Reevaluating the Effectiveness of Peacekeeping and SDG 16 in Africa: Challenges in Combating Ethnic Conflict

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ABSTRACT

After almost 10 years into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African continent remains left behind in many points of the SDG, including SDG 16 "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institution". Many of the world's current issues of armed conflict and territorial disputes still reside in the continent. While many new factors of armed conflict surfaced throughout the decade, a dominant issue remains a big hurdle in bringing peace to Africa, ethnic conflict. In order to solve ethnic conflicts, international efforts of peacekeeping become one of the most used strategies in the hopes to combat these issues. As of 2023, 6 out of the 12 ongoing global United Nations peacekeeping operations still reside in Africa. However, the issue of ethnic conflict remains prevalent and peacekeeping seems to be ineffective in de-escalating it. Using peacekeeping as third-party mediation theory by A.B. Fetherston, this article identifies that whilst UN Peacekeeping is relatively successful in conflict control, it still struggles with resolution processes which prevents long-term peace and resolution to take place. This article also identifies the lack of UN Peacekeeping capability in addressing local conflicts and the complexities of ethnic based-conflict, as well biases in peacekeeping operations contribute to effectiveness. This article also urges the need for greater communication between UN Peacekeeping and local actors, and regional bodies, as well as a more comprehensive training for peacekeeping in handling ethnic conflict.

Key Words: ethnic conflict, SDG 16, peacekeeping, Africa

ABSTRAK

Setelah hampir 10 tahun dibuatnya *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), benua Afrika masih tertinggal dalam mencapai banyak poin dalam SDG, termasuk di dalamnya SDG 16 'Perdamaian, Keadilan, dan Kelembagaan yang Kuat'. Banyak permasalahan terkini dunia terkait konflik bersenjata dan sengketa wilayah terjadi di benua ini. Walau banyak faktor baru yang memicu konflik bersenjata yang muncul sepanjang dekade ini, salah satu isu utama yang masih menjadi hambatan besar dalam mewujudkan perdamaian di Afrika adalah konflik etnis. Untuk menyelesaikan konflik etnis, upaya *peacekeeping* internasional menjadi salah satu strategi yang paling banyak dilakukan untuk memerangi masalah ini. Pada tahun 2023, 6 dari 12 operasi *peacekeeping* global PBB yang sedang berlangsung masih berada di Afrika. Namun, isu konflik etnis masih banyak terjadi dan upaya *peacekeeping* tampaknya tidak efektif dalam meredakan konflik etnis. Menggunakan teori *peacekeeping* sebagai mediasi pihak ketiga oleh A.B. Fetherston, artikel ini mengidentifikasi bahwa meskipun Penjaga Perdamaian PBB relatif berhasil dalam pengendalian konflik, namun mereka masih kesulitan dalam proses resolusi yang menghambat terwujudnya perdamaian dan resolusi jangka panjang. Artikel ini juga mengidentifikasi kurangnya kemampuan Penjaga Perdamaian PBB dalam mengatasi konflik lokal dan kompleksitas konflik berbasis etnis, serta bias dalam operasi penjaga perdamaian yang berkontribusi terhadap efektivitas. Artikel ini juga mendesak perlunya komunikasi yang lebih besar antara Penjaga Perdamaian PBB dan aktor lokal, dan badan-badan regional, serta pelatihan penjaga perdamaian yang lebih komprehensif dalam menangani konflik etnis.

Kata Kunci: konflik etnis, SDG 16, *peacekeeping*, Afrika

Introduction

For the past decade, the actions of the international community have all reflected one concept, the Sustainable Development Goals. From global conferences, such as the annual United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Conference of the Parties (COP), G20, G7, to individual nation state's regional or national policies have all revolved around the Sustainable Development Goals and how international actors can reach those goals by 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals or commonly known as SDGs are a set of seventeen universal goals that was adopted in 2015, but has been developed since the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, as a continuation of the previous global sustainability initiative, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).[1] The goals start with ending poverty and ends with building sustainable partnerships to reach these goals globally. Ever since its adoption, the United Nations and many countries in the world have allocated many resources, investments, and funding in order to achieve the SDGs. Whilst not legally binding, it has become a framework in which many countries have built their policies upon.

