



EFFECTIVENESS OF THE USE OF FORCE TO PROTECT CIVILIANS IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)

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ABSTRACT

Though the United Nations (UN) has mandated the use of force, in most missions, innocent civilians continue to be attacked and killed. Focused on the “UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic”, (MINUSCA), the study investigated the effectiveness of the use of force (UoF) in the Protection of Civilians (PoC). The study was anchored on Liberalism theory. This was a library-based research that relied on secondary data. Data was obtained from books, e-books, journals, UN publications and websites. The collected data was analysed thematically. The findings show that the UoF in the PoC has positive impact on the execution of the MINUSCA mandate since early 2017 and has helped to reduce levels of armed violence. Although UoF was perceived as being effective in CAR, it was faced with some challenges. This was due to the fact that it was seen as directly targeting one party to the conflict; an act which is perceived to be against the principles of PKOs. The UoF must be supported by proper conflict analysis prior to the signing of a peace agreement, troops with a capability and training matching the task, and committed to the use of force. Missions with PoC mandate must be matched by an appropriate military capability beyond the normal infantry battalion capability. Troops deployed to PKOs should not be deployed on the basis of just the will of the member state, but the troops must have the capacity and capability to undertake the UN mandate.

Key words: Use of Force; Protection of Civilians; Central Africa Republic; MINUSCA; UN Peace Keeping Operations

I. INTRODUCTION

Africa continues to be imperilled by wars and conflicts. In the last several years, the continent has witnessed numerous conflicts from North to South and East to West. Although some of the protracted conflicts such as the Angolan and North-South Sudan civil wars have been resolved, there have been intermittent occurrences of war in other parts of the continent. Other challenges related to “endemic poverty, transnational organized crime, proliferation of small arms and international terrorism among others have also made it hard to secure sustainable peace in the continent”.¹ Arising from these conflicts, the UN has sanctioned a number of interventions in the continent which on completion have been evaluated, studied and documented by scholars and policy makers. These interventions have either been humanitarian, peacekeeping or peace enforcement operations. Much as the UN interventions have been hailed as successful, they have also failed in some cases. This has challenged its credibility regarding its ability to manage contemporary conflicts. Examples of commendable UN interventions include but not limited to; Croatia (Eastern Slavonia), Cambodia, Timor Leste, El Salvador, Namibia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Burundi. Despite

¹Ibrahim A. Gambari, ‘Africa’s Major Challenges and the United Nations Reform Agenda: Implications for United States Policy.’ (Address at US Naval War College, Newport Rhode Island’ 2005), Accessed on 2 Oct 2019. <https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/gambari/2005-africas-major-challenges.pdf>



having complex mandates executed in non-permissive environments, their use of minimum force when dealing with armed groups, contributed to their success.²

In contemporary conflicts especially in Africa, issues concerning the Use of Force (UoF), the essence of protecting civilians in the course of executing their mandates and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) have become major issues of concern which have been associated with the perceived failure of some interventions. The UoF in UN Peacekeeping has always been as a last resort. It is usually applied in self-defence as well as in the protection of UN assets unless the mission is deployed “under chapter VII of the UN charter.” In the recent complex emergencies, the UN has introduced the Protection of civilians (PoC) concept in most missions in Africa where the deployed troops have been authorized through the mandate to use force when doing so. Howard, posits that blue helmets operations have been fraught with the inability to contain violence, failure in the PoC, ill equipped forces, SEA and in some cases failure by the forces to execute their duties as enshrined in the mandate.³ The UN is yet to comprehend that the configuration of forces deployed in peace support operations are not constituted to help fight protracted battles and lack the required firepower to face the belligerents. Lack of political goodwill has been felt on the ground with most of the TCCs remaining risk averse. How then are such forces expected to protect civilians if they lack the capability to protect themselves? Although the UoF in the PoC is now embedded in most interventions, its complexity and efficacy in some missions in Africa such as in South Sudan, DRC and CAR are fraught with a number of challenges require to be systematically studied.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Though a large number of UN interventions have been successful, they are often confronted by a myriad of challenges which include lack of capacity, poor implementation of the mandate, environmental issues, continued fighting leading to the inability to contain the violence and interference by the host Nation. While executing their mandate, misconduct by the intervening forces and civilian members of staff has undermined the legitimacy and credibility of such missions. In some of the missions today, despite the fact that the mandates are clearly defined, intervening forces especially UN peacekeepers have been criticized and blamed for inefficiency and misconduct leading to loss of civilian lives. PoC is a key concern in contemporary UNPKOs and currently most mandates have included the UoF in the PoC.⁴

