



# International Peace Support Training Centre Nairobi, Kenya

## Impact of the UN Force Intervention Brigade Operations on the Eastern DRC



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**SERIES 5, N°2**

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# Impact of the UN Force Intervention Brigade Operations on the Eastern DRC

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**SERIES 5, Nº2**

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## Foreword

The International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC) is a research and training institution focusing on capacity building at the strategic, operational and tactical levels within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and has developed into the regional center of excellence for the African Standby Force (ASF) in Eastern Africa. It addresses the complexities of contemporary UN/AU integrated Peace Support Operations (PSO) by describing the actors and multi-dimensional nature of these operations. The research conducted covers a broad spectrum ranging from conflict prevention through management to post-conflict reconstruction. The Center has made considerable contributions in training and research on peace support issues in East Africa through design of training curriculum, field research and publication of Occasional Papers and Issue Briefs; the Occasional Papers are produced annually, while the Issues Briefs are produced quarterly. The issue briefs and Occasion Papers are an important contribution to the vision and mission of IPSTC.

The Peace and Security Research Department (PSRD) of the IPSTC presents one of the occasional papers on Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) titled: **Impact of the UN Force Intervention Brigade Operations on Eastern DRC conflict**. The paper provides insights into the role of the UN Force Intervention Brigade Operations to stabilize the region after several initiatives to solve the conflict. This paper also aims at generating information that will be useful to policy makers and contribute to the security debate and praxis in DRC. The paper is also expected to inform the design of the training modules at IPSTC.

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**Brig. Robert Kabage**  
**Director, IPSTC**

## Abbreviations

<b>ADF/NALU</b>	Allied Democratic Forces/ National Army for the Liberation of Uganda
<b>APSA</b>	African Peace and Security Architecture
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>CNDP</b>	Conseil National de défense du Peuple
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>FARDC</b>	Force Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo
<b>FDLR</b>	Forces Démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda
<b>UNFIB</b>	United Nations Force Intervention Brigade
<b>ICGLR</b>	International Conference of the Great Lakes Region
<b>IDPs</b>	Internal Displaced Persons
<b>IPSTC</b>	International Peace Support Centre
<b>M -23</b>	Mouvement du 23 Mars ( March 23 Movement)
<b>ONUC</b>	Operation of the United Nations in Congo
<b>MONUC</b>	UN Peacekeeping Mission in the Congo
<b>MONUSCO</b>	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
<b>PSO</b>	Peace Support Operations
<b>PSRD</b>	Peace and Security Research Departement
<b>RDC/Goma</b>	Rally for Congolese Democracy–Goma (RCD-Goma)
<b>SADC</b>	South African Development Community
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nation Development Program
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council

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## Abstract

Conflict in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has claimed millions of lives, rendered thousands people refugees and IDPs, destroyed property and increased poverty and disease. There have been several failed attempts to prevent, manage and solve the conflicts. Prompted by the sudden emergence of M-23 and the capture of Goma in 2012 with no response from UN peacekeepers, the United Nations authorized a military intervention, the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade (UNFIB) to target M-23 and other armed groups in Eastern DRC.

The introduction of the UN FIB made a significant difference with the defeat of M-23, an achievement that has not yet been reached by MONUSCO despite its 17,000 troops and a mandate to fight against non-state armed groups.

However, given that the military defeat did not address the root cause of the conflict, and that there are still many armed groups operating in the region, specifically the Force for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), it is important to examine how this new feature will impact the long peace and security stabilization of Eastern region of DRC.

This study seeks therefore to examine the impact of the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade on peace and security in Eastern DRC, as well as challenges that remain to be addressed for an effective security stabilization of the region.



## Introduction

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), particularly in the Eastern provinces, can be traced to its history of migration, citizenship and property rights. The conflict opposes armed groups sometimes supported by neighboring countries, the national army and several local self-defense forces. The current conflict began in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, and the three groups are now vying for the control of the area's natural resources<sup>1</sup>.

Currently the populations in the provinces of North and South Kivu, bordering Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi face the greatest threat of crimes against humanity and war crimes. The security situation in this region remains dire with attacks against civilian's commonplace. Sexual assault is widespread throughout North and South Kivu and is regularly perpetrated with impunity<sup>2</sup>.

The Government of DRC has taken steps to prevent and halt such atrocities, including the implementation of its plan for stabilization in the East. The stabilization plan aimed at consolidating state authority, addressing the many challenges to security in Eastern DRC and improving access to justice for victims of sexual violence. Despite these continued efforts, as well as the presence of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), crimes continues unabated and the security situation shows few signs of improving. In South and North Kivu, conditions deteriorated with the seizure of Goma in 2012 by the M-23 rebel group, formed by defectors from the national army, the Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC). The emergence of the M-23 Movement in 2012 produced high civilian's casualties and mass migration as well as the international attention on the escalation of violence in Eastern DRC.

Following a United Nations Joint Human Rights Office report documenting widespread and asymmetric abuses of human rights committed by M-23 and the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC), the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted a Resolution 2098 establishing a United Nations Force Intervention Brigade (UNFIB), an Offensive Combat Force to protect civilian by neutralizing

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1 Carol J, Gallo, The origin of the conflict in Eastern DRC: How the Belgian colonial policy towards Banyarwanda feeds into today's conflicts , Cambridge University ,15April 2014

2 Leslie Alan Horvitz and Catherwood Christopher, Encyclopedia of war crimes and genocides

and disarming Congolese Rebels and Foreign Armed Groups. The UN FIB has a mandate to carry out offensive operations against armed groups in the eastern DRC starting with M23<sup>3</sup>.

This force is unique in terms of composition and the historic background of the Eastern DRC conflict. It is assumed that this conflict has foreign influence from some neighboring countries but the force has been established without the participation of the immediate neighbors (Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda). It is also the first United Nations peacekeeping unit specifically tasked to carry out targeted offensive operations to neutralize armed groups that threaten State authority and civilian security<sup>4</sup>. The brigade is based in North Kivu and is made up of a total of 3,069 peace keepers from Malawi, Tanzania and South Africa.

## **History of Armed Groups in Eastern DRC**

In North and South Kivu, local ethnic antagonisms overshadowed politics at the national and international level in the years following independence. From 1962 to 1965, conflict opposed Hutu and Tutsi who had come from Rwanda during and just after the colonial period against the Hunde, Tembo, and Nyanga population. These immigrants, who had become the demographic majority in parts of Masisi and Rutshuru territories, together with Kinyarwanda speaking populations living in these areas long before colonialism, were denied access to customary power. Attempts to disenfranchise this group provoked serious bouts of fighting before the 1965 elections<sup>5</sup>. The opening of political space and electoral competition fuelled violent mobilization during this period and led to manipulations by politicians, who provided the organization and funds to transform local grievances into violence.