One of the goals in the SDGs is goal number 16 which focuses on peace, justice, and strong institutions. This particular goal touches on the ongoing global violence, from war, ethnic conflict, territorial dispute, terrorism, to gang and political violence.[2] SDG 16 aims to raise concern and increase emphasis on the need to build sustainable and just political institutions and conditions in order to stop violence and bring more peace in conflict prone areas across the world. With indicators such as the reduction of all forms of violence and related death rates and the promotion of rule of law, SDG 16 targets the eradication of any form of conflict and violence.[3] The United Nations Global Progress Report on SDG 16, released in late 2023 unfortunately shows a slow and concerning progress of SDG 16, especially in comparison to other SDG targets. For the first time since SDG was first established, there was an increase in civilian related deaths globally back in 2022.[4] Many factors contribute to this increase, particularly with the increase of casualty from the Russia invasion toward Ukraine. However, besides the invasion, the increase of civilian deaths in 2022 was also caused by the 23% increase of deaths in Sub-Saharan Africa.[5]

Amongst these regions, Africa seems to have some of the biggest challenges and setbacks in achieving SDG 16. A 2019 SDG Report shows 7 out of the 10 lowest ranking countries in achieving SDG 16 are in the African continent, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Nigeria, and Angola.[6] Many of these struggles of the African region in successfully achieving their SDG targets stems from the long history and still on-going conflicts happening in the African region. In 2023, Africa, with some northern regions connected to the Middle East, became the region with the most armed conflict, with more than 45 conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, and 35 armed conflicts in the

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[1] "The 17 Goals," United Nations, accessed January, 3, 2024, https://sdgs.un.org/goals.

[2] United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition* (New York: United Nations Publishing, 2023), 48.

[3] "SDG 16 Indicators | SDG 16," SDG 16 Hub. Accessed April 25, 2024. https://www.sdg16hub.org/landing-page/sdg-16-indicators.

[4] "Global Progress Report on Sustainable Development Goal 16 Indicators: A Wake-up Call for Action on Peace, Justice and Inclusion," 2023, *UNDP*, UNODC, UNDP, OHCHR, https://www.undp.org/policy-centre/oslo/publications/global-progress-report-sdg-16, 25.

[5] "Global Report Report."

[6] Kempe Ronald Hope Sr., "Peace, Justice and Inclusive Institutions: Overcoming Challenges to the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 1 ." *Global Change, Peace & Security* 32, no. 1 (2020): 63. doi:10.1080/14781158.2019.1667320.

rest of the African region.[7] Currently, five out of 10 of the least-peaceful countries in the world are in the African region.[8] These conflicts, many of which have been going on for decades, have seen close to no resolutions and have only gone up in numbers, with some of the highest numbers of sexual violence coming from Northern African countries.[9] Attempts to combat these violence, such as through arms weapon tracking and seizing remain some of the most successful globally due to lack of information and regional cooperation.[10]

Over the years, the root causes of violence and conflict in Africa have become more complex. Recent issues of natural resource dispute and religious extremism have added more variables to take into account in tackling conflict in the region. However, a long-standing issue in African conflict are deeply rooted in disputes due to ethnicity. By definition, ethnic conflict is a conflict, usually violent, that refers to disputes between contending groups who identify themselves primarily on the basis of ethnic criteria and who make group claims to resources on the basis of their collective rights.[11] Ethnic conflict is not an uncommon occurrence in Africa. As a continent with many ethnicities, with a long history of colonization, followed by unstable governments built upon what was left from colonization, disputes relating to marginalization, non-inclusive political governments, and lack of democracy created room for many ethnic disputes to grow in Africa.[12] Throughout the past 70 years, ever since more countries in Africa became independent and free from colonization, the creation of growth and development of African nations has always been held back by ethnic conflicts amongst its society .The Rwandan Genocide in 1994, one of the most noticeable and horrific example of modern ethnic conflicts, resulted in the death of millions of people from the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic in Rwanda and to this day, its aftermath still effects Rwanda's political and economic growth.[13] Currently, ethnic conflict in South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) also rises as two out of the many ethnic conflicts still happening in Africa. These conflicts have been one of the many factors that have hindered development and stability amongst African nations. Many African countries have seen an upsurge in numbers of forced displacements of its people due to conflicts, with countries such as Sudan and Somalia seeing over 30 percent increase in forced displacement.[14]

In facing these issues, many efforts have been implemented, both by national government and international organization and collective efforts. One of the most notable and consistent efforts in combating armed conflict is through the United Nations Peacekeeping. UN Peacekeeping is a joint international effort through the United Nations conducted and deployed to conflict areas in order to help

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[7] "Today's Armed Conflict," Geneva Academy, accessed January, 3, 2024, https://geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts .

[8] "The Armed Conflict Survey 2022: Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Analysis," International Institute for Strategic Studies, November, 18, 2022, https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis//2022/11/acs-2022-sub-saharan-africa .

