



Human Needs and Civilian Violence in United Nations Peace Keeping Operations: A Case of MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Abstract

Citizens' protests against UN Peacekeepers in Africa are on the increase. This article draws from MONUSCO's experience in DRC to address one crucial question: Why are local populations launching violent demonstrations against UN Peacekeepers in DRC? The study utilises human needs theory to reveal that unfulfilled civilian security needs manifest in violent mass protests against peacekeepers. This article argues that while civilian protection remains UN's priority, violent demonstrations against MONUSCO in the DRC and emerging protests elsewhere in Africa put UN's peacekeeping role into question. The study anticipates continued citizens' protests unless there is a change in UN's strategies to enhance the capability of peacekeeping operations. The article utilises qualitative data from key informant interviews and evidence from documentary sources. The analysis indicates that the Congolese population is frustrated with MONUSCO's failure to protect them from a series of attacks by armed rebels. Consequently, citizens have launched violent demonstrations against peacekeepers to voice their concerns for meeting their security needs. This calls UN to review the peacekeeping strategy to ensure the relevance of peacekeeping operations for the long-term and effective protection of civilians.

Keywords

Peacekeeping, Protection of Civilians, United Nations, Armed Groups, MONUSCO, DRC

1. Background

Since 2014, there have been a series of violent civilian demonstrations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) against the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs), also known as MONUSCO. The protests are launched because of the continued ineffectiveness of UNPKOs in DRC. The remarkably devastating demonstrations happened from 24th November 2019 to December 2019. This was a confusing and challenging day for the staff and troops of the the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the DRC, "the Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République démocratique du Congo (MONUSCO)." On that day, in Beni town North

Kivu, troops and MONUSCO staff were trying to save their lives, not from armed Groups' (AGs)¹ attacks, but from agitated civilians who had launched violent mass demonstrations that led to a peak in disorder in the country against MONUSCO (UN, 2019a). Demonstrators targeted UN mission staff and troops, attacked MONUSCO bases as well as staff housing, looted, set fire to MONUSCO offices as well as vehicles, burned tires on roads and blocked roads with stones including logs (UN, 2019a). Such mass demonstrations erupted after eight civilians were killed by a rebel group known as the Allied Democratic Forces - National Army for Liberation of Uganda ((ADF-NALU) on 23rd November 2019 (Caldwell, 2019).

On the 26th and 27th of November 2019, demonstrations spread in Butembo area and Goma town (Aljazeera, 2019a). Protesters demanded the withdrawal of MONUSCO from the country, alluding that it failed to protect Congolese citizens. Mass demonstrations against the UN mission are not new in the DRC as they started in 2014 (Welle *et al.*, 2016). However, since 2019, they have escalated due to unending cycles of violence and a new wave of killing civilians by the AGs in eastern DRC. Killings were committed as a reprisal after the MONUSCO and the Congolese National Army (Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo "FARDC") increased operations, especially against ADF-NALU. It was estimated that 94 civilians were killed by the ADF-NALU from November to December 2019 (Aljazeera, 2019a). In addition, the resurgence of the March 23 Movement (M23) in November 2021 worsened the relationship between MONUSCO and civilians (UN, 2022b). M23 has been launching a series of deadly attacks inside the DRC, causing deaths and casualties of many civilians. Similarly, East DRC witnessed another wave of protests on 18th January 2023 in Goma city, this time against the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF) deployed in Eastern DRC since November 2022. One of the citizens' claims for the protests was EACRF's choice to use military diplomacy instead of launching offensive operations against M23 (Ilunga, 2023).

The United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs) comprise the deployment of neutral and lightly armed forces. Usually, this happens with the permission of the country on whose territory PKOs are deployed to stop and discourage the renewal of armed conflict and create a situation under which the underlying dispute can be resolved (UN, 2008; Diehl, 1988). For instance, MONUSCO was deployed in Beni town in North Kivu in the early 2000s. Traditionally, Congolese citizens have been friendly and cooperative with UNPKOs. Citizen sentiments usually existed but not to the level where they turned violent. Violent demonstrations against MONUSCO started after those people suffered a lot from atrocities done by ADF-NALU and other AGs. Such new dynamics raise one central question: Why are local populations launching violent demonstrations against UN Peacekeepers in DRC? In addition, what should the UN do to prevent such incidents in its future missions?

