

The Impact of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions on Conflict Resolution in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Temiloluwa Anne Ojo-Lanre and Akeem Amodu²

Abstract

The persistent prevalence of armed conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa has necessitated the continuous deployment of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions aimed at maintaining peace and facilitating post-conflict recovery. Despite these efforts, the region remains plagued by violence, state fragility, and recurring crises, raising critical questions about the actual impact of UN peacekeeping missions on conflict resolution. This study investigates the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations in resolving conflicts and fostering sustainable peace in Sub-Saharan Africa. Anchored in liberal institutionalism and conflict transformation theory, the research assesses the extent to which UN interventions have achieved their intended goals. Employing a qualitative, case

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1. Department of Politics and International Relations, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria; annabelojolanre@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9648-7459>.
 2. Department of Politics and International Relations, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria; akeemamodu@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8677-9948>

study approach, the study draws on secondary data from UN reports, academic literature, and policy analyses. It examines four key missions: MONUC/MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo, UNMISS in South Sudan, MINUSMA in Mali, and MINUSCA in the Central African Republic. The findings reveal mixed outcomes: while the missions have contributed to civilian protection, humanitarian support, and the reduction of open hostilities, they have often fallen short in addressing the root causes of conflict, facilitating political reconciliation, and achieving long-term peace. Key challenges identified include mandate ambiguity, limited resources, lack of local ownership, and complex political environments. The study concludes that while UN peacekeeping missions play a critical role in stabilising conflict zones, their effectiveness in achieving comprehensive conflict resolution remains constrained by operational, structural, and political limitations. To enhance their impact, the study recommends clearer mandates, stronger collaboration with regional organisations such as the African Union, greater investment in peacebuilding, and increased inclusion of local actors in the peace process. The paper contributes to ongoing debates on global peacekeeping practices and offers insights for policymakers and international actors involved in African conflict resolution.

Key Word: United Nations, Peacekeeping, Conflict Resolution, Sub-Saharan Africa, Impact

Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa has been the focal point of various violent conflicts, including civil wars, ethnic violence, terrorism, and state fragility. Countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan, Mali, and the Central African Republic (CAR) have experienced extended durations of instability, leading to significant human misery, displacement, and socio-economic decline. These confrontations have frequently exceeded national capabilities, requiring the intervention of international entities. The United

Nations (UN) has led peacekeeping initiatives in the region, implementing multidimensional missions to stabilise war-affected countries, safeguard people, and facilitate post-conflict rehabilitation.

United Nations peacekeeping missions aim to establish conditions favourable for enduring peace. These missions have transitioned from conventional ceasefire monitoring to intricate mandates encompassing disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR), electoral assistance, civilian protection, and institutional transformation (Bellamy & Williams, 2010). The United Nations has initiated some of its most lengthy and expensive missions in Sub-Saharan Africa, including MONUC/MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MINUSMA in Mali. Notwithstanding these endeavours, the region persists in contending with recurrent cycles of violence, prompting enquiries regarding the overall efficacy of these missions in achieving long-term conflict settlement.

This study analyses the efficacy of UN peacekeeping operations in addressing conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa. It examines the impact of these missions on peace processes, the reduction of violence, and the enhancement of political stability. It aims to identify the elements that facilitate or hinder the success of UN activities in the region through case studies and comparative research. The paper examines the partnership between the UN and regional entities, including the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS, in fostering sustainable peace. Considering the substantial financial and human resources allocated to peacekeeping, it is imperative to rigorously evaluate the genuine impact of these missions beyond superficial stability. Similarly, this paper analyses major case studies to elucidate the strengths and limitations of UN peacekeeping in an area characterised by intricate security issues.

Statement of the Problem

Considering the massive implementation of United Nations peacekeeping missions in Sub-Saharan Africa, the region continues to suffer from enduring and recurring conflicts. Missions like MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo, UNMISS in South Sudan, MINUSMA in Mali, and MINUSCA in the Central African Republic were created primarily to foster peace, safeguard people, and assist in post-conflict reconstruction. Nevertheless,

some countries persist in facing instability, precarious political structures, and sporadic violence years subsequent to the deployment of peacekeepers.