The Rwandan genocide of 1994 prompted 30,000–40,000 Hutu militiamen and soldiers of the Forces armées rwandaises (FAR, Rwandan Armed Forces), most of whom had been involved in the genocide, to cross from Rwanda to Eastern DRC, along with a million civilian refugees. With them came weapons, radicalism, and

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3 U.S Department of State Country Reports on Terrorism 2013

4 Security Council SC/10964: Resolution 2098 (2013) Enables Offensive Combat Force to Neutralize and Disarm Congolese Rebels, Foreign Armed Groups

5 Bucyalimwe Mararo, Stanislas, 'Land, Power and Ethnic Conflict in Masisi (Congo-Kinshasa), 1940s–1994', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 30 (1997), pp. 503–38

ethnic polarization<sup>6</sup>. Since that period armed groups began to flourish and developed networks driven by the development of a war economy, which thrived on illegal taxation, smuggling and racketeering. Efforts to stabilize the region, through power sharing mechanisms introduced new dynamics that foster armed mobilization. The integration of some of the former belligerents into the army created malcontents, who used new insurgencies as a form of bargaining. They were encouraged by the power-sharing logic of the transition, which condoned the use of violence to access political power<sup>7</sup>. The emergence of M-23 in 2012 was a turning point on the Eastern DRC crisis. In August 2013, a large-scale FARDC offensive against the M23, backed by the newly established United Nations Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), achieved a number of military successes.

## Origins of the Intervention Brigade Initiative

The strategy of deploying a military force to offensively engage with the rebel groups in Eastern DRC was originally conceived by African regional powers in the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in July 2012. Regional countries supported by South Africa, sought to address what was seen as twin failures of the government of the DRC and MONUSCO to clear Eastern Congo of rebel groups, some associated with residual conflicts in the region, such as the FDLR. The region's powerful actors were troubled by the continued instability rebel groups in the DRC presented to their borders, and the ICGLR agreed and began preparations for the deployment of a Neutral Intervention Force<sup>8</sup>. The brigade was planned as a Neutral Intervention Force of approximately 3,500 soldiers (mostly from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) that would conduct offensive operations to protect civilians and neutralize and disarm rebel groups, as agreed by the ICGLR. The brigade was announced as the first-ever offensive combat force intended to neutralize and disarm the rebel groups<sup>9</sup>. To avoid a parallel force deployment in the DRC, the United Nations adopted the proposal and incorporated the force into MONUSCO.

6 Gérard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 24–9.

7 Tull. D. and Andreas Mehler.A. 'The Hidden Costs of Power-sharing: Reproducing Insurgent Violence in Africa', *African Affairs* 104 (2005), pp. 375–98.

8 12 Nkala, O, "Uganda Pleads for UN Support for Deployment of 4000 Strong Neutral Force in Eastern DR Congo," *The Daily Journalist*, October 17, 2012

9 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1856 (December 22, 2008), UN Doc. S/RES/1856

## Statement of the Problem

The United Nation Force Intervention Brigade with close collaboration with the (FARDC) managed to defeat the most organized armed group, the March 23 Movement (M-23) within two weeks. However both North and South Kivu provinces are still facing daily threats and violence at the hands of armed groups, despite the defeat of the M-23 militia. This conflict continues to negatively impact on humanitarian conditions in DRC, particularly in the eastern provinces<sup>10</sup>.

The United Nation Force Intervention Brigade may have succeeded in neutralizing M-23 but its' long term success will be determined by how it will deal with the Democratic Force for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and other armed groups in the region. The defeat of M-23 was a positive development but the problem is bound to recur if other peace building measures are not in place. There is a real risk that the UNFIB model of Peace Enforcement may offer wrong lessons if other critical factors are not examined.

## Objectives

The study aims to assess the impact of the United Nations Intervention Brigade (FIB) operations on the Eastern DRC Conflict by following three main objectives:

1. Examine the extent to which the routing of M-23 from eastern DRC has contributed to the conflict de-escalation in eastern DRC.
2. Explore what changes have been brought about by FIB and other factors that are contributing to continued violence in the region.
3. Evaluate the impact of FIB/FARDC's victory and its contribution to overall pacification of Eastern DRC.

## Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this paper is that the Force Intervention Brigade is a critical tool for the stabilization of the Eastern region of DRC.

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10 USAID Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo - Complex Emergencies March 19, 2014,

## Research Methodology

The research was primary dependent on qualitative approach. The primary sources of data are interviews of key informants from the security sector in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, MONUSCO, ICGLR, civil society, international and non-governmental organizations and local authorities leaders in the area affected by conflicts. Interview guides were used to explain desired information.

Secondary data were obtained from official policy documents and official documents from UN, AU, ICGLR and SADC, policy documents from the governments of DR Congo and countries sharing the same border (Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda) as well as studies commissioned by specialized organizations. Desk top research was conducted through the internet to access other publications relevant to the study like ‘*Conflict in Eastern Congo (DRC) and Peace Perspectives*’<sup>11</sup> and ‘*Congo Wars Conflict Myth and Reality*’<sup>12</sup>.

Field visits provided access to raw data and observations of the security situation on the ground. It also enabled the researcher to interact with key persons dealing on a daily basis with the security situation in the region and share their feelings and perceptions on how peace and security can be improved. The people interviewed were selected based on the relevance of the institution to the issue under investigations.

## Limitations and Delimitation of the Study

The security situation in Eastern DRC remains fragile and there is no free movement from Goma, the main city to many locations in the region. It was not possible to visit villages and towns liberated by the coalition FADC-UNFIB due to security constraints.

However, the research was well conducted and succeeded in meeting required officials in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. This was possible because of previous experience and special contacts from military officers from researcher’s country of origin. It would have been very difficult for IPSTC researcher with no special contacts in the region to undertake research successfully.

11 Claude Shema Rutagengwa; *Conflict in Eastern Congo (DRC) and Peace Perspectives*, Great Lakes Peace Initiative, 2005

12 Turner, Thomas; *Congo : Wars Conflict, Myth and Reality*, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, 2007

## Theoretical Framework

The effective protection of civilians in eastern DRC conflicts is still problematic despite the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade operations. The United Nations is presented as the most pro-active and innovative actor in developing practical approaches to conflict resolution by peace operations. However, scholars present two opposing theories on the current United Nations military Interventions: **the Political Realism Theory and the Liberalism Theory**

Luttwak Edward subscribes to the political realism theory<sup>13</sup>. This theory argues that the UN involvement in protracted conflicts may fuel hostility and prolong human suffering. The political realism theory seems to be ignorant of the political and military realities on the ground where civilians are actually targeted in most of current conflicts. The UN Force Intervention Brigade was mainly conceived to protect civilians in Eastern DRC as the Government of Congo and MONUSCO has failed. The Intervention Brigade operations managed to de-escalate the conflict. If United Nations had never intervened, which would have been preferable according to Luttwak's theory, the conditions in the DRC would have been probably worse.