[9] "Global Report Report," 31.

[10] "Global Report Report." 36.

[11] Errol A. Henderson, "Ethnic Conflicts and Cooperation," *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict* 1, no. 3 (2008): 747. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012373985-8.00062-3.

[12] Mudida, Robert. *An Emerging Africa in the Age of Globalization*. New York: Routledge, 2022., 72

[13] "How well has Rwanda healed 25 years after the genocide?," The Economist, March, 29, 2019, https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/03/28/how-well-has-rwanda-healed-25-years-after-the-genocide?utm_medium=cpc.adword.pd&utm_source=google&ppccampaignID=18151738051&ppcadID=&utm_campaign=a.22brand_pmax&utm_content=conversion.direct-response.anonymous&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQiAkeSsBhDUARIsAK3tiecIZh057651UW8jdE1vG8Kxb-sRHc6mE_OvGXgLH2tCsfflOlx4yn0aArkQEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds .

[14] "African Conflict Displace Over 40 Million People," Africa Center for Strategic Studies, August, 22, 2023, https://africacenter.org/spotlight/african-conflicts-displace-over-40-million-people/ .

deescalation the conflict. The role of UN Peacekeepers, the multinational troops deployed to conflict areas, vary from helping in a ceasefire to community reintegration and conflict prevention. UN Peacekeeping operations first started during the Cold War as a practical solution in resolving on-going conflicts diplomatically and with as little violent confrontation as possible.[15] Since its first establishment, the UN has taken on over 70 peacekeeping operations. In 2023 alone, there are 12 ongoing peacekeeping missions, with almost half of them being in the African continent, 5 to be more specific, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara (MINURSO), United Nations Organisation stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central Africa Republic (MINUSCA).

Taking note of the previously discussed ethnic conflict in Africa and SDG 16, peacekeeping plays a very important role in upholding and implementing SDG 16 in the continent. Peacekeeping becomes a crucial tool in achieving SDG 16 targets of the establishment of rule of law, as well eradicating violence and upholding human rights in conflict areas. However, recent events have created shifts in the way people see UN Peacekeeping, especially in Africa. Many African countries have slowly lost faith in the success of UN Peacekeeping and have started to look for alternative solutions, with Mali and the DR Congo government expressing their frustration and plan to withdraw from UN Peacekeeping in their respective countries.[16] These dissatisfaction stems from the lack of progress these UN Missions in Africa have achieved in the last few decades. UN Peacekeeping has faced several failures in resolving conflict, with the most prominent example of this case being the Rwandan Genocide which caused more than 70.000 casualties.[17] With the ever changing geopolitical landscape and the surge of violence and terrorism in the region, it has the potential to become worse. Critiques also arise when looking at the budget allocation from African UN Peacekeeping in 2023, which soared up to 6.1 billion USD.[18]

Seeing these issues, this paper will discuss further regarding the effectiveness of UN Peacekeeping and its operations in combatting and eradicating conflict, specifically the seemingly never-ending ethnic conflicts in Africa. It will also focus on the previous attempts of peacekeeping in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo as study cases in order to evaluate peacekeeping challenges in resolving ethnic conflict in Africa.

Literature Review

The first group of literature used by the author is the group that sees UN Peacekeeping as an effective tool in combating conflict, specifically in the African region. Whilst it is undeniable that the current peacekeeping missions are not perfect in any way, data proves that there is a positive relation between peacekeeping and peace in Africa. It sees peacekeeping as a third-party solution that has been fairly effective in resolving some of the worst conflicts in Africa. In an article by Barbara F. Walter, Lise Morje Howard and V. Page Fortna, the authors argued that despite its imperfections and complications, UN Peacekeeping has done a substantial job in maintaining global security and peace. It is argued that peacekeeping has statistically been beneficial and successful in conflict management,

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[15] Richard Caplan, "Peacekeeping/ Peace Enforcement," accessed January, 1, 2023, https://pesd.princeton.edu/node/561 .

[16] Teresa Nogueira Pinto, "Peacekeeping without the UN." GIS Reports, February 12, 2024, https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/un-peacekeeping-africa/.

[17] "Peacekeeping Without the UN."