This paradox prompts essential enquiries into the effectiveness and influence of UN peacekeeping in promoting enduring conflict resolution. Although several missions have effectively diminished violence momentarily, others have encountered challenges in mandate execution, logistical limitations, insufficient governmental backing, and a deficiency of local ownership. Furthermore, the intricacy of contemporary conflicts frequently incorporating non-state entities, terrorism, and transnational criminal organisations, presents novel problems that conventional peacekeeping frameworks may be insufficiently prepared to address.

The issue is exacerbated by the fragmented coordination between the UN and regional entities such as the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS, whose initiatives occasionally overlap without attaining strategic coherence. As a result, there is increasing apprehension that UN peacekeeping deployments may be inadequate in achieving their long-term goals of conflict resolution and peace consolidation in the region.

Research Objectives

The broad objective of the paper is to elucidate the impact of United Nations peacekeeping missions on conflict resolution in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, the specific objectives of the paper are to:

- i. Investigate the role of UN peacekeeping in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- ii. Explore the effectiveness of these missions in achieving conflict resolution; and
- iii. Unravel the factors influencing their success or failure.

Conceptual Clarifications

Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping denotes the deployment of multinational personnel, usually under the United Nations' aegis, to sustain peace and security in post-conflict or vulnerable settings (Akindoyin, 2024). Historically, peacekeeping missions were established to oversee ceasefires and facilitate the execution of peace agreements with the permission of the concerned parties (Bellamy et al., 2021). The activities adhered to the principles of neutrality, the

prohibition of force except in self-defence, and the agreement of the host nation. The character of peacekeeping has undergone substantial transformation since the conclusion of the Cold War. Modern peacekeeping frequently encompasses more comprehensive and multifaceted mandates that incorporate civilian protection, facilitation of political processes, disarmament, and institutional development (UN Peacekeeping, 2023).

Peacekeeping missions have been implemented in Sub-Saharan Africa amidst intricate conflict environments marked by intra-state violence, ethnic fragmentation, terrorism, and ineffective governance. Missions like MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo and UNMISS in South Sudan illustrate the transition from traditional to multidimensional peacekeeping.

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding refers to the initiatives aimed at addressing the fundamental causes of conflict and cultivating enduring peace through the enhancement of institutions, promotion of social cohesion, and facilitation of development (Barnett et al., 2020). This protracted process typically commences during or immediately following peacekeeping operations and includes endeavours such as judicial reform, democratic governance, economic reconstruction, and reconciliation. While peacekeeping establishes a stable environment, peacebuilding guarantees the longevity of peace. In Sub-Saharan Africa, peacebuilding has been vital in nations like Liberia and Sierra Leone, where international assistance contributed to the reconstruction of state institutions and the prevention of conflict recurrence. Nonetheless, the disconnect between peacekeeping and peacebuilding mandates frequently obstructs the transition from stabilisation to sustainable peace (de Coning, 2018).

Peacemaking

Peacemaking denotes diplomatic endeavours aimed at negotiating peace accords between opposing factions. It encompasses mediation, negotiation, and various forms of communication mediated by states, international organisations, or third-party entities (Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse, 2016). In contrast to peacekeeping, which is conducted on the ground, peacemaking transpires at the political and diplomatic levels, frequently preceding or occurring simultaneously with peacekeeping operations.

The function of UN special envoys and regional mediators in peace processes in nations such as Sudan and the Central African Republic underscores the significance of peacemaking in commencing and maintaining peace initiatives. However, when peacemaking does not produce inclusive or lawful accords, peacekeeping missions may be implemented in precarious post-conflict environments when political resolutions are still unattainable.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution simply entails addressing the root causes of discord and identifying mutually agreeable solutions to avert future occurrences. It includes all phases of conflict intervention- peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding- yet explicitly targets the attainment of enduring, structural peace (Fisher et al., 2019). Resolution encompasses more than the mere management or containment of conflict; it entails the transformation of relationships, the redress of grievances, and the establishment of organisations adept at peacefully resolving future disagreements.

UN peacekeeping deployments aid in conflict resolution by ensuring security, assisting political transitions, facilitating humanitarian aid delivery, and safeguarding civilians. Nonetheless, their influence on long-term conflict resolution in Sub-Saharan Africa is contentious, especially in environments characterised by structural disparities and fragile state structures.