On the other hand, the **liberalism theory** emphasizes the protection of human rights. Liberals argue that human beings possess fundamental natural rights to liberty consisting in the right to do whatever they think fit to preserve themselves, provided they do not violate the equal liberty of others unless their own preservation is threatened<sup>14</sup>. People also have the right to be treated and a duty to treat others as ethical subjects and not as objects or means only<sup>15</sup>. Liberalist defenders believe that individuals share some interests, which can make both domestic and international cooperation possible<sup>16</sup>. To support this argument, liberals cite the emergence of international organizations, such as the United Nations, as an example of prevalence of interstate cooperation.

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13 Santiago Delgado Calderon: **The Need for Interventions: A Counterfactual Approach to Challenging War Theories**, the Policy Review journal of the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs,

14 Charvet John and Kaczynska-Nay E, *The Liberal Project and Human Rights: Theory and Practice of a New World Order* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

15 Kurth J, "Humanitarian Intervention after Iraq: Legal Ideals Vs. Military Realities." *Orbis*. 50, no. 1 (2006): 87.

16 Fortna, Virginia Page, "Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace? International Intervention and the Duration of Peace After Civil War." *International Studies Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (Jun., 2004): pp. 269-292.

Michael Walzer, a leading scholar of this strand, argues that military intervention can be justified as a last resort and as a means to protect civilians from human rights violations, such as genocide and crimes against humanity<sup>17</sup>. This responds to the ongoing evolution in peacekeeping operations especially in relation to the use of force mandates for the Protection of Civilians. The idea of inaction in the face of systematic violence targeting ethnic or religious groups is against the international community's universal notions of justice and fairness. United Nations military operations should be framed not as a right to intervene, but rather a responsibility to protect (R2P)<sup>18</sup>. It is therefore the liberalism theory that inspires authorized United Nations military enforcement operations specifically mandated to protect civilians.

The creation in 2013 of the offensive force (Intervention Brigade) against negative forces perpetrating atrocities in Eastern DRC is a response to the widespread violence against civilians in the region.

However peace enforcement cannot solve the underlying problems in most areas of potential application. The insertion of forces to stop combat may be effective in making the continuation of violence impossible; it cannot, in and of itself, create the conditions for lasting peace, which involves the political embrace of peace as more attractive than war. The insertion of outside force may break the cycle of violence and convince the combatants that resistance to the peace enforcers is more painful than compliance to an imposed peace. Since these conflicts are normally very deeply rooted and desperate, the shock effect of outside force may prove to be no more than a break between rounds of fighting. The root causes of Eastern DRC conflict will defiantly have to be addressed from a political angle.

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17 Doyle, Michael, and Stefano Recchia. "Liberalism in International Relations." *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* (2011), 1434-1438.

18 Gareth Evans and Sahnoun Mohamed. The Responsibility to Protect. *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 6 (2002): pp. 99-110.

## Literature Review

DRC has over time generated a lot of interest from scholars due to its never-ending conflict. They explain the multiplicity of armed groups with different interests, the adventure of M-23 and the contribution of the UN Force Intervention Brigade to defeat the most organized rebel group in the region. These scholars do mention however that the demise of M-23 will not alone bring peace in Eastern region of DRC.

Fidel Bafilemba and Timo Mueller argue that the complexity of the war in Eastern DRC with its entangled web of actors pursuing a multiplicity of agendas can be overwhelming and confusing. Over the years, relationships have shifted. Friends have become foes, foes have become friends, and political circumstances have changed, frequently altering the power equation in Africa's Great Lakes Region.

Because the Congolese state does not have a monopoly over the means of violence in Eastern DR Congo, and elements of its armed forces often engage in abuses similar to those of militias, the region is a fertile environment for the development and growth of armed groups and warlordism. As a result, violence is frequently traded for money, political power, and control of natural resources. This situation has left DR Congo's North and South Kivu provinces in a protracted crisis. One of the latest outgrowths of the insecurity is the M23 rebel group, which defected from DRC Forces and is now fighting against the Congolese national army. Each of these parties pursues its interests through a set of relationships with other armed groups<sup>19</sup>.

Jacob Goodman says that the persistent failure of the peace process in the Eastern DR Congo to date makes clear that a change in strategy is required to implement and secure a stable peace in Eastern DRC. The rules of the game in the Eastern DR Congo, so well established after years of containing and appeasing belligerents, must be changed<sup>20</sup>.

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19 Bafilemba Fidel and Timo Mueller: *The Networks of Eastern Congo's Two Most Powerful Armed Actors, Enough project to end genocide and crime against humanity*, 2013

20 Goodman Jacob, *The Grease in the Gears: Impunity in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Opportunity for peace*, Loyola of Los Angeles International and Comparative Law Review, 2010



Kevin J Kelley says that the victory over the M23 rebels is emboldening the United Nations to take the same aggressive approach against other forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo and possibly to export the model of combative UN intervention to other areas affected by conflicts in Africa. The Force Intervention Brigade approved in 2013 by the UN Security Council is seen as having played a decisive role in the defeat of M23. The UN-sponsored detachment of 3,000 African troops was fielded following the three-year-long failure of traditionally reactive UN peacekeeping to stabilize the Eastern DRC<sup>21</sup>.

Jeffrey Herbst and Greg Mills affirms that the apparent demise of the 18-month-old M23 rebellion is unlikely, on its own; to deliver peace to the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where, in the absence of a significant presence of the state, at least 40 armed groups operate, and a chronic humanitarian crisis persists<sup>22</sup>.

Dominic Johnson and Simone Schlindwein have concern about MONUSCO's delay to start military operations against FDLR. Within MONUSCO (and in wider UN circles) there are divergent opinions on whether the group should be tackled or not. Two troop-contributing countries of the FIB (Tanzania and South Africa) stand in diplomatic rows with the government in Kigali and appear reluctant to do Rwanda the favor of hunting its archenemies. Within this regional gamble over diplomatic leadership in the FDLR question, it will be crucial to see how overlapping membership (i.e. DRC and Tanzania) in ICGLR and SADC play out and how the positioning of UN and/or AU will influence future developments<sup>23</sup>.

Kris Berwouts continues saying again that there is obvious reason to mistrust the FDLR. Hailed as major advances regarding the issue, FDLR's voluntary but partial demobilization is a symbolic one. Out of an estimated 1500-2500 combatants (compared to 8000 ten years ago), less than 200 combatants surrendered and the second phase of the demobilization process never happened. There is a growing gap between believers and non-believers in the region on the question of how relevant and genuine FDLR's demarche is<sup>24</sup>.

