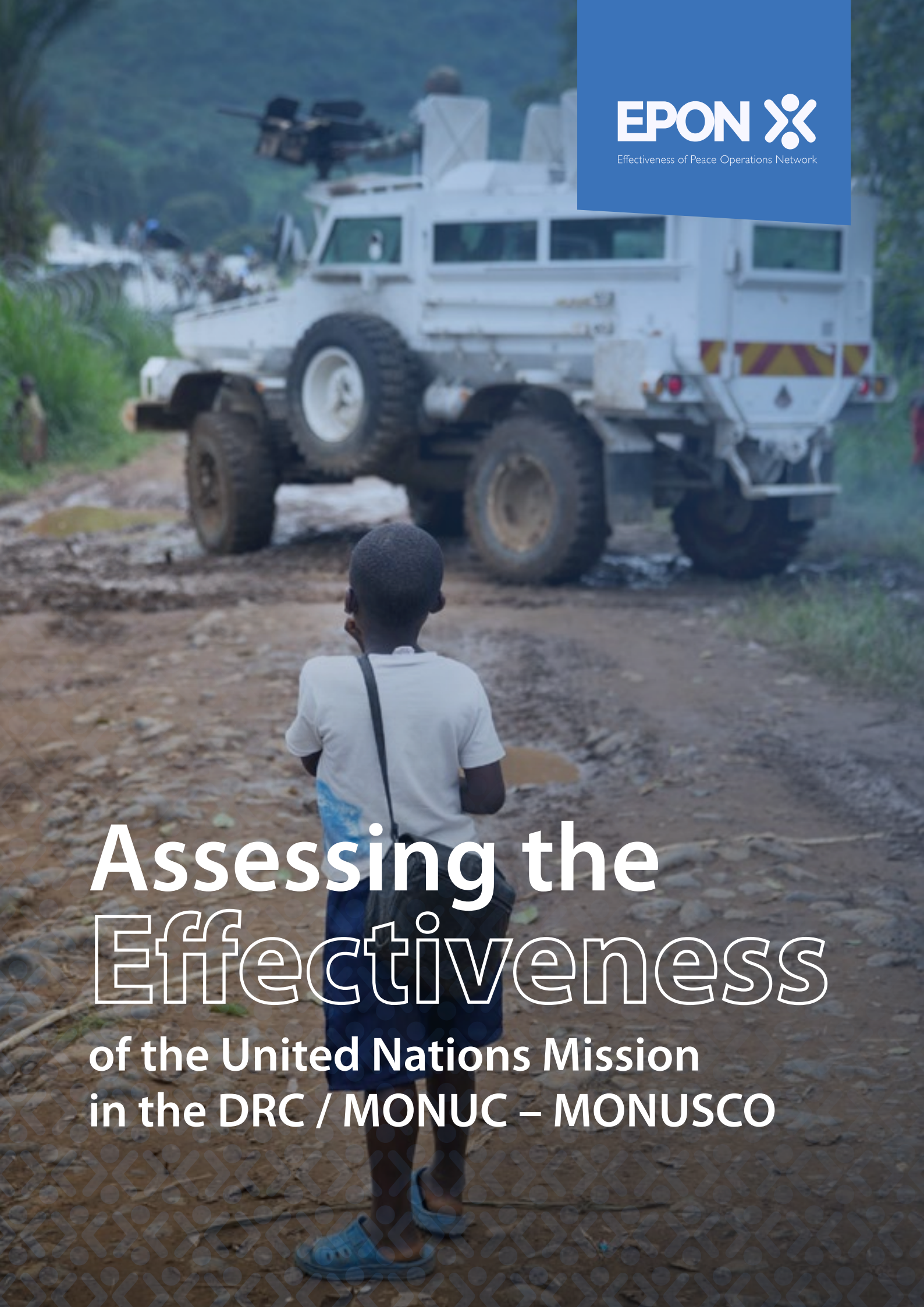


The logo for the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON). It features the acronym 'EPON' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, followed by a stylized icon consisting of three interconnected circles forming a triangular shape.

EPON

Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network

The background of the cover page is a photograph. In the foreground, a young child with short dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt and blue shorts, stands with their back to the camera. They are looking towards a large, white, armored UN vehicle, possibly a military transport or patrol vehicle, which is parked on a dirt road. The vehicle has large, heavy-duty tires and a mounted machine gun on its roof. The setting appears to be a rural or conflict-affected area with hills in the background. The overall tone is somber and reflective.

Assessing the Effectiveness

of the United Nations Mission
in the DRC / MONUC – MONUSCO

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Assessing the Effectiveness of the UN Missions in the DRC

(MONUC - MONUSCO)

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اور کیا انہوں نے پرندوں کو اپنے اوپر نظر اٹھا کر نہیں دیکھا کہ وہ پروں کو
پھیلائے ہوئے ہوتے ہیں اور سمیٹ بھی لیتے ہیں۔ ان کو خدا نے رحمن
کے موا کوئی تھا ہے ہوئے نہیں ہے یقیناً وہ ہر چیز کی خوب دیکھ
بہال کرنے والا ہے۔

سورۃ النور
آیت ۲۹



SOMALIA
1993-1994

SIERRA LEONE
2001-2004



Acronyms

A4P	Action for Peacekeeping
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
ADF-NALU	Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
AU	African Union
BDK	Bundu dia Kongo
CAN	Community Alert Network
CENCO	Conférence nationale épiscopale du Congo (National Episcopal Conference of the Congo)
CENI	Commission électorale nationale indépendante de la République démocratique du Congo (the DRC's independent electoral commission)
CEPAS	Centre d'études pour l'action sociale (Study Centre for Social Action)
CHESD	Centre des hautes études de sécurité et de défense (College of Advanced Strategy and Defence Studies)
CIAT	Comité international d'accompagnement de la transition (International Committee in Support of the Transition)
CIC	Center on International Cooperation

CIVIC	Center for Civilians in Conflict
CLA	Community Liaison Assistant
CNDP	Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (National Congress for the Defence of the People)
COB	Company Operating Base
CONADER	Commission nationale de démobilisation et réinsertion (National Commission for Demobilisation and Reinsertion)
CP	Child Protection
CVR	Community Violence Reduction
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (of ex-combatants)
DDR(RR)	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Repatriation, Reintegration and Resettlement
DPA	Department of Political Affairs (UN)
DPKO	Department for Peacekeeping Operations (since 1 January 2019, Department of Peace Operations) (UN)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EPON	Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network
ESAM	Ecole supérieure d'administration militaire (Higher School of Military Administration)
EU	European Union
EUFOR	European Force in the DRC (RDCongo)
EUMM	EU Monitoring Mission in the Ukraine
EUPOL	European Union Police
EUSEC	EU Mission to provide advice and assistance for security sector reform in the (RDCongo) DRC in the area of defence
FARDC	Forces armées de la république démocratique du Congo (Congolese armed forces)
FDLR	Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda)
FIB	Force Intervention Brigade
FRF	Forces républicaines fédéralistes (Federal Republican Forces)
FRPI	Force de résistance patriotique d'Ituri (Patriotic Resistance Front of Ituri)
GoE	Group of Experts (UN)

I4S/ISSSS	International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy
ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPI	International Peace Institute
JMAC	Joint Mission Analysis Centre
JPT	Joint Protection Team
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LSC	Local Security Committee
M23	Mouvement du 23 Mars (named after the 23 March 2009 accords between the DRC and Rwanda)
MARA	Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting Arrangements
MINUSCA	Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MLC	Mouvement de libération du Congo (Movement for the Liberation of the Congo)
MONUC	Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo (UN Mission in the DRC)
MONUSCO	Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République Démocratique du Congo (UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC)
MTM	Madina at Tauheed Wau Mujahedeen (The city of monotheism and holy warriors militia group)
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NUPI	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
OIOS	Office for Internal Oversight Services (UN)
O-SESG	Office of the Special Envoy (UN)
P5	The five permanent members of the UN Security Council: China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US
PARECO	Patriotes résistants congolais (Congolese Resistance Patriots)
PCC	Police-Contributing Countries
PoC	Protection of Civilians

PNC	Police nationale congolaise (Congolese National Police)
PSCF	Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
RCD	Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (Congolese Rally for Democracy)
RCD-K	RCD-Kisangani
RCD-ML	RCD-Liberation Movement
RDB	Rapidly Deployable Battalion
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SCD	Standing Combat Deployment
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SESG	Special Envoy of the Secretary-General (UN)
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General (UN)
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SSRC	Social Science Research Council
SSU	Stabilization Support Unit
STAREC	Programme de stabilisation et de reconstruction des zones sortant de conflits armés (Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for Eastern DRC)
TCC	Troop-Contributing Country
UEPN	Unité d'exécution du programme national (National Project Implementation Unit)
UN	United Nations
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNHCR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHRDDP	UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNMISS	UN Mission in South Sudan
UNPOL	UN Police
USAID	US Agency for International Development
VTC	Video Teleconference





Executive Summary

The United Nations peacekeeping engagement in the DRC since the end of the Second Congo War has spanned nearly 20 years, three presidential elections, eight Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General, and numerous political and security crises involving national and regional actors as well as non-state armed groups. The Mission has reinvented itself several times, tried to adapt to changing conflict dynamics, and had to shift its posture due to demands from the Security Council, the Congolese government and regional states, as well as in response to recent funding cuts.

Through this report, on behalf of the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON), the authors identified four distinct phases: (1) the deployment into the crisis and the progressive growth of the Mission; (2) the support to the transitional government and to the organisation of general elections in 2006; (3) the post-transition phase that led to the establishment of a stabilisation mission; and (4) the creation of the FIB to fight the M23 and other designated armed groups, and to push towards new presidential elections as President Kabila's second and last term was completed. We may even consider that 2019 marks the beginning of a fifth and perhaps final stage for the Mission, as it is burdened with the new challenge of supporting a Tshisekedi presidency with contested legitimacy and limited control over the key institutions of power, protecting an anxious and suspicious civilian population, and planning for its eventual drawdown and exit.

By adopting the EPON's methodology framework, the report has evaluated the effectiveness of the UN peacekeeping efforts in the DRC across eight critical dimensions. A number of significant strategic and operational impacts and three constraints that have undermined UN efforts have also been identified.

The effectiveness of the UN Missions in the DRC across eight critical dimensions

Political Primary and the Organisation of Elections

In the DRC, the lack of a political framework with true national buy-in since the 2002 agreement and the end of the transition in 2006 has been a defining feature and posed challenges for the daily work of the UN Mission in the DRC. Whereas the UN Mission – MONUC at the time – had a significant role in the 2006 elections, the role of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) diminished in 2011 and was further marginalised during the latest presidential elections in 2018, mostly due to the Congolese Government's reluctance. Nevertheless, the SRSGs and Mission leadership have been effective in deploying their good offices role and encouraging political compromises in moments of tension, but alternatively, they have not been as vocal in demanding the implementation of political commitments, as many stakeholders would have preferred. The UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region could have been active in a more efficient way on issues that have regional and international implications. The Missions' great-

est political successes occurred when there was coordination between international and regional actors in support of a national process.

The United Nations peacekeeping engagement in the DRC has spanned nearly 20 years, three presidential elections, eight Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General.

Protection and Stabilisation

MONUSCO's effectiveness in protection has varied widely across both space and time, and has produced a mixed record. There are documented examples of both successes and failures. Where MONUC/MONUSCO has made a concerted integrated effort to protect civilians and deter violence, it has made a real difference. However,

there is also evidence of failure to act, both proactively and in reaction to reports of attacks on civilians. MONUC/MONUSCO has, over time, been a laboratory for the development of protection of civilians (PoC) tools (that have become best practices for protection throughout peacekeeping) and the refinement of the operational concept of protection itself.

The financial pressure lately placed on MONUSCO by the Security Council has dwarfed its "protection through projection" concept that was initially meant to increase the flexibility of the Mission. This has lessened the protection capacity of the whole Mission. The effective implementation of a protection strategy cannot be separated from the active engagement of the host government in reforming its security institutions to support

appropriate disarmament and reconciliation strategies. Strategies cannot be considered without due consideration for the adequacy of capacities requested to implement them. The challenge has so far been that the strategy requires close cooperation with the local authorities whose commitment has fluctuated, depending on the military target.

The military component can continue to try to disarm the armed groups in the east forcefully, but this stated goal will continue to be a futile exercise if the larger political issues are not addressed. Nevertheless, the larger conventional groups, like the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23), and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), have either been defeated or significantly reduced in numbers and capacity. This can be put to the credit of the Congolese armed forces (FARDC), MONUC/MONUSCO, and major diplomatic efforts with regional actors. In general, the instances of success achieved by MONUSCO (along with the FARDC) in reducing the military strength and capabilities of some armed groups have involved using a combination of military pressure and soft tools, such as political dialogue, disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement (DDR(RR)), and repatriation to home countries. Today, while the remaining armed groups present in Eastern DRC do pose a threat to the local population, they may no longer constitute an international or regional threat.

The financial pressure placed on MONUSCO lately by the Security Council has dwarfed its “protection through projection” concept that was initially meant to increase the flexibility of the Mission.

National and Local Ownership

Where the UN and Government interests overlap, there has been good cooperation, but where these interests and agenda do not overlap, the Congolese authorities have chosen their own path. This has been particularly true in the area of security sector reform (SSR). The security forces in the DRC were not designed and put in place to protect the Constitution and the citizens of the DRC. Instead, they have served to secure the interests of a narrow elite against those of the broader population. The result is that, for long periods, the central authorities in the DRC have resisted attempts to reform the security institutions since doing so would undermine the control of the elites in power. The resistance to reform has been one of the greater constraints on MONUSCO in terms of the supporting role it should play and the exit strategy it needs to envisage.

Regional and International Support

The continued support provided by other states in the region to illegal armed groups in the DRC has often undermined the implementation of the Mission mandate. None of the permanent five countries on the Security Council (China, France, Russia, UK and the US) have been willing to put their national or strategic weight into solving the instability in the country. If the Council is divided on MONUSCO or lacks interest, the Mission is largely left to its own devices to work with the Government. Regional allies have supported stability and continuity rather than the transformational change that is needed in the DRC. The Peace and Security Cooperation Framework (PSCF) and the UN Great Lakes Special Envoy created a channel to manage regional influence. MONUSCO had a role in the decrease of direct support for non-state armed actors in the DRC after the fall of the

M23, but the absence of political will from regional actors to disrupt the economic benefits of instability in the DRC has diminished the overall effectiveness of the framework.

Better engagement with the population, and a closer working relationship between UN troop contributors and the FARDC would be key components of a more effective partnership which may have the capacity to foster national ownership.

Coherence and Partnerships

Across all of these variations in coherence and partnerships, the Mission has faced the challenge of continuity, not only due to shifts in the mandate, but also because of leadership styles and changing priorities. A number of interlocutors considered that MONUSCO should have stronger partnerships with local society, and that it could use political engagement and be a coordinator, but other partners should be responsible for implementation. The Mission was most suc-

cessful 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 Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) phase), and least successful when this political alignment was weak. Mobilising these kinds of political alliances is key to mission success. Since they are hard to maintain, effectiveness is likely to ebb and flow. While higher-level considerations and political calculations are the main explanations for the relationship problems between the host government and MONUSCO, better engagement with the population, and a closer working relationship between UN troop contributors and the FARDC would be key components of a more effective partnership which may have the capacity to foster national ownership.

Legitimacy, Impartiality and Credibility

MONUC/MONUSCO's legitimacy, impartiality and credibility have oscillated significantly over time, and the perception of these characteristics has also varied across the Congolese territory. The Mission's role in reunifying the territory generated a wave of goodwill that is still remembered, especially when respondents refer to specific mechanisms that span the entire DRC territory, such as Radio Okapi, which began broadcasting in 2001. Difficulties in task prioritisation and inadequate management of expectations by the Mission itself have contributed towards the Mission's loss of legitimacy, impartiality and credibility. These gaps highlight the importance of having a clear strategic communications strategy in place for the Mission. The Mission's lack of a close relationship with the Government has also undermined its credibility in the eyes of those who see the Government as lacking legitimacy and credibility (especially after the 2011 elections).

Women, Peace and Security

Due to the work of MONUC/MONUSCO, FARDC has vastly improved its methods for identifying child soldiers and no longer recruits them. This is one of the longer-term successes for the Mission. In parallel, MONUSCO's Gender Office has, especially during recent years, worked to promote a gender-sensitive approach within the Mission itself to incorporate a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the role of gender in conflict and the needs that it generates.

People-Centred Approach

Adopting a people-centred approach is a major challenge. However, in recent years, the Mission's civilian dimension, in particular, has worked to adopt a participatory approach, backing inclusive local mechanisms for dialogue and consensus, and building community-based solutions. By expanding its capillary reach into the territory, the Mission has tried to create new interfaces with communities, especially those located in and around hotspots of violence and instability, even as it faces dwindling resources. However, the adoption of a people-centred approach has remained a constant challenge, especially because of how uneven the Mission's capillary reach is.

Strategic and Operational Impact of the UN Missions in the DRC

The first area in which MONUC had a strategic impact is in its contribution towards the reunification of the country. The second area where MONUC-MONUSCO had a strategic impact is in preventing a recurrence of a major violent conflict.

The third manner in which MONUC-MONUSCO has had strategic impact is by using its presence to enable other international and national actors, including the private sector, to provide services and stimulate the local economy. MONUC-MONUSCO contributed to the functioning, and in some cases the development, of vital infrastructure, such as several airports, key access roads, river and lake traffic, and telecommunications.

The first area in which MONUC had a strategic impact is in its contribution towards the reunification of the country. The second is in preventing a recurrence of a major violent conflict.

The fourth area where MONUC-MONUSCO has had strategic impact is through its contribution over the years to the enhancement of a dynamic civic space and civil society, and its contribution to democratic politics. Among others, it did so by supporting Radio Okapi, and by facilitating a culture of consultation and dialogue through its own example. Radio Okapi, in particular, has made a significant contribution towards this civic activism by providing a platform for impartial media space, and filling it with information and debate.

The fifth area where the role of MONUC-MONUSCO is critical is in observation, reporting, information collection, and sharing information which has been used by the International Criminal Court in its prosecutions. The information the UN Mission generated informed deliberations and decisions on the DRC over the years by the UN, AU, EU, ICGR, SADC, World Bank, IMF, donors, private sector investors, the media, and the public.

Constraints and Challenges of the UN Missions in the DRC

The main strategic constraint of the UN Mission has been the degree of cooperation of the host state which has diminished over the years. Many interlocutors observed that, for many years, MONUSCO has been working with a government that does not want it to

be there, and that has asked several times for its departure, although it maintained its legal consent for MONUSCO's presence.

The second main strategic constraint has been the role of neighbouring states fuelling instability, and the lack of a Security Council champion or consensus on the priority for international support. Overall, the Mission has faced serious constraints on its ability to influence key players who have sway over armed groups. This is sometimes due to reluctance by the central Government and/or the complicity of state actors in conflicts in Eastern Congo, but also at times due to interference by regional actors, and a related inability to gain leverage over some of those most responsible for driving insecurity in Eastern Congo.

As far as the operational constraints are concerned, there is first and foremost the problem of multiple interpretations of what peacekeeping is and of the mandate of the Mission. This also leads to the issue of the lack of a strategic communications strategy to counter misunderstandings, and to explain the mandate and the mission to the Congolese people or even internally within MONUSCO's different components.

Current Dilemmas

The Mission's relevance and importance in supporting the Congolese government greatly increased with the surprising inauguration of President Felix Tshisekedi. While he is trying to assert his control over the security forces, much of the military leadership will have conflicted loyalties. He will have little support in a Kabila coalition-dominated legislature, and many of the sectors of the economy will be difficult to access due to various pre-negotiated deals and structural conditions. The Mission could be one of his strongest allies and act as a buffer against the forces that oppose him.

Yet, during this transitional period, when Fayulu-led opposition supporters and regional parties' interests will also have to be accommodated, the drawdown conversation and planning for the Mission's exit will take place. If it can be done in a responsible manner, based on the country's actual needs, and not driven by blind financial cuts, there is a chance that the Mission can deliver on its long-term investment and provide the new government with some quick joint victories, and transfer its many mandated tasks to more effective state institutions and an empowered Congolese population.





Introduction

“Military force – especially when wielded by an outside power – cannot bring order in a country that cannot govern itself.”

Robert McNamara

Despite their original intention as temporary measures (under the provision of Article 40 of the UN Charter), some peacekeeping operations have been deployed for decades. That longevity often hides the fact that, over such a period, a UN mission would typically have co-evolved with the situation and, as a result, there are usually several distinct episodes in the lifetime of a mission. Assessing the effectiveness of a peacekeeping operation must take this dynamism into account, and this is the reason why this report analyses the UN Organization Mission in the DRC (MONUC) and the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) as one continuous UN intervention with several distinct episodes deployed in the DRC since August 1999.

The UN’s peacekeeping presence in the DRC originally began with the mandate of observation of a ceasefire after the Second Congo War, before turning to help secure a democratic transition with general elections in 2006. Demonstrating the optimism during the lead-up to the elections, there were even members of the Security Council who mentioned the possibility of scaling down the force if the elections were successfully concluded. That did not happen, and slowly the Mission transformed into a full-fledged multidimensional peacekeeping operation. Unfortunately, the 2006 elections did not herald a stable and democratic order. Instead, instability persisted, especially in the east of the country, and

the Congolese Government became increasingly uncomfortable with the UN's prolonged peacekeeping presence, which it perceived as an encroachment on its sovereignty.

In 2010, the Security Council was under pressure from the Congolese Government (which was celebrating the country's 50th anniversary of independence) to reconfigure the Mission for transition and drawdown. As a consequence, MONUC was renamed MONUSCO in July 2010, and the Mission was restructured to focus on helping the Congolese Government stabilise its fragile eastern provinces and eventually transitioning out. However, the conditions in the eastern provinces never reached sufficient stability to trigger a withdrawal of the UN Mission. The Security Council tasked the Mission with helping to reform and rebuild national institutions and with preventing a relapse into violent conflict, involving not only local armed groups but also those financed by some of the DRC's neighbours. This gargantuan task has entailed, among other priorities, protecting civilians in a country the size of continental Europe with increasingly inadequate means.

Throughout its almost 20 years of existence, the UN Mission in the DRC has faced multiple crises (for instance, Bunia in 2003, Bukavu in 2004, Goma in 2008 and 2012-13, and Beni in 2018-19). Each crisis led to massive displacements of populations, gross violations of human rights, and numerous deaths among civilians. The UN Mission also managed somewhat competing elements in its mandate (for example, supporting state institutions, protecting civilians, and assisting with the organisation of the elections, each requiring different Mission capacities and analysis).¹ It shifted from working with a fragile government to working with a reluctant government; and has been the target of heavy criticism for not doing enough to protect civilians in a country with little infrastructure and few navigable roads – among many other challenges.

It became both one of the biggest UN peacekeeping operations ever deployed (with 21,485 uniformed personnel and 3,994 international civilians at its peak in October 2013)² and the smallest when compared to the size of the territory it has been assigned to cover. The Mission has served as a laboratory for testing the limits of the use of force in UN peacekeeping. This is evident in how the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has used a robust posture (through the deployment of special forces), and a number of new technologies (drones were first used in a peacekeeping context within the DRC). Experimentation is also seen in how the DPKO has developed a series of concepts related to PoC, and when the Security Council authorised the deployment of an FIB in March 2013 to “neutralize armed groups.” Over time, the UN Mission in the DRC became synonymous with the difficulties inherent in managing a UN peacekeeping operation in a complex crisis – characterised by international civilian staff and uniformed peacekeepers from dozens of countries – and in an uncertain global context where the Mission was pulled in different, often competing, directions by the Security Council.

1 Since the emergence of Ebola in the region of Beni (after the outbreak near Mbandaka), MONUSCO partly reoriented itself to support the Ebola emergency relief effort.

2 Only for a certain period (2010-2012); UNAMID has since over passed MONUSCO in troop numbers.

Nevertheless, over the years, the UN Secretariat and Mission transformed an overly ambitious mandate into a pragmatic “art of the possible,” without much support from the Security Council, neighbouring countries, and the host state, and without the resources required for the ambitious goal of transforming and reforming a country.³ This report finds that the UN Mission in the DRC’s impact has fluctuated, not only across the DRC territory, but also over time. During some episodes, the Mission was highly effective. During others, it was only moderately effective, and there were episodes when it was not effective.

An overall observation is that one needs to assess effectiveness in the context of the willingness of the parties engaged in the conflict to reach a settlement, and in the capacities given to that Mission by the Security Council. If certain parties to the conflict (at different levels) see stronger benefits in maintaining instability than in promoting sustainable peace, then there is little that a UN peacekeeping mission can do other than try to limit the instability and protect civilians. Against this benchmark, this study found widespread agreement that the situation would have been significantly worse, with considerably higher numbers of deaths, rapes and displacement of populations, if the UN Mission had not been present throughout this period.

One needs to assess effectiveness in the context of the willingness of the parties engaged in the conflict to reach a settlement, and in the capacities given to that Mission by the Security Council.

It is within this context that the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Research Network (EPON) study aims to produce a more comprehensive picture of MONUC and MONUSCO’s overall performance and impact. To that end, and drawing on the EPON’s analytical framework (see section 1), we look back at the many episodes of this Mission and give a detailed analysis of the drivers of the conflict and of its key actors (section 2). That then allows us to delve into a detailed analysis of its current mandate, its objectives, and its activities (section 3), i.e., until the end of 2018, before going through some of the key generic dimensions of contemporary peace operations (discussed in section 4).

3 Jason Stearns, “The Art of the Possible: MONUSCO’s New Mandate,” Congo Research Group Consultation Report #1, March 2018.

Box 1. Chronology of events	
Date	Event
1996-1997	First Congo War. Rwanda and Uganda, in support of Laurent Désiré Kabila, defeat President Mobutu Sese Seko. Laurent Désiré Kabila becomes President in May 1997.
1998-1999	Second Congo War. DRC, Angola and Zimbabwe vs Rwanda and Uganda. Mushrooming of local armed groups. Signature of the Lusaka Agreement in 1998, paving the way for the withdrawal of foreign forces from the DRC.
Aug 1999	Resolution 1258 authorises the deployment of up to 90 UN military liaison personnel, together with the necessary civilian, political, humanitarian and administrative staff, to the capitals of the State's signatories to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement.
Nov 1999	Resolution 1279 authorises the deployment of MONUC as an observation mission.
1999-2003	Third Congo War pitting the Congolese Government against the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC), Congolese Rally for Democracy based in Goma (known as the RCD-Goma), and the RCD based in Kisangani (RCD-K) (later called the RCD-Liberation Movement (RCD-ML)), as well as a number of localised armed groups behind the ceasefire lines.
Jan 2001	Assassination of Laurent D. Kabila. His son Joseph takes over.
Apr 2002	Signature of the Sun City agreements.
Jun 2003	The EU deploys Operation Artemis in Bunia for three months to help MONUC deal with the crisis in the province of Ituri.
Jun 2004	The city of Bukavu is taken over by Laurent Nkunda's forces.
Jun 2006	The EU deploys the European Force in the DRC (EUFOR RD Congo) for six months as a deterrent force, assisting MONUC in securing the elections in Kinshasa.
Dec 2006	First democratic elections since 1965 lead to the election of Joseph Kabila.
2007	Laurent Nkunda forms the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), controls large parts of Masisi and Rutshuru, and threatens Goma.
Jan 2008	Signature of a general agreement (Goma accords) between the Congolese Government and several rebel groups, including the CNDP, which also leads to the planning and the conduction of joint military operations (Rwanda-DRC-MONUC) against the FDLR.

Jan 2008	Signature of a secret agreement between Joseph Kabila and Paul Kagame.
Nov 2008	The Kiwanja massacre takes place, leading to increased focus on protection and criticism of the UN troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and forces.
Jan 2009	Signature of a secret agreement between Joseph Kabila and Paul Kagame.
Mar 2009	Signature of a general agreement (Goma accords) between the Congolese Government and several rebel groups, including the CNDP, which also leads to the planning and the conduction of joint military operations (Rwanda-DRC-MONUC) against the FDLR.
May-Jul 2010	MONUC becomes MONUSCO, adding a greater stabilisation component to its mandate.
Nov-Dec 2011	Widespread fraud during the presidential elections through which Joseph Kabila is made president.
Apr 2012	Ex-CNDP officers start the M23.
Nov 2012	Fall of Goma to the M23.
Feb 2013	Signature of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSCF).
Mar 2013	Creation of MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade (FIB).
Nov 2013	Military defeat of the M23 after a nine-day offensive.
2014-2016	Opposition protests against possible third term for Joseph Kabila.
Jan-Feb 2015	Anti-FDLR operations start under blacklisted generals.
Aug 2016	A new crisis in the Kasai breaks out after the killing of a customary chief.
Dec 2016	End of second and final constitutional five-year term of President Kabila. Signature of the Saint-Sylvestre Agreement that sets out a path toward elections.
Dec 2017	Killing of 15 FIB peacekeepers in Simuliki.
Aug 2018	President Kabila announces that he will not be a candidate in the presidential elections.
30 Dec 2018	Presidential elections are held.
Jan 2019	Inauguration of Felix Tshisekedi as new president of the DRC.





SECTION 1.

Analytical Framework and Research Methods

This report is one of the four 2018 pilot case studies (AMISOM, MINUSMA, MONUSCO, and UNMISS) by the EPON. The network is a consortium of more than 40 research institutions, peacekeeping training centres, and think tanks from across the globe. These institutions have been collaborating to assess the effectiveness of specific UN peace operations using a shared analytical framework (see Appendix A: EPON Project Summary).

The aim of the EPON is to analyse the effectiveness of contemporary peace operations, especially a mission's strategic-level effects on the political process and armed conflict dynamics in the host country. To do so, the network developed an overarching methodological framework to assess effectiveness against mandated tasks and the broader impact a mission is having on the political and security dynamics in the conflict system.⁴

⁴ Theoretical and Methodological Framework for the 2018 Pilot Studies (unpublished document, EPON, May 2018).

To undertake this research, a multinational team of four people travelled to the DRC (both in Kinshasa and Goma, with field trips to Bunia and Bukavu) for 15 days in late July 2018. The team interviewed a variety of relevant stakeholders, including:

- Members of the peace operation, including senior leadership and representatives of its multidimensional components;
- Some local authorities, as national authorities did not answer any meeting requests from the EPON team;
- International and regional organisations, including those authorising the Mission or engaged in its theatre of operations;
- External partners of the Mission – multilateral and bilateral;
- Members of the UN Security Council;
- Local and international civil society organisations;
- Local populations in the conflict-affected areas; and
- Other groups, researchers, institutions or companies with a special interest or stake in the country or affected region.

This team studied relevant primary and secondary sources, and conducted semi-structured interviews in New York and the DRC. Focus group discussions were held in Kinshasa and Goma with national and local civil society representatives, NGOs, and researchers. Interviews were carried out with the explicit consent of the subjects on a not-for-attribution basis in order to encourage frank discussion and meet relevant ethical guidelines. This work was carried out taking into account all of the limits that such a short visit to a peacekeeping mission entails in terms of the briefness of the interaction with the stakeholders, the limits of fully capturing the perceptions of key stakeholder communities, and of drawing conclusions largely on the basis of a relatively small number of interviews and an analysis of primary and secondary documents.

As illustrated in figure 1 below, the EPON analytical framework focuses on understanding two major issues:

1. How much congruence is there between a mission's capabilities and activities and its mandated tasks?
2. How relevant are a mission's activities for influencing the situation on the ground, especially for the people most affected by the crisis?

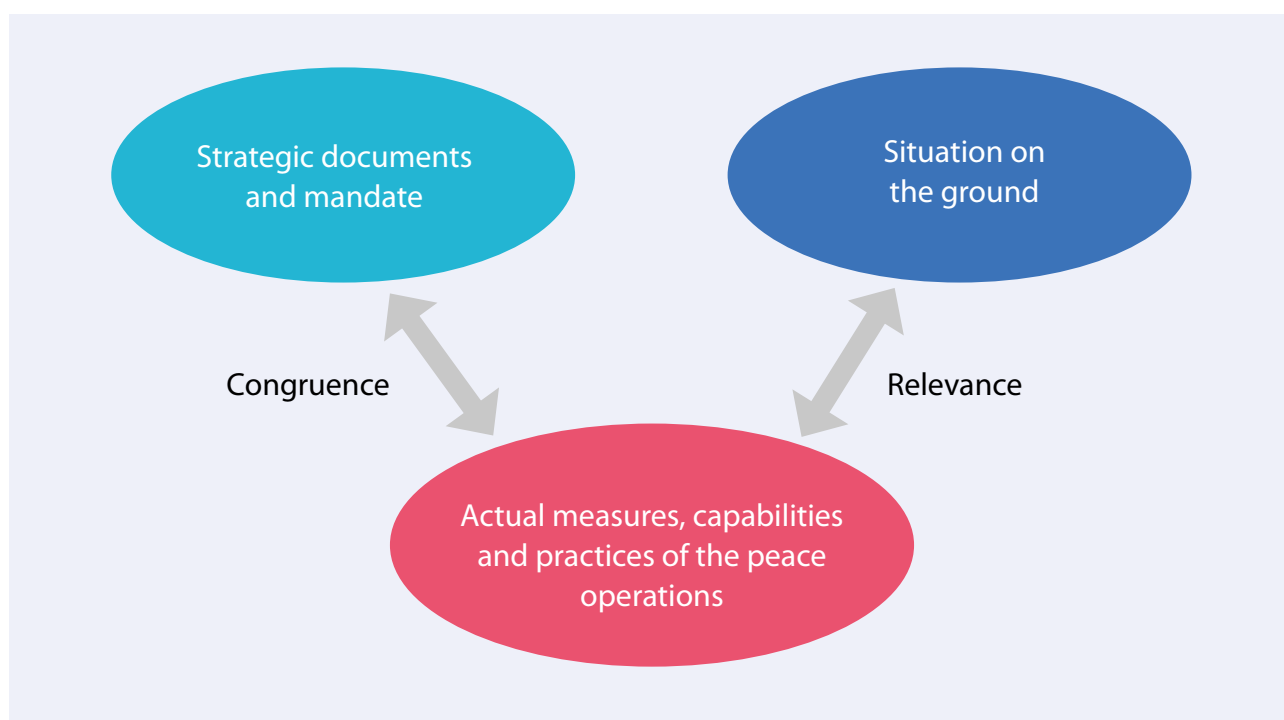


Figure 1. EPON Analytical Framework

Assessing congruence entails analysing the actual measures, capabilities and practices of a peace operation across various substantive dimensions (e.g., stabilisation, civilian protection, gender, and facilitating humanitarian relief) and analysing to what extent they match the ambitions and objectives expressed in the mission's strategic documents (and those of the organisation(s) that authorised it). The degree of congruence between intent and execution would shed light on how far the operation was able to fulfil its mandated tasks, within the context of the resources and capabilities at its disposal.