The efficacy of the use of such force remains a challenge in a number of UN interventions such as in DRC, South Sudan, Mali and CAR. Though use force has been mandated in these missions, attacks to innocent civilians by the parties to the conflict remain unabated. However, there is scanty literature on the effectiveness of UoF in the PoC in CAR. As a result, it remains untenable to make empirically informed recommendations on how to best employ UoF in PKOs in contemporary conflict zones in Africa. This could have negative ramifications on civilians as well as on the PKOs themselves. This buttress the importance of this study that set out to investigate the effectiveness of the use of force in the PoC in CAR.

1.2 Research Objective

This study sought to investigate the effectiveness of the use of force in the PoC in Central African Republic.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

This study was anchored on Liberal theory. Liberalism argues that through the creation of an international organisation aimed at regulating international anarchy, peace can be achieved⁵ and since power lies within the

² Howard, Lise Morjé, "Peacekeeping, Peace Enforcement, and UN Reform". *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 16, no. 2, 2015: 6-13. Accessed on 6 September 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43773690>.

³ Lise Morjé Howard, "Peacekeeping, Peace Enforcement, and UN Reform." *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 16, no. 2 2015: 6-13. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43773690>.

⁴ Nick Wheeler, *Saving Strangers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁵ Tim Dune, "Liberalism", in *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 3rd Edition, edited by John Baylis and Steve Smith (New York: Oxford university Press, 2005).



organisation, collective security is assured.⁶ Liberal Institutionalism and Neo-liberal Institutionalism posit that “States can achieve peace and prosperity. This can be achieved through the “pooling of their resources and in some instances, surrendering their sovereignty”.⁷ Neo-liberal institutionalists portend that mutual interests of states are not only confined in trade and development issues but also include security. Being generally critical of pre-emptive and unilateral UoF, they also support cooperative multilateralism.⁸ Though there are other actors, in addition to states, in the international system, states are instrumental or rational actors. In this regard, they always endeavour to maximize their interests through cooperation in all issues. However, it is in areas where states have shared interest that neo-liberal institutionalism is more relevant.⁹

Robert Keohane acknowledges the link between national interest and international cooperation. He further acknowledges that cooperation in world politics is extremely difficult; however, he believes that international institutions, such as the UN, provide the best conditions for states to re-align interests to enable cooperation on mutually agreed issues.¹⁰ Kenneth Waltz however argues that as long as international institutions continue to meet the expectations of their creators, or be perceived to do so, they would continue to survive.¹¹ Keohane links the level of success or failure of cooperation to three dimensions: the mutuality of state interests; the extent of any long term state gains from cooperating; and the amount of actors involved.¹² State actors will determine the weight placed against each of the three dimensions; however, those of national interest underpin the other two.¹³ Ruth Grant posits that: “the individual, in consenting to membership in a community, leaves a situation where his own preservation takes precedence over any other obligation and enters one where his obligation to the community supersedes his own preservation.”¹⁴

