

CHAPTER 68

UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION STABILIZATION MISSION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (MONUSCO)

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INTRODUCTION

THIS chapter analyses the first two and half years of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the successor mission to MONUC (chapter 56).¹ The MONUSCO story is still unfolding, so any conclusions on this mission are necessarily tentative.

MANDATE AND KEY FACTS

*Operation Mandate:*² Security Council Resolution 1925 (28 May 2010) decided that, in view of the “new phase that has been reached” in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the UN mission from 1 July 2010 would bear the title of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). MONUSCO would complete several critical tasks rolled forward from MONUC, notably civilian protection and the stabilization of the eastern Congo; and launch of a peace consolidation initiative in the west of the country, intended to shift the focus of resources and attention to development and capacity building with a corresponding transfer of responsibilities (civilian and military) from MONUC to the government and UN partners.

On 28 March 2013, acting in support of the objectives of the Framework agreement for Peace, Security and Cooperation for the DRC and the region, and answering the call of Governments in Africa’s Great Lakes region, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2098 (2013), by which it extended until 31 March 2014, the mandate of MONUSCO and created a specialized “intervention brigade” to strengthen the peacekeeping operation.

The Council decided that such a brigade would be set up within MONUSCO for an initial period of one year and on an exceptional basis and “without creating a precedent or any prejudice to the agreed principles of peacekeeping.” It would have the responsibility of “neutralizing armed groups” and the objective of “contributing to reducing the threat posed by armed groups to state authority and civilian security in eastern DRC and to make space for stabilization activities.” It was also decided that the intervention brigade would have a clear exit strategy and that the Council would consider extending its mandate beyond one year on the basis of its performance, and of whether the DRC had made sufficient progress in implementing the Peace and Security Framework for the region.

Duration: 1 July 2010—present.

Maximum authorized strength (Resolution 1925, 28 May 2010): 19,815 troops, 760 military observers, 1,441 police plus an appropriate civilian component.

Deployed strength at 31 December 2012: 17,090 troops, 675 military observers, 1,401 police, 977 international civilian personnel, 2,895 local civilian personnel, and 548 UN Volunteers.

Personnel: Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, China, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan, Senegal, South Africa, Ukraine, and Uruguay.

Intervention brigade troop contributors: South Africa, Malawi, Tanzania.

Finance: from July 2010 until June 2013: US\$ 4.262 billion

After a decade of peacekeeping operations in the DRC, the Congolese government, the Security Council, and the Secretary-General agreed in mid-2010 that the UN peacekeeping presence in the Congo should be re-shaped to take account of changes in the country’s political and security landscape as well as the continuing challenge of civilian protection. A successor mission—MONUSCO—was authorized in a renewed effort to secure the stabilization of the eastern DRC and to provide support for a peace consolidation program in the (essentially western) areas of the country considered to be relatively secure and no longer requiring a significant UN security presence.³

The leadership structure of the new mission was organized to reflect this repositioning of the UN peacekeeping presence. Under the overall direction of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, one Deputy Special Representative (DSRSG) was specifically designated to coordinate a stabilization and peace consolidation component with a second deputy designated to head up a rule of law and protection component.⁴

COURSE OF THE OPERATION

UN stabilization efforts in the eastern Congo began in 2005 when the Security Council called on MONUC to develop an action plan to facilitate the restoration of state authority in the Ituri district of Oriental province. A broader effort, encompassing several of the eastern provinces, was developed by MONUC following the January 2008 Goma

peace conference. The resulting security and stabilization strategy envisaged a multi-dimensional approach to peace consolidation, encompassing security, the political process, restoration of state authority, the return and reintegration of refugees and the internally displaced, and the fight against sexual violence.⁵ The strategy was designed to lay the groundwork for MONUC's eventual withdrawal. Subsequently, in April 2009, this strategy was formalized as the UN Security and Support Strategy (UNSSS), later renamed the International Security and Stabilisation Support Strategy (ISSSS), which served as the foundation for the Government's own Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for War Affected Areas (STAREC).⁶ In October 2011, STAREC was extended by the Government until June 2014 while MONUSCO and partners completed the development of the second phase of the ISSSS, the stabilization priority plan for 2012–14.

