'Nobody wants to get into the jungle.'

Explaining strategy based on restrained offensive operations and peacekeeping effectiveness.

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ABSTRACT

No study has so far documented the characteristics of a military strategy based on offensive operations and whether they influence the security situation in the areas in which they are launched. Yet, it seems extremely important to study because there is a growing trend in Peacekeeping Operations of becoming more robust in the use of force by applying this kind of military strategy. This study aims to develop a new theory to explain the short and long term effects of applying a military strategy based on offensive operations which are politically restrained in the use of force and asks to what extent it affects it. Deriving from war and peace research, this study argues that when a strategy based on restrained offensive operations is applied, it is likely that stability improves in the short term but deteriorates in the long term presenting a ‘V’ shape effect. This is because the political restriction on the use of force does not allow achieving a decisive victory. Using the method of structured focused comparison, most similar case, the suggested hypothesis is tested on two UN sectors belonging to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The results show some support for the theorized relationship, although the ‘V’ shape was less pronounced than expected. Hence, further research is needed to refine the causal mechanism suggested. This study does not provide empirical evidence, neither should be interpreted that in order to make Peacekeeping Operations more effective it is necessary to conduct full-fledge offensive operations.

Key words: offensive operations, MONUSCO, Peacekeeping Operations, Democratic Republic of Congo.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank the free and public Argentinean education system, from which I will always be indebted for the formation I have received. First and foremost, I would like to express my love and thankfulness to my family that without their support and moral example, I would have not achieved anything in my life. Thanks also to Rotary Foundation for its generous scholarship that allowed me to study abroad during these 2 years and Jonssson host family for their warm welcoming. I also want to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Chiara, for her valuable observations, patience and good sense of humour. Last but not least, to my friends and companions for being present and making my life a beautiful adventure.

This thesis is especially dedicated to Alejandro. A brave soldier and a good friend!
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1. Introduction

‘(...) tell the Government that they can never chase us from this forest. Waging war will not lead to anything, if there are no talks, nothing will change.’ Rebel message sent through a farmer to DRC government (UNSC Final report (…) 2017, 14)

The previous failures of Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) to stabilize countries and protect civilians, such as the genocides in Rwanda in 1994 and in Srebrenica in 1995, lead the UN Security Council to adopt robust mandates to avoid that kind of massacres. Because since 2000, 15 out of 18 Peacekeeping Operations were authorized under Chapter VII, which ‘(...) routinely authorized to use offensive force (‘the necessary action’) to protect civilians, UN personnel(...) as well in order to achieve various other objectives(...)’ (Sloan 2014, 691) A more recent step forward this robust approach from the UN, there is an incipient trend of ‘(...) authorisation and implementation of UN war-fighting [mandates] in the Central African Republic (CAR), the DRC and Mali [which] is moving UN peacekeeping into unknown and perhaps unwanted territory.’ (Karlsrud 2017, 41) This creates a new type of mission that consists in protecting governments or peace processes from insurgencies by using the force that goes beyond the principles of consent, impartiality and Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate (De Coning, Coi and Karlsrud 2017, 20).

In this new type of mission, the UN are widely launching offensive operations as a part of a military strategy to fulfil the mandate. The logic of this strategy is to bring stability by attacking and defeating the spoilers of peace processes. Examples of this operations were observed in Sierra Leone (2000), Haiti (2006), Mali (2013) and DRC (2005 & 2013) among others. The problem with these offensive operations is that they are restrained in terms of resources and how force is used. UN peacekeepers do not fully employ the force and exploit the success of its attacks and therefore they cannot achieve a decisive victory. As a military officer explained to me, in PKOs ‘Nobody wants to get into jungle’, that is to say, no country wants to risk their soldiers in offensive operations against rebel groups and pay the cost of sustaining large contingents.

No study has so far documented the characteristics of a military strategy based offensive operations and whether they influence the security situation in the areas in which
they are launched. Yet, it seems extremely important to study because PKOs are one of the main tools that UN has in order to manage and eventually solve armed conflicts. Therefore it is important to understand the PKOs conditions for success because the life and wellness of tens thousands of people depends on it. In this thesis, I ask to what extent a military strategy based on restrained offensive operations in PKOs is effective to bring stability in the short and long term. More specifically, this thesis aims to contribute to solve this research puzzle by asking the following question: To what extent a military strategy based on restrained offensive operations affect the short and long-term of stability of an area of responsibility (AoR) compared to an AoR where these operations are not conducted?