Assessing relevance entails analysing the impact a peace operation's activities have had on the political and security situation in the host country and/or regional conflict system; on whether a peace operation's activities actually deal with the threat to regional or international peace and security, as identified by the Security Council; and in ensuring the protection of the populations most directly affected by those threats. The aim is to enhance understanding of a peace operation's ability to enable local actors to achieve stability, as well as its influence on critical conflict drivers, and to look at parameters influencing a peacekeeping operation's effectiveness.

To address those two dimensions, in this report we also chose to take into account the impacting factors and the constraints that MONUC and MONUSCO have faced on a daily basis and at various levels (strategic, operational, tactical), as illustrated in figure 2 below. This approach has led us to look at both external and internal factors that may have influenced the effectiveness of MONUC-MONUSCO. Indeed, a UN mission's effectiveness is influenced by the political context in the sense that it is enabled or constrained by the

actions of the host state, the member states of the region, and the members of the Security Council, in particular, those who have a strategic interest in the country.

The mission's effectiveness is also shaped by the UN's internal bureaucratic processes, including the way in which human, financial and material resources are employed by UN and mission leadership in order to pursue its mandated tasks. They ultimately depend on the adequacy of timely and relevant capacities as well as the ability to fix systemic malfunction throughout the UN chain of responsibilities.

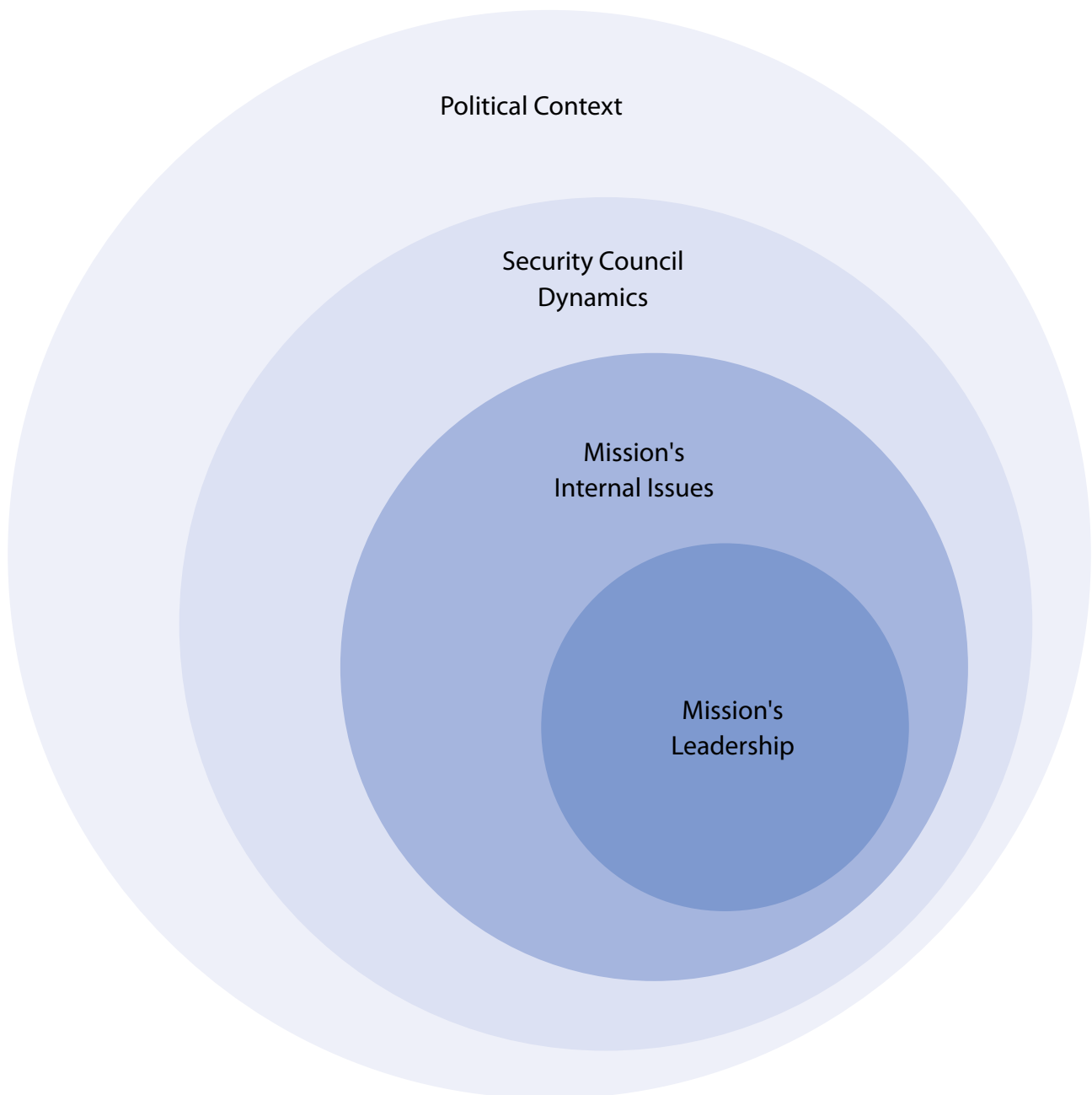


Figure 2. Constraints Impacting a Peacekeeping Operation

Source: Created by Alexandra Novosseloff

There are indeed functional factors of efficiency or a lack thereof. During most interviews, our interlocutors have at several occasions complained about the wider issues of the UN's human resources system by which the Mission is "unable to recruit at short notice and for a short period."⁵ There were similar complaints about the pace of the budgeting process ("Budgets are made nine months before they are approved or not; by this time the dynamics on the ground may have changed"⁶), and the shortcoming of personnel management ("To be people-centred externally, peacekeeping missions should be people-centred internally"⁷).

Other internal UN issues that hamper efficiency mentioned include the absence of proper rotation of personnel, the high turnover of personnel, loss of institutional memory due to no or insufficient handover, and a "constant change of internal structures and portfolio."⁸ An interlocutor has also pointed out, "The amount of time spent on inventing new concepts and trying to implement them has been very disruptive for the mission," which occurs seemingly every two years.⁹ Other interlocutors have expressed similar sentiments.

The mission's effectiveness is also shaped by the UN's internal bureaucratic processes.

Finally, a number of interlocutors considered that at different times the management style of the Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General (SRSGs) – there have been eight SRSGs since 1999 (see table 1) – was an issue. There is tension between their political role and their role as the most senior manager of a large one-billion-dollar mission employing at times more than 20,000 people. An interlocutor mentioned that one can get the impression that "there is a new mission each time a new SRSG is appointed." Some of the respondents for this research noted that new senior leaders frequently ignored their predecessor's efforts, and begin anew, creating major discontinuities in relation to initiatives that were already being implemented.

5 Interview, UN staff, Kinshasa, July 2018.

6 Interview, UN officials, Kinshasa, July 2018.

7 Interview, UN staff, Bunia, July 2018.

8 Interview, UN staff, Kinshasa, July 2018.

9 Interview, UN official, Goma, August 2018.

Table 1. List of Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General (SRSGs) in the DRC

November 1999 – August 2001	Kamel Morjane	Tunisia
August 2001 – June 2003	Amos Namanga Ngongi	Cameroon
July 2003 – October 2007	William Lacy Swing	USA
October 2007 – June 2010	Alan Doss	UK
July 2010 – July 2013	Roger Meece	USA
August 2013 – October 2015	Martin Kobler	Germany
November 2015 – January 2018	Maman Sambo Sidikou	Niger
Since January 2018	Leila Zerrougui	Algeria

Source: Created by Alexandra Novosseloff from the Secretary-General reports

For a number of interlocutors, these constituted “additional factors of inefficiency,” that impacted on the effectiveness of the Mission, but unfortunately, the EPON team did not have the time or resources within the scope of this study to go beyond these general comments. However, most of the issues mentioned are endemic to UN peace operations, and relate to UN rules, procedures and structures. Addressing them requires system-wide reforms, including some that are underway.

Finally, all these external and internal issues need to be addressed within a broader understanding of the overall limited effect a peacekeeping operation can have on any conflict system. Primary agency lies with the national and local actors. In addition, neighbouring states and other countries often have direct interests and wield significant leverage in shaping the conflict. Dozens of other actors are involved, including multilateral, bilateral, non-governmental, humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors; many of the UN’s own funds, agencies and programmes; and international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

South-South cooperation actors, including China, are also present and active in the country. Many of these actors’ initiatives, for instance, in SSR, will have a significant impact on the work of the peacekeeping mission. The private sector, especially firms in the extractive industries, is likely to have a significant impact on the situation in the country, as does organised crime, illicit financial flows, and capital flight. The contribution of the peacekeeping operation thus has to be understood in the context of the larger conflict system and the many actors engaged in trying to influence it.

It is obviously challenging to attribute specific effects to a UN peacekeeping mission when so many other actors within that same space are driven by a myriad of goals and objectives.





SECTION 2.

Conflict Analysis and History of the UN Mission in the DRC

The Congolese conflict can be divided into several and frequently overlapping sub-conflict systems, both involving internal and external parties. The Congo Wars (1996-1997; 1998-2003) involved a myriad of military actors, both internal and external, combined with a layer of domestic conflicts. This also meant that, even if “regional interference was at the origin of the conflict” (as stated in MONUSCO’s Mission Concept), the conflict changed character after the official withdrawal of the foreign forces from a conventional conflict between external statutory armies to a more complex intrastate conflict involving a wide variety of armed actors.

The conflict has been highly damaging to the civilian population of the DRC. Between August 1997 and April 2007, an estimated 350,000 people died directly as a result of the conflict. Some NGOs and researchers estimate that as many as 5.4 million people have

lost their lives directly and indirectly as a result of war-related causes.¹⁰ The war also led to widespread displacement (4.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), and 541,000 refugees in DRC from neighbouring states), something that the UN Mission has always had a limited impact on, as shown in figure 3 below. Even today, the DRC is facing “one of the worst humanitarian crises in Africa, with over 10 per cent of the country’s population in need of humanitarian assistance.”¹¹

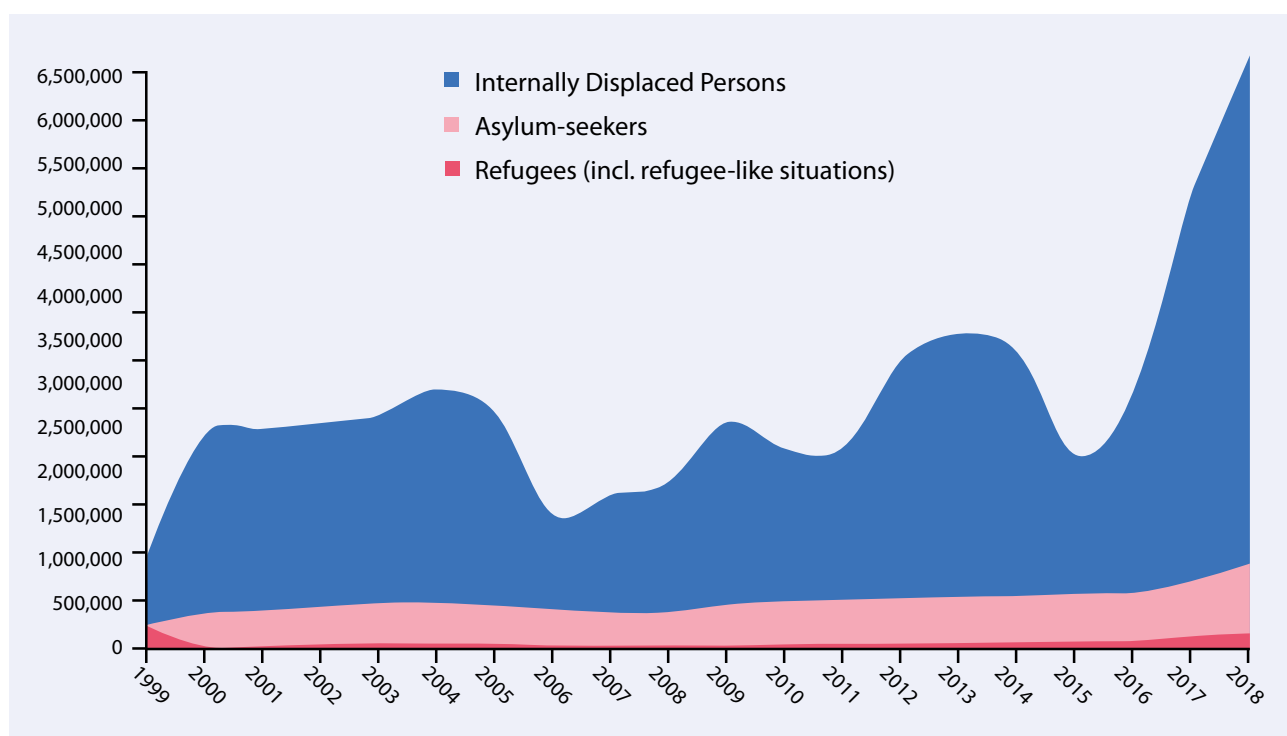


Figure 3. Number of Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and IDPs in the DRC (1999-2018)

Source: Data – ACLED; processing and visualisation – NYU CIC¹²

MONUC, established at the end of 1999, was not the first UN operation in the Congo. In the 1960s, the UN deployed the largest and the most expensive peacekeeping venture in the organisation’s history up until the 1990s, involving 19,828 military and civilian personnel at its peak.¹³ It marked the first time that the Secretary-General invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter, calling for a Security Council meeting to discuss the issue of the secessionist tendencies in Katanga and to help the young state restore public order. It was

10 International Rescue Committee, “Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: An ongoing crisis,” May 2007: <https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/661/2006-7congomortalitysurvey.pdf>.

11 S/2017/826 (29 September 2017), “Special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” para. 35.

12 ACLED collects data on nine event types including three types of battles, violence against civilians, remote violence, rioting (violent demonstrations), protesting (non-violent demonstrations), and three types of non-violent events (non-violent takeover of territory, headquarter and base establishment, and strategic developments).

13 Jane Boulden, chapter 10 on the “United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC),” in *Oxford Handbook on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, Joachim A. Koops, Norrie MacQueen, Thierry Tardy, and Paul D. Williams (eds) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 160–170.

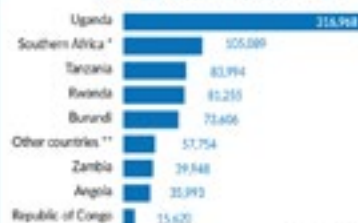
REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

AGE AND GENDER BREAKDOWN



810,227

TOTAL DRC REFUGEE POPULATION



Source: LBN-87-2.

¹ Southern Africa includes Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Madagascar, RSA, and the Kingdom of Swaziland.

*Other countries include South Sudan, Kenya, Central African Republic and Chad.

Source: LBNCH and OCHA. For more information on refugee statistics in DRC, please contact: ocha.drc@unhcr.org

also the first and only time the Security Council explicitly authorised, through Resolution 169 (24 November 1961), the Secretary-General to “take vigorous action, including the use of the requisite measure of force, if necessary, for the immediate apprehension, detention, and/or deportation of all foreign military and paramilitary personnel and political advisers not under the UN command, and mercenaries.”

Some NGOs and researchers estimate that as many as 5.4 million people have lost their lives, directly and indirectly, from war-related causes.

In the late 1990s, the UN became involved once again in the DRC, yet under very different circumstances, during what some experts refer to as the “first African world war.”¹⁴ Following the July 1999 signing of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement between the DRC and five regional states (Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe), the Security Council established the UN Organization Mission in the DRC (MONUC) through Resolution 1279 (30 November 1999).¹⁵

2.1. Conflict Analysis: Actors and Drivers of the Conflict

The history of the country and the drivers of the conflict in the DRC and the region are central to understanding some of the long-standing constraints and difficulties the UN Mission has faced from the start in implementing its mandate, particularly as a peace-keeping mission never operates in isolation from its political, security and economic environment. This section provides some historical and political context for understanding MONUC-MONUSCO’s activities and some of the structural difficulties that complicate the UN’s role. Cycles of armed rebellion, government repression, political settlements and short-term alliances, and the involvement of neighbours and regional actors have required MONUC-MONUSCO staff to continuously update their analyses and navigate the shifting sands of the realities on the ground.

14 Christopher Williams, “Explaining the Great War in Africa: How Conflict in the Congo Became a Continental Crisis,” *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 37(2), summer 2013, pp. 81-100. For a thorough account of the Congo wars, see Jason K. Stearns’ outstanding book, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa* (New York: Public Affairs, 2012).

15 A region and a country that reappeared on the agenda of the Council in November 1996 when the situation in Eastern Zaire deteriorated and constituted “a serious threat” to the stability of the region (S/PRST/1996/44). See Tatiana Carayannis, chapter 32 on “The Democratic Republic of the Congo,” in *The UN Security Council in the 21st Century*, Sebastian von Einsiedel, David M. Malone, and Bruno Stagno Ugarte (eds) (New York: IPI/Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2015, second edition), p. 661.

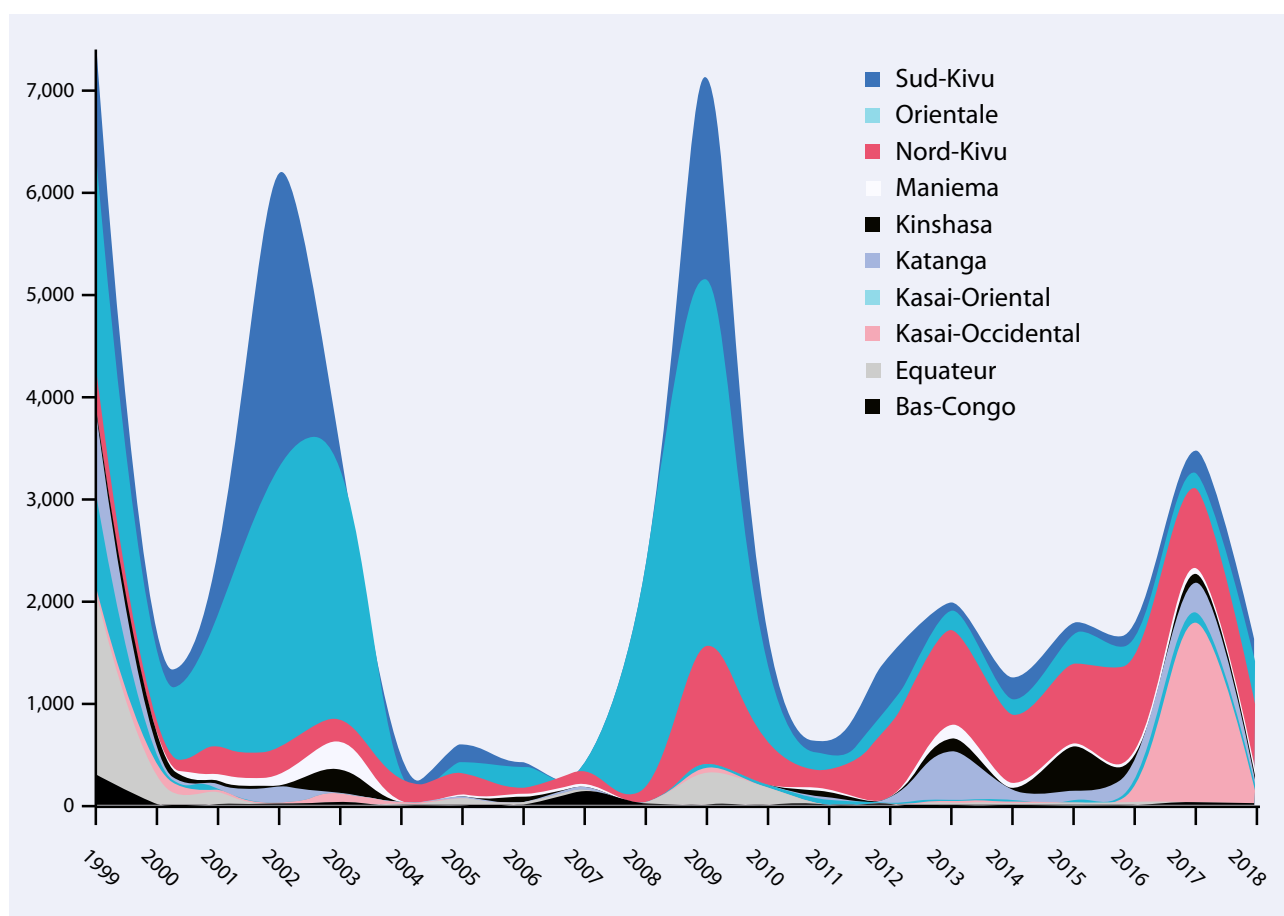


Figure 4. Annual Conflict-Related Fatalities in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri (1999-2018)

2.1.1. Historical Causes of the Conflict

In attempting to identify the causes of the cyclical outburst of violence in the DRC, it is useful to distinguish between what can be termed its structural or root causes and what has triggered the various outbreaks of violent conflict over the years. The conflicts in the DRC have many intertwined layers that vary across time, space and origin. At the core of these conflicts is the merger of localised drivers of conflict with national and regional dynamics.

Primary drivers include the Belgian colonial legacy and its predatory system of government “which promoted the mass immigration of Rwandans and manipulated ethnic power structures,”¹⁶ the structural problems created by President Mobutu’s ruling style, the lack of decentralisation of power and resources, the massive illicit mineral extraction industry (in which international actors, national political elites, and local armed groups are all involved), competing claims for land access, unequal rights to citizenship, and localised

16 Jason K. Stearns, *North Kivu: The Background to Conflict in North Kivu Province of Eastern Congo* (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2012) pp. 9, 13–20. See also David Van Reybrouck, *Congo. Une Histoire* (Paris: éditions Actes Sud, collection Babel, 2014).

competition for access to and control over economic resources across the DRC. The question of the right to citizenship became central, especially among the communities in Eastern DRC, where the people of Burundian and Rwandan origin living in Congo/Zaire before 1950 were considered foreigners, despite their longstanding history in Congo, and therefore ineligible for national rights.¹⁷

These structural causes were then exacerbated by regional and international trigger events, like the end of the Cold War and the 1994 Rwandan genocide that resulted in an estimated three million Rwandan Hutu refugees resettling in the east of the DRC, altering an already volatile political and security situation in this region. The refugee camps became the source of military opposition to the new Kagame-led regime in Rwanda, which in turn started hunting for those responsible for the genocide, many of whom had taken refuge in the Eastern DRC, and whom President Mobutu assisted and cooperated with, stoking the conflict further. Radical Hutu nationalists coming into the country added to the local dynamics of ethnicity, with local Tutsi and Banyamulenge being targeted and drawn into the conflict.

2.1.2. Drivers of the Conflict: Power Politics and the Character of the State

The UN system's approach to the DRC over the past two decades has been largely focused on traditional state-building, the extension of State authority into areas of limited governance, and the longer-term national reform processes envisioned within the 2002 peace agreement. This approach tends to obscure the multiple power networks among government actors, non-state entities, and informal networks across the DRC. It tends to overlook the analysis of interests and strategies of those national actors running the State, and that a weak state does not necessarily mean a weak government.

In the case of the DRC, the State has for the most part been highly functional only for a narrow elite, showing "little interest in ending peripheral wars that do not threaten its survival."¹⁸ As a result, "It has privileged maintaining patronage networks over the security of its citizens, and elite survival over institutional reform."¹⁹ As Hugo de Vries has underlined, "The state itself is a prized resource – with positions in the army and police particularly valued as they hold the means of violence – and the state is used by these

17 Chris McGreal, "The roots of war in Eastern Congo," *The Guardian*, 16 May 2008: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/may/16/congo>. See also Stephen Jackson, "Sons of Which Soil? The Language and Politics of Autochthony in Eastern D.R. Congo," *African Studies Review*, 49(2), pp. 95-123, 2006, and "Of 'Doubtful Nationality': Political Manipulation of Citizenship in the D. R. Congo," *Citizen Studies*, 11, pp. 481-500, 2007.

18 See Christoph Vogel and Jason K. Stearns, "Kivu's Intractable Security Conundrum, Revisited," *African Affairs*, August 2018, p. 6. As pointed out by Jason K. Stearns in his 2012 book, "Congolese rebel politics since the 1960s has been either an elite or an ethnic affair, or – most often – a mixture of both" (*Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*, p. 232).

19 Christoph Vogel and Jason K. Stearns, "Kivu's Intractable Security Conundrum," loc. cit., p. 6.

support networks for personal gain.”²⁰ This complex mix of neo-patrimonialism also reinforces capacity deficits, a weak education system, and the co-optation of civil society. Another dimension of the so-called weak Congolese State is the fact that the security forces, both the Police nationale congolaise (Congolese National Police) (PNC) and the Forces armées de la république démocratique du Congo (Congolese armed forces) (FARDC) are extremely underpaid, often work with their own economic interest at heart, and/or in collusion with armed non-state actors.

At the core of these conflicts is the merger of localised drivers of conflict with national and regional dynamics.

This situation has a direct impact on the work of MONUSCO, in particular as its objectives (even more than during the MONUC period) are to strengthen State institutions and to help them extend their reach to the periphery, while the elites that rule the DRC have an interest in keeping State institutions weak and subject to manipulation by their patronage networks, rather than accountable only to the State. As summarised by the Mission’s 2017 strategic review, “Disputes over access to resources and land, intercommunal conflicts, ethnic grievances, poor governance, eroding State authority and legitimacy, the absence of the rule of law and a worsening socioeconomic situation remain key drivers of conflict in the country.”²¹

2.1.3. Actors of the Conflict: The Political Economy and Clientelistic State Behaviours

An indication of the influence of these elite networks is the fact that the immediate family of former President Joseph Kabila controls large economic assets in almost every sector of the Congolese economy, including farming, mining, banking, real estate, telecommunications, and airlines.²² This control has enabled Kabila’s family, and their larger network of allied elites, to strengthen their hold over the State apparatus and civil society using a mixture of techniques including co-optation, coercion, corruption, and international support.

Although much of the activist community focuses on mining revenues in the Kivus, the real money in the Congo (and primary source of government revenue) is found in the copper and cobalt mines in Katanga, where the peacekeeping mission has little military

20 Hugo de Vries, “Going around in circles – The challenges of peacekeeping and stabilization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” Conflict Research Unit Report, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, September 2015, p. 19.

21 S/2017/826 (29 September 2017), “Special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” para. 17.

22 Michael Kavanagh, Thomas Wilson, and Franz Wild, “With His Family’s Fortune at Stake, President Kabila Digs In,” Bloomberg, 15 December 2016. See also “All the President’s Wealth: The Kabila Family Business,” report of the Congo Research Group, July 2017.

presence.²³ This is also the source of quick influxes of cash needed for electoral campaigns or political deal-making. According to Global Witness, among others, massive mining concessions are sold under market value in exchange for loyalty and advances on payments when times get tough.²⁴ Moreover, as documented by the UN Group of Experts (GoE) on the DRC, there are a number of cross-border criminal networks involved in money laundering and mineral smuggling, which benefit some members of the army, political elite and other international actors.

With a growing population and massive flows of displaced people, the claims for land rights and access to land have become a key cause of conflict in the DRC.

With a growing population and massive flows of displaced people, the claims for land rights and access to land have become a key cause of conflict in the DRC. Fertile land is not only a means of survival, it is also closely tied to identity, the consequences of colonial heritage, questions related to the rights of citizenship, which pit social groups against one another on the basis of ethnicity, and customary heritage. Elites are often involved in land grabbing for clientelistic pur-

poses, and political entrepreneurs instrumentalise these tensions to mobilise others from neighbouring communities.²⁵ Land conflicts persist at an intercommunal level, but they become most problematic when they involve broader political or identity-based dynamics and powerful political, economic or military actors. Intercommunity violence erupts after long-term processes of politicising ethnic identity and turns into an easy source of divisive discourse and (violent) mobilisation.²⁶

At the heart of the conflict and crises in the DRC is the absence of good governance. Many actors (including many of the elites who run State institutions) directly benefit from instability in the DRC. The elites running the State have contributed towards this instability through the violations of its armed forces and their control over the business done in a number of mines in the east: “A large part of the FARDC’s roughly 130,000 troops are deployed in the Kivus, controlling key mining areas, towns and roads.”²⁷ Provincial and territorial authorities are either actively involved in these networks, or starved for funding, as the constitutionally mandated retrocession for the provinces to receive 40% of the

23 See any of the published Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (ITIE) reports for a breakdown of extractive industry revenues: <https://www.itierdc.net>.

24 “Congo’s Secret Sales,” Global Witness, 13 May 2014: <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/oil-gas-and-mining/congo-secret-sales>.

25 Hugo de Vries, “Going around in circles,” op. cit., p. 19.

26 Gillian Mathys and Koen Vlassenroot (2016) “It’s not all about the land’: Land Disputes and Conflict in the Eastern Congo,” Rift Valley – Political Settlements Research Programme, PSRP Briefing Paper 14.

27 Christoph Vogel and Jason K. Stearns, “Kivu’s Intractable Security Conundrum, Revisited,” op. cit., p. 6.

revenues they produce has never been returned by the central authorities.²⁸ As long as key elites and neighbouring states have vested interests in instability in the DRC, this scenario is unlikely to improve. In such a situation, the UN Mission faces difficulties in operating as the elite-controlled government is unwilling to provide the necessary political support or the allocation of funds to build on the reforms (in particular, in the security sector and decentralisation) pushed forward by the UN and other international donors.²⁹

2.2. Key Episodes of the UN Mission in the Congo since 1999

The current state of the Mission is also the result of its past, and the many elements the Security Council added to its mandate over the years in response to the specific dynamics at the time. The UN's mandate in the DRC has changed and expanded dramatically over the years from a small, 500-strong military observer and monitoring mission in 1999, whose principal task was to support the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, to a full-fledged multidimensional peacekeeping operation peaking in size at 21,485 uniformed personnel and 3,944 civilians on 31 October 2013. The Mission also went from a three-page mandate in 1999 to a 17-page one in 2018. This expansion resulted from a mix of micromanagement on the part of the Security Council; an inability to remove unachievable tasks from the Council and the Secretariat; requests from the Secretariat to keep certain tasks; and a “natural growth” due to requests from the ground, as the UN Mission is often the first and last resort in the absence of the state. As one UN staff member described this situation, “At times, the mandate expands itself.”³⁰

At the heart of the conflict and crises in the DRC is the absence of good governance.

There have been four major episodes in the UN Mission's lifespan in DRC: (1) the deployment into the crisis and the progressive growth of the Mission; (2) the support to the transitional government and to the organisation of general elections in 2006; (3) the post-transition phase that led to a stabilisation mission; and (4) the creation of the FIB

28 By one estimate, the provinces received between 6% and 10% from 2007 to 2013. Pierre Englebert and Emmanuel Kasongo Mungongo. “Misguided and Misdiagnosed: The Failure of Decentralization Reforms in the DR Congo.” *African Studies Review*, 2016, 59(1).

29 As underlined by Jason K. Stearns, Koen Vlassenroot, Kasper Hoffmann, and Tatiana Carayannis, “At the core of Congo's problems lies the lack of political will on the part of the country's elite, which does not see poverty alleviation, public services, or institutional reform as priorities. Congo's government agencies are woefully underfunded, pushing officials to levy illicit taxes and fees, demand bribes, and otherwise extort citizens to make ends meet,” in “Congo's Inescapable State: The Trouble With the Local,” *Foreign Affairs*, 16 March 2017.