The consolidation of peace was envisaged essentially as an initiative aimed at the relatively stable areas of Western DRC, where MONUSCO's operational responsibilities could be progressively transferred to other national agencies and development cooperation partners. The Secretary-General announced in early 2011 that MONUSCO, the UN country team, and the World Bank had developed, in consultation with donors, a concept, endorsed by the Congolese government, based on two pillars: one to strengthen the rule of law and justice system and the second for community recovery and access to basic social services.⁷ Joint MONUSCO/UN country team offices were to be established in three western provinces to guide UN support for peace consolidation and to allow the progressive transfer of responsibilities from UN peacekeepers to national and local authorities and UN partners.⁸ This arrangement was also intended to avoid a precipitous departure of the UN peacekeeping assets (principally logistics) needed to sustain UN civilian operations in the provinces where MONUSCO forces are expected to drawdown.

For MONUSCO, the practical application of the stabilization and peace consolidation initiatives translated into five areas of operational focus: protection of civilians; support for the institutions and practice of democratic governance; security sector reform; the defence of human rights and strengthening the rule of law; and the restoration of state authority and economic infrastructure in areas freed from the control of armed groups. A brief overview of each of these areas of operational focus follows, illustrating and underlining the complexity, and sometimes contradictory nature of the MONUSCO mandate.

The predicament of protection: The fall of Goma and the presumption of protection

In approving the mandate of MONUSCO, the Security Council emphasized that the "protection of civilians must be given priority in the decisions about the use of available capacity and resources"⁹ and authorized "MONUSCO to use all necessary means ... to carry out its protection mandate."¹⁰

The gap between the expectation of civilian protection and the realities on the ground had proved very damaging to MONUC's credibility (see chapter 56). Within a matter of weeks, MONUSCO's own credibility was equally tested when, in August 2010, more than 300 people were raped in a mass attack by militia on a dozen villages in Walikale district in North Kivu. The Mission was roundly criticized for its inability to prevent or respond quickly to the attack.¹¹ The UN Secretary-General reported that "MONUSCO patrols and protection mechanisms ... were unable to detect the gravity of the situation, prompting widespread criticism of the Mission's perceived failure to protect civilians."¹²

In response to this and other attacks against civilians, MONUSCO launched several robust actions against militias in North and South Kivu. A series of operations were also conducted against recalcitrant Ituri militias, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (*Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda*, FDLR) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The aim of the operations was to project a more vigorous posture and deter attacks on civilians. Some of these operations were conducted by MONUSCO alone but others were undertaken in cooperation with the Congolese armed forces (FARDC) within the framework of the conditionality policy applied since 2009 to UN support for FARDC operations (on conditionality, see chapter 56).

During the period 2010–12, MONUSCO completed more than two dozen separate operations against Mayi Mayi militias, the FDLR, and the LRA. Efforts continued to strengthen and improve early warning mechanisms through the establishment of joint MONUSCO/FARDC protection monitoring posts, the expansion of the community alert network, and the recruitment of additional community liaison assistants.

These interventions had a considerable impact. Based on the joint security assessments mandated by the Security Council, the Secretary-General reported that "in several areas, there has been a shift from organized and coordinated attacks towards common criminality or acts of banditry by elements of armed groups."¹³ Subsequently, he advised the Security Council that both the LRA and the FDLR had been seriously diminished as fighting forces due to the combined efforts of MONUSCO and the Congolese army.¹⁴

Nevertheless, the Secretary-General still cautioned the Security Council that "the levels of insecurity, violence and human rights abuses in the Kivus and Oriental Province remain alarming." He noted as well, "the pressing need to secure adequate resources for State institutions and the national security services" and that "FARDC reform initiatives ... remained limited."¹⁵