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21 East African journal , Victory over M23 emboldens UN to use force in conflicts, November 9,2013

22 Jeffrey Herbst and Greg Mills: The Congo Doesn't Exist

23 Schlindwein Simone - Johnson Dominic, Endgame or bluff? The UN's dilemma with the FDLR militia in DRC, Democrtatie Chretienne,2014

24 Berwouts Kris , Central Africa: FDLR Demobilization Provides Some Light, but Not End of the Tunnel, African Arguments,29 August 2014

## Factors Leading to M23 Defeat

The combination of factors that led to M23 defeat can be classified into political and military factors. Political factors are related to the M23 political grievances which were not convincing enough. Military factors concern the reorganization and the crucial logistical support provided by the regular DRC army and MONUSCO.

### Political Factors

Political factors that led to M-23 defeat are factors related to the dynamics of politics in the region. The rebels' defeat inspires the Congolese national army and the Intervention Brigade with regard to their ability to take on insurgent groups while raising the cost of continued rebellion for the latter and their potential supporters. The events should also contribute to paving the way for peaceful political engagements among Congolese socio-political stakeholders, on the one hand, and between the DRC and its eastern neighbors on the other hand.

### Rebels with Changing Grievances Hypothesis

Despite M23's numerous attempts to explain its grievances and justification, they remain unclear and have changed since its formation. When M23 was created, it claimed that it was seeking the correct and complete implementation of an agreement signed between the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) and the Congolese government on 23 March 2009. They were also arguing that the FDLR continued atrocities against Congolese Tutsis and other civilians since the genocide<sup>25</sup>, which provides the M-23's stated reason of existence, protecting the eastern Congo's Tutsi population from further atrocities<sup>26</sup>. This position was valid when M23's intention was not to conquer territory, nor to push for new negotiations, but to demand the application of the March 23 agreement.

Sometime later, the movement expressed its will to find a political solution including all popular defense groups. M-23 continued to add items to its list of demands, rendering the likelihood of successful negotiations with Kinshasa increasingly minimal. In October 2013 the movement announced four preconditions for

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25 Human Rights Watch, *Renewed Crisis in North Kivu*, October 2007, at 3, available at <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/drc1007/>.

26 International Crisis Group : *Bringing Peace to North Kivu*, supra note 71, at 7.

participating in direct negotiations: Respect of the 23 March agreement, Consideration for additional demands and grievances of M23 including social issues and issues of good governance, a review of the truth of the ballot boxes, and the participation of the political opposition led by Etienne Tshisekedi and Vital Kamerhe, in the negotiations, as well as Congolese diaspora and civil society<sup>27</sup>.

By November 2013, grievances relating to the alleged lack of implementation of the 23 March 2009 agreement featured less and less prominently in M23 discourse; the group steadily unveiled a national agenda. After the seizure of Goma, M23 spokesperson Vianney Kazarama demanded the departure of President Kabila and announced to people gathered at a rally that the movement will march to Kinshasa<sup>28</sup>.

M23's strategy on the battlefield does not suggest that protecting the Tutsi population is its most urgent concern. After capture of Rutshuru, M23 decided to move on Goma first, before trying to conquer the territory of Masisi, which is home to a large part of the Congolese Tutsi and borders M23's positions in Rutshuru. After it took Goma, M23 advanced towards Sake but, instead of focussing its efforts on Masisi, announced that Bukavu would be next. Although M23 made some incursions into, amongst others, the Masisi towns of Mushaki and Karuba, the heaviest fighting with FARDC occurred on the Minova axis towards Bukavu.

It is important to mention that around half of the ex-CNDP Tutsi commanders have not joined M23, but have remained within the FARDC. Should these officers perceive a grave and urgent security threat to their community, they would probably refuse to fight against M23.

## **Willingness of the UN and Neighboring Countries**

The willingness of the UN to initiate a plan like the FIB is in large part due to the strong political commitment of the neighboring countries in the Great Lakes region. The Framework for Peace, Security and Cooperation for the DRC and the Region, agreed to by 11 countries in February 2013, paved the way for the UN to seriously consider the FIB (originally conceived by the International Conference of the

27 Point de presse du Chef du Haut Commandement militaire du M23, le Colonel MAKENGA Sultani, See [www.m23mars.org](http://www.m23mars.org)

28 Editorial: qui ose dire que le M23 est pour la Balkanisation de l'est de la RDC?, 10th August 2012, see [www.m23mars.org](http://www.m23mars.org)

Great Lakes Region) as a strategy to break the pattern of violence in Eastern DRC. Countries in the region recognize that instability in the region can adversely impact their own political and economic stability. Significantly, the substantially reduced regional patronage of the M23 was critical to the success of the FIB experiment. The willingness of all the relevant (international and regional) actors is particularly important as it ensured a high level of political cohesion that did not necessarily exist previously<sup>29</sup>.

## **Military Factors**

The use of well-trained and disciplined FARDC units (mostly Unités de Reaction Rapide) that benefitted from functioning supply chains in terms of equipment, logistics, and food in conjunction with massive FIB support made the difference. In addition, M23 decided to engage in a ‘classic war’ positioning itself as a proper army instead of engaging in guerrilla tactics. These aspects did not only help a swift military victory on the side of the government/UN coalition but also prevented major humanitarian consequences.

That the Security Council was willing to take the political risk to explicitly authorize a high-tempo offensive operation by the UN (what some peacekeeping experts would term ‘peace enforcement’) was seen by many as a contributing factor for the eventual success of the FIB. The particularly forceful language of the resolution also provided a cloak of assurance to the countries contributing to the FIB (Tanzania, South Africa and Malawi) that their unequivocal readiness to use force to carry out the mandate in its fullest sense was sanctioned.

A critical condition for the FIB’s success was the role of the Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC). The FARDC, compared to 2006, was in a far better position (in terms of training, capabilities and political will) to carry out combat operations and to secure and consolidate gains made on the ground. The success of the FIB was also conditioned on the fact that MONUSCO is an extremely well-resourced mission and had the means to provide enabling assets to support the FIB.

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29 The International Forum for the Challenges of Peacekeeping Operations: [www.challengesforum.org](http://www.challengesforum.org)

This allowed the FIB and the FARDC to wage intensive operations on average 15 a day against the M23. Strong mission leadership was also credited with contributing to the success of the FIB.

## **M-23 Tactics**

M23 decided to engage in a classic war positioning itself as a proper army instead of engaging in guerrilla tactics. These aspects did not only help a quick military victory on the side of the government/UN coalition but also prevented major humanitarian consequences. MONUSCO, at this time, had no serious contingency plans to react to massive displacement if it had happened. Moreover, concerns over the regional escalation have luckily not materialized given that, among others, Tanzanian and South African forces fought M23 who allegedly benefitted from Rwandan and Ugandan support, and thus from countries that lately traded diplomatic rows with FIB contributors.

## **Internal M-23 Conflicts**

Fighting within M-23 between Sultani Makenga and Bosco Ntaganda, the top leaders of the rebel group, has also weakened the movement. Tensions existed since 2012 and came to the surface after M23 dramatically took Goma.