I argue that how military force is employed does matter to explain PKOs outcomes in terms of stability achieved. This is because military strategy consists in how force is used to accomplish the desired end result. However, the military strategies applied by the UN forces were not fully analysed by Peace research literature to explain their effectiveness in reducing violence. The main independent variables used to explain peacekeeping effectiveness were the type of mandate; unilateral vs multilateral interventions; size of contingents, peacekeeper presence and unit composition (military, police, observers, gender); and heterogeneity of military components and military culture and geopolitical interests (see Di Salvatore & Ruggeri, 2016; Fortna & Howard 2008).

My first contribution is assessing how a military strategy affects the level of stability in PKOs. This thesis argues that a strategy based on offensive operations in PKO is likely to succeed in reducing the levels of violence in the short term by diminishing the combat capabilities of rebel groups. Nevertheless, this strategy falls short to completely defeat the rebel groups, because of political and economic restrictions in the use of force (restrained offensive operations) that impede to pursuit of the initial success. Hence, rebel groups will have time to reorganize and starts their violent activity again. My hypothesis is that: When a strategy based on restrained offensive operations is applied, it is likely that stability improves in the short term but deteriorates in the long term. My second

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1 For the purpose of this paper, I refer to PKOs to those missions which are under the UN Security Council mandate and not those which were delegated to a coalition of the willing or regional organization. I will focus on those PKOs that were conducted in the midst of intra-state conflict because it is the most likely scenario where offensive operations are conducted.
contribution, following the path of Ruffa (2017) is trying to build a theory that combines the research of War Studies with Peace Studies. Although it can be argued that PKOs are different from other military operations, they also present some similarities with COIN operations. For instance, the new type of UN mandate mentioned above supports host governments against rebel groups; it faces similar guerrilla-fighting tactical challenges; winning the support of the population is the key issue to succeed; governance in the area of conflict is contested, etc. Hence, it is worthwhile to use the War Studies literature on COIN to shed some light on the military strategy applied in PKOs.

As this thesis aims to build a new theory, a qualitative research methodology is used. This allows a deeper understanding of the causal mechanism that supports the construction of the theory. However in order to make the construction of the theory more robust, I will use the theory testing framework. I will analyse the effects of restrained offensive operations in MONUSCO, because it has the most robust mandate and was the mission were they were most used. In order to assess the differences in the outcome of these offensive operations, I will compare an AoR where restrained offensive operations were used to another one where they were not applied. In order to be systematic, I will use the method of structured focused comparison, most similar case variant between.

The main finding of this thesis suggests that the hypothesis is partially confirmed. However, the ‘V’ shape effect were less pronounced than expected, due to the fact that rebel groups were able to retaliate on civilians during the retreat phase. As this thesis aims to build a theory and due to data restrictions, its conclusions should be considered provisional. Further research is needed to test the external validity of this theory in other cases, where restrained offensive operations are being conducted, such as Mali or Central African Republic.

In the second section, I will analyse the previous research regarding peacekeeping literature and its effects on stability level. In the third section I will define what a restrained offensive operation is and how it is expected they should produce a ‘V’ shape in the stability level. Fourthly, I will analyse the use of restrained offensive operations in the UN Central sector in DRC compared with a robust mandate approach in the Southern Sector. Then, I will compare the effects of these military strategies in both sectors and lastly conclusion will be presented.
2. Literature review

According to Fortna and Howard there were three waves of studies regarding PKO: ‘(...)first, a long period including the sporadic studies during the Cold War; second, the newfound interest in peacekeeping in the 1990s, which turned quickly to a focus on failure, dysfunction, and unintended consequences; third, the advent of systematic qualitative and quantitative studies that have tested peacekeeping’s impact empirically, showing that despite its limitations, peacekeeping is an extremely effective policy tool’ (2008, 284).

Because of the relevance for this thesis research question I will focus on the third wave of peacekeeping effectiveness literature.