A mutiny instigated in April 2012 by troops of the defunct National Congress for the Defense of the People (*Congrès national pour la défense du peuple*, CNDP) nominally integrated into the FARDC, dramatically amplified the already uncertain security situation in North Kivu.¹⁶ Calling itself the M23 in reference to the date (23 March 2009) of the agreement brokered by Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania between the CNDP and the Congolese Government, the mutiny quickly metamorphosed into a rebellion. Although he denied it, the leader of the rebellion was said to be Bosco Ntaganda, the general who broke with Laurent Nkunda and engineered the CNDP integration into the FARDC early in 2009.

The proximate cause of the rebellion was the alleged failure of the Congolese Government to live up to its commitments. While there was certainly an element of truth in that claim, and indeed in the Government's counter claim that the CNDP was not respecting its own commitments, the immediate spark for the rebellion seems to have been President Kabila's rather casual inference that he would seek to arrest Ntaganda, already indicted by the International Criminal Court in 2006 for crimes allegedly committed some years before in Ituri.

The crisis took a sadly familiar trajectory: violence against civilians, population displacements, and the sharp deterioration of relations between the DRC and Rwanda and Uganda with the Congolese government accusing both countries of encouraging the rebellion with cross-border support. These allegations gained considerable credibility with the publication of reports by the UN group of experts charged with monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the ban on arms transfers to the Congo.¹⁷

Whatever the proximate causes of the rebellion, the outcome proved to be disastrous for the FARDC and highly detrimental to MONUSCO's reputation, again raising questions about its protection mandate. FARDC units deployed to stop the rebellion were quickly over-run, due in part to (perennial) logistical failures. Despite superior numbers, the FARDC quickly disintegrated. In early November 2012, MONUSCO deployed fire support with multiple helicopter gunship sorties in an effort to halt the M23 advance on Goma. It also re-deployed troops from Ituri "to deter any attack on Goma and provide the [MONUSCO] North Kivu brigade with tactical flexibility."¹⁸ Temporary cease-fires were negotiated accompanied by a flurry of diplomatic activity in the hope of finding a political solution to the crisis. But events on the ground moved faster than the diplomatic timetable. Despite an international outcry, and a demand from the Security Council that the M23 desist from advancing on Goma, the M23 entered the city on 20 November 2012.¹⁹ The FARDC collapsed, retreating or deserting in disorder.

MONUSCO did not forcibly oppose the M23's capture of the city. The day before M23's entry into Goma, the Secretary-General's spokesperson stated that "MONUSCO will remain present in Goma and will continue all efforts to robustly implement its mandate to the fullest of its capabilities with regard to the protection of civilians." He added that "any actions to undermine or target MONUSCO will not be tolerated."²⁰ However, a MONUSCO spokesman in the DRC stated that peacekeepers had fought the advancing rebels using rockets, cannon rounds, and helicopter gunships, but MONUSCO's mandate did not go beyond supporting the Congolese army, adding: "We are not going to engage the M23 directly. Our mandate is to support the national army."²¹ Subsequently, the head of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) explained that "it is not the mandate of MONUSCO to directly hit the armed groups ..., they have to be in support of the armed forces of Congo (FARDC)" and because the FARDC deserted Goma, the UN mission could no longer support them under the framework of "joint military operations."²² This response left open the question of whether or not troops on the ground had received instructions from UN headquarters, or indeed directly from capitals, on whether or not to forcefully oppose the entry of the M23 into Goma.