This article draws from the Human Needs Theory developed by Burton (1990) to explain citizens' reactions to PKOs, particularly MONUSCO. It argues that citizens' violence against MONUSCO is an outcome of unfilled safety needs. The theory asserts that all human beings have fundamental basic needs, and if denied, there is a likelihood for conflict to occur. While human basic needs are diverse, this article concentrates on safety needs. Mitchell (1990) alluded that for all human beings, safety is the first requirement and if the human does not feel secure, there will be no harmony for him/her, his/her family and the entire society. In the process of finding the lost peace, human beings are usually causing conflicts.

¹ Krause & Milliken define rebel or armed groups (AGs) as organised groups that engages in military fighting against government forces, (2009).

However, Rubenstein (1990) challenged the theory by arguing that it failed to come up with measures for identifying those basic needs, which, if unfulfilled, would bring conflict to society. He contends that, as far as this theory is concerned, it is difficult to know the human needs that have not been met when conflict erupts in society (Rubenstein, 1990). Also, he questions prioritising certain needs over others, such as the need for security over food. On the other hand, Mitchell (1990) emphasises that the need for security is natural, prime, and very important. Still, human beings may change their needs from the need for security to the need for dominance because there is a tiny line between security needs and dominance. Regardless of these criticisms, the theory is still helpful in addressing the dynamics that sparked violent demonstrations by civilians against MONUSCO.

The violent demonstrations against PKOs are a new phenomenon in the area of PKOs and accordingly, most studies have not focused much on the subject matter. For example, studies by Hultman *et al* (2014); Fjelde *et al* (2019), and Williams (2023) all focused on issues of effectiveness of PKOs, evaluation of the UN success in the Protection of Civilians (POC) and lack of universal definition of the POC, respectively. Evidence on why local populations launch violent demonstrations against UN Peacekeepers remains scanty and largely anecdotal. Therefore, this article intends to bridge the knowledge gap in that space.

The article is divided into six sections. The first section sets out the background. Section two provides the methodology for the study. An overview of the conflict in the DRC is presented in section three, while section four covers PKOs and civilian protests. The fifth recommends how to repair and improve civilian relations with UN peacekeepers. It ends with concluding remarks.

2. Methodology

A qualitative research approach was taken through a case study design in the DRC between October 2021 and March 2023. Seventeen (17) Key informant interviews (KIIs) involving senior and junior UN staff members, including MONUSCO military commanders, academicians/experts in conflict resolution and local community members, were conducted. Purposive sampling was employed to identify the participants. The interviews were transcribed and subjected to content analysis. In addition, the article utilised evidence from documentary review, especially documents sourced from the UN, regional bodies like the East Africa Community (EAC), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the Southern African Development Cooperation (SADC), as well as from Civil Societies. These secondary sources were chosen based on the availability of information relating to the UNPKOs in the DRC under the MONUSCO.

3. An Overview of Political Conflict in DRC

The context of violence in DRC cannot be separated from her history of independence. Just three days after her independence of 30th June 1960, the Congolese Army mutinied (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2013). Concurrently, Katanga and South Kasai provinces waged secessionist struggles against the new Congolese Government (Vogel, 2011). The two incidents, together with the assassination of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba on 17th January 1961, fueled the conflict in the country (De Witte, 2022). Without consent from the Congolese Government, Belgium responded by deploying troops in Congo (Abi-Saab, 1979). The incidents were resolved by the UN Operations-Opération des Nations Unies au Congo (ONUC), deployed in 1960 and left the country in 1964 (Spooner, 2010). However, the thorny periods in DRC's conflicts were the First Congo War, from 1996 to 1997 and the Second Congo War, from 1998 to 2003 (Rupiya, 2002; Kiteti, 2010).