In the context of UN intervention, it is important to note that States that volunteer to intervene under a UN mandate retain power to enforce actions such as the UoF in order to pursue or safeguard their interests. Though states become members of the UN and subsequently contribute troops for specific peace support operations, each of those states contributing has certain interests though not declared. This means the link between national and international cooperation as espoused by Keohane is a critical ingredient in peace support operations. Success of peace operations therefore rely on the mutuality of interests of the TCCs and those that do not send troops but support the mission financially. One example that illustrates this state of affairs is the difficulty that the UN always has to mobilize human and financial resources in a timely and sufficient manner for Peace Keeping Missions (PKMs).¹⁵

As Keohane states, cooperation in world politics so the UN provides a platform where States enforce cooperation through mutually agreed issues, in peace support operations it's sometimes hard to find all TCCs agreeing on the aspect of the UoF. Interests of individual states contributing troops take precedence over UN interests and guidance. Even in cases where there are mutually agreed issues or interest, the UN fails to get troops that are ready to execute its mandate. In a briefing to the UN Security Council in 2015, the commander of the UN peacekeeping force in Mali for example indicated that his force, which has been repeatedly targeted by jihadists, lacked the mandate as well as the requisite training and right equipment to undertake “anti-terrorist or counter-insurgency operations.”¹⁶ However, the UoF, as envisaged by this study could not be panacea to the challenges faced by PKOs. It could contribute to reduction in loss of lives as well as destruction of civilian and military infrastructure.

⁶ Jeffrey Herbst, “African Peacekeepers and State Failure”, in, *Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement in Africa; Methods of Conflict Prevention*, Robert et al (eds), (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000),

⁷ Lamy, Steven L., “Contemporary mainstream approaches: Neo-realism and Neo-liberalism”, in *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 3rd Edition, edited by John Baylis and Steve Smith (New York: Oxford university Press, 2005).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Kenneth Oye, *Cooperation under Anarchy* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1986).

¹¹ Kenneth Waltz, *Structural Realism after the Cold War*, *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Summer 2000.

¹² Oye, Kenneth, (1986). *Op.cit.*, p.227.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Grant, RW. ‘*John Locke’s Liberalism*’ (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1987), p.131.

¹⁵ Mathieu Bere. "Armed Rebellion, Violent Extremism, and the Challenges of International Intervention in Mali." *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* 7, no. 2 (2017): 60-84. Accessed on 8 September 2019.

¹⁶ Ibid.



2.2 Empirical Literature Review

In conflict situations where there is perceived threat to international peace and security, external third parties, especially the UN and major Western powers, have regularly intervened in the PoC, help stabilize their politics, and restore peace.¹⁷ However, during the Cold War, UN advocated for PKMs that could not use force. During that time, it was argued that any UoF other than for “self-defence was violation of the UN Charter. It also amounted to gross violation of human rights” even if it was for the PoC. In the UN Security Council, the UoF has been increasingly approved since the end of the cold war in the PoC. This has been witnessed in UNOSOM in Somalia, “UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia¹⁸ and the UN mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)” in 1999.¹⁹ In 1992 UNPROFOR advocated for the protection of civilian lives as well as the delivery of aid through the use of all necessary means through the creation of numerous safe havens for civilians and demilitarized zones in both Bosnia and Croatia.²⁰ Although international media and NGOs criticized UNPROFOR for “consistent inability to act upon its Chapter VII authorizations,” it is evident that UoF can have tangible results in the PoC.

The UN has continued to review its intervention efforts through report such as the agenda for peace in 1992, the Brahimi Report in 2000 and “the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report of 2015.” HIPPO was mandated by the UNSG in 2014 to undertake a thorough review of the UNs contribution in contemporary peace operations and the emerging needs of the future”.²¹ The panel was aimed at comprehensively appraising the UN PKOs potential in its efforts towards conflict prevention and resolution. It also aimed at recommending how PKOs could be best constituted and equipped to face future challenges.”²² All these efforts by the UN are aimed at keeping abreast with the ever changing operational environment and to address the expanded nature of peace operations. Though these measures included the need to implement robust peacekeeping mandates, they have not correlated with increased success in peacekeeping.²³ This robustness was also related to the effective UoF and deploying forces with the ability to undertake tasks outside peacekeeping. In MONUSCO, the UN has initiated the use of drones and having forces with different mandates within the same mission by employing the force intervention brigade that was sanctioned by the UNSC in 2013.²⁴ A similar intervention concept has also been instituted in the CAR.