The Security Council expressed strong support for the Mission, and commended “the tireless efforts of all MONUSCO contingents, particularly in and around Goma.”²³ The outside world was less complimentary. A humanitarian official in Goma claimed that “MONUSCO’s behavior has graduated from incompetent to dangerous.”²⁴ The international media carried reports that “rebels captured the main city in eastern DRC, marching into its centre without a shot being fired as the government army fled and UN peacekeepers stood by.”²⁵ The same report quoted a senior UN officer saying that the peacekeepers had no cause to intervene to stop the rebels’ advance “because so far there is no violence.”²⁶ Nevertheless, criticism was leveled that “despite its numerical superiority and fire-power, MONUSCO has not managed to fulfill the crucial component of its mandate since the start of this crisis—the protection of the civilian population.”²⁷

The Goma debacle underlined the fundamental dilemmas facing MONUSCO and, indeed, all peacekeeping missions tasked with civilian protection: when should peacekeepers engage in actions that require them to cross the line between peacekeeping and peace enforcement to ensure civilian protection? While that line is often blurred when relatively short-term, small-scale interventions are needed, there has been little appetite in the Council, including the five permanent members, and among troop contributing countries, for coercive action to forcefully disarm irregular forces (or for that matter, the government’s own security forces) known to be threatening or inflicting harm on civilians.

Democratic governance: The electoral test

Democratic governance is much more than a presidential election. However, given the DRC’s turbulent history of contested power, the UN Secretary-General in 2009 flagged the presidential elections scheduled for 2011 as a critical stage in the consolidation of peace and democracy in the DRC. He characterized the elections as a “strategic milestone” of the transition strategy for the UN peacekeeping presence, an essential step towards the consolidation of peace.²⁸

A year later, while cautioning that the “timely conduct of general elections ... will be vital for the future legitimacy of the democratic institutions” in the DRC, the Secretary-General recommended that MONUSCO provide logistical and technical assistance to assist the electoral commission to facilitate dialogue among all stakeholders.²⁹

In January 2011, President Kabila moved the electoral goal posts, promulgating a constitutional amendment that changed the presidential elections from a two round to a single round, first past-the-post poll thereby permitting the election of a president with less than 50 percent of the popular vote. Subsequently, a reconfigured Electoral Commission headed by a close ally of President Kabila was sworn in, and elections were set to take place on 28 November 2011.

The November elections were beset by numerous organizational problems despite extensive logistical support from MONUSCO. In contrast to the 2006 elections, however, violence was largely limited to sporadic clashes between government supporters and activists from the main opposition party, the UPDS (*Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social*). The results of the elections, which gave President Kabila a comfortable margin of victory, were immediately denounced by the opposition. International stakeholders were divided in their response. Regional institutions and states led by South Africa generally endorsed Kabila's victory while noting logistical and other challenges. By contrast, the United States, the European Union and various observer groups criticized the mismanagement and lack of transparency in the conduct of the elections and questioned the credibility of the results.³⁰

The UN Secretary-General commented that MONUSCO (and the UN Development Programme) "provided critical, timely and much needed support to the Congolese electoral authorities without which, the presidential and legislative elections could not have taken place."³¹ He also noted serious irregularities in the management of the electoral process yet he did not call into question the outcome of the elections but rather stressed the lessons learnt for the conduct of future provincial and local elections.³²

The DRC presidential election gave rise to two uncomfortable questions: first, did the UN and MONUSCO enable a flawed election that did not meet the threshold of legitimacy essential to the political stability of the DRC? Second, did the UN and MONUSCO lose credibility as a result? One independent observer clearly believed that was the case, commenting that "Neither the Security Council nor MONUSCO articulated clear red lines for the credibility of the [electoral] process."³³

Unfinished business: The saga of security sector reform

Calls for the reform of the Congolese army were already voiced as far back as the July 1999 Lusaka Ceasefire agreement.³⁴ During the period of the transitional government (2003–06) a joint coordination committee to plan and monitor a security sector reform (SSR) program was established under MONUC auspices. Much of its attention, however, was directed to the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program and the creation of integrated brigades made up of regular army soldiers and ex-combatants. Then, as subsequently, the Congolese government was reluctant to engage in root and branch reform, including the vetting of senior commanders many of whom had appalling records of human rights abuses or involvement in illicit mining activities.³⁵

Overall, MONUC's efforts to engage with the government on SSR did not produce substantial results. Because of President Kabila's stated preference for bilateral military cooperation,³⁶ MONUSCO's role in SSR has been just as marginal, essentially confined to training support for the national and military police and for the strengthening of military justice.