[18] "Peacekeeping Without the UN."

decreasing civilian deaths, and facilitating peace-agreements.[19] The second literature in this group is by Margherita Ghioioso, Jesicca di Salvatore, and Jonathan Pinckney. This literature argues how UN Peacekeeping plays a big part in reducing battlefield deaths in civil wars, specifically in Africa from 1992 to 2011.[20] The authors argued that with more UN Peacekeeping troops being sent to conflict areas, it reduces the amounts of deaths in the battlefield, even when the peacekeeping mission ends up being unsuccessful.**[21]**

The second group of literature sees that peacekeeping brings more negative side effects than it does positive. Many see the initial result of peacekeeping but turn a blind eye on the negative impacts that come with peacekeeping, acting as a western and liberal solution towards African conflict. In an article by Roy May and Gerry Cleaver, it is stated that peacekeeping in Africa has improved throughout the years and Africa itself has started to gain the capability to enforce its own peacekeeping through the UN Peacekeeping. These capabilities have mostly been about the increasing number of manpower that Africa has contributed. However, when it comes to logistics and the transportation of resources, Africa is still very much dependent on western powers and aid and will most likely continue to do so.[22] With this pattern of aid coming from the west, this article insinuates that UN Peacekeeping efforts, which has been mainly supported by western countries, proves as a short-term solution to conflicts in Africa, will also bring continuous dependency.

Another article by Phillip Cunliffe also mentioned a few points relating to external influences. In this article it is argued through its case studies that the UN Peacekeeping mission does not in fact align positively with democracy, but can undermine the democracy of states.[23] It states that peacekeeping gives opportunity to foreign actors to influence the political process of a country, specifically processes that relate to military operations through UN Peacekeeping.[24] In the case of Africa or countries with unstable governments, it's easy to use this as a leverage against national governments, threatening them to pull out aid and support if they do not comply with their demands. This indirect influence in a country's decision-making process is what is seen as harmful towards a country's democracy.

Looking at both groups of literature, peacekeeping is mostly analyzed from the perspective of logistics and operations. Its effectiveness is determined by the UN's effectiveness in the decision making process and program within the mission. However, it is also important to emphasize the importance geopolitical influences have in the success and effectiveness of a peacekeeping mission. The nature of a conflict and the community in conflict plays an important factor in the success of a peacekeeping mission, which is unfortunately rarely holistically discussed alongside the operational and logistic analysis. This paper posits that the success and effectiveness of UN peacekeeping still faces major and fundamental challenges, and the challenges are caused by not only the infectivity of UN Peacekeeping strategy, but also the nature of the complexity of Africa's history with ethnic conflict.

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[19] Barbara F. Walter , Lise Morje Howard and V. Page Fortna, *"The Extraordinary Relationship between Peacekeeping and Peace,"* British Journal of Political Science (October 2021): 1705-1722, doi:10.1017/S000712342000023X.

[20] Margherita Belgioioso, Jessica Di Salvatore, and Jonathan Pinckney, "Tangled up in Blue: The Effect of UN Peacekeeping on Nonviolent Protests in Post–Civil War Countries," *International Studies Quarterly* 65, no.1 (March 2021): 5. https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqaa015.

[21] "Tangled Up in Blue".

[22] Roy May, and Gerry Cleaver, *"African peacekeeping: Still dependent?",* International Peacekeeping 4, no.2 (November 2007): 1-21, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13533319708413664.

[23] Philip Cunfille, *"From peacekeepers to praetorians – how participating in peacekeeping operations may subvert democracy,"* International Relations 32, no. 2 (December 2017): 15, https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117817740728.

[24] Cunfille, "Peacekeepers to praetorians."

Methodology and Theory

This paper uses a qualitative approach in research and analysis. It is based on literature study through secondary data from case studies, UN Peacekeeping reports, and previous literature regarding matters of UN Peacekeeping and ethnic conflicts in Africa. It also uses a comparative analysis of two current peacekeeping missions in Africa, specifically, United Nations Organisation stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) to find patterns in the methods used by UN Peacekeeping in facing ethnic conflicts. The two missions were chosen as a study case due to its scale of operations, being the two of the largest UN Peacekeeping Operations in 2023.[25]It also uses evaluation reports of both missions by Effectiveness of Peacekeeping Operations Network (EPON).

In order to conduct the analysis, this paper will use the theory by A.B. Fetherston that looks at peacekeeping as a third-party mediation. In her work to find a theoretical framework for peacekeeping, Fetherston applies the activity of peacekeeping through a contingency model. Firstly, the main goal of peacekeeping is conflict control. Conflict control refers to deescalation of conflict and mediation of conflicting parties in order to control hostilities.[26] This then continues to the establishment of a room for democratic political process to continue. However, Fetherson notes the importance that peacekeeping missions do not stop at conflict control. With the contingency model, Fetherston states that after conflict control, peacekeeping missions have to take the next step of 'facilitation of an atmosphere conducive to negotiations and settlement' or 'facilitation of the resolution process'.[27] This means that after the initial conflict control, that will be the base of the establishment of a negotiation and resolution, peacekeeping has a role of guiding through the reestablishment and settlement process of the aftermath of conflict. This theory also moves with the assumption that conflict comes in phases and it is important that for a Peacekeeping mission to be successful, it needs to come with the right strategy depending on the phase of the conflict. Fetherson also emphasized on how this theoretical framework tries to take into consideration the importance of both the means and strategies, as well as the end goal. Additionally, Fetherston sees that currently there are noticeably discrepancies between the demand of peacekeepers as mediators, negotiators, and facilitators, and their military training.[28]