Under international pressure Makenga wanted to leave town, while Ntaganda preferred to remain in the provincial capital. When they finally withdrew on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2012, Ntaganda and Makenga clashed over the division of the goods looted from the city. The leadership crisis also crystallized in the same period around appointments: both leaders wanted to place their officers and cadres in key positions within the movement.

# Effects of M-23 Defeat and the FIB/FARDC

## Victory

The defeat of M23 rebels in the Democratic Republic of Congo has been understood as a shift in military and political dynamics that presented the most concrete prospects of peace in eastern region of the country. This victory of the Congolese army, better known for its human rights abuses than for its battlefield efficiency has presented its capacity to fight for their country. It was also an important message to many rebel groups operating in the area to stop fighting, raising hopes that a lasting peace may be in sight after two decades of conflict.

## Hope of Peace and Security Recovery

The Congolese rebel group known as M-23, remnants of Hutu rebels of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and Ugandan armed rebels of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) have been operating in that region. The situation has changed over the last sixteen months after the defeat of M-23. Through joint efforts of Congolese military forces and the UN Force, the M-23 is no more; the ADF has been reduced to a shadow of its former self, almost 4,000 combatants from a variety of Congolese armed groups have surrendered. And also the FDLR appears to start to voluntarily disarm while almost 500,000 displaced persons have returned to their homes. However, although the security situation has vastly improved in eastern DR Congo, it's still fragile and not irreversible as conflict persists due to presence of other armed groups<sup>30</sup>.

## Socio-economic Effects

After the defeat of M-23, a new environment of peace and reconstruction took place in Eastern DRC. Emergency projects have begun to advance the launch of the Eastern Region Stabilization and Peace-Building Project (STEP). In this emergency projects special attention has been paid to those hardest hit by the conflict, such as the internally displaced and their host communities, youth and women at risk.

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30 Mbatha , Derrick: Security situation has improved in Eastern DR Congo, United Nations, News and Media, 7 Aug 2014

The work reflects the World Bank's commitment, in collaboration with the UN and other partners to rapid aid for reconstruction of the eastern region of the DRC ravaged by many years of war, providing swift assistance to the most vulnerable communities as well as other parts of Eastern DR Congo. Special attention has been paid to internally displaced and their host communities. A US\$ 6 million advance has been released to fund preparatory work for this project<sup>31</sup>.

The STEP intend to focus on community-building and better access to basic socio-economic services, job creation to boost income among vulnerable population groups and strengthening the capabilities of provincial authorities and entities.

## **Recovering the Lost Capacity of the DRC Army**

The FARDC was formed in 2003 as a result of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue's Global and All-Inclusive Agreement on the Transition in December 2002, which created a plan for integrating President Joseph Kabila's Army, the Congolese Armed Forces (FAC), the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) and the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC). The integration of armed groups has resulted in poor loyalty, indiscipline and disruptions in the chain of command. Integrated Brigades are composed of soldiers with different backgrounds (ex-RCD, ex-MLC, ex-Mai Mai or government) and come from different regions of the DRC. The army suffers from inadequate budget, lack of equipment, lack of pay, and a weak military justice system. In battle, FARDC forces typically ran away from the front when faced with a challenge often breaking ranks and going on looting and raping sprees in whatever city or village that was on their path<sup>32</sup>.

Before this historic victory, the Congolese military suffered from low morale, weak command and control, widespread corruption, haphazard administration, poor operational planning, limited training and equipment, questionable military capability and were responsible for many human rights abuses.

The quick morale-boosting victory against M-23 could not happen without the critical strong support from the new Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) deployed by the United Nations.

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31 World Bank Group, Rebuilding Lives and Infrastructure in Eastern DRC, February 11, 2014

32 Seay Laura, 2013, Despite M23 Defeat, Major Hurdles to Stable Peace in DRC, World Politics Review

## Recovering the Lost Public Support

Used to setting up numerous roadblocks in order to earn their money from the bribes of road-weary travelers, the DRC army has lost their credibility in the eyes of the people of Eastern DRC. Soldiers raped women, inflicted arbitrary fines on citizens, and pillage and harassed the villagers<sup>33</sup>. When the M-23 marched into Goma, the regional capital of North Kivu, in November 2012, it marked perhaps the lowest point in the 15-year U.N. peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo known as MONUSCO (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in Congo)<sup>34</sup>. When FARDC troops re-took formerly rebel-occupied territory, they broke with tradition and in large part did not prey on the local populace. FARDC troops also benefited from increased logistical support, from Kinshasa.

“The day we heard the victory over M-23, people in Goma celebrated that important milestone, men, women and children have dressed in white to show support to the Congolese army and the government. There was a festive mood in the people mind and in the country”<sup>35</sup>, (*Kabongo Mutombo Perre*).

“The defeat of the M23 rebels represents a significant opportunity for peace in Eastern DRC because it enables the Congolese army to regain confidence in people and in themselves. This victory provides a basis for rebuilding the Congolese army, our army”<sup>36</sup>, (*Lubenga Magloire*).

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33 <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

34 Derick Wolf, Congo: M23 Down but Not Out, Worldpress.org, Article, April 25, 2014

35 Kabongo Mutombo Pierre, Congolese Civil Society representative

36 Lubeka Magloire, Congolese citizen



## Impact of the UN FIB Operations

The establishment of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) as such is unique in the history of UN peacekeeping even if the UN has been actively involved in fighting in DRC before (ONUC in the 1960s in Katanga, and more recently MONUC around 2004 in Ituri). This evolution reflects recent developments in UN approaches elsewhere. Mali, Somalia and South Sudan are countries where UN peacekeeping is explicitly engaged in stabilization of contested states. As a new idea to existing UN framework on conflict resolution, the Force Intervention Brigade operations have consequences on UN security framework, MONUSCO and on regional peace and security.

## United Nations Peace and Security Framework

The UN's peacekeeping operation in the DRC, represents a possible end to the main dilemma facing UN peacekeeping missions. The UN Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) authorizes UN forces to use "*all necessary measures*" to avoid violent attacks from rebel forces. Those measures include a preventive, offensive attack by the UN to neutralize armed groups. This case therefore constitutes an important step in the evolution of UN peacekeeping and will be a test case for ensuring that UN peace keepers do not become victims of armed conflict.

This resolution provides two important reflections upon two aspects of UN peacekeeping deployment policy; first, concerning the late deployment of peacekeeping missions to fragile states; second, the need to change peacekeeping operations based upon the challenges and complexities of armed conflict. The past deployments of UN peacekeeping missions were vulnerable to rebel attacks such as the mission in Sierra Leone where 300 peace keepers were kidnapped in 2000<sup>37</sup>.