On the other hand, bilateral engagements have been largely framed and conditioned around the specific interests and requirements of the partner concerned and not

necessarily aimed at a systemic process of reform. The result has been a patchwork of poorly coordinated interventions. In October 2010, the Secretary-General was already reporting that he was “concerned that bilateral support for reform of the FARDC may be waning.” He also noted that “structural weaknesses of the FARDC, which were compounded by the incomplete integration of the Congolese armed groups, including the CNDP ... have continued to create vacuums that the FDLR and other armed groups exploit.”³⁷

The collapse of the FARDC in November 2012 in the face of the M23 rebellion, again precipitated renewed calls for security sector reform, even though there had already been ample warning that the army reform process was stalling.³⁸

In the wake of the fall of Goma, the Security Council reverted one more time to a well-worn format, emphasizing “the primary responsibility of the Government of the DRC to reinforce State authority and governance in Eastern DRC, including through effective security sector reform.”³⁹ The relevant resolution is silent on how that objective might be achieved. The fact that such admonitions have remained a constant feature of Security Council resolutions, statements, and reports⁴⁰ on the DRC for more than a decade does not seem to have prompted the Council, at least in its public pronouncements, to discuss how the future prospects for SSR might be different from the past.

The concept of SSR is, of course, larger than the reorganization and rebuilding of armed forces. Almost from the outset of the UN peacekeeping operations in the DRC, capacity building for the Congolese police figured in the successive mandates of MONUC and MONUSCO. The UN police presence (UNPOL) in the DRC was gradually expanded and UNPOL has conducted numerous training programs for Congolese police officers with the support of various bilateral donors and the EU police mission (EUPOL). UNPOL leadership has played an active role in the police reform steering committee under the authority of the Commissioner General of Police.

Furthermore, together with the EU and bilateral partners, a program of police reform and development is being implemented with MONUSCO assistance. This aims at rationalizing and modernizing the Congo National Police Force (PNC) and accelerating police deployment to conflict-affected areas as part of the broader effort to restore state authority. Despite these initiatives, national policing remains weak and police officers continue to be regularly implicated in human rights abuses.⁴¹ Much of the eastern region of the country is still devoid of a police presence because of continuing conflict, which has driven the police from many areas where “law enforcement” is now either non-existent or in the hands of militias.

The struggle to end impunity: Human rights and the rule of law

The protection and promotion of human rights and the strengthening of the rule of law institutions figure prominently in the MONUSCO mandate; these activities are

an essential corollary of MONUSCO's civilian protection mandate. They reflect the Security Council's concern about the inability (or unwillingness) of the Congolese authorities—military, police, and civilian—to curb rampant impunity for flagrant violations of human rights.

The Joint UN Human Rights Office (JHRO)⁴² in the DRC, a partnership of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and MONUSCO, monitors, investigates, documents, and reports on human rights violations across the country. It also leads the UN's capacity building for human rights, including in the security services, as well as advocacy on behalf of human rights defenders. Some elements of this assistance, for example the JHRO aid for military prosecutions, are very innovative and have extended the operational boundaries of the UN's engagement in strengthening the rule of law in countries affected by violent conflict.

Along with UN partners, MONUSCO, through its Rule of Law section, is extending support to the Ministry of Justice and (with JHRO) to the military justice authorities. It is also providing assistance and some material support for penal reform, including the reconstruction of prisons. With MONUSCO participation, a UN multi-year justice support program has been developed in an effort to improve the administration of justice in the DRC.