The country's natural resource abundance, foreign interests, prolonged civil conflicts among its neighbours, political antagonism, and poor governance are cited as the major causes of rebellions and endless wars in the DRC (UNECA, 2015). The neighbouring countries, armed groups, warlords, and insurgents in the DRC instigate conflicts mainly for natural resource opportunities (Spittaels and Hilgert, 2010). Violence is rampant, given the many actors in the conflict fighting for economic and political dominance. On the other hand, there are more than 500 ethnic groups in the DRC separated into small tribes, clans, and families. Those ethnic groups are the sources of violence aimed on the control of resources, especially land and minerals. Also, inter or intra-communal violence results in the formation of AGs to defend themselves from other communal groups (Hoffmann & Vlassenroot, 2014). All these situations necessitated the deployment of UN PKOs in the DRC.

As it has been alluded, MONUSCO is not the first UNPKO in the DRC conflict. Since the 1960s, there have been several UN deployments, at different times, with various names (Spooner, 2010). The first PKO in DRC was ONUC, which was deployed on 12th July 1960 and withdrawn after four years by 30th June 1964. The deployment was based on DRC's request to curb the post-independence political crises. ONUC aimed to ensure the withdrawal of Belgian forces and to assist the Government in maintaining law and order.

Intensification of insecurity in DRC commenced after the First Congo War (from 1996 to 1997) and the second Congo war from 1998 to 2003 (Rupiya, 2010). Deaths resulting from both wars and subsequent wars till 2022 are estimated at 6 million people, while 5.4 million people were displaced (Parens, 2022). In 1999, the Lusaka ceasefire agreement was signed to end the war followed by deployment of the MONUC in 2000 under United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1258 (UN, 1999). After the DRC general elections of 2006, the UN reformed the mandate of MONUC and gave it a new name, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) on 1st July 2010. This was to mark a new phase of peace settlement reached in the DRC (UN, 2010; Depla, 2015).

However, in 2012, a new rebel group, namely March 23 (M23), was created and caused further insecurity in eastern DRC (Depla, 2015). Different initiatives were carried out that resulted in the ratification of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC on 24th February 2013, leading to the deployment of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) from Tanzania, South Africa, and Malawi in March 2013 (UN, 2013). The FIB is the military unit that constitutes part of the MONUSCO formed under the UNSCR 2098 of 2013 (UN, 2013). The deployment of FIB in DRC set a new dimension in the history of PKOs. It was in the DRC that PKOs received one of the first Chapter Seven (VII) of UN mandates, and it is the first mission approved to use unmanned aerial vehicles for surveillance purposes (UN, 2013; Gberie, 2013).

Despite all those promised initiatives, MONUSCO failed to stop relentless killings of civilians by AGs. For example, the number of innocent civilians killed, especially in Beni area, kept increasing. In 2014, FARDC, with support from MONUSCO forces, FIB in particular, commenced operations against ADF-NALU in Beni area (African Argument, 2019). "The operations were not effective."² Later, analysis revealed that MONUSCO and FARDC operations against ADF-NALU achieved very little (Titeca and Fahey 2016). As a reprisal for those operations, ADF-NALU started killing civilians in Oicha, Butembo, near Beni town and then they expanded to Beni town. Those killings spread to other areas such as Masisi, Ituri, Walikale and others and they were carried out by the Maimai Nyatura Alliance des Forces Résistantes, Mai-Mai Jetaime, Force de Resistance Patriotique Ituri, Maimai Kifuafua and others. Generally, the

² Interview, Malenda, a Beni resident, 21 January 2023. Beni, DRC.

situation in DRC is getting worse. The Global Centre for Responsibility to Protect [(GCRP) 2023] reported that more than 2,400 people were killed from January to December 2022, approximately double the number of deaths that occurred in 2021 (GCRP, 2023). The resurgence of M23 rebel group in 2021 and its killing of about 40 civilians in Kishishe-Goma from 28th to 30th November 2022 testifies that, regardless of MONUSCO's presence, the security situation in eastern DRC is not stable (UN, 2022a).

4. Understanding Civilians' Protection and Mass Protest Movements

Civilian is a term that describes ordinary, unarmed people who are not members of the armed forces (Henckaerts and Doswald-Beck, 2005). This definition is similar to the UN-Protection of Civilians Policy that considers everyone as a civilian, except persons falling either into categories of members of the armed forces, members of organised armed groups with continuous combat function, and civilians directly participating in hostilities, for such time as they do so (UN, 2019). However, according to Metcalfe (2012), there is no standard definition of the "POC" concept among military, peacekeeping, or humanitarian actors. For Metcalfe (2012), protecting civilians includes three key components. First, it entails compliance by all parties to conflict with international humanitarian and human rights law; second, mitigating or reducing threats and vulnerabilities of civilians; and third, in the long-term, building a protective environment, including strengthening capacities of the host state and local communities (ibid.).

