How peacekeepers protect civilians

A case study of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's response to the Kasai crisis

Author: Christian Immanuel Ulfsten

Supervisor: Sverke Runde Saxegaard

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Department of Political Science

Faculty of Social Sciences

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Abstract

United Nations peacekeeping is an apparatus with the aim of helping countries to navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace. Specifically, one of the core objectives of United Nations peacekeeping is to protect civilians. Numerous empirical studies have examined whether peacekeepers have managed to achieve this challenging objective. Though there are some well-known cases of protection failures, such as Rwanda and Srebrenica in the mid-90's, various large-n studies conclude that the deployments of peacekeepers generally contribute to reducing violence against civilians.

These findings bring important implications, as it increases our confidence in that peacekeeping generally works. However, there are few empirical studies that examine *how* the blue helmets produce these results. Therefore, this thesis sets out to examine how peacekeepers contribute to achieving its core objective of protecting civilians. Thus, the research question for this thesis is: How are peacekeepers protecting civilians?

To answer this question this thesis conducts a single case study of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (MONUSCO) response to the armed conflict in the Kasai-provinces in 2016-2018. Based on existing theorizations and empirically tested studies on how peacekeeping works, I identify three mechanisms through which peacekeepers might protect civilians: direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. Through the application of a form of theory-centric process tracing I search for implications of the presence of these mechanisms in the case of the Kasai-crisis in 2016-2018.

Based on an analysis of the turn of events in the Kasai-provinces, from the initial deployments of MONUSCO, to when levels of violence against civilians was significantly reduced, I find indications which suggests that peacekeepers protected civilians through the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. However, in the initial phase of the conflict, due to the Mission's lack of troop capacity, these mechanisms were not widely present enough to reduce substantial levels of violence against civilians in the Kasai provinces.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

United Nations peacekeeping operations work. Extant quantitative large-n studies have found that UN peacekeeping missions play a vital role in (1) Reducing Civilian and Combatant Killing in civil war (Beardsley et al., 2019; Carnegie & Mikulaschek, 2020; Hultman et al., 2014; Salvatore, 2020) , (2) preventing the spread of violence (Beardsley & Gleditsch, 2015), (3) reaching and implementing comprehensive peace agreements (J. Kathman & Benson, 2019) and (4) maintaining Peace in the Aftermath of war (P. Collier et al., 2008; Sambanis, 2008). In sum, when it comes to the peacekeepers' impact on levels of violence, the majority of quantitative large-n studies finds "…a strong, statistically significant relationship between peacekeeping and reduced bloodshed." (Walter et al., 2021).

Specifically, a central objective for UN peacekeeping operations is the *protection of civilians*. As of today more than 95% of UN peacekeepers serve in missions with a mandate to protect civilians (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2022). In terms of the effectiveness of peace-operations in implementing this mandate, there are well known cases where peacekeepers have failed to protect civilian populations, such as in Rwanda and Srebrenica in the mid-90's (Howard, 2007; Saracino, 2022; Smith, 2022). Moreover, there are contemporary peacekeeping missions such as those in South Sudan and Mali that are not progressing well in terms of civilian protection (Lijn, 2019; Walter et al., 2021).

Despite these protection failures of the 90's, and challenges in contemporary peacekeeping missions, extant large-n research find that generally where peacekeepers are deployed the levels of violence against civilians decrease (Carnegie & Mikulaschek, 2020; Fjelde et al., 2019; Hultman et al., 2013; Phayal & Prins, 2020; Salvatore, 2020). Although these studies conduct research on different cases, use different explanatory variables, and differ in the use of quantitative methods, they all conclude that peacekeeping in general positively contribute to civilians' safety in the countries in which they operate.

While these studies provide insightful answers to the question of *whether* peacekeeping reduce violence, there is a lack of empirically tested studies which addresses the question of *how* peacekeepers contribute to reducing violence. Specifically, we still know little about the mechanisms through which peacekeepers contribute to protecting civilians and

reduce violence against civilians. This thesis aims at addressing this gap and examines how peacekeepers might contribute to reducing violence against civilians. Therefore, the research question for this thesis is: *How are peacekeepers protecting civilians?*

To answer this question, this thesis will conduct a single case study of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (MONUSCO) response to the outburst of violence in the Kasai-provinces in 2016-2018. This case study will be theory-centric as it seeks to identify the presence or absence of various casual mechanisms on how peacekeepers might protect civilians in the case of the Kasai-crisis. The case study will be the result of a theory-driven, critical assessment of a wide array of data-streams, including text-based sources and five in-depth interviews with actors who witnessed the Kasai-crisis. Descriptive statistics from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) and the United Nations Migration Agency (UNMA) will also be analyzed and interpreted.

This introductory chapter will elaborate on the following factors. First, a brief description of MONUSCO's protection of civilians mandate and the case of the Kasai-crisis from 2016-2018 will be presented. Secondly, a justification of the research design and an elaboration of the theoretical framework will be presented. Finally, the structure of this thesis and the main argument will be presented in brief.

1.2 MONUSCO and the Kasai-crisis

As this is a case study of *MONUSCO's* protection efforts in the *Kasai-provinces*, a short background of these components will be provided. MONUSCO is one of the largest, longest-serving and most expensive peacekeeping missions the UN has ever deployed (Novosseloff et al., 2019, p. 183; Rolley, 2017). Since 2008, the protection of civilians has been the Mission's highest priority (UNSC, 2008, p. 3). MONUSCO's mandate from 2016 states that the Mission shall "Ensure, within its area of operations, effective protection of civilians under threat of physical violence, including by deterring, preventing and stopping armed groups from inflicting violence on the populations" (UNSC, 2016, p. 9-10). In terms of civilian protection, MONUSCO has a mixed record. While some researchers claim that the failure of the Mission is overdetermined (Autesserre, 2010; Howard, 2019), others find that MONUSCO successfully reduce violence against civilians where they make a concerted and integrated effort to protect (Fjelde et al., 2019; Novosseloff et al., 2019; Phayal & Prins, 2020). One of

these protection efforts was MONUSCO's response to the violence in the Kasai-provinces, an otherwise peaceful area which was given the name "an oasis of peace" (Rolley, 2017).

In august 2016 violent confrontations between the armed militia Kamuina Nsapu and the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) erupted, subsequent to a customary conflict (Congo Research Group, 2018, p. 3). These fightings severely impacted the lives of civilians as hundreds of thousands were displaced and hundreds of civilians were killed by both state and non-state forces from late 2016 until mid-late 2017.[1] MONUSCO responded to these atrocities by gradually deploying military, police and civilian components to the Kasai-provinces from December 2016 to September 2017 (Rolley, 2017). After MONUSCO's gradual deployments to the Kasai-provinces violence targeting civilians decreased significantly from mid-2017 and hundreds of thousands of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) returned to their homes (UNMA, 2018, p. 6). The security situation seemed to markably improve after the intervention of MONUSCO. This thesis will examine *how* MONUSCO responded to protect civilians under threat in the Kasai-provinces and assess the effectiveness of their protection activities in light of theories on how peacekeeping works. The background of the conflict, levels of violence targeting civilians, MONUSCO's deployments and numbers on IDP movements will be further elaborated in the case study.

1.3 Research design

To understand how peacekeepers protect civilians, this thesis will conduct a single case study of MONUSCO's response to the Kasai-crisis in 2016-2018. In the methodology chapter I provide a detailed justification of the research design of the thesis. In short, the single case study design is applied as it allows the researcher to in-depth into specific causal mechanisms linking the deployment of peacekeepers and reductions of violence against civilians. Thus, a single case study can provide increased understanding of *how* peacekeepers succeed or do not succeed in protecting civilians. Specifically, a form of theory centric process tracing will be applied to search for implications of the presence of theorized causal mechanisms of protection in the case of the Kasai-crisis in 2016-2018. The aim of this method as such is to open the black box of causality between the variable of (x) the deployment of peacekeepers and (y) reduced levels of violence targeting civilians (Stokke, 2019). The particular

[1] The exact numbers violence targeting civilians and IDP movements will be presented in the analysis

mechanisms of interest, which might be present in the black box of causality are direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. These mechanisms will be further described in the following sub-chapter.

Notably, I have chosen to study a hard case for the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping on civilian protection. Hultman et al. (2019a) states that "The DRC is probably the least likely place in the world to find support for the theory that peacekeepers reduce violence". As such, if the theorized mechanisms of how peacekeepers protect civilians is found to be present in this case, there might be a chance they could be found in similar contexts with peacekeeping operations with a mandate to protect civilians.

1.4 Theoretical framework

Based on existing literature on military strategy and protection of civilians in UN peacekeeping, I have identified three mechanisms through which peacekeepers are theorized to protect civilians: direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. The theoretical foundations of these mechanisms will be presented in detail in the theory chapter. In short, the mechanism of **direct protection** involves the effective protection of civilians by the physical interpositioning by armed peacekeepers between civilians at risk and the armed elements that threaten them. Civilians can be directly protected through taking refuge in peacekeeping compounds guarded by armed peacekeepers and tactical interpositioning in the field. Peacekeepers can also protect civilians through the mechanism of **deterrence**. By establishing a military presence in areas at risk, peacekeepers can represent a credible implicit threat of military counteraction and thus deter armed actors from inflicting violence against civilians. Moreover, within the category of deterrence, peacekeepers can deter armed actors from inflicting violence against civilians by imposing political costs on belligerents. Specifically, peacekeepers can monitor atrocities against civilians and threaten to report this information to the international community, which in turn can deter actors from inflicting violence against civilians. Finally, the mechanism of **verbal persuasion** involves the "ideational" factors which can persuade belligerents to not resort to violence against another armed actor, or against civilians. Specifically, verbal persuasion as such can be exercised through activities such as public outreach (awareness raising), mediation and training.

These three mechanisms, outlined from existing research on peacekeeping and military strategy will be the theoretical framework of this thesis. The aim of the analysis will thus be to search for implications of the presence of these mechanisms in the case of the Kasai-crisis in 2016-2018.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

In this chapter the following components have been highlighted. First, a brief description of MONUSCO's mandate to protect and the Kasai-crisis has been presented. Secondly, this chapter has succinctly justified the research design and theoretical framework of this thesis. The following section, the general structure for the rest of the thesis will be introduced.

The second chapter presents the theoretical underpinnings of the three protection mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. In addition, as these mechanisms might be entangled empirically, the second chapter aims at clarifying the analytical differences between the outlined mechanisms.

The third chapter elaborates and justifies the research design, operationalizes the mechanisms outlined in the theory chapter, and attempts to clarify what I would expect to see if these mechanisms are present in the case of the Kasai-crisis. The advantages and limitations of a single case study will be discussed as well as challenges in gathering data from volatile areas such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

In the fourth chapter, the case study is introduced. The case study starts with a brief presentation of the root causes and triggers of the Kasai-crisis. Furthermore, the overall impact of MONUSCO's deployments on violence against civilians and IDP movements, will be discussed in light of descriptive statistics from ACLED and UNMA. The second part includes the tracing of the theorized causal mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. To get an increased understanding of how peacekeeping works and do not work, the analysis will search for implications of the mechanisms in three distinct periods. Period 1 was a phase where violence targeting civilians escalated, and reached its peak, while MONUSCO initiated its deployments. Period 2 – was a period when MONUSCO gradually strengthened its presence in the Kasai-provinces and levels of violence targeting civilians were still high but started to gradually reduce. Period 3 was a period when MONUSCO reached its peak of deployments with 450 peacekeepers across the three Kasai-provinces and

violence remained at a significantly lower level, compared to the other periods. In brief, from December 2016 to January 2018, the analysis provides indications that all the protection mechanisms were present from period 2, when violence targeting civilians started to decrease. However, in Period 1 and 2, due to the Mission's lack of troop capacity, these mechanisms were not widely present enough to reduce substantial levels of violence against civilians in the Kasai provinces.

In the fifth and final chapter, a conclusion of the findings of the indications of the presence of the mechanisms. Furthermore, the theoretical and empirical contributions of this thesis to the peacekeeping literature will be presented.

2 Theory

2.1 Introduction

UN peacekeeping operations generally succeed in mitigating violence against civilians in the countries in which they are deployed (Carnegie & Mikulaschek, 2020; Fjelde et al., 2019; Hultman et al., 2013; Phayal & Prins, 2020; Salvatore, 2020) . In addition, UN peacekeeping generally succeed in reducing all sorts of violence on the macro country-level (Walter et al., 2021). Even MONUSCO in the DRC, which operates in a massive geographical space with limited personnel and resources, are found to mitigate some of the violence against civilians caused by the long-lasting consequences of civil war (Fjelde et al., 2019; S. Hultman et al., 2019; Novosseloff et al., 2019; Phayal & Prins, 2020). These studies seem to make it clear that there would be more battle related fatalities and violence against civilians in the world, and in the DRC, if it were not for the deployment of peacekeeping operations. To the question of *whether* peacekeeping works, the answer of a large number of researchers seems to be a resounding 'yes' or 'to a large extent', though with some hesitation for the Congo as the country has hosted one of the deadliest civil wars after WW2 (Reliefweb, 2003). However, the question of *how* peacekeepers succeed or fail in the protection of civilians remains understudied. This chapter sets out to present some of the literature on how peacekeepers might protect.

2.2 How peacekeepers protect civilians

One of the reasons of the lack of studies on how peacekeepers protect civilians, is the difficulties in gathering data from remote and volatile areas such as the DRC and other countries where peacekeepers deploy. As Clayton et al. (2017) states "If we are interested in understanding how peacekeeping works – or does not work – to protect civilians, we need to improve our data on what peacekeepers do once they deploy." Even though data, are scarce on how peacekeepers contribute to improve civilians' safety on the ground, the quality of both data and theory is under advancement. From the literature on peacekeeping and the protection of civilians I identify three mechanisms for how peacekeepers might protect civilians: Direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. As with any typology, these mechanisms might be entangled empirically but are yet analytically distinct. The following sub-chapters will thus

present the theoretical foundations for direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. Finally, the analytical differences of these mechanisms will be clarified in the summary of this sub-chapter.

2.2.1 Direct protection

This mechanism might be the easiest to observe as it includes the *physical* intervention of military elements from a peacekeeping mission to protect civilians. Hunt & Bellamy (2011) provides this definition of the mechanism, which includes two different strategies:

> The direct POC by military peacekeepers, typically in a reactive sense, involves one or both of two strategies. The first requires the interposition of troops between at-risk populations and the elements that threaten them (…).

The second strategy, which is less frequently employed, involves tactics aimed at restricting the activities of groups that threatens civilians, for example by the use of force to protect civilians (Hunt & Bellamy, 2011).

The first strategy does not include any offensive military action against perpetrators of violence, but direct protection of civilians by merely standing between civilians and potential threats against civilians. *Interpositioning* as such is theorized to be an activity that protects civilians through the mechanism of direct protection. As Hultman et al. (2019b) contend armed peacekeeping units can "interposition themselves between combatants and civilians" which in turn can contribute to reducing overall levels of violence targeting civilians. Moreover, in terms of the first direct protection strategy, military peacekeepers can also exercise *defense* of themselves and of civilians through warding off attacks by establishing "protection of civilian" camps, as UN peacekeepers have done in South Sudan (Howard, 2019a). Direct protection through defense can also occur as vulnerable groups gravitate towards peacekeeping compounds in areas under threat, "thereby becoming *de facto* 'safe areas'" (Hunt & Bellamy, 2011). In addition to these 'static' protection activities which can protect civilians directly, peacekeepers also have operational tasks outside peacekeeping compounds. For example, peacekeepers can directly protect by interpositioning between civilian IDPs and threats against them in transit and upon return to their homes (Hunt & Bellamy, 2011). Moreover, patrols by military peacekeepers, which constitutes "the modal activity of all uniformed personnel" (Howard, 2019a), can also facilitate direct protection

through preventing and stopping attacks against civilians while they conduct patrols (Haas & Khadka, 2022).

The second strategy of direct protection which includes the use of force by peacekeepers against those targeting civilians to eliminate them is a relatively rare protection mechanism (Hunt & Bellamy, 2011). Yet, as Tull (2018) points out, the UN Security Council has had an increasing tendency to push the boundaries of UN peacekeeping beyond the 'non-use of force' doctrine by equipping peace operations with more robust military capabilities and even peace enforcement mandates. The Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in MONUSCO is an example of this increased robustness, as the FIB and FARDC used force to defeat the rebel group of M-23 in Goma, DRC in 2013 (Kjeksrud, 2019, p. 140). Furthermore, this was an example of successful protection of civilians through the mechanism of direct protection by the use of force as the M-23 was "stripped of all ability to continue attacking civilians" (ibid.). However, though this armed group was defeated, MONUSCO has not been able to tamper the continuous growing number of armed groups and violence in DR Congo (Howard, 2019c). As we now know, even though the neutralization of the armed group M-23 in 2012 yielded positive short-term effects, as of June 2022 the mission has reported events of violence against civilians perpetrated by M-23 in the eastern provinces of Congo (UN press, 2022).

In sum, the above-mentioned literature highlights direct protection as a mechanism through which peacekeepers can protect civilians. In practice, as illustrated above this mechanism can specifically work through the activities of; (1) Interpositioning – by standing between combatants and civilians during patrols or protection of IDPs during return movements to their home; (2) Defense – by protecting civilians in 'protection of civilian' camps and peacekeeping compounds and (3) The use of Force – by defeating threats to civilians and thus stripping them from the ability to continue attacking civilians. The mechanism of deterrence which similarly relates to the military capabilities of a peacekeeping mission will be presented in the following section.

2.2.2 Deterrence

Johnson et al. (2002, p. 10) describe deterrence as "… convincing someone not to take a contemplated action, such as attacking you, by making the expected results of the action appear worse than the expected consequences of not acting." In this sense, peacekeepers can

work as the 'convincer' to prevent state and non-state actors from inflicting violence against civilians and themselves. However, what are the ways in which peacekeepers convince potential attackers that the consequences of targeting civilians will be larger than the consequences of not acting? Though the effects of deterrent activities of peacekeeping missions can be notoriously difficult to measure (Howard, 2019a), researchers have theorized on factors that can deter armed actors from inflicting violence against civilians. For example, Fjelde et al. (2019) theorizes that peacekeepers deter violence through two channels, by (1) imposing military costs on belligerents and (2) imposing political costs on belligerents. The following sub-chapters will follow this structure and firstly present existing research on *military* deterrence and secondly *political* deterrence.

Imposing military costs

The theory of deterrence is often linked to an actor's military capacity and its ability to impose credible threats on an adversary. As Huth (1999, p. 5) puts it "a threat is considered credible if the defending state possesses both the military capabilities to inflict substantial costs on an attacking state in an armed conflict, and if the attacking state believes that the defending state is resolved to use its available military forces". In line with this description, in the context in which peacekeepers operate, Hultman et al. (2013) argue that it is mainly the *military* and *police* component in UN peace operations that successfully deter potential armed attackers from inflicting violence against civilians. Furthermore, what increases the effect of deterrence in the field are armed peacekeeping elements in large numbers. As stated by Hultman et al (2019b) "Increasing mission size improves operational capacity and strengthens the UN's signal to the combatant parties that it is committed to stopping violence.". It is thus, according to Hultman et al. (2013; 2019b) the mere presence of military and police personnel in *large numbers* that can signal resolve, which deters armed actors from attacking civilians. These findings are based on data from all African countries in which peacekeepers were deployed from 1991 to 2008. Based on their country level findings, they recommend that UN peace operations should be equipped with a sufficient number of *armed* military and police personnel, which is more likely to deter violence against civilians, because it represents a credible threat (L. Hultman et al., 2013; Hultman et al., 2019b). UN observers on the other hand, without the ability to protect - with the use of force – does not have this deterrent effect (Hultman et al., 2013). In fact, when it comes to the effects of UN observers and monitoring efforts on levels of violence J. D. Kathman & Wood (2016), find that the large deployment of

UN observers is *positively* correlated with violence.[2] The reason for this is allegedly that the sole deployment of UN observers signals a lack of commitment and resolve and that the UN is not "deeply invested" in resolving the conflict (Walter et al., 2021). In addition to a signal of lack of commitment and resolve, observer missions are counterproductive "possibly because they give the impression of protecting civilians while not having the capacity to do so." (Kreps & Wallace, 2009). This can in turn cause civilians to be emboldened by the presence of observers, "incorrectly assuming observers will provide security when such provisions fall outside their capability and mandate" (Hultman et al., 2019b; Kreps & Wallace, 2009).