What has been the impact of these interventions? The Secretary-General expressed the view that there had been “comparatively greater progress” in the police, the judiciary, and corrections while still noting that the “human rights situation remains of grave concern.”⁴³

The scourge of sexual violence that has overtaken the eastern Congo makes that point abundantly clear. When civilians are under attack, women and girls are almost inevitably the most abused, often by the Government's own security forces. As a result of interventions from MONUSCO, Security Council members, advocacy groups, and civil society organizations, some higher level officers in the security services and the militias have been arrested and prosecuted for serious human rights violations. Indeed, some of the Government's sternest critics have acknowledged limited progress.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, progress is slow and the widespread violation of human rights, especially sexual violence, remains an immense challenge.⁴⁵

Building hope: Restoring state authority and creating economic opportunity

The absence of basic administrative services and law enforcement, the progressive disintegration of economic infrastructure (especially the road network) and the disruption of the rural economy are at once causes and consequences of conflict in the eastern Congo. The resulting collapse of employment and legitimate income opportunities have provided a ready supply of recruits for local militias and artisanal miners ready to illicitly mine minerals, for the benefit of militias and local politicians, FARDC commanders, and neighboring countries.

The stabilization strategy for the Kivus was developed around the concept of “clear, hold, and build.” The aim was to restore some semblance of state authority in areas freed from the control of the armed groups. This campaign was to proceed hand in hand with efforts to revive the rural economy through public works (roads in particular) and agricultural investment. Given the abundant natural resources of the eastern Congo, there was a not unreasonable hope that the end of violence would spark a fairly rapid economic revival.

To that end, the MONUSCO stabilization team channeled resources into priority areas where militia activity had diminished, with the goal of facilitating the rapid deployment of public officials and the police. Key administrative infrastructure—police stations, courts, municipal offices, and military barracks—were identified for refurbishment or rebuilding in support of the deployment. There was also heavy investment in rehabilitating roads either through STAREC or bilateral projects. By mid-2011, a total of \$230 million had been mobilized under the framework of the ISSSS for the eastern DRC (but leaving an estimated funding gap of \$655 million).⁴⁶

From the outset, the stabilization programme faced two fundamental challenges. The first was the failure of the FARDC to protect police and public officials from attacks and reprisals by armed groups re-infiltrating areas over which they had previously lost control. The FARDC has not been able to hold territory even with the assistance of MONUSCO. All the usual shortcomings—poor logistics, unpaid troops, frequent changes of command, and divided loyalties—have totally undermined the effectiveness of the FARDC. Worse, by inflicting violence on the civilian population, the FARDC has forfeited the allegiance of local communities and in doing so fatally compromised the hold and build concept.

The second failing was the government’s inability to put in place and sustain the police, administrative, and judicial officials needed to build the process of stabilization. Like the FARDC, public officials and the police are often not paid and given no logistical assistance (fuel, communications, etc.). Donors, while willing to cover capital expenditures (buildings, equipment), were very reluctant to meet recurrent costs. As a result, newly constructed or rebuilt administrative facilities were often left empty for months on end.

The already complex and immensely demanding task of stabilizing the eastern Congo has been rendered even more difficult by the M23 rebellion, which forced the UN and other partners to suspend various projects.⁴⁷ The Secretary-General reported in November 2012 that “the mutiny of M23 and its consequences have reversed hard won gains in security, stabilization and reconciliation in the eastern DRC.”⁴⁸

Stabilization in the eastern Congo: Building on sand?

As a result of these setbacks, some observers have questioned the value of the MONUSCO-led stabilization effort, arguing that “in the absence of the agreed army reform, military pressure on armed groups had only a temporary effect and,

moreover, post-conflict reconstruction has not been accompanied by essential governance reforms.”⁴⁹

The stabilization initiative represents a holistic effort to deal with the multiple stresses that continue to generate violence in eastern Congo. It was intended to build on the momentum generated by the Goma peace conference of 2008 and the joint Government/MONUSCO efforts then underway to dismantle the various armed groups. It aimed to address specific “root causes and consequences of conflict,”⁵⁰ supporting the implementation of peace initiatives at local level, and helping to stabilize areas where conflict had recently ceased in the belief that channeling resources into security, justice, and economic recovery would gradually create a positive dynamic of confidence.