2.1. Presence, numbers and composition of peacekeepers

Hultmann et al (2014) found in a broad study of PKOs in the midst of on-going conflicts that the larger and better equipped the military contingents are, the lesser battlefield deaths will occur. However police and military observers presence were not significant to explain this effect. The same conclusions were found regarding the protection of civilians (Hultman et al 2013). Both studies made highly important contributions in the sense they analyse in a systematic way and based on a large dataset (African countries from 1991-2011) the effects of PKOs rather than focusing on failures or special cases. Hultman (2013) also suggest some tactics that peacekeepers can apply when the contingents are larger, well equipped and have protection of civilians tasks (e.g. more patrols). Nevertheless, as this study is quantitative it does not analyse the military strategy and tactics that can cause the reduction of civilian deaths. Moreover, it does not take into account of the differences of how TCCs can interpret the same mandate but use the force in a different way. This fact can lead to an ineffective protection of civilians no matter the mandate and the quantity of peacekeepers.

Ruggeri et al (2017) found that at micro level that the presence of peacekeepers made the conflicts last shorter. He analysed the effects of deterrence and solving the commitment problem when UN peacekeepers are present. However, is not only the presence what causes deterrence but how forced is used in order to be credible.

Gender literature on peacekeeping shows that women participation can improve the stability situation in the area where they are deployed because of host people cultural
perceptions towards them (Karim 2016). In addition to this the participation of women also helps to reduce sexual abuse from male peacekeepers (Simic 2010). However, that studies did not analyse whether gender is a key variable to understand the effectiveness of the use of force.

### 2.2 Mandate type

Beardsley & Gledistch (2015) found that robust mandates tend to reduce violence by reducing the freedom of action of rebel groups and avoiding confrontation with the government. Krebs & Wallace (2009) found that mandates and the lead organization that is conducting the PKO affects the quality of peace. Sambanis & Doyle (2000) found that enforcement mandates can end violence but are not sufficient to build a lasting peace. Other scholars like Sloan (2014), Dull (2018) and Berdal (2015) were sceptical about the effectiveness of ‘robust’, ‘enforcement’ or ‘muscular’ mandates in PKOs. According to these scholars UN does not have the expertise, resources and military capabilities to conduct operations to defeat rebel groups. Moreover there are strong disagreements in the use of force among TCCs that affects the performance of this kind of approach. Although those scholars mention the military strategy and tactics, their analysis is more case focused and lack of a comprehensive or more systematic analysis. Another issue with this literature is that the definition of mandate is inconsistent among scholars so it is difficult to contrast the conclusions they reach (Salvatore & Ruggeri, 2017).

### 2.3 Multilateral vs. unilateral interventions.

Kim (2015) found that multilateral interventions conducted by UN tend to improve democracy and quality compared to unilateral interventions that are self-interested oriented and only concerns about the protégé security. On the other hand Peksen (2011) claimed that supportive and neutral interventions (UN can be considered supportive and neutral) tend to increase the levels of human rights violations. In this sense Krain (2005) argues that partial military intervention that directly challenge the perpetrator are the most effective in order to stop massacres or genocides. Contrary to this assumption, Lounsbery (2011) concluded that there are not significant difference of multilateral and unilateral military interventions in terms of the effects they produce in governance, physical quality of life, and economic
growth. Therefore the results of these investigations are not conclusive yet and further research is needed to understand the causal mechanism of this kind of explanations.

2.4 Military heterogeneity, cultural differences and political interest

The research about military heterogeneity proved that mission diversity is more effective to reduce violence against civilians (Ruggeri & Bove, 2015). In this sense Rubinstein (2005) warns about the necessity of peacekeepers to be aware not only of the host country culture but also among the TCCs culture in order to improve horizontal interoperability. This issue affects the effectiveness of the mission. In the same line, Ruffa (2017) argues that the military culture affects how countries interprets a mission and how they will use force according to that. She mentions how the Italian contingent in Afghanistan and Lebanon had a more humanitarian approach whereas the French contingent in the same countries were more engaged in combat related activities. Another issue that affects the military performance in PKO are the geopolitical interests of the TCCs. However this approach does not explain the variation of outcomes that may happen inside the same contingent depending on what military strategy applies. As a matter of fact a country can apply different military strategies that are in line with its own military culture.