PoC concept has been extensively practiced and this is evidenced by the fact that most of the UN-led missions that included PoC mandates have been conducted in Africa.²⁵ Presently, more than 90% of UNPKOs include PoC.²⁶ In this regard, PoC has now being considered a standard of appropriate behaviour of peacekeeping.²⁷ In this regard, the UN opines that the failure in the protection of civilians should not be blamed on “consent of the parties, impartiality, and the limited UoF.”²⁸ In this regard, it is pertinent to find out the effectiveness of UoF in PoC in contemporary African conflicts.

Although the UN mission in South Sudan has the PoC mandate, in 2014, a number of civilians were killed when SPLA attacked a PoC camp under the watch of UN troops. This has also been the case in Mali, DRC and CAR.

¹⁷ Mathieu Bere. 2017. Op.cit.

¹⁸ Nick Wheeler, 2000. Op.cit.

¹⁹ Lisa Hultman, ‘UN peace operations and Protection of Civilians: Cheap Talk or Norm Implementation?’ *Journal of Peace Research*, Jan 2013. Accessed on 6 September 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343312461662>

²⁰ United Nations Security Council, S/RES/836, 4 June 1993.

²¹ United Nations (2015), ‘Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) on uniting our strengths for peace: Politics, partnership and people.’ UN Document No. A/70/95S/2015/446.

²² Mathieu Bere. 2017.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Howard, 2015. Op.cit., p11.

²⁵ UN Security Council (UNSCR, 2013). Op.cit

²⁶ Victoria Holt, ‘The Responsibility to Protect: Considering the Operational Capacity for Civilian Protection’ (Washington, D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Centre, 2005), p.4.

²⁷ Ingvild bode and John Karlsrud, ‘Implementation in practice: The use of force to protect civilians in United Nations peacekeeping,’ *European Union Journal of International Relations* 22 October 2018. Accessed on 2 October 2019. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1354066118796540>

²⁸ Zimmermann, L ‘Same or different? Norm diffusion between resistance, compliance, and localization in post-conflict states,’ *International Studies Perspectives*, 17(1), (2016): 98–115.

²⁹ HIPPO Report, Op.cit



On the other hand, MINUSMA has made great contributions to the PoC in northern Mali and the stabilization of the country, but the intervention had shortcomings that are inherently related to the limitations of the current international regime for dealing with violent conflicts.²⁹ The UoF however comes with its own challenges including the targeting of peacekeeping troops. At least eighty-nine UN peacekeepers have been killed and 166 injured in Mali since 2003, which makes MINUSMA one of the most perilous UN PKMs.³⁰ Being an impartial peacekeeping force, MINUSMA's mandate has been quite restricted in terms of military engagement with the armed groups.³¹

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a library-based research that has purely relied on secondary data. Data has been obtained from books, e-books, journals, UN publications and, on-line publications among others. The data so collected has been analysed thematically so as “to establish the key themes and trends from which findings, conclusions, and recommendations have been drawn.”

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 The Essence of UoF in the Protection of Civilians

In context of inability to protect civilians in Rwanda and Srebrenica, the UN has understandably taken a lot of time to reorient the mindsets of peacekeepers from “traditional ceasefire monitoring under Chapter VI to robust peacekeeping as enshrined in Chapter VII.”³² Today, therefore, in contrast with the past missions, “more than two thirds of the UN's peacekeepers are deployed amidst on-going conflicts where there is ‘no peace to keep which is a radical departure from the Brahimi report's guidance, based on a core lesson learned from the peacekeeping crises in Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s, that UN peacekeeping should not be deployed where there is ‘no peace to keep’.”³³ Troops are consistently being mandated by the UN to deploy in semi-permissive environments that are unpredictable, volatile and uncertain.