That dynamic of confidence has not materialized and much of the eastern Congo remains mired in violent conflict. Past experience in other conflicts has shown the vital importance of early action to ensure that the momentum of peace and recovery does not slip away. This was the intent of the eastern Congo strategy. But stabilization and security are inextricably linked. The M23 rebellion and the disintegration of the FARDC in North Kivu in November 2012 underscored, yet again, the weakness of the Congolese state and its leadership, which seems unable to anticipate or find an adequate response to the multiple security crises which have overtaken the country. This then is the single most important lesson: stabilization in the absence of effective security is just not possible. However, over time, security cannot be sustained without the essential ingredients of stabilization: rule of law and economic progress.

CONCLUSION

The events of late 2012 inevitably raised questions about the viability of MONUSCO’s mandate and the way it has been implemented. In response to the November 2012 crisis, regional leaders signed in February 2013 the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSC) for the DRC.⁵¹ However, the Framework reverts to well-worn nostrums, calling on the DRC government to “continue and deepen security sector reform” and to further the agenda of “reconciliation, tolerance and democratization.” The region commits to non-interference in the affairs of neighboring countries and to “neither tolerate nor provide assistance or support of any kind to armed groups.” The agreement also calls for a strategic review of MONUSCO that aims to “strengthen support to the Government to enable it to address security challenges and extend state authority.”

The initial response from the UN Security Council, which welcomed the Framework, appears to be one of “doubling down” on the military option. The Council has authorized, “on an exceptional basis and without creating a precedent or any prejudice to the agreed principles of peacekeeping,”⁵² an intervention brigade, which will be a part of the MONUSCO force but with an offensive mandate. The brigade is entrusted with

the “responsibility of neutralizing armed groups.”⁵³ These provisions seem to take the MONUSCO mandate beyond the accepted norms of UN peacekeeping, which have usually meant the non-use of force (except in defense of the mandate) and the consent of the government of the country concerned.

At the same time, the Council stated that the “Intervention Brigade will have a ‘clear exit strategy.’”⁵⁴ However, it links that strategy to the progress that the DRC makes in “implementing its commitments under the [Peace and Security] Framework” as well as to “the establishment and implementation of a national security sector reform roadmap for the creation of a Congolese ‘Rapid Reaction Force’ able to take over responsibility for achieving the objective of the Intervention Brigade.”⁵⁵

Will this reinforcement of MONUSCO’s mandate and its military capacity mark a turning point in the fortunes of the DRC and the relationship between MONUSCO and the DRC government? Or does it instead make the Mission a hostage to future, and as yet, uncertain governance and security sector reforms? Or will Kofi Annan’s reflection that “Peacekeepers cannot decisively change the balance of force in any conflict”⁵⁶ prove to be prescient?

The Security Council does not seem to have publicly questioned the basic premise on which MONUSCO’s mandate, and indeed the Addis Abba framework, is based: wholehearted government commitment and action on reform. This has not been done despite a decade of experience which casts doubt both on the Congolese government’s willingness to meet its obligations and on the UN and MONUSCO’s abilities to ensure compliance with them.

The stakes are now much higher. For the UN, the decision to field an intervention brigade is a significant risk. In the name of protection and stabilization, the Security Council, by authorizing UN forces to carry out, either unilaterally or jointly with the FARDC, robust, highly mobile, and versatile “targeted offensive operations,” has consciously crossed the Rubicon from peacekeeping to peace enforcement.⁵⁷

It remains to be seen if the individual countries contributing troops to the brigade will impose any caveats on their use of force and whether they will be willing to accept the casualties that might result from more aggressive forward operations. There will also be concerns about the capabilities of the units that will make up the brigade to operate for extended periods in isolated areas with tough conditions. Moreover, offensive operations will generate humanitarian concerns, as they may lead to retaliatory measures on civilians from the targeted militias.