30 Interview, UN staff, Bunia, July 2018.

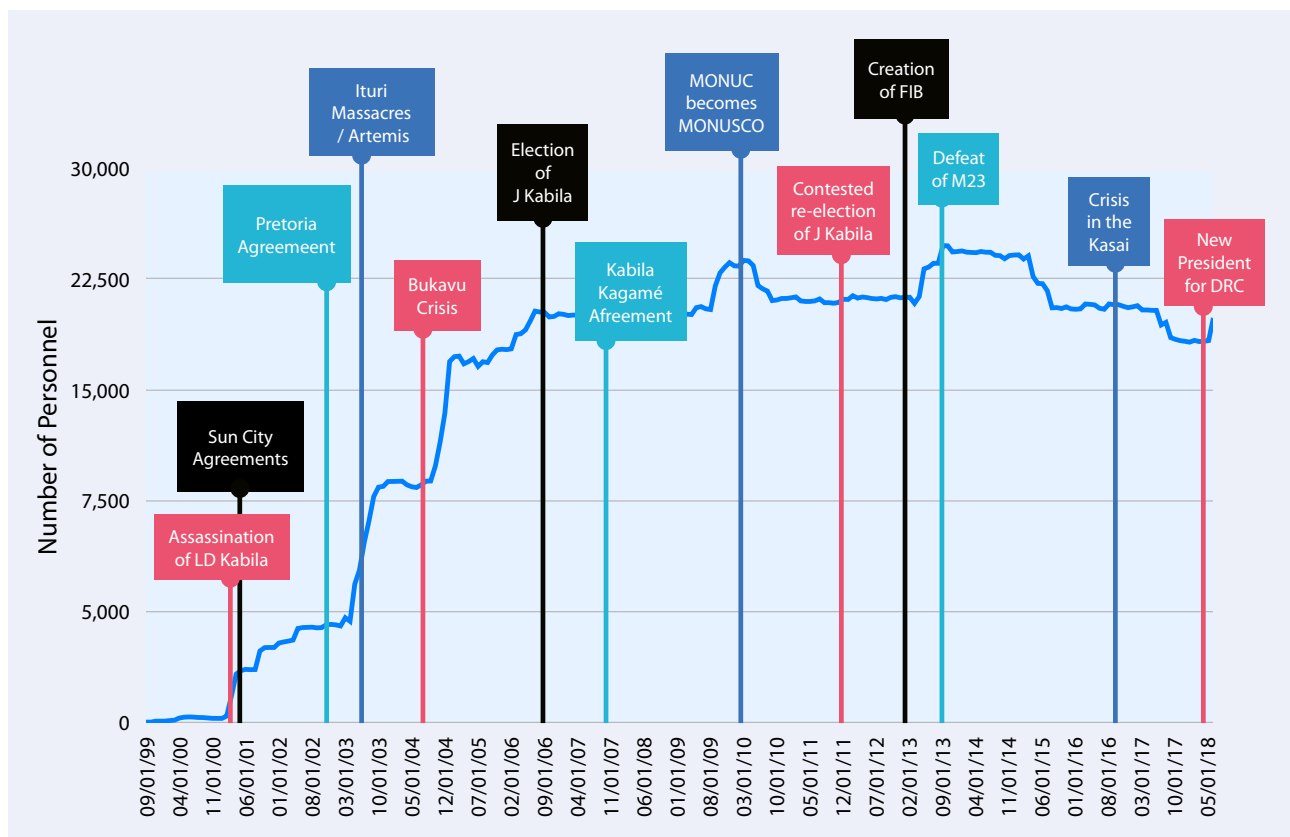


Figure 5. Evolution of the UN Mission in Relation to Congolese Political and Military Events (September 1999 to December 2018)

Source: Created by Alexandra Novosseloff

to fight the M23 and other designated armed groups, and the push for the organisation of new presidential elections as President Kabila's second and last term came to an end.

2.2.1. 1999-2002: An Observation Mission Deployed in the Middle of a Regionalised Civil War

In Resolution 1234 (9 April 1999), the Security Council called for “the immediate signing of a ceasefire agreement allowing the orderly withdrawal of all foreign forces, the re-establishment of the authority of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo throughout its territory, and the disarmament of non-governmental armed groups in the DRC.” Five months later, Resolution 1258 (6 August 1999) authorised a vanguard deployment of 90 military liaison officers to the capitals of the State's signatories and the headquarters of the Joint Military Commission. This led to the establishment of MONUC three months later (Resolution 1279, 30 November 1999) to monitor the ceasefire and the disengagement of forces, as agreed to in the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement signed in July 1999 by the DRC and five regional states (Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe).

The role of MONUC was greatly limited by the on-going war waged by the neighbouring countries, and by the fact that Laurent Désiré Kabila, after agreeing on its initial deployment, blocked its movements, “believing it would prevent his military triumph.”³¹ His assassination in January 2001 marked a turning point. A series of agreements were then negotiated for withdrawal plans of foreign troops: the Angolans and the Namibians withdrew in June 2001, the Zimbabweans at the end of 2001, and the Ugandans and the Rwandans at the end of 2002 (although they left proxy forces behind). The Sun City Accord of April 2002 and the Pretoria Agreement of July 2002 both contained provisions for the implementation of transitional governance arrangements. Joseph Kabila’s “presidency marked an abrupt U-turn in government policy” in which, “devoid of any national constituency, he had decided to treat the international community as his powerbase,” while “his eagerness to comply with the demands of the United Nations put Rwanda on the defensive for the first time since the beginning of the war.”³²

During this period, the Security Council authorised the phased expansion of MONUC in number (Resolution 1291, 24 February 2000, authorised the deployment of up to 5,537 military personnel to protect the military observers) and in tasks (Resolution 1355, 15 June 2001, authorised MONUC to assist in the early implementation, on a voluntary basis, of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of armed groups). Resolution 1291 even introduces the possibility for MONUC to “protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.” However, there was a limit to what the Mission could achieve, and it had little to no effect on the clashes between Ugandan and Rwandan armies in 1999–2000 in Kisangani, as well as the May 2002 Kisangani uprising and its ensuing bloody repression. As one observer said, during the first three years of its mission, “MONUC remained little more than a shadow over the horizon.”³³

2.2.2. 2003–2006: Completion of the Transition with “a Joint Sense of Purpose”³⁴

For many analysts, 2003–2006 was MONUC’s most effective period as its mandate was aligned with the political process and it had a clear objective and exit strategy, namely, to hand over to a sovereign state. Following the signing of the Pretoria Agreement, the Security Council decided in Resolution 1493 (28 July 2003) that MONUC should contribute to the security of the institutions and officials of the Government of National Unity and Transition – specifically, through the Comité international d’accompagnement de la transition (International Committee in Support of the Transition) (CIAT). The SRSG who chaired the CIAT had to bear with many ongoing and diverging bilateral

31 Jason K. Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*, op. cit., p. 271.

32 Ibid., p. 313.

33 Quoted by Emily Paddon, “The Perils of Peacekeeping without Politics: MONUC and MONUSCO in the DRC,” Rift Valley Institute Briefing, 18 April 2013.

34 Hugo de Vries, “Going around in circles,” op. cit., p. 10.

agendas,³⁵ the re-establishment of a state based on the rule of law, the framing of a new constitution, and the preparation and holding of general elections.

MONUC supported the transition and the organisation of the referendum on the new Constitution and the elections (but also a number of DDR/SSR initiatives and the creation of the FARDC and the PNC). This phase was considered to be crucial since it aimed

to establish a link between security and democratic governance (understood as the rule of law and efficient state services). However, this task was complicated by the persisting insecurity in Ituri, where newly armed groups (who were not part of the Lusaka Agreements) had emerged. There, Resolution 1484 (30 May 2003) authorised the deployment of an Interim Emergency Multinational Force in Bunia (commonly known as “Operation Artemis”), sent by the European Union (EU). This force was mostly composed of French troops and some South African, Swedish and Canadian elements. Fifteen years later, people in the region still recall that force, which sta-

For many analysts, 2003-2006 was MONUC’s most effective period as its mandate was aligned with a political process and it had a clear objective and exit strategy.

bilised the security situation in Ituri within three months.³⁶ A representative of a civil society interviewed by EPON said: “Artemis has been able to deal with the insecurity in Bunia in three months, why can’t MONUSCO do the same?”³⁷ Other civil society representatives expressed the same sentiments. When Operation Artemis handed over to MONUC in September 2003, the number of blue helmets (UN peacekeepers) surpassed 10,000.

After the violent public riots and demonstrations in Kinshasa in 2003 – which came very close to overrunning the UN compound in the capital – and the incidents of Bukavu of May-June 2004 (during which the UN was severely criticised for not preventing human rights violations), the number of troops was further increased to more than 15,000. For the first time, a divisional headquarters was created in Kisangani with increased autonomy to conduct operations with special forces and attack helicopters to disarm armed groups across the Kivus.³⁸ The mandate and the missions of MONUC were then reorganised in a more robust manner by Resolution 1565 (1 October 2004) and reinforced by the

35 The members of the CIAT were: Angola, Belgium, Canada, China, France, Gabon, Mozambique, Nigeria, the Russian Federation, South Africa, the UK, the US, Zambia, the AU/African Commission, and the EU/European Commission.

36 Thomas Mandrup, “Multinational rapid response forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo – another example of winning battles, but losing the peace?” in John Karlsrud and Yf Reykes (eds), *Multinational Rapid Response Mechanisms From Institutional Proliferation to Institutional Exploitation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

37 EPON focus groups, representatives of civil society, Kinshasa and Goma, July and August 2018.

38 See Patrick Cammaert, “Learning to use force on the hoof in peacekeeping: Reflections on the Experience of MONUC’s Eastern Division,” ISS Situation Report, April 2007.

establishment of an arms embargo applicable to the entire territory of the DRC. This phase ended with the general elections of 2006, secured in Kinshasa by a six-month EU operation (EUFOR RD Congo) at the request of the Secretary-General, which was deployed as a deterrent force, and to support MONUC's mandate.³⁹

The electoral season was opened late in 2005 with a referendum on a new Congolese constitution. This paved the way for the DRC's first free and fair elections in 46 years. On 30 July 2006, the first round of the presidential and legislative elections was held, and three months later, on 30 October, the second round of the presidential and provincial polls were held. The polls saw major security challenges – including fighting in the streets of Kinshasa between troops loyal to Kabila and his challenger, former Vice-President Jean-Pierre Bemba, after both rounds of elections. MONUC and CIAT leveraged their influence to help push the elections through and to secure a process that was deemed credible by the “international community.”

This moment was likely the high-water mark of the Mission's political standing and ability to influence the trajectory of the key actors in the DRC. People interviewed for this report remember this period as one when all stakeholders were working together. However, to many interlocutors, this cooperation happened under false assumptions. Joseph Kabila believed that this support to the electoral process was meant to legitimise his presidency, which was obviously not the intention of the Security Council. As one UN staff explained, this “entente” was finally broken on 20–21 August 2006, when the provisional results were proclaimed, and Kabila had to campaign for a second round.⁴⁰ Thereafter, he progressively closed the door on the “international community.”

The most expensive election process (which went unfinished as the local elections were never held⁴¹) in the UN's history (up to that time) did not succeed in putting an end to the conflicts in the Kivus. Nevertheless, its success “led the Council to see this as an opportunity for exit, with the US and the UK in particular pushing for a drawdown. The Council subsequently disengaged politically and diplomatically from the DRC, while placing ever greater emphasis on protection.”⁴² Moreover, the end of the transition did not translate into real autonomy for the country, nor the functioning of its institutions, particularly its security forces. Thus, MONUC remained engaged, and its mandate grew to over 50 different tasks.

39 The EU was heavily committed at the time: funding for the elections, training and equipping of a joint police unit ‘Unité de Police Intégrée’ to protect the electoral process – which later morphed into EUPOL, and involvement in the DDR and SSR processes of the FARDC. See Laura Davis, “The EU and peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” Civil Society Dialogue Network Discussion Paper No. 9, 2015: http://eplo.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/EPLO_CSDN_Discussion_Paper_The-EU-and-peacebuilding-in-the-DRC.pdf.

40 Interview, UN staff, Kinshasa, July 2018.

41 The local elections were never foreseen to take place in the 2006 cycle. Before the end of the transition, they were cancelled by the CENI in 2012, and again in 2015.

42 Tatiana Carayannis, “The Democratic Republic of the Congo,” op. cit., p. 672. See also International Crisis Group, “Congo: A Stalled Democratic Agenda,” Briefing 73/Africa, 8 April 2010.

2.2.3. 2007-2012: From a Post-Transition to a Stabilisation Mission

Neither the Security Council nor the Secretariat seem to have prepared for the post-election phase. To many stakeholders, the election was an end in itself; to others, the nature of the elected regime was known but, after the large investment, no-one wanted to admit it. As one researcher described it, “No-one wanted to spoil the party and understand what was truly happening.”⁴³ As a result, after the elections, the “international community” became more

The post-election democratic institutions were not consolidated, and insecurity persisted in the Kivus.

fragmented, and was competing for favours from the new government.⁴⁴ Regional actors continued their involvement in the remaining instability in the east. In that context, MONUC and international donors pursued a “militarized approach” stipulated by the Kabila administration in its bid to shore up and centralise its power following the election. The Mission supported efforts to disrupt those armed groups which posed the greatest challenge to the Government’s authority.⁴⁵ The Security Council authorised MONUC to take

action to “prevent attacks on civilians and disrupt the military capability of illegal armed groups that continue to use violence” (Resolution 1856, 22 December 2008). Yet, “What the Council did not do was to make a strategic assessment of MONUC’s capacity to actually implement the growing list of the tasks that it was mandating the mission to undertake.”⁴⁶

The post-election democratic institutions were not consolidated, and insecurity persisted in the Kivus. In December 2006, Laurent Nkunda, a veteran of the earlier Congo Wars, launched a Tutsi rebellion in North Kivu under the banner of the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (National Congress for the Defence of the People) (CNDP). That rebellion ended with the signing of a general agreement between the Congolese Government and several rebel groups, including the CNDP, in January 2008, followed in January 2009 by a secret agreement between Kabila and Kagame. Against the advice of international donors (especially the EU Mission to provide advice and assistance for SSR, known as EUSEC (RDCongo), and MONUSCO’s SSR Unit), the CNDP was integrated into the FARDC and created an army within the army, failing therefore the policy of integration and “brassage” of troops.⁴⁷ From then on, the attention of the Mission began to shift from Kinshasa to Goma.

43 Interview, NGO researcher, New York, December 2018.

44 As one interlocutor pointed out, “After his 2006 election victory, Kabila turned away from the West to strike a deal with China in order to realize his ‘cinq chantiers’ (five construction yards), a multi-billion dollar ‘infrastructure for mining licenses’ deal.” Interview, UN staff, Goma, August 2018. See also International Crisis Group, “Congo: Consolidating the Peace,” Report no. 128, 5 July 2007.

45 Emily Paddon, “The Perils of Peacekeeping without Politics: MONUC and MONUSCO in the DRC,” *op. cit.*

46 Alan Doss, chapter 56 on the “United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC),” in *Oxford Handbook on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, Joachim A. Koops, Norrie MacQueen, Thierry Tardy, and Paul D. Williams (eds) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 660.

47 Thomas Mandrup, “Reforming the bras tendus? The Congolese National Police reforms, 2003-2016,” *African Security Review*, 2018, 27(2), pp. 109-128, DOI: 10.1080/10246029.2018.1486719.

The 2009 agreement led to the planning and carrying out of joint military operations (Rwanda-DRC-MONUC) against the remaining forces of the FDLR. MONUC found itself in a difficult place, having to support the national forces in its open-ended military operations (Kimia I and II, Amani Leo), some elements of which resulted in grave violations of human rights. Resolution 1906 (23 December 2009) then introduced a principle of conditionality, calling peacekeepers to withdraw their support to any unit that had committed such crimes. The Mission faced a dilemma in having to deal with the insecurity in the east partially created by the government it was meant to support. In those areas controlled by the state, government forces became the main threat to the local populations that MONUC was mandated to protect. Meanwhile, the local population was caught between the poorly disciplined FARDC and the illegal armed groups, resulting in the displacement of thousands. The countryside became heavily militarised, and armed groups mushroomed and took control of large swathes of the Kivus and Ituri.⁴⁸

Under pressure from the Congolese Government, which wanted to show that it did not need any external help as it celebrated the 50th anniversary of the country's independence, a discussion was started on the reduction of MONUC and a possible transitioning out.⁴⁹ Some experts thought Kabila was merely flexing his muscle to limit MONUC's political space. Through Resolution 1925 (30 May 2010), the Security Council authorised the withdrawal of up to 2,000 troops, and turned MONUC into MONUSCO as of 1 July 2010, with the 'S' for "Stabilization." The new name and mandate were meant to indicate that a return to "normalcy" was near, even if this was not reflected by the events on the ground, and that emphasis should shift to a DRC-led initiative to stabilise the country's institutional and territorial space. As pointed out by a South-African researcher, this was "a significant symbolic change that could lend itself to portraying the DRC Government as taking more responsibility for the consolidation of peace."⁵⁰ The SRSG had to change, and a person prone to compromise with the Congolese leadership was appointed: Roger Meece, the former US Ambassador to the DRC. Many interlocutors described that period as a "very weak moment for the UN Mission."⁵¹

The new name and mandate were meant to indicate that a return to "normalcy" was near, even if this was not reflected by the events on the ground.

48 Hugo de Vries, "Going around in circles," op. cit., p. 12.

49 As underlined by a Stimson Center and Better World Campaign report, "this rhetoric was an attempt to limit the mission's ability to monitor and report on election-related misconduct or repression; to demonstrate to the public that security conditions in the country had improved; and to drum up nationalist sentiment," "Challenges and the Path Forward for MONUSCO," June 2016: <https://betterworldcampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Stimson-BWC-MONUSCO-Paper-FINAL.pdf>.

50 Petrus de Kock, "The DRC at 50: Confronting the Challenges of Peace and Territorial Consolidation," SAIIA Policy Briefing 22, Governance of Africa's Resources Programme at the South African Institute of International Affairs, August 2010.

51 Interview, NGO representative, Kinshasa, July 2018.

While Meece had not previously criticised the reform of the electoral code undertaken by the Parliament,⁵² he and most of the “international community” then remained silent during much of the preparation for the 2011 presidential elections (which were severely flawed and generated widespread violence).⁵³ The consequence of the questioned electoral outcome was a further weakening of the legitimacy of the re-elected President Kabila, which triggered new instability in the east with the emergence of the M23 (in essence, a spin-off of the CNDP).

2.2.4. 2013-2017: The Creation of the FIB and a Militarised Approach to Stability

A mutiny instigated in April 2012 by troops of the defunct CNDP dramatically amplified the already uncertain security situation in North Kivu. The emerging group called itself the M23, in reference to the date (23 March 2009) of the agreement brokered by former Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania specifically between the CNDP and the Congolese Government. The mutiny quickly escalated into a full-fledged rebellion supported by Rwanda and Uganda. The risks of destabilisation, local and regional, and the humiliation created by the capture of Goma in November 2012 (in the eyes of MONUSCO and the FARDC⁵⁴) led to a remobilisation of regional and international actors around the DRC situation.

In February 2013, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon engaged in a regionally driven political initiative, and a UN-brokered Peace and Security Cooperation Framework (PSCF) was adopted by all countries of the region, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), and the African Union (AU). In March, he created the position of the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region and appointed to the post former Irish President Mary Robinson, who opened her office in Nairobi (replaced in July 2014 by Algerian diplomat Said Djinnit).

52 As explained by a researcher, “The mode of election, from a two-round to a simple majority was changed in the Constitution, and later operationalized in a new electoral law. The reform of the Constitution was pushed through very rapidly during the 2010-2011 Christmas holidays. It also changed the mode of removal of the provincial governors, thereby increasing central control.” Interview, NGO researcher, December 2018.

53 See International Crisis Group, “DR Congo: Saving the Elections,” 8 December 2011; Kevin Kelley, “US Envoy Lauds DRC Forces After UN Report on Rampage,” *The East African*, 24 March 2012.

54 Despite earlier heavy fighting (“On 17 November, our helicopters subjected the M23 to a barrage of fire, all day”), when the M23 entered Goma, “we decided not to engage in combat inside the city to avoid collateral damage,” as MONUSCO Force Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Patrick de Grammont related: <https://monusco.unmissions.org/node/100042554>. See also Pete Jones and David Smith, “Congo rebels take Goma with little resistance and to little cheer,” *The Guardian*, 20 November 2012. The M23 offensive stressed that FARDC was not capable of undertaking effective military operations, and supported the narrative that the SSR of the FARDC had been a failure. It also strengthened a widespread resentment against the UN forces in the DRC. The M23 furthermore managed to capture a significant arsenal of heavy weapons, which was later used in the fighting against the FARDC and MONUSCO.

In parallel, a revision of MONUSCO's mandate was undertaken, leading to the creation of an FIB within the Mission but composed of regional forces from the SADC (see box 2). Resolution 2098 (28 March 2013) authorised the FIB to "neutralize armed groups," an expression that triggered a lot of debate in New York and in the field within the Mission (see section 3.3). In August 2013, a new SRSG, Martin Kobler (from Germany), arrived to take the helm of the Mission. He had two main objectives. The first was to concentrate efforts on reducing the instability caused by various armed groups in the east, and therefore move the political centre of gravity of the Mission's headquarters from Kinshasa to Goma (something that had, however, been planned by the DPKO before his arrival⁵⁵). His second key goal was to emphasise the need for stability and stabilisation through the new concept of "islands of stability," which was proven totally inadequate and was ignored after his departure.⁵⁶

The M23 was weakened by MONUSCO's effective support to FARDC offensive operations around Goma in August 2013, by its internal discord, and by reduced Rwandan support (due to the pressure of a number of donor states – the US, the UK, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands – and countries of the region, especially Tanzania and South Africa).⁵⁷ The M23 was thus defeated in November 2013 by a series of joint operations between the FIB and the FARDC (see section 3.2.2. for further analysis of FIB's internal and operational challenges after that episode).

55 However, according to an NGO researcher, "He moved 90% of the mission's assets to the east so rapidly that there were local staff protests and labor grievances filed in Mbandaka, for example, as he did not give the requisite notice for firing local staff." Interview, New York, December 2018.

56 See Hannah Cooper, "More Harm than Good? UN's Islands of Stability in DRC," Oxfam Policy and Practice Blog, 8 May 2014; Alberto Barrera, "The Congo Trap: MONUSCO Islands of Stability in the Sea of Instability," *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2015, 4(1): <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.gn>; and Christoph Vogel "Islands of Stability or Swamps of Insecurity? MONUSCO's Intervention Brigade and the Danger of Emerging Security Voids in Eastern Congo," Egmont Institute, Africa Policy Brief no. 14, February 2014.

57 Rwandan support to the M23 lasted until the end of October 2013, and consisted of advice, logistical support, intelligence, and provision of direct fire support against FARDC. Interview, former MONUSCO official, New York, December 2018.

Box 2. The Force Intervention Brigade (FIB): Mandate and Composition

The FIB was created by Security Council Resolution 2098 (28 March 2013). Its concept was based on an original idea proposed at a ministerial level conference, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), to create a “neutral International Force to eradicate M23, FDLR and all other Negative Forces.” It was meant to be a regional parallel force, but as a number of members of the Security Council opposed financing such a force through peacekeeping assessed contribution, it became an element of MONUSCO, filling a long-standing lacking capacity of rapid and robust reaction. Also, the UN did not want a parallel force operating alongside MONUSCO. It was meant to be the teeth to the political process of the PSCF, and ensure that regional actors are involved in the solution to address the instability caused by armed groups.

The FIB has a separate mandate from the rest of the MONUSCO forces, but is under the command of MONUSCO’s Force Commander. Its mandate is, either jointly with the FARDC or unilaterally and forcefully, to disarm selected armed groups – notably the M23, FDLR, ADF, and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA).

The FIB consists of three infantry battalions, one artillery, and one special force and reconnaissance company with headquarters in Goma. It has in total 2,826 soldiers from South Africa, Malawi and Tanzania. It includes special forces elements and artillery, supported by Rooivalk and Mi24 attack helicopters (not part of FIB).

The 2017 strategic review of MONUSCO (S/2017/826, 29 September 2017) recommended that “by the end of 2018, the Intervention Brigade of the force would be reconfigured to a volume of two battalions and integrated into the force’s overall command and operational structure. Intervention Brigade units would be further ‘unlocked’ from their static infrastructure and would be deployed to the areas in which the force operates, where they would be projected with other units to address protection threats, including through operations to neutralize priority armed groups. The headquarters of the Intervention Brigade would be co-located with the force headquarters and placed under the direct command of the Force Commander to streamline overall command and control.” The latest Resolution 2409 (27 March 2018) decided to reconfigure the FIB by bringing in stronger leadership, and increasing special forces and air-support capabilities.

While MONUSCO has a mandate to conduct unilateral operations when necessary, in practice the Mission has overwhelmingly conducted its neutralisation operations in support of the FARDC, aligned with the idea that a peacekeeping operation supports the host state. However, due to the numerous human rights violations and abuse of FARDC, this support was perceived by many Congolese communities and NGOs as either a way to control the FARDC’s abusive behaviour or align the Mission too closely with the Kabila Government.⁵⁸ The argument developed by MONUSCO was that, through these joint operations, it was ensuring oversight over FARDC conduct, thus preventing their

58 Harvard Humanitarian Initiative Perception Surveys for Eastern Congo: <http://hhi.harvard.edu/publications>. See also CIVIC, “From Mandate to Mission: Mitigating Civilian Harm in UN Peacekeeping Operations in the DRC,” 2016: https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/DRC_REPORT_Web_2016_12_30-Small.pdf.

misconduct, and mentoring them to incentivise their professionalism and good behaviour. Another argument was that, by their support, they empower the FARDC.⁵⁹

In August 2016, a new crisis broke out in the Kasai after the Kabila Government interfered in a local customary succession case. Anti-government protests escalated into what became known as the Kamuina Nsapu rebellion. A local chief (Jean-Pierre Pandi) of the Dibaya territory of Kasai-Central province was killed. Violence soon spread across the region and sharply escalated, pitting government forces and perceived allied ethnic groups against the Kamuina Nsapu militia and their communal backers.

Over the course of the next year, approximately 1.4 million Congolese were displaced due to the conflict and thousands were killed. Casualty figures vary greatly, depending on the source, and mass graves, reportedly filled by victims from both sides, have been found and documented by the UN's Joint Human Rights Office. Initially shocked by the spread of violence, as it had little presence outside the Kivus and Kinshasa, MONUSCO deployed a company from the rapidly deployable battalion (RDB) in South Kivu and was relieved by force reserves from Kinshasa.⁶⁰

The Mission later upgraded its presence in the provincial capital, Kananga, from an “antenna” office to a field office reinforced by 70 additional civilians and 30 police. It deployed mixed expertise, mobile monitoring, and response teams to access conflict-affected areas and verify reports of human rights violations.⁶¹ Tragically, Zaida Catalan and Michael Sharp, two members of the UN Panel of Experts investigating the violence in this region, were killed in March 2017. An investigation was set up into the cause of their death and the alleged complicity of certain government representatives.⁶² Despite much reported resistance and interference, the Mission's response to the Kasai crisis was generally viewed positively by the EPON team's interlocutors.

In practice the Mission has overwhelmingly conducted its neutralisation operations in support of the FARDC, aligned with the idea that a peacekeeping operation supports the host state.

59 Interview, former UN official, New York, December 2018.

60 S/2017/203, para 203.

61 S/2016/1130 para. 30; S/2017/565, para. 25.

62 “Who Is To Blame For The Murders Of Michael And Zaida?,” Congo Research Group, May 25, 2017: <http://congoreserchgroup.org/who-is-to-blame-for-the-murders-of-michael-and-zaida/>





SECTION 3.

MONUSCO: A Current Overview

In 2017-2018, MONUSCO had once again to adapt to new crises on the ground, along with financial cuts adopted by the main financial contributors of the peacekeeping budget (a reduction of 8.5% for 2017-2018⁶³), and upcoming presidential elections scheduled for December 2018. In May 2017, MONUSCO also went through a comprehensive strategic review. In September 2017, the Mission began dealing with an outbreak of violence in Uvira (South Kivu), triggered by assaults by the Mai-Mai Yakutumba.

In February-March 2018, the Mission had to respond to another outbreak of violence in Ituri by unidentified Lendu militia forces, which were suspected of receiving support from across the Ugandan border. Furthermore, in May 2018, MONUSCO had to help the DRC as it faced a new outbreak of Ebola in the northwest near the provincial capital of Mbandaka, and then a second strain in North Kivu, near Beni.

63 For many interlocutors, doing more with less has not worked, and MONUSCO is devoid of muscle (“now we are cutting the bones”). Interview, UN staff, Kinshasa, July 2018. To cope with the budgetary cuts, the Mission was in reality two battalions under the mandated troop ceiling by mid-2018, and was considering sending an additional one battalion home. Interview with UN official in Goma, August 2018. See also Katharina P. Coleman, “The Dynamics of Peacekeeping Budget Cuts: The Case of MONUSCO,” *The Global Observatory*, 10 July 2017.

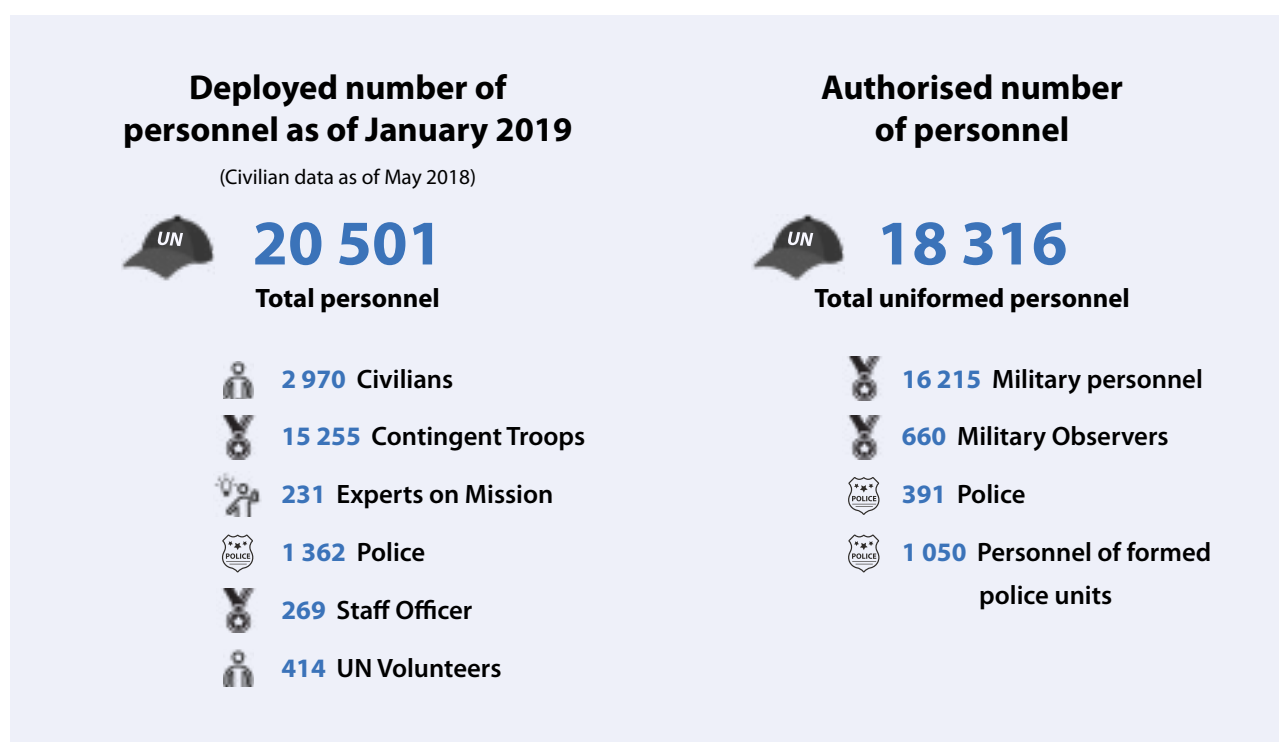


Figure 6. Current strength of MONUSCO (as of January 2019)

Source: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/data>

In Kinshasa, the relationship between the Mission and the DRC Government had soured considerably. In his speech to the General Assembly on 25 September 2018, President Kabila called for an “effective and substantial” start in the withdrawal of UN forces. Unlike the previous elections, the Congolese Government did not ask the UN Mission for help with the December 2018 presidential and parliamentary elections.

3.1. Current Structure and Deployment

As with most multidimensional missions, MONUSCO has, under the responsibility of the SRSG, four main pillars: the Force (military component), the Deputy SRSG in charge of Operations and of Protection, the Deputy SRSG Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, and Mission Support. The Deputy SRSG in charge of Operations and of Protection is based in Goma, while the SRSG is in Kinshasa. This is a special arrangement unique to MONUSCO which has proven effective in dealing with the geographic divide between Kinshasa – where most of the Mission’s leadership is located – and Goma/Eastern DRC, where most Mission personnel are based. The Mission’s primary operational focus (PoC) is in the east, but the SRSG’s main interlocutors are in Kinshasa, and this is also where the Mission has to engage on the national political and security issues.