Types of UN Peacekeeping Missions

The UN has established diverse peacekeeping operations designed to address the intricacies of modern conflicts. They include:

Traditional Peacekeeping: Missions, such as the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in the 1950s, focus on overseeing ceasefires and maintaining buffer zones.

Multidimensional Peacekeeping: Missions such as MONUSCO and UNMISS are assigned comprehensive missions, encompassing the support of political processes, the protection of civilians, and the facilitation of disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR).

Robust Peacekeeping: In unstable regions like Mali (MINUSMA), the Security Council permits the use of force exceeding self-defence to safeguard people and dissuade armed factions. This category has prompted

ethical and legal discussions regarding neutrality and the application of military force (Durch & Berkman, 2006).

United Nations and Sub Sahara African States

The body of literature concerning United Nations (UN) peacekeeping and its function in conflict resolution has notably increased in the last twenty years, especially pertaining to its activities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Researchers have examined peacekeeping from various viewpoints, encompassing theoretical critiques and empirical evaluations of mission efficacy. This analysis consolidates essential discussions and conclusions, emphasising the advantages and drawbacks of UN peacekeeping operations in tackling Africa's intricate conflict environment.

UN peacekeeping is founded on the principles of neutrality, the permission of the parties involved, and the prohibition of force unless in self-defence or for the protection of the mandate. Historically, peacekeepers functioned mostly as monitors to oversee ceasefires. Since the 1990s, the UN has progressively implemented multidimensional peacekeeping missions with mandates encompassing civilian protection, disarmament support, electoral processes, and state-building (Bellamy & Williams, 2010). The increased mandates are particularly apparent in African contexts, where conflicts are frequently intrastate and involve several non-state players.

The efficacy of these missions is a topic of continuous discourse. Fortna (2008) contends that peacekeeping deployments substantially diminish the likelihood of conflict resurgence by serving as a buffer between adversaries, overseeing ceasefires, and fostering confidence. Her quantitative study on civil conflicts indicates that peacekeeping enhances the longevity of peace agreements. Nonetheless, she recognises that effectiveness is context-dependent and significantly influenced by the mission's mandate, available resources, and the political will of stakeholders.

Peacekeeping in Sub-Saharan Africa has garnered both commendation and condemnation. Missions such as MONUC/MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo have faced allegations of ineffectiveness despite their duration and scale. Autesserre (2014) asserts that these missions frequently adopt a top-down, technocratic methodology that sidelines local stakeholders and neglects the fundamental social dynamics of conflict. She

underscores the necessity of “bottom-up” peacebuilding that involves communities and tackles local complaints, a facet often absent in UN efforts.

Other researchers emphasise the operational and systemic limitations that hinder peacekeeping efficacy. According to Durch (2006), numerous missions in Africa function under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which confers upon them the ability to employ force. However, they frequently lack sufficient troop strength, logistical resources, and political endorsement from member nations. The disparity between mandate and resources engenders a “credibility dilemma,” particularly when missions are tasked with safeguarding civilians in extremely unstable contexts such as Mali or South Sudan.

The significance of regional actors is also widely highlighted in the literature. Williams (2013) emphasises the increasing significance of collaborations between the UN and African entities, including the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS. Although these collaborations provide local legitimacy and contextual insight, they frequently encounter coordination difficulties, conflicting political objectives, and varying levels of capacity. Effective conflict resolution relies not only on the UN’s skills but also on the robustness of its collaboration with regional entities and host governments.

Moreover, the literature examines the unexpected repercussions of peacekeeping. Certain research indicates that extended international presence may unintentionally reinforce conflict economies or undermine local institutions (Pouligny, 2006). Concerns exist over the erosion of accountability, particularly when peacekeepers face allegations of wrongdoing, thereby undermining their legitimacy among local populations.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, there is a consensus that peacekeeping is an essential instrument for managing international conflicts. The essential factor is customising mandates to particular conflict dynamics, maintaining strong interaction with local stakeholders, and equipping missions with adequate resources and political backing. The necessity for adaptable, context-sensitive peacekeeping is particularly pressing in Sub-Saharan Africa, where conflicts are increasingly influenced by transnational threats including terrorism, climate insecurity, and organised crime.

Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in three interconnected theoretical frameworks: liberal institutionalism, conflict transformation theory, and the human security paradigm. Collectively, these frameworks offer a thorough perspective for examining the function and influence of United Nations peacekeeping operations in conflict resolution in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Liberal institutionalism operates as a fundamental philosophy for comprehending the justification for the existence and operations of international organisations like the United Nations. Liberal institutionalist theory posits that international institutions are essential for fostering cooperation, regulating anarchy within the international system, and mitigating conflict through organised interaction (Keohane, 1984). UN peacekeeping deployments are perceived as instruments with which nations together tackle global security issues. These missions, created through consensus among UN member states, offer platforms for multilateral solutions to disputes that jeopardise international peace and security. Liberal institutionalism posits that institutions such as the UN may shape state behaviour and promote peaceful conflict resolution by establishing standards, disseminating information, and mitigating uncertainty. This viewpoint elucidates the rationale behind the deployment of peacekeeping missions and their anticipated role in stabilising conflict-prone areas.

On its part, the theory of conflict transformation, promoted by researchers like Johan Galtung and John Paul Lederach, provides a profound and dynamic comprehension of how peacekeeping might transcend the mere cessation of violence to cultivate enduring peace. In contrast to conflict management or resolution theories that prioritise immediate solutions, conflict transformation underscores the importance of enduring structural and relational change. Lederach (1997) asserts that permanent peace necessitates the transformation of the fundamental social, political, and economic structures that incite war. This idea highlights the significance of UN peacekeeping deployments in Sub-Saharan Africa, emphasising their role in not just executing peace accords and separating combatants but also in fostering institution-building, reconciliation, and community participation. Missions that fail to tackle the fundamental causes of conflict- such as inequality, governance failure, or marginalisation- are unlikely to achieve enduring peace.

Thirdly, the human security paradigm shifts the emphasis of peacekeeping from state-centric security to the safeguarding and empowerment of individuals. Introduced in the 1994 Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), human security underscores the necessity of safeguarding individuals against significant and widespread risks, such as violence, poverty, and sickness. This paradigm is particularly pertinent in Sub-Saharan Africa, where people frequently endure the consequences of violent conflicts. UN peacekeeping mandates increasingly prioritise the protection of civilians (POC) as a fundamental objective, indicating a transition towards human-centred peace operations (Newman, 2010). This strategy corresponds with multifaceted peacekeeping operations that emphasise civilian protection, humanitarian accessibility, and the enhancement of social services. The human security perspective is essential for assessing the actual effects of peacekeeping operations on at-risk populations.

Collectively, these theories offer a comprehensive framework for examining the planning, execution, and results of UN peacekeeping missions. Liberal institutionalism elucidates the structural and diplomatic rationale for their creation; conflict transformation theory emphasises the necessity for profound, systemic change; and the human security paradigm assesses the missions' effects on civilian well-being and enduring peacebuilding. This theoretical framework directs the analysis of the successes and shortcomings of UN peacekeeping operations in addressing conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative case study methodology to analyse the influence of United Nations peacekeeping operations on conflict resolution in Sub-Saharan Africa. The research examines four principal peacekeeping operations: MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), UNMISS in South Sudan, MINUSMA in Mali, and MINUSCA in the Central African Republic (CAR). These missions were chosen based on their magnitude, intricacy, and strategic significance within the overarching framework of UN peacekeeping in Africa.

The selection of a qualitative method is determined by the nature of the research questions, which aim to comprehend the mechanisms and reasons behind peacekeeping efficacy rather than to quantify results. Qualitative methodologies provide a comprehensive examination of the political, social, and institutional aspects influencing the efficacy or ineffectiveness of peacekeeping operations. Comparative analysis of the chosen case studies offers insight into the many contexts and factors affecting mission outcomes.

Data collection predominantly depends on secondary sources. These encompass: Official United Nations documents and mission reports; Policy papers and publications from regional entities such as the African Union and ECOWAS; Academic journal articles, books, and scholarly critiques; Reports from international non-governmental organisations (e.g., Human Rights Watch, International Crisis Group). This desk-based research methodology guarantees many views and data sources to enhance the analysis and reduce bias.

Thematic content analysis will be employed for data analysis. Collected information will be structured according to principal themes, including mandate execution, civilian protection, cooperation with regional stakeholders, conflict transformation initiatives, and post-conflict peacebuilding. The analysis will evaluate both immediate outputs (e.g., decrease in violence, election oversight) and enduring effects (e.g., institutional stability, reconciliation, repatriation of displaced individuals).