In accordance with Hultman et als findings (2013; 2019b) Fjelde et al. (2019) argue that the "sizeable" deployment of armed peacekeepers at the local level contribute to increased protection for civilians through deterrence. Fjelde et al (2019) argue that peacekeepers mitigate violence against civilians by imposing both military and political costs on belligerents in the areas they deploy. In terms of imposing military costs - "Local presence also raises the military costs of targeting civilians because it represents a credible threat of military counteraction." (Fjelde et al., 2019). In accordance with Hultman et als (2019) main argument, they further hypothesize that where peacekeepers presence signals willingness to defend civilians through the use of force, armed actors are more likely to be deterred from targeting civilians in future interaction (Fjelde et al., 2019). However, deterrence through imposing military costs, is more likely to be effective against non-state actors than state actors (Fjelde et al., 2019; Phayal & Prins, 2020). As theorized by Phayal & Prins (2020) this is because peacekeepers tend to be reluctant to confront government forces as peacekeeping missions depend on host-nation consent.

In order to signal that a UN peacekeeping operation is present – and thereby signaling resolve, peacekeepers conduct patrols. For example, MONUSCO in the DRC, in 2017-2018 alone conducted over 100,000 patrols (Hultman et al., 2019a). In terms of its effects on violence against civilians, according to Haas & Khadka (2022) violence against civilians by insurgent groups increases where troop contributing countries reduce proactive patrolling and

[2] The positive correlation between the deployment of UN observers and violence found by Kathman and Wood (2016) is however debated. Kocher contends that UN observers also positively contribute to mitigating one sided violence. For example, subsequent to the UN's response to Liberia with 500 personnel, mainly observers, one-sided violence fell to almost zero.

implement mobility restrictions. For example, because of the health hazards of the covid-19 pandemic, the African Union Mission to Somalia implemented mobility restrictions, which was found by Haas & Khadka (2022) to have negative consequences for the security of civilians and levels of violence. Haas & Khadka (2022, p. 30) further theorize that patrols can be a deterrent against potential attackers against civilians, by signaling resolve around the MONUSCO bases. Unlike preliminary research on the effects of peacekeeping deployments on violence against civilians (Fjelde et al., 2019; Hultman et al., 2019b; Phayal & Prins, 2020), this contribution offers a more specific analysis of a frequently used protection tool, namely patrolling. Based on their findings, Haas & Khadka (2022) recommends that proactive patrols should be prioritized in time of crisis. For example, as noted by Haas & Khadka (2022, p. 30), patrols can protect civilians through the signaling of military resolve. In addition, patrols as a tool of monitoring the conflict situation create a widespread impression on potential perpetrators of violence that they are being watched, which in turn can condition violent behavior, as illustrated by (Howard, 2019a) in the Central African Republic.

Thus, the underlying hypothesis of the above-mentioned studies is that the mere *presence* of armed peacekeepers, in large numbers, in conflict zones, signals a credible threat of military counteraction, which deters armed actors from inflicting violence against civilians. This "deterrent presence" as named by Kjeksrud (2019, p. 19) can transpire both static and dynamic, where static means the establishment of peacekeeping compounds and dynamic means activities where peacekeepers deter violence on the move, such as patrols. Deterrence by imposing military costs and direct protection can be difficult to distinguish empirically. For example, the conduct of patrols can deter violence as it creates a widespread impression that potential perpetrators of violence are being watched (Howard, 2019a). Patrols as such can also be a tool that facilitates direct protection, as peacekeepers can intervene while they are conducting them. The difference as such is that direct protection involves the actual intervention or interpositioning during these patrols. Patrols as a tool for deterrence is about signaling military resolve, which can deter armed actors from inflicting violence against civilians

Imposing political costs

As pointed out by Fjelde et al., (2019) UN peacekeepers also deter violence by imposing political costs on potential perpetrators of violence against civilians. Political costs as such includes for example international shaming and persecutions by the ICC. As for shaming "IOs often use various sorts of shaming techniques (…) to get states and non-state actors to comply with existing or emergent international practices" (Barnett et al., 2005, p. 176). The effects of shaming as such, by the UN or transnational advocacy networks are found to reduce the severity of state-based murder (DeMeritt, 2012; Krain, 2012). As for non-state actors Jo (2015) finds that rebel groups are generally not deterred by shaming, but that some rebel groups care about their legitimacy in the international community, such as M23, the rebel group in Goma.[3] However, rebel groups can be deterred by other political costs. As pointed out by Fjelde et al. (2019), the persecutions of the ICC can pose a real threat against armed groups who might not be deterred by threats of international shaming and condemnations. On aggregate, actors who care about their legitimacy internationally, such as state-actors, are more likely to be deterred by the threat of international condemnations and shaming.

However, *how* are peacekeepers protecting civilians through deterrence by imposing political costs? In practice, as pointed out by Fjelde et al. (2019) the way in which peacekeepers impose these political costs is through the protection activities of monitoring and reporting. "Peacekeepers on the ground can monitor and report ongoing violations, which could heighten the political costs of targeting civilians through international condemnations and even arrests." (Fjelde et al., 2019). In addition to being deterred by the fear of potential military costs, peacekeepers can draw attention to atrocities against civilians perpetrated by state and non-state actors through activities of monitoring and reporting, or *surveillance* as Howard (2019a) names it. In addition to being an activity that can facilitate direct protection and deterrence, patrolling is also an activity for gathering information and obtaining

[3] Jo argues in *Compliant Rebels: Rebel Groups and International Law in World Politics* (2015) that many groups do not care about international Humanitarian Law. However, the case of the rebel group M23, who invaded Goma in 2012, illustrated that some rebel groups consciously care about adhering to IHL. The leader of M23 expressed that they would leave major towns in North Kivu so MONUSCO and the national police could ensure civilian security (Jo, 2015, p. 135). Jo (2015) does not claim that MONUSCO in particular contributed to 'shaming' M23 into adhering to IHL. Rather, she argues that some rebel groups do indeed care about what the international community says about them. Therefore, in some cases 'shaming' can possibly contribute to preventing and deterring non-state armed groups from attacking civilians.

situational awareness. The information gathered from these activities can in turn be used to shame or prosecute perpetrators of violence against civilians (Fjelde et al., 2019). Monitoring and reporting as such is one of the prioritized areas within MONUSCO's mandate to protect civilians. As the Mission's mandate of 30 March 2016 stipulates the Mission shall "(…) strengthen its early warning mechanism, and to increase its efforts to monitor and document violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights (…)" (UNSC, 2016, p. 10). Monitoring and reporting as such is a frequently used practice in UN peacekeeping operations. For example, MONUSCO, as well as most UN missions, regularly report human rights abuses and incidents of violence against civilians perpetrated by rebel groups and government forces, in reports of the United Nations Secretary-General.

While Fjelde et al. (2019) states that peacekeepers can deter violence through imposing both military and political costs, Howard (2019a) argues that deterrence by peacekeepers is not rooted in the threat of military counteraction. Howard (2019a) points out that "Although they may have a mandate to compel, UN peacekeepers have neither the capacity nor the resolve to do so". When it comes to the mechanism of deterrence, Howard, (2019a) claims that "Potential attackers may decide not to attack because they fear potential economic or political consequences, but not the destructive wrath of peacekeepers." Thus, Howard's (2019a) argument seems to slightly contrast to Hultman et als., (2019b) and Fjelde et als. (2019) general findings, that peacekeepers reduce violence by signaling military resolve by establishing a large presence of peacekeepers with the ability to use force. Rather, according to Howard (2019a), deterrence works through the threat of imposing economic or political costs on perpetrators of violence against civilians.

In sum, peacekeepers can deter violence against civilians by imposing military and political costs. According to the literature above, peacekeepers can impose military costs through the activities of (1) establishing a military and police presence in areas at risk and (2) conducting patrols. These activities can signal a credible threat of military counteraction which can deter violence targeting civilians. Peacekeepers deter violence by the threat of imposing political costs such as international shaming and persecutions by the ICC. In practice, monitoring and reporting of atrocities against civilians by peacekeepers enables these political costs to deter violence targeting civilians. However, peacekeepers are not only protecting civilians and keeping the peace by threatening belligerents with various potential costs. Peacekeepers also use 'soft power' tools such as verbal persuasion.

2.2.3 Verbal persuasion

The mechanism of verbal persuasion is rooted in the peacekeeping missions' non-material tools to ensure peace. As noted by Howard, (2019b);

> Persuasion is the power of nonmaterial, "ideational" factors to change behavior. The United Nations in general, and more specifically UN peacekeeping, employs persuasion to try to convince warring parties to stop fighting, and to consolidate peace, by engaging politically as opposed to violently.

In contrast to deterrence, the theory of verbal persuasion does not include *threats* about military or political costs. Howard (2019) in the book "power in peacekeeping", argues that peacekeeping can work through persuasion – by using ideas to change behavior.[4] Specifically, and in practice, this mechanism can work through activities such as (1) public outreach, (2) mediation and (3) training (Howard, 2019b).

First, public outreach is attempts of persuasion through sharing information or "awareness raising" (Howard 2019b). To advance peace processes the UN has historically developed "public information campaigns by peacekeeping missions aimed at the local population." (Oksamytna, 2018). These types of campaigns have for objective to create consensus around the peace processes among civilians and parties to a conflict (Howard, 2019b). These programs contributes to progressing the peace processes, Oksamytna (2018) points out "Information plays an important role in volatile post-conflict environments and can both advance and endanger the peace process.".

Secondly, *mediation* encompasses activities which bring two or more conflicting parties together to resolve conflicts through dialogue (Howard, 2019b). Furthermore, the activity of mediation can occur among high level politicians in the Mission and among military peacekeepers on the ground (ibid.). As for the effects of mediation on violence Beardsley et al., (2019) find that mediation is associated with reduced bloodshed and that mediation and peacekeeping reinforce one another to reduce battle deaths.

Third, *training* encompasses the efforts of peacekeepers to train police or military policing and military practices (Howard, 2019b). As the responsibility to protect civilians rests with the host countries for any peacekeeping operation security, peacekeepers can

[4] And through (2) Financial and institutional inducement – by providing sticks and carrots of aid and employment; and (3) coercion – by limiting the choice of belligerents by actions short of offensive military force.[4]

engage in training of police or military to protect civilians. However, the effects of these training programs on levels of violence seems to be limited (Solli et al., 2011).

On aggregate, as for the effectiveness of these activities Howard, (2019) illustrates the effectiveness of the activities of verbal persuasion through qualitative ethnographic studies of the UN peace missions in respectively Namibia, Lebanon and the Central African Republic. For example, in the case of Namibia "the mission did not possess the capacity to supply certain security guarantees" but succeeded in persuading the belligerents verbally to not to attack each other, mostly through public outreach and training programs (Howard, 2019b). Howard (2019b) thus illustrates that ideational tools as such, can contribute to producing effective peacekeeping results, while military resolve and the use of force can contribute to deteriorating security situations. As Howard (2019a) illustrates in the Central African Republic in April 2018, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) attempted to forcibly disarm a militia in Bangui. However, the following combats caused three dozen civilian deaths and the killing of a peacekeeper (Williams, 2021). Howard depicts this operation as a failed attempt in compellent exercise of power in peacekeeping. Rather, she highlights that verbal persuasion through 'soft power' tools such as mediation, public outreach, and mediation, effectively can stop people from attacking each other, as illustrated in Namibia, and therefore directly or indirectly protecting civilians.

In sum, as presented above, the mechanisms of verbal persuasion can work through the activities of (1) public outreach, (2) mediation, and (3) training. As illustrated by Howard (2019b) persuasion contributed to stopping actors from attacking each other in Namibia.

2.3 Summary

In sum peacekeepers can protect civilians through the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. This sub-chapter will first present a summary of how these mechanisms work as outlined above. Secondly, a brief discussion of how these mechanisms can be difficult to distinguish empirically will follow.

Direct protection involves two strategies, where the first relates to interpositioning between civilians and potential threats to them, and the use of force to protect civilians. In practice, peacekeepers can interposition between civilians and armed elements by setting up

protection of civilians camps and by escorting civilian IDPs in transit on their way to their homes. **Deterrence** in the context of peacekeeping involves the threat of imposing military and political costs on perpetrators of violence against civilians. In practice, as for imposing military costs, military peacekeepers can (1) establish a military presence in areas at risk and (2) conduct patrols, which can represent a credible threat of military counteraction, which in turn deters violence. The threat of imposed military costs is more likely to deter non-state actors than state actors (Fjelde et al., 2019; Phayal & Prins, 2020). Peacekeepers can also deter violence by imposing political costs through shaming. In practice, peacekeepers on the ground can monitor and report on atrocities against civilians and bring this information to the international community, which can contribute to deterring actors from inflicting violence against civilians. Shaming as such is more likely to deter violence perpetrated by state forces, as governments have concerns for their legitimacy in the international community. **Verbal persuasion** involves nonmaterial "ideational" factors that contributes to changing behavior of perpetrators of violence against civilians. This mechanism can work through the activities of public outreach, mediation, and training. Notably, these activities can be carried out by military, police, and civilian personnel.

The mechanisms of the protection of civilians outlined above can be interrelated and challenging to separate empirically. As direct protection and deterrence both relates to the military component of the peacekeeping mission, they can be difficult to distinguish. The main difference between direct protection and deterrence, is that deterrence does not require the protection activity of interpositioning. Deterrence rather protects civilians through imposing credible *threats* of military or political costs on potential perpetrators of violence, which might prevent them from attacking civilians. Thus, the *threat* of the use of force is deterrence, whereas the *actual* use of force and interpositioning is direct protection. As opposed to direct protection and deterrence, verbal persuasion does not involve threats nor interpositioning between civilians and perpetrators of violence against civilians. Rather, verbal persuasion encompasses the use of ideas to change behavior of perpetrators of violence against civilians. In practice, whereas deterrence could be reflected in this phrase; 'If you attack civilians, we will impose military and political costs on you', verbal persuasion looks more like; 'please do not attack civilians, it is wrong to attack civilians'. Thus, the main difference between deterrence and verbal persuasion, as outlined from the peacekeeping literature above, is that verbal persuasion seeks to convince actors to not attack civilians without the use of threats of imposed military or political costs.

The mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence and verbal persuasion and the activities that enable them to work effectively, as theorized above, are summarized in table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Mechanisms of protection and protection activities

Mechanism	Activities
Direct protection	- Interpositioning - Defense - The use of force
Deterrence	- Establishing a military and police presence in areas at risk (imposing military costs) - Patrols (Imposing military costs and political costs) - Shaming (Imposing political costs) - Monitoring and reporting (Imposing political costs)
Verbal persuasion	- Public outreach (awareness raising) - Mediation - Training

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The last chapter outlined a set of causal mechanisms which explains how peacekeepers might protect civilians in conflict zones. Namely direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. This chapter will explain how this theoretical framework will be applied to examine the question of how MONUSCO protected civilians in the case of the Kasai-crisis in 2016-2018. First, the overall research design for this thesis, which is a single case study, will be presented. In this part a reflection of advantages and limitations of single case studies and what single case studies can and cannot do will be presented. Secondly, a brief description of the method of theory centric process tracing, which is the tool used to gather and analyze the empirical data to answer the research question for this thesis will be presented. This part will also further explain how I searched for the implications of the presence of the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. Finally, I will discuss potential threats to internal validity when using the research design of a single case study.

3.2 Case study design

A case study is an intensive study of a single unit, for the purpose of understanding a larger class of units (Gerring, 2007, p. 27). The central and defining question for case study research is thus "What is this a case of?" (Gerring, 2007, p. 13). This is a case of a peacekeeping operation (MONUSCO) with a mandate to protect civilians. Specifically, this thesis is a single case study of MONUSCO's attempt to protect civilians in the Kasai provinces in the DRC in 2016-2018, a period when violence targeting civilians peaked, MONUSCO deployed, and violence targeting civilians subsequently de-creased. Specifically, this thesis examines the protection activities of MONUSCO in the Kasai provinces in 2016-2018, in light of various theorizations on how peacekeepers might reduce violence against civilians. This thesis thus contributes to existing research on the effectiveness of peace operations in terms of civilian protection by shedding light on the causal mechanisms explaining the established relationship between the deployment of UN peacekeepers, and reductions in violence against civilians in conflict zones.

3.2.1 Advantages and limitations of a single case study

Case studies have a long tradition in social science research. However, as noted by Gerring (2007, p. 43) "Case study research suffers problems of representativeness because it includes, by definition, only a small number of cases of some more general phenomenon". Thus, case studies are weaker in terms of external validity and generalization to other units of analysis (ibid.). In addition, in terms of limitations Gerring (2007, p. 6) state that a case study

> (…) is often identified with loosely framed and nongeneralizable theories, biased case selection, informal and undisciplined research designs, weak empirical leverage (too many variables and too few cases), subjective conclusions, non-replicability, and causal determinism.

To tackle these potential pitfalls, the aim of this analysis has been to be as systematic, objective and transparent as possible. Thus, this thesis aims at making it clear for the reader if certain observations strengthen or weakens our confidence in that the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence and verbal persuasion were present. Moreover, I have attempted to be as formal and disciplined as possible when it comes to the research design. As for the case-selection, I chose to study a hard case, the DRC, where it is highly unlikely to find support for the theory that peacekeepers reduce violence (Hultman et al., 2019a). Though one can hardly generalize to other cases, one could argue that if the mechanisms are found to be present here, there might be a slight chance that they could be present in similar contexts with a peacekeeping mission with the mandate to protect civilians. However, as it is a single case study, one can only formally make within-case inferences (Beach, 2017).

The research design of a single case-study gives the opportunity to dig deeper into the mechanisms through which peacekeepers protect civilians. Specifically, it can provide knowledge of which causal mechanisms that works to explain how levels of violence against civilians and levels of IDP movements gets reduced and how overall security situations get improved because of the presence of peacekeepers. Furthermore, A single case-study can enable the researcher to trace "[m]ultiple causal paths leading to the same outcome" also called the system of equifinality (Gerring, 2007, p. 213). As the protection of civilians is a comprehensive approach with numerous protection activities initiated at the same time, a case study can be suitable to identify the effects of these separate causal paths. Notably, there can be several factors that contribute to explaining the reduction and/or close to absence of

violence in the Kasai provinces from July 2017.[5] A case study can be useful to explore all of these factors and provides the opportunity to deconstruct "the independent causal effects of each factor." (Gerring, 2007, p. 61). As the question of *how* peacekeepers protect civilians remains understudied, and this thesis aims at tracing which protection mechanisms that may contribute to improving security for civilians, a single case study is the most beneficial research design.

Another advantage of Single-case studies is that there is "a natural advantage in research of an exploratory nature" (Gerring, 2007, p. 39). This entails that case studies are beneficial for generating theory (Gerring, 2007, p. 39-43). In this thesis the theory. i.e., the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence and verbal persuasion, guides the empirical analysis, which can be used to further refine theories on how peacekeepers protect civilians. For this research design a single case study is beneficial according to Gerring (2007, p. 39-43).