Despite that division of labour and some efforts to enhance interaction between the components in Goma, the coordination between the military component, the police component, and the civilian divisions of the Mission has remained weak. Many interlocutors pointed to this lack of integration between the various pillars, which remains a systemic challenge common to multidimensional peacekeeping operations, despite various initiatives over the years to improve integration. As one former MONUSCO interlocutor acknowledged, “We need to change the way we do things. Sometimes we can send a team of civilians, some other time establish a SCD [standing combat deployment], but first, the question must be: ‘what is our intent?’”⁶⁴

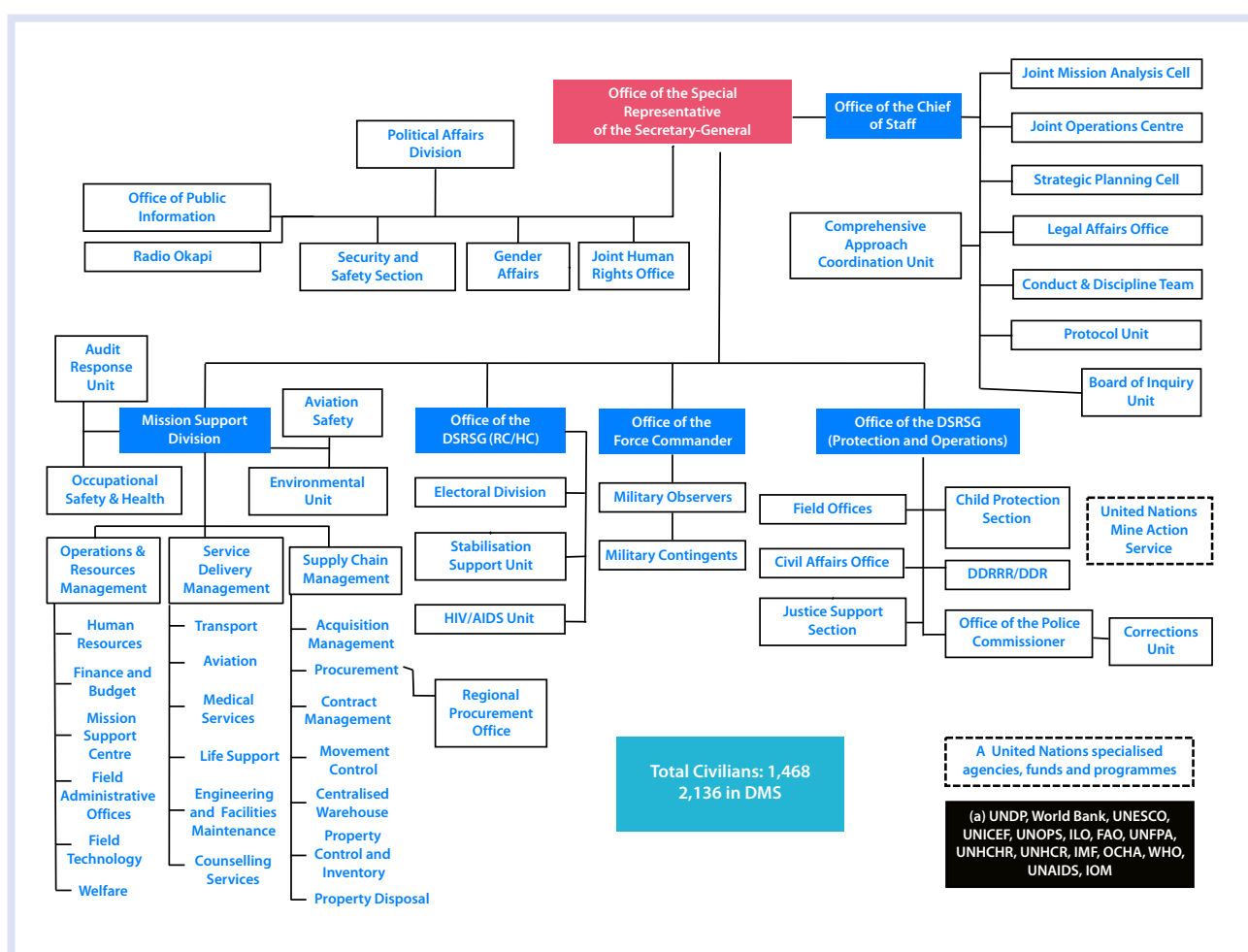
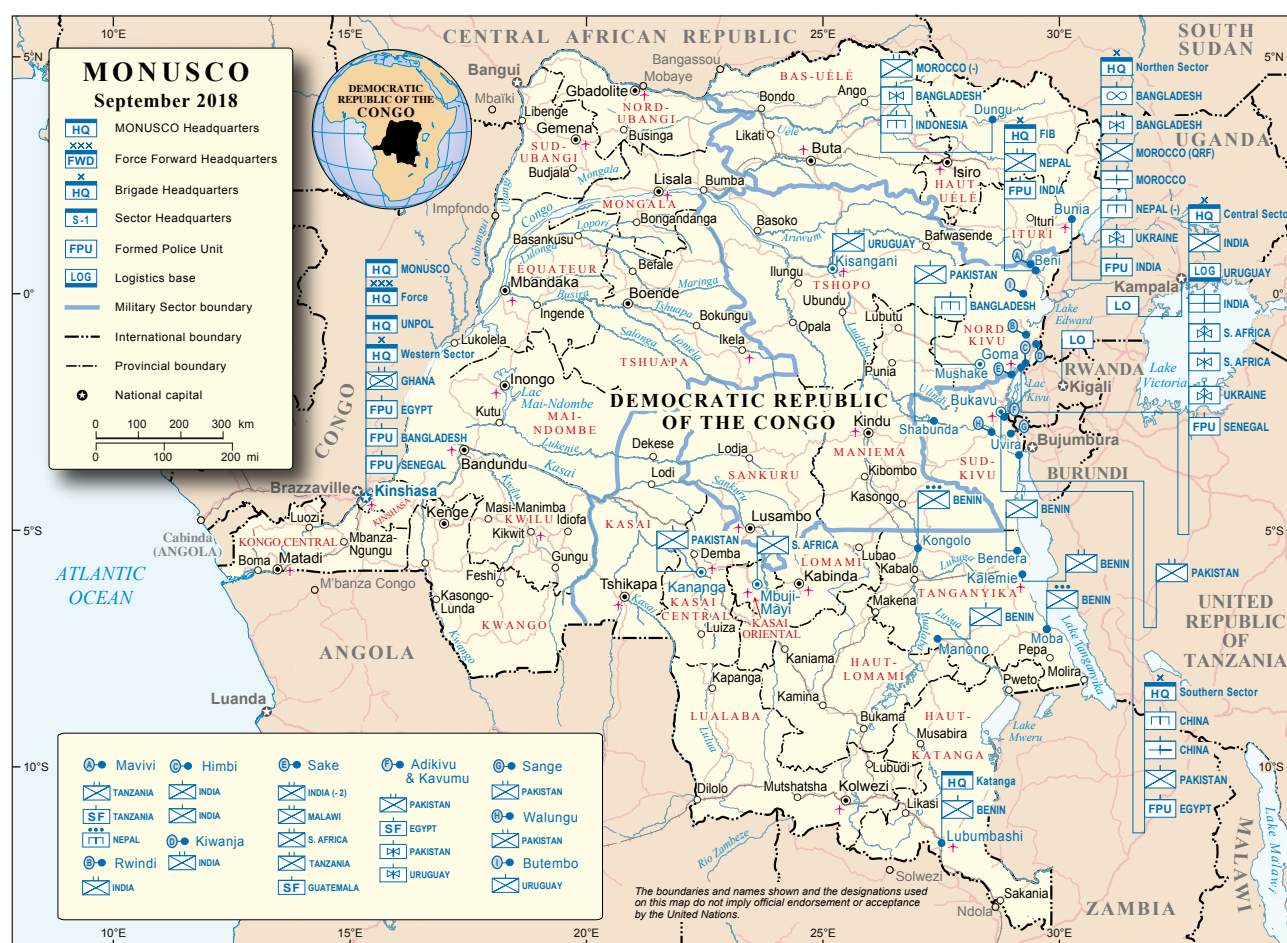


Figure 7. MONUSCO's Organisational Chart (as of 2018-19)

Source: Created by Alexandra Novosseloff on the basis of MONUSCO's budget reports

64 Interview, former MONUSCO official, New York, December 2018.

By late January 2019, MONUSCO had 15,255 soldiers and military experts/officers, and 1,362 police officers from 124 contributing countries, as well as 3,384 civilians (i.e., international staff, national staff and UN volunteers). Among them were 573 female military officers, 168 female police officers, 219 female international civilian personnel, 327 female local staff, and 129 female UN volunteers.⁶⁵ MONUSCO's deployment is organised in four sectors (one in the west and three in the east: North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri). This deployment structure enables MONUSCO to deal with the Kivus, as well as one or two additional crises (see map 1 of the Mission's deployment below).



Map 1. Current Deployment of MONUSCO (as of 31 September 2018)

Source: <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/dpko/MONUSCO.pdf>

⁶⁵ This gender data is not available for the civilian component. See <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender>

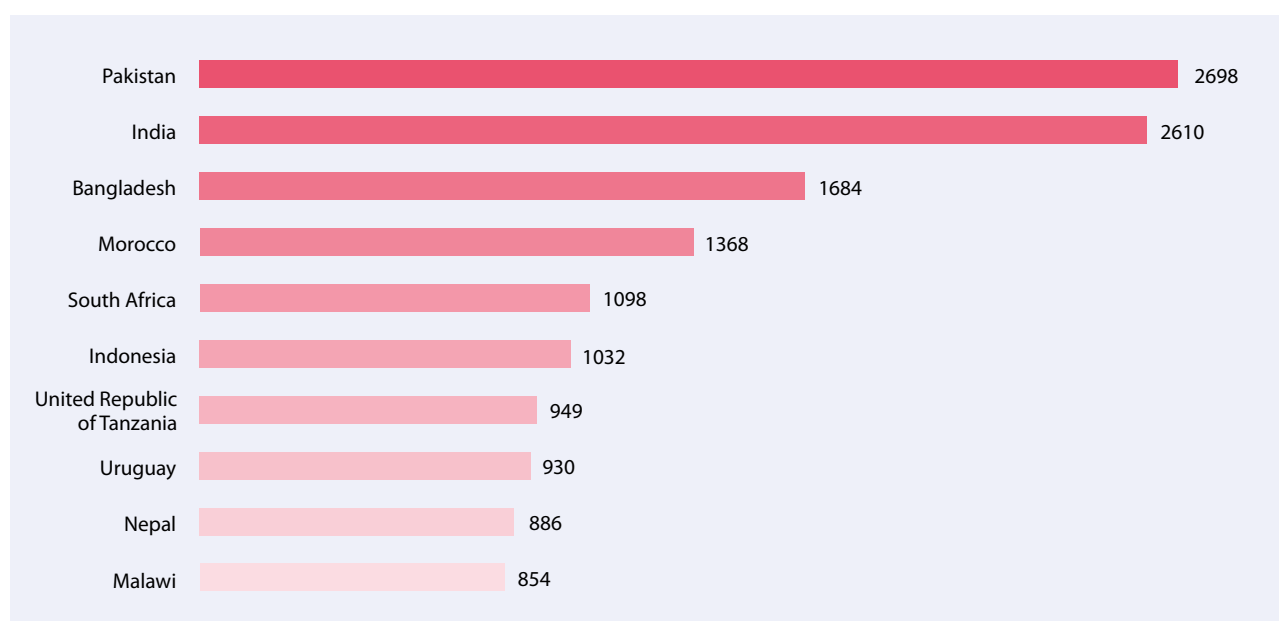


Figure 8. Top ten troop contributors to MONUSCO (as of January 2019)

Source: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/data>

3.2. Military Component

3.2.1. A Military Force Under a Number of Transformations

The military component of MONUSCO has evolved significantly since the March 2013 creation of the FIB in March 2013 (see box 2), mandated to neutralise armed groups and authorised to carry out targeted offensive operations in the DRC. In 2015-16, as requested by Security Council Resolution 2277 (30 March 2016), and following recommendations made by the Secretary-General (S/2014/957), the DPKO had also planned for a “Force transformation” to increase the mobility of the troops (see box 3),⁶⁶ which led to the concepts of “rapidly deployable battalions” (RDBs) and then of “protection by projection” (in lieu of “protection by presence,” see below). These concepts, however, were undermined by the financial cuts undertaken in 2017-18.

According to a former MONUSCO official, the Mission itself (especially its civilian part) was “reluctant and did not fight for a proper implementation of the Force transformation, while cuts in the Mission budget imposed by New York started to affect its operational capacity.” Moreover, the search for increased mobility proved more complicated, in particular in terms of logistical support, as a number of capabilities were not adapted to the need to move around battalions.⁶⁷ As one interlocutor pointed out: “To deploy rapidly, we need to have lighter equipment and air assets. We don’t have the proper assets to deploy a

⁶⁶ Interview, former MONUSCO official, New York, December 2018.

⁶⁷ Interview, MONUSCO staff, Goma, August 2018.

full company.”⁶⁸ Moreover, access does not only depend on air assets, but also on military engineers and capacity to repair roads. This is true even with the implementation of the new concept of “protection through projection”. The military component of MONUSCO continues to face the operational and tactical challenges of not having adequate means and capacities to fulfil the mission, of having contingents unwilling to execute the given mandate, and of having poor leadership as well as poor pre- or in-mission training.

Box 3. The four pillars of the “Transformation of the Force” (2015-16)

First pillar: To enhance the capacity of the force to respond effectively to threats against civilians. This will include improving intelligence and surveillance capacities, increasing and improving MONUSCO’s aviation assets, and developing three RDBs. RDBs are intended to have the capacity to respond efficiently to threats against civilians in remote parts of the country.

Second pillar: To decrease MONUSCO’s static military footprint. The force will begin to close company and temporary operating bases centered on sound analysis and in consultation with Mission, UN Country Team (UNCT), and to some extent, DRC authorities. Static battalions will be stationed in a smaller area near the borders with Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, with RDBs deploying as needed to respond to situations outside that area.

Third pillar: To strengthen the FARDC’s capacity to gather intelligence and operate without MONUSCO’s support.

Fourth pillar: To bolster the FARDC’s capacity to build infrastructure, including roads, bridges and wells. These efforts are intended to normalise societies and address the root causes of conflict.

Source: Stimson Center and Better World Campaign, “Challenges and the Path Forward for MONUSCO,” June 2016: <https://betterworldcampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Stimson-BWC-MONUSCO-Paper-FINAL.pdf>.

3.2.2. FIB’s Internal and Operational Challenges after the defeat of the M23

After its role in the initial political and military success of defeating the M23 (also accomplished through bold actions by the FARDC), and contributing significantly to reducing the level of violent deaths in North Kivu (see figure 11),⁶⁹ the FIB has been less effective

⁶⁸ Interview, UN official, Goma, August 2017.

⁶⁹ “Between July and November 2013, the FIB engaged by various means (artillery, aerial attacks, snipers etc.) alongside FARDC units that were leading the pushback against DRC’s then strongest armed group. The offensive led to an unexpectedly quick win on the side of FARDC/FIB. The primary reason for this was the use of well-trained and disciplined FARDC units (mostly Unités de réaction rapide) that benefitted from functioning

in fulfilling its main mandate of disarming the armed groups, predominantly the FDLR and the ADF. This highlighted a number of challenges faced by the FIB.

First, from an operational and force generation point of view, the FIB was configured to conduct operations against the M23 with a conventional force structure. As summarised by a MONUSCO staff member, “M23 was probably the easiest enemy for the FIB, as this rebellion behaved more or less as a conventional army, and operated in a fairly limited area close to the Rwandan border.”⁷⁰ When the FIB was asked to shift its operational focus towards a more asymmetric opponent in the form of the FDLR (spread out over a large inland area), and later the ADF (an opaque and decentralised group hiding in an extremely dense rain forest), it showed to be less well equipped for that type of adversary. It was not configured for jungle warfare and for fighting a strategic asymmetric enemy. Moreover, the FIB was then split into several smaller locations, undermining its role as a rapid reaction force, before it was assembled again in 2018 in one geographical area of operation around the town of Beni.⁷¹

The military component of MONUSCO continues to face the operational and tactical challenges of not having adequate means and capacities to fulfil the mission.

Another operational challenge has been the lack of HQ capacity, which has negatively affected operational planning. The rotation of FIB leadership has also constituted a problem, and the quality of the leadership has at times been an issue. For several months, the FIB has had to operate without close air support, while the UN and South Africa were disagreeing over the reimbursement of the Rooivalk attack helicopters, which has created much frustration within the FIB.⁷²

The coordination with the FARDC and the other military contingents of MONUSCO (the “framework brigades”) remained minimal or non-existent, which meant that areas cleared by the FIB could not be taken over on time by other forces. Indeed, tensions have existed with the other troop-contributing countries (TCCs) since the beginning over the interpretation of the mandate and of their role within the Mission, and this had created a two-tier UN mission.⁷³ This happened despite the fact that MONUSCO’s leadership

supply chains for equipment, logistics, and food in conjunction with massive FIB support.” See Christoph Vogel, “DRC: Assessing the performance of MONUSCO’s Force Intervention Brigade,” *Africa Arguments*, 14 July 2014: <https://africanarguments.org/2014/07/14/drc-assessing-the-performance-of-monuscocs-force-intervention-brigade-by-christoph-vogel>. See also Evert Kets and Hugo de Vries, “Limits to supporting security sector interventions in the DRC,” ISS Paper 257, July 2014.

70 Interview, MONUSCO staff, Goma, August 2018.

71 Interview, MONUSCO staff officer, Goma, August 2018.

72 Ibid.

73 “Since the adoption of Council resolution 2098 (2013), differences in interpretation concerning the use of force in protecting civilians have become both more apparent and more potentially divisive.” See debates on this issue

had constantly repeated that there was only “one mandate, one Force.” Indeed, the contributing countries of the “framework brigades” have interpreted the mandate in a very passive way, leaving all robust elements and the task of going after the rebel groups to the FIB, while the FIB did not feel responsible for other protection-related tasks aside from military operations against armed groups.⁷⁴ The result is that the FIB forces have been operationally spread out, undermining the initial idea of the FIB being “robust, mobile and versatile.”

However, since the financial pressure on the Mission – with a threat to repatriate underperforming contingents and the DPKO’s focus on performance in the context of the publication of the Santos Cruz report and the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative⁷⁵ – the

More pressure has been placed on the TCCs to actively protect their own camps by having a more robust posture, dominating the area, and having a more credible leadership.

attitude of some of the “traditional contingents” seems to have changed. It seems to have led them to move beyond the perimeters of their base and to be more proactive in the implementation of the mandate. In the Southern Sector of Eastern DRC, for example, more patrols (including with the FARDC), are being undertaken, increasing the visibility of MONUSCO forces. More pressure has been placed on the TCCs to actively protect their own camps by having a more robust posture, dominating the area, and having a more credible leadership. The UN conducted a joint task force assessment with the SADC on the FIB in April-May 2018 in an effort to resolve

some of these tensions, and it came up with a number of recommendations to increase the Brigade’s effectiveness and relationship within the Mission. Greater mission control, increased enablers, and specialised jungle warfare capabilities were highlighted as key improvements needed for the next phase of operations.⁷⁶

Second, the support of the FIB’s own TCCs has wavered over time. There was strong regional and international support for the fight against the M23. However, when MONUSCO’s leadership deployed the FIB to conduct operations against the FDLR and the ADF, its TCCs were less supportive. This was also because the operational objectives and priorities were not clear from the Mission HQ. These developments show that robustness is as closely linked to political will and interest as it is to military capacity. As a result, even though the FIB was supposed to be a quick and robust reaction force, part of

in A/68/787 (7 March 2014), “Evaluation of the implementation and results of protection of civilians mandates in United Nations peacekeeping operations,” Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, p. 13.

74 Interview, UN staff, New York, August 2018.

75 See the series of articles in the IPI’s Global Observatory on the Santos Cruz report: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/tag/cruz-report>, and on the A4P initiative and declaration: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/tag/a4p>.

76 Report of the UN and SADC Joint Task Force on the Assessment of the Force Intervention Brigade of MONUSCO in the DRC from 30 April to 4 May 2018 – Restricted Copy.

it became stationary around the town of Beni, where the ADF is the most active group. As one interlocutor stressed, the FIB “became very static and lost momentum.”⁷⁷ The deployment and role of the FIB highlights a number of challenges which need to be addressed for any future peacekeeping operation. As one interlocutor asked, “Is it acceptable to send troops with blue helmets, white vehicles, to deploy them in forward positions under white tents, to have them relying on mission support staff not working on weekends to fight a group that you cannot confront in another manner than with the will to physically eliminate them?”⁷⁸

The FIB was also supposed to be a temporary mechanism whose “exit strategy” was conditioned, according to Resolution 2098, to DRC’s “sufficient progress in implementing its commitments under the PSC Framework, as well as the establishment and implementation of a national security sector reform roadmap for the creation of a Congolese ‘Rapid Reaction Force’.” These developments did not materialise, and the temporary FIB became a de facto semi-permanent part of MONUSCO. While the ongoing operations against the ADF are less politically controversial, the Mission’s capacity to reduce the ADF threat has been hampered by ineffective regional diplomatic efforts and lack of dialogue with the various Mai-Mai groups in the region.

3.3. Police Component

Since the first training of 161 Congolese police officers undertaken in 2002, UN Police (UNPOL) has been involved in both security provision and joint patrolling with the PNC, while also assisting in training programmes and the drafting of the judicial frameworks for the PNC. The police component therefore contributes, according to Resolution 2409, to both the PoC “through the swift establishment of professional, accountable and sustainable security forces, the deployment of an accountable Congolese civil administration, in particular the police, judiciary, prison and territorial administration and the consolidation of rule of law and promotion and protection of human rights,” and to the reform of the security sector “by assisting the Comité de réforme de la police, and by advocating for the establishment of the Secrétariat général à la sécurité et à l’ordre public that will coordinate security institutions with a law enforcement mission.” UNPOL efforts are mostly undertaken in cooperation and

The role of MONUSCO’s police component positioning itself to temper the police repression during the December 2017 marches.

⁷⁷ Interview, NGO researcher, New York, December 2018.

⁷⁸ Interview, former MONUSCO official, New York, December 2018.

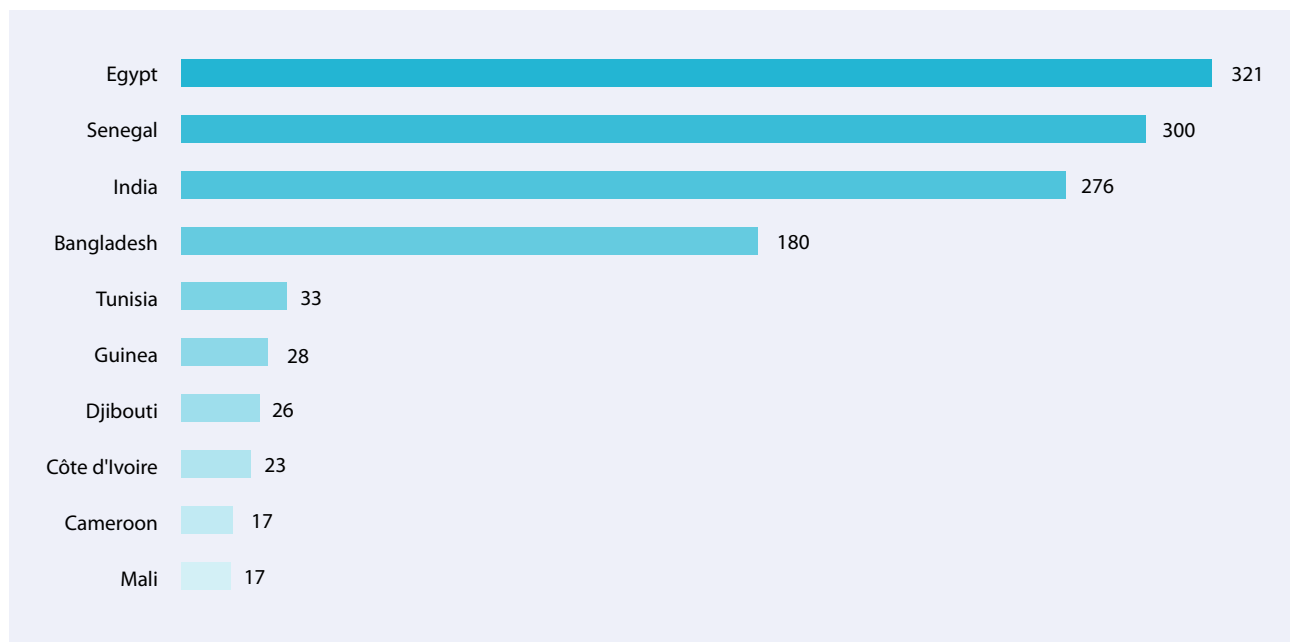


Figure 9. Top ten police contributors to MONUSCO (as of January 2019)

Source: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/data>

coordination with other international partners (such as the EU that deployed a Police Mission from 2007 to 2014). UNPOL has furthermore played a significant role in preparing the PNC for the elections in 2006 and 2011, and it was once again tasked to play a role in preparing for the 2018 elections. In the demonstrations of December 2017 in Kinshasa, MONUSCO's police component deployed to observe and occasionally intervene between the PNC and protesters. According to an interlocutor, this had a deterrent, even if limited, effect on the actions of the Congolese authorities.⁷⁹ It is, however, “a good example of where UNPOL have had to respond and interpret the PoC mandate creatively and sensitively.”⁸⁰ A representative from the civil society acknowledged the role of “MONUSCO's police component positioning itself to temper the police repression during the December 2017 marches.”⁸¹ Other civil society representatives also acknowledged this.

UNPOL has faced a number of challenges that have made its work less effective than expected. The SSR programme of the PNC has been lacking in several aspects. The UN's European counterpart (EUPOL) has experienced similar challenges.⁸² To date, the PNC has not been able to gain the trust of the Congolese people.⁸³ It is considered corrupt, and the population does not have confidence in its ability to provide security. As part of the

79 Interview, MONUSCO official, Bukavu, August 2018.

80 Interview, NGO Researcher, New York, December 2018.

81 EPON focus groups, representatives of civil society, Kinshasa and Goma, July and August 2018.

82 See Alicia Cebada Romero, “The EU's failure in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Are we in time to put things right?” Katoikos, 6 September 2015: <http://www.katoikos.eu/pending/9939.html>.

83 See Thomas Mandrup, “Reforming the bras tendus?” loc. cit.

larger stabilisation initiatives, the PNC has often been incapable of fulfilling its operational role. An example of this has been the police's inability to deploy to areas "cleared" by the FARDC and MONUSCO, where the police, in principle, are supposed to deploy and take over the responsibility for security from the military elements. This often does not happen, and the areas return to the control of the insurgent elements.⁸⁴

The PNC also often lacks the most basic equipment such as effective and secure means of communication and means of transport. Coordination between the FARDC and the PNC is difficult or non-existent, which has negative consequences for MONUSCO in reaching its strategic objectives. Another challenge faced by UNPOL has been that they are working in a non-permissive environment and with a partner that has limited interest in implementing the needed reforms to improve the capacity of the PNC. A third challenge faced by UNPOL is the difficulties in donor cooperation at times, which creates redundancy and a lack of coordination in efforts.

3.4. Civilian Component

As of May 2018, MONUSCO had 2,970 international and national civilians and 397 UN volunteers. The Mission's civilian dimension has covered all aspects of the mandate and supported all elements of the Mission, from intercommunal reconciliation to mission planning, logistics, and human rights monitoring, among many other tasks. The civilian dimension has also been actively involved in the Mission's current two overarching engagements: implementing protection and helping to establish the conditions for the implementation of the December 2016 agreement (Accord de la Saint-Sylvestre) which aimed at a political transition and the organisation of municipal, legislative and presidential elections.⁸⁵ On that latter aspect, the political affairs division of the Mission and its electoral division have seen a great deal of turnover and reorganisation over the past few years, hampering its ability to follow events on the ground, and work with Congolese political actors. Mission leadership continues to play their good offices role, engaging with a variety of Congolese stakeholders, often in a discrete manner.

Additionally, the Mission has worked to support the development and implementation of the justice sector and tackling the challenge of impunity. Despite broadly engaging with the national-level government in earlier years, over the past three years, efforts have focused heavily on local-level initiatives, in large part due to the decline in responsiveness to the Mission on the part of the DRC Government. In a sense, this turn "towards the local" resulted from the increasing lack of political impact on the Congolese Government. Despite some successes (such as the reconciliation projects led in Ituri after the fighting

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ This agreement was the result of the dialogue that the Congolese Catholic Church led with Kabila's Government, in which MONUSCO did not participate.

between the Twa/Luba and the Hutu/Nande), the localisation of Mission efforts has not contributed towards preventing the proliferation of illegal armed groups. On previous occasions, prior to national elections, the Mission had also sought to mitigate the risk of election-related violence by engaging with civil society and supporting its role in promoting dialogue and a peaceful electoral process. However, the Mission has not been able to play the same role in 2018 because the Government declined MONUSCO's electoral support.

At the local and sub-national levels, different sections devoted primarily to the civilian dimension of MONUSCO have engaged with a variety of stakeholders on issues pertaining to protection. Functioning as an interface between the broader Mission and the Congolese population and authorities, the Office for Civil Affairs, in particular, has sought to strengthen engagement and early warning at the level of communities. The section has also been active in boosting conflict resolution locally, through reconciliation and mediation in support of protection. In parts of the country, the Mission has also strengthened local participative security governance, for instance, by supporting the formation of local security committees (LSCs).

The Mission capillary's reach has been in large part due to the approximately 250 staff members, including 180 community liaison assistants (CLAs), who have been deployed by the Office for Civil Affairs across 10 field locations. Most of these staff members have operated locally, responding to the evolving challenges of protection. The CLAs have worked primarily at Mission military bases in Eastern Congo and the Kasais, serving as a key interface between the military component of MONUSCO and local communities, and gathering first-hand information as inputs for analysis and strategy. Their work has focused heavily on enhancing resilience and the ability of communities to respond to emerging threats, and it has added to the Mission's strong emphasis on reporting violations and emerging threats.

In addition to this localised work, the Mission's civilian component has engaged in the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement through the empowerment of civil society. MONUSCO has supported sensitisation campaigns for civil society and local communities, especially for youth and women in hotspots and other priority zones. To that end, Civil Affairs has worked closely with different levels of the Congolese Government, including the Ministry of Interior and Security and the Ministry of Decentralization and Customary Affairs. As with other components of the Mission, this collaboration has varied with changes in the responsiveness of the Government, especially at the national level.

3.5. The Mission's Mandate and Current Challenges

Table 2. MONUSCO's Current Mandate

(I) MONUSCO's Strategic Priorities	
Protection of civilians (PoC) through comprehensive military and civil responses • Ensure effective, dynamic and integrated protection under threat of physical violence through a comprehensive approach; • Identify threats to civilians, implement prevention and response plans, and strengthen civil-military cooperation; • Strengthen early warning mechanisms; • Neutralise armed groups through the FIB under direct command of the MONUSCO Force Commander; and • Good offices, advice and assistance to ensure actions against armed groups are supported by civilian and police components.	Support to the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement and the electoral process in order to hold credible elections, thus contributing to the stabilisation of the DRC. • Technical and political support, good offices and engagement with interlocutors across the political spectrum; • Technical assistance and logistical support for the electoral process, in coordination with Congolese authorities, the UNCT, regional and international actors, in order to facilitate the electoral cycle; • Engage in regular and substantial dialogue with the DRC's independent electoral commission (CENI); and • Report on restrictions on political space and violence, including in the context of the elections.
(II) To Pursue the Following Tasks in Support of Strategic Priorities	
Stabilisation and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) • Conflict-sensitive approach through the implementation of the I4S in order to enable state and society to build mutual accountability and capacity to address and mitigate drivers of conflict, creating the conditions for improved governance and longer-term development; • Implementation of the Action Plan to Prevent and End the Recruitment and Use of Children and Sexual Violence by FARDC; and • Good offices, advice and assistance to the DRC Government to support DDR efforts in line with a community violence reduction (CVR) approach.	Security Sector Reform (SSR) – work with DRC Government on: • Reform of the police; • Encourage inclusive SSR; • Army reform, in compliance with the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (UNHRDDP), that enhances accountability, efficiency, self-sustainability, training, vetting and effectiveness; and any support provided by the UN, only for joint operations, should be jointly planned and executed, and subject to appropriate oversight and scrutiny, failing which that support should be suspended; and • Justice and prison sector reforms.

Sanctions Regime Monitor the implementation of the arms embargo in cooperation with the UN Group of Experts (GoE), and observe and report on flows of military personnel, arms or related material across the eastern border of the DRC.	Child Protection (CP) Assist the DRC Government in ensuring CP is taken into account in DDR and SSR processes as well as during interventions leading to the separation of children from AG in order to end and prevent violations and abuses against children.
Gender, Sexual Violence, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) - To assist the DRC Government in ensuring the participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels, including in the creation of conditions conducive to the holding of elections; - To hold accountable all perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian law and SEA; and - Full compliance of MONUSCO personnel with the UN zero tolerance policy on SEA.	Humanitarian Access All parties should allow and facilitate the full, safe, immediate and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel, equipment and supplies, and the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance to populations in need, in particular to IDPs, throughout the territory of the DRC, respecting the UN guiding principles of humanitarian assistance and relevant provisions of international law.

Following the 2015 report, the Security Council has attempted to prioritise the mandate.⁸⁶ Resolution 2409 (27 March 2018) set two main priorities: a) protection of civilians (PoC) through comprehensive military and civil responses; and b) support to the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement and the electoral process in order to hold credible elections. On that basis, the Mission had elaborated on a series of benchmarks with the strategic end state of MONUSCO being able “to ensure that security conditions in DRC no longer pose a tangible threat to international peace and security and remain that way even after the Mission’s departure.” MONUSCO has considered that the following broad conditions would be key to achieving its desired end state:

- a. The holding of credible elections leading to a peaceful transfer of power;
- b. The reduction of the threat posed by the remaining foreign armed groups to a level that can be managed by the country’s security forces;
- c. The reduction of intercommunal tensions and conflicts in the North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces to a level that can be managed by the Congolese authorities, with support from the UNCT and other partners; and
- d. Progress in the fight against impunity, so that the security forces are no longer perceived as a threat to civilians.