Although the Council has crafted an expanded and more forceful mandate, MONUSCO will likely continue to confront the same fundamental dilemmas: when and how best to use force? How to cooperate, or possibly constrain, undisciplined national security forces? How to manage a relationship with a sovereign government which may not share the same concerns and priorities? How to tackle the myriad local rivalries and enmities that fuel friction and violence among ethnic groups? How can the Tutsi community, which is widely perceived—rightly or wrongly—by Congolese public opinion as a proxy for Rwanda’s interests, be integrated into Congolese society? And what pressures can the UN and MONUSCO mobilize to stop regional actors from intervening in

the eastern Congo? Above all, how can the Mission ensure that the reforms needed to redress the governance failures which facilitate the survival of armed groups are actually implemented?

MONUSCO was intended to mark a new departure in the relationship between the DRC and the United Nations. However the Mission's mandate still largely reflects the aims and language of past mandates. The PSC framework underlines the importance of addressing the underlying root causes of the conflict through a comprehensive peace process⁵⁸ backed, if need be, by force. But the creation of the intervention brigade and the adoption of the regional framework for peace will not easily surmount the contradictions that lay between the good intentions of the international community and the profound divides within Congolese and regional politics. To the contrary, they may well sharpen them by exposing the limits of outside intervention. The threat of the M23 may be eliminated with the aid of MONUSCO's intervention, but MONUSCO cannot replace the indispensable ingredient of successful peacebuilding—effective national leadership and active community engagement.

MONUSCO and other partners should continue to support international efforts at conflict resolution in the DRC. In doing so, however, they would do well to recognize that the Congo will continue “to shock, intrigue or infuriate observers and political actors for many years to come.”⁵⁹

NOTES

1. The background to the wars in the Congo is provided in chapter 56 on the MONUC.
2. For an overview of MONUSCO's mandate, see <www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/monusco/background>.
3. See Security Council resolution 1925, 28 May 2010.
4. Report of the Secretary-General S/2010/164 (30 March 2010), para. 97.
5. Twenty-fifth report of the Secretary-General S/2008/218 (April 2008), para. 36.
6. Twenty-eighth report of the Secretary General S/2009/335 (18 September 2009), para. 44.
7. Report of the Secretary General S/2011/20 (17 January 2011), para. 68.
8. Report of the Secretary General S/2010/512 (8 October 2010), para. 76, and Report of the Secretary General S/2011/656 (24 October 2011), para. 40.
9. Report of the Secretary General S/2011/656 and Security Council Resolution 1925 (2010), para. 10.
10. Security Council Resolution 1925.
11. See, for example, David Smith, “UN ignored Congo rape warnings,” *The Guardian*, 3 September 2010.
12. Report of the Secretary-General S/2010/512 (8 October 2010), para. 8.
13. Report of the Secretary-General S/2011/298 (12 May 2011), para. 60.
14. *Ibid.*, para. 76 and Report of the Secretary-General S/2012/355 (23 May 2012), paras. 79 and 82.
15. Report of the Secretary-General S/2011/298 (12 May 2011), paras. 78, 61, and 54.
16. For details, see Jason Stearns, *From CNDP to M23: The evolution of an armed movement in Eastern Congo* (Nairobi: Rift Valley Institute, Usalama Project, 2012).

17. See the reports of the UN Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo S/2012/348 (21 June 2012); S/2012/348(Add.1) (27 June 2012); and S/2012/843 (12 October 2012).
18. Report of the Secretary-General S/2012/838 (14 November 2012), para. 79.
19. Security Council press statement, 17 November 2012.
20. Statement by a UN spokesperson, 20 November 2012, UN News Centre.
21. Quoted by David Smith and Blase Wetemwami, "Goma trembles before Congo rebel advance UN seems powerless to stop," *The Guardian*, 19 November 2012.
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