Equally important is that, over the last 20 years, PoC mandates in UNPKOs have become closely intertwined with how the troops utilize of force in the execution of their mandates without compromising the principle of impartiality. Most of the contemporary UNPKOs notably in Africa, such as South Sudan (UNMISS), DRC (MONUSCO), Mali (MINUSMA), and the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) have been mandated to use all necessary means, including lethal force, in the PoC.³⁴ The government of CAR, for example, does no longer have the monopoly of the UoF and therefore it is unable to ensure protection of its citizens a task which has now been taken over by MINUSCA troops. Its internal sovereignty is challenged by a number of armed belligerent groups and armed civilians that control most of the territory outside Bangui the capital city, and compete with the state over the control of vast natural resources.³⁵ Efforts by the UN forces in support of the Armed Forces of Central African Republic (FACA) in the restoration of normalcy and restoration of deployment throughout CAR have been slow and given the relative absence of the state authority, UN peacekeepers still bear the responsibility “to secure and stabilize troubled areas”.³⁶

²⁹ Mathieu Bere. 2017. Op.cit., p.66.

³⁰ Mathieu Bere, (2017). Op.cit., p. 66.

³¹ Ibid.

³² International Peace Institute Report, ‘How Much Force is Necessary to Protect Civilians?’ 24 September 2019. Accessed on 20 December 2019.

https://reliefweb.int/report/world/how-much-force-necessary-protect-civilians_

³³ Cedric de Coning, “Implications of Stabilization Mandates for the use of force in UN Peace Operations”, in *Use of force in UN Peacekeeping*, Peter Nadin (ed) (London: Routledge, 2018)

³⁴ International Peace Institute Report (2016), Op.cit

³⁵ Alexandra Lamarche, ‘New MINUSCA Leadership Must Seize Opportunity for Progress in the Central African Republic,’ 21 March 2019. Accessed on 28 January 2020.

https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2019/3/21/new-minusca-leadership-must-seize-opportunity-for-progress-in-car_

³⁶ Ibid.



The UN through the deployment of robust peacekeeping troops with a mandate to use force in securing stability, the new concept of ‘stabilisation’ has been introduced into UN peacekeeping terminology. This represents emergent categories of UN missions termed as stabilisation operations in which the UoF has been authorized explicitly in the mandates. This has been the case in MINUSCA and MINUSMA as well as in “the deployment of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in MONUSCO.”³⁷ Being a crisis response tool, they played a key role in deterring escalation of violence. Further, they were tasked with containing the conflict while also protecting civilians. Concurrently, they were required to revitalise or restart peace processes.”³⁸

Contemporary Peace Support Operations (PSOs) are often conducted in very hostile environments, and therefore in most cases the use force in dispensing their mandated tasks has become a norm rather than an exception. Despite the inclusion of the UoF in the mandates of most PSOs in Africa, most of the troops deployed in such missions either lack political will or fail to deploy troops with the requisite capability. In some cases, member states have often been reluctant to deploy troops to such missions. They tend to be risk averse if the deployed troops lack the basic capability to fight or face hostile armed belligerent parties or if it is not in the interest of their national political authorities to use force.

A pertinent question that arises is, “how can forces be expected to protect others [civilians] without wielding the capability to protect themselves³⁹ or lack the political will to use force?” The UoF in most PSOs has further been complicated in that there is a blurred distinction between a combatant and a civilian. De Conning posits that “the traditional distinction between soldier and civilian has become almost irrelevant.” In this light, the new conflict paradigm means that “civilians have become both the targets and the instruments of war.”⁴⁰