⁸⁶ See “Applying the HIPPO Recommendations to the DRC: Toward Strategic, Prioritized, and Sequenced Mandates,” IPI meeting note, 1 August 2017: <https://www.ipinst.org/2017/08/applying-hippo-recommendations-to-drc>.

These objectives were reiterated during the strategic review led by the Secretariat in September 2017, but a clear assessment as to whether or not they are being met was not conducted. The UN Mission had to contend with three significant challenges that influenced its effectiveness. Firstly, the Kabila Government's support for MONUC-MONUSCO eroded steadily after 2006. There were low points in the relationship with the Government, such as the expulsion of the head of the human rights office in October 2014 after the publication of a report on human rights violations during an anti-crime operation in Kinshasa. There have also been high points, for instance, the joint FARDC and FIB defeat of M23 in 2013. In general, however, overall support for the Mission has declined.

Two areas where this has been particularly problematic are SSR and political reform. President Kabila preferred bilateral partnerships for SSR and did not want MONUC-MONUSCO to play a meaningful role in coordinating SSR efforts.⁸⁷ Moreover, the SSR programmes were negatively influenced by the constant competition and lack of coordination among donors; and there has been no agreement among donors over the role to be given to the UN in this area, despite the constant call from the Security Council that MONUSCO should play a coordinating role. The fact is that President Kabila preferred bilateral support for SSR and did not want a meaningful role for MONUC-MONUSCO in coordinating SSR efforts.⁸⁸

Secondly, MONUSCO's mandate has not fundamentally changed as it has remained a centre of gravity to support the extension of state authority and Kinshasa-controlled state building. This has been reiterated in the latest Resolution 2463 (29 March 2019) which changed the second objective of MONUSCO to: "Support to the stabilisation and strengthening of State institutions in the DRC and key governance and security reforms." However, the recent budget cuts and ongoing financial pressure meant that the Mission had to change its posture. It had to close down some bases, and this meant that it lost some of its early warning and response capabilities in those areas. In response, the Mission opted for a new "protection by projection" approach, which lacked adequate means to replace the previous approach of "protection by presence" (see section 4.2.1 below). As a consequence, it did not address the issue of MONUSCO's impact with a reduced static footprint.

The strategic end state of MONUSCO being able "to ensure that security conditions in DRC no longer pose a tangible threat to international peace and security and remain that way even after the Mission's departure."

⁸⁷ Interview, NGO researcher, New York, December 2018.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

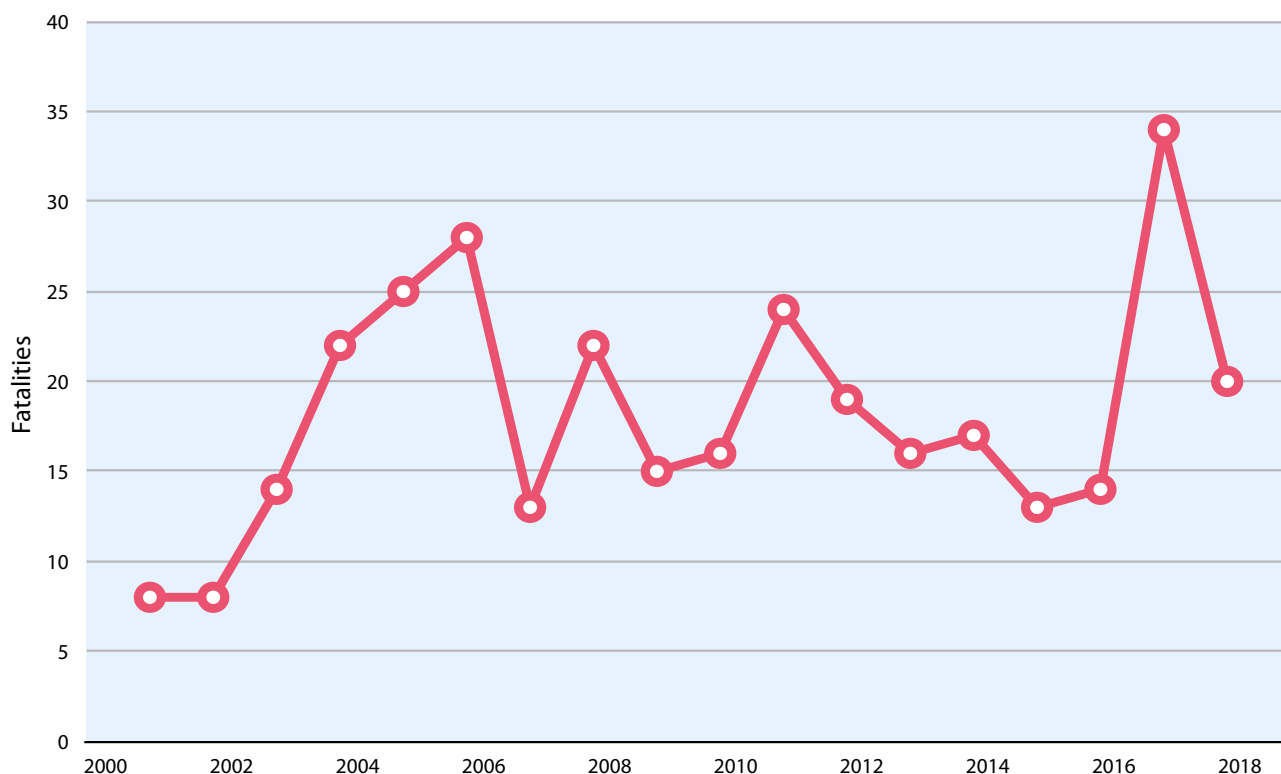


Figure 10. MONUC and MONUSCO's fatalities

Source: Graph created from DPKO data: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/fatalities>

Thirdly, the protection risk increased over this period. The overall political uncertainty around the 2018 elections (as to whether they would take place in December 2018 and whether President Kabila would be a candidate), and various regional and local political struggles contributed to the outbreak of several local conflicts. These resulted in significant human rights abuses, including sexual violence and massacres (in the Kasai, Ituri and Beni regions). Some of the armed groups have also attacked the Mission. MONUSCO suffered a significant number of casualties in 2016–2018 (the highest in its history), including an attack on one of its compounds in Simuliki (near Beni) in December 2017 in which 15 Tanzanian peacekeepers lost their lives (see figure 10).⁸⁹

Furthermore, the Mission had to contend with two Ebola pandemics over the last 12 months, and the response has been hampered by ongoing fighting and displacement in the area, as well as the lack of trust from the local population towards the Congolese authorities.

In this context, MONUSCO's mandate was just renewed by Resolution 2463 (29 March 2019) for less than a year (up until December 2019). Now that the transfer of power has happened in Kinshasa, the Security Council has requested the UN Secretariat to conduct an “independent strategic review” before 20 October 2019. This review of MONUSCO

⁸⁹ “Note to Correspondents on the findings of the Special Investigation on recent attacks against MONUSCO peacekeepers,” New York, 2 March 2018: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2018-03-02/note-correspondents-findings-special-investigation-recent>.

is tasked with advising the Secretary-General on possible options for the UN's role in the DRC in a political context where the results of the presidential elections have been strongly disputed,⁹⁰ and where the newly inaugurated president, Felix Tshisekedi, will most likely have to work with a prime minister who is loyal to the previous president, Joseph Kabila, as his party was granted the majority of the seats in Parliament by the CENI. In its Resolution 2463, the Security Council also wishes it to take place in the context of “the need to progressively transfer MONUSCO's tasks to the Government of the DRC, the UNCT and other relevant stakeholders in order to enable the responsible and sustainable exit of MONUSCO, based on the positive evolution of the situation on the ground, and in a way that contributes to sustainable progress towards the stabilization of the DRC, consolidation of State authority and reduction of the threat posed by armed groups.”

The impact these developments will have on the political and security landscape, including in the east, is still uncertain, and there is concern that a short-term pragmatic calculation by regional and international actors might have disastrous long-term impacts on the unity and stability of the country.⁹¹ The UN Mission may not change drastically before 2020 – António Guterres considered that “a quick departure of the UN in DRC is an illusion”⁹² – even if the Security Council is likely to show its willingness to start the withdrawal and transition process by further reducing the number of troops during the next discussions on the renewal of the mandate.⁹³ Felix Tshisekedi has, for his part, already advocated for a “qualitative resizing of MONUSCO” as it progressively drawdowns, but has still requested a year-long renewal.⁹⁴

The recent budget cuts and ongoing financial pressure meant that the Mission had to change its posture. It had to close down some bases, and this meant that it lost some of its early warning and response capabilities in those areas.

90 Partial CENI results and a local CENCO observer tally leaked to the Financial Times, Le Monde and the Congo Research Group, among others, showed an overwhelming victory for the presidential candidate Martin Fayulu (with over 60% of the vote), but the veracity of this data is still disputed by Fayulu's opponents or disregarded.

91 Tatiana Carayannis and Herbert Weiss, “Congo Kicks the Can Down the Road – How a Failed Election Could Lead to a Violent Uprising,” Foreign Affairs, snapshot, 18 January 2019.

92 “Guterres estime qu'un départ rapide de l'ONU est une ‘illusion’,” VOAAfrique, 6 February 2019: <https://www.voaafricque.com/a/rdc-guterres-estime-qu-un-depart-rapide-de-l-onu-est-une-illusion-/4775542.html>.

93 Wilder Alejandro Sanchez, “DRC Elections and the Fate of the UN Monusco Mission,” Geopolitical Monitor, 21 January 2019: <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/drc-elections-and-the-fate-of-the-un-monusco-mission>.

94 “Les troupes de la MONUSCO doivent être moins nombreuses mais équipées et aguerries,” Actualités CD, 15 February 2019: <https://actualite.cd/2019/02/15/les-troupes-de-la-monusco-doivent-etre-moins-nombreuses-mais-equipees-et-aguerries>.



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SECTION 4.

Analysis and Findings (Across Eight Dimensions)

This section summarises our research findings across the eight dimensions of peace operations identified as most salient by the EPON methodology. The eight dimensions are conditions that influence the effectiveness of a peacekeeping operation.

4.1. Political Primacy and Organisation of Elections

Supporting and advancing the political process is a core task of any peacekeeping operation. Numerous interlocutors considered that the 2006 elections would not have been held without the UN's logistical support and expert guidance to the Congolese's Independent Electoral Commission (CENI). This was actually the first time that the UN used an institutional partnership between the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the DPKO through a mission on the ground to coordinate its electoral support. The UN's role in quickly stopping the violence (with the help of EUFOR RDCongo) between Bemba and Kabila supporters in Kinshasa after the results were announced also proved a crucial step in the DRC's transition.

However, after this first electoral process, President Kabila's commitment to assert his authority diminished the UN's political influence. Moreover, the lack of a political framework since the 2002 agreement and the end of the transition in 2006 has been a defining feature and a challenge for the daily work of MONUSCO. It has undermined its capacity to advance and protect the political space, and to support the free and fair nature of elections. As underlined by Emily Paddon, "The UN's ability to play a constructive role in the DRC has been constrained by the absence of a credible political process to which the parties are committed, and by the international community's selective and inconsistent engagement in the country."⁹⁵ However, as an interlocutor put it, "The UN could not have been able to impose a political framework on a reluctant sovereign partner either."⁹⁶

The lack of a political framework since the 2002 agreement and the end of the transition in 2006 has been a defining feature and a challenge for the daily work of MONUSCO.

ent engagement in the country."⁹⁵ However, as an interlocutor put it, "The UN could not have been able to impose a political framework on a reluctant sovereign partner either."⁹⁶

The 2011 presidential elections were a sharp reminder of the limits of the UN's influence without united support from the international community and a Congolese Government counterpart who is committed to pursuing a singular electoral outcome, rather than a free and fair vote. MONUSCO's role essentially ebbed to the deployment of electoral materials to primary and secondary hubs throughout the provinces. It was

only partially involved in the tabulation process in which much of the criticism was levelled by the Carter Center and the EU, who determined that the vote was not credible.⁹⁷ Although MONUSCO temporarily suspended some of its support to the electoral process over the lack of transparency and repression, and expressed concern over the irregularities after the vote, many believed that the Mission leadership did not then sufficiently use its authority to speak out against the flawed process.⁹⁸

Since 2013, as a number of interlocutors pointed out, the UN Special Envoys of the Secretary-General (SESGs) for the Great Lakes Region have been challenged by the lack of genuine engagement by the DRC and the regional signatories in the "Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework" (PSCF). This framework was "a necessary political process that understood the linkages between national and regional dynamics and actors,"⁹⁹ and was meant to be, at the time, a political counterbalance of the military strategy embodied by the mandate of the FIB. However, efforts to institutionalise the framework

⁹⁵ Emily Paddon, "The Perils of Peacekeeping without Politics: MONUC and MONUSCO in the DRC," op. cit.

⁹⁶ Interview, NGO researcher, New York, December 2018.

⁹⁷ Carter Center, "Presidential and Legislative Elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," 28 November 2011. Mission d'observation électorale de l'Union européenne, République Démocratique du Congo – Rapport final – Élections présidentielles et législatives.

⁹⁸ Interview, UN staff, Kinshasa, July 2018.

⁹⁹ Interview, NGO researcher, New York, December 2018.

through various thematic committees and oversight mechanisms transformed the PSCF into more of a series of technical and programmatic processes and benchmarks than an expression of its original intention. This did not always empower the UN SESGs to play a significant role in addressing, in coordination with the Mission and regional and bilateral Special Envoys, some of the breakdowns in regional relationships within the ICGLR and SADC. According to one UN official, “This position should focus on what cause regional and international tensions,” and push MONUSCO to be more of “a political mission with a regional understanding.”¹⁰⁰

Over the years, the Mission’s attempts to support the political process have generally been resisted by the Government, especially when MONUSCO was seen to be taking a more public stance. In 2015, SRSG Kobler was pushed away by the Congolese Government after attempting to broker a deal between the ruling coalition and the opposition, while SRSG Sidikou’s quieter, behind-the-scenes efforts through 2016–2017 were permitted, although he was nevertheless criticised by the opposition for being too close to the ruling party. Tied to these efforts has been the regional shuttle diplomacy of UN Great Lakes Special Envoy, Said Djinnit, encouraging key allies to support the compromise.¹⁰¹

Tensions returned in earnest as the Mission criticised government crackdowns on protesters in December 2017 and documented abuses through the Joint Human Rights Office. Despite government resistance at the most senior levels, the Mission has invested a great deal of effort in improving the political acumen of its analysts in the field and creating a more effective system of forecasting and anticipating political crises and potential threats. However, during EPON interviews, there seems to be a sense that analysis from the Political Affairs Division and Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC) were not always mutually reinforcing. Senior leadership relied on a small group of trusted sources and advisors, and the Mission was not always content with the quality of the information coming from the field offices.

Early in 2016, the AU Commission launched a process with Edem Kodjo as a facilitator that led to a dialogue in Kinshasa with an agreement, but the only major politician from the opposition to sign was Vital Kamerhe. The Rassemblement regrouping of political parties refused, and slowly all converged towards the process led by the Conférence nationale épiscopale du Congo (National Episcopal Conference of the Congo) (CENCO) that led to the December 2016 agreement (Accord de la Saint-Sylvestre). Mission leadership, the UN SESG and bilateral envoys played a positive role in supporting a Congolese-led political accord. The agreement, however, was ultimately doomed by the passing of Etienne Tshisekedi (1 February 2017), who had been set to lead the monitoring council for the agreement.

100 Interview, MONUSCO official, Goma, August 2018.

101 On 22 January 2019, the Secretary-General appointed Huang Xia (China) as his new Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region. He took office on 1 April.

In the 2017-18 political environment, SRSG Leila Zerrougui was especially active in performing her good offices role with regular correspondence with the presidential candidates and ruling party representatives in the lead up to the candidate registration process.¹⁰² The Mission and the human rights office in particular also sought to protect political space, enable peaceful demonstrations, and publicly document any violent crackdowns by State security services or acts of violence from the protestors.

However, it is difficult to isolate the effect these efforts had on the decision of President Kabila to finally declare his intention not to run in the December 2018 vote, or the failure of the CENI and the Constitutional Court to validate the candidacy of the two leading opposition candidates (Jean-Pierre Bemba and Moïse Katumbi). This third electoral process was the one in which the UN Mission had the least impact. Moreover, its planned logistical package, according to some interlocutors, was based on unreliable numbers and did not have support within the CENI. On that basis, MONUSCO's efforts to put pressure on the electoral commission to be more transparent had not met the many, often-unrealistic expectations Congolese civilians and international actors have levied on the Mission. Last but not least, the Congolese Government finally refused the logistical support MONUSCO was ready to provide.¹⁰³

In DRC, the lack of a political framework since the 2002 agreement and the end of the transition in 2006 has been defining features and have posed challenges for the daily work of MONUC. Whereas the UN Mission – MONUC at the time – had a significant role in the 2006 elections, MONUSCO has seriously diminished for the following votes, mostly due to the Congolese government's reluctance. It had little role in the organization of the latest presidential elections. The role of Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region should be used in a more efficient way on issues that regional and international tensions.

4.2. Protection and Stabilisation

4.2.1. Protection: An Effective Protection of Civilians (PoC) Strategy?

Since 2008 and Security Council Resolution 1856 (22 December 2008), the Mission's "highest priority" is to "ensure the effective protection of civilians under threat of physical violence." This is reiterated in the 2016 Mission's concept which states, "The effective protection of civilians will be measured by the significant reduction of the threat posed

¹⁰² Interviews with UN staff, Kinshasa, July 2018.

¹⁰³ Joan Tilouine, "Affaiblie, la Monusco se cherche une porte de sortie honorable en RDC," *Le Monde*, 15 October 2018.

by Congolese and foreign armed groups and of violence against civilians.” Progress is to be “measured in relation to the reduction of this threat to a level which can be effectively managed by Congolese justice and security institutions.”

MONUSCO’s effectiveness in protection has varied widely across both space and time.¹⁰⁴ As the Security Council’s mandates “that emphasize protection do not stipulate the how to,” the UN Mission “had to operationalize the principle through the development of a number of mechanisms and tools.”¹⁰⁵ As a result, MONUC-MONUSCO has been a laboratory for the development of PoC tools and the refinement of the operational concept of protection itself. The Mission has generated, often after a protection failure (Kiwanga, Luvungi, etc.), several innovations within its portfolio of Mission-specific protection tools (see box 4).¹⁰⁶ The operation has often been considered a test case for new concepts or postures, such as robust military actions and specific protection actions that set new grounds for peacekeeping in general. MONUC developed a comprehensive civilian protection strategy, the first of its kind in a peacekeeping operation. While these tools have improved the Mission’s information-gathering capacity, some interlocutors expressed concerns that they are not always well integrated into the senior-leadership level and the political process of engaging with armed groups.

The operation has often been considered a test case for new concepts or postures, such as robust military actions and specific protection actions that set new grounds for peacekeeping in general.

104 See the following report for a general account of protection in the DRC before 2010: Julie Reynaert, “MONUC/MONUSCO and Civilian Protection in the Kivus,” International Peace Information Research: https://monusco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/monuc-monusco_and_civilian_protection_in_the_kivus.pdf.

105 Arthur Boutellis, “The Democratic Republic of Congo,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Responsibility to Protect*, Alex J. Bellamy and Tim Dunne (eds) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, August 2016), p. 737.

106 Such innovations have been accompanied by monitoring mechanisms to mitigate the harm caused by the Mission’s operations, especially in the aftermath of SEA cases and allegations, such as “Do No Harm” safeguards. See MONUSCO, “Protection of Civilians and Protection Tools”: <https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/protection-civilians-and-protection-tools>.

Box 4. Various Tools for the Protection of Civilians (PoC)

Joint Protection Teams (JPTs): Established after the 2008 Kiwanja (North Kivu) massacre of more than 100 people near a MONUC camp. JPTs are multi-disciplinary teams deployed to hotspots needing protection to analyse protection needs and define preventive and responsive interventions to address them. JPTs bring together the military, police, and civilian components of the Mission for a multidimensional analysis of threats and protection needs, and to devise preventive and responsive protection plans in given field locations.

Must-Should-Could Matrix: A joint planning exercise between MONUSCO and the humanitarian community to help identify priority areas according to the level of threat and degree of vulnerability of the local population in given hotspots.

Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs): National staff working alongside troops in military bases to enhance interaction between the Force and local communities and authorities, analyse protection needs, and inform protection strategies and plans.

Community Alert Networks (CANs): Early-warning mechanism based on a network of focal points in communities surrounding MONUSCO bases. CANs stay in touch via radio or mobile phone to alert one another in case of an imminent threat. Lately, they have even developed a specific phone number (like a 911).

Local Security Committees (LSCs): Established at the provincial and territorial level to provide a framework through which they can engage with local officials and civil society.

Prosecution Support Cells: Established to bolster military prosecution capabilities.

In addition to the mechanisms discussed in box 4, MONUC-MONUSCO has deployed Mobile and Temporary Operating Bases to increase access and assistance to IDPs and surrounding villages, and to improve civilian protection through proximity. As mentioned earlier, this approach was abandoned in 2017/2018 in favour of a “protection through projection” posture.

Our network [of information] presently has 65 nodes based at the community level which link protection committees and various alert systems. It allows the Mission to identify threats and respond by channeling information from communities to our operating bases and headquarters. Today, 900 communities are covered by the early warning system network in Eastern DRC and we continue to expand the coverage. Since the system relies on mobile phone connectivity, we are continuously working with phone operators and assisting them expand their coverage area to allow more communities to be part of our early warning network. Currently, we receive approximately 500 alerts per month and have a response rate of 86%. This is an improvement on the 2017 response rate of 70% and we continue to try and improve this rate.

Source: David Gressly, "Protection of Civilians in the Democratic Republic of The Congo: A New Approach," 8 January 2019: <https://medium.com/unpeacekeeping/protection-of-civilians-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-a-new-approach-9fa6f00df4d7>.

The Mission has also played a preventive role. A number of initiatives led by the Civil Affairs sections of the Mission have prevented or delayed local violence, and several of the Force's interventions have prevented the escalation of violence. Many interviewed within and outside MONUSCO for this study were particularly encouraged by the Mission's recent responses to Kasai, Uvira (September 2017) and Ituri (February–March 2018), and highlighted these two episodes as examples of the Mission's recent responsiveness to mitigate civilian casualties. A P5 interlocutor highlighted the fact that in Uvira, in particular, "Without MONUSCO firepower, a rebellion would have captured a major centre in South Kivu."¹⁰⁷ Other interlocutors expressed this view as well.

In the Kasai, MONUSCO quickly scaled up its presence in the region, first through mobile monitoring teams, and then by establishing three larger and more permanent company operating bases (COBs) along with a number of temporary positions.¹⁰⁸ The causal relationship between a MONUSCO presence and increased protection was not established, as one former MONUSCO staff explained, "especially as the average armed group can just sneak around the average patrol by cutting through the forest."¹⁰⁹ However, numerous interlocutors seem to believe that there is a link and noted

A number of initiatives led by the Civil Affairs sections of the Mission have prevented or delayed local violence, and several of the Force's interventions have prevented the escalation of violence.

107 Interview with P5 representative, Kinshasa, July 2018, and with NGO researcher, New York, December 2018.

108 CIVIC, "Protection With Less Presence: How the Peacekeeping Operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo is Attempting to Deliver Protection with Fewer Resources," 10 January 2018, p. 8.

109 Interview, former MONUSCO staff, New York, August 2018.

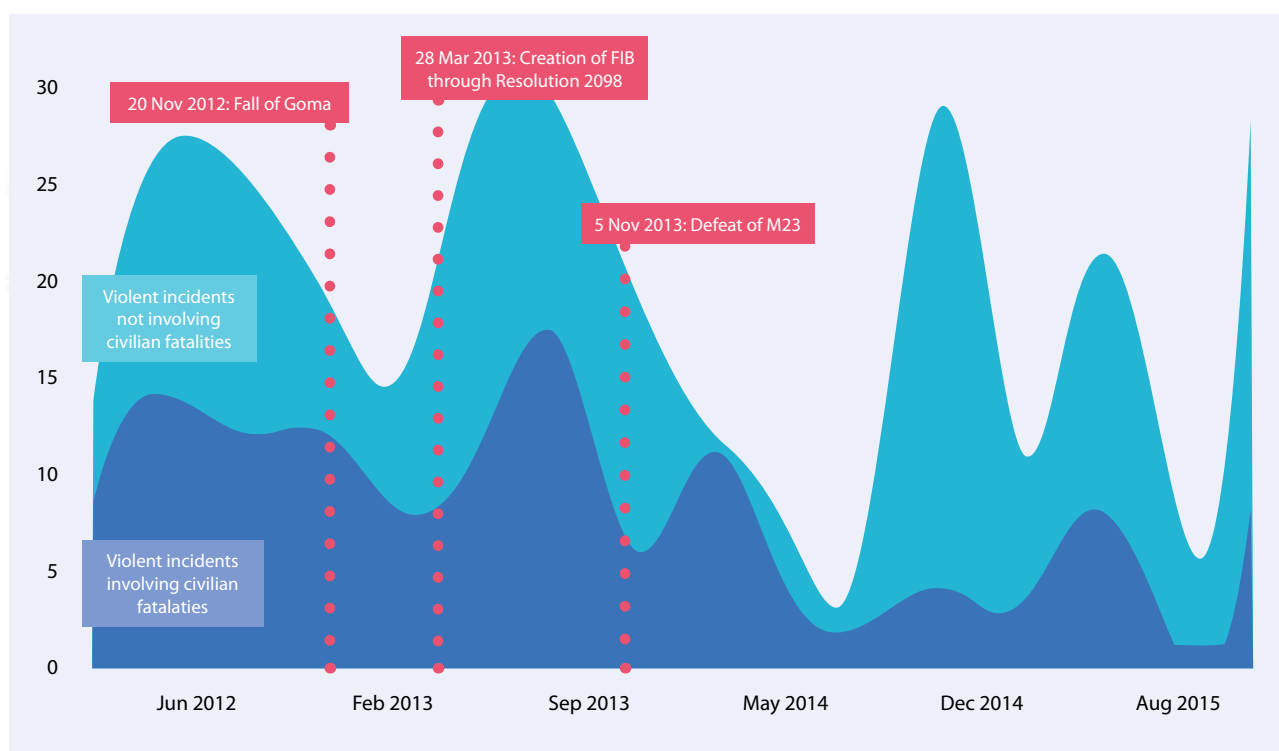


Figure 11. Number of deaths from violent incidents in North Kivu, 2012-2015

Source: Data from Uppsala Conflict Data Program; processing and visualisation by NYU CIC

how much worse the situation would have been without the Mission's presence. During a patrol in the north of Bukavu (South Kivu), a congregation of local villages called on the MONUSCO forces to protect them from rebel activities, since they could not count on the local FARDC battalion for protection.¹¹⁰

Despite many examples showing that MONUSCO has protected populations in need where it is deployed, there are also counterexamples indicating that major failures have happened in achieving this core objective. The 2014 UN Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) report on PoC highlighted that MONUSCO only responded (with a military or political response) to 26% of incidents reported during 2010-2013 Secretary-General Reports. However, this is slightly higher than the UN's average during that period.¹¹¹

As figure 12 below shows, after 20 years of presence in the country, there is a "love and hate" relationship between the UN Mission and the Congolese (the Government and the people). At the time of the Congo Research Group poll, almost 50% thought that MONUSCO was doing a good job in protecting civilians, although 55% did not want

¹¹⁰ Patrol with MONUSCO during fieldwork, Bukavu, August 2018.

¹¹¹ A/68/787 (7 March 2014), op. cit., pp. 7-8. The report also mentioned that, "Force was not used when Goma was invaded (see S/2013/96, paras. 7 and 37), when Likuanguole was destroyed (see S/2012/140, paras. 28-30) or when Mai Mai Cheka rebels constantly harassed the population of Pinga, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite the presence of United Nations troops on site and the existence of significant risk to civilians."

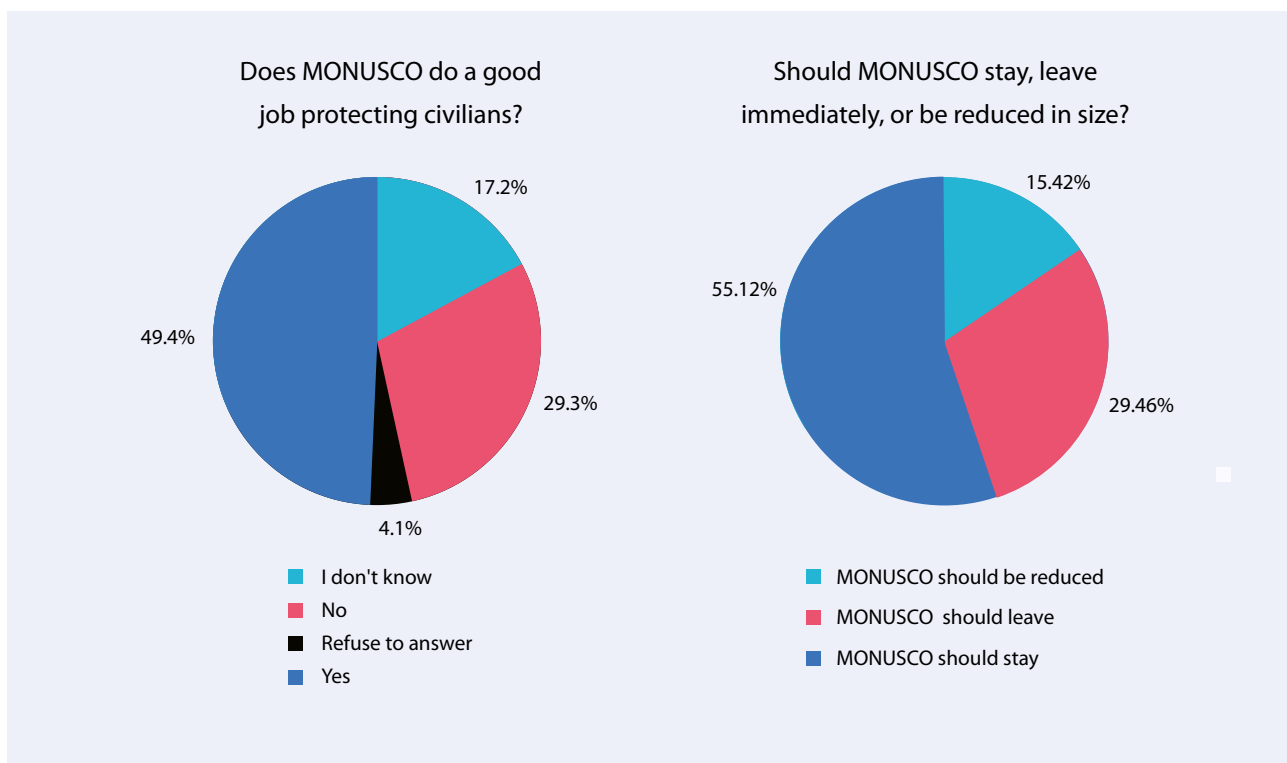


Figure 12. Perceptions of MONUSCO (December 2016)

Source: Jason Stearns, "Is Monusco Doing A Good Job At Protecting Civilians?" *Global Peace Operations Review*, 13 December 2016. © Congo Research Group.

the Mission to leave. Such tension is also reflected in the exchanges the EPON team had with local NGOs and research institutions in Kinshasa and Goma. Some national and local interlocutors place a share of the blame for the persistent violence and instability squarely on the Government, and noted that MONUSCO's continued presence is also due to the incapacity and unwillingness of the Congolese Government and people to secure their Republic.¹¹² One representative of the civil society said, "The UN Mission contributed to the protection of civilians, but when massacres occur, it is often passive."¹¹³ Another said, "As a result, a lot of Congolese don't know what protection means, as many of the patrol don't seem to be very effective. People know when they are going to pass by. For many, this protection is theoretical. Population wants to reach UN camps to seek protection, but outside those camps, there is still insecurity that has to be dealt with. Civilians only

There is a "love and hate" relationship between the UN Mission and the Congolese (the Government and the people).

¹¹² Member of the academic community, Kinshasa focus group, July 2018.

¹¹³ EPON focus groups, representatives of civil society, Kinshasa and Goma, July and August 2018.

see the issue of protection, and that dimension conditions all the other aspect[s] of the mandate.”¹¹⁴ Other Congolese interlocutors interviewed for this study, however, still recall some of the Mission’s early achievements. One particularly fond memory was of when MONUC peacekeepers went behind rebel lines during the early 2000s to deliver national exam materials to students.¹¹⁵

In 2013, the Mission had 69 air assets, whereas by 2018, it had only 45, and this had an impact on the protection capacity of the Mission.

The limited geographic reach of MONUSCO has constrained its capacity to tackle emerging and even ongoing threats in large parts of the country. Even within the scope of its actions and operations, the ability to carry out protection has depended not only on the effectiveness of the military and police components, but also on the capacity of its civilian dimension to reach remote areas. In all three dimensions, the limitations created by a lack of transport infrastructure resulted in the Mission’s heavy dependence on

aviation for deployment to the field. Another limitation arises from “the lack of training and guidance for peacekeeping troops rotating in and out of the mission, the limited will and ability of certain contingents to use force,” and “leadership and command and control issues at all levels.”¹¹⁶

Early 2017, the UN headquarters put forward the new concept of “protection through projection” to test MONUSCO’s ability to protect civilians in a context of drastic budget cuts requested by the Security Council.¹¹⁷ As described by David Gressly, MONUSCO’s Deputy SRSG for Operations and Protection:

“MONUSCO has taken a comprehensive approach combined with increased mobility and a proactive posture facilitating both civilian and military interventions in areas where the Mission does not have a presence. It relies on greater mobility and agility of military forces and civilian personnel, as well as an expanded and strengthened early warning system, allowing rapid deployments whenever and wherever needed either to prevent or respond to violence or conflict and provide physical protection to civilians. Furthermore, *protection through projection* is intended to be comprehensive and is tailored to the specific alert or threat. Most importantly, it is not only a military action or response that is projected, it is a platform for various civilian interventions, such as investigation of human rights abuses or assessment of future protection needs as well as

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ A/68/787 (7 March 2014), op. cit., pp. 7–8.