3.3 Tracing causal mechanisms

This sub-chapter describes how I measured and assessed the theoretical concepts and protection activities outlined in the theory chapter, namely: direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. I have used a form of theory-centric process tracing to analyze the data. Bennett & Checkel (2015, p. 12) define process tracing as "the analysis of evidence of processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a case for the purpose of either developing or testing hypotheses about causal mechanisms that might causally explain the case". The method has thus been to see whether the theorized causal mechanisms have been present, or not, in the evidence of the case of the Kasai-crisis. Given that this analysis is theory-driven, the predictions about evidence "should be as clear as possible, making it easier to determine whether they are then actually found in the subsequent case or not" (Beach, 2017). Thus, the following paragraphs will operationalize the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence and verbal persuasion and attempt to make it clear what I would expect to see in the empirical data if these mechanisms were present in the case. Thus, the following section will attempt to specify which activities I expect to observe, and more importantly, what I expect to observe if these activities contributed to produce reductions of violence

[5] See figure 4.1 and 4.2.

targeting civilians through the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. As some observations carry stronger inferential leverage about causality than others, the following sections will also briefly describe which type of observations that can be treated as hoop-tests and smoking-guns (D. Collier, 2011).[6]

3.3.1 Direct protection

As outlined in table 1.1, based on existing research, if the mechanism of direct protection is present in the Kasais, I expect to observe peacekeepers to exercise the activities of interpositioning, defense or the use of force. As for interpositioning, if the evidence reveals that peacekeepers shielded refugees or IDP's to their homes, and thus prevented civilians from being targeted, then this would update our confidence in that the mechanism of direct protection through interpositioning is present. As for defense, If I observe that civilians take refuge in peacekeeping compounds, and were not harmed in these compounds, it can update our confidence in that the mechanism of direct protection was present. If there are any implications that suggest that civilians would be dead if it were not for the interpositioning and defense capabilities of peacekeepers, it would significantly increase our confidence in the presence of direct protection. As such, the observation of civilians under severe threat, who are saved by the interpositioning by peacekeepers, could be treated as a "smoking gun" which confirms that direct protection was present (D. Collier, 2011). Finally, though I do not expect to observe it, if the peacekeepers use force or engage in confrontations with any of the armed actors violently, and reduce their capacity to attack civilians, then it would update our confidence in the presence of the mechanism of direct protection. The reason I do not expect to observe this is that the use of force, is rarely a used tool in peacekeeping operations. Nevertheless, there are recordings of successful protection of civilians through the use of force by MONUSCO in the DRC, so there might be a possibility to observe this (Kjeksrud, 2019).

[6] Straw-in-the-wind tests affirms relevance of the presence of the mechanisms but does not confirm it, as a given piece of evidence is not sufficient, nor necessary for affirming causal inference. Hoop-test affirms relevance of the presence of a mechanism but does not confirm it, as a given piece of evidence is necessary to observe but not sufficient for affirming a causal inference. A smoking gun confirms the presence of a mechanism, as a given piece of evidence is sufficient for affirming causal inference (D. Collier, 2011).

3.3.2 Deterrence

How do we observe successful deterrence of armed actors by peacekeepers? Deterrence is difficult to observe because it relies on the counterfactual that an actor did not act because of a specific threat and not for some other reason (Howard, 2019a). Deterrence *failures* are easier to pinpoint. If I observe that violence targeting civilians increase in the same areas in which peacekeepers are deployed, then deterrence has failed, and thus the mechanism of deterrence is not present in the Kasais. However, to observe the presence/absence of successful deterrence I will rely on both descriptive statistics and qualitative data.

If deterrence by imposing military costs is present in this case, I expect to observe that violence targeting civilians and threats against civilians gets reduced – or is absent - in the areas in which MONUSCO has established a static (peacekeeping compounds) or dynamic (patrols) military presence. In addition to levels of violence targeting civilians, I will consider IDP and refugee movements in the Kasai-provinces. If deterrence is present, I expect to see that civilians, particularly displaced persons, and refugees, gravitate towards areas where MONUSCO has a presence. Notably, these observations could only slightly increase our confidence in that the mechanism of deterrence is present, as reductions of violence is not a sufficient observable to affirm that deterrence was present. These quantitative pieces of evidence would thus affirm the relevance of the 'hypotheses' of the presence of deterrence but would not confirm it, and therefore pass the "hoop-test" (D. Collier, 2011). Moreover, if interlocutors highlight that state and non-state actors were deterred by the presence of peacekeepers, and thus refrained from using violence against civilians, it will affirm the relevance of the mechanism. However, perceptions from interlocutors as such would not confirm the presence of deterrence, as one can hardly know the exact reason why armed actors do not attack civilians.

What would substantially upgrade our confidence in that the mechanism of deterrence is present in the Kasais, is the observation of changes in violent behavior among state or non-state actors. For example, if perpetrators of violence are seen to refrain from attacking civilians, when they observe the patrols or military compounds of peacekeepers, it would confirm that deterrence was present. Put in the words of D. Collier (2011), this piece of evidence will be treated as a "smoking gun" as it will sufficiently affirm that deterrence was present.

If deterrence by imposing political costs is present in this case, I expect to observe that the activities of shaming and monitoring and reporting finds place. More importantly, I expect to observe that potential perpetrators of violence refrain from attacking civilians in fear of international condemnations after the Mission or any organization publicly condemns an armed actor. If there are any indications of this posited by interlocutors or text-based sources, it would update our confidence in that the mechanism of deterrence through imposing political costs was present in the Kasais.

3.3.3 Verbal persuasion

Verbal persuasion is observed through changes in behavior among actors which peacekeepers has negotiated with or talked to. As outlined in the literature review these 'talks' can take the form of (1) public outreach, (2) meditation, and (3) training. If interlocutors or text-based sources leaves traces of changes in behavior among perpetrators of violence after peacekeepers has engaged in any of these activities, it would update our confidence in that the mechanism of verbal persuasion is present. In this context changes in behavior means that perpetrators of violence lay down their arms or stop perpetrating violence against civilians, after MONUSCO engages in verbal persuasion activities. If this change in behavior among perpetrators of violence is observed, the evidence could be treated as a "smoking gun" confirming that verbal persuasion contributed to de-creasing the capacities of perpetrators of violence against civilians.

3.4 Data

Poor data and limited availability to interview-objects or any sources who can reflect what happened on the ground in the Kasai-provinces from 2016 – 2018 has been a recurring challenge throughout this project. Data collection from volatile and remote areas such as the Kasai provinces is a challenge as data collectors on the ground face security risks. As stated by the Mission itself "The security situation in the region has significantly impeded humanitarian access, affecting both the delivery of assistance and the verification of information." (UNSC, 2017c, p. 8). Furthermore, as stated by Kjeksrud (2019, p. 62) systematic reporting of the particular performance and outcomes of UN military protection efforts is often lacking. Though the quality of data on MONUSCO's protection activities are scarce and sometimes poor, I relied on written secondary sources from the UN, news articles,

statistical data from ACLED and UNMA and semi-structured in-depth interviews. The following section will describe how these different types of data was collected.

3.4.1 Quantitative data

To get an overview of the security situation for civilians in the Kasai provinces, data from ACLED and UNMA have been used. The Raw data from ACLED is trimmed down to only encompass levels of civilian fatalities and events of violence targeting civilians in the provinces of Kasai-Central, Kasai and Kasai-Oriental from 2016-2018. I used RStudio to trim the data, including by separating state and non-state actors according to ACLED's codebook.[7] As noted by the ACLED codebook: "Fatality data are typically the most biased, and least accurate, component of any conflict data. They are particularly prone to manipulation by armed groups, and occasionally the media, which may overstate or underreport fatalities for political purposes". To solve this problem, *events* of violence targeting civilians is also included in the graphs, which by ACLED's assessment is a more accurate metric (*Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook*, n.d.)

3.4.2 Document analysis

For the document analysis, several secondary sources were collected. This included, UN's reports of the secretary general, reports from the Mission's operations in the Kasais, news articles from respectively Radio Okapi and RFI and several other reports by NGOs in the Kasai-provinces. An obvious methodological issue is that reports and documents from the UN might be biased and only highlight successful instances of the protection of civilians in the Kasais. Furthermore, reports from high level offices in the UN such as reports from the secretary general often describe what MONUSCO is doing to protect civilians, but rarely say anything about the effects of their protection activities. This makes it notoriously difficult to establish that causal mechanisms are operative in any respective case. However, to solve the issue of potential biases in the UN's reporting I used data from the news agency Radio France

[7] From the ACLED codebook: **37** – represents Political militias versus civilians, **47** – represents communal militias versus civilians, **78** – represents other actors such as private security forces targeting civilians. These were all coded as "Non-state actors" as described in the script and Figure 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3. **17 –** represents state repression of civilians. This number was coded as 'state actor' as described in the script and figures. (*Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook*, 2021.)

Internationale (Rfi) and Radio Okapi[8] and reports from organizations such as Congo Research Group (CRG), Mercy Corps and the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON). Except Radio Okapi, all these organizations are reporting independently from the UN, which can contribute to portraying a more nuanced picture of (1) what peacekeepers do to protect civilians, and (2) the impact of these protection activities on levels of violence targeting civilians, IDP movements and the overall security situation.

3.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

The written sources covered to some extent the overall impact of the Mission, and the lack of it, in terms of civilian protection in the Kasai provinces from 2016 – 2018. The goal of conducting interviews was to get the point of view of people who observed the process of the conflict with their own eyes. This data serves as a valuable supplement to written sources which oftentimes report *whether*, or not, MONUSCO successfully protected civilians, whereas interlocutors can provide more knowledge on *how* MONUSCO protected. Thus, the goal was to get in touch with MONUSCO-employees or other civilians who had observed them at work. Reaching out to potential interlocutors was a challenge as one is required to send a formal research request to MONUSCO. This research request was never answered. Furthermore, even though I got in touch with interlocutors, some of them refused to be interviewed and recorded as the conflict in the Kasais is a sensitive topic to several MONUSCO employees. Despite these challenges, seven interviews were conducted with four MONUSCO employees, one expert on the Kasai region and a journalist, out of which 5 were recorded. Three of these interviews were conducted in French, as some of them were Congolese nationals. All the interviews were conducted through zoom, WhatsApp messages, and emails. The aim of these interviews was thus (1) to obtain additional background knowledge of the case of the Kasai-crisis and (2) to supplement the analysis of UN reports, news articles and reports from NGOs. To avoiding to "clog" the narrative I asked the interlocutors open ended questions about how they protected civilians or how they had observed MONUSCO protect civilians (Roberts, 1996, p. 66-67, 87-88). One challenge that came up was that several of the interlocutors pointed out that the Kasai conflict was a long time ago, and some things could be difficult to remember. This could slightly weaken the

[8] Though this is an independent radio channel, MONUSCO is an active supporter of their work.

internal validity of within case inferences. However, to solve this potential threat to this thesis' validity, I compensate by using numerous text-based and quantitative sources.

3.5 Validity and reliability

Validity, an important judgment criterion for all types of research, is defined by Bryman, (2016, p. 41) as the "integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research". Validity as such is distinguished between internal validity, which refers to the accuracy of the analysis, whereas external validity refers to representativeness of a small sample of cases to a larger population (Gerring, 2007, p. 43). The case study design normally has a high level of internal validity as they can provide "thick" descriptions of events, as opposed to the potential "thinness" of cross-case studies Gerring (2007, p. 49). However, there exists some potential threats to internal validity in the single-case study design of this thesis. First, the risk of confirmation bias. Confirmation bias is "the tendency to process information by looking for, or interpreting, information that is consistent with one's existing beliefs" (Britannica, 2022). As the method of theory-centric process tracing is used in this thesis, there is an inherent risk that pre-existing theories about causal mechanisms are interpreted as being present in the case when they really are not. To solve this, I have attempted to be as transparent as possible and to make clear what I expect to observe in the evidence of a case if the theorized causal mechanisms are present. Furthermore, to increase internal validity I have triangulated a wide array of quantitative and qualitative sources, to hopefully increase the internal validity of my findings.

4 Case study

4.1 Introduction

This part of the thesis will analyze the empirical data to answer the research question of how peacekeepers might protect civilians. This chapter will be structured in the following way. First, in the background chapter, a brief section on the identified root causes and triggers of the Kasai-crisis will be presented. Moreover, a discussion of MONUSCO's overall impact on the protection of civilians in the Kasai-provinces, in light of descriptive statistics from ACLED and UNMA will be presented. Third, there will be a brief discussion on alternative explanations to the reductions of violence targeting civilians in the Kasai-provinces. Then the analysis of how MONUSCO protected civilians throughout the Kasai-crisis will be conducted.

4.2 Background

According to Mercy Corps (2019, p. 35), the root causes of the violent conflict can be summarized in the following factors: (1) a dysfunctional central state, and (2) decades of underdevelopment and widespread poverty in the Kasais. During Mobutu Sese Seko's presidency in the DRC (1965-1997) in the early 1980's, opposition movements in the Kasai region gained prominence as the opposition figure Etienne Tshisekedi[9] emerged (Mercy Corps, 2019, p. 21). This opposition in the Kasais against the central state continued after the Congo wars[10]. Throughout Joseph Kabila's presidency (2001-2019) there existed hostility among Luba and Lulua communities in the Kasais against Kabila and the state in general (Congo Research Group, 2018, p. 23). This hostility towards the central state was proved to be prominent as over 70% of the region voted for the opposition to Kabila in the 2011 elections (Congo Research Group, 2018, p. 23). Thus, the Kasai region as a whole has been considered as an "opposition stronghold" by the Congolese authorities[11], who deliberately and systematically have under-invested in the region in fear of a mobilization of resistance against the government (Mercy Corps, 2019, p. 35). Hence, as a result of systematic neglect and

[9] An ethnic Luba from Kasai
[10] First Congo war (1996-1997). Second Congo war (1998-2003)
[11] Both during Mobutu Sese Seko and Joseph Kabila's presidencies (Congo Research Group, 2018, p. 23).

under-investment of the Kasais, before the violence erupted in 2016, the region has suffered from widespread underdevelopment and poverty (ibid.). In fact, The Kasai region had some of the poorest and least developed areas in the DRC, even before the conflict escalated in 2016-2017 (Shaw, 2018). These conditions, as a result of the neglect from the Congolese central state, have caused further hostilities and grievances towards the state in general, especially among Luba and Lulua communities (Congo Research Group, 2018, p. 23).

One of the chiefdoms that remained especially hostile against the state in 2016 was the Luba-speaking community Kamuina Nsapu, with its elected leader Jean-Prince Mpandi (Pandi).[12] The Congolese authorities' refusal to offer Pandi a *decree*, which is a formal recognition of his chiefship, created discontent with Pandi leading him to form a militia with the aim of preventing Congolese security forces from entering his village Kamuina Nsapu (Congo Research Group, p. 3). On the 12th of August the conflict sparked as Pandi was killed by Congolese security services (Rolley, 2017). Subsequent to the death of the chief Pandi, on 2 September 2016, UNICEF reported that at least 51 people had died, 806 buildings had burned up, state buildings were destroyed and nearly 12,000 people were displaced (ibid.). In the months to follow, civilians would be increasingly targeted by both Congolese security services and non-state actors such as the Kamuina Nsapu and Bana Mura as illustrated in Figure 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3. Moreover, the violent conflict of the Kasai region, with its peak of violence in 2017, caused the displacement of approximately 1.4 million Congolese citizens (UNHCR, 2021).

4.2.1 MONUSCO's impact on protection of civilians

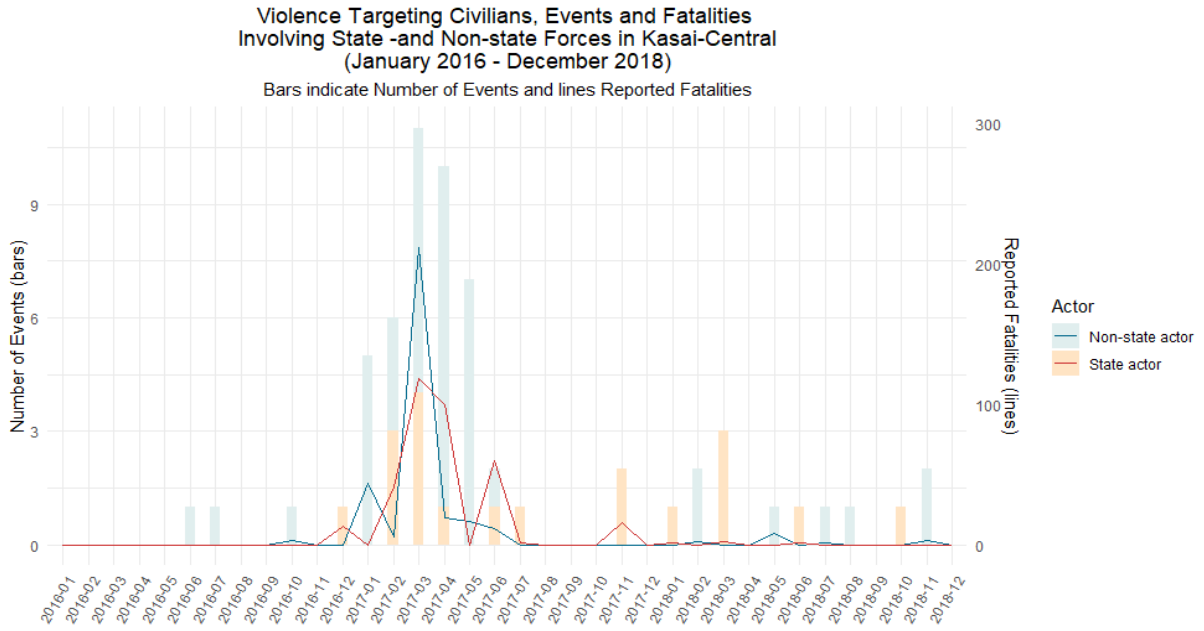
As a response to these atrocities against civilians, MONUSCO initiated its deployments of military troops to the Kasai-provinces with emphasis in Kasai-Central in December 2016 (UNSC, 2017a, p. 5). By September 2017, the Mission had deployed 450 peacekeepers across the provinces of Kasai-Central, Kasai, and Kasai-Oriental.[13] These deployments of military peacekeepers seemed to eventually have an impact on protection, as levels of violence

[12] Most of Kamuina Nsapu consisted of Luba speakers. Luba and Lulua communities as such have historically been hostile towards the government in general in part because of marginalization from the government's side during both Mobutu and Kabila's presidencies (Congo Research Group, 2018, p. 23). Furthermore, resentment against Luba and Lulua communities traces back to the 'favorization' of Belgian colonists during their colonial rule (Congo Research Group, 2018, p. 23).

[13] The entire process of peacekeeping deployments to the violence in the Kasai-provinces is illustrated in appendix 7.1. I have collected this data from various sources.