Contemporary interventions are faced with the reality that, in order to realise successful mediation processes, there is the need for use of some coercive powers (carrot and stick).⁴¹ Indeed, it is an inevitable reality that some modern-day complex conflicts are hard to contain, even when coercive force is used.⁴² In this context therefore, it is pertinent for PSOs to integrate the UoF in the PoC in some of these conflicts. Citing the UoF in Mali, Bere notes that, “international military and non-military interventions have led to observable positive changes not only in conflict dynamics, but also in the overall situation in Mali, especially in the North where the African, French, and UN-led interventions in 2013 reversed the dynamics of the conflict by stopping the insurgent groups that were advancing toward Bamako and helping the government and its army regain control of the North where the jihadist movements had started to implement their version of Sharia law”.⁴³

The UoF in the PoC has been applied to four main UNPKOs, which include: MONUSCO, MINUSCA, MINUSMA and MINUSTAH. Regrettably, this provision has come with its own challenges. This emanates from the fact that some of the environments are dangerous and replete with operations by terrorists and violent extremist groups.⁴⁴ In the contemporary PKOs, the traditional respect for intervenors such as peacekeepers has been lost and indiscriminate attacks on UN installations, including direct attacks on UN patrols and convoys has been on the rise.⁴⁵ This has prompted the UoF in protecting civilians and themselves in MINUSCA.

Out of all the 17 PKOs that have had clear authorization of UoF in the PoC, MINUSMA MONUSCO and MINUSCA stand out. This is due to the fact that they have extensive authorization to use force in Peacekeeping

³⁷ Cedric de Coning, Op.cit.

³⁸United Nations (2015b), Op.cit.

³⁹ Burton, John, ‘*Conflict: Resolution and Provention*,’ (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, London: The MacMilan Press, 1990), p.22-23.

⁴⁰ Cedric de Conning and Ian Henderson, ‘*Conflict Management for Peacekeepers Handbook*.’ ACCORD, October 2006: First Edition, RSA.

⁴¹ Ramsbotham, Oliver et al, ‘*Contemporary Conflict Resolution, the Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts*,’ *Second Edition*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), p.18.

⁴² Burton, John, Op.cit.

⁴³ Mathieu Bere. (2017), Op.cit

⁴⁴ Sylva, L., ‘*The Reality of New Forms of UN Peacekeeping: High Risk Missions and Fatalities*,’ Master’s Thesis. New York University, 2017.

⁴⁵ Ibid.



processes. This allows peacekeepers to use offensive force within the process of establishing law and order and securing security for civilians.⁴⁶

4.2 UoF to Protect Civilians by MINUSCA

MINUSCA took over the “African Union-led International Support’ MISCA in 2014 in the PoC as well as helping in the stabilization of the country after coup in 2013.” MINUSCA was mandated to undertake tasks that were geared “towards the re-establishment of State authority, promotion of the rule of law, and PoC, amongst other activities.”⁴⁷ Targeted violence against civilians however increased in spite of the brokerage of a ceasefire agreement in 2015 which subsequently led to elections in 2016. This was due to the fact that the elected government did not have control over the whole state (controlling only 25% of 16 provinces) as well as the disintegration of the armed groups.⁴⁸ The armed groups control some 80% of the country’s territory⁴⁹ thereby undermining MINUSCA’s legitimacy and credibility as the armed groups continue to spoil the peace.⁵⁰

The killings of hundreds of civilians by armed groups were documented by HRW since 2017. This mostly took place in the south-eastern and south-central regions of the country which continued through 2018.⁵¹ According to the 2018 HRW Report, fights between “the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC), a Seleka faction and Anti-balaka continued to be reported. At the same time in March 2018, 15 civilian Peuhl herders were killed by Anti-Balaka fighters. They included women and children. In retaliatory attacks, about 40 internally displaced persons were killed in two attacks targeted at a church in Seko. The victims had sought shelter there.⁵² Although several grievances have been raised in CAR, the main ones include “a culture that tolerates vengeance, absence of functional state governance systems, and rampant feelings of impunity.”⁵³ Arising from these incidents, in April 2017, the UN commissioned “an independent special investigation into the escalation of violence in the CAR and the response of MINUSCA, to attacks against civilians, particularly in the south-east of the country.”⁵⁴