¹¹⁷ Lauren Spink, “The human cost of cuts to the peacekeeping mission in Congo,” *Irinnews*, 10 January 2018.

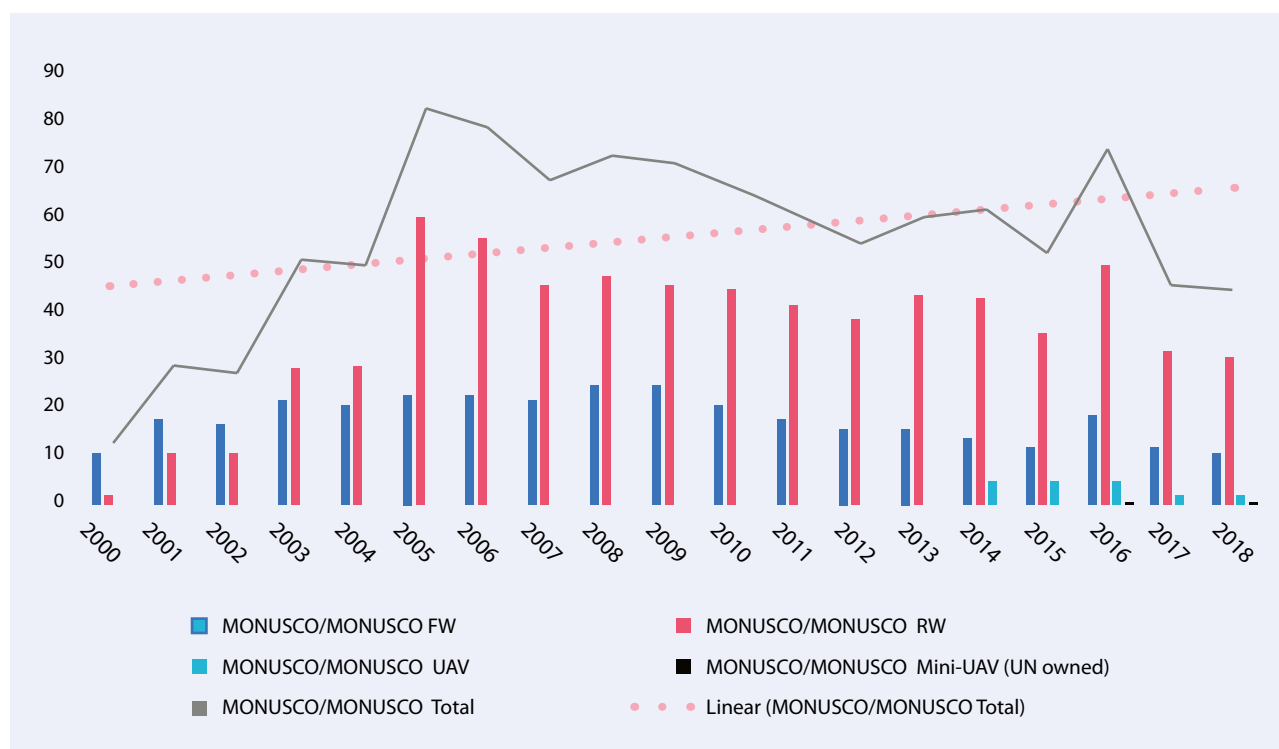


Figure 13. Evolution of MONUC and MONUSCO's number of air assets (2000-2018)

Source: UN Department of Field Support, August 2018

implementing conflict resolution initiatives, creating the space for local authorities and security forces to be able to respond more effectively or arranging for the surrender of armed groups. It can also facilitate humanitarian access to certain areas."¹¹⁸

However, numerous interlocutors considered that the implementation of that concept did not go as smoothly as predicted. Many stressed that this concept was inadequate given the reduction in Mission resources, in particular, those that enable its mobility (as shown in figure 13). Given the large expanses of territory involved, the inability to deploy in an agile manner to many remote areas means that its ability to identify and respond to emerging threats is further compromised.

In 2013, the Mission had 69 air assets. By 2018, it had only 45, and according to a number of interlocutors, this had an impact on the protection capacity of the Mission. In North Kivu, MONUSCO closed five bases, which resulted in a reduction in the Mission's military, police and civilian reach. In particular, it means that its civilian experts who "carry out critical activities to protect civilians, such as monitoring human rights violations,

¹¹⁸ David Gressly, "Protection of Civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: A New Approach," 8 January 2019: <https://medium.com/unpeacekeeping/protection-of-civilians-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-a-new-approach-9fa6f00df4d7>.

resolving local conflict through dialogue, supporting community self-protection strategies, and convincing armed actors to demobilize”¹¹⁹ will no longer have military bases that they can use to operate from when they need to visit the communities in these areas. The travel budget for civilians had also been cut. In South Kivu, at the time of the EPON field

visit, only two helicopters were available to the various parts of the southern sector. This means that MONUSCO forces must use roadways to deploy, which takes time and, given the scarcity and poor state of roads, they may not be able to reach the trouble spots at all.¹²⁰

The successful implementation of physical protection strategies will always require the consent and active engagement of the host country, the cooperation of the region, and the sustained political support and encouragement of the Security Council and donors.

In some areas, such as in Ituri, for example, a staff member from MONUSCO explained that the closure of bases was carried out without adequate alternative presence by the Mission, and this has left local populations without safe ground in case of attacks.¹²¹ The Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) reported the concerns raised over the impact of the closures and on this de facto reduced mobility: “that non-state armed groups will quickly retake territory that MONUSCO has vacated, that violations committed against civilians by both state and non-state security forces would increase, that humanitarian access would decrease, and that

closures might trigger population movements or increased displacement.”¹²² The decision by the Security Council to reduce the size of the Mission and, by the budgetary committees, to reduce the budget of MONUSCO thus had an immediate and significant impact on its ability to protect civilians.

Finally, protection has to come with a strategic end state by which the UN Mission will handover that task to the national authorities. As underlined by Arthur Boutellis, “The successful implementation of physical protection strategies will always require the consent and active engagement of the host country, the cooperation of the region, and the sustained political support and encouragement of the Security Council and donors. In order to be sustainable, protection strategies should be part of a viable political strategy aimed at supporting the development of accountable and legitimate

119 Lauren Spink, “The human cost of cuts to the peacekeeping mission in Congo,” loc. cit. On the issue of base closures, see also the report of CIVIC, “Protection With Less Presence,” op. cit.

120 Interview, MONUSCO staff, Bukavu, August 2018.

121 Interview, UN staff, Bunia, July 2018.

122 Lauren Spink, “The human cost of cuts to the peacekeeping mission in Congo,” loc. cit.

security and justice institutions.”¹²³ This is something the Congolese Government has always been reluctant to develop (see section 4.3.2).

MONUSCO's effectiveness in protection has varied widely across both space and time, and has produced a mixed record. There are documented examples of both successes and failures. Where MONUSCO has made a concerted integrated effort to protect, it has made a real difference. However, there is also evidence of failure to act, both proactively and in reaction to reports of attacks on civilians. MONUC-MONUSCO has, over time, been a laboratory for the development of PoC tools (that have become best practices for protection throughout peacekeeping), and the refinement of the operational concept of protection itself.

The financial pressure placed on MONUSCO by the Security Council has dwarfed its “protection through projection” concept, which was meant to increase the flexibility of the Mission. Rather, it has lessened the protection capacity of the whole Mission. The effective implementation of a protection strategy cannot be separated from the active engagement of the host government to reform its security institutions to support appropriate disarmament and reconciliation strategies. Strategies cannot be considered without due consideration of the adequacy of the capacities required to implement them.

4.2.2. Stability: Effectiveness of the Stabilisation Strategy?

What was initially conceived as a temporary transition period to consolidate peace and phase out the UN Mission became instead a new concept of stabilisation that the UN never clearly defined. Moreover, the activities undertaken seemed to lean more towards development initiatives than peacekeeping per se.¹²⁴ The framework for stabilisation in the DRC elaborated on in 2008-12 is composed of the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (I4S), which is the international community's framework, and the Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for Eastern DRC (STAREC) in support of this. STAREC is the purview of the Congolese State, and therefore precedes the transfer from MONUC to MONUSCO.¹²⁵ Early on in the Mission, at the time of MONUC,

123 Arthur Boutellis, “The Democratic Republic of Congo,” op. cit., p. 745.

124 According to Robert Muggah, “Conceptually speaking, stabilization appears to constitute a ‘transition’ from large-scale peacekeeping operations in areas affected by widespread insecurity to smaller-scale program with targeted security and development packages” (“The United Nations Turns to Stabilization,” IPI Global Observatory, 5 December 2014). The HIPPO Panel pointed out that the term “stabilization” had a “wide range of interpretations,” and that its usage would require clarification (HIPPO, para. 30). See David Curran and Paul Holtom, “Resonating, Rejecting, Reinterpreting: Mapping the Stabilization Discourse in the United Nations Security Council, 2000-14,” *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2015, 4(1): 50, pp. 1-18; and Aditi Gorur, “Defining the Boundaries of UN Stabilization Missions,” Report of the Stimson Center, December 2016. One interlocutor also considered that, with I4S, “we have mixed transition and stabilization.” Interview, New York, August 2018.

125 Emily Paddon and Guillaume Lacaille, “Stabilizing the Congo,” Forced Migration Policy Briefing 8, Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford Department of International Development, Oxford University, December 2011.

stabilisation was conceived as a support strategy for the 2009 Goma accords when a large number of armed groups laid down their arms and decided to reintegrate after years of war. It then focused too narrowly on “top-down” military tasks, and on technical development initiatives, such as refurbishing courts, army barracks, municipal buildings, and police stations, as well as building roads and other infrastructure.

Overall, the implementation of I4S between 2008 and 2012 has encountered several obstacles. First, it suffered from the breakdown in collaboration with the Congolese Government, and from the creation of the FIB, which eclipsed the stabilisation work for a while.¹²⁶ Second, stabilisation programmes focused mainly on State authority constructions and reconstructions (police stations, courthouses, local government buildings, etc.) without considering local and deeply rooted conflict dynamics. Furthermore, the I4S took place in the absence of effective security, which undermined its sustainability, and in a context where the rule of law and economic progress are lacking.¹²⁷ As one UN staff underlined, “Another recurrent challenge for stabilisation is MONUSCO’s focus on elections and the challenge of focusing on a long-term approach (I4S) in an environment where political and humanitarian crisis are changing and starting repeatedly.”¹²⁸ Moreover, stabilisation, with its focus on support to national institutions and the extension of State authority, has in fact more visibly aligned MONUSCO with the Kabila Government in many respects, tying international resources to government-owned plans in Eastern Congo. As a result, MONUSCO had difficulties formulating a strategy based on local needs.

That dimension of MONUC-MONUSCO grew over the years with the establishment of the first Stabilization Support Unit (SSU) in a peacekeeping mission. Between 2010 and 2016 (Resolution 2277), stabilisation became a key priority of the Mission, along with protection and the support of holding credible elections. After 2012, the I4S revised its strategy, taking into account the existence of a predatory state and the need to empower and include local communities.¹²⁹ The idea was to try to work with a combined “top-down” and “bottom-up” conflict transformation approach, including a “more context-specific, damage control-focused approach.”¹³⁰ The current phase prioritises democratic dialogue as a tool for conflict transformation and political engagement. Conflict zones have been

126 See Emily Paddon and Guillaume Lacaille, “Stabilizing the Congo,” loc. cit.; and Hugo de Vries, “The Ebb and Flow of Stabilization in the Congo,” Rift Valley Institute, PSRP Briefing Paper 8, February 2016.

127 Alan Doss, chapter 68 on the “United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC),” in *Oxford Handbook on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, op. cit., p. 809.

128 Interview, former UN staff, New York, December 2018.

129 http://www.unpbf.org/wp-content/uploads/ISSSS-2013-2017-Strategic-Framework-FINAL_EN.pdf.

130 Hugo de Vries, “Going around in circles,” op. cit., p. 49. As explained by Randi Solhjell and Madel Rosland, the failure of these “top-down” projects is that they are overly technical, and do not respond to the need for more socioeconomic and political solutions: “The region’s main conflict lines are structured around governance and livelihood issues, such as customary power struggles over land and conflicts with government and other public authorities. As a result, the construction of a government building or road – without having a deeper understanding of the conflict drivers and accompanying social projects – may in fact lead to an escalation of violence, rather than the creation of stability.” “Stabilisation in the Congo: Opportunities and Challenges,” *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2017, 6(1), DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.478>.

identified and prioritised, along with the development of provincial stabilisation strategies and action plans that are validated by national and provincial authorities.

In 2016, a Stabilization Coherence Fund of US\$40 million was launched with an additional US\$220 million of bilateral projects to support the implementation of the I4S, as well as provincial stabilisation strategies and Action Plans for North-Kivu, South-Kivu, and the ex-Province Orientale (Ituri).¹³¹ Within a context of scarce resources, the Fund has helped the Mission prioritise investments and actions in stabilisation based on an area-based programming approach and providing a more predictable and flexible channel for funding. In 2017, MONUSCO's strategic review recommended that the Mission's SSU "begin transitioning to a structure jointly managed by MONUSCO and UNDP in anticipation of a full transfer to the United Nations Country Team [UNCT] in the post-electoral period."¹³² As one P5 representative questioned, "Is MONUSCO the best placed to do the stabilization work" instead of finding a way for the UNCT to "get the space to do it?"¹³³

As one P5 representative questioned, "Is MONUSCO the best placed to do the stabilization work" instead of finding a way for the UNCT to "get the space to do it?"

However, as some EPON interlocutors noted, one of the results of this strategy is that areas of relative stability have been created that are nevertheless vulnerable to spillover from other parts of the country. And, in the absence of an overarching peace agreement and uneven collaboration from the National Government – a collaboration that is in fact stronger at the provincial level than at the national one – the resulting "patchwork quilt" of varying levels of (in)stability remains fragile and subject to recurring political problems, especially around the elections.

The new I4S strategy is an attempt to address a problematic part of the country with a holistic approach. However, another interlocutor argued that "As long as the nature of conflict in Congo is extremely localised, it might be useful to transform conflicts one at a time. So far, we have seen that using one approach to the conflict in the Eastern DRC also do not work."¹³⁴ So far, the main challenge has been that the strategy requires close cooperation with the local authorities, which has, in the political climate leading up to the

131 The revised I4S is funded through: i) Stabilization Coherence Trust Fund (Norway, UK, Netherlands, Peacebuilding Fund, Sweden, Germany); and ii) bilateral funded projects aligned to the I4S strategy with donors, in particular, USAID, Netherlands, and the EU. From 2008 to 2012, I4S had a budget of over US\$367 million.

132 S/2017/826 (29 September 2017), "Special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," para. 91.

133 Interview, P5 representative, New York, June 2018.

134 Interview, MONUSCO staff, Bunia, August 2018.

elections, proven to be difficult, even if the Prime Minister chaired a meeting on the I4S process with key ministers only days before the election.

The first area where the new strategy was tested was around the border area between Ituri and North Kivu, where rebel activity has been pervasive. One example is the case of the I4S inclusive, participatory, and transparent Democratic Dialogue process that gave MONUSCO the opportunity to develop the first-ever comprehensive civilian and military approach to neutralise an armed group, the Force de résistance patriotique d'Ituri (Patriotic Resistance Front of Ituri) (FRPI). The I4S has supported local government and civil society actors in engaging with community and political stakeholders from local to national levels. At the time of writing, a national action plan has been validated by the Congolese Government, a peace agreement has been drafted and presented to all parties, DDR phases agreed upon, and funds mobilised to a Reintegration phase through the I4S Trust Fund. This is an example of how a specific I4S approach in one area can help to focus other MONUSCO actions, add political engagement, and provide a mechanism for engaging with an armed group.

Areas of relative stability have been created that are nevertheless vulnerable to spillover from other less stable parts of the country. In the absence of an overarching peace agreement and uneven collaboration from the National Government – a collaboration that is sometimes in fact stronger at the provincial level than at the national one – the resulting “patchwork quilt” of varying levels of stability remains fragile and subject to ongoing political problems, especially around the time of the elections.

The challenge is that the strategy requires close cooperation with local authorities, which has proven difficult in the political climate leading up to the elections. This is in spite of the Prime Minister’s role as chairperson at a meeting on the I4S process with key ministers only days before the election.

4.2.3. Security: Effective Reduction of the Threat of Armed Groups?

The Mission has developed tailored strategies for these priority armed groups involving engagement with government authorities, community leaders, and other influential actors; DDR, resettlement and reintegration activities, and support for national DDR initiatives complemented by CVR projects; unilateral force operations; support for military operations by FARDC and, where necessary, joint operations with FARDC under specific conditions and in strict compliance with the UNHRDDP; and information collection. The overarching objective of these strategies is to minimise the impact of the activities of the armed group on the civilian population and to reduce them to a level that can be managed by the Congolese security forces.

Source: S/2017/826 (29 September 2017), "Special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," para. 61.

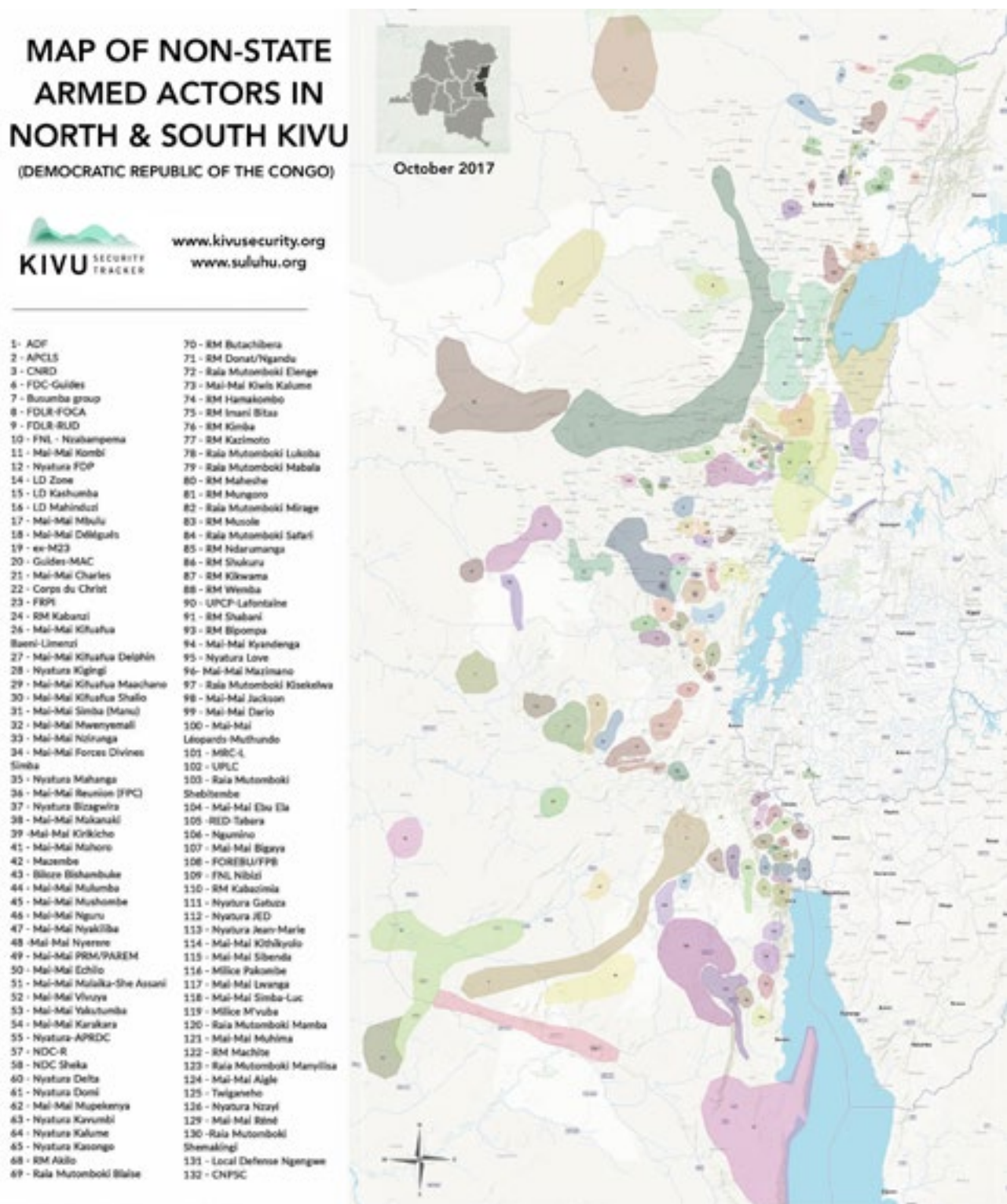
The formation of Congolese rebel groups has been driven by a number of factors, including the need for local protection, the absence of state-provided security, and economic opportunism. A great number of Congolese rebel groups were also helped at one point by an outside patron: Angola, Congo-Brazzaville, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and/or Zimbabwe. By 2018, many armed groups also had prominent national-level elite backers. Since the end of the Congo Wars, the number of active armed groups in the DRC has never been under 30. Indeed, far from experiencing a single crisis,¹³⁵ the multiple and intertwined conflicts in the DRC have involved a bewildering array of armed group names and acronyms: Congolese Resistance Patriots (PARECO), Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU), Madina at Tauheed Wau Mujahedeen (MTM), FRPI, Bundu dia Kongo (BDK), Federal Republican Forces (FRF), Mai Mai Kifuafula, Mai Mai Virunga, to name but a few, as well the more well-known (and notorious) CNDP, M23, FDLR, and LRA.

To further complicate matters, some of the armed groups have disintegrated into factions, while others integrated into the FARDC only to reappear with another name when a new round of DDR was on offer.¹³⁶ By mid-2018, some researchers counted more than 120 armed groups still present in the Eastern DRC (see map 2), even if a number of them have been inactive for a long time.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Alberto Barrera, "The Congo Trap," op. cit., p. 22.

¹³⁶ Alan Doss, forthcoming book. See also Mehdi Belaid, "Les mobilisations armées à l'est de la République démocratique du Congo: dynamiques sociales d'une pratique ordinaire," *Critique internationale*, 2019/1, no. 82, pp. 31-49.

¹³⁷ Jason Stearns, "The Art of the Possible: MONUSCO's New Mandate," op. cit., p. 3. Interview, MONUSCO staff officer, and patrol with MONUSCO in Southern Sector, Bukavu, August 2018.



Map 2. Map of Armed Groups in the Eastern Congo

The dynamics of the rebel groups have changed over the years, and the larger conventional groups like the M23 and FDLR have either been defeated or significantly reduced in numbers and capacity. The FARDC, with the support of MONUC and MONUSCO, took full part in this achievement. Other active groups, such as the FDLR and the Mai Mai Cheka, are generally very few in numbers, and typically hide out in the national parks and then conduct attacks from there to get supplies. These groups are more banditry in nature and are localised in their operations. Many of these groups coexist and even cooperate with the national armed forces, which makes MONUSCO's task more difficult, and "shows a difficulty of the Mission to be able to operate with local actors."¹³⁸ MONUSCO staff thus stated, "As a result of a number of commissioned conflict analysis, we can argue many groups are answering to State authorities, and sometimes to the highest level."¹³⁹ This is all the more difficult as the FARDC is not a coherent institution.¹⁴⁰

Success achieved by MONUSCO in reducing the military strength and capabilities of some armed groups have involved using a combination of military pressure and soft tools, such as political dialogue, DDR, repatriation, resettlement and repatriation to home countries.

In general, the instances of success achieved by MONUSCO (along with the FARDC) in reducing the military strength and capabilities of some armed groups have involved using a combination of military pressure and soft tools, such as political dialogue, disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement (DDR(RR)). However, attempts to neutralise the armed groups, especially the ADF and FDLR, have been frustrated by the political context and the interests of external powers, as well as the forces' inability to move beyond the phase of clearing an operational theatre and implementing effective hold and build elements. The consequence is that locally the citizens have to some extent experienced a cycle of violence in which they see the FARDC and rebel elements come and then leave again. The Ugandan rebel group, the ADF-NALU, is currently the most active in the Eastern DRC,¹⁴¹ and has inflicted serious damage on the local population around Beni (est. 1,000 civilians killed since 2014). The ADF, under different names, was mostly dormant during the 1990s, but has become increasingly active since it came under military pressure from the FARDC and MONUSCO from 2013. To complicate matters further, some other

138 Interview, former MONUSCO official, New York, September 2018.

139 Interview, MONUSCO staff, Goma, August 2018.

140 Some of the reasons for this are the lack of operational planning capability in FARDC, the lack of basic military equipment, logistics and facilities, and the lack of proper training. Interview, senior FARDC officer North of Bukavu, August 2018.

141 The ADF is to some extent dominated by a radical Islamic ideology, but little is known about the group.

armed actors seem to use the ADF name to cover for their often criminal activity around Beni, including individual FARDC members.¹⁴²

Armed groups remain in the DRC because they are useful for the host government and some of its neighbours. Indeed, regional politics and violence are heavily tied together in the east, with armed groups, supported by Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, crossing borders quite easily, causing tensions to run high between the DRC and Rwanda at times. Illustrations of this are the partly failed SSR and DDR(RR) programmes (see section 4.3.2), where inaction and the failure of the Congolese authorities especially to deliver on their responsibility in the implementation of these programmes have resulted in desertions and disarmed members rejoining the armed groups. As pointed out by Stearns and Vogel, the policy to integrate higher-ranking members of armed groups into the FARDC has left armed group combatants seeking other commanders, and in some cases creating an incentive to continue fighting.¹⁴³

However, does the situation in the DRC still constitute a threat to international peace and security? Do the activities of all these armed groups constitute a threat of such a nature? This is a question that more and more diplomats ask in the corridors of the Security Council. The 2017 strategic review considered that “The sustainable reduction of the threat

While the remaining armed groups present in Eastern DRC do pose a threat to the local population, they may no longer constitute an international or regional threat.

posed by foreign armed groups along the borders with Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and South Sudan would significantly reduce the perception of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a threat to international peace and security.”¹⁴⁴ While the remaining armed groups present in Eastern DRC do pose a threat to the local population, they may no longer constitute an international or regional threat. Therefore, some representatives of Member States consider that “The mission should reduce its presence in the East to a bare minimum.” Others argue that this level of instability can be considered manageable by the

Congolese State and that it is time for the MONUSCO to withdraw.¹⁴⁵ Several interlocutors said that they find it difficult to justify a continued international military presence in the DRC, not so much due to the lack of threats in the operational theatre, but because Congolese elite groups do not want a peaceful solution.¹⁴⁶ The lack of an overall political

142 Interview, MONUSCO staff, Goma, August 2018.

143 Jason K. Stearns and Christoph Vogel, *Understanding Armed Group Proliferation in the Eastern Congo* (London/Nairobi: Rift Valley Institute, December 2015) p. 7.

144 S/2017/826 (29 September 2017), “Special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” para. 104.

145 Interview, P5 member official, New York, June 2018.

146 Interview, MONUSCO staff, Goma, August 2018.

framework to which the parties are committed¹⁴⁷ and the lack of a clear Security Council mandate to pursue negotiated tracks with armed groups has left the Mission overly reliant on militarised approaches.

The Mission is faced with a conundrum in that the seemingly localised armed groups are often closely connected to outside economic and political interests, both nationally and regionally. The problem of chronic instability in the DRC is closely tied to the weakness of the State, and the political dynamics in Kinshasa, as well as regionally. The military component can continue to try to disarm the armed groups in the east forcibly, but this stated goal will continue to be a futile exercise if the larger political issues are not addressed. Protection and disarmament tasks should not be a substitute for local, national and regional processes. The overall lack of a political framework or clear Security Council mandate to pursue negotiated tracks with armed groups has left the Mission overly reliant on these militarised approaches, and isolated from the political leadership of the groups. Nevertheless, the larger conventional groups, like the M23 and FDLR, have either been defeated or significantly reduced in numbers and capacity, which can be put to the credit of FARDC and MONUC-MONUSCO.

4.3. National and Local Ownership

National and local ownership is about three elements: the degree to which the government and other national and regional institutions take ownership and deal with their issues themselves; the degree to which the UN Mission is working well or not with this government and regional and local institutions to promote sustainable solutions; and the way the country in crisis owns the process decided by the Security Council, and the way it integrates in its own processes and policies the measures requested by the Council. As the 2008 Capstone Doctrine pointed out, “Every effort should be made to promote national and local ownership and to foster trust and cooperation between national actors. Effective approaches to national and local ownership not only reinforce the perceived legitimacy of the operation and support mandate implementation, they also help to ensure the sustainability of any national capacity once the peacekeeping operation has been withdrawn.”¹⁴⁸

147 The PSCF has struggled to maintain the high-level buy-in of the Congolese Government and firm commitments from the regional signatory states to tackle the key political challenges of the region.

148 United Nations Peacekeeping Operations – Principles and Guidelines (Capstone Doctrine), p. 39: https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/capstone_eng_0.pdf.

4.3.1. An Increasingly Difficult Relationship with the Host Nation

In the case of the DRC, the Kabila Government has pursued its own interests. Once the period of transition (2002–2006) ended, it became increasingly reluctant to accept any international interference and UN support. In a way, the Congolese Government wanted to own this process, but by pursuing a different agenda to the UN. Under such circumstances where the UN and government interests overlap, there has been good cooperation (such as in the organisation of the 2006 elections, FARDC joint operations, and I4S). However, where these interests and agendas do not overlap, the Congolese have chosen their own path (for example, in the 2011 and 2018 elections, relations with Rwanda and some major armed groups, and political dialogue with the opposition in 2015–2016). At times, depending on the issue, dialogue can be easier to conduct at the provincial and local levels than at the national one, as the management of I4S has demonstrated.

Better engagement with the population, and a closer working relationship between UN troop contributors and the FARDC would be key components of a more effective partnership.

As stated in the 2008 Capstone Doctrine, “The ownership of change must be built, first, through dialogue.”¹⁴⁹ On that issue, during the focus groups EPON organised with actors of the civil society, there was a sense that the Mission has failed in truly explaining to the everyday civilian its purpose, capacities and its many constraints. Some interlocutors pointed out that “MONUSCO gives sometimes the impression to the government and the population that it acts in autonomy.”¹⁵⁰ Some understand the reasons behind the deterioration of relations but

still expressed the “need for a stronger partnership therefore between the Mission and the government,”¹⁵¹ and considered that “a true cooperation between the government and the UN Mission must exist.”¹⁵² One African diplomat also acknowledged that MONUSCO has “the most difficult role to play: everything that works out is beneficial to the partner; everything that does not work is the fault of the UN Mission.”¹⁵³

Relations between MONUC-MONUSCO and the Congolese Government have been largely defined by the alignment of interests between the ruling party and the Mission, and the political realities of the particular moment. As one civil society representative acknowledged, “When the government started to gain confidence, it started to ignore the

149 Capstone Doctrine, p. 40.

150 Interview, UN official, Kinshasa, July 2018.

151 Ibid.

152 EPON focus groups, representatives of civil society, Kinshasa and Goma, July and August 2018.

153 Interview, representative of an African country, Kinshasa, July 2018.

UN's efforts to help it stabilize the country.”¹⁵⁴ Another said, “For some time now, the Government does not want MONUSCO anymore, and that is the main weakness of the UN Mission.”¹⁵⁵ The operations against the M23 were largely successful and well-coordinated due to their common cause. However, once a divergence emerges, as seen in the way MONUSCO was blocked in its early attempts to investigate the violence in the Kasais,¹⁵⁶ relations quickly deteriorate. Ideally, the Congolese authorities would prefer a Mission, “mainly in the form of a military force they could use when they deem necessary,” but not one that monitors their misbehaviour and can hold them accountable.¹⁵⁷

The imposition of the conditionality policy and the January 2015 suspension of joint operations due to the human rights record of appointed FARDC commanders has been a regular point of contention between the Mission's leadership and government authorities. At the working level, trust between the two military forces is quite poor, and the profound asymmetries and different working methods of the FARDC and UN forces are among the primary reasons for their limited impact.¹⁵⁸ While higher-level considerations and political calculations are the main explanations for the relationship problems between the host government and MONUSCO, better engagement with the population, and a closer working relationship between UN troop contributors and the FARDC would be key components of a more effective partnership which may have the capacity to foster national ownership. According to one interlocutor, “The Government has no appetite for the kind of assistance the UN is providing.”¹⁵⁹ The relationship with the host State is also difficult because, in many parts of the country, the State itself often has been the primary source of threats to civilians, and because the State has proven reluctant to engage in the reform of its security sector.

4.3.2 An Uneasy Relationship: Examples of DDR and SSR Programmes in the DRC

The way in which the DDR and the SSR programmes were managed and respected by the Congolese Government are examples of the lack of agreement with the UN Mission on how to foster sustainable solutions for ending the conflict. DDR and SSR are often considered different issues and UN processes. They are, however, very much related in the context of the DRC because SSR largely started with DDR and integration in the country.