Analysis

a. Case Study of MONUSCO and UNMISS

Out of the current five operating peacekeeping missions in Africa in 2023, three of them have a long history with ethnic disputes. In order to have a better look at the peacekeeping mission in the African region, it is important to take a look at these current missions. The UN Organization Stabilization MIssion in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or MONUSCO is one of the oldest current peacekeeping missions, started in 2010. Established as a continuation of Mission the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) established in 1999, MONUSCO comes in as an effort to establish stability in the DR Congo region long-running ethnic conflict in the region. After the devastating 1994

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[25] "Peacekeeping Without the UN."

[26] A.B. Fetherston, *Towards a Theory of United Nations Peacekeeping* (London: Macmillan Press, 1994), 151.

[27] Fetherston, *Theory of Peacekeeping.*

[28] Isiaka Alani Badmus and Bert Jenkins, "Basic Concepts and Theories in International Peacekeeping: An Analytic Review," *Austral Brazilian Journal of Strategy & International Relations* 8, no. 16 (2019): 60. https://doi.org/10.22456/2238-6912.80990.

genocide in Rwanda, over 1 million Hutu ethnic from Rwanda fled to what now is DR Congo, which was mainly dominated by the Tutsi ethnic. In 1996, rebellions then started, led by Laurent Desire Kabila to take over the current government, which led to the establishment of DR Congo. However, not long after, in 1998, a rebellion against Kabila's government, supported by Rwanda and Uganda created an armed conflict that took the attention of the global world and led to a demand of ceasefire by the UN Security Council. This was what then led to the establishment of MONUC. During the midst of conflict, MONUC was created with the mandate of supervising the then established and agreed upon ceasefire agreement and stayed in the country to help the elected government in resolving conflicts and uproar in some of DR Congo's provinces. MONUSCO came to be in 2010 with an emphasis on the mandate of protecting civilians, deploying humanitarian personnel and human rights defenders amongst other things.[29]

For the past 13 years, the MONUSCO mission has significantly helped in establishing a somewhat stable government in DR Congo and has contributed in preventing many armed conflicts, especially in the Kivu region. Many have even come to say that without the MONUSCO mission, DR Congo would not exist in its form today.[30] In 2019, Effectiveness of Peace and Operations Network (EPON) did an evaluation of the effectiveness of MONUSCO. It tried to analyze its effectivity using eight dimensions, namely Political Primacy and Organization of Elections, Protections and Stabilization, National and Local Ownership, Regional and International Support, Coherence and Partnerships, Legitimacy, Impartiality and Credibility, Women, Peace, and Security, and People Centered Approach.[31] Generally, even in the midst of financial pressure from the Security Council and what many see as a lack of resources in implementing such ambitious mandates, MONUSCO has performed relatively well. It was successful in navigating through several democratic elections in the DR Congo without major complications. It also has become the leading peacekeeping mission that has developed an advanced and thorough Protection of Civilians (PoCs) strategy, such as Joint Protection Teams (JPTs) and Community Alert Networks (CANs).

However, a major challenge that still occurs within the mission, a very impactful one in fact, is the lack of coordination and cooperation with the government itself. Although operational wise, MONUSCO has been relatively successful and effective, it has always had problems when it comes to cooperation with the DR Congo government. Efforts from MONUSCO are often met with hesitation, resentment, and strong urges to get out of the country. During an interview with *Foreign Affairs*, Joseph Kaliba, the President of DR Congo professed his views on MONUSCO by stating that in his perspective MONUSCO and the UN seemingly have different priorities when it comes to the main goal of the mission. While Kaliba, representing the government, sees success as the containment of armed groups and harmony, MONUSCO sees it as elections and human rights.[32] This missmatched view of priority action has held back several operations that would benefit the country according to the UN, for example with the establishment of Security Sector Reform (SSR). SSR was a reform to focus on three aspects of

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[29] "MONUSCO Background," United Nations, accessed January 5, 2024, https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/background .