Essentially, the UN (2019) holds that POC's mandate is a process of integrated and coordinated activities by all civilian and uniformed mission mechanisms in PKOs to prevent, deter or respond to threats from physical violence against civilians within the mission's competencies. This includes areas of deployment through the use of all necessary means, up to and including deadly force, without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the host state (UN, 2019). The presented POC's mandate goes hand-in-hand with the first-ever UN Resolution 1265, passed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 1999 (UN, 1999). The Resolution gave PKOs the mandate to take necessary action(s) to protect civilians under imminent threat from physical violence (UN, 2019a).

Although MONUSCO was given the stated mandate, it failed to utilise the mandate given under the Resolution to protect civilians, citing such reasons as lack of modern weapons to counteract AGs, especially M23, complexity of the terrain, lack of jungle warfare capability and others (Princewill, 2022). As a result, the security situation in the eastern part of DRC has kept worsening due to concentrated attacks by AGs. Consequently, people in the eastern DRC decided to organise mass protests as a way to openly show their feelings and voice concerns. This is in line with Human Needs Theory, in which Mitchell (1990) alluded that safety is the first requirement for all human beings, without which it can cause revolt. Similar arguments have been advanced by Ortiz *et al* (2022) explaining that in an attempt to influence public opinion or government policy, protesters may organise an opposition, as a method of voicing their feelings, or they may undertake direct action(s) in an effort to enact anticipated changes themselves. The Human Needs theory explains such a phenomenon as a collective response to create a new social order that would guarantee their needs (Blumer, 1971).

A critical question that arises is how such collective efforts organise? While some scholars, such as Dinnie & Fischer (2020), emphasise the role of formal community organisations such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) dealing with Human rights in pursuing social change, others such as O'Shea, (2007) point to much more informal connections among social movement activists, often rooted in their pre-existing interpersonal relationships.

4.1. *MONUSCO and Citizens Protests*

On 18th October 2014, local people organised violent mass demonstrations towards MONUSCO's base at Boikene in protest against the failure to ensure protection (Welle *et al.*, 2016). Later, demonstrators gathered in front of the MONUSCO Mavivi Base with the same objectives. According to a report from the Human Rights Watch (2016), the major civilian killings happened on 13th August 2016 after ADF-NALU rebels launched multiple attacks on Rwangoma district in Beni city. In such attacks, more than 36 civilians were massacred, hundreds were injured, and several houses were burned (Human Right Watch, 2016). This incident attracted international attention whereby different influential people and organisations such as Pope Francis, the UN and the MONUSCO condemned it (UN, 2016). After the attacks, a series of mass demonstrations arose in different cities in eastern DRC, accusing the Congolese Government and MONUSCO for failing to ensure protection. The demonstrators demanded the withdrawal of MONUSCO forces from the DRC (African News, 2016). Reacting to that, the Government barred public gatherings in the country and declared a state of emergence in North Kivu (GCRP, 2023).

The government's banning of mass demonstrations did not achieve the intended results, as from 24th November 2019, a series of violent anti-MONUSCO mass demonstrations started in different parts of North Kivu, Goma, and Butembo. Protesters attacked the UN bases and staff housing, blocked roads with big stones as well as logs, and looted and burnt MONUSCO offices, including staff housing and burnt UN vehicles and generators, to mention but a few. During interviews, one of the MONUSCO staff said, "Thanks to God. I was in the office when demonstrators set fire to our accommodation. Otherwise, they could have killed me, but I lost almost everything due to such fire."³ The protesters were demanding the withdrawal of the MONUSCO troops because it failed to protect them from killings by ADF-NALU and other AGs (Aljazeera, 2019b). UN also confirmed that mass protests were linked to civilian concerns over growing regional insecurity following continued attacks by ADF-NALU (UN, 2019b).