However, the UN FIB Intervention Brigade also has serious implications on the way to address challenges in complex conflict situations. In case of complete success, United Nations will be bound to apply the same solution to similar situations. If the UN does not deploy a Force Intervention Brigade on future missions where rebel groups pose a major threat to security, the civilian population (as well as the UN

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37 Varun Vira, India and UN Peacekeeping: Declining Interest with Grave Implications, Small Wars Journal, July 2012

peacekeeping contingent) may become vulnerable to attacks and the credibility of the UN mission will suffer. In case of failure in Eastern DRC, the UN will have to provide another option to replace the stabilization of the region.

## **MONUSCO**

MONUSCO has been strongly criticized by Congolese civil society as well as the Congolese government before the introduction of the UN Intervention Brigade. MONUSCO tries now to cooperate closely with the government when the FARDC continue to be accused of human right violations. Despite important registered progress of FARDC in terms of human rights abuse, MONUSCO can be considered as part of the conflict as it is fighting beside the FARDC and can be linked to some of the human rights violations. The kind of impunity that benefited some of FARDC members has to be quickly addressed for MONUSCO to avoid such attribution.

## **Regional Peace and Security**

M23 was a serious threat to the security of civilians in Eastern DRC. It was the most well organized armed group in the region. This was the reason why it was the first UN Force Intervention Brigade target. According to Major Hilaire .S, a Congolese military officer, “the defeat of M23 was an important achievement of FARDC and FIB. People of Eastern DR Congo are now proud of the army (FARDC) than ever”. The Force Intervention Brigade operations have also saved the image of MONUSCO which failed to move against M23 last year. We will move now to other foreign armed group to oblige them to go back to their countries<sup>38</sup>.

However Eastern DRC conflict is not only a problem for DRC, but is also a regional problem. Therefore the UN Force intervention Brigade operations can have consequences on the overall peace and security in the region. The absence of willingness by governments to initiate peace talks with their respective rebel groups can lead to a raise of conflicts. These armed groups will have to report to their home countries after negotiations or by force. If the second alternative occurs, the overall peace and security in the region will be undermined.

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38 Samwel ILUNGA LENGA, administrateur d’Uvira, Province du Su Kivu

# Challenges for the UN FIB to Stabilize the Eastern Region of DRC

The following challenges are likely to undermine the United Nation Force Intervention Brigade success if they are not quickly addressed. Some of them if immediately addressed can have a direct and positive impact on the conflict situation in the region while others require a long term process.

## Limitations of the Mandate

While not so prescribed by MONUSCO's current mandate, the mission is clear on the fact that FIB will not start unilateral operations without consent of the DRC government. This is understandable with regard to sovereignty matters, but prevents action since President Kabila is yet to give green light for anti-FDLR operations. President Kabila himself is not necessarily against or for such operations, but amongst DRC elites (politically and militarily); the FDLR question is highly controversial. This was simultaneous to diplomatic tensions and the increasing role of SADC as a regional body in Eastern DRC's affairs, an area rather covered by ICGLR, another regional body that has been effective enough<sup>39</sup>.

## Controversial Question of FDLR

While some favor military action, others reject it on the basis of previous relations and collaborations against common adversaries, and the claim that as DRC was drawn into negotiations with M-23, Rwanda should also negotiate with FDLR.

Within the FIB, similar political thinking is being played. Various stakeholders have independently confirmed that as Tanzanian and South African troops do not have clearance to engage in fighting with the FDRL, leaving the Malawian battalion as the only force that could engage<sup>40</sup>. The Rwandan government has also accused the newly-formed Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) of supporting the FARDC-FDLR alliance, adding that the Brigade officers had also discussed with FDLR matters related to their tactical and strategic collaboration<sup>41</sup>.

39 Vogel Christopher: DRC assessing the Performance of MONUSCO's Intervention Brigade, AfricanArgument Editors, 2014

40 Feingold Russell D., Prospects for Peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Great Lakes Region, 2014

41 Kwibuka Eugene, Rwanda 'committed to DRC Peace Deal', The New Times, 26 July 2013

Again there is a high level of mutual suspicions between Rwanda and DRC which means that conflict can arise at any time if the issues of M-23 and FDLR are not solved at the same time. The delay observed to fight against FDLR is seen by Rwanda as deliberate because after the defeat of M23, the next target was supposed to be FDLR.

## **Vastness of the Country and the Number of Armed Groups**

The major challenge of the UN Force Intervention Brigade is the vastness of the country and the number of armed groups. The myriad of armed groups operating in the DRC pose a serious security issue. Numerous armed groups are formed for a diverse array of reasons, ranging from legitimate concerns over land rights in the country's Eastern Kivu province to xenophobic discrimination against particular ethnic groups to a desire to control key trade routes or natural resource revenues. Taking names that almost invariably include the words justice, freedom or liberation, many groups fizzle out within a few months or years, while others build enough strength and strong financial bases to sustain decades of sporadic, low-intensity fighting with DRC government forces and one another. Most are rarely mentioned or known outside of the region or even in Kinshasa, the country's capital city, 950 miles away<sup>42</sup>.

If the Force Intervention Brigade has to fight different armed groups from one to another, it may take many years to overcome this task. Armed groups are estimated to be around forty and their motives vary from self-defense, stake of territory, political representation and pure pillage. FARDC and MONUSCO clearly aim to tackle other armed militia in the region, but these groups differ from the M-23 by the nature of their organization; most are decentralized and far less structured than the M23. Different groups, across different areas, require different military strategies and the coalition forces will have to adopt their approaches accordingly.

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42 Seay Laura , *Old is New: M23, Rwanda and Conflict in the Eastern DRC*

## **Collaboration Between FARDC and Negative Forces**

Local-level collaboration between the FARDC and the FDLR has been observed. Faced with the rapidly evolving M23 rebellion in 2012, the FARDC first abided by a tacit non-aggression agreement with the FDLR. However, the declining security situation in Eastern DRC, culminating in the fall of Goma on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2013, enhanced the collaboration between some FARDC units and the FDLR in areas of close proximity with M23-controlled territory. The Group has documented local-level collaboration between the FARDC and the FDLR (e.g. precise places and moments where FARDC and FDLR met and exchanged operational information, concrete cases of ammunition supplies), and continues to investigate the extent to which the FARDC hierarchy may be involved in such collaboration.

During actual operations against other armed groups, the indirect collaboration with one negative force to neutralize another starkly puts the FIB's, MONUSCO's, and more generally, the UN's impartiality in question. The FARDC's continued collaboration with various armed groups used as proxy forces against others, as well as the FARDC's paradigmatic lack of unity and internal cohesion. Nevertheless the need for proper army reform in the frame of larger Security Sector Reform (SSR) is vital for DRC. MONUSCO and the UN Security Council may have given assurances to the Rwandan government that they will not only tackle M23 but also FDLR<sup>43</sup>.