To guarantee the reliability and validity of the conclusions, triangulation will be utilised as well as cross-verifying information from diverse sources and comparing results across case studies. The methodology's limitations encompass possible biases in secondary sources and the lack of primary field data resulting from access restrictions. Nevertheless, the abundance of extant literature and government documents provides a reliable basis for study.

Case Study: Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC/MONUSCO)

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has hosted one of the most enduring and intricate peacekeeping operations in United Nations history. The UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), initiated in 1999, was replaced by the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the

Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) in 2010. These missions were authorised to assist in the execution of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, stabilise the nation, safeguard civilians, and promote state-building following the Second Congo War, a conflict involving numerous regional participants that led to millions of fatalities and displacements.

MONUC was originally assigned to monitor ceasefire breaches and support humanitarian aid efforts. As the conflict progressed and elections were scheduled, its mandate broadened to encompass disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) of armed factions, electoral assistance, and civilian security. In 2010, MONUC evolved into MONUSCO, acquiring a comprehensive stabilisation mission under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which permits the use of force to safeguard civilians facing imminent threats (United Nations Security Council, 2010).

In 2013, MONUSCO was augmented with the creation of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), the inaugural UN peacekeeping unit officially authorised to conduct offensive operations against armed factions. The FIB's engagement with the M23 rebel faction in North Kivu represented a notable transformation in UN peacekeeping principles and was broadly regarded as a military triumph (Tull, 2015).

The peacekeeping presence in the DRC has yielded ambiguous results. MONUC and MONUSCO positively contributed to electoral stability, especially during the 2006 and 2011 general elections, and were instrumental in disarming armed factions, enhancing humanitarian access, and facilitating the repatriation of internally displaced individuals in specific areas. Their presence dissuaded large-scale crimes on numerous occasions, and their backing fortified the Congolese national army in combating insurgent organisations (Autesserre, 2010).

Nonetheless, the mission has encountered much criticism. MONUSCO has faced allegations of being bureaucratic, sluggish in its responses, and frequently ineffectual in safeguarding people during assaults by armed factions. Critics contend that the mission's huge scale- frequently surpassing 20,000 soldiers- has not resulted in commensurate efficacy on the ground. In numerous communities, there exists profound distrust of UN forces, fuelled by suspicions of passivity or collaboration during critical violent incidents, such as the massacres in Beni and Ituri provinces (Stearns, 2012).

Furthermore, the mission has faced challenges due to inadequate coordination among international stakeholders, the Congolese government, and civil society organisations. The central government's limited capacity and purported corruption have exacerbated peacekeeping and state-building initiatives. The withdrawal strategy of MONUSCO has been a topic of discussion, particularly considering the persistent conflict in eastern DRC. The DRC story illustrates the imperative of adaptable mandates, stringent norms of engagement, and local ownership for effective conflict settlement. The establishment of the Force Intervention Brigade represented an uncommon proactive approach by the UN and indicated a transition towards more assertive peacekeeping measures. However, the DRC example underscores that military achievement alone cannot ensure enduring peace without the implementation of political reforms, justice, and socioeconomic growth.

South Sudan (UNMISS)

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was founded in July 2011 according to UN Security Council Resolution 1996, subsequent to South Sudan's independence from Sudan. The mission initially concentrated on facilitating state-building, fostering peace and development, and enhancing the capabilities of the nascent government. Nonetheless, the onset of civil war in December 2013 significantly transformed the mission's direction, redirecting its emphasis toward safeguarding people and enabling humanitarian aid.

The conflict, chiefly between forces aligned with President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar, rapidly intensified into a savage civil war marked by ethnic bloodshed, extensive displacement, and pervasive human rights violations. The UN Security Council modified UNMISS's mandate with Resolution 2155 (2014), emphasising civilian protection, monitoring human rights abuses, and facilitating the execution of peace agreements. By mid-2015, more than 200,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) were residing in UNMISS-managed Protection of Civilians (PoC) camps, underscoring the mission's essential humanitarian function (UNMISS, 2022).