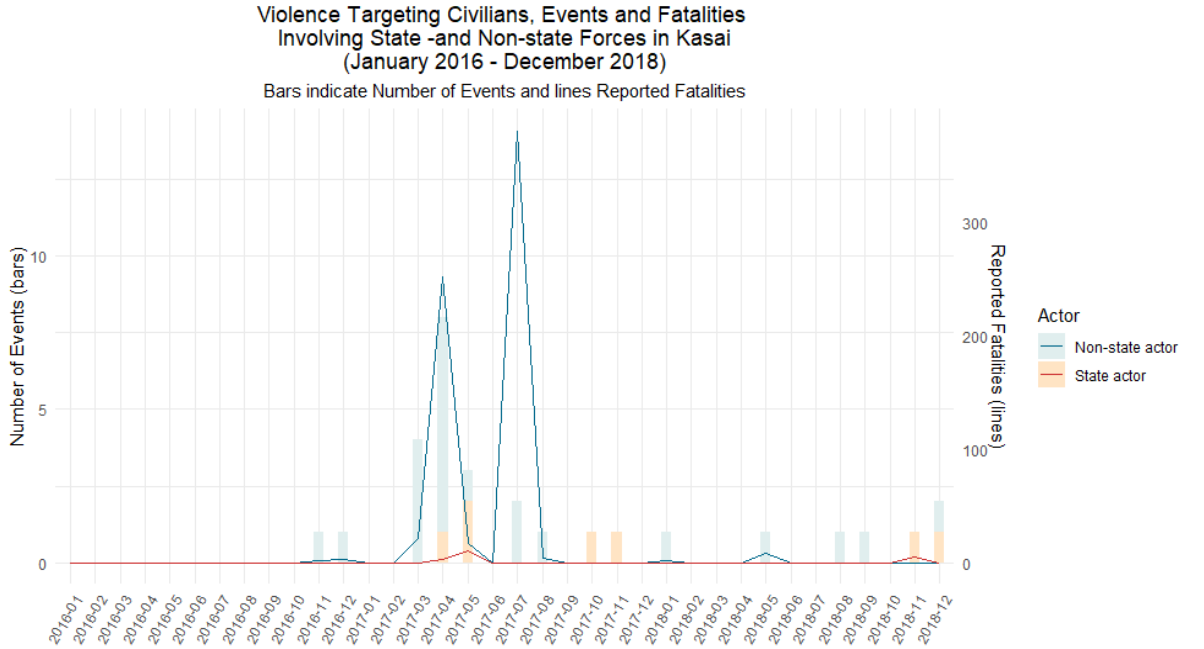
targeting civilians were significantly reduced from the month of September 2017 in all Kasai-provinces as illustrated in figure 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3. These figures include violence targeting civilians perpetrated by both state and non-state forces.

Figure 4.1: Violence against civilians in Kasai Central



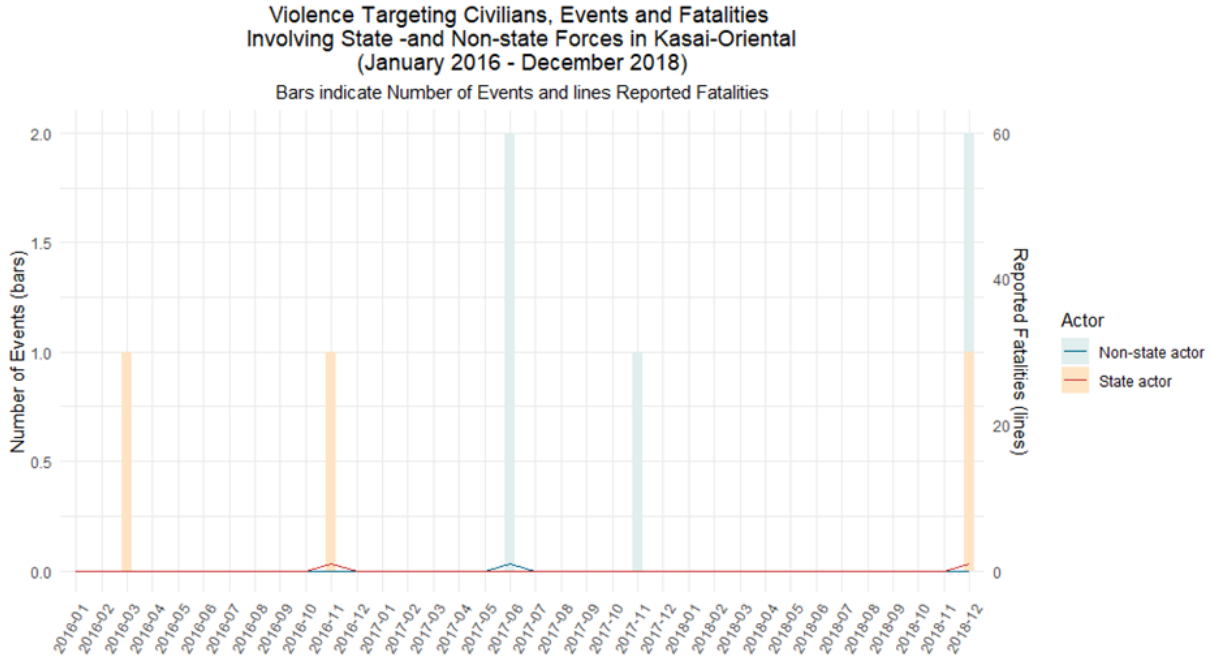
Source: *Raleigh, Clionadh, Andrew Linke, Håvard Hegre and Joakim Karlsen. (2010). "Introducing ACLED-Armed Conflict Location and Event Data." Journal of Peace Research 47(5) 651-660.*

Figure 4.2: Violence against civilians in Kasai



Source: *Raleigh, Clionadh, Andrew Linke, Håvard Hegre and Joakim Karlsen. (2010). "Introducing ACLED-Armed Conflict Location and Event Data." Journal of Peace Research 47(5) 651-660.*

Figure 4.3: Violence targeting civilians perpetrated by state and non-state actors in Kasai-Oriental



Source: *Raleigh, Clionadh, Andrew Linke, Håvard Hegre and Joakim Karlsen. (2010). "Introducing ACLED-Armed Conflict Location and Event Data." Journal of Peace Research 47(5) 651-660.*

Notably, as the figures illustrate, levels of violence targeting civilians were significantly higher in the provinces of Kasai-central and Kasai, compared to the province of Kasai Oriental. Thus, Kasai Central and Kasai were the areas in which MONUSCO focused its presence (UNSC, 2017a, p. 5; Rolley 2017).

Moreover, following the deployments of peacekeepers to the Kasai-provinces, there were large return movements caused in part by the improved security situation as presented in Table 4.1. Approximately 60% of all IDPs returned to their homes as a result of the improved security situation according to UNMA (2018, p. 8) [14].

[14] Most likely, these return movements occurred in the last quarter of 2017. With regards to figure 1.1, violence dropped significantly in the last quarter of 2017. This could indicate the improvement of the security situation and thus the large return movements.

Table 4.1: Return movements of displaced persons and refugees in the Kasai region from 2016-2018

Province	2016	2017	2018
Kasai	12,145	738,289	185,721
Kasai Central	37,759	1,292,745	236,911
Kasai Oriental	9,213	159,685	16,116

Source: (UNMA, 2018, p. 8)

In sum, subsequent to MONUSCO's deployments, violence against civilians was reduced in the Kasais in line with existing research on the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations (Carnegie & Mikulaschek, 2020; Fjelde et al., 2019; Hultman et al., 2013; Phayal & Prins, 2020; Salvatore, 2020). Though it is difficult to determine to what extent peacekeepers contributed to this drop in violence and return movements, the overall trends seem to suggest that MONUSCO played a role in improving the security situation for civilians in line with the above-mentioned research. This theory is also supported by independent researchers. According to Mercy Corps (2019, p. 44) MONUSCO contributed to reducing violence against civilians as the Mission "was able to deploy larger numbers of troops and post them in some hotspots to reduce tensions." In addition, several interlocutors of EPON's report (Novosseloff et al., 2019, p. 79) from within and outside MONUSCO, were especially encouraged by the Mission's response to the violence in the Kasai and highlighted this episode as an example of the Mission's recent responsiveness to mitigate civilian casualties. Though these can be indications that MONUSCO contributed to reducing violence against civilians in the Kasai provinces, there are some possible alternative explanations highlighted by interlocutors.

4.2.2 Alternative explanation to reductions of violence against civilians

As this thesis applies the method of process-tracing, transparency about alternative explanations to the outcome of reductions of violence against civilians is crucial. As pointed out by Beach (2017) "If the hypothesized observable is found and there are few alternative explanations, this would enable a strong confirming inference to be made, and vice versa.". According to some of the interlocutors, the response of the Congolese security services against the Kamuina Nsapu explained the reductions in violence targeting civilians. As stated

by Interlocutor 4, a humanitarian in the United Nations Office for the Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), who was deployed to the Kasai provinces in October 2017 and worked closely with MONUSCO, stated (2022):

> The way the conflict, the *hot* conflict ended, was very much a result of the FARDC's high levels of violence, destroying the Kamuina Nsapu and then what MONUSCO did was to encourage them to be a lot more responsible with the aftermath.

One interpretation of this statement is that the FARDC's response ended the conflict quickly, and thus deprived non-state actors from the opportunity to attack civilians further. This statement was supported by Interlocutor 5 (2022) who stated that "(…) it was the sheer brutality when the Congolese security services went after Kamuina Nsapu people, that led to this reduction in violence.". Thus, the response of the FARDC might have contributed reducing violence against civilians through the mechanism of direct protection by the use of force against the non-state actor Kamuina Nsapu. This might impact the ability to make stronger causal inferences about the presence/absence of the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion in the Kasais, as this seems like a plausible explanation for the reduction of violence against civilians perpetrated by non-state forces. Nevertheless, even though the Kamuina Nsapu were defeated by the FARDC, Congolese security services continuously perpetrated violence against civilians, as illustrated in figure 4.1. As the following sub-chapter will depict further, violence targeting civilians perpetrated by state forces would probably remain higher, if it were not for the presence of peacekeepers who protected civilians through direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion in the Kasai-region from December 2016.

The following section will go beyond the numbers and examine the actions of MONUSCO in the Kasai-provinces in 2016-2018 in light of various theories of *how* peacekeepers might reduce violence against civilians.

4.3 How MONUSCO protected civilians during the Kasai-crisis

As outlined in the theory chapter, peacekeepers may protect civilians through the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. **Direct protection** works through the activities of (1) interpositioning – by standing between combatants and civilians during patrols or protection of IDPs during return movements to their homes; (2) Defense – which entails protection of civilians in peacekeeping compounds and (3) the use of force by defeating threats against civilians. These activities of direct protection can contribute to reducing violence against civilians (Howard, 2019a; S. Hultman et al., 2019; Hunt & Bellamy, 2011). **Deterrence** can work through imposing military and political costs on perpetrators of violence against civilians. As for imposing military costs, peacekeepers can establish a static and dynamic "deterrent presence" in areas at risk (Kjeksrud, 2019, p. 19). This presence of armed peacekeeping elements might represent a credible military threat which deters armed actors from inflicting violence against civilians, which in turn reduces violence against civilians. Peacekeepers can also deter violence by imposing political costs on belligerents through monitoring and reporting which can be used to shame perpetrators of violence against civilians (Fjelde et al., 2019). As some actors are concerned about their legitimacy in the international community, actors are deterred from inflicting violence against civilians as they might be internationally condemned (DeMeritt, 2012; Fjelde et al., 2019; Howard, 2019b). **Verbal persuasion** are ideational factors that might change the violent behavior of potential perpetrators of violence against civilians. Through activities such as public outreach (awareness raising), mediation and training, peacekeepers may persuade belligerents to not attack civilians (Barnett et al., 2005; Howard, 2019b; Oksamytna, 2018).

The following sub-chapters will trace indications for the presence, or absence of these three mechanisms. In line with the reports that provide an overview of MONUSCO's whereabouts, their protection activities and the number of capabilities and types of capabilities, the following section will be structured chronologically, starting from December 2016. The chronology of events will be structured in three distinct periods. Period 1, which spans from December 2016 to March 2017, is the period with the highest levels of violence targeting civilians, especially in Kasai Central and Kasai as figure 4.1 and 4.2 depicts. In addition, this is the period when MONUSCO initiated their response to the atrocities in the

Kasais.[15] Period 2, which spans from March 2017 to August 2017, is a period where violence targeting civilians still occurred, but gradually de-escalated to almost zero in August 2017, after the peak of violence in Kasai-Central in March 2017. In period 2, the province of Kasai experienced extremely high numbers of violence targeting civilians, until they de-creased to almost zero in August 2017. Period 3, which spans from August 2017 to January 2018 was the least violent period in all Kasai-provinces, subsequent to the deployment of peacekeepers to all provinces from September 2017.[16]

4.3.1 Period 1: December 2016 – March 2017

As of 2016, before the violence in the Kasai-provinces erupted, there were around 17,307 uniformed personnel and 3,112 civilian personnel in MONUSCO spread across the immense country of the DRC (Doss, 2015). None of these troops were deployed to the Kasai provinces when tensions started to rise in august 2016 (Rolley, 2017). During this period MONUSCO's protection activities did not seem to successfully protect civilians, considering the sharp increase in violence targeting civilians from the last quarter of 2016 and the continuation of violence until August and September 2017. In sum, according to the available data from this period, the Mission attempted to protect civilians and stabilize the Kasai-provinces mainly through the activities of monitoring and reporting; engagement with local populations and provincial authorities to support meditation efforts; establishing a military presence with 100 Uruguayan troops in Kananga, Kasai-Central; and the exercise of patrols. According to the collected data, (1) the *small number* of peacekeepers in the Kasais and (2) the *lack of will to cooperate* by Congolese authorities and security services can contribute to explaining the limited impact of these protection activities. Thus, the inference is that the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence and verbal persuasion were not present during Period 1 in Kasai-Central, because the data only indicates the presence of the *activities* but comes short in describing their effects on protection. The reduction of violence, or absence of violence as such, are conditions that must be observed to update our confidence in that any of the mechanisms were present. The following paragraph will delineate in more detail how

[15] See appendix 7.1

[16] Notably, the data collected from period 2 and 3 can be somewhat intertwined. This is because the reports of the secretary general do not always state the exact time of the Mission's protection activities. Moreover, not all of the informants remember the exact time that certain events occurred, which might entail that the reported events did not happen in the exact period suggested. Nervetheless, the news articles from Radio Okapi and rfi are clear on dates.

MONUSCO attempted to protect civilians in the initial phase of the conflict, and how these activities were interrupted, starting with the mechanism of direct protection.

Direct protection

There is little evidence which suggests that the mechanism of direct protection caused a mitigation of violence targeting civilians from December 2016 to March 2017, considering the increase in violence and reports from interlocutor 1 and 4. Interlocutor 1 (2022) noted that the mission in general do not physically intervene to protect civilians as "MONUSCO is not committed to defending civilians" and is reluctant to interpositioning between civilians and armed actors. In terms of 'preventing' violence Interlocutor 1 (2022) further pointed out that he has not observed a single case where peacekeepers have interpositioned to prevent violence from happening as "The troops of MONUSCO always came too late, only for counting dead bodies". Furthermore, in terms of direct protection, Interlocutor 4 (2022) added that **"**I think peacekeeping is able to provide an infrastructure that enables the conflict to move on and dissipate as opposed to going in an actually stopping conflict.". These comments from Interlocutor 1 and 4 seems to suggest that interpositioning was not a frequently used protection activity in the initial phase of the conflict, nor that interpositioning was used in an active sense. These comments are in line with Hunt & Bellamy's (2011) theory that direct protection activities oftentimes occurs in a "reactive sense". Thus, based on these statements, one can hardly infer that the mechanism of direct protection was present in Kasai-Central during Period 1. However, Interlocutor 3 (2022), a civilian who occasionally worked with reporting of the Mission's protection efforts, had a slightly different perspective as Interlocutor 3 experienced to be directly protected by peacekeepers. According to Interlocutor 3 (2022), violent clashes between Kamuina Nsapu and Congolese Security Services happened in downtown Kananga in Kasai-Central some time during Period 1. Though instances of successful protection cases were close to absent in this period, Interlocutor 3 (2022) records that some peacekeepers exercised protection through escorting people to safety and interpositioning themselves between civilians and armed actors in accordance with Hultman et al (2019) theorized causal mechanisms about interpositioning. As interlocutor 3 (2022) records "(…) we [were] in [an] ambush and by the grace of God we escaped from it; at the time of our return, we were given the blue helmets to accompany us to the airport and to secure us.". This comment seems to reveal that direct protection through interpositioning by peacekeepers transpired in Kasai-Central during period 1. Furthermore, though it is difficult

to determine what the outcome would be without the interpositioning of peacekeepers, it seems like the mechanism of direct protection was present in this particular instance. However, considering the increase in violence in Kananga, Kasai Central, (figure 4.1) direct protection did not seem to be a widely present mechanism in Kasai-Central, as indicated by interlocutor 1 and 4 (2022). At least not widely present enough to prevent substantial violence in the Kasai provinces. [17]

Deterrence

There are few indications that the mechanism of deterrence through imposing military or political costs was at work in Kasai Central from January to March 2017. In the midst of the escalations of violence in the transition between 2016 and 2017, the Mission's footprint was limited in the Kasais. As the Mission itself stated "Deploying additional capacities to Kananga is an important first step in an area where the Mission has very limited capacities." (United Nations, 2016, p. 6) Thus, from December 2016, MONUSCO initially sent interdisciplinary Mobile Monitoring Teams (MMTs) to "several areas affected by the violence in the Kasai Provinces" (UNSC, 2017a, p. 5). MMTs are interdisciplinary teams, consisting mostly of civilian participants and UN police, with its main purpose to rapidly deploy to areas where MONUSCO have no presence to gather information and provide the mission with situational awareness (UNSC, 2017a, p. 11). Moreover, the teams were principally sent to verify reports of serious human rights violations and to engage with local and provincial authorities, with the aim of protecting the local population affected by violence (UNSC, 2017a, p. 5). By the missions own assessment the Mobile Monitoring Teams were "proven valuable" in providing the Mission with situational awareness and analysis and helped to de-escalate tensions and address the root causes of violence in Kasai-Central (UNSC, 2017a, p. 5).[18] Though these teams were proven valuable by the Mission's own assessment, there are few indications that they contributed to deterring violence, through monitoring, on the provincial level, as violence increased sharply from December 2016 in Kasai-Central. As the MMTs mostly consisted of civilians, they might not have been able to signal a credible threat of military counteraction. Thus, eventually, in support of the MMTs, a Uruguayan battalion of peacekeepers was deployed to Kananga in Kasai-Central in December 2016 (Rolley, 2017). These military peacekeepers did not seem to deter violence as some

[17] See figure 4.1 and 4.2
[18] The report only states that they contributed to reducing tensions. However, how they did this is unclear.

events of violence targeting civilians perpetrated by state-forces transpired in close proximity to the Uruguayan Battalion of peacekeepers in late January 2017 in Kananga, Kasai-Central. One example of this, as Interlocutor 1, a Congolese journalist based in Kananga records:

> On 27/1/2017, Kamuina Nsapu youths arrived in downtown Kananga carrying sticks. The armed forces massacred them in front of the UNICEF Kananga office where a helmet unit was located. The peacekeepers drove their armored vehicles inside the fence, leaving the DRC armed forces to massacre civilians in broad daylight." (Interlocutor 1, 2022).

Furthermore, the lack of the Mission's effectiveness in deterring state-based violence targeting civilians was illustrated during the peak of violence in Kasai-Central in March 2017. As Interlocutor 1 (2022) recorded:

> From 27 to 29/3/2017, special forces of the Congolese army fresh from Kinshasa stormed the commune of Nganza in the city of Kananga and killed civilians and Kamuina Nsapu fighters indiscriminately. Although they were less than 3 km from the commune and despite several calls for help, the peacekeepers never made it to the commune. They arrived on 30/3/2017 to film the decaying corpses and mass graves.[19]

These two events could support the theory that peacekeepers tend to be less successful in deterring violence when the host-nation is the perpetrator of violence, as peacekeepers rely on consent from the host-state (Fjelde et al, 2019; Phayal & Prins 2020). Furthermore, one could argue that these events support Tansey & Billerbeck's (2019) argument, that the presence of peacekeepers in the DRC can contribute to nurturing the violent behavior of illiberal and autocratic regimes. These examples suggest that the mechanism of deterrence was not present during Period 1 in Kasai-Central, and that the activity of establishing a "deterrent presence" did not deter state actors from attacking defenseless civilians (Kjeksrud, 2019, p. 19). These examples can also suggest that the mechanism of direct protection was not present, as peacekeepers had the opportunity to interposition because of their proximity to the events of violence.