July 2022 witnessed another violent mass demonstration against MONUSCO. This was after the resurgence of M23, which launched a series of deadly attacks inside DRC and caused many atrocities (UN, 2022). The anti-MONUSCO feelings were intensified in February 2023 after M23 gained more areas of control in the DRC. On 09th February 2023, displaced people living in Kanyaluchinya set fire on three UN vehicles carrying containers, which were on a convoy from Rumangabo to Goma (Defence Post, 2023). The displaced people asked, "Why, with all those military weapons, are you running away from M23 rebel group?"⁴ In that incident, some displaced people were also killed. According to the RFI (2022), on 13th July 2022, Mr Mathias Gillmann (MONUSCO spokesman) stated that MONUSCO had no capacity to fight the rebel groups, notably the M23. That statement prompted the DRC government to expel him from the country. Trustworthiness of the MONUSCO to protect civilians under impending risks was again lost (RFI, 2022).

Between 25th and 27th July 2022 in North and South Kivu, MONUSCO experienced another series of violent demonstrations (Kinghambe & Citeya, 2022). The civilians raised the same claims, MONUSCO's ineffectiveness and failure in taming violent AGs (Ibid.). A MONUSCO staff commented:

This is the toughest situation I have ever met since my 12 years working with the UN. Since July 2022, no serious operations have been conducted for fear of civilian attacks. We have

³ Interview, MONUSCO staff, Beni, 23 February 2023.

⁴ Interview, Beni resident, Beni 07 February 2022.

changed number plates of our vehicles so that we cannot be easily recognised by civilians when we want to go to town for logistics. Without FARDC, there is no movement.⁵

This statement corresponds with that of FARDC General in Beni who said, “These people (MONUSCO) are giving us more tasks. We must escort them whenever they want to go out even to fetch water. Soon we will get tired.”⁶ The violent demonstrations against MONUSCO since 2014 demonstrate MONUSCO ineffectiveness in protecting civilians, which is the biggest dilemma on the part of the UN peacekeeping forces.

Apart from the ONUC, which was stayed for few years, the current UN forces have been in DRC since the year 2000 (Depla, 2015). Several scholars have noted that UN forces have achieved different goals regarding peace and security for the DRC. Some of the achievements mentioned are the facilitation of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process, supporting peaceful repatriation of civilians from neighbouring countries, facilitating returns of people who were living in the Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps back to their homes, helping to re-unify the country, integration of the armed group combatants to the national army (Brassage), reforming the FARDC, supporting democratic elections and others. During interviews, a retired DRC politician asserted, “The UN has done a wonderful job here in the DRC and a remarkable one was the support to democratic elections of 2006, 2011 and 2018/19, which are very important in shaping the political landscape we are seeing today.”⁷ Another interviewee commended MONUSCO for enabling DRC to have a retired president, at least for the first time.⁸

However, despite achievements in some areas, these forces have recorded minimal success in other aspects, especially in the POC (Koko, 2011). As Hultman, (2017) well puts it, PKOs could be termed successful only if they managed to protect civilians from violence effectively. Therefore, as far as this fact is concerned, MONUSCO is not an effective mission because it has failed to assure POC. There are many examples where these forces failed to protect civilians, resulting in the killings of innocent civilians (Koko, 2011). For instance, according to the International Crisis Group (2003), more than 400 people were massacred in 2003 in Ituri, while peacekeepers from Uruguay just stood in their camp without knowledge of how to react.

Similarly, in June 2004, MONUC failed to counter violence against civilians perpetrated by the AGs in Bukavu. Again, in November 2004, MONUC was unable to intervene when General Nkunda’s AG invaded Kiwanja town and killed more than 150 civilians close to the MONUC camp (Koko, 2011). Another example was in August 2010, in North Kivu, when 500 women and children were sexually abused a few kilometres from a UN Camp (Koko, 2011). The biggest noted failure was recorded in November 2012 when MONUSCO just remained watching when M23 rebel group took Goma city. MONUSCO defended such weaknesses by saying it decided not to counter them to prevent possible collateral damage to civilians in Goma city (UN, 2012).