Manpilly (2018) studied how geopolitical interest affects the performance of peacekeepers. He argues that the Indian contingent performance in MONUSCO declined after the India opposition to Libya intervention. As India was one of the largest contributors to MONUSCO, the threat to withdraw military assets and do not engage against rebel groups was a way to pressure the UN Security council. The consequence of that was the lack of civilian protection where the Indian military where deployed. I will use part of this argument to explain the restriction mechanisms that limits the offensive operations outcomes. However, this scholar does not address that a State has many potential strategies to achieve the results that it wants.

To sum up, the previous literature made substantial contributions to understand the different factors of PKOs that affects the stability level of a mission or the area where they are deployed. However, there was not a systematic study of the effects of the military
strategies applied by the UN in PKOs. This is the research gap, I will try to address in the next chapter.

3. Theory

Derived from the research gap and the research question, this section starts by conceptualizing the independent variable which is a military strategy based on restrained offensive operations. Then it conceptualizes the dependent variable which is the level of stability in an AoR. Lastly, it develops a new theoretical argument of how a military strategy based on offensive operations affect the level of stability in PKOs.

3.1 Conceptualizing Military Strategy based on Offensive Operations in PKOs

The neglected independent variable identified in the previous literature to explain the stability level achieved in PKOs is the use of restrained offensive operations. Therefore it is necessary to explain what an offensive operation is, what aims and how is it related to a military strategy.

Military operations always respond to a strategy which ‘(...)is the bridge that relates military power to political purpose; it is neither the military power per se, neither the political purpose. By strategy I mean the use that is made of force and the threat of force for the ends of policy.’ (Gray 1999, 19). Although it can be argued that this definition is too narrow, as it only considers the use of military power as part of the strategy, it is useful in the sense that it makes a clear distinction between means and ends and how they are related. Moreover, it also identifies the ‘use of force’, that is to say, how force is implemented in order to achieve the desired goal, which is a characteristic of PKO under Chapter VII. Finally, Colin Gray’s definition captures the famous instrumental approach of conceiving strategy as a balance between means, ways and ends. Means are the military resources allocated in order to fulfil the mission, ways are the different forms of applying military force and ends are the military objectives (Likke jr. 1989).

I define offensive strategy as the one that aim to fulfil the political purpose through the proactively use of offensive operations to defeat the opponent. Offensive operation aims to disarm an opponent by seizing, retaining, and exploiting the initiative (US Army 2017,
Hence the main characteristic of an Offensive Strategy is the initiative to engage with the opponent as a way to neutralize it.

Depending on the political aims, political context, military doctrine, manpower, technology, geography and economic resources the level of offensiveness of a strategy can vary. For instance, it is not the same a limited-aim offensive strategy as the Russians applied in Crimea in 2014, that the all-out war offensive strategy that Bashar Al Assad is fighting against his enemies in Syria nowadays.

The problem with the UN is that does not have a coherent military doctrine defining military strategies to address different kind of threats/situations, neither (…) *UN has not defined offensive operations and specified what this means in practice* (Garcia, 2017). As that scholar pointed out in his paper, there are many strategies for conducting offensive operations (Counter Terrorism, Counter Insurgency, Arms Combined Operations, etc.)

I argue that lack of UN military doctrine, make their military strategy mostly based in a pragmatic approach based on: 1) offensive operations aiming to defeat the opponent by a cumulative succession of direct attacks; 2) supporting host forces offensive operations against rebel forces and 3) offensive patrols conducted in areas where the rebels presence is strong. However, as it will be explained in section 3.3, the offensive operations are restrained because of political reasons. Therefore, I define a military strategy based on restrained offensive operations as the conduct of direct attacks or support to host Armed Forces attacks, that cannot pursue the initiative because of the restrictions imposed by the political power.