In addition to these instances there are multiple examples of the lack of successful deterrence against state-forces during period 1. As for the relationship between the UN/MONUSCO and the government of the DRC, the UN openly condemned what was

happening in Kasai-Central in February to March 2017. As the High Commissioner of Human Rights, Ra'ad Hussein stated: "It is time to stop a heavy-handed military response that does nothing to address the root causes of the conflict between the government and local militias but rather targets civilians based on their alleged links to the militias" (UN News, 2017). As MONUSCO troops tried to patrol to the areas where The UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) had reported that extrajudicial executions by the FARDC had taken place, the blue helmets met resistance from local authorities (Rolley, 2017). As a Blue Helmet stated: "We were supposed to go to a site of the mass graves, but the FARDC blocked the road and took us in. We had to give up" (Rolley, 2017).[20] In Tshimbulu, a town located close to Kananga, while a company of 40 blue helmets exercised monitoring through patrolling some peacekeepers stated that they were held at gunpoint by FARDC soldiers (Rolley, 2017). The Mission's attempts to protect civilians through deterrence by conducting patrols were thus hampered by Congolese security services on the ground in Kasai-Central. The fact that state-forces did not seemingly change their violent behavior towards civilians clearly suggests that the mechanism of deterrence – directed against state-forces – was not present in the Kasais during period 1. Moreover, as the violence was at its peak in March 2017, the UN itself experienced to be targeted, which suggests that deterrence was not present during period 1.

As recorded in appendix 7.1 the Mission sent additional civilian staff to Kananga, Kasai-Central in February 2017 to enhance its protection efforts. Out of the Civilian MONUSCO staff deployments in February 2017, there were two UN experts – Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp – who were investigating alleged mass graves after fighting broke out between government forces and Kamuina Nsapu (BBC, 2022). These UN experts as well as a Congolese translator and driver, were abducted and killed close to Tshimbulu on 12th of March 2017 (ibid.). The UN was shocked by these murders and the Secretary General of the UN – António Guterres - expressed that the organization "would do everything possible to ensure that justice is done" (ibid.). Notably, in addition to its mandate to protect civilians, the mission became increasingly focused on deploying additional capabilities to protect its own personnel (Interlocutor 3, 2022). This shift in priorities had negative implications for the implementation of the protection of civilians mandate as stated by interlocutor 3 (2022). "(…) you will understand that there was no improvement of the security of civilians but rather the search for the bodies of the killed experts and their justice." There is however no additional

[20] Blue helmet cited by Sonia Rolley (2017)

data that suggests that the MONUSCO priority of finding the bodies of the dead UN experts negatively impacted the Mission's protection activities. In an attempt to investigate the murders of the UN experts, the mission struggled with lack of cooperation with the local authorities in the Kasai region (Human Rights Watch, 2017). The Mission itself claimed that lack of cooperation from the host state also negatively affected their mandate implementation of protection of civilians and deterring violence against civilians, as MONUSCO expressed "serious concern over restrictions placed on its freedom of movement by security forces in Kananga in recent days, which restrict the ability of the Mission to exercise its mandate." (MONUSCO, 2017b). Hence, the fact that some elements from Congolese security services targeted both civilians and allegedly UN personnel, suggests that that the mechanism of deterrence was not present during period 1.

Verbal persuasion

During period 1 there are few indications that suggests that the mechanism of verbal persuasion was present, as violence targeting civilians was on the rise. In an attempt to obtain information about the conflict, and to solve the conflict through dialogue, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, went to Kananga to meet with provincial authorities, civil society, religious leaders and political parties (United Nations, 2016, p. 3). In support of these mediation efforts on the higher political level, 100 military peacekeepers were deployed to Kasai-Central to:

> (…) support local conflict-resolution initiatives, including initial disarmament discussions with the Kamuina Nsapu militia. Provisional authorities in Kasai Oriental engaged in efforts, supported by MONUSCO, to enlist the support of community leaders in defusing tensions in their areas and *persuading* local youth not to join the Kamuina Nsapu militia (UNSC, 2017a, p. 5).

The intervention of the 100 peacekeepers to Kananga in Kasai-Central in December 2016 was the first deployment to the Kasai crisis of military capabilities with the ability to use force. However, as the above-mentioned report details, meetings, and discussion with and collaboration with local authorities was a central part of the military personnel's protection efforts as well as for the MMTs and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General. This can suggest that some *activities* of the protection of civilians through verbal persuasion were present in period 1, namely mediation and public outreach, and that they

were exercised by both military and civilian components of the Mission. However, as tensions was on the rise and the number of IDP's started to increase from 2016-2017 these efforts did not seem to succeed. While these efforts to verbally persuade belligerents to stop using violence occurred, Interlocutor 3 (2022) criticized the Mission for its 'passive' protection approach as "(…) the peacekeepers were just there to observe what was happening in [the] Kasai[s] (…)". Though this statement by interlocutor 3 (2022) and the report of the Secretary-General suggest that the Mission engaged with local populations to support local conflict resolution initiatives, there is no evidence that suggests that these efforts produced increased security for civilians, considering the increase in violence targeting civilians from December 2016.

Furthermore, in the initial phase of the conflict, the Mission's attempts to verbally persuade state actors through supporting conflict resolution activities were hampered as the first civilian deployments, or "fact-finding teams" to the Kasais were:

> (…) routinely ignored by the security services and the special commission. Nor did the provincial authorities request MONUSCO's assistance in resolving the underlying conflict related to the chieftaincy. (…) Similarly, security agents from *Kinshasa's Conseil National de Securité* (CNS) dispatched to Kananga informed MONUSCO they too were blocked from investigating on the ground by local security services[21] (United Nations, 2016, p. 2).

This extract could indicate that the Mission attempted to protect civilians through verbal persuasion activities such as mediation, but that provincial authorities seemed disinterested in its support. Moreover, it also states that investigations, by civilians - who only possess *verbal* tools to protect civilians - were blocked. These indications seem to support Fjelde et als. (2019) theory, that government forces and authorities are less sensitive to the presence of peacekeepers, as government forces have the power to shape peacekeeping deployments. With limited capacities in the Kasai-provinces, the effects of the protection activities of mediation and attempting to resolve the conflict through dialogue were scarce. Thus, one can hardly infer that the mechanism of verbal persuasion caused any changes in behavior among

[21] Document CCX-234 retrieved from Sonia Rolley's (2017) *DRC: Violence in Kasai: The United Nations deals with crisis.* Retrieved from: https://webdoc.rfi.fr/rdc-kasai-violence-kamwina-nsapu-onu/chap-03/pdf/confidential-message-2-november.pdf

state and non-state perpetrators of violence, as levels of violence targeting civilians continuously increased throughout Period 1 in Kasai-Central.

Summary and discussion: Period 1

In summary, during Period 1, the Mission attempted to protect civilians through the mechanisms of; (1) Direct protection – by interpositioning between some civilians and the Kamuina Nsapu (Interlocutor 3, 2022); (2) Deterrence – through the deployment of the Uruguayan battalion and its patrols in volatile areas such as Kananga and Tshimbulu in Kasai-Central. And through the deployment and patrols of Mobile Monitoring Teams and fact-finding teams, and (3) Verbal persuasion - through support of local mediation efforts and persuasion of local youths to not join the Kamuina Nsapu Militia. Considering the increase of both IDP movements and violence targeting civilians until March, one can hardly confirm that the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence and verbal persuasion were present during period 1. Increasing levels of violence against civilians in the presence of peacekeepers explains the failure of the protection mechanisms. As Howard (2019a) argues "If we witness the ignition of a crisis, (…) then deterrence has failed.". However, Interlocutor 3 (2022) highlighted that the Mission escorted a number of people to safety which might suggest that the levels of violence targeting civilians might have been slightly higher, was it not for the interpositioning of the peacekeepers. Nevertheless, the overall trend suggests that MONUSCO's protection activities had limited impact on the security situation during Period 1.

According to the collected data from this period, the factors that limited the effectiveness of the Mission in terms of mitigating violence against civilians were, (1) limited capacities – with only about 140 blue helmets present in Kasai-Central as of February 2017[22] – and (2), the lack of cooperation from the Congolese authorities and Security services – as the Mission's patrolling activities and monitoring were repeatedly blocked. In terms of the limited capacities, the findings from Period 1 support Fjelde et als. (2019) theory, that only a "sizeable" deployment of peacekeepers can deter violence against civilians through imposing military and political costs. This is because it represents a credible threat of military counteraction Fjelde et al. (2019). Moreover, it supports Hultman et als. (2019b) theory that the strength of peacekeepers in terms of civilian protection, is in its numbers of military and

[22] See appendix 7.1

police personnel. Thus, to monitor the conflict process and engage with meetings with local populations and provincial authorities "(…) are probably not sufficient to dissuade thousands of members of armed groups who are intent on using violence against each other and civilians." (Howard, 2019a). This seemed to be the case in Kasai-Central from December 2016 to March 2017 as well. Furthermore, in terms of the lack of cooperation from the Congolese security services, the findings from Period 1 support Boutellis' (2013) theory that "(…) the successful implementation of physical protection strategies will always require the consent and active engagement of the host country (…)". According to the data presented above, there was neither consent from the Congolese authorities nor active engagement to protect civilians from the host-country's side. Thus, this reluctance to cooperate hindered the protection mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion to unfold. Specifically, as the data point out, the effectiveness of verbal persuasion was impeded as provincial authorities did not request any assistance from MONUSCO to address the underlying root causes of the conflict and resolve conflict through dialogue (United Nations, 2016, p. 2). The effectiveness of deterrence through patrols, was blocked on the ground in the Kasai-Central as Congolese security services refused to give MONUSCO access to certain areas and even held them at gunpoint. This suggests perpetrators of violence, namely state-forces, were not deterred by the presence of civilian and armed peacekeepers.

In the months to follow the mission itself records some successful protection activities over the course of March 2017 until June 2017 at the local level in Kasai-Central. Notably, as the next section will examine further, the mission appeared to have varied impact on the security situation of civilians by protecting civilians through the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. Put in other words, during Period 2 the data seems to leave indications that these mechanisms were present.

4.3.2 Period 2 - March 2017 to August 2017

In contrast to Period 1, the data collected from Period 2 highlights more cases of successful protection of civilians, most particularly through the mechanism of deterrence by establishing a military presence in areas at risk and imposing political costs on state-actors. Though levels of violence targeting civilians were high until July 2017, especially in the Kasai province, there was a decline in events and fatalities in Kasai-central and Kasai from respectively

March 2017 and July 2017.[23] In sum, the data collected from Interlocutors and text-based sources highlighted that the Mission attempted to protect civilians through the activities of monitoring and reporting; establishing a military presence and conducting routine -and long-range patrols; by evacuating civilians from areas under threat; and; deterring state-actors from inflicting violence against civilians through shaming. These activities seemed to be more effective in curbing violence targeting civilians and contributing to return movements in Period 2 as will be presented. Moreover, the reason why these mechanisms seemed to work better were (1) the Mission increased its situational awareness in areas under threat of violence through establishing Community Alert Networks (2) the Mission increased the number of personnel and equipment (military, police, and civilians) and (3) the Mission as well as *other* organizations put significant political pressure on state-forces to cease violence targeting civilians, and thus deterring violence. The following paragraph will delineate in more detail how MONUSCO attempted to protect civilians from March 2017 in the Kasai-Provinces and the impact of these protection activities, starting with the protection of civilians through direct protection.

Direct protection

The data reveals some indications that the Mission attempted to protect civilians through conducting evacuations and rescue missions of civilians under threat. "(…) MONUSCO evacuated 26 religious figures and 80 children who had been threatened by militias and increased the number of security patrols in areas under threat." (UNSC, 2017b, p. 6). In addition to routine patrols, from July 2017 to June 2017, MONUSCO engaged in long-range missions and "five major rescue missions in support of UN personnel and civilians, either in harm's way or after an aircraft crash" (MONUSCO, 2018). By Interlocutor 2's (2022) assessment, these patrolling activities were "definitely" a valuable tool for the protection of civilians "[a]s long as patrolling is done in a professional manner". Moreover, these protection activities had an important stabilizing effect by the Mission's own assessment "including by containing human rights violations and encouraging the local population to return and schools to open." (UNSC, 2017b, p. 6). Specifically, the fact that peacekeepers evacuated and rescued civilians under threat seems to be indications that the protection activity of interpositioning was present during this period. Thus, the fact that these activities

[23] See figure 4.1 and 4.2

of interpositioning seemed to bring civilians to safety, seems to indicate that the mechanism of direct protection was present, to a certain extent.

Recalling Hunt & Bellamy's (2011) theory, peacekeepers can protect civilians through the mechanism of direct protection by shielding displaced persons in transit on their way to their homes. These activities seemed to occur during period 2 in the Kasais as well. "The deployment of the standing combat deployment in Tshimbulu has contributed to the return of people displaced as a result of the insecurity of the situation." (UNSC, 2017b, p. 6). Moreover, the data leaves more indications of this form of direct protection. "In the Kasais, people are beginning to return to their villages thanks to the deployment of the MONUSCO force, which has encouraged this gradual return." (Radio Okapi, 2017d). These seem to be indications that civilians were shielded on their way to their homes and brought to safety, which might suggest that the mechanism of direct protection was present

In sum the Mission highlighted that they rescued civilians "under threat" and in "harm's way" (UNSC, 2017b, p. 6). However, as the Mission do not specifically record if the civilians would most likely be targeted, if it were not for the evacuations and rescue missions of the Mission, these indications cannot be treated as smoking guns. Nevertheless, one could argue that the fact that they were brought to safety certainly de-creases the likelihood of further attacks, and thus was a contribution to reduce violence against civilians. There are no indications that the Mission exercised the use of force or defense in peacekeeping compounds during this period. Another activity the Mission recorded as important for enabling the other mechanisms to work was monitoring.

Monitoring and deterrent presence

The data from period 2 leaves some indications that the activity of monitoring was present. Moreover, the data seems to leave indications that this activity enabled peacekeepers to protect civilians through the mechanism of deterrence. As noted by (Howard, 2019a) Surveillance and new technologies are being used as activities to "appear omnipresent" for peacekeepers and hence deterring violence. In order to appear omnipresent in volatile areas and deter armed groups, MONUSCO has established Community Alert Networks (CANs) and has listed it as one of its protection tools in line with its mandate to protect civilians (MONUSCO, 2016). CANs are "Early-warning mechanism based on a network of local points in communities surrounding MONUSCO bases" (Novosseloff et al., 2019, p. 78).

Thus, the Mission provide civilian populations with mobile phones and radios, so civilians can alert the Mission if there are any evolving threats against civilians (MONUSCO, 2016). The Mission recorded that this was a valuable tool to indirectly protect civilians in Kasai-Central from March 2017:

> MONUSCO reinforced its community alert networks, with an emphasis on Kasai Central. Community alert networks transmitted, on average, 486 early warning alerts per month, an average monthly increase of 170 alerts compared with the previous reporting period. Of all such alerts, 85 per cent resulted in a response by the Government and/or MONUSCO to protect civilians. Those not responded to were either in areas with limited State security deployment and capacity, or in areas with difficult access (UNSC, 2017c, p. 12)

The fact that the mission responded to the early warnings supports Phayal & Prins' (2020) theory, that peacekeepers actually deploy to violent areas despite the security risks it entails. Though the extract above does not say anything about of the nature of the threats reported to the mission, nor anything about how the Mission or Congolese security services responded, it is clear that the activity of monitoring was present in Kasai-Central from March 2017. Furthermore, it implies that the role of monitoring, and other intelligence gathering capacities, are essential for the protection of civilians. Interlocutor 2 (2022) highlighted monitoring as an important indirect protection tool. “I had quite a good team who were simply monitoring events, which meant that as soon as anything happened, we could at least respond or identify where we saw further tensions emerging.” The Early warning mechanisms of CANs as such enabled the Mission to rapidly respond to escalating tensions in the province of Kasai-Central. As Interlocutor 2 (2022) stated “(…) the fact that we can go there quickly I think had a serious impact because we simply went there (…) if the UN is capable of responding rapidly you are definitely saving lives.” Thus, the mechanism of surveillance through establishing community alert networks around MONUSCO bases seemed to indirectly contribute to improving the security situation of civilians according to the above-mentioned data. As a researcher on the effectiveness of the protection of civilians in the DRC (Interlocutor 7, 2019) stated “[e]arly warnings, intelligence, early deployment and to intervene before the threat becomes too significant has an impact on protection as the armed groups are deprived from the opportunity to attack civilians.” The above-mentioned data seems to suggest that the activity of monitoring was an important tool which contributed to rapid response by the Mission which in turn deterred violence from escalating. Thus, in line with Howard's (2019a)

argument, the mechanism of monitoring contributes to the capacity to engage in other protection activities such as deterrence, by responding to the information and establishing a presence in areas under threat.

In sum, the data from period 2 leaves some indications that the protection activity of monitoring was present in Kasai-central during period 2. This activity produced rapid response by the Mission which according to Interlocutor 2 (2022) definitely contributed to saving lives as it enabled peacekeepers to rapidly establish a presence in areas under threat. Moreover, "Simply being there" contributed to calming any volatile situation down by Interlocutor 2's (2022) assessment. This might imply that the activity of monitoring enabled the Mission to establish a presence, which in turn deterred armed actors from inflicting violence against civilians. As the data does not reveal the nature of the threats responded to, nor present any examples of events where perpetrators of violence against civilians changed behavior as a result of the monitoring activities of peacekeepers, one can hardly draw the inference that monitoring in itself deterred violence against civilians. Rather, it was a valuable tool as it provided the mission with situational awareness and enabled other protection mechanisms to work. The following sections will look more closely at the mechanism of deterrence.

Deterrence

This section will be divided into two sub-sections. Firstly, the analysis will trace indications of the effective use of deterrence by establishing a military presence in areas at risk and thereby imposing military costs. Secondly, I will look at the Mission's effectiveness in terms of deterring violence by imposing political costs.

Imposing military costs

The data collected from period 2 leaves indications that the protection activities of establishing a military presence and conducting patrols contributed to improving the security situation for civilians, through the mechanism of deterrence. Most of MONUSCO's military deployments were in Kasai-Central during Period 2 as in Period 1.[24] According to the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) to the Mission, Maman Sidikou[25] – they had

[24] See appendix 7.1
[25] Maman Sidikou was the SRSG of MONUSCO from 2015-2018.

a significant positive impact where they established a military presence in local communities in Kasai-Central (UNSC, 2017b, p. 6). For example, in Tshimbulu, a town 115 km from the capital of Kasai-Central, Kananga. As Mercy Corps (2019, p. 30) records, Tshimbulu was the administrative center nearest to Kamuina Nsapu and strategically located on the road between the two provincial capitals Kananga and Mbuji-Mayi. This town was thus "hotly contested between rebels and government troops" where numerous mass killings of militia members and civilians took place (Mercy Corps, 2019, p. 30). Tshimbulu as such was also the town where the two UN experts and the four Congolese nationals were murdered on 12th of March 2017 (BBC, 2022). Notably, the fact that the Mission decided to deploy capabilities to Kananga and some of its surrounding villages such as Tshimbulu and Dibaya, supports Phayal & Prins' (2020) argument, that peacekeeping units at the local level are more likely to get deployed in areas where there are higher instances of violence against civilians. The mission's military presence in this area appeared to positively impact the security situation for civilians according to MONUSCO. The Mission records that in the areas they had established a presence: "Over 65 per cent of the population has now returned and all 36 schools and churches have reopened. The Mission has also supported mediation efforts with a view to protecting civilians." (UNSC, 2017b, p. 6). According to Interlocutor 2 (2022) both the static[26] and dynamic[27] presence of the Mission helped to calm things down: "I think military presence in general helps, I'm talking about static presence, but I think where it was really effective was where these joint missions could deploy". Dynamic deterrence as such, through the exercise of patrols by sole military units and joint protection teams[28], was a frequently used protection tool. According to Interlocutor 2 this was an effective tool to make themselves visible and deter violence against civilians (2022):

> (…) so the normal way of doing things is that they will conduct routine patrols where they are, in the urban areas, which means going out for 5 or ten kilometers in their area just to make themselves visible and to know their environment (…) but then special missions would be planned, so longer distance road patrols, if there was deemed to be a specific justification, which very often would be these joint missions, protection driven missions to show presence in particular areas where civilians were more vulnerable and those, in my mind that helps.