Before 2017, there is little evidence for effective UoF by MINUSCA, however, this changed in 2017 when, on 13 February, it used helicopters to disperse a group of militiamen in Bambari, who were heavily armed. In this incident, about 40, “Popular Front for the Renaissance of Central African Republic (FPRC)” fighters were poised to attack the town. By using active aggression, the MINUSCA forces used active force to deter the eminent attack.⁵⁵ This case in CAR shows a clear shift by the UN modus operandi and is a clear illustration of its resolve to use force in protecting civilians and deterring spoilers of peace at the same time.

Over the year [2017] MINUSCA continued to use force to reign in eminent attacks levelled against civilians, leading to the reduction of violence. This was possible due to an all-round use of strategies such as “effective early warning, robust interventions in PoC, reinforcement of structures for preventing violence, regular community engagement, and dialogue with armed actors.”⁵⁶ Indeed, national actors have often put pressure on MINUSCA to

⁴⁶ Jair Van der Lijn and Timo Smit, “Peacekeepers under Threat? Fatality Trends in UN Peace Operations,” SIPRI Policy Brief (2015).

⁴⁷ United Nations, UNSCR S/RES/2387, (15 November 2017).

⁴⁸ Centre for Civilians in Conflict, ‘Central African Republic.’ Accessed on 6 January 2020. <https://civiliansinconflict.org/our-work/where-we-work/central-african-republic/>.

⁴⁹ Lise Howard, Op.cit.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Human rights Watch, ‘Central African Republic: Civilians Targeted as Violence Surges: UN Peacekeeping Mission Faces Renewal, Needs Expansion, 27 October 2017.’ Accessed on 4 February 2020. https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/27/central-african-republic-civilians-targeted-violence-surges_

⁵² Human Rights Watch, ‘Central African Republic, Events of 2018,’ Accessed on 4 February 2020. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/central-african-republic_

⁵³ Lise Howard, Op.cit.

⁵⁴ United Nations General Assembly, Implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, A/73/480, November 2018.

⁵⁵ Reuters, “UN air operations disperse Central African Republic militia,” Reuters Online, 26 February 2017. Accessed 20 March 2017. Accessed on 20 December 2019. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-centralafrica-violenceidUSKBN1650VW>.

⁵⁶ International Peace Institute (October 2018.) Prioritizing and Sequencing Peacekeeping Mandates: The Case of MINUSCA. IPI. https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/1810_The-Case-of-MINUSCA-English.pdf. Accessed on 20 December 2019.



expand the circumstances under which it uses force; however, there have been cases of detractors in MINUSCA's UoF. Some political and community leaders in CAR see MINUSCA as an extension of the CAR national army. Although the PKO collaborates with FACA to eliminate the threat of armed actors, its mandate does not actually allow it to use force solely for purposes of eliminating armed groups which can be perceived as being impartial. Yet in report on "the escalation of violence in the CAR and the response of MINUSCA" by the independent special investigation in April 2017, noted that evidence lacked that "the Mission's contingents in the south-east had acted in a partial manner towards certain armed groups or communities."⁵⁷ Consequently, the UoF is often challenged by MINUSCA's mission of "constructive roles in supporting political processes at the national and subnational levels."⁵⁸

The Centre for Civilians in Conflict in a report titled, "The Primacy of protection: delivering on the MINUSCA mandate," takes note of the importance of the UoF by MINUSCA in the PoC. In this regard, the report recommends review of its UoF policies to include the circumstances under which it uses its force, inter-positioning between armed actors and civilians, and need to expand its use of attack helicopters as was the case with Bambari. This would yield fruits in checking escalation of violence in other designated weapons-free zones or areas, which could protect more civilians.⁵⁹