In addition, different major operations conducted by UN forces alone or jointly with the Congolese National Army to fight AGs in the DRC have been failing (Levine, 2011). For example, there was operation UMOJA WETU, in which DRC with MONUC and Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF) jointly fought the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) in January 2009. This operation was launched after DRC and Rwanda agreed to fight FDLR. Another

⁵ Interview, MONUSCO staff, Beni, 07 February 2022.

⁶ Interview, FARDC General, Beni, 10 March 2023.

⁷ Interview, Politician, Goma, 14 August 2022.

⁸ Interview, Goma resident, Goma, 12 March 2023.

operation was KIMYA II launched in South Kivu jointly between the MONUC and the FARDC in February 2009 (Schulman, 2009). In 2010, another FARDC and MONUSCO joint operation, Operation AMANI LEO, was launched. Similarly, operations SOKOLA I and SOKOLA II were carried out in North Kivu in 2014 and 2015, respectively (Reliefweb, 2015). All of these operations had no decisive success and the number of civilian deaths was still on increase.

These scenarios make citizens in DRC question the logic of MONUSCO's inefficiency, given its military might as these interviewees reveal, "We don't understand why MONUSCO is failing to eliminate the AGs while their arsenals, tactics and number of troops are much bigger than AGs."⁹ "How can rebel groups just come and kill people while MONUSCO, which the UN has entrusted to protect us, are just watching? As a citizen of this country, I would rather see MONUSCO leave. We can protect ourselves."¹⁰ It is not only the citizens who have questioned MONUSCO's role, but even higher level diplomats like the French Foreign Minister, Laurent Fabius who asserted that, "The failure of the MONUSCO with heavy weapons to halt the advance of lightly armed rebels was absurd" (UN, 2012). East African leaders' decision to deploy the East Africa Regional Force (EACRF) in DRC also testifies to the failure of UN Forces (All Africa, 2022). If the UN could have been effective, there would have been no need to deploy regional forces for the same missions.

The findings above reveal peoples' frustrations with the UN forces in guaranteeing citizens' security needs. This explains a series of violent mass demonstrations targeting the MONUSCO staff and properties. Citizens believe that MONUSCO can justify its existence only if it thwarts AGs and guarantees peace; otherwise, they see their attacks as justified:

Ask yourself, why didn't we attack MONUSCO when the FIB under MONUSCO managed to neutralise M23? The answer is simple. We want MONUSCO to work, not simply enjoy life with their Land Cruiser vehicles in bars and nightclubs here in Goma, using their big salaries to take advantage of our situation. They are here to justify their big salaries and superfluous budgets.¹¹

Such feelings reveal deep-seated sentiments against UN peacekeepers. Citizens see MONUSCO as an accomplice in the conflict, garnering benefits at the expense of civilian lives. The general observation is that while protecting civilians remains a priority in the eastern part of DRC, protecting civilians by MONUSCO has been fraught with several pitfalls. Thus, MONUSCO's role needs to be revisited for the UN to live up to the ambition of its mandate. This will help to protect civilians and will reduce the frustration of the Congolese population, which has been suffering from persistent insecurity for a long time.

Apart from ineffectiveness in countering AGs, UN troops in DRC have been accused of illegal smuggling, especially of natural resources- (minerals) and even arms and ammunition (Koko, 2011). For example, from 2007 to 2008, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (2008) reported that troops from Pakistan deployed in Mongbwalu were involved in gold smuggling in exchange for guns with militia (BBC, 2008). Other factors contributing to the UN Mission's loss of credibility include a perception of some government officials that some contingents in the MONUSCO are spying for the interests of their states.

There are other reasons which contribute to the ineffectiveness of PKOs. One of them is conflicting interests among Troops Contributing Countries (TCCs), with financial benefits taking

⁹ Interview, A Beni Resident, Beni, 23 January 2023.

¹⁰ Interview, Goma Resident, Goma 20 May 2021.