[26] Meaning the presence of MONUSCO bases
[27] Meaning activities such as patrols.
[28] Joint Missions or "Joint Protection Teams missions are multi-sectoral teams, which could be composed of any combination of representatives of the Force, UNPOL and sections, representatives of UNCT and Humanitarians, and authorities (FARDC and PNC) and civil society." (MONUSCO, 2016).

Hence, as the extract from above suggests, these patrolling activities seemed to help calming things down. As of May 2017, The Deputy Force Commander of the Mission, General Bernard Commins, further added that the population of Greater Kasai "is very happy" with the presence of peacekeepers in various locations in the region, as the "presence brings additional security to the local population" (Radio Okapi, 2017b). The return movements and resumption of security in Kasai-Central was in part due to the presence of MONUSCO, as General Bernard Commins further stated:

> The resumption of activities in the markets and the reopening of schools and churches closed for several months are indicators that show the effectiveness of the commitment of the MONUSCO force in this part of the DRC," (Radio Okapi, 2017d).

Notably this statement was made in July 2017, when levels of violence targeting civilians in Kasai-Central were significantly lower than in the preceding months whereas in Kasai violence targeting civilians reached its peak in July 2017. In Kasai-Central, where MONUSCO had most of its deployments in June over to July 2017, violence was significantly reduced and IDP's returned to their homes. As stated by Interlocutor 2 (2022), the Mission's effectiveness in terms of the protection of civilians was in part due to MONUSCO's increased mobility and capacities:

> So, we increased our presence in Kananga and to some degree in Mbuji-Mayi (…) and we deployed into Tshikapa (…) By June 2017 we had quite a strong footprint and we had helicopters to support our movements across a very large area. We had quite good capacity to operate.

Moreover, Interlocutor 4 (2022) argued that the helicopters played an important role in terms of "appearing omnipresent" and calm things down as the helicopter was used to move "up and down" between the Forward bases in the western and southern part of Kasai-Central (Howard, 2019a). As stated by Interlocutor 4 (2022):

> (…) they had a helicopter, they were able to move around and talk to the FARDC and encourage them to be more responsible and more calm, and then give a degree of stability as well to the cities, so in terms of the displaced population, they were able to calm things down, so I think they were very influential in that respect.

Thus, the helicopter helped the Mission show a presence multiple places in Kasai-Central which according to Interlocutor 4 (2022) helped calm down the indiscriminate use of force by the Congolese security services. In addition to the assessments of Interlocutor 2 and 4, Civilians in Kasai-Central also stated that MONUSCO's presence had a chilling effect on

violent activity and insecurity. As of August 2017, the mayor of Tshimbulu in Kasai-Central stated that "peace is now restored in Tshimbulu" and "When the government learned of this situation, it sent the police, the FARDC. And today, there is also MONUSCO. So, all the forces to impose peace are in Tshimbulu. Today, peace reigns in Tshimbulu (Radio Okapi, 2017e).

In sum, as for the mechanism of deterrence through imposing military costs, MONUSCO attempted to protect civilians through the activities of establishing a presence with emphasis in Kasai-Central; conducting routine -and long-range patrols; and used a helicopter to try to "appear omnipresent" in the large areas in Kasai-Central, Kasai and Kasai-Oriental (Howard, 2019a). It is difficult to determine if armed actors were in fact deterred by these activities, as there are no observations of actors deciding not to attack civilians in fear of military or political retribution. However, considering the de-crease in violence targeting civilians from March 2017 in Kasai-Central; the large return movements of IDP's to Kasai-Central, principally as a result of the improved security situation and subsequent to the Mission's gradual response as depicted in Table 4.1; the resumption of 'everyday activities' and re-opening of schools, the Mission seemed to contribute to improving the security situation for civilians through the establishment of a military presence and through conducting patrols. It can also be noted than in Kasai-Central, where MONUSCO made a concentrated effort to protect civilians, violence targeting civilians gradually de-creased from March 2017. In contrast, the Kasai-Province, where MONUSCO had not yet established a significant military presence,[29] experienced a peak of violence targeting civilians in July 2017. This seems to support the well-established theory which is that where military and police components of a UN peacekeeping mission deploys, violence against civilians gets reduced (Carnegie & Mikulaschek, 2020; Fjelde et al., 2019; Hultman et al., 2013; Phayal & Prins, 2020; Salvatore, 2020). As such, the de-crease of violence is a necessary observable to infer that deterrence was present, but there are no observations of actors that refrain from using violence against civilians in fear of military retribution from peacekeepers, which would be a sufficient observable to infer that the mechanism of deterrence was present. Thus, the 'hypothesis' that the mechanism of deterrence was present in this case passes the "hoop-test", as protection threats and violence targeting civilians was reduced in the areas the Mission established a presence (D. Collier, 2011).

[29] As depicted in

Imposing political costs

In addition to establishing a military presence and conducting patrols, peacekeepers also attempted to deter violence through political channels. As noted by Interlocutor 2 (2022), a former MONUSCO employee stationed in the Kasai-province in 2017-2018, there was a visit by the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng,[30] in the Kasai region, to make sure that a genocide was not going to happen in early June 2017. As there were still tensions in the Kasai-provinces in June 2017, there was in fact concern in MONUSCO that this might happen (Interlocutor 2, 2022). The objective of Adama Dieng:

> (…) was to meet with local inhabitants, political leaders and civil society to initiate a dialogue on urgent measures to be taken to end the violence, ease intercommunal tensions and relieve the suffering of civilians. (Reliefweb, 2017)

Notably, in addition to meet with civilian victims of violence and civil society representatives, Dieng met with numerous Government ministers, the Prime Minister, the national judicial, civilian and military authorities and parliamentarians from the Kasai-Provinces (ibid.) In a public statement, Dieng addressed and condemned the violent behavior by state-forces.

> The scorched-earth policy practiced by certain units of the armed forces in several territories in the region, the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force against the civilian population and the mobilization and arming of auxiliary militias, in particular those based on ethnic lines, are equally unacceptable, and their leaders should face the full force of the law (Reliefweb, 2017)

The sharp de-crease of violence targeting civilians perpetrated by *state-forces* in Kasai-Central in July 2017,[31] in the following month of Dieng's visit, might suggest that the inducement of political pressure contributed to deterring state-based violence against civilians. This is in line with Fjelde et als (2019) argument that "(…) the UN's ability to curb government violence primarily works through political pressure in the national arena." Interlocutor 1 (2022) stated that this was the case in Kasai-Central. When asked if the mission contributed to reducing the levels of violence targeting civilians in the Kasai Provinces Interlocutor 1 (2022) answered

[30] Adama Dieng served as UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide from 2012-2020
[31] See figure 4.1

> Yes and no. First, because MONUSCO's presence was a deterrent. That is, even if the security forces wanted to use violence against civilians, the security forces feared MONUSCO's presence. This played a role in reducing violence against civilians.

Furthermore, this deterrent effect did not mainly transpire as a result of the Congolese security services' fear of military retribution but transpired for fear of other political costs. As Interlocutor 1 (2022) further stated, "Their physical presence frightened those who could attack civilian populations on the grounds that the UN would make a report that could bring them before international justice". Notably, the Mission publicly reported on violence targeting civilians perpetrated by both none-state and state actors. As stated by the Special Representative of the Secretary General Maman Sidikou:

> [Maman Sidikou] strongly condemns the actions of the *Kamuina Nsapu* militia in recruiting and using child soldiers as well as their acts of violence against the State. He expresses his concern about repeated reports of the disproportionate use of force by the FARDC and offers the Mission's support to a credible investigation of this regrettable situation. He regrets the deaths and injuries suffered in these clashes and calls upon the Congolese Security Forces to act in line with acceptable standards of national and international laws in their response to the situation (MONUSCO, 2017a).

In addition to public statements by the UN High Commissioner[32], Radio France Internationale (RFI) [33] and MONUSCO[34] condemning the attacks of both Kamuina Nsapu and the disproportionate use of violence by Congolese Security Services, the International Criminal Court (ICC) underscored that the ICC "watches the situation with extreme vigilance." (Rolley, 2017). Thus, the international community was well aware of high levels of violence targeting civilians in the Kasai-Provinces and attempted to cease violence by publicly shaming all the actors involved in the conflict. In terms of the effects of shaming, the report of Mercy Corps' (2019, p. 44) on the situation in the Kasais stated the following:

> (…) more and more publications by Radio France Internationale and human rights groups detailed grave human rights violations and named some of the key actors, which, according to key informants, had a chilling effect on military activity

This extract from Mercy Corps' (2019) report seems to indicate that MONUSCO, in a joint effort with other entities from the international community, deterred state-actors from

[32] See statement from Period 1 (UN News, 2017).
[33] Radio France Internationale publicly named and published photos of perpetrators of violence against civilians, both state -and non-state actor

inflicting violence against civilians through shaming. Recalling the theory of Krain (2012) and DeMeritt (2012) the UN's shaming of violent states de-creases both likelihood and severity of state-based violence, as governments are concerned about their legitimacy in the international community. Considering the de-crease in violence targeting civilians by state-forces from March 2017 and the low levels of violence targeting civilians in July 2017 in Kasai Central, this seemed to be the case here as well. This theory was supported by Mercy Corps (2019) report and Interlocutor 1's (2022) assessment. Specifically, according to Interlocutor 1 (2022), the fear of the imposed political costs from the peacekeepers, which is in essence deterrence through shaming, is what drove the Congolese security services to refraining from using violence against civilians. Notably, the Kasai-Province, where the Mission did not have many troops[35], would see extreme levels of violence targeting civilians perpetrated by non-state forces in the month of July 2017. This could suggest that the mechanism of deterrence, through imposing political costs, by shaming, is more effective against state-forces, as state violence against civilians was significantly reduced from August 2017 in *all* Kasai-Provinces.

Verbal persuasion

In addition to political efforts on the national level in the UN, the Mission engaged in other "soft power" efforts on the ground. In June 2017 in Kananga in cooperation with the local authorities and humanitarian workers, the Mission proceeded an initiative "to recover nineteen minors who served in the Kamuina Nsapu militia" resulting in the return of 25 minors (Radio Okapi, 2017c). This initiative was welcomed by parents of children who had been recruited by Kamuina Nsapu, and parents expressed the need to raise awareness among young Kamuina Nsapu fighters who were reluctant to surrender (Radio Okapi, 2017c). These public outreach activities, in coordination with civil society and local military police presumably made the civilian population feel safer (Radio Okapi, 2017b). In addition, the mission engaged in training traditional leaders in ethnic conflict management techniques in Kasai-Central from May 10 to 11 in Kananga (Radio Okapi, 2017a). This is a central part of the implementation of MONUSCO's mandate to protect civilians according to the Head of the MONUSCO office in Kananga (ibid.). As he stated;

[35] See timeline 1.1

> One of the pillars of MONUSCO's mandate is the protection of civilians, and it intends to achieve this by supporting local and customary authorities, who in reality are the first responsible for the protection of populations (Radio Okapi, 2017a).

The data collected from period 2 indicates that the protection activities of public outreach, through awareness raising with parents of Kamuina Nsapu fighters, and training of local populations were present, which are activities related to the protection mechanism of verbal persuasion. In terms of training of traditional leaders, it is difficult to trace if this activity contributed to improving the security situation for civilians and reducing violence. The demobilizing efforts through awareness raising, on the other hand, seemed to contribute to reducing the capacity of the Kamuina Nsapu militia which in turn might have increased overall protection (Radio Okapi, 2017c). As will be discussed under Period 3, the Missions demobilizing efforts successfully de-creased the capacity of the Kamuina Nsapu militia "en masse" (MONUSCO, 2019) from September 2017.

Summary and discussion: Period 2

In summary, the data collected from period 2 seems to leave indications that the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence and verbal persuasion were all present in Kasai-Central from March to August 2017. The peacekeepers protected civilians by (1) Direct protection – through evacuations and rescue missions of civilians in areas under threat (2) Deterrence – through establishing a military presence – mainly in Kasai-Central - and the exercise of routine –and long-range patrols. In addition, the data from this period leaves indications that peacekeepers deterred violence through shaming. (3) Verbal persuasion – through recovering minors who served in the Kamuina Nsapu militia and training traditional leaders in ethnic conflict management techniques.

The fact that violence targeting civilians gradually de-escalated in Kasai-Central from March 2017, where MONUSCO focused the establishment of its military presence and patrolling activities might suggest that the mechanism of deterrence through imposing military or political costs on belligerents was present in this case in line with preliminary research (Carnegie & Mikulaschek, 2020; Fjelde et al., 2019; Hultman et al., 2013; Phayal & Prins, 2020; Salvatore, 2020). In addition, the large return movements of IDP's and re-opening of schools, specifically in the areas where MONUSCO had established a military

presence, can indicate that the mechanism of deterrence worked. These observations do not confirm the presence of deterrence, but it affirms the relevance of the mechanism. Furthermore, the large-scale violence targeting civilians perpetrated by state-forces persisted longer than non-state violence in Kasai-Central, supports the theory that peacekeepers struggle with deterring violence through imposing military costs when the government is the perpetrator of violence. (Fjelde et al., 2019; Hultman et al., 2019b; Phayal & Prins, 2020). Put in other words, the quantitative data leaves indications that deterrence as such, through imposing military costs by establishing a military presence, was not as effective against state-forces in Kasai-Central. However, there seems to be indications that MONUSCO, as well as the international community, successfully deterred state-actors from inflicting violence against civilians through shaming. The fear of the potential political costs is what drove state-actors to refrain from using violence against civilians by the assessment of Interlocutor 1 (2022) and the conflict assessment of Mercy Corps (2019). However, the condemnations of Dieng and Sidikou against the Kamuina Nsapu militia did not seem to successfully deter non-state actors as violence targeting civilians spiked in the Kasai province in the month of July 2017[36] (MONUSCO, 2017a; Reliefweb, 2017).

4.3.3 Period 3: August 2017 to January 2018

In sum, during period 3, the data collected from Interlocutors and text-based sources highlighted that the Mission attempted to protect civilians through the efforts of (1) deterrent activities - as establishing a military presence and (2) verbal persuasion activities - mainly through demobilizing efforts of the Kamuina Nsapu militia and continuous dialogue and engagement with Congolese security services. Furthermore, the data from this period seems to indicate that the mechanisms of deterrence and verbal persuasion were present in this case. First, as in Period 2, there was a reduction in protection threats and return movements specifically in the areas where MONUSCO established a presence, which can indicate that the mechanism of deterrence was present. Secondly, the fact that the large parts of the Kamuina Nsapu militia surrendered “en masse” as a result of the Missions demobilizing efforts can indicate that the mechanism of verbal persuasion was present in this case. In addition, Interlocutor 4 (2022) highlighted that continuous dialogue with Congolese security services prompted them to have a more “responsible approach” towards civilians, which can indicate

[36] See figure 4.2

that verbal persuasion directed against state forces was a mechanism present in this case. The following paragraph will delineate in more detail how MONUSCO attempted to protect civilians from August 2017 until May 2017 in the Kasai-Provinces, starting with the mechanism of deterrence.

Deterrence

During period 3, the Mission exercised the same deterrent activities as in Period 2. Namely (1) establishing a military and civilian presence in areas under threat and (2) conducting routine patrols. By September 2017 the Mission had increased its military presence in the region and established two operating bases in respectively Tshikapa and Mbuji-Mayi, and reinforced its office in Kananga – the capitols in Kasai, Kasai-Central and Kasai Oriental.[37] After the establishment of a 'heavier' military presence in the region, with a total of approximately 450 peacekeepers across the three Kasai provinces, a large number of refugees continuously returned to their homes and levels of violence targeting civilians dropped significantly as depicted in Figure 4.1, Figure 4.2 and Table 4.1. As the report of the Secretary General suggests:

> In areas where MONUSCO has established a presence, a decline in protection threats and incidents was reported, while schools and health centers reopened and 70 per cent of the displaced population returned. (UNSC, 2017c, p. 13).

Furthermore, Interlocutor 2 (2022) highlighted that MONUSCO's military presence played a role in this improvement of the security situation for civilians in Period 2. Interlocutor 2 (2022) stated:

> I think the fact that we increased our presence quite significantly with civilian, military and police personnel, I think that does various things. It sends a clear message to people that the international community by the UN cares, it means that the presence of soldiers in particular will normally make people think twice about violence, in most places.

As in Period 2, the fact that (1) there was a decline in protection threats (2) civilian infrastructure such as schools and health centers reopened, (3) large parts of the displaced population returned and (4) Interlocutor 4 (2022) states that the presence of peacekeepers

[37] Data retrieved directly from Geo-PKO v2.1. To get the exact number of peacekeepers in September 2017 I selected "MONUSCO" and then September 2017. Soure: Cil, D., Fjelde, H., Hultman, L., & Nilsson, D. (2020). Mapping blue helmets: Introducing the Geocoded Peacekeeping Operations (Geo-PKO) dataset. Journal of Peace Research, 57(2), 360–370

makes actors think twice about using violence, seem to be indications that the mechanism of deterrence was present during period 3. These quantitative observables are necessary but not sufficient to affirm that the mechanism of deterrence was present. Thus these quantitative pieces of evidence can be treated as a "hoop" (D. Collier, 2011).

However, during Period 3, the Mission reported that there were still instances of violence targeting civilians in all the Kasai-provinces.

> There was a relative lull in fighting in the Kasai region during the reporting period, despite periodic instances of serious violence, such as in Tshikapa, Kasai Province, and in the Luiza territory of Kasai Central Province, and women and children continued to account for a significant portion of the victims (UNSC, 2017c, p. 7).

Though there was a relative lull in fighting and violence from August 2017, the continuous return movements of displaced persons resulted in increasing ethnically charged environment in the Kasai region (UNSC, 2017c, p. 17). Thus, even though the security situation was improved, armed groups with allegiance to Lulua and Luba communities fought against the emerging Bana Mura militia, comprising of individuals from Tshokwe, Pende and Tetela ethnic groups (UNSC, 2017c, p. 7). Though on a smaller scale, these tensions resulted in events of violence targeting civilians from August 2017. Despite continuous ethnic tensions in the Kasai-Provinces, the Force Commander of the MONUSCO force – Derrick Mgwebi reported on August 15th, 2017, that the Mission positively contributed to the improved security situation. As the Local radio channel Radio Okapi records from a statement of Derrick Mgwebi: "He believes that calm is returning to the region due to the deployment of the MONUSCO force and government forces" as "inhabitants who had moved away because of insecurity are beginning to return, particularly in the areas where MONUSCO forces are deployed." (Radio Okapi, 2017f). Furthermore, this deterrent effect of peacekeepers on levels of violence transpired in and around the MONUSCO military compounds by the Mission's own assessment. As the General in the MONUSCO force, Bernard Commins, stated in Kinshasa in August 2017: "Within a perimeter of 5 to 10 km around the place where our forces are deployed, people are regaining confidence (...) but it is essential that the authorities of this country, who are in charge of the security of their citizens, take over from us," (Radio Okapi, 2017g). The reports from the Force Commander and the Deputy Force Commander of the mission underscores the importance of the deterrent effect of the Mission's military static presence, in and around the military bases. In line with Interlocutor 2's (2022) statement, that peacekeepers normally patrol 5-10 kilometers around the bases, Bernard Commins stated that

this is the radius in which the positive effects of protection is most noticeable. (Radio Okapi, 2017g). This could suggest that both the static presence through the establishment of bases and the dynamic presence, through routine patrolling contributed to keeping the peace, through the mechanism of deterrence in the Kasais at this point in time. Recalling Haas & Khadka's (2022) findings, patrolling and dynamic presence of peacekeepers contributes to preventing violence, which seemed to be the case in the Kasai provinces as well.