[30] Alexandra Novossellof, "The Effectiveness of UN Peacekeeping in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," IPI Global Observatory, December 19, 2019, https://theglobalobservatory.org/2019/12/effectiveness-un-mission-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/.

[31] Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network, *Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in the DRC/ MONUC - MONUSCO* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2019), 73-111. https://effectivepeaceops.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/EPON-MONUSCO-LowRes.pdf.

[32] "Big Man in Congo: A Conversation with Joseph Kabila," Foreign Affairs, December 14, 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/interviews/big-man-congo .

security, which are army, police, and justice.[33] It was established through the Security Council resolution 2348 in hopes to coordinate with the government of DRC in advancing the reform of its security pillars. However, the action was met with resistance from the government.

Similar patterns can also be seen in the UN Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan or UNMISS. UNMISS was first established in 2011 as a response towards the uproar of conflict occurring in the midst of South Sudan's independence. As a newly independent country, South Sudan rose from a 6-year independence process that ended with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.[34] In the midst of its establishment, during its first few years, South Sudan's political and social landscape was filled with armed conflict and disputes as results of ethnic tensions that was left from the previous civil war. During that time, UNMISS was established with 4 pillars of mandate, which includes protection of civilians, creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, supporting the implementation of the revitalized agreement and peace processes, and monitoring, investigating, and reporting on violations of humanitarian and human rights law.[35]

Looking back at its strategy, UNMISS has significantly helped the crisis in South Sudan. During the first few years of conflict and violence, UNMISS played a significant role in providing over 200.000 refugees shelter and safety.[36] As part of their PoCs program, the establishment of a 'PoCs' site for people fleeing Dinka-led South Sudan's People Defence Forces (SPLA) remains a huge help for victims. However, with the renewal of the mission most recently in 2023, many still see that a few aspects of the operations remain unsuccessful and face many challenges. For one, many issues regarding financing and its distribution often arise, seeing as almost 70% of UNMISS' budget goes towards PoCs sites.[37] This would have been beneficial if it was allocated well. However, evaluations and a report from EPON towards UNMISS shows that these allocated funds distributed towards PoCs sites are unfortunately still ineffectively used. This is due to the fact that different distribution of PoCs sites require different priority needs. Whilst some may need more immediate physical facilities, others may not be as urgent, and yet the allocation of funds and resources are not based on the local conditions of each PoCs.

When looking at these case studies, a few conclusions can be brought up. If we try to look at this from Featherston's theory of peacekeeping as a third-party mediation, a key step seems to be missing or lacking from both examples. As previously stated, the first goal of peacekeeping is conflict control. It can be relatively agreed upon that both MONUSCO and UNMISS have both successfully achieved this and or are still continuing to do so. Efforts of Protection of Civilians, enforcing ceasefire and peace treaties, deployment of troops, and continuous efforts of creating dialogue space between conflicting parties have been achieved consistently in the past decade on both missions. However, Featherston also mentioned the key step for a peacekeeping mission, that is the facilitation of the resolution process. In order to be considered fully successful and ready to depart from the conflicting area, each mission has to be able to reach this goal, according to their established mandates. Resolution process means not only stopping the conflict, but creating foundations to help sustain long-lasting

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[33] "MONUSCO Security Sector Reform," United Nations, accessed January 9, 2024, https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/security-sector-reform .

[34] "UNMISS Background," United Nations, accessed January 9, 2024, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/background .

[35] "UNMISS Background."

[36] Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network, *Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan/ UNMISS* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2019), 58. https://effectivepeaceops.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/EPON-UNMISS-Report-LOWRES.pdf

[37] Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network, United Nations Mission in South Sudan, 104.

institutions and resolutions to prevent another outbreak and unfortunately both missions still lack this piece of the puzzle.

This particular aspect of peacekeeping is particularly hard to do on both of the case studies. In the UNMISS mission, whilst trying to achieve peace and stability from violence, a framework for strong institutions is still lacking. It seems as though UNMISS is still stuck in the phase of conflict control in the last decade, rather than slowly trying to move one, or at the least allocate resources to create institutions that can stand on its own. This struggle also arises with the fact that when dealing with ethnic conflict, both peacekeeping missions seem to have a hard time in solving the core of the problems. Admittedly, issues of conflict in both regions and other regions of Africa are in fact very complicated and has many layers of historical tension behind it, however, as a tool and active agent in helping achieving peace and stability, peacekeeping missions need to be able to identify the core issues of these conflicts and solve it at its core.