### 3.2 Conceptualizing stability in PKOs.

The way of framing stability in PKO is divided between the scholars that conceptualize it in terms of positive peace and those who conceptualise it in terms of negative peace (see Di Salvatore & Ruggeri, 2016). I argue that is beyond the military contingent capabilities to build the elements that characterize positive peace (social justice, democratic institutions, culture of peace). Armed forces were not designed for improving governance, conflict mediations, providing education and health care service. Military force is used in PKO to deter potential spoilers, reduce security dilemma or to enforce the warring parties to resort on violence in order to achieve their political goals. In some cases as subsidiary mission they can provide humanitarian aid.
As it was mentioned above there is no consensus among the scholars regarding what it should be understood as stability. Based on the war studies literature, more specifically COIN literature, I will assess the stability in terms of violence caused by rebel groups’ activity level. The struggle for the recognition of the people to be considered the legitimate authority is considered the key issue to succeed in COIN scenarios. Therefore, I define rebel activity as all the actions carry on by rebel groups in order to undermine the governance of the state. Moreover, if the UN is using the military force to defeat rebel groups in order to bring stability, then it makes also sense to test the effectiveness of the military strategy by assessing the rebel groups’ activity level.

Another advantage of measuring stability by assessing the rebel activity is that takes into account the full spectrum of incidents that affects the stability of a country/region but are not captured but other common ways of measuring stability such as battle-related deaths or lethal violence against civilians. Examples of this kind of incidents are battles where people are injured but not killed, terrorist attacks without fatal casualties or violence against civilians such as raping, kidnapping, looting, etc.

Lastly, although it is an important issue, I will not analyse the sexual misconduct of peacekeepers or human rights abuses of host Armed Forces. The reason is that these issues were present among different kind of missions, have their own particular drivers and therefore are independent from the kind of military strategy applied by UN.

3.3 Causal mechanism

In order to develop my theory, I will use the war studies literature on Counter Insurgency operations (COIN). This literature, mostly policy focused, tried to assess under what conditions and a military strategy applied was successful to defeat rebel groups (see for instance Galulla 1964; Trinquier 1964; Thompson 1970; Boot 2013). PKOs, differ from counterinsurgency operations because they are based on the principles of consent of the parties, impartiality and minimum use of force for self-defence and defence of the mandate purpose. Moreover, the idea of PKOs is to help the warring parties to find a peaceful resolution and deterring potential spoilers.

However, the new UN war-fighting mandates make PKOs similar to COIN operations by ‘(...) defending the host state, and thus in reality the government, against an insurgency. In practice this means working close with the security forces of the State,'
including, for instance in the DCR, undertaking joint operations against armed groups.’ (De Coning, Aoi, Karlsrud 2017, 18). As a matter of fact, the main characteristics of the countries’ security situation such as Mali, Central African Republic, DRC and South Sudan match with Kilcullen’s (2006) conception of ‘Contemporary Insurgency’: 1) rebel groups lack of a coherent military strategy and have a decentralized chain of command (flat network organizations); 2) although there is a political incompatibility between governments and rebels, that fact does not imply the latter want to become the governing authority; 3) complex ‘Conflict Ecosystem’ of multiple rebels groups competing for mobilizing resources in local areas with different political agendas focus in survival; 4) use of safe havens in geographical difficult access areas where they recruited people both with economic incentives and coercion; 5) rebel groups may not necessarily depends on population in order to survive and 6) their funding is mostly based on criminal activities such as illegal mining, black market trafficking, looting and kidnappings. Based on that, the first assumption of this thesis is that the PKOs that I am studying, are similar to ‘Contemporary Insurgency’ environment and therefore the COIN framework is helpful to understand the effects of the UN use of force.

There is a wide array of war studies literature analysing the effectiveness of COIN strategies and under what conditions they fail or succeed. In a comprehensive analysis Arreguín-Toft (2001) assessed the effectiveness of military strategies in asymmetric conflict based on an interactive model. This scholar classifies military strategies in two categories: a) direct strategy which seeks to defeat the enemy by destroying its armed forces and b) indirect strategy which seeks to defeat the enemy by destroying its will to fight. Therefore there are 4 possible interactions strategies between the strong actor and the weak actor (A) Direct-Direct, B) Direct-Indirect, C)Indirect-Indirect, D) Indirect-Direct).

Arreguín-Toft concludes that strong actors are more likely to succeed in A and C (all other things remaining equal) and weak actors are more likely to succeed in B and D. This is: ‘Because nothing therefore intervenes between raw power and goals, strong actors will win same-approach interactions in proportion to their advantage in relative power. Opposite-approach interactions—whether direct-indirect or indirect-direct—favor weak actors because they sacrifice values for time.’ (Arreguín-Toft 2001, 121-122). Time works in favour of the insurgents because they only need not to lose in order to win, whereas a
protracted conflict undermines the population support of the government leading to its exhaustion.