Despite encountering logistical and operational obstacles, UNMISS significantly contributed to reducing the extent of violence. The mission established secure refuges for civilians, enabled humanitarian corridors, and promoted negotiation between conflicting parties. The human rights reporting function heightened global awareness and exerted pressure on political leaders to adhere to peace procedures. Nonetheless, criticisms endure. The mission has faced allegations of insufficient early warning responses, restricted mobility in remote regions due to security concerns, and strained relations with national authorities who frequently regarded UNMISS as invasive (Craze, 2023).

In 2018, the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) was executed, primarily due to the endeavours of regional entities like IGAD, with UNMISS providing ancillary support. Since that time, the mission has shifted to facilitating the peace process, encompassing electoral preparations, transitional justice, and community healing. UNMISS has strengthened its field presence to enhance interaction with local populations and authorities, a transition that corresponds with overarching objectives of conflict transformation and human security (Day, 2021).

Nonetheless, the security situation remains precarious. Ongoing communal violence, food shortages, and political paralysis persist in jeopardising peace and stability. The future efficacy of UNMISS hinges on its capacity to adjust to these emerging risks while exerting pressure on national actors to fulfil the peace agreement. The mission's transition to early warning systems, mobile peacekeeping patrols, and community involvement signifies a positive adjustment to South Sudan's dynamic conflict landscape.

Mali (MINUSMA)

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was created in April 2013 in response to the political instability and insurgency in northern Mali. The mission's principal objective was to facilitate political processes and execute security-related stabilisation duties, especially in the northern regions, following the disintegration of state power due to a Tuareg revolt, the emergence of Islamist insurgencies, and a military coup in 2012. MINUSMA is one of the United Nations' most

perilous and logistically complex peacekeeping missions, owing to Mali's extensive geography, unstable political landscape, and the existence of violent extremist factions.

The operation was initiated under UN Security Council Resolution 2100, with mandates encompassing civilian protection, assistance in reinstating state authority, and the execution of the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement. Notwithstanding its extensive mandate, MINUSMA has had considerable challenges in achieving its goals. A significant problem has been the asymmetric threat presented by jihadist organisations, including Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). These factions consistently assault peacekeepers, local security personnel, and civilians, resulting in several regions being ungovernable and exceedingly perilous (International Crisis Group, 2023).

While MINUSMA has contributed to stabilisation in certain metropolitan areas and facilitated elections and peace negotiations, its overall efficacy in conflict resolution in Mali has been constrained. A significant constraint has been the inadequate collaboration between the mission and the Malian government, particularly after the coups in 2020 and 2021. Tensions escalated in 2023 when the transitional military administration demanded the evacuation of the mission, alleging ineffectiveness and interference. The UN Security Council enacted Resolution 2690, permitting the incremental withdrawal of MINUSMA, anticipated to conclude by the end of 2023 (United Nations, 2023).

Moreover, MINUSMA faced operational inefficiencies, restricted mobility due to topography and logistical challenges, and little interaction with local communities. Bøås and Torheim (2023) observe that the mission's emphasis on state-centric stabilisation has insufficiently addressed grassroots issues, resulting in unresolved conflicts in rural regions.

MINUSMA's experience underscores the intricacies of peacekeeping in contexts characterised by extreme violence, political instability, and diminished state legitimacy. It also exposes the constraints of UN missions when cooperation from the host state wanes or becomes antagonistic. Although the operation attained certain tactical victories in safeguarding civilians and facilitating political processes, it ultimately failed to cultivate durable peace or alleviate conflict in Mali's centre and northern regions.

The dissolution of MINUSMA prompts significant inquiries over the viability of UN peacekeeping in the Sahel and other precarious environments. It emphasises the necessity for more adaptable, regionally anchored, and publicly endorsed missions capable of responding to asymmetric threats and evolving political contexts.

Central African Republic (MINUSCA)

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was instituted in April 2014 pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 2149, in response to the disintegration of state authority and the emergence of sectarian conflict between the predominantly Muslim Séléka rebels and the primarily Christian anti-Balaka militias. The nation has become entangled in a profound humanitarian and security crisis, marked by widespread displacement, atrocities against civilians, and the collapse of law and order. MINUSCA was tasked with safeguarding civilians, facilitating the transition process, and aiding in the restoration of state authority throughout the nation.