The MONUSCO mission struggled to have good cooperation with the government of DR Congo due to their hesitation to work with them. While the government sees the mission benefits them, they welcome it with open arms. However, when the mandate, or more specifically execution style of the mandate differs, referring to the example previously stated above, the government becomes resentful. In the context of DR Congo, as an example, with the implementation of their Security Sector Reform (SSR) creates setbacks in implementing strong institutions and stability. This is due to the fact that by implementing the SSR, the government of DR Congo, which has roots in ethnic politics and is controlled by the country's elites will be less benefitted. This constraint due to a divided and undemocratic government rises as a prevalent pattern that creates complications in peacekeeping missions

These sets of setbacks are the issues that frequently come with ethnic rooted conflicts. During the hundreds of years of colonization in Africa, the region was divided as administrative regions based on their cultural similarities, resources, and economic practices. This division then led to the development of ethnic consciousness that over the years grew to competition between ethnicities, more specifically its elites in resources.[38] Colonials rulers even used this to create policies that purposefully widen the divide amongst different ethnic groups in order to have better control of the region (divide and rule method).[39] This ethnic tension evolved over the years until what it was today. In the modern age, the ethnic tension forms in the shape of these ethnic based politics. Whilst not explicit, many leading political parties in African countries are dominated or based on certain ethnicities. In order to gain political power and thus economic power, these political party elites often use ethnicity as their way of gaining supporters for their agenda. This then bleeds into ethnically based political elections, in which votes and alliances are gained, not because of ideologies, like most of the world, but allegiance to their ethnicity.[40] These ethnic biases that arise during pre-election then seeps into the government and thus often emerge as governments with primordial based actions within it. These primordial based actions can be seen through, for example, putting certain people in positions of power in the government based on their ethnicity and creating ethnic bias policies. This is the core of the ethnic conflict issues that makes it so hard to solve.

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[38] Robert Mudida, *An Emerging Africa in the Age of Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 71.

[39] Mudida, Emerging Africa, 71

[40] Mudida, Emerging Africa, 73.

With such a deep-rooted history, ethnic conflict requires solutions of different levels in order to thoroughly cover all tiers of the problem.[41] Within the African region, tackling ethnic disputes requires solutions at the national, regional, as well as community based level. Most cases of peacekeeping, especially in Africa, lack capacity in addressing local conflicts, whether it's due to the lack of communication or comprehensive understanding of community problems.[42] There were several occasions of this happening, where UNMISS failed to handle the inter-communal conflict between the Lou Nuer and Murle ethnic group, which resulted in hundreds of deaths from 2011-2012 in the state of Jonglei. This failure to engage with local communities and local issues was also seen in the MONUSCO program called the Ituri Pacification Commision, where its members which consist of individuals from different ethnic and political groups, were seen as an inclusive solution to resolve violent conflict. However, in its implementation, the Commission failed to resolve riots between the Hemu and Lendu-based militia groups.[43]

In continuance of the failure in the step of facilitating resolution processes, this step is often hindered in tackling ethnic conflict due to the biases that occur during the mission. Facilitation of resolution processes require conflicting parties to meet, with the help of UN Peacekeeping, to establish room for negotiations and a resolution process as the result. Third party mediation in conflict requires the trait of neutrality and impartiality, especially in the case of ethnic conflict. As a third party, UN Peacekeeping must be able to facilitate both sides of conflict, in order to establish its legitimacy and trust from both sides to resolve the conflict. If UN Peacekeeping is seen as biased towards certain groups, it has the potential to lead to more conflict.[44] However, most cases of UN Peacekeeping are established in conjunction with the government, therefore its agenda is based on priorities aligned with the government.[45] In the case of peacekeeping in Africa, this issue occurred when it comes to coordination with the government of South Sudan itself. South Sudan comprises over 65 ethnic groups. Adding to that, its long history of ethnic conflict and civil war, some of which still happens to this day, creates an unstable and biased government for UNMISS to work with. The mandate of protecting civilians, whilst upholding government sovereignty sometimes blur when situations occur in which the ruling government becomes the oppressor or the party creating the tension.

b. New Steps for Peace and Stability

With these recurring issues, we have established that whilst many aspects of peacekeeping have improved over the years, some important parts of it remain faced with challenges, especially when dealing with ethnic conflict. With the complexities of ethnic conflict, especially in the Africa region where the issue is deeply-rooted in its history and political systems, eradicating the issue requires solutions and improvements in several different aspects from both the technicalities of peacekeeping operations, as well joint efforts from the African nations' government and regional organizations. From the case studies we can see that both peacekeeping operations lack the final step of being able to have good coordination with the government, whilst maintaining their priority mandate, especially when it

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[41] Sergio Luiz Cruz Aguilar,"Ethnic Conflicts and Peacekeeping," In *Risk, Identity, and Conflict: Theoretical Perspective and Case Studies*, edited by Steven Ratuva, Hamdy A. Hassan, and Radomir Compel, 157–83. Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd., 2021.