¹¹ Interview, Goma resident, Goma, 08 February 2023.

precedence. Carnahan, Durch and Gilmore (2006) argue that national interests, which TCCs are fulfilling by using PKOs, are monetary gains from reimbursement, provision of stability in close neighbours' country/countries, provision of experience of their troops, and gaining international support. Mostly, there has been a mismatch between the mandate given and the actual situation on the ground (Gibbs, 1997). Compatibility and commitment sometimes fail PKOs as peacekeepers come from different TCCs with different military backgrounds, languages, experiences, cultures and traditions. Some TCCs lack the commitment to take risks in PKOs, especially when their troops are deployed thousands of kilometres from their home countries (Novosselof & Sharland, 2019). The involvement of Peacekeepers in corruption and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) scandals paints UN missions as unprofessional and indisciplined. These factors and others limit the effectiveness of PKOs to protect civilians.

Not only have UN missions faced criticisms from the local people, but the Government has also not been in good rapport with such missions. The Congolese government has afforded little cooperation to the UN mission from the time of MONUC. At times, it threatened to revoke the consent because it delayed deploying in the Eastern Congo (Clark, 2011). There is a belief among MONUSCO staff that, "Sometimes the government instigates civilian demonstrations against MONUSCO"¹². The International Peace Institute [(IPI) 2011] reported that, during the celebration of 50 years of DRC independence in 2009, the former President, Joseph Kabila, called for peacekeepers to start retreating by claiming the country's security situation was stable. Similarly, Ilunga (2019) asserts that the Congolese Government has repeatedly asked for MONUSCO's withdrawal, accusing the MONUSCO's political department of interfering in the country's sovereignty. For example, the former president of the DRC Joseph Kabila was once quoted by US Foreign Affairs magazine saying:

Our relationship with MONUSCO is love-hate type of relationship. We are in the same boat. If the MONUSCO succeeds, the Congo will succeed, and if Congo succeeds, the MONUSCO and the UN will succeed. The difference is in understanding of success. Our understanding of success is to make sure that we do away with all the AGs and that the population, be in the east or anywhere else lives in total harmony. For the MONUSCO, success is election and human rights. That's not and should not be its mission. I am always reminding the UN that Congo is not Lebanon or Cyprus where you will be deployed for the next 30 years. One day MONUSCO will have to pull out (Foreign Affairs, 2018).

Violent civilian demonstrations create a dilemma as to whether UN forces should fight the civilian demonstrators whom they have been mandated to protect. The correct answer might be that the peacekeepers should avoid fighting with civilians. However, in such circumstances, peacekeepers are likely to use force or even deadly force to protect themselves as mandated by the principles of the PKOs (Findlay, 2002). Yet, excessive use of force may trigger more violence and protests. Definitely, this is a big challenge for both troops on the ground and the policy makers.

MONUSCO's case is however not an isolated one. In Central African Republic, there have been demonstrations by civilians demanding the withdrawal of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission from the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). They gave reasons that MINUSCA is not doing enough to protect them as atrocities by AGs have been on the increase (BBC, 2016). Similarly, on 15th June 2023, the UN Security Council was forced to close operations of its PKOs in Mali called the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which had been in the country for a decade

¹² Interview, MONUSCO staff, 08 February 2023.

since April 2013 (UN, 2023). The UN took such decision after the Malian Government and civilians, in general, demanded the withdrawal of the force because of dissatisfaction with the capability of such force to protect them. The same fate has befallen MONUSCO recently. The government in DRC has pushed the UN to withdraw its troops starting April 2024 to December 2024. In 19th December 2023, the UNSC adopted a resolution (UNSCR 2717 of 2023) which among other things, stipulates how the withdrawal will be conducted (UN, 2023a).

Failures of UN missions have pushed governments to look into other initiatives to resolve their conflicts. One of the initiatives is using Private Military Contractors/Companies (PMCs). For instance, a Russian-based Wagner Private Military Company has been deployed in the Central African Republic, Mali, and Burkina Faso where the UN has troops (Borshchevskaya's, 2020). A senior diplomat described this emerging trend, in various African states, of contracting PMCs even where UN has deployed its PKOs as evidence of loss of trust in UN peacekeeping missions, not only by civilians in those states but also by governments.¹³ Also, countries with security challenges are now resorting to bilateral cooperation rather than seeking UN's peacekeeping interventions. For example, Titeca, (2022) point out that there is OPERATION SHUJAA in DRC by Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) jointly with FARDC against ADF-NALU. Also, Burundi has a bilateral agreement with DRC to fight a rebel group known as RED TABARA in DRC. Equally, apart from SADC forces which operate in the country, Mozambique has bilateral agreements with Rwanda and Tanzania to fight the terror group al-Sunnah wal-Jamaah "ASWJ" (Aljazeera. 2020; Alfiado, 2023).