On aggregate, as in period 2, though on a larger scale, the above-mentioned data frequently mentions that IDP's and refugees returned to areas where MONUSCO established a presence. Moreover, in areas MONUSCO established a presence, civilians "regained confidence"; schools and health centers re-opened; protection threats were reportedly reduced and; civilians sought refuge around MONUSCO bases. These factors seem to be indications that the mechanism of deterrence was present during period 3, mainly through the protection activity of merely establishing a presence and routine patrols 5-10 kilometers around MONUSCO bases. However, these pieces of evidence cannot be treated as smoking guns, as the data does not reveal that anyone were in fact deterred by the Mission's established presence and patrols. However, the fact that protection threats were reduced, and violence targeting civilians perpetrated by state and non-state actors were close to absent in August 2017[38] in all provinces affirms the relevance of the mechanism of deterrence. Moreover, in accordance with extant quantitative studies which find that peacekeeping deployments reduce violence against civilians (Carnegie & Mikulaschek, 2020; Fjelde et al., 2019; Hultman et al., 2013; Phayal & Prins, 2020; Salvatore, 2020), violence targeting civilians dwindled significantly after the establishment of bases in all major towns of the Kasai-Provinces. However, in Period 3 when the security situation had improved in Kasai and Kasai-Central (UNSC, 2017c, p. 2) the mechanism of the Mission's verbal persuasion activities were highlighted by interlocutors as effective means to keeping the peace.

Verbal persuasion of non-state forces (The Kamuina Nsapu)

After the establishment of a larger military presence, followed by a de-crease in civilian fatalities and return movements, the Mission actively attempted to protect civilians through verbal persuasion activities and demobilizing efforts of the Kamuina Nsapu militia in the Kasai-Provinces. For example, MONUSCO responded to the persistent hostile ethnic

[38] See figure 4.1 and 4.2

environment by initiating mediation efforts with the aim of peaceful resolutions of customary and ethnic conflicts through capacity-building workshops with the Direction Generale des affaires coutumieres (UNSC, 2017c, p. 13). Furthermore, in cooperation with the Network of Congolese Youth Associations the Mission contributed to raise awareness among more than three hundred ex Kamuina Nsapu fighters (Radio Okapi, 2017h). MONUSCO reported through the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict that these efforts to raise awareness had a positive impact. As recorded in the report of the Secretary General: "The increasing number of surrenders by Kamuina Nsapu militia allowed the separation of several children." (UNSC, 2018, p. 8). Furthermore, the report stated that Kamuina Nsapu was the armed group of the highest number of child recruitments in the DRC with 339 recruited children in the reporting period from 2nd October to 5th of January (UNSC, 2018, p. 8). In contrast to armed rebel groups and militias in the eastern provinces in the DRC, children and other actors who escaped, surrendered or got out of Kamuina Nsapu in the Kasai, tended *not* to be re-recruited (MONUSCO, 2019, p. 87). According to the Mission, the low levels of re-recruitments were a result of the lower levels of violence (MONUSCO, 2019, p. 87). Moreover, the low levels of re-recruitment and violence in the Kasai provinces from August, were due to the Mission's demobilizing campaigns according to MONUSCO: "It was also a function of the active role of MONUSCO demobilization campaigns, which led numerous local chiefs and their followers to surrender en masse in mid-late 2017." (MONUSCO, 2019, p. 87). Particularly from August to October 2017, according to the mission's assessment, MONUSCO played a significant role in demobilizing and reintegrating Kamuina Nsapu fighters – in which 60% were children under 15.[39] (MONUSCO, 2019, p. 93). As the missions stated in their report about child recruitment:

> MONUSCO CPS separated 157 children, including 32 girls, ages 5 to 17; four days later, 134 more children, including 27 girls were separated, after MONUSCO child protection staff negotiated directly with customary chiefs. (MONUSCO, 2019, p. 93).

In addition to the Mission's direct negotiation with customary chiefs, which resulted in several children's surrender from August to October, MONUSCO focused on raising demobilization awareness through radio transmissions and awareness raising. As the Mission reported:

[39] (MONUSCO, 2019, p. 88)

> MONUSCO community and radio demobilization awareness raising proved to be influential in swaying children to surrender or for commanders to release children voluntarily, as, for example, the 11-year-old boy who surrendered with his chief after hearing MONUSCO DDR messages in April 2017. (MONUSCO, 2019, p. 93).

It is difficult to establish that levels of violence targeting civilians and IDP fluxes would be higher if the Mission did not engage in these public outreach efforts. However, the demobilizing campaigns and awareness raising seemed to contribute to diminishing the capacity of the overall most violent actor during the Kasai-crisis, namely the Kamuina Nsapu militia. This is in line with Hultman et al., (2019b) theorized causal mechanism, that peacekeepers reduce the potential of violence by taking weapons out of the hands of fighters and through initiating demobilizing processes (S. Hultman et al., 2019). The significantly lower levels of violence targeting civilians perpetrated by non-state forces from September 2017 might suggest that MONUSCO successfully indirectly protected civilians through public outreach (awareness raising). Hence, in summary, the fact that MONUSCO's awareness raising to demobilize contributed to surrenders by Kamuina Nsapu "en masse" and contributed to prevent re-recruitment can be indications that the mechanism of verbal persuasion was present during Period 3. This because, these campaigns contributed to reducing the potential of more violence against civilians. Notably, the demobilizing efforts of MONUSCO started during Period 1 (UNSC, 2017a, p. 5), but the efforts did not seem to produce any significant results before Period 3. The Mission did not engage in demobilizing campaigns against state-forces as they are not mandated to do this. However, the Mission continuously engaged in dialogue and verbal confrontations with Congolese security services during period 3, as will be presented in the following section.

Verbal persuasion of state-forces

In October 2017 during Period 3, the 'hot-conflict' had ended and the number of the Kamuina Nsapu Militia had decreased leading to the halt of major operations by FARDC (UNSC, 2018, p. 6). However, there were still small-scale instances of violence against civilians and human rights violations, including cases of rape perpetrated by FARDC elements (UNSC, 2018, p. 6). In fact most of these occurrences of rape and human rights violations against the civilian population from October 2017 until January 2018 were perpetrated by FARDC soldiers (UNSC, 2018, p. 6). As stated by Interlocutor 4 (2022) the non-state actors including the Kamuina Nsapu militia "(…) weren't the principal threat (…)" against civilians during Period 3, which is also reflected in figure 4.1, especially in Kasai-Central from August 2017. As a

response to these continuous but lower-scaled atrocities against the civilian population perpetrated by FARDC, MONUSCO engaged in dialogue with Congolese security services. Dialogue with the FARDC as such, is an activity rooted in the Mission's mandate. As of 2016 the Mission had for objective to "[w]ork with the Government of the DRC to identify threats to civilians and implement existing prevention and response plans and strengthen civil-military cooperation (…)". (UNSC, 2016, p. 10). Notably, this objective is difficult to achieve, when the Congolese security services worked against MONUSCO and did not assume their responsibility to protect civilians, as reflected in Period 1. As for Period 3 however, Interlocutor 4 (2022), a humanitarian who worked closely with the Mission stated:

> (…) that calming influence of MONUSCO, being very close to the FARDC, meeting with them every day, talking with the governors and encouraging a more responsible approach, and encouraging discipline, no doubt had an impact.

"Talking" with the FARDC as such and "encouraging" them to be more disciplined were activities that occurred frequently and were an important protection activity that seemed to help to calm things down (Interlocutor 4, 2022). Specifically, Interlocutor 4 (2022) highlights that MONUSCO brought up instances of violence targeting civilians perpetrated by the FARDC during their interactions and persuaded them to have a more responsible approach.

> if we went and said to the general, 'your guys are doing something here, you pick up the phone and call them', it wasn't necessarily his priority in the first place, but because he valued his relationship with us he would do it, so I would say on those aspects are much more important, the infrastructure and the information infrastructure the physical infrastructure and the political relationships are much more important than patrolling in terms of direct protection, but the patrolling brings back the information, and informs the engagement and the dialogue and where to go (Interlocutor 4, 2022).

This extract seems to indicate that the mechanism of verbal persuasion was present as the general changed his priorities after the Mission prompted him to make his soldiers act more responsible. In addition to highlighting that MONUSCO contributed to holding the FARDC accountable for violence against civilians, Interlocutor 4 (2022) suggests that the political relationships were more important than direct protection activities. In accordance with Interlocutor 4's statement, the Force Commander of the Mission underscored the importance of political solutions to conflict as he stated in an interview with Radio Okapi on 19th of January 2018; "The solution to the Congolese crisis is not military, but political" and invited the Congolese to be more introspective (Radio Okapi, 2018). As for the military tools to

protect civilians, direct protection through evacuations and rescue missions were not as important during Period 3. As Interlocutor 4 (2022) summarized:

> (…) in some ways the protection from physical violence is one of the least important because, the geographical space is massive, and the number of people you've got to do with is really quite small, but the fact that they're representing by; getting on the road, driving main routes, showing a presence … they're saying please calm down, please respect civilians, please respect human rights, but they're not saying "if you don't we're going to", we're not confronting them in this kind of …"we're the boss around here and we tell you what to do.

This extract seems to suggest that the Mission continuously exercised deterrent activities such as patrolling and showing a presence in Period 3. However, it also highlights that the peacekeepers engaged in verbal persuasion activities while conducting patrols. The data further leaves indications that the mechanism of verbal persuasion through ongoing dialogue with the Congolese security services and provincial authorities, was present during Period 3 in the Kasais. Furthermore, as Interlocutor 4 (2022) emphasises the mission would frequently use the wording of "please calm down, please respect civilians" rather than "if you don't, we're going to…". This can be an indication that the mechanism of verbal persuasion was present in this case, rather than deterrence, especially from the month of October 2017, when violence targeting civilians were lower. Deterrence as such impose threats of use of violence or political costs. To impose explicit threats as such was not a frequently used activity during patrols, but the mission sought to persuade the FARDC to not attack civilians, through dialogue (Interlocutor 4, 2022).

Interlocutor 4 added that the overall impact of continuous dialogue and persuasion activities directed towards the FARDC, and the continuous presence of peacekeepers produced discipline among FARDC elements: "(…) the sense was that a much more responsible FARDC were encouraged as a result of the Mission's presence, and ongoing political dialogue with each of the provincial governors (…)." Furthermore, "(…) the counterfactual of their absence would be the FARDC behaving a lot worse." (Interlocutor 4, 2022). These statements seem to suggest that the mechanism of verbal persuasion was present during Period 3, as FARDC elements were 'encouraged' rather than 'threatened' to not attack civilians. Furthermore, it can imply that dialogue, as well as the mere presence of MONUSCO, are activities that jointly produced a more responsible approach towards civilians among FARDC elements.

In sum, in terms of verbal persuasion of state-actors during period 3, there are some indications that the mechanism of verbal persuasion was present. The data above indicates that the Mission exercised verbal persuasion through frequent meetings with the FARDC and provincial authorities; encouragements of the FARDC to be more disciplined, and a verbal confrontation with a FARDC general when the Mission had received reports of violence targeting civilians perpetrated by state forces. According to Interlocutor 4 these activities, as well as other deterrent activities such as patrols, produced a more responsible approach among FARDC elements towards civilians. Additionally, the fact that the FARDC general "changed his priorities" after MONUSCO verbally confronted him with the state-based attacks against civilians, seems to indicate that the mechanism of verbal persuasion was present during Period 3.

Summary and discussion: period 3

In summary, the data collected from Period 3 seems to leave indications that the mechanisms of deterrence and verbal persuasion were present from August to January 2018. Firstly, the data from this period seems to indicate that the Mission protected civilians by deterrence through establishing a larger military footprint in the Kasai region with Company operating bases and conducting routine patrols 5-10 kilometers around their bases. The fact that IDP's and refugees returned to areas where MONUSCO established a presence; civilians "regained confidence" in areas MONUSCO had a presence; schools and health centers re-opened; protection threats were reportedly reduced and civilians sought refuge around MONUSCO bases, seems to indicate that deterrence worked. Notably, as for period 2, the empirical data does not leave any evidence which suggests that anyone were in fact deterred. Thus, the observations of the absence of violence and the resumption of everyday activities affirms the relevance of the mechanism of deterrence but does not confirm it. Secondly, the Mission engaged in verbal persuasion activities directed towards both non-state and state-actors. As for non-state forces, Kamuina Nsapu elements surrendered "en masse" from mid-2017 to late 2017. According to the data presented above, these surrenders was a result of direct negotiations with customary chiefs and the awareness raising campaigns of demobilization through radio transmissions (MONUSCO, 2019, p. 93). These indicators seem to support the theory that verbal persuasion of non-state actors worked during Period 3, as the capacity of the Kamuina Nsapu militia, which targeted hundreds of civilians in the previous months of the conflict, was significantly reduced. As for state-actors, frequent meetings with the

FARDC and provincial authorities; encouragements of the FARDC to be more disciplined, and a verbal conformation with a FARDC general when the Mission had received reports of violence targeting civilians perpetrated by state forces, seemed to contribute to making Congolese security services have a more responsible approach towards civilians. The fact that the FARDC acted more responsible towards civilians around peacekeepers and that the general changed his priorities might suggest that the mechanism of verbal persuasion directed against state forces worked during Period 2.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

As numerous studies have already addressed the question of *whether* peacekeepers protect, this thesis has set out to examine *how* peacekeepers contribute to reducing violence against civilians. Therefore, the research question of this thesis has been: *How are peacekeepers protecting civilians?* To answer this question, this thesis has conducted a single case study of MONUSCO's response to the outburst of violence in the Kasai-provinces in 2016-2018 and traced the Mission's protection activities from the initial phase of the conflict, until violence subsequently dwindled. Furthermore, this thesis has applied a deductive approach to address the research question and identified three mechanisms from the existing quantitative and qualitative research on how peacekeeping works. These mechanisms are direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion.

The case study chapter aimed at searching for implications of the presence of these mechanisms in the Kasais from 2016 to 2018. To set the stage, a brief description of the root causes and triggers of the conflict was firstly presented. Secondly the chapter discussed the overall provincial impact of MONUSCO's deployments on protection in Kasai-Central, Kasai and Kasai-Oriental, in light of descriptive statistics on violence targeting civilians and IDP movements. These metrics seemed to indicate that in the provinces where MONUSCO deployed, violence against civilians was eventually reduced. In the same section, a brief discussion of alternative explanations of the reductions of violence against civilians was presented. One of these explanations was the intervention of the FARDC who quickly defeated the Kamuina Nsapu, and thus hampered further escalations of violence against civilians. However, as the analysis reveals, there was an inherent need for the protection efforts of MONUSCO in the Kasais, as the FARDC continuously committed violence against civilians throughout the conflict.

The next section moved beyond the numbers and addressed the more pressing question of *how* peacekeepers might have contributed to this reduction of violence against civilians. Specifically, the analysis searched for implications for the presence of the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion. In conclusion, the empirical data leaves indications for the presence of all these protection mechanisms, most particularly from period

2, a period when MONUSCO gradually increased its presence across the three Kasai-provinces, and violence targeting civilians started to reduce. However, as MONUSCO had a limited number of troops in the Kasai provinces, with about 450 peacekeepers spread across an area which is approximately the same size as Germany (Powell, 2018), these mechanisms were able to work only in a few places.[40] Moreover, in period 1, the lack of will be Congolese security services hindered the mechanisms to work effectively (Rolley, 2017). Nevertheless, in the areas MONUSCO had a presence, they made a real difference, through the mechanisms of direct protection, deterrence, and verbal persuasion from period 2 in the Kasai provinces.

The rest of this chapter will do two things. First, it will summarize the indications of the presence of these mechanisms across all periods. Secondly, the implications the theoretical and empirical contributions of this thesis will be presented.

5.2 Findings

5.2.1 Direct protection

In the analysis, the empirical data left some, but few, indications that MONUSCO protected civilians through the mechanism of direct protection, mainly in period 1 and 2. In these periods, interlocutors and text-based sources highlighted the protection activity of interpositioning. In practice, this took the form of evacuations and rescue missions of civilians under threat and shielding of displaced persons back to their homes. These activities seemed to contribute to reducing levels of violence targeting civilians as these civilians were brought to safety by peacekeepers. In fact, according to the available data, the peacekeepers rescued about "26 religious figures and 80 children" (UNSC, 2017b, p. 6). This might further suggest that the overall levels of violence targeting civilians would be even higher during both periods if it were not for the peacekeepers' evacuation and rescue missions. However, even though these indicators update our confidence in that the mechanism of direct protection was present, the high levels of violence against civilians in Kasai Central and Kasai in period 1 and 2, suggests that it was not widely enough present to prevent substantial levels of violence against civilians. Moreover, though it seems like the Mission often interpositioned and thus protected civilians, Interlocutor 4 (2022) highlighted that this was the least important mechanism of

[40] See appendix 7.1 for peacekeeping deployments.

civilian protection: "(…) in some ways the protection from physical violence is one of the least important because, the geographical space is massive, and the number of people you've got to do with is really quite small". This could suggest that the protection activity of interpositioning and intervening in situations where civilians are under threat, is less used when the capacity of the mission is limited. In conclusion, MONUSCO protected civilians through the mechanism of deterrence, but only in a few places. Verbal persuasion and deterrence as such were highlighted as more important than direct protection (Interlocutor 4, 2022)

5.2.2 Deterrence

Deterrence has been a difficult mechanism to trace as there could be numerous reasons for the absence and reductions of violence against civilians in the Kasais. As such, the case study left few observations that can be treated as smoking guns, that confirmed the presence of deterrence. Rather, there were several quantitative implications as well as perceptions of interlocutors which can update our confidence in that MONUSCO protected civilians through the mechanism of deterrence, to a certain extent.

Despite the failures of deterrence in Period 1, when civilians were murdered by state-forces in close proximity to peacekeepers (Interlocutor 1, 2022), the data leaves some fingerprints of the presence of deterrence in the Kasai-provinces from the subsequent periods. On aggregate, the quantitative data, as well as text-based sources reveals that protection threats and violence targeting civilians was reduced in the areas MONUSCO had a military presence (UNSC, 2017b, p. 6; Interlocutor 1, 2022; Interlocutor 2, 2022; Radio Okapi, 2017b; Radio Okapi, 2017d). Moreover, displaced persons and refugees gravitated to the areas where MONUSCO established a presence, and schools and churches re-opened (UNSC, 2017c, p. 13). While these sources do not confirm that any entities were in fact deterred by MONUSCO's representation of a credible military counteraction, these observations can affirm the relevance of the protection mechanism of deterrence.