[42] "Ethnic Conflict and Peacekeeping."

[43] "Ethnic Conflict and Peacekeeping."

[44] "Ethnic Conflict and Peacekeeping."

[45] "Ethnic Conflict and Peacekeeping."

differs from the nation or government's interest. Whilst this seems like a cross-road that is quite hard and sensitive to tackle, however not impossible.

The struggle and challenges in the final step of peacekeeping operations stems from the lack of collective understanding of the definition of peacekeeping and the mandate. Over the course of decades that these peacekeeping missions take place, the changes in mandate needs to be fully addressed not just within the Security Council and head decision makers, but at every level of the operations to reduce miscommunication. Lack of trust from the government and different priorities also show that the intention and that the international community thinks is best for the country may differ from the national interest. While from the side of the UN, this restraint is seen as a hurdle in achieving the peacekeeping goal, it is important to note that at the end of the day, a state's sovereignty remains the number one rule. Therefore, a degree of flexibility, when can be had, needs be kept in mind when proposing operations and programs. By having clear dialogue of intention and interest between the UN and the government, as well as leaving room for negotiations, a practical solution, although may differ from its original plan, can be executed. It is also crucial to increase trust between the government and the UN. Improvements in communication, not just at the level of state, but with other international actors, as well as local actors working for the same cause, can help in preventing inefficiency. Another key factor that plays in executing a successful peacekeeping mission, especially in dealing with ethnic conflict, is to have a deep understanding of the history and dynamic behind ethnicity and identity. Going beyond military, peacekeeping missions and peacekeepers need to find a balance between military, political, and humanitarian approach. Paying extra attention to the root causes of ethnic dynamics in creating peacekeeping strategies also play a big role.

Conclusion

SDG 16 aims to raise concern and increase emphasis on the need to build sustainable and just political institutions and conditions in order to stop violence and bring more peace in conflict prone areas across the world. With indicators such as the reduction of all forms of violence and related death rates and the promotion of rule of law, SDG 16 targets the eradication of any form of conflict and violence. The United Nations Global Progress Report on SDG 16, released in late 2023 unfortunately shows a slow and concerning progress of SDG 16, especially in comparison to other SDG targets. Many of these concerning progress revolve around certain regions that are statistically high in conflict. One of those regions is Africa. Several countries in Africa are ranked the lowest when it come to SDG 16 progress. Whilst many factors of conflict occur, the dominant form of conflict are ethnic conflict or conflicts between two or more ethnic groups. To eradicate and counter these conflicts, the UN implements the Peacekeeping Mission as an effort to de-escalate conflict and help regain stability in the region. Although it does not have authority, peacekeeping has helped many countries in achieving peace. However, even with all these efforts, peacekeeping missions still cannot seem to be able to tackle many conflicts in Africa, especially those that stem on ethnic-centered disputes.

Using the theory of peacekeeping as a third-party mediation from A.B. Fetherston, it is discovered that although many aspects of peacekeeping have been effective, mostly the first step of peacekeeping, which is conflict control, efforts in facilitating resolution processes, or the facilitation of negotiations, rehabilitation programs, and dialogue, are still lacking. Using an example of the UN Peacekeeping Mission MONUSCO in DR Congo and UNMISS in South Sudan, this paper discovered several problems that hinder the second step of peacekeeping. Due to Africa's deep rooted history of colonialism, ethnic tension has been prevalent in many levels of society in Africa. These tensions which

often lead to conflict and violence require solutions from all levels of society, including on the regional, national, and local community level. Unfortunately, both missions struggled in government cooperation and maintaining a good working relationship with local governments, with many miscommunication and misperceptions occurring and hindering effective program execution. Issues of biases inherent in peacekeeping operations, and the failure to effectively engage with local communities and address their specific needs are also still prevalent. Moreover, the differing priorities between international peacekeeping mandates and national interests further complicate the peacebuilding process.

Moving forward, addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. This includes fostering greater trust and communication between UN Peacekeeping forces and host governments, as well as enhancing collaboration with regional and local actors. A deeper understanding of the historical and socio-political dynamics underlying ethnic conflict is essential in crafting more effective peacekeeping strategies. Furthermore, a holistic approach that integrates military, political, and humanitarian efforts is crucial in addressing the root causes of ethnic conflict and building sustainable peace.

Acknowledgement

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