154 EPON focus groups, representatives of civil society, Kinshasa and Goma, July and August 2018.

155 Ibid.

156 MONUSCO Press Release, “MONUSCO expresses serious concern over recent developments in Kananga,” Kinshasa, 18 May 2017.

157 Interview, UN staff, Kinshasa, July 2018.

158 Judith Verweijen, “Strange Battlefield Fellows: The Diagonal Interoperability Between Blue Helmets and the Congolese Army,” *International Peacekeeping*, 2017, 24(3), pp. 363-387.

159 Interview, NGO researcher, New York, December 2018.

DDR in the DRC

The DDR programmes in the DRC were initiated after the signing of the first Lusaka agreement in 1999 and later “The Global and All-inclusive” Peace Agreement signed in Pretoria on 17 December 2002. Two national DDR programmes (2004–2007 and 2008–2012) failed to live up to these expectations. The first was conducted by the National Commission for Demobilisation and Reinsertion (CONADER) and supported by the World Bank. However, due to massive corruption, weak capacity and inefficiency, CONADER was forced to shut down a year before its four-year mandate was over.¹⁶⁰

The 2008 Goma peace conference prompted a second World Bank-funded attempt with a new Congolese institution to work with, the DDR National Project Implementation Unit (UEPN-DDR). Nevertheless, after the 2009 CNDP deals, and efforts towards army in-

tegration, government commitment waned, and MONUSCO was left to take the lead through informal integration. The World Bank reintegration funds also soon ran out, and attempts to deal with ex-combatants were largely ad hoc and limited in their scope.

However, MONUSCO’s stabilisation unit reported that, between 2008 and 2012, nearly 5,000 ex-combatants were demobilised, with 2,600 receiving support from the programmes it coordinates.¹⁶¹ Additionally, as summarised in

the 2017 strategic review, more than 32,000 foreign ex-combatants and their dependents, mainly ex-FDLR, have been repatriated to Rwanda since 2002.

In 2015 and 2016, the Mission supported and facilitated the third national DDR programme, which achieved the demobilisation of 5,583 ex-combatants from Congolese armed groups.¹⁶² Recently, after lengthy delays and longstanding negotiations with Rwandan and Ugandan representatives, the Office of the Special Envoy (O-SESG) for the Great Lakes Region and MONUSCO have made some progress with FDLR and M23 repatriation.

The exiting and repatriation of former combatants has been ineffectively managed, constituting a major challenge for the peace process in the DRC. Among the resultant problems

The exiting and repatriation of former combatants has been ineffectively managed, constituting a major challenge for the peace process in the DRC.

160 World Bank, “Redacted Report: Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration project, Democratic Republic of Congo”: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDOII/Resources/INT_redactedreport_Congo2.pdf; Andre Kolln, “DDR in the Democratic Republic of Congo: An Overview,” Peace Direct, November 2011; US Department of State, “Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Languishing in the DRC,” WikiLeaks Cable, 8 February 2007.

161 UN Stabilization Unit in the DR Congo, “International Security and Stabilization Strategy: 2013–2017,” p. 14.

162 S/2017/826 (29 September 2017), op. cit., para. 43.

are that individuals are stuck in reintegration centres and transit camps under bad conditions and for a long time. This tempts former combatants to rejoin rebel groups, which can thus create a vicious cycle.¹⁶³

SSR in the DRC

SSR was initiated, with the support of MONUSCO and a range of international partners, to secure the creation of a civilian-controlled professional PNC and FARDC. However, one of the fundamental problems for the Mission has been that the Congolese have generally failed to take ownership of the SSR process. In some instances, the State has directly attempted to undermine the reforms of the security services. Between 2008 and 2014, the UN Mission was given a coordinating role in SSR, but there has never been any buy-in from the Congolese authorities and by all its bilateral partners.

The Mission had to rely on funding from external donors, each of which is influenced by its own agenda and political constraints, which has prevented the UN Mission from adequately planning for more long-term projects and reform initiatives. International partners have for long periods been unable or unwilling to coordinate their efforts effectively, and have opted for bilateral agreements with their Congolese counterpart. To illustrate the Congolese' reluctance, in the initial military training undertaken by MONUSCO of FARDC units, the Government often failed to deliver its agreed support for the troops in training. As a result, the FARDC troops sometimes lacked food and income, and often had to secure their own transport to the training camps.

The reform of the PNC has featured a wide variety of programmes and plans, but few of these have been implemented.¹⁶⁴ The DRC still lacks basic requirements for an effective national security system, including centralised and updated rosters of servicing personnel, effective payment structures, and a functioning police academy. The lack of progress in reform is also due to the fact that the PNC reform initiatives have been met with significant resistance from the local actors, as well as the limited size of the UNPOL and EUPOL missions, despite their numerous training programmes (human rights, crowd control) and their strategic support (legal frameworks). The frequent staff turnover among the involved international staff and the lack of effective access to and understanding of the local dynamics has hampered the Mission's effectiveness.¹⁶⁵

Currently, as a member of the police component pointed out, 80% of DRC's 148,000 officers lack basic training, and the Congolese State does not allocate resources to the

163 For more details, see Aaron Pangburn and Tatiana Carayannis' blog "DDR and Return in the DRC – A Foolish Investment or Necessary Risk?" March 2018, LSE Centre for Africa: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2018/03/26/ddr-and-return-in-the-drc-a-foolish-investment-or-necessary-risk>

164 Thomas Mandrup, "Reforming the bras tendus?" loc.cit.

165 Ibid.

Many interlocutors consider SSR the biggest failure of the “international community” in the Congo.

training of its police officers.¹⁶⁶ According to him, the Government has never been willing to take on the cost of police reform, and improvements are still needed for the basic living conditions of Congolese police officers, their equipment, and the way they communicate with and relate to the population. However, he also acknowledged, “MONUSCO itself lacks well-trained officers capable of training their Congolese counterparts.”¹⁶⁷ In other instances, MONUSCO has nevertheless been able to progress on some smaller projects. In Ituri, for example, the Mission has helped improve Congolese prison infrastructure through a dedicated budget for prisons in the Congolese State budget.¹⁶⁸

The reform of the FARDC has also come against a number of challenges. Even though a biometric-based payment system has been introduced (in particular, through the EUSEC (RDCongo) from 2006 to 2015), the lack of regular and sufficient salary payments (especially for the rank-and-file officers) is still a major issue. Between 2005 and 2015, EUSEC, France, Belgium, the UK, the US, South Africa and others were funding SSR programmes without systematic coordination. Different battalions were thus trained using different concepts and equipment, preventing interoperability within the FARDC. As a result, MONUSCO has been mandated to support a “national army” that operates autonomously in many corners of the country,¹⁶⁹ and at times the Mission has had to perform some of the security responsibilities of the Government. This remains true today despite two recent changes initiated by the Congolese Government: the creation in 2016 of the Centre des hautes études de sécurité et de défense (College of Advanced Strategy and Defence Studies) (CHESD), which was framed as a regional strategic centre of excellence,¹⁷⁰ and in 2017 the Ecole supérieure d’administration militaire (Higher School of Military Administration) (ESAM), as a way to train the military elite and civilian elite on regional and national security issues.

Many interlocutors consider SSR the biggest failure of the “international community” in the Congo.¹⁷¹ Despite the clear lack of interest from the Congolese authorities in reforming their security institutions and building a proper army, the Security Council has kept

166 Interview, UNPOL officer, Kinshasa, July 2018.

167 Ibid.

168 Interview, UNPOL officer, Bunia, July 2018.

169 Even if, as one interlocutor underlined, “It is also quite incredible that this dysfunctional army is engaged in such a complex way in many areas and has quite a high number of casualties (sources talk about 1,000 deaths per year) and still ‘functions’ – parts are thugs, parts are actually quite serious and brave people working in impossible conditions, even if largely dependent on MONUSCO for food supplies, medical evacuation, etc.” Interview, NGO researcher, New York, December 2018.

170 Cérémonies de clôture de l’année et de remise des diplômes et brevets: <http://www.ceeac-eccas.org/index.php/fr/actualite/676-ceremonies-de-cloture-de-l-annee-et-de-remise-des-diplomes-et-brevets-college-des-hautes-etudes-de-strategie-et-de-defense-chesd>. See also the website of the college: <https://chesd-rdc.org>.

171 Interview, NGO representative, Kinshasa, July 2018.

the item of SSR in the mandate of MONUSCO, and as a result, the Mission continued to have an SSR unit. As pointed out by one interlocutor, “They were not interested in reform, but in the training and equipment they got. Some of the trained units actually performed quite well, but as long as the state partner that conducted the training kept being involved.”¹⁷² One of the challenges for the SSR programme has been the arms embargo, whereby the international community trained the security forces, but refused to allow them access to the equipment and other means needed to undertake effective operations.¹⁷³

Both the PNC and FARDC are the result of political compromises made during the peace processes. This, in turn, resulted in personnel appointments that many individuals did not necessarily have the qualifications to fulfil. Reform efforts were doomed from the start by the lack of commitment on the part of the Kabila Government (which preferred to rely on a presidential guard for protection and rotated FARDC leadership based on strategic preferences and access to rents). These dynamics have rendered the country’s security structures “highly vulnerable to partisan abuse and have further reinforced a culture of using force to resolve political challenges.”¹⁷⁴ The operational capacity of the national security institutions is extremely limited, and there is little local trust in the ability of the PNC and FARDC to undertake sole responsibility for security provision. Both the FARDC and PNC are institutions plagued by corruption, lack of training, and insufficient salaries. In many instances, officers operate like the armed group members, financing their activities by taxing the local population. Overall, the lack of a national SSR strategy has remained a great impediment to a successful I4S programme. As a result, the 2017 strategic review recommended the Mission’s activities in the area of SSR “to be reoriented towards providing analytical support to the MONUSCO senior leadership.”

Where the UN and Government interests overlap, there has been good cooperation, but where these interests and agenda do not overlap, the Congolese have chosen their own path. This has been particularly true in the area of SSR. The security forces in the DRC were not designed and put in place to protect the Constitution and the citizens of the DRC. Instead, they serve to secure the interests of a narrow elite against those of the broader population. The result is that, for long periods, the central authorities in the DRC have resisted attempts to reform the security institutions since doing so would undermine the control of the elites in power. The resistance to reform has been one of the greater constraints on MONUSCO in terms of the supporting role it was supposed to provide and the exit strategy it needed to envisage.

172 Interview, NGO researcher, New York, December 2018.

173 Thomas Mandrup, “Reforming the bras tendus?” loc.cit.

174 Africa Center for Strategic Studies, “Security Sector Institutions and the DRC’s Political Crisis,” 20 December 2016: <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/drc-congo-security-sector-institutions-helping-impeding-political-reform>.

4.4. Regional and International Support

As stated in the Brahimi report, part of the effectiveness of a peacekeeping operation comes from the support it receives from the regional stakeholders, the Security Council, and the host state. As the 2016 Mission Concept underlined, “The region is part of the problem and will need to be part of any solution. The constructive engagement of regional actors is therefore critical for stability in the DRC.” With respect to the regional stakeholders, MONUSCO’s mandate calls on all states within the region to support the creation of a peaceful environment “by respecting the principles of non-interference, good-neighborliness and regional cooperation” (Resolution 2409). Many interlocutors in this research pointed to two other weaknesses of MONUC-MONUSCO when referring

to regional and international support: the absence of a champion of this UN Mission in the Council, and numerous regional interferences in the implementation of successive mandates.

The continued support provided by other states in the region to illegal armed groups in the DRC has often undermined the implementation of the Mission’s mandate.

Although the Mission and the UN Secretariat have involved regional bodies, such as the AU, SADC and ICGLR, in the dialogue processes, and even though there was a moment of greater alignment between the UN and regional players when the FIB/PSCF was created, the continued support provided by other states in the region to illegal armed groups in the DRC has often undermined the implementation of the Mission’s

mandate. While regional interference has become less overt over the last few years, the shifting positions of regional actors have often played a key role in security dynamics in the Eastern Congo over time. This recurring problem is exacerbated by the weakness of the Congolese State. Today, the ruling elites’ primary interest seems to be stability at the country’s borders, as well as avoiding a surge in incoming refugees. Rwanda, in particular, wishes to avoid being viewed as a spoiler, and Angola has been one of the strongest voices for stability.

At the international level, there is little strategic interest for the DRC among P5 members. One European diplomat even qualified MONUSCO as an “orphan mission” as it has no real supporter within the Council.¹⁷⁵ None of those countries have been willing to put their national or strategic weight into solving the instability in the country. The US, in particular, has used the sentiment of “MONUSCO fatigue” to successfully request budget cuts in 2017-2018 without having a clear strategy in place. As one interlocutor put

¹⁷⁵ Interview, European embassy, Kinshasa, July 2018.

it: “Nobody wants to pay for it anymore.”¹⁷⁶ One P3¹⁷⁷ representative acknowledged that there is a “political benefit to bash the UN operation over the head: it is an easy scapegoat on all sides.”¹⁷⁸ At times, it can even be difficult to mobilise the A3 (the African members of the Council) on the DRC. Moreover, there is a potentially growing division among the Council on the DRC, as China and Russia have increasing vested interests in the country and resist any interference with the electoral process; not to mention the somehow divergent views and approaches within the P3.¹⁷⁹ As a result, “The traffic light is more or less always on orange,” according to one researcher, “The Security Council is worried about the situation and will cling to every good news story coming out of the country, but is unwilling to do much more or become more political about what is going on.”¹⁸⁰

If the Council is divided on MONUSCO or lacks interest, the Mission is largely left to its own devices in working with the Government. Due to the silos between the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the DPKO, at least before the UN reforms implemented on 1 January 2019,¹⁸¹ some interlocutors in the Mission have considered that there is a struggle to address regional problems (such as the sharp deterioration in the relations between Uganda and the DRC over the ADF and Lake Edward, the dire relations between Uganda and Rwanda, and the continued tensions between Rwanda and Burundi¹⁸²) at UN headquarters. This is true despite the efforts of the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes who was tasked with finding regional solutions to insecurity in the Eastern Congo.

There are different views within the UN about the effectiveness of the current regional approaches, and some analysts have called for deeper, more systematic engagement with the wide range of actors who control and influence armed groups from their perches outside the Congo. As the political crisis in the Congo deepens, many UN analysts have pointed to a resurgence in foreign interference in the country (such as new regional security threats like the ADF

If the Council is divided on MONUSCO or lacks interest, the Mission is largely left to its own devices in working with the Government.

176 Interview, P5 official, Kinshasa, July 2018.

177 France, the UK, and the US.

178 Interview, P5 official, New York, June 2018.

179 In this context, the importance of the economic drivers of the Congolese conflict is present where multinational companies and states have clear interests.

180 Hugo de Vries, “Going around in circles,” *op. cit.*, p. 32.

181 Effective at the beginning of 2019, the African divisions of the DPA and DPKO were merged in a reform effort to bring the substantive units closer together. The Central Africa division of the UN Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA/DPO) should help break down these silos, although in the first few months there have been growing pains over the delineation of specific responsibilities.

182 Gérard Prunier, “Cocktail meurtrier en Afrique centrale,” *Le Monde diplomatique*, February 2016.

or the complex security problem with Burundi), that impact on the security situation and how the UN engages with armed groups at both regional and domestic levels.¹⁸³

The continued support provided by other states in the region to illegal armed groups in the DRC has often undermined the implementation of the Mission mandate. None of the P5 countries within the Security Council have been willing to put their national or strategic weight into solving the instability in the country. The PSCF and the UN Great Lakes Special Envoy created a channel to manage regional influence, but with limited positive effect. As a result, the UN Mission is largely left to its own devices to work with the Government.

4.5. Coherence and Partnerships

MONUSCO is one of the largest and longest-serving UN peacekeeping missions, meaning that it has had to adapt repeatedly to changing conditions on the ground as well as shifting demands and expectations from the UN Secretariat. Changes in the mandate and scope of the Mission over time has posed challenges for both coherence, in the sense of coordinated responses among its many different components, and for partnerships, here referring to collaborative ties to actors outside the Mission, from donor countries, humanitarian organisations, and local NGOs.

Specific sections of MONUSCO have built lasting relationships with UN funds, programmes, specialised agencies, and other components of the UN system present in the DRC. At the Sexual Violence Unit, for instance, the Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) working group on conflict-related sexual violence holds monthly meetings with other sections, including Gender, as well as other UN partners, such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), for data sharing and joint analysis of trends, and the identification of hotspots.

This coordination “trickles up” in communications with the UN Secretariat. In reports for the Secretary-General, for instance, both the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Sexual Violence data are reported on. Where such coordination is missing, however, MONUSCO has had trouble in better targeting local initiatives and carrying out risk assessments. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the gaps in coherence make it harder for the Mission to link its work to the national priorities – and, as a result, MONUSCO tends to focus too narrowly on what some staff refer to as “fire brigade work” at the expense of longer-term prevention. For example, the extensive benchmarking exercise (supported by the Mission and O-SESG) that was set up and which worked with the Government’s

¹⁸³ Interviews in Kinshasa and Goma, July 2017.

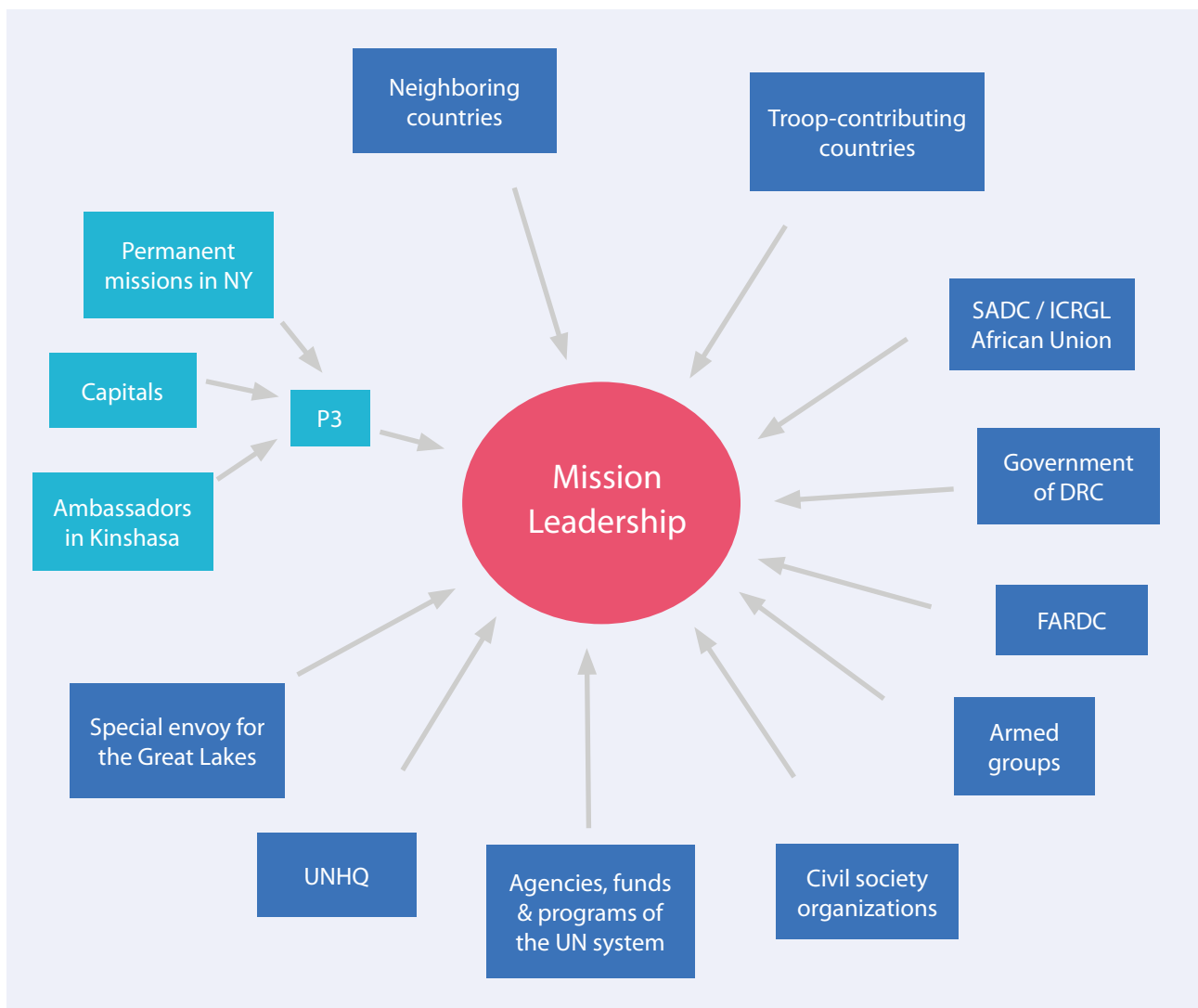


Figure 14. External Interactions of MONUSCO

Source: Created by Alexandra Novosseloff

National Oversight Mechanism to establish, monitor and implement the national priorities included in the PSCF has gone nowhere.¹⁸⁴

On partnerships, the Mission also has a mixed record with both donors and local community actors. Certain sections, such as the SSU, have collaborated with a wide range of partners under a wider planning umbrella (the UN Peacebuilding Fund, the EU, the UK, the Netherlands, Norway, the US, Sweden, and Germany), and it has engaged in the Donor Stabilization Forum working with the US Agency for International Development (USAID), Belgium, and the World Bank.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, this set-up helps the Mission better

¹⁸⁴ Interview, MONUSCO and O-SESG staff, December 2018.

¹⁸⁵ MONUSCO, "Capacity-building of the Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan (STAREC) in Eastern DRC," 2012: <https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/capacity-building-stabilization-and-reconstruction-plan-starec-eastern-drc>.

engage, use the sources of other partners, and “act like a donor, coordinating and engaging between different stakeholders and make it possible to outsource activities to those who are best at doing it.”¹⁸⁶

The Stabilization Trust Fund allows accepted and strong civil society partners to engage with communities. These are partners with specialised knowledge who can actually work in war zones when MONUSCO staff are restricted to travel to the field because of the UN’s security rules. Sub-contracting some of the work to NGOs can bolster Mission efforts and bring in the required expertise. For example, a local NGO would be more effective in agricultural development than MONUSCO staff trying to conceptualise a CVR project for agricultural activities.¹⁸⁷

Although the Mission’s engagement with youths has been less systematic when compared to its work on gender, it has carried out peacebuilding and sensitisation workshops and other training activities for youths.¹⁸⁸ The MONUSCO Political Affairs section, for instance, has held awareness sessions, drawing member organisations of the Provincial Youth Council in Kasai.¹⁸⁹ In Goma and elsewhere in Eastern Congo, local youth groups, such as the Congo Peace Network, count MONUSCO among the partners that they draw on in order to expand their reach and engage in the peacebuilding process.¹⁹⁰

Across all of these variations in coherence and partnerships, the Mission has faced the challenge of continuity, not only due to shifts in the mandate, but also because of leadership styles and changing priorities. A number of interlocutors considered that MONUSCO should have stronger partnerships with local society, and that it could use political engagement and be a coordinator, but other partners should be responsible to implement this. 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 the early FIB phase), and least successful when this political alignment was weak. Mobilising these kinds of political alliances is key to the Mission’s success. However, since political alliances are hard to maintain, effectiveness is likely to ebb and flow.

186 Interview, former MONUSCO staff, New York, December 2018.

187 Ibid.

188 See, for instance, MONUSCO, “Over 250 Youth Leaders Sensitized on MONUSCO’s New Mandate,” 2012: <https://monusco.unmissions.org/node/100042405>.

189 MONUSCO, “MONUSCO urges the youth of Kananga to engage in constructive dialogue,” 2018: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/monusco-urges-youth-of-kananga-to-engage-constructive-dialogue>.

190 Congo Peace Network: <http://cpn.congopeacenetwork.org>.

4.6. Legitimacy, Impartiality and Credibility

MONUSCO's legitimacy, impartiality, and credibility have oscillated significantly over time, and the perception of these characteristics has also varied across the Congolese territory. The Mission's role in reunifying the territorial integrity of the DRC generated a wave of goodwill that is still remembered, especially when respondents refer to specific mechanisms that span the entire DRC territory, such as Radio Okapi, which began broadcasting in 2001 with the support of the UN Mission.¹⁹¹

The radio station and online website has national scope and is widely viewed as a reliable non-partisan news source, giving voice to a wide spectrum of Congolese. Interlocutors affirmed that, due to these roles, Okapi has become an essential pillar of the Mission's legitimacy in the eyes of the local population. As one NGO representative put it, "Radio Okapi has allowed Congolese to talk to each other above the various frontlines; it has been the biggest success of the UN Mission that contributed decisively to the country's reunification and to the development of a democratic space."¹⁹² MONUSCO's impact on Congolese media and, in particular, its role in broadening access to independent information was seen by many interviewers as a positive influence of the Mission, especially because MONUSCO trained journalists, increased the investigatory capacity of many Congolese, and helped democratise the media environment through this instrument.

The Mission's role in reunifying the territorial integrity of the DRC generated a wave of goodwill that is still remembered.

After the creation of the FIB and particularly in the aftermath of its offensive against the M23, MONUSCO enjoyed a moment of credibility that impacted on the entire Mission, even though this success was also due to other factors, as explained in section 2.2.4. But, by the same token, the Mission also lost a measure of its impartiality and thus to some extent its legitimacy.¹⁹³ Other researchers have argued that more assertive way(s) of being impartial can "co-exist alongside 'passive' ones, and that 'unbiased implementation of

191 Radio Okapi: <https://www.radiookapi.net>. The radio station was established as a partnership with Fondation Hirondelle (a Swiss NGO) and, after initial debates over whether this was going to serve exclusively as the communications department of MONUC, it became an independent, national radio station.

192 Interview, NGO representative, Kinshasa, July 2018.

193 See Scott Sheeran and Stephanie Case, "The Intervention Brigade: Legal Issues for the UN in the Democratic Republic of the Congo" IPI report, November 2014; Patrick Cammaert and Fiona Blyth, "The UN Intervention Brigade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," IPI issue brief, July 2013; and Adam Day, "The Best Defense Is No Offense: Why Cuts to UN Troops in Congo Could Be a Good Thing," Small Arms Journal: <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-best-defense-is-no-offense-why-cuts-to-un-troops-in-congo-could-be-a-good-thing>.

mandate' can equate impartiality."¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the perception that the effectiveness of the FIB has generally declined after 2013-14 is applied to the Mission as a whole. Several interlocutors referred to non-action by some of the contingents as reflecting the Mission's lack of effectiveness, and hence, of its loss of credibility, even as they acknowledged that other troop- and police-contributing countries (T/PCCs) have been willing to go on more extensive patrolling and other operations.

Another example frequently mentioned is the attacks on villages and IDP camps, which sometimes occur near or next to MONUSCO bases. The vulnerability of some of these communities, especially when they are geographically close to the Mission's installations, is one of the most potent justifications given by respondents as to why they find MONUSCO to be lacking in credibility. As a result, the UN Mission is seen as a passive observer rather than an actor. A civil society representative complained that the Mission "does not intervene and then often counts the deaths afterwards. It comes to observe afterwards what has happened. It only comes to see the damage, not to prevent it."¹⁹⁵ Another interlocutor hence concluded: "The population views MONUSCO as an organisation that observes but that otherwise does nothing."¹⁹⁶

In an environment of dwindling resources, you have to constantly reassess.

Members of the diplomatic community in Kinshasa understand that much of the UN's efforts take place behind the scenes and are discrete in nature, but they also express frustration at certain results that are often beyond MONUSCO's control. However, for many respondents, MONUSCO's presence is still nec-

essary. They expressed the belief that large swaths of the population in Eastern Congo, fearing relapse into large-scale violence, want the Mission to stay. For these populations – the country's most vulnerable communities – MONUSCO is viewed as an imperfect, but essential actor in PoC. This underlines the importance of the Mission having a better strategic communications strategy in place to mitigate some of the negative perceptions.

Another factor contributing to the Mission's loss of legitimacy, impartiality and credibility is the combination of the need to prioritise with the adequate management of expectations of what MONUSCO can actually achieve. The Mission is not (and cannot be) present everywhere in the DRC, and as a result, priorities are shaped through a combination of decisions taken at several levels, from the UN Secretariat in New York to Mission leadership to section heads and field offices. In the words of one interlocutor, "In an environment of dwindling resources, you have to constantly reassess."¹⁹⁷ However, there is

194 Marion Laurence, "An 'Impartial' Force? Normative Ambiguity and Practice Change in UN Peace Operations," *International Peacekeeping*, 2018, p. 10, 15.

195 EPON focus groups, representatives of civil society, Kinshasa and Goma, July and August 2018.

196 Ibid.

197 Interview, MONUSCO official, Goma, July 2018.

a mismatch between this prioritisation process and local expectations, since populations sometimes believe that the Mission will or should act in areas that are beyond its mandate, whether in building infrastructure or assuming a proactive role during outbreaks of communicable diseases, such as Ebola (see box 5).

Box 5. MONUSCO's Response to the Ebola Outbreak

On 8 May 2018, the Government of the DRC announced a new outbreak of the Ebola virus, with cases emerging in three health zones: Bikoro, Iboko and Wangata, and eventually the provincial capital of Mbandaka (the Equateur region has had a number of Ebola outbreaks in the past). The presence of the disease in Mbandaka, a city of over one million, and an urban centre along the Congo River significantly increased the potential threat of the disease. However, an impressive Congolese Ministry of Health and WHO-led response contained the disease and limited its impact to 54 cases and 33 deaths. By 24 July, the outbreak officially ended, after 42 days (two incubation periods) without a confirmed case. Despite being overstretched with other strategic priorities, MONUSCO played a significant role and showed impressive nimbleness in response to this urgent and unexpected threat. Within a few weeks, the Mission redeployed 13 staff to Mbandaka to assist with the establishment of an emergency operations centre, created a 20-person camp in Iboko, and used its fixed and rotary aircraft to transport cargo



and provide logistical support.¹⁹⁸ The Mission took these steps without the budget to do so or guarantee of reimbursement,¹⁹⁹ but eventually helped secure pledges of US\$57 million from multilateral and bilateral donors.

Sadly, on 1 August 2018, a second and unrelated strain of Ebola emerged outside of Beni – one of the most complicated security environments in the country. The Mission showed responsive leadership, Deputy SRSO David Gressly joined the governor of the province a day later on 2 August to offer the Mission's assets in support, and they discussed how to tackle this more aggressive outbreak. The Mission has tried to reorient its operations to enhance the response by targeting local armed groups, and protecting humanitarian space.

As of 21 February 2019, over 859 cases have been confirmed, including 536 deaths, in the North Kivu Province and in adjacent areas in Ituri Province, bringing the fatality rate to 62%.²⁰⁰ The outbreak has been more difficult to contain as Beni is an active conflict zone with a number of competing dynamics. Ebola health respondents must negotiate with local armed groups to track down infected individuals and trace the possible spread through their contacts. Persistent rumours are causing a great deal of community mistrust of both national and international partners.²⁰¹ On 19 October 2018, two FARDC medical personnel in uniform at a checkpoint were targeted and killed by local militia in Butembo.

Source of the infographics: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/infographics>

MONUSCO's legitimacy, impartiality and credibility have oscillated significantly over time, and the perception of these characteristics has also varied across the Congolese territory. The Mission's role in reunifying the territory generated a wave of goodwill that is still remembered, especially when respondents refer to specific mechanisms that span the entire DRC territory, such as Radio Okapi, which began broadcasting in 2001. Difficulties in task prioritisation and inadequate management of expectations by the Mission itself have contributed towards MONUSCO's loss of legitimacy, impartiality and credibility. These gaps highlight the importance of having a clear strategic communications strategy in place for the Mission. The Mission's lack of a close relationship with the Government has also undermined its credibility in the eyes of those who see the Government as lacking legitimacy and credibility (especially after the 2011 elections).

198 "Report of the Secretary-General, United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," S/2018/655, 2 July 2018, para. 32.

199 Interview, MONUSCO official, Goma, August 2018.

200 "United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo – Report of the Secretary-General," S/2019/218, 7 March 2019, para. 32.

201 Nurith Aizenman, "Why are people so angry at Ebola responders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?" NPR, 30 October 2018: https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/10/30/661010437/an-an-gry-crowd-a-burial-teams-escape-scenes-from-the-ebola-outbreak?fbclid=IwAR384vo5IA7NWAJhpV3PVIIm-Zwt7vjObHgb-Qf5o3Mb5uEHfVfSg7BBH4_90&ct=1541013376485.

4.7. Women, Peace and Security

MONUSCO's efforts on the Women, Peace and Security agenda have concentrated on two fronts. On the one hand, its Gender Office has, especially during recent years, worked to promote a gender-sensitive approach within the Mission itself.

The Mission has expanded its own perspective of the 1325 agenda²⁰² beyond the narrow view of women as potential/actual victims of sexual violence and of men as attackers, to incorporate a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the role of gender in conflict and the needs that it generates. This work has included greater emphasis on the measuring of the Mission's gender impact through the development of indicators and markers. At the same time, MONUSCO has favoured low-cost, high-impact approaches such as convincing Mission leadership of the links between adopting a gender-sensitive approach and the effectiveness of actions and operations.