The centrality of the UoF in the CAR was reported by the International Peace Institute in 2019 which took note of the fact that since mediation efforts by PKO civilian personnel has often failed; there is need for such mediation efforts to be coupled with the UoF and other relevant robust interventions. Indeed, the use of mediation alone was reported as not being able to deter fighting in Bria orchestrated by determined non-state combatants.⁶⁰ Conversely, "lasting peace is not achieved nor sustained by military and technical engagements, but through political solutions".⁶¹ Therefore, a whole-of-mission approach lays the groundwork for achieving lasting political settlements and sustainable peace.⁶²

The International Peace Institute noted that there is need for expansion of provisions for UoF so as to enforce the tangible progress in the political process, which in February 2019, saw the government of CAR sign "the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR (APPR)" with fourteen armed groups. As such, it is recommended that MINUSCA should be authorized to explicitly use force in supporting the APPR by monitoring violations and holding the signatories accountable. In this context it is evident that the UoF can yield tangible fruits in reigning in on non-compliance with ceasefire arrangements as well as protecting the lives of civilians, state troops as well as the peacekeepers.

Despite the fact that there seems to be some success in the PoC in CAR by MINUSCA, "the April 2017 independent special investigation into the escalating violence in CAR and the response of MINUSCA" noted that "the Mission has a well-established PoC strategy and functioning early warning mechanisms". However, the report further noted that, "there were deficiencies in civil-military-police planning, and operations, particularly at the field level".⁶³ The report also indicated that "regarding T/PCCs training and their understanding of PoC, there were several gaps."⁶⁴ The report further made some recommendations for the "UN headquarters, MINUSCA, TCCs and Police Contributing Countries (PCC); MINUSCA should review its PoC strategy to ensure that its operational response is better aligned to and supported by its political engagement and that the Mission's civilian components are more proactively involved, UNHQ should develop and strengthen tools to address shortcomings and engage T/PCCs with performance gaps to

⁵⁷ United Nations, 'United nations secretary Generals note to Correspondents on the findings of the Central African Republic Special Investigation, 24 January 2018.' Accessed on 4 February 2020. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2018-01-24/note-correspondents-findings-central-african-republic>.

⁵⁸ International Peace Institute (October 2018.). Op.cit.

⁵⁹ Centre for Civilians in Conflict. 'The Primacy of Protection: Delivering on the MINUSCA Mandate. United States of America: Centre for Civilians in Conflict (2017). Accessed on 6 January 2020.' https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/CIVIC-MINUSCA-Report_WEB.pdf

⁶⁰ International Peace Institute (October 2019), 'Prioritizing and Sequencing Peacekeeping Mandates: The Case of MINUSCA,' IPI. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/1910_The-Case-of-MINUSCA.pdf.

⁶¹ HIPPO Report, (2015), Op.cit

⁶² United Nations, 'Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/73/480, 5 November 2018).'

⁶³ United Nations, (24 January 2018). Op.cit.

⁶⁴ Ibid.



ensure a better operational readiness, UNHQ and MINUSCA, in collaboration T/PCCs, should review pre-deployment and in-Mission training to ensure proper understanding of PoC requirements, with an emphasis on the role of commanders and senior leadership”.⁶⁵

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

It is evident that the UoF in the PoC has positive impact on the execution of the MINUSCA mandate since early 2017 and has helped to reduce levels of armed violence. Although UoF was perceived as being effective in CAR, it was faced with some challenges. This was due to the fact that it was seen as directly targeting one party to the conflict; an act which is perceived to be against the principles of PKOs. The UoF must be supported by proper conflict analysis prior to the signing of a peace agreement, troops with a capability and training matching the task, and committed to the use of force.

5.2 Recommendations

Missions with PoC mandate must be matched by an appropriate military capability beyond the normal infantry battalion capability. Troops deployed to PKOs should not be deployed on the basis of just the will of the member state, but the troops must have the capacity and capability to undertake the UN mandate.

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⁶⁵ Ibid.



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