## **Poverty and Bad Governance**

The DRC has one of the highest incidences of poverty in the world. According to the World Bank access to clean water dropped from 28.5% in 2001 to 16.7% in 2007. In 2007 primary school enrollment was 62%. In its 2011 annual report on the Human Development Index (HDI) UNDP estimated that over 71% of the Congolese population lives on less than a dollar per person per day. Provinces like Equator, Bandundu and South Kivu have poverty incidences of over 85%. Life expectancy is currently 48 years. Despite having 13% of the world's hydropower potential only 9% of the population has access to electricity<sup>44</sup>.

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43 IRIN, fighting an invisible enemy in DRC, humanitarian news and analysis, Article, April 9, 2014

44 DRC: Bad Leadership, Corruption and Poverty in a rich country

Poor governance is the major problem in the DRC. Every elite in a position of power uses their office to build a political following by selectively allocating benefits to those whose support they seek. To this end they continue to cannibalize the state and loot the economy. The eastern region is more affected with inadequate services, insufficient infrastructure and a lot of insecurity caused by over 25 armed militia groups and the government army. The army is poorly and irregularly paid and soldiers often survive by looting.

## **Mismanagement of Natural Resources**

DR Congo is estimated to have \$24 trillion (equivalent to the combined Gross Domestic Product of Europe and the United States) worth of untapped deposits of raw mineral ores, including the world's largest reserves of cobalt and significant quantities of the world's diamonds, gold and copper<sup>45</sup>. Much of the resource extraction is done in small operations, known as Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM), which are unregulated in the DRC<sup>46</sup>. Armed groups in Eastern DRC finance their activities through the exploitation of natural resources.

## **Land and Citizenship**

Conflict in the Eastern region of the DRC is also linked to land and citizenship. Banyamulenge consider themselves pure Congolese and they think that they have the right to live in their motherland Congo while the Congolese government and other Congolese consider Banyamulenge as pure Rwandese Tutsi Community who must leave Congolese territory as soon as possible and go back to Rwanda<sup>47</sup>.

The democratization process reinforced ethnic divisions between local elites elsewhere in North and South Kivu and provoked communal tensions and violence. The arrival in 1993 of large numbers of Hutu refugees from Burundi and in 1994 from Rwanda additionally complicated these conflicts. A complex web of ethnic alliances and divisions would turn particularly the North and South Kivu into a highly contested zone.

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45 Morgan, M. J. (2009). "DR Congo's \$24 trillion fortune

46 Garrett, Nicholas ("The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) & Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM). Preliminary Observations from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)", 2007).

47 Rutagengwa Claude Shema: Conflict in Eastern DRC and Peace Perspectives

Land issues are also increasingly recognized as a key driver and sustaining factor of conflict in Eastern DRC. Over the years, scholars and practitioners have identified a number of critical land-related factors contributing to violence and conflict, including a huge diversity of land governance forms; the existence of overlapping legal frameworks and the weakness of the statutory land law; competition between indigenous and migrant communities; limited access to arable land in demographically dense areas; the weak performance of the administration and justice system in the reconciliation and arbitration of land disputes; growing stress on local resources caused by massive displacement; the expansion of artisanal and small-scale mining; and increased competition between elites for the control over land and the consequent land concentration. Several initiatives were developed to deal with conflict-related land issues, focused on mediation of local-level land disputes and on legal protection assistance. While these efforts have had some positive impact on the individual and short-term level, they have limited effect on the structural causes.

## **The Strategy of Sponsoring Rebel Movements in the Region**

The strategy of sponsoring rebel movements to destabilize enemy nations has led to growing insecurity throughout the Great Lakes region. Lack of trust between political leaders and porous boundaries have shaped a new way of war in which the goal is to overthrow a rival regime rather than conquer an opponent's territory. This is still happening because political leaders fear the end of their rule and use the strategy of supporting rebel movements to justify their local politics and at the same time to weaken neighboring country's security system. Competing networks of alliances among states and non-state rebel group's insurgents take their place in different countries and have fuelled interconnected conflicts in the African Great Lakes Region. The threats of regime destabilization create an acute security problem in each country and contribute to maintaining conflict environment in the region. The wars that have broken out in the Great Lakes region emanated from the lack of common understanding on peace and security issues in the region.

## Opportunities to Stabilize Eastern DRC Region

The International community is ever committed to create economic opportunity and advocate for peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Leaders from around the world are working in partnership with the people of the DRC, and people from around the world are learning about and advocating for a new future for this region. It is a unique and rare opportunity to achieve peace and development for the region.

### A Robust and Comprehensive Mandate

MONUSCO's failures reached an embarrassing high point in 2012, when hundreds of M23 rebels occupied Goma, the DRC's second largest city and the inability of 17,000 U.N. peacekeepers to protect Goma from just hundreds of M23 rebels was absurd<sup>48</sup>.

The new approach of a UN Force Intervention Brigade came to halt many human rights abuses that followed the conflict. The resolution, which establishes the force, gives the brigade a mandate to carry out offensive operations alone or with Congolese army troops to neutralize and disarm armed groups. This brigade is unprecedented in U.N. peacekeeping because of its offensive mandate. The resolution states clearly that it would be established for one year "on an exceptional basis and without creating a precedent to the principles of U.N. peacekeeping.

The resolution, sponsored by France, the United States and Togo, would give the brigade a mandate to operate in a robust, highly mobile and versatile manner to ensure that armed group can not seriously threaten government authority or the security of civilians.

### A Weaker FDLR

The FDLR had lost a lot of its former power since the military campaigns following Umoja Wetu in 2009. They continued to weaken in 2012. The Mid-Term Report of the Group of Experts describes how FDLR suffered from internal divisions and a weak hierarchy that lacks the capability to command and control the organization's entire operations. The movement's leadership is divided between hardliners such as Sylvestre Mudacumura who wanted to continue within the armed struggle,

<sup>48</sup> Robles Steven, the U.N.'s new force redefines intervention, 2014



and moderates belonging to younger generations, who favor demobilization and reintegration. The FDLR is also weakened by the emergence of other armed groups: the rise of Raia Mutomboki and its attacks against the FDLR forced the latter to redeploy towards the East of North Kivu, and towards the south of South Kivu. As a result, there is a gap of 400 kilometers between the northern and southern FDLR sectors, and hardly any movement of troops between the two sectors<sup>49</sup>.

The Group of Experts report estimates that the FDLR's present force to be approximately 1,500 soldiers, the majority of whom are deployed in North Kivu and the remainder in South Kivu. In 2012, MONUSCO repatriated 1,441 foreign FDLR combatants, and demobilized 398 FDLR Congolese combatants. The report mentions that there is no evidence that the FDLR receives significant financial or other support from abroad<sup>50</sup>.