Through a combination of gender affairs officers, CLAs, and gender focal points, the section has worked to bring a gender perspective to territories where the Gender Office is not directly represented. However, the recent focus on promoting a gender-sensitive perspective within the Mission itself has meant that MONUSCO has left the bulk of external gender work to the agencies that work on the issues nationally, and that provide broader support for the DRC National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security.²⁰³

On sexual violence, the Mission's focus has been on denouncing, reporting and monitoring, with regular reports and data analysis issued by the 17 field offices for the Secretary-General, in collaboration with agencies such as the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNHCR. In some instances of allegations, joint missions involving peacekeeping forces and civilian representatives from mission sections have been sent to those areas. However, there have been frequent delays between these events or allegations and the deployment of the joint missions, especially in remote areas with little to no access. Representatives from the civil society have complained about the number of "MONUSCO babies" (of local people and peacekeepers), and thus of the "behaviours of certain peacekeepers, and laxity of the UN

Due to the work of MONUSCO, FARDC has vastly improved its methods for identifying child soldiers and no longer recruits them. This is one of the longer-term successes of the Mission.

202 See UN Security Council Resolution 1325 for further details on the commitments of national governments.

203 PeaceWomen, "National Action Plan: Congo (Kinshasa)": <https://www.peacewomen.org/nap-drc>.

regarding those.”They have even mentioned that “Some of them are doing religious proselytism without the UN saying anything about this.”²⁰⁴

Due to the overlap between sexual violence and the vulnerability of women and children, the Sexual Violence section works closely with Child Protection (CP), engaging with armed groups on child recruitment and sexual violence (see box 6 below). More broadly, the Mission has had limited impact on galvanising support for victims, whether directly or via partnerships with other sections, UN agencies, or humanitarian organisations. Although, as part of DDR programmes, CVR initiatives have included small projects, they focus on ex-combatants and other women linked to the armed groups, and are therefore highly targeted and limited in reach. For instance, although the Mission has identified women who forage for charcoal in the forests of Eastern Congo as especially vulnerable to rape, attempts to move them towards less risky alternative sources of income have been less than successful due to the comparatively high income generated through that activity. Due to the work of MONUSCO, FARDC has vastly improved its methods for identifying child soldiers and no longer recruits them. This is one of the longer-term successes of the Mission.

Box 6. Prevention of Child Recruitment by Armed Groups

In the context of the armed conflict in the DRC, children have been killed in massacres, caught up in and traumatised by the violence, or died as a result of lack of access to food, medical care, and other essential services. Many have also been abducted and recruited into armed groups or the national forces. To tackle these challenges, MONUSCO has developed specific strategies for CP, as part of its broader approach to protection. This strategy entails a combination of external actions and partnerships, but also efforts to mainstream CP across the Mission itself.

In some areas of the country, almost 50 % of documented cases of sexual violence are committed against girls under the age of 18. MONUSCO’s CP Section has thus worked closely with the Sexual Violence Unit on protection issues related to girls. At the same time, there has been minimal work done to overcome the stigma around reporting of abuses against boys, for instance, through initiatives to promote positive masculinities. Among the most important functions the Mission has taken on are those of monitoring and reporting, advocacy, and capacity-building – all of which have proven to be essential elements in the prevention of child recruitment and in the fight against impunity.

204 EPON focus groups, representatives of civil society, Kinshasa and Goma, July and August 2018.

Due to the work of MONUSCO, FARDC has vastly improved its methods for identifying child soldiers and no longer recruits them. This is one of the longer-term successes of the Mission. In parallel, MONUSCO's Gender Office has, especially during recent years, worked to promote a gender-sensitive approach within the Mission itself to incorporate a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the role of gender in conflict and the needs that it generates.

4.8. People-Centred Approach

Adopting a people-centred approach – in the sense of the concrete impacts that the Mission has on the lives of individuals and communities – has proven a major challenge for MONUSCO, as it is for all peacekeeping operations in general. In the interactions with representatives of the civil society, one interlocutor said that they “don’t really understand what MONUSCO is doing, and how it functions; and where they [the peacekeepers] could be useful, we don’t see them.”²⁰⁵ In part, this difficulty is a result of the vastness of the territory in which the Mission operates, coupled with the lack of adequate infrastructure, dwindling resources, and declining collaboration on the part of the DRC Government. A representative of the civil society acknowledged that “There is a significant mismatch between locals’ expectations of the Mission and what MONUSCO actually does.”²⁰⁶ Others from civil society agree with this.

In order to redress these gaps, in recent years the Mission’s civilian dimension, in particular, has worked to adopt a participatory approach, backing inclusive local mechanisms for dialogue and consensus and building community-based solutions. By expanding its capillary reach into the territory, the Mission has tried to create new interfaces with communities, especially those located in and around hotspots of violence and instability, even as it faces dwindling resources.

The Mission’s support for local security governance has been particularly welcomed in parts of the territory. The capillary reach of Civil Affairs, especially through the Community Alert Networks (CANs), has enabled the Mission to mitigate violence, including during electoral cycles. The CANs (as of August 2018, there were a total of 66) have allowed remote communities to transmit threats in order to alert MONUSCO, and the Mission has combined this data with other information to improve local partner response to emerging threats.

205 EPON focus groups, representatives of civil society, Kinshasa and Goma, July and August 2018.

206 Ibid.

Despite these enhancing capacities through innovative mechanisms, to some, the relationships feel more like outsourcing than true partnerships. Efforts at local empowerment, including via capacity-building and enhanced partnerships as well as local protection communities, have suffered from a lack of continuity. This is in part due to the lack of resources channelled to the provinces, even as the number of provinces reached increased to 26. In addition, there are mismatches in expectations. As one respondent noted, “Frequently the local communities have high and misguided expectations about what the Mission will accomplish – they want us to rebuild the school, to generate jobs.”²⁰⁷ There are many examples of how the Mission has brought people together in reconciliation efforts and driven its approach from the ground up. Interlocutors have, however, pointed out the mismatch between such well-intentioned initiatives and the way the root cause of these

incidents should be addressed.²⁰⁸ Despite some successes (such as the reconciliation projects led in Ituri²⁰⁹), the localisation of Mission efforts has not contributed towards preventing the proliferation of illegal armed groups.

The adoption of a people-centred approach depends in part on the receptivity of local actors and the credibility of the Mission in their eyes.

In some instances, the Mission has triangulated with other UN system components and external actors, including universities and think tanks, to generate knowledge and capacity-building. One noteworthy example is the Perceptions of Populations Project,²¹⁰ undertaken with the UNDP and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative.

Since 2013, the partnership has provided a vast amount of information through questionnaires organised around hundreds of indicators to better understand popular opinions on topics related to the Mission’s mandate and, more generally, peace in the DRC. The involvement of local universities in North and South Kivu and in Ituri has also helped to institutionalise the project locally, while harnessing innovative technologies from research centres abroad.

The adoption of a people-centred approach depends in part on the receptivity of local actors and the credibility of the Mission in their eyes. MONUSCO has tried to enhance its people-centred approach through various mechanisms including outreach missions to explain the closure of bases and how to strengthen LSCs in Ituri; by organising dialogue and reconciliation activities between Hema and Lendu communities in Djugu,

207 Interview, Civil Affairs Section, Goma, August 2018.

208 Interview, NGO representative, Goma, August 2018.

209 In Ituri, MONUSCO has long deployed many of its innovation community initiatives to strengthen local capacities for security governance with varying degrees of success. Kasper Hoffmann, Koen Vlassenroot, and Karen Büscher, “Competition, Patronage and Fragmentation: The Limits of Bottom-Up Approaches to Security Governance in Ituri,” *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2018, 7(1), p. 14.

210 Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, “Projects,” 2018: <https://hhi.harvard.edu/research/peace-and-human-rights-data/projects>.

encouraging FARDC to dismantle illegal checkpoints, and working with CANs in the Aru and Irumu territories.²¹¹ However, the transition towards the ‘protection through projection’ model is viewed by civil society stakeholders as constraining the positive impact that the Mission has on communities, especially in remote parts of the country. As underlined in earlier sections of this report, this new concept is considered to exacerbate the image of MONUSCO as a distant, impersonal actor to large swaths of the population, detracting from its potential to be a people-centred mission.

Adopting a people-centred approach is a major challenge. However, in recent years, the Mission’s civilian dimension, in particular, has worked to adopt a participatory approach, backing inclusive local mechanisms for dialogue and consensus and building community-based solutions. By expanding its capillary reach into the territory, the Mission has tried to create new interfaces with communities, especially those located in and around hotspots of violence and instability, even as it faces dwindling resources. However, the adoption of a people-centred approach has remained a constant challenge, especially given how uneven this capillary reach is.

211 UN Secretary-General Report, S-2018-174, 1 March 2018, para. 40.





SECTION 5.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

Assessing the effectiveness of any peacekeeping operation is certainly a very challenging task. Quantitative indicators have their limits. Successes and failures of peacekeeping operations depend on political conditions, on the interpretation of the mandate, and on the degree of support the mission enjoys. These considerations are further influenced by interpretations of what the Mission can or should accomplish, the means given to it, and the ambitions assigned.

Considering all the obstacles, one UN official summarised, “It is very impressive what MONUSCO has been able to achieve with comparatively little resources in an area of operations that is the size of a continent.”²¹² In the end, MONUSCO is a multidimensional peacekeeping mission that does its best to implement often unrealistic or overly ambitious mandates. In measuring its effectiveness, this must be taken into consideration, not only in the implementation of the mandate delivered by the Council, but also the means and capabilities provided to the Mission.

²¹² Interview, UN official, Kinshasa, July 2018.

Box 7. Evaluation of the 2017 Strategic Review on the Impact of MONUC-MONUSCO

118. The investment by the international community in peacekeeping in the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the past 17 years has helped to bring about a profound transformation in the country's security landscape. When the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo first deployed in 1999, the country was emerging from a devastating war involving the direct military intervention of five African nations. Large swathes of the country were under the control of rebel movements more intent on plundering its vast natural wealth than attending to the basic needs of the population.

119. By 2006, that mission had presided over the withdrawal of the remaining foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and helped to steer the country towards its first democratic elections in 46 years. The successful conclusion of the transition following the signing of the Final Act of the Inter-Congolese Political Negotiations marked a high point in the long history of United Nations engagement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Yet since then, the country has struggled to build on this historic achievement. The contested elections of 2011 were a setback for the consolidation of the country's fledgling democracy. The vast majority of Congolese continue to live in abject poverty and lack access to the most basic services. The State is still absent from many parts of the country and all too often preys on the citizens it is meant to protect. Challenges linked to corruption, poor governance and the illegal exploitation of the country's natural resources have sapped the confidence of donors and investors, preventing the country from realizing its full economic potential.

132. In the long run, it is clear that there can be no lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as long as the root causes of conflict remain unaddressed. The track record of MONUSCO over the past decade demonstrates that in the absence of a genuine political commitment to reform, there is little the United Nations or any other external actor can do to build sustainable peace. The country's leaders will therefore need to decide whether they are finally ready to embrace inclusive and peaceful politics, tackle security sector reform, root out corruption and mismanagement, uphold the rule of law and ensure that all Congolese are able to enjoy their basic human rights. In such an endeavor, they can count on the full support of the United Nations in preserving the gains of the past 20 years and steering the Democratic Republic of the Congo towards long-term stability and development.

Source: S/2017/826 (29 September 2017), "Special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo."

5.1. Strategic and Operational Impact

The first area in which MONUC had a strategic impact is in its contribution towards the reunification of the country. In short, as one African diplomat put it, “If the UN Mission had not existed, most probably DRC would not have existed in its current form.”²¹³ When MONUC was created, people needed a visa to travel to the east of the country. As one NGO representative pointed out, “The UN Mission was deployed to keep the country together, but this was never explained this way.”²¹⁴ Alan Doss, a former SRSG, summarised the impact of MONUC over this period as helping “to secure the implementation of both the 1999 Lusaka and 2002 Pretoria Agreements, which ended overt foreign intervention in the DRC, reunified the country and created a new constitutional order, leading to national elections that were generally accepted by the Congolese people and international stakeholders.”²¹⁵ One P5 diplomat also said, “A UN mission is effective when it has a clear focus,” and “In 2006, MONUC had one focus: handing over to a sovereign state.”²¹⁶

“A UN mission is effective when it has a clear focus,” and “In 2006, MONUC had one focus: handing over to a sovereign state.”

As pointed out in section 2.2, MONUC enabled legitimate institutions to be reinstalled in 2006. In this, the Mission was helped in particular by the International Committee in Support of the Transition, which gathered powerful international actors ready to contribute resources to the DRC, in particular, the EU that also launched its first military operation (Operation Artemis). These gains were, however, eroded later when the newly elected president prevented them from properly functioning by changing the rules of the game in 2011, by delaying the organisation of elections at the local and national level, as well as by undermining a fragmented political opposition through corruption, co-option and force.

The second area in which MONUC-MONUSCO had a strategic impact is in preventing a recurrence of a major violent conflict. MONUC was deployed to help implement the Lusaka agreement, and later the Pretoria agreement, which ended the Congo Wars. There was always a risk that the DRC could relapse into war, and MONUC-MONUSCO contributed to preventing that regression. In fact, many local, national, regional and international interlocutors interviewed for this study are still concerned that the DRC will slide back into a major violent conflict if the UN peacekeeping mission withdraws, which

213 Interview, diplomat from an African state, Kinshasa, July 2018.

214 Interview, NGO representative, Kinshasa, July 2018.

215 Alan Doss, chapter 56 on the “United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC),” op. cit., p. 665.

216 Interview, P5 official, Goma, August 2018.

is an indication of the degree to which people at all levels attribute the absence of a major violent conflict to the presence of the UN peacekeeping mission.

Despite the presence of MONUC-MONUSCO, there were many local- and low-level violent conflict incidents over the years (see figure 4). There were several serious incidents (at Kisangani, Bukavu, Kiwanja, Goma, etc.) where the levels of violence transformed into a national crisis that threatened to escalate into something even bigger, such as when the M23 took control of Goma in November 2012. There are several specific instances where MONUC-MONUSCO failed in its protection mandate. There are also many instances where MONUC-MONUSCO did manage to protect people and to prevent outbreaks of violence from escalating further. The defeat of the M23 stands out as a high point in this regard. There is widespread agreement among our interlocutors that most likely many more would have died, been raped, assaulted, and/or displaced if MONUC-MONUSCO was not present and active.

As documented in this report, MONUC-MONUSCO did not have the means, mandate, political support, size, resources, capabilities, etc., to impose security and full stability on the DRC, to prevent all conflicts, or to protect the entire population. This is the common fate of most peacekeeping operations. However, the UN peacekeeping presence did contribute to preventing greater loss of life, to preventing more violent conflict incidents and the further escalation and spread of violent conflict, and to deterring potential military incursions from neighbours intending to protect their own interests. Despite

ongoing low-level conflicts, overall, MONUC-MONUSCO has so far contributed to the relative stability of the country, and to preventing greater loss of life, suffering, and major violent conflicts from happening.

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The third area where MONUC-MONUSCO has had strategic impact is by using its presence to enable other international and national actors, including the private sector, to provide services and to stimulate the local economy. MONUC-MONUSCO contributed to the functioning, and in some cases the development, of vital infrastructure, such as several airports, key access roads, river and lake traffic, telecommunications, etc. Its presence allowed access and provided security for national and international state and

non-state humanitarian, development and diplomatic actors and visitors, including national, regional and local state officials, which has had a catalytic effect far beyond what MONUC-MONUSCO could have achieved on its own. The Mission also has a direct significant economic footprint of its own.

The fourth area where MONUC-MONUSCO has had strategic impact is through its contribution over the years to the enhancement of a dynamic civic space, civil society, and its contribution to democratic politics. Among others, it did so by supporting Radio Okapi, and by facilitating a culture of consultation and dialogue through its own example. Radio Okapi, in particular, has made a significant contribution towards this civic activism by providing a platform for impartial media and filling it with information and debate. This political space, and the advancement of many other Congolese media actors, contributed to preventing President Kabila from changing the Constitution to remain in power, it enabled the 2018 elections to take place without major incidents, and despite its shortcomings, resulted in the first peaceful transfer of power in the DRC since the country gained independence from Belgium in 1960.²¹⁷

The fifth area where the role of MONUC-MONUSCO is critical is in observation, reporting, and information collection and sharing. The information the UN Mission generated informed deliberations and decisions on the DRC over the years by the UN, AU, EU, ICGRL, SADC, World Bank, IMF, donors, private sector investors, the media, and the public. It was also subsequently used by the International Criminal Court to prosecute Thomas Lubanga, Germain Katanga, Bosco Ntaganda, and others.²¹⁸ As one UN official in Kinshasa said, “Where we have a presence, we have an impact; and when violence is deeply rooted, presence is important.”²¹⁹

5.2. Strategic and Operational Constraints

However, a number of strategic and operational constraints have undermined the actions or activities of the UN Mission.

5.2.1. Host State Consent Without Full Cooperation

The main strategic constraint of the UN Mission has been the degree of cooperation of the host state which has diminished over the years. Many interlocutors observed that for many years MONUSCO has been working with a government that does not want it to be there, and that has asked several times for its departure, although it maintained its legal consent for MONUSCO’s presence.

217 “Tshisekedi calls for ‘a Congo for all’ after disputed election,” Reuters, 24 January 2019; Mo Ibrahim and Alan Doss, “Congo’s election: a defeat for democracy, a disaster for the people,” *The Guardian*, 9 February 2019.

218 Interview, European embassy, Kinshasa, July 2018.

219 Interview, UN official, Kinshasa, July 2018.

Box 8. Interview with Joseph Kabila

Stuart Reid: What's your relationship like with the UN peacekeeping mission in Congo, MONUSCO?

Joseph Kabila: It's a love-hate relationship. We are in the same boat: if MONUSCO succeeds, then the Congo will have succeeded, and if the Congo succeeds, then MONUSCO and the United Nations will have succeeded. Where there is a difference is in our understanding of success versus MONUSCO's. Our understanding of success is to make sure that we do away with all the armed groups and that the population, be it in the east or anywhere else, lives in total harmony. But for MONUSCO, success is elections and human rights. That is not and should not be its mission. I'm always reminding the United Nations: the Congo is not Lebanon or Cyprus, where you'll be deployed for the next 30 years. There was a mission; that mission is coming to an end. And when that happens, MONUSCO will have to pull out.

Source: "Big Man in Congo: A Conversation with Joseph Kabila," Foreign Affairs, 27 December 2018: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/interviews/2018-12-14/big-man-congo>.

As discussed in the conflict analysis section, the DRC is governed by an elite class that operates a patronage system that is dependent on a weak state and, to some degree, on ongoing instability. There is thus a fundamental tension between the Congolese Government, and the UN and international community's attempt to build strong state institutions, to reform the security and other government sectors, and to stabilise the country. Sectors such as security and mining are critically important for the functioning of the governing elites' patronage system, and they have used a number of techniques to disrupt, delay, and erode reform efforts. Additional conflict drivers, including the Belgian colonial legacy, the lack of decentralisation of power and economic resources to provincial and territorial elites, competing claims for land access, and unequal rights to citizenship further complicate this relationship.

This lack of host government cooperation has translated into a reluctance to institute a number of reforms that the Security Council considered crucial to achieving stability and the rule of law. This has been particularly the case for SSR issues which, as noted in section 4.3.2, were continuously delayed by the Congolese authorities. Moreover, as a representative of the civil society pointed out, "These difficulties on the SSR programme had an impact on the efficiency of the UN Mission."²²⁰ The lack of cooperation has hampered the ability of the Mission to achieve its core mandated tasks. In many instances, such as the investigations into the violence in the Kasai, the Government has opted for obstruction rather than support. One UN official in Goma talked about the Government as being "the fundamental limiting factor."²²¹

²²⁰ Interview, NGO representative, Kinshasa, July 2018.

²²¹ Interview, UN official, Goma, August 2018.

A number of other interlocutors and representatives of civil society pointed out that there is a need for a stronger dialogue with the Government: the UN must listen more to the Government, while keeping a “delicate line between respecting sovereignty of the country and our need to be impartial.”²²² Keeping this balance has been increasingly difficult. If the goal is sustainable peace, then one pre-requisite is that such a peace needs to emerge from within, and needs to be anchored locally.²²³ The UN Mission will never be able to withdraw if the benchmarks set by the Council are at odds with the programme and objectives of the Congolese governing elite. Therefore, the Security Council needs to take into account the national dynamics and adapt its benchmarks accordingly.

5.2.2. Lack of Strategic Support From the Region and From the Security Council

The second main strategic constraint has been the role of neighbouring states fuelling instability. Overall, the Mission has faced serious constraints on its ability to influence key players who have sway over armed groups – sometimes due to reluctance by the central Government and/or complicity by state actors in conflicts in Eastern Congo, but also at times due to interference by regional actors, and a related inability to gain leverage over some of those most responsible for driving insecurity in Eastern Congo. The main exceptions to this were the bilateral agreement reached by the DRC and Rwanda in 2009 to target and disarm the FDLR, and the regional consensus reached in 2013 concerning the FIB, which was mandated to disarm the M23 and other armed groups. To date, the regionally composed FIB has worked and “continues to do so as a deterrent against further strategic meddling.”²²⁴ It has indeed showed what is possible when the Security Council, the UN Mission, the TCCs, the regional bodies and the Government are all politically aligned. However, that window did not last.

A lack of host government cooperation has translated into a reluctance to institute a number of reforms that the Security Council considered crucial to achieving stability and the rule of law.

These examples should also remind us that such instances are rare, and that hard political work is necessary to maintain alignment as long as possible and to try to create alignment

²²² Ibid.

²²³ See the work done by Severine Autesserre, in particular, *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2010). See also her article: “What the Uproar Over Congo’s Elections Misses the Local Roots of the Country’s Problems,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 2017.

²²⁴ Interview, NGO researcher, New York, December 2018.

when it is not there. Overall, a peacekeeping mission cannot deliver properly on its mandate if its political environment (both neighbouring states and the region/sub-region) is divided. This was on full display in the aftermath of the recent presidential elections, when regional states such as Zambia and South Africa released multiple contradictory statements (from different parts of their governments) about the credibility of the process, and the AU announced a high-level mission to investigate the irregularities, before backing down.

Another strategic constraint has been, after 2006, the absence of a champion for MONUC-MONUSCO in the Security Council who was able to leverage a commonly agreed blueprint for dealing with the conflict in a comprehensive fashion. The Mission has often been “left out on a limb in dealing with the Congolese Government.”²²⁵ It is almost impossible

A peacekeeping mission cannot deliver properly on its mandate if its political environment is divided.

for a mission to be effective if it does not have the active support of the majority of the Council, and if it does not have a willing and able national partner. This is particularly acute if the Mission is expected to use force. A clear and sustained majority in the Security Council backing the use of force is a pre-requisite for the effective use of force by a peacekeeping operation. When voting on establishing the FIB, the Security Council

was de facto divided, with a number of elected members who were also major contributing countries (such as Pakistan) refusing to get involved on the ground in this Force. Division in the Council has had negative operational effects on the ground, whereby several TCCs often have refused to undertake joint operations with the FIB, or even to provide support to it.

5.2.3. Operational Constraints: From Multiple Interpretations of the Mandate to the Lack of Good Communications Strategy

As far as the operational constraints are concerned, there is first and foremost a problem of multiple interpretations of what peacekeeping is and of the mandate of the Mission. Security Council resolutions are negotiated and require sufficient constructive ambiguity to avoid a veto. For instance, the resolution that tasked the FIB with neutralising the M23 and other armed groups has also a paragraph that requires the FIB to be guided by the traditional principles of peacekeeping, which includes the principle of using force only in self-defence. Some argue that this principle has in practice been broadened to now include the use of force to defend the mandate, but the fact that this is unclear further emphasises the problem of ambiguity in mandate negotiations. At the Mission level, the lack of clarity about the mandate complicates its implementation and prevents coherence

²²⁵ Hugo de Vries, “Going around in circles,” op. cit., p. 31.

of the Mission. Often these interpretations (protective, reactive, proactive) also depend on the means and capabilities at the disposal of the Mission to be in a proactive posture or not. Troop contributors have come from different military backgrounds and cultures, and pre-deployment training has yet to produce a force capable of acting as one. The consequences are a lack of full integration in information gathering, in integrated planning, in analysis, in discussions on protection, and in the coordination between the components of the Mission. These problems are common to all multidimensional peacekeeping operations, but are especially acute in stabilisation missions when there is an expectation of proactive and preventive use of force.²²⁶

The MONUSCO mission was furthermore hampered by the fact that the doctrinal meaning of the term “stabilisation” was never clearly defined. For some, it had a significantly different meaning in the UN context than was known within, for instance, NATO doctrine and operations. In the case of MONUSCO, stabilisation was initially thought of by the pen-holder in the Security Council as a route to drawdown and exit, but via the I4S it ended up focusing on tasks that are more developmental than military in nature. Others link stabilisation in the UN context to the way the UN uses force to protect a government against insurgents, and does so alongside national government forces.²²⁷

This leads also to the issue of the lack of a strategic communications strategy to counter misunderstandings or *sous-entendus*, and to explain the mandate and the mission to the Congolese people or even internally. Because mandates delivered by the Security Council are adopted with a certain level of ambiguity, UN operatives on the ground think it cannot unveil them and explain the true rationale of its presence in the country. If discussions happen, they are held at a very high level, excluding the local population who then often has the impression that the UN Mission is being imposed on them. Local populations tend to think that the UN Mission can do everything and are disappointed when it falls short. The Mission has also had difficulty in communicating the realities faced by its peacekeepers on the ground when they are unable to prevent violence and protect civilians everywhere.

Another impediment to the effectiveness of the Mission, especially in times of crisis, is the lack of good communication with UN headquarters, despite weekly video teleconferences (VTCs), regular exchanges of code cables, and frequent field visits of people

At the Mission level, the lack of clarity about the mandate complicates its implementation and prevents coherence of the Mission.

226 See Alexandra Novosseloff, “Improving the military effectiveness and proficiency of peacekeeping operations: a new goal for A4P?” *Challenges Forum Policy Brief*, 2019: 2, February 2019, 11 pages.

227 See Cedric de Coning, John Karlsrud, and Chiyoki Aoi (eds), *UN Peacekeeping Doctrine in a New Era: Adapting to Stabilisation, Protection and New Threats* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

working at New York headquarters. The lack of good communication is mainly due to the highly decentralised nature of UN command and control, and the light backstopping of missions by UN headquarters in New York.²²⁸ As a UN Mission staff member complained: “We rarely get feedback on reports we send.”²²⁹ A number of Mission staff also related this problem. There is often a lack of discussion and analysis between field staff and headquarters on various perceptions of priorities that the UN Mission should pursue. Furthermore, often both look in different directions: New York towards interactions with the Council; Kinshasa more towards “local issues”. Hence, the Mission is stuck in a bureaucratic bubble. This is true even in the field where some UN staff considered that they are not venturing outside their offices enough (as one interlocutor in Bunia pointed out). This has affected the effectiveness of the Mission on the ground because it has an effect on the common narrative shared with the various stakeholders and partners of the Mission.

5.3. Conclusion

Overall, we need to change the lenses through which we tend to look at peacekeeping operations and start with what they have achieved in terms of conflict prevention, stability and protection, instead of putting all the blame on them for what they have not been able to achieve. Peacekeeping operations are basically deployed with “pocket money,” in the places few people care about, and where the P5 have no strategic interests. Despite such circumstances, most missions have accomplished a lot, and they are helping the “international community” to keep an eye on those situations, and to keep the conflict at a level that is tolerable (not too much violence, not too many deaths) for their standard.

Now that the DRC has a newly elected president, Felix Tshisekedi, with challenged legitimacy and without total control of the armed forces (Kabila’s network is still quite strong in the security sector), the pressure to drawdown the Mission has slightly subsided, although the US is still leading the calls for further budget cuts. However, there remains the need to set a clear timeline for withdrawal, and the SRSG will need a partner in negotiating the exit strategy with the new government. Some members of the Security Council “will never be comfortable leaving DRC”, but others feel that peacekeeping missions have to be temporary and limited in scope and ambition.²³⁰ If and when the Mission leaves, the Congo will still face tremendous challenges, but the core question the Council has to consider is whether the situation in the Congo still represents a threat to international peace and security. There will be disagreement about whether the internal power struggle

228 See International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations, *Designing Mandates and Capabilities for Future Peace Operations*, chapter 4 on “Authority, Command and Control”, 2014: www.challengesforum.org/en/Reports-Publications/Designing-Mandates-and-Capabilities-for-Future-Peace-Operations/Designing-Mandates-and-Capabilities-for-Future-Peace-Operations.

229 Interview, MONUSCO staff, Kinshasa and Goma, July and August 2018.

230 Interview, P5 official, New York, June 2018.

between the new President Tshisekedi, the former President Kabila's supporters, and the alienated Fayulu voters will result in the eruption of these threats, and if regional adversaries, such as Uganda and Rwanda, will resist the historical trend of further fomenting additional instability in the DRC.²³¹ The next mandate and MONUSCO's updated strategic assessment will give the Council some time and evidence to make this determination.

Many of the people interviewed for this study (June–December 2018) are of the opinion that the UN Security Council now has to elaborate on a clear exit strategy for MONUSCO after the December 2018 elections, stick to this strategy, and leave the DRC in an orderly manner.²³² Some argued that, after about 20 years, the presence of the UN peacekeeping mission weakens the state. The longer the Mission stays, the more it helps to absolve the national authorities from the responsibilities of maintaining law and order, improving the living conditions of the population, and addressing the root causes of the conflict. Although there might be a new administration finally willing to tackle these core issues, they may not have the capacity to do so. During EPON interviews, the general sentiment was that the UN Mission should transition out and leave the country in a timeframe of 18–24 months from the holding of the last presidential elections. However, for now, in this fragile political situation, the extreme anxiety felt by the Congolese people means that they are in dire need of MONUSCO's support.

We need to change the lenses through which we tend to look at peacekeeping operations and start with what they have achieved in terms of conflict prevention, stability and protection.

231 Stephanie Wolters, "The Great Lakes can't afford more instability," ISS Today, 18 March 2019.

232 Even if, as some interlocutors pointed out, holding elections cannot constitute a sufficient condition to phase out or disengage a peacekeeping operation, it has been for the Security Council a marker for transitioning out its operations (as in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, etc.). Interview, former MONUSCO staff, New York, December 2018.





APPENDIX A.

EPON Project Summary

Peace operations are among the most important international mechanisms for contemporary conflict management. But their effectiveness often remains the subject of confusion and debate in both the policy and academic communities. Various international organisations conducting peace operations, including the UN, AU, and EU, have come under increasing pressure to justify the effectiveness and impact of their peace operations. Although various initiatives are underway to improve the ability of these organisations to assess the performance of their missions, there remains a distinct lack of independent, external research-based information about the effectiveness of these peace operations.

To address this gap, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), together with over 40 partners from across the globe, has established an international network to jointly undertake research into the effectiveness of peace operations. This network has developed a shared methodology to enable the members to undertake comparable research on this topic. This will ensure coherence across cases and facilitate comparative research. The network will employ this methodology to produce a series of reports that will be shared with stakeholders, including the UN, AU, EU, interested national government representatives, researchers, and the general public. Over time, this project will produce a substantial amount of mission-specific assessments, which can be used to identify the key factors that influence the effectiveness of peace operations. This data will be made

available via a dedicated web-based dataset that will be a publicly available repository of knowledge on this topic.

In 2018, four pilot case studies were undertaken in the DRC (MONUSCO), Mali (MINUSMA), Somalia (AMISOM), and South Sudan (UNMISS). The results of these initial research studies will be shared at international seminars in Addis Ababa (AU HQ), Geneva (Peace Week), and in New York (UN HQ). The network partners will review the pilot experiences and refine their research methodology, and in 2019 the project will continue with studies of, among others, the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the G5-Sahel Force, and the EU Monitoring Mission in the Ukraine (EUMM).

The following EPON partners have directly participated in the 2018 research studies. Several others have supported these studies via their participation in an external reference group that has commented on the draft reports.

- African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), South Africa
- Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), Australia
- Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation (BIPSOT), Bangladesh
- Cairo International Centre for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCCPA), Egypt
- Center on International Cooperation (CIC), New York University (NYU), USA
- Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), Germany
- Chinese People's Police University, China
- Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), Sweden
- George Washington University, USA
- Igarapé Institute, Brazil
- Institute for Security Studies (ISS), South Africa
- International Peace Institute (IPI), USA
- Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), Ghana
- Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Norway
- Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), Norway
- Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, Australia

- Security Institute for Governance and Leadership (SIGLA), Stellenbosch University, South Africa
- Social Science Research Council (SSRC), USA
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Sweden
- Training for Peace Secretariat, Ethiopia
- University of Trento, Italy
- UN University, Japan

This report assesses the extent to which the UN Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is achieving its current strategic objectives and what impact the Mission has had on the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), especially in the eastern part of the country where it is mostly deployed.

The report focuses on both the most recent period of MONUSCO's mandate (2013-18), and takes into account the work of the MONUC since 1999, thereby taking a long-term view of the peacekeeping presence in the country. The UN peacekeeping engagement in the DRC since the end of the Second Congo War has spanned nearly 20 years, three presidential elections, eight Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General, and numerous political and security crises involving national and regional actors and non-state armed groups. The Mission has reinvented itself, tried to adapt to changing conflict dynamics, and had to shift its posture due to demands from the Security Council, the Congolese government and regional states, as well as in response to recent funding cuts.

As one of the largest multidimensional peacekeeping operations – currently including 15,000 soldiers and 1,300 police officers from 124 contributing countries, as well as 3,400 civilians – MONUC-MONUSCO has been provided with significant resources and an extraordinarily ambitious mandate. Assessing the match between resources and mandate and the ways the Mission has adapted its approaches to be effective in extremely challenging circumstances are the key objectives of this report.