MINUSCA's involvement in conflict settlement has been intricate and demanding. The operation has achieved considerable progress in diminishing violence in key urban areas and safeguarding people. The deployment of peacekeepers has facilitated the reopening of humanitarian corridors, the organisation of elections in 2015–2016 and 2020–2021, and the restoration of security institutions, including the national police and gendarmerie (UN Security Council, 2023). The mission has also facilitated the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration, and Repatriation (DDRR) programmes aimed at armed groups prepared to participate in peace negotiations.

Nevertheless, the mission encounters ongoing hurdles. Militant factions persist in exerting dominance over extensive areas, particularly in rural and resource-abundant locales. Notwithstanding the ratification of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation between the government and 14 armed factions, execution has been sluggish and plagued by recurrent infractions (International Crisis Group, 2023). MINUSCA forces have often been overextended, lacking the requisite people and equipment to adequately establish a presence throughout the whole territory. The expansion of external mercenaries, particularly the Russian Wagner Group, has

complicated the security landscape and heightened concerns regarding the deterioration of international rules and coordination (de Bruijne, 2023).

The partnership between MINUSCA and the Central African government has encountered strain. The government frequently depends on the mission for security assistance, although it concurrently reproaches the UN for its passivity in response to rebel aggression. This political ambivalence has influenced coordination and the credibility of the peacekeeping initiative in the perception of certain local populations.

Nevertheless, MINUSCA continues to be a crucial participant in the peace process. Its multifaceted mandate- encompassing military, political, and humanitarian elements- demonstrates a cohesive strategy for conflict resolution. The mission's ongoing presence is essential for averting a return to large-scale violence and for facilitating national and local discussion channels. Its collaboration with civil society, women's organisations, and youth projects has been essential in promoting inclusive peacebuilding endeavours.

Analysis and Discussion

This discussion assesses the efficacy of these missions in fulfilling their goals and facilitating long-term resolution of conflicts, based on the case studies. An overarching topic that arises from the analysis is the multifarious character of peacekeeping mandates in modern African conflicts. In contrast to conventional peacekeeping, which mostly focused on ceasefire monitoring, contemporary missions incorporate military, political, and humanitarian elements. MINUSCA has concentrated on civilian protection, disarmament, and facilitating electoral procedures in the Central African Republic. Likewise, MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade has adopted an aggressive stance against armed factions in eastern DRC, indicating a transition to assertive peacekeeping (UN Security Council, 2023). This shift indicates an increasing acknowledgement within the UN system that sustained peace necessitates more than only halting wars; it demands addressing core causes and implementing institutional reform.

The efficacy of peacekeeping missions significantly varies, shaped by contextual elements like host government collaboration, geographical conditions, foreign intervention, and the capabilities of mission personnel.

In South Sudan, UNMISS has shown variable success in safeguarding civilians, despite the establishment of Protection of Civilians (PoC) locations. The mission has frequently been hindered by political meddling and restricted mobility, particularly during times of escalated violence (ReliefWeb, 2023). In Mali, MINUSMA has encountered ongoing threats from Islamist militants, inadequate infrastructure, and increasing popular discontent driven by perceived ineffectiveness and foreign intervention, culminating in the Malian government's decision to evacuate the mission in 2023 (Al Jazeera, 2023).

The interplay between peacekeeping missions and host governments is a crucial element. Although collaboration is crucial for mission success, it frequently turns tense when states view the UN as exceeding its authority or not fulfilling its obligations. The Central African Republic government has become further dependent on non-UN entities like the Wagner Group, eroding MINUSCA's legitimacy and hampering its coordinating initiatives. These dynamics highlight the necessity for more explicit mandate enforcement, increased diplomatic engagement, and improved strategic communication to foster mutual trust between missions and national authorities (de Coning, 2023).

A significant finding from the investigation is the necessity of local engagement and legitimacy. Missions that focus on community-based conflict resolution, civil society involvement, and local governance generally yield more sustainable results. Nevertheless, numerous missions continue to employ a top-down methodology, constraining their capacity to resolve micro-level issues. In the DRC, local residents have voiced discontent with MONUSCO, leading to protests and violent reprisals. This underscores a disparity between mission aims and community expectations, indicating that increased focus should be directed towards context-specific tactics and grassroots peacebuilding.