## **Regional and International Support to DRC Government**

The DR Congo conflict has attracted many international and regional peace process efforts. The country hosts one of the largest UN peacekeeping forces in the world. The International Conference on Great Lakes has been at the forefront of facilitating peace negotiations and signing of agreements. This international undertaking has contributed to a certain level of political stability and ensured the functioning of several transitional institutions; it facilitated the preparation of the 2006 and 2011 national elections and aided, in part, the implementation of a comprehensive Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration and Security Sector Reform program. The peace and security framework (PSF) of the great lakes region is the latest development where the International and Regional communities joined efforts to present a comprehensive approach to the solution of the conflict. It is an opportunity for all the stakeholders, especially for the UN Force Intervention Brigade and MONUSCO to fulfill their mandates with a formal maximum of political support.

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49 Berwouts Kris , Rwanda, M23 and the FDLR as actors in the DR Congo conflict, The oxford Central Africa Forum ,2013

50 The UN Group of Experts report on the Democratic Republic of Congo, June 20113

## Regional Commitment for Peace

The ICGLR Existing Frameworks for conflict prevention and resolution, the Tripartite Plus Commission, the Goma Conference of January 2008 and the AMANI Program are some of achievements to encourage the regional commitment for peace. Most of these mechanisms neglected the principal conflict drivers, namely militias opposed to the government in Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, all based in North and South Kivu, and whose home countries are members of ICGLR. In its Article 19 of the Dar – es – Salaam Declaration of ICGLR Heads of State and Government on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lake Region (GLR) of 20 November 2004, ICGLR Member States commit themselves to establish an effective regional security framework for the prevention, management and peaceful settlement of conflict<sup>51</sup>.

## The Support of DRC Population

It is important for UN missions to be perceived as legitimate and credible, particularly in the eyes of the local population. The inhabitants of North and South Kivu have suffered from consequences of conflicts for a long time. According to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), more than half a million people have been driven from their homes in Eastern DRC since the beginning of the M23 rebellion. The support of local population was a sign of fatigue and high hopes that the force could help redress the more fundamental failings of MONUSCO, and FARDC when M23 captured Goma in 2012. **Goyon Milemba** affirms that it was the first time in 20 years for Eastern DRC people to feel that their security can be enhanced and they can look forward to a better future because the new force has a mission to put an end to the armed groups.

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51 Nibishaka E , Regional and International efforts in Conflict Resolution and Transformation in Eastern DR Congo, 2013

## Conclusion

This paper has identified factors that contributed to the UNFIB/FARDC success on the M-23 rebel group and the significance of this victory. It demonstrated that the UN Force Intervention Brigade operation performance has contributed to enhance the level of peace and security of the region by defeating M-23 armed group. A number of political and military factors have contributed to the defeat of the most feared and organized armed group in the region. The M-23 defeat established that, within the DRC context, action is better than inaction. The UN resolution 2098(2013) sought to address the criticisms to deliver a long overdue proactive, peacekeeping brigade with the authority to intervene for the protection of vulnerable citizens. That important victory was a strong message to other armed groups which continue to threaten peace and security in the region.

However given the size of the area of operations and number of rebel groups, just over 3,000 UN troops may not be what the existing mission requires to fulfill its mandate of protecting civilians and neutralizing all armed groups. Rebel groups in DRC, more importantly the FDLR remain a threat to stability in the region and to civilians who are frequently targeted in their attacks.

In addition, in-depth analysis should be done on MONUSCO failures and successes to identify the gaps in capability, as well as a thorough ground evaluation that includes physical and human terrain mapping. Without articulating the problems, it cannot be assumed that an intervention brigade is the solution.

The military victory is only a first step towards stability in a region plagued by decades of extreme violence, lawlessness and the lack of accountable state authorities. Much of North and South Kivu are still under the control of other armed groups and regional political relations remain fragile. The delay to fight FDLR is interpreted as deliberate caused by different understanding and interpretations in regional political dynamics.

In order to prevent further conflicts in Eastern DRC, a comprehensive political dialogue, where all unresolved issues like land and citizenship will be addressed, would form the basis of lasting peace in the eastern DRC. The UN Force Intervention Brigade may be able to complement this political process by acting as a deterrent and by making rebel groups believe they have no alternative but to negotiate that they will not achieve their aims by violent means.

The question whether the UN Force Intervention Brigade represents the future of peacekeeping operations will be tested in the challenging theater of the DRC as the people of Eastern DRC region and neighboring countries still looking to the United Nations to bring sustainable peace and security to the region.

## Recommendations

- Despite important political challenges surrounding the question of FDLR, the UN Force Intervention Brigade and MONUSCO should focus on the mandate and initiate significant operations against FDLR. The inaction against FDLR can lead to wide spread conflicts in the region or give reasons to other armed groups include M-23 to reappear and perform the grievances.
- It is important for the UNFIB to capitalize on the success of the defeat of M-23 by tackling other armed groups and expand its presence by controlling all areas recovered. To achieve this, the FIB strength should be enhanced with additional troops in order to be present and effective in locations where armed groups can attack civilians. This will help to overcome small armed groups quickly as well as to enhance the level of protection of civilians.
- The government of Congo should implement a sustainable program of social and economic reintegration of M23 and other ex-combatants to avoid them from being tempted to go back into conflict. The causes of the failure of previous Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) initiatives must be addressed in order to find viable initiatives that work. M-23 members will not report to their home country if there are no comprehensive DDR and SSR programs which secure them in home areas. Towards the same end, the Congolese Government has to solve the problem of citizenship in Eastern DRC, Banyamulenge identity and Citizenship recognition which are issues behind all the Tutsi rebellions in Eastern DRC.
- For further research, in-depth analysis should be done on MONUSCO failures and successes to identify the gaps in capability, as well as a ground evaluation that includes physical and human terrain mapping to articulate the problem and confirm if the intervention brigade is the solution.

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## Impact of the UN Force Intervention Brigade Operations on the Eastern DRC

Conflict in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has claimed millions of lives, rendered thousands people refugees and IDPs, destroyed property and increased poverty and disease. There have been several failed attempts to prevent, manage and solve the conflicts. Prompted by the sudden emergence of M-23 and the capture of Goma in 2012 with no response from UN peacekeepers, the United Nations authorized a military intervention, the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade (UNFIB) to target M-23 and other armed groups in Eastern DRC.

The introduction of the UN FIB made a significant difference with the defeat of M-23, an achievement that has not yet been reached by MONUSCO despite its 17,000 troops and a mandate to fight against non-state armed groups. However, given that the military defeat did not address the root cause of the conflict, and that there are still many armed groups operating in the region, specifically the Force for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), it is important to examine how this new feature will impact the long peace and security stabilization of Eastern region of DRC.

This study seeks therefore to examine the impact of the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade on peace and security in Eastern DRC, as well as challenges that remain to be addressed for an effective security stabilization of the region.

### About the Author



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