5. Repairing UNPKOs -Civilians Relations

Amid increasing citizen frustrations and protests against UN peacekeeping missions, what can UN do to repair relations with citizens? The situation in DRC and emerging trends elsewhere in Africa call for UN action to regain the declining confidence. The UN needs to address existing challenges that hinder the effectiveness of its peacekeeping missions. It needs to reform its strategy on PKOs to enhance POC. It should develop mechanisms to commit peacekeeping forces to maintain peace, including setting up clear and achievable mandates for PKOs. The current short-term mandates are unrealistic. The UN should ensure all peacekeeping forces are committed to bringing peace and are given clear and achievable mandates with inbuilt protection of civilians as a core and a priority. Deadlines for accomplishing the mandate should be realistic and based on the cumulative experience of the UNPKOs in the field. The Security Council should seek more profound knowledge of inherent and imminent problems before developing mandates and committing troops. The mandates should be feasible, clear, and unambiguous, unlike the current security environment in which peacekeepers operate. All pre-deployment training must be oriented and related to POC. There must be a thorough advance assessment of the security situation to determine the requirement of PKOs before they deploy.

Additionally, all peace actors in the DRC, including the UN, Regional Organisations, Civilian Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, and others, should first increase their capability on conflict resolution mechanisms and address some external issues contributing to the perceived failures of PKOs. To improve its capacity, the UN needs to deploy well-trained forces capable of facing contemporary complex battlefield environments. Since DRC (especially North Kivu) is dominated by jungle, MONUSCO or any other future missions need to maximise collection of information related to the AGs using Human Intelligence and Artificial Intelligence such as drones and Obiter. The forces should be supported by a sound logistical backup. Equipment and weapons must match the situation on the ground. In addition, UNPKOs

¹³ Interview, Diplomat, Dar es Salaam, 08 February 2023.

should be supported by the presence of strong leadership of both civilians and military with relevant experience, including expertise in PKOs.

This study is, therefore, timely given the increasing demand for reforms in the UN and its auspices. The recommendations this research provides are directed to all actors in PKOs. Enhancing the effectiveness of PKOs will help restore trust of UN among member states, especially those in the developing world. The UN originated from wars, with a prime mandate to maintain global peace and security. Therefore, reforms shall help consolidate its legitimacy to regain the lost trust.

Lastly, the UN needs to have effective strategic communication to make sure that the local people understand its functions, principles, capabilities and limitations to mention but a few. "There are many achievements that MONUSCO has realised in the DRC, but people do not adequately understand their role and performance. Thus, MONUSCO needs to project its good image both locally and internationally."¹⁴ Whatever that be, UN missions have to address civilian security needs otherwise, its relevance will remain in question.

6. Conclusion

The article has discussed violent civilian demonstrations against UNPKOs in DRC due to unfulfilled civilian security needs. It has employed the human needs theory to explain the motives behind these demonstrations. It has also highlighted an emerging trend among African countries to throw away UN peacekeeping missions. The article concludes that for UNPKOs to remain relevant, they should address the security needs of both civilian and hosting states. The article suggests changes in UN's peacekeeping strategies so that to achieve effective protection of civilians wherever UNPKOs are deployed. Otherwise, the UN risks surrendering its peacekeeping role to the emerging self-regulated model of PMCs whose records in guaranteeing human rights is not unquestionable. On the other side, hosting governments such as the DRC should prioritise enhancing the domestic capacity of conflict resolution while utilising available opportunities to increase combatant capacity. DRC, in particular, could take advantage of the recent UN lifting of the arms embargo to expand its army's capacity in weaponry and equipment. This study reinforces existing research on DRC conflict. It approached civilian demonstrations from the theoretical lenses of human security needs. Future research may explore how different actors in the conflict interact to influence civilian perception of UNPKOs.

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¹⁴ Interview, MONUSCO staff, Goma, 13 March 2022.

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