Furthermore, the resource deficit continues to be a constant limitation across all four missions. Numerous peacekeeping units are underfunded, deficient in logistics, and dispersed over extensive areas. This hinders their capacity to react promptly to emerging threats or deliver consistent protection to people. Enhanced collaboration with regional entities like the African Union and ECOWAS could mitigate this disparity, augmenting mission scope and credibility.

Conclusion

This study attempted to analyse the influence of United Nations peacekeeping operations on conflict resolution in Sub-Saharan Africa, utilising significant case studies such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), South Sudan (UNMISS), Mali (MINUSMA), and the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). The research indicates that although UN peacekeeping missions have been crucial in stabilising conflict areas and facilitating peace processes, their efficacy has fluctuated considerably based on context, mandate structure, local dynamics, and international backing. UN peacekeeping missions have significantly impacted short-term conflict reduction by diminishing violence, enabling humanitarian access, and assisting transitional political frameworks. In nations like the Central African Republic and South Sudan, peacekeepers have served as essential stabilising entities amid pervasive insecurity and institutional disintegration. Furthermore, their mandates have broadened to encompass essential responsibilities such as civilian protection, electoral assistance, disarmament, and human rights oversight, which correspond with overarching peacebuilding and state reconstruction objectives.

Nonetheless, the results also underscore enduring constraints. Numerous missions experience logistical limitations, insufficient personnel levels, and a disparity between lofty mandates and operational capability. Furthermore, the deficiency of authentic political commitment among local elites and the absence of cohesive international coordination can hinder peacekeeping initiatives. In certain circumstances, including Mali and the DRC, peacekeepers have faced difficulties in mitigating violence from non-state actors and transnational armed organisations. This has prompted inquiries on the durability and enduring effects of UN interventions.

Moreover, peacekeeping missions have been subject to criticism for employing top-down strategies that inadequately involve local communities and civil society participants. The report emphasises that for UN missions to attain enduring peace, there must be an intensified emphasis on local ownership, inclusive governance, and the resolution of fundamental conflict drivers such as inequality, marginalisation, and fragile institutions.

In conclusion, although UN peacekeeping missions are not a universal solution, they continue to be an essential tool in the international community's

response to conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their influence on conflict resolution is most potent when bolstered by cohesive political strategies, adequate resources, and substantive collaborations with regional organisations and local stakeholders. In the future, reforms that improve operational efficiency, accountability, and community involvement will be essential for enabling peacekeeping forces to promote lasting peace throughout the area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping missions in conflict resolution across Sub-Saharan Africa. These recommendations are directed at the United Nations, regional organisations, host governments, and international partners to promote more sustainable and locally relevant peace outcomes.

- i. UN peacekeeping deployments require sufficient resources to align with the intricacy of their duties. Ambitious objectives, including civilian protection, disarmament, and governance reform support, cannot be realised with inadequate military levels or logistical constraints. Member states must pledge to constant financing and substantial troop contributions to guarantee that peacekeeping operations can effectively execute their tasks on the ground.
- ii. Collaboration with African regional entities, like the African Union (AU), ECOWAS, and IGAD, should be intensified. These organisations possess contextual expertise and political influence that can enhance UN initiatives. Collaborative planning, unified training, and joint deployment techniques can enhance regional ownership and augment the coherence of peace activities.
- iii. UN missions must prioritise the engagement of local stakeholders, encompassing civil society organisations, traditional authorities, women, and youth, in peacebuilding initiatives. Local ownership is crucial for legitimacy and sustained success. Missions ought to allocate resources to community dialogue platforms, local reconciliation efforts, and the enhancement of capabilities for grassroots peace advocates.

- iv. Peacekeeping missions require a robust political approach that tackles the underlying causes of violence. The UN ought to endorse inclusive political discourse, constitutional amendments, and the fortification of democratic institutions. Support for credible elections and the rule of law must be integral elements of peacekeeping exit strategies.
- v. To uphold the integrity of peacekeeping deployments, the UN must implement rigorous accountability measures for peacekeepers, especially in instances of human rights violations or misconduct. Transparent investigative procedures and cooperation with host governments are essential to maintain the mission's integrity and local confidence.
- vi. Peacekeeping missions ought to incorporate early warning systems and preventive diplomacy into their operations. Prompt reactions to emerging threats can avert escalation and diminish the human and financial toll of extended conflicts.

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