However, as for deterrence through imposing political costs, there were some pieces of evidence which might have slightly stronger inferential leverage. Interlocutor 1 (2022) stated that the presence of MONUSCO "frightened" state actors to not attack civilians as they might be prosecuted or internationally condemned (Interlocutor 1, 2022). Moreover, subsequent to Adama Dieng's public 'shaming' of the Kamuina Nsapu and the FARDC, state-based

violence dropped significantly in all Kasai provinces, whereas violence against civilians perpetrated by non-state actors reached its overall peak with over 300 civilian deaths in Kasai in the month after Dieng's visit.[41] These observations seems to suggest that peacekeepers protected civilians through deterrence by imposing political costs. However, imposing political costs as such only seemed to succeed against state-actors, as they might be more concerned about their legitimacy in the international community, than non-state actors.

5.2.3 Verbal persuasion

The data left implications of the presence of the mechanism of verbal persuasion throughout the Kasai crisis. Specifically, MONUSCO engaged in activities such as public outreach (awareness raising), mediation (support to conflict resolution initiatives) and training throughout the entire conflict. However, as the data leaves no fingerprints of the effects of these activities in the two first periods, one can hardly infer that the causal mechanism of verbal persuasion was present. Period 3, on the other hand, leaves implications of successful verbal persuasion of both non-state and state actors. First, as a result of the demobilizing campaign, which in practice involved awareness raising and radio transmissions, the Kamuina Nsapu militia surrendered "en masse" from mid – to late-2017. These surrenders were also a result of direct negotiations with customary chiefs. Second, Interlocutor 4 (2022) highlighted that the continuous dialogues the Mission had with the Congolese security services caused a more "responsible approach" among FARDC elements towards civilians. In fact, Interlocutor 4 highlighted that the Mission, through a verbal confrontation with a FARDC general, prompted him to call his soldiers and tell them to act more responsible towards civilians. One can argue that this piece of evidence can be treated as a smoking gun, as interlocutor 4 states that the FARDC general changed behavior and called his soldiers to act more responsibly towards civilians, as a result of MONUSCO's verbal confrontation. Notably, verbal persuasion activities as such were a frequently used tool by *all* peacekeeping personnel throughout the conflict. For High-level politicians in the UN, and military troops on the ground.

[41] See figure 4.2

5.3 Contributions and further research

This sub-chapter will first present the theoretical and empirical contributions of this thesis to the research on peacekeeping. First, I discuss the theoretical contributions. Secondly, I discuss further research.

This thesis has combined various elements from the quantitative and qualitative literature on the effects of peacekeeping on civilian protection and put together coherent theoretical framework which might to a certain extent explain how peacekeepers protect civilians. This theoretical framework can be tested in similar contexts with peacekeeping operations with a mandate to protect civilians. Notably, this thesis has applied this theoretical framework in a hard case, namely MONUSCO's protection of civilians in the DRC. The fact that they were found to be present here, to a certain extent, might suggest that it is likely that they can be found in other similar contexts with peacekeeping operations with a mandate to protect civilians. Moreover, as presented in the theory chapter the quantitative literature offers theorizations on causal mechanisms that link the deployment of peacekeepers and reductions of violence against civilians, such as interpositioning and deterrence through imposing military and political costs (Fjelde et al., 2019; L. Hultman et al., 2013; S. Hultman et al., 2019). This thesis contributes to this research by examining these mechanisms empirically and can contribute to illustrating the challenges that emerge in the process of synthesizing theory and operationalizing theoretical concepts. This thesis has also been inspired by the qualitative work of Howard (2019) with the typology of how peacekeepers exercise power. Her research does not, however, assess the effectiveness of this typology on the protection of civilians specifically. This thesis contributes to Howard's typology as such to illustrate the relevance of "persuasion" and the utility of 'soft power' tools on the protection of civilians specifically.

As for empirical contributions, this thesis provides increased understanding of what peacekeepers do on the ground once they are deployed in the context of the DRC. As pointed out by this type of in-depth studies are needed (Clayton et al., 2017) "If we are interested in understanding how peacekeeping works – or does not work – to protect civilians, we need to improve our data on what peacekeepers do once they deploy.". Moreover, it does so in a hard case such as the DRC. Though data collection has been a challenge throughout this process, the data collected from interlocutors and text-based sources, can be a small contribution to

increase our understanding of what peacekeepers do on the ground to protect civilians in the country of the DRC.

While conducting this study, some new questions emerged. For instance, the role of the Mission's monitoring capacities was frequently brought up as an important tool to work effectively to protect civilians. As such, further studies on the impact of MONUSCO's or any other peacekeeping operations' information gathering capacities on protection, could provide an even broader understanding of how peacekeepers protect civilians. Moreover, as the majority of the non-state actor Kamuina Nsapu comprised of children under 15, further research on how peacekeepers protect civilians when the perpetrators of violence are children could be useful. In this case, MONUSCO protected civilians through demobilizing campaigns, which was termed as awareness raising, which resulted in diminishing the capacity of the violent Kamuina Nsapu militia. As this might entail different approaches in other cases, further research on this topic could be valuable in the research field of peacekeeping and how peacekeepers protect civilians.

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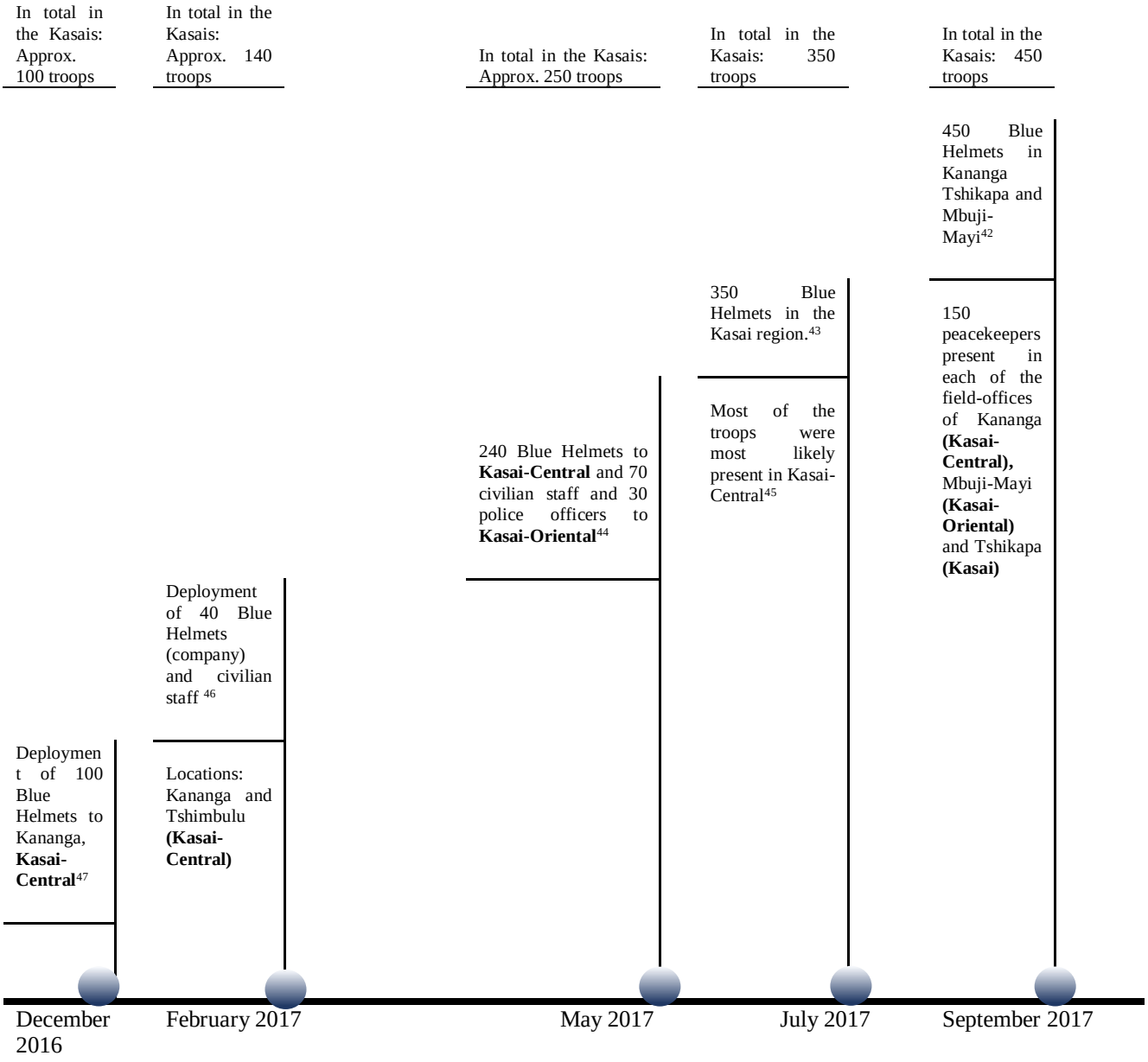
7 Appendix:

7.1 Recorded deployments and presence of peacekeepers in the Kasais



[42] Cil, D., Fjelde, H., Hultman, L., & Nilsson, D. (2020). Mapping blue helmets: Introducing the Geocoded Peacekeeping Operations (Geo-PKO) dataset. Journal of Peace Research, 57(2), 360–370.
[43] UN news; Radio Okapi; Though the sources are unclear where the Mission focused its presence S/2017/824 (2017, p. 12) says that the Mission reinforced its community alert networks with an emphasis on Kasai-Central.
[44] S/2017/565 , p. 6; Rolley (2017) UN response
[45] Though the sources are unclear where the Mission focused its presence, S/2017/824 (2017, p. 12) says that the Mission reinforced its community alert networks with an emphasis on Kasai-Central.
[46] Rolley 2017 timeline; S/2017/206, p. 5
[47] Source: S/2017/206, p. 5; Rolley timeline

7.2 Code for figure 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3

```
############################
############################
#Code STV 4992 - MA Thesis #
############################
############################


rm(list = ls())

# Starting off by important dataset by using
# the "import dataset" dataset function

install.packages("dplyr")
install.packages("lubridate")
install.packages("stringr")
library("lubridate")
library("dplyr")
library("stringr")
library("anytime")
library("tibble")
library("tidyr")
library(ggplot2)
library(hrbrthemes)


# Creating a graph for violence targeting civilians in Kasai-Central

newdataset <- rawdata %>% subset(admin1 == c("Kasai-Central"))

# Formatting dates in datasets to the "Date format"

newdataset$new_date <- ymd(newdataset$event_date)
str(newdataset)


data1 <- newdataset %>% select(new_date, interaction, fatalities, event_type)%>%
  complete(new_date = seq.Date(min(new_date), max(new_date), by="month"))%>%
  mutate(month=format(new_date,"%Y-%m"))%>%
  mutate(interaction = str_replace(interaction, "37", "Non-state actor")) %>%
  mutate(interaction = str_replace(interaction, "47" ,"Non-state actor" )) %>%
  mutate(interaction = str_replace(interaction, "17" ,"State actor" )) %>%
  mutate(countevent=1)%>%
  # According to the ACLED codebook "37" represent interactions
  # with political militias vs civilians
  # "47" represents interactions with communal militias vs civilians
  # "17" represents Military (state repression) against civilians
  # The code above recodes these values to state and non-state actors
  # To use ggplot2 and get the dates chronologically from left to right
  # in a plot I change the date format
  group_by(month, interaction)%>%
  summarise(fatalities=sum(fatalities), events=sum(countevent)) %>%
  # I summarise reported fatalities for each month
  ungroup()%>%
  # Renaming the variable "interaction"
  mutate(Actor = interaction)


  data2 <- data1[data1$month > "2015-12" &
                   data1$month < "2019-01", ] %>%
    complete(month, Actor)%>%
    #complete dataframe with all combinations of
    # month and actor to get 3 obs per month
    mutate(interaction=ifelse(is.na(interaction),Actor,interaction))%>%
    # copy actor to Actor var for NAs
    mutate(fatalities=ifelse(is.na(fatalities), 0,fatalities))%>%
    mutate(events=ifelse(is.na(events),0,events)) %>%
    subset(!is.na(Actor)) #remove the third category

# Now with the trimmed down dataset i make a plot by using the "ggplot2" package

data2 %>%
  ggplot(aes(month, events, fatalities, fill=Actor)) +
  geom_bar(stat= "identity", width=.4) +
  scale_fill_manual(values=c('azure2', 'bisque1')) +
  geom_line(aes(y= fatalities / 27, group=Actor, color = Actor, fill = Actor)) +
  scale_color_manual(values=c('deepskyblue4','brown3')) +
  scale_y_continuous(name = "Number of Events (bars)",
            sec.axis = sec_axis(~.*27, name = "Reported Fatalities (lines)")) +
  theme(axis.title = element_text(size = 30)) +
  xlab("") +
  theme_minimal() +
  theme(axis.text.x=element_text(angle=60, hjust=1))+
  labs(title = "Violence Targeting Civilians, Events and Fatalities
Involving State -and Non-state Forces in Kasai-Central
(January 2016 - December 2018)",
    subtitle = "Bars indicate Number of Events and lines Reported Fatalities") +
  theme(plot.title = element_text(hjust = 0.5)) +
  theme(plot.subtitle = element_text(hjust = 0.5))
```

```
## making graphs for Kasai and Kasai-Oriental. Sane process as above.


newdataset1 <- rawdata %>% subset(admin1 == c("Kasai"))


newdataset1$new_date <- ymd(newdataset1$event_date)
str(newdataset)

data3 <- newdataset1 %>%
  select(new_date, interaction, fatalities, event_type)%>%
  complete(new_date = seq.Date(min(new_date), max(new_date), by="month"))%>%
  mutate(month=format(new_date,"%Y-%m"))%>%
  mutate(interaction = str_replace(interaction, "37", "Non-state actor")) %>%
  mutate(interaction = str_replace(interaction, "47" ,"Non-state actor" )) %>%
  mutate(interaction = str_replace(interaction, "78" ,"Non-state actor" )) %>%
  mutate(interaction = str_replace(interaction, "17" ,"State actor" )) %>%
  mutate(countevent=1)%>%
  # According to the ACLED codebook "37" represent
  # interactions with political militias vs civilians
  # "47" represents interactions with communal militias vs civilians
  # "17" represents Military (state repression) against civilians
  # The code above recodes these values to state and non-state actors
  # To use ggplot2 and get the dates chronologically from left to tight
  # in a plot I change the date format
  group_by(month, interaction)%>%
  summarise(fatalities=sum(fatalities), events=sum(countevent)) %>%
  # I summarise reported fatalities for each month
  ungroup()%>%
  # Renaming the variable "interaction"
  mutate(Actor = interaction)


data4 <- data3[data3$month > "2015-12" &
                 data3$month < "2019-01", ] %>%
  complete(month, Actor)%>%
  #complete dataframe with all combinations of month
  # and actor to get 3 obs per month
  mutate(interaction=ifelse(is.na(interaction),Actor,interaction))%>%
  # copy actor to Actor var for NAs
  mutate(fatalities=ifelse(is.na(fatalities), 0,fatalities))%>%
  mutate(events=ifelse(is.na(events),0,events)) %>%
  subset(!is.na(Actor)) #remove the third category


data4 %>%
  ggplot(aes(month, events, fatalities, fill=Actor)) +
  geom_bar(stat= "identity", width=.4) +
  scale_fill_manual(values=c('azure2', 'bisque1')) +
  geom_line(aes(y= fatalities / 27, group=Actor, color = Actor, fill = Actor)) +
  scale_color_manual(values=c('deepskyblue4','brown3')) +
  scale_y_continuous(name = "Number of Events (bars)",
            sec.axis = sec_axis(~.*27, name = "Reported Fatalities (lines)")) +
  theme(axis.title = element_text(size = 30)) +
  xlab("") +
  theme_minimal() +
  theme(axis.text.x=element_text(angle=60, hjust=1))+
  labs(title = "Violence Targeting Civilians, Events and Fatalities
Involving State -and Non-state Forces in Kasai
(January 2016 - December 2018)",
    subtitle = "Bars indicate Number of Events and lines Reported Fatalities") +
  theme(plot.title = element_text(hjust = 0.5)) +
  theme(plot.subtitle = element_text(hjust = 0.5))
```

```
####################################
## Making Figure for Kasai-oriental ##
####################################

newdataset2 <- rawdata %>% subset(admin1 == c("Kasai-Oriental"))


newdataset2$new_date <- ymd(newdataset2$event_date)
str(newdataset)

data5 <- newdataset2 %>%
  select(new_date, interaction, fatalities, event_type)%>%
  complete(new_date = seq.Date(min(new_date), max(new_date), by="month"))%>%
  mutate(month=format(new_date,"%Y-%m"))%>%
  mutate(interaction = str_replace(interaction, "37", "Non-state actor")) %>%
  mutate(interaction = str_replace(interaction, "47" ,"Non-state actor" )) %>%
  mutate(interaction = str_replace(interaction, "78" ,"Non-state actor" )) %>%
  mutate(interaction = str_replace(interaction, "17" ,"State actor" )) %>%
  mutate(countevent=1)%>%
  # According to the ACLED codebook "37" represent interactions
  # with political militias vs civilians
  # "47" represents interactions with communal militias vs civilians
  # "17" represents Military (state repression) against civilians
  # The code above recodes these values to state and non-state actors
  # To use ggplot2 and get the dates chronologically from left to right
  # in a plot I change the date format
  group_by(month, interaction)%>%
  summarise(fatalities=sum(fatalities), events=sum(countevent)) %>%
  # I summarise reported fatalities for each month
  ungroup()%>%
  # Renaming the variable "interaction"
  mutate(Actor = interaction)


data6 <- data5[data5$month > "2015-12" &
                 data5$month < "2019-01", ] %>%
  complete(month, Actor)%>%
  #complete dataframe with all combinations of month
  # and actor to get 3 obs per month
  mutate(interaction=ifelse(is.na(interaction),Actor,interaction))%>%
  # copy actor to Actor var for NAs
  mutate(fatalities=ifelse(is.na(fatalities), 0,fatalities))%>%
  mutate(events=ifelse(is.na(events),0,events)) %>%
  subset(!is.na(Actor)) #remove the third category


data6 %>%
  ggplot(aes(month, events, fatalities, fill=Actor)) +
  geom_bar(stat= "identity", width=.4) +
  scale_fill_manual(values=c('azure2', 'bisque1')) +
  geom_line(aes(y= fatalities / 30, group=Actor, color = Actor, fill = Actor)) +
  scale_color_manual(values=c('deepskyblue4','brown3')) +
  scale_y_continuous(name = "Number of Events (bars)",
            sec.axis = sec_axis(~.*30, name = "Reported Fatalities (lines)")) +
  theme(axis.title = element_text(size = 30)) +
  xlab("") +
  theme_minimal() +
  theme(axis.text.x=element_text(angle=60, hjust=1))+
  labs(title = "Violence Targeting Civilians, Events and Fatalities
Involving State -and Non-state Forces in Kasai-Oriental
(January 2016 - December 2018)",
    subtitle = "Bars indicate Number of Events and lines Reported Fatalities") +
  theme(plot.title = element_text(hjust = 0.5)) +
  theme(plot.subtitle = element_text(hjust = 0.5))
```

7.3 Anonymized list of interviews

ID	ROLE	TAPED	FULLY TRANSCRIBED	DAY	LOCATION	GENDER
1	Journalist	YES	YES	28.06.2022	Whatsapp call, exchange of messages	M
2	MONUSCO (civilian), Staff	YES	YES	06.06.2022	Zoom-call	M
3	(civilian), staff	YES	YES	08.09.2022	Whatsapp, mail exchange	M
4	UNOCHA, Humanitarian worker	YES	YES	30.06.2022	In-person interview	M
5	Academic, socialcultural anthropology	YES	YES	24.06.2022	Zoom-call	M
6	MONUSCO (civilian), staff			27.09.2022	Whatsapp call, exchange of messages	
7	Researcher	YES	NO	2019	In-person interview	M
8	MONUSCO staff	NO	NO	2022	Zoom-call	M