Arreguín-Toft model is useful to understand, the effects of military strategies in the stability level of a country/sector assuming that the defeat of the rebel group will bring stability. This model is also helpful to shed some light in how a strategy based on restrained offensive operations works, because it is a direct strategy according to the typology of that scholar. I argue that reason why UN in practical terms adopts this direct strategy is because of the political pressure to achieve tangible results in the short term and because it is the only type of strategy the UN can perform with the available resources. This political pressure increases if they were noticeable failures (e.g. massive killing of civilians) or the stability situation deteriorated (e.g. rebels took an important city). Nevertheless, the problem with the theoretical strategy interaction framework of Arreguín-Toft is that is based on the ‘classic COIN’ cases where both governments and a rebel groups used to have coherent military strategies (e.g. Mao Zedong 3 stages guerrilla warfare, ‘Che’ Guevara focus revolutionary theory, French school of COIN, British school of COIN, etc.) and to fight for the control of the State with clear antagonist political ideologies. As I have argued above, this is not the case of modern insurgencies.

For the purpose of this paper, I will assume that the rebel opportunistic resistance strategy remains constant. Holding this variable constant represents a limitation of this study because different rebel groups have different military capabilities and strategies. Nevertheless, it can be argued that, as this rebel groups are not so sophisticated in terms of organization, the variation should not be so important. In addition to this, holding constant the rebel groups strategies allows me to isolate the variation of the use of force by UN peacekeepers and assess how it affects the stability level in a UN sector.

On the other hand, UN missions also experiences political pressures not to conduct fully offensive operations. In this sense, it is useful to explain the UN strategy based on restrained offensive operations using the COIN Impossible Trilemma developed by Zambornardi (2010). This author argues that ‘(...) it is impossible to simultaneously achieve: 1) force protection [refers to the security of the troops that are conducting COIN], 2) distinction between enemy combatants and noncombatants, and 3) the physical elimination of insurgents’ (Zambornardi, 2010, 22). If a state wants to eliminate the
insurgents without compromising their troops, it has to have more loose rules of engagement in order to shot first in situations where the distinction of civilians from rebels are not clear. Moreover, they cannot rely too much on air support or artillery because of the high risk of having collateral damage. On the contrary, if they want to eliminate insurgents and not having collateral damage of civilians, they have to adopt certain tactics (having more interaction with local population, not using airpower, have more strict rules of engagement) that increases the risk of having more casualties during the battles.

The third assumption of this thesis is that for UN the two most important goals are: 1) force protection because of the political cost that TCC can have at home (e.g. US Armed Forces had to retire from Somalia in 1998 after 18 troops were killed) and 2) the distinction between enemy combatants and non-combatants because of the reputational cost that collateral damage can have. As a result UN cannot be fully engaged in offensive operations without risking their soldiers or putting in danger the life of civilians. Moreover, counterinsurgency operations are costly, protracted and requires high levels of manpower. That was not an issue in the period 1945-1980 where the struggle between capitalist and communist countries was clear and people were willing to accept the costs of that operations. However as Etienne de Durand claims: ‘The difference with our present interventions is therefore huge, if only in terms of stakes. Today, we have limited interests at stake and must operate with constrained resources, yet our militaries are under constant media attention.’ (Manea 2011, 5). In consequence TCCs are less willing to risk their soldiers when their geopolitical interest are not at stake or are not directly affected by the result of the PKO.

To sum up, the UN Security council does not have the resources to support a huge intervention, neither TCCs are willing to provide more soldiers in an area which does not represent a clear security threat for their national interest. Moreover some TCC are not capable of properly equipped the military contingents they send.

The last restriction is that there must be certain level of coordination and permission with the host country in order to lunch a military operation. TCC and UN try not to appear as an occupier force and try to respect as much as possible the sovereignty of the host country. As De Coning, Coi and Karlsrud argues: ‘(...) UN’s doctrinal culture remained fundamentally reluctant to move beyond the tactical level ‘robustness’(...)’(2017, 15). This
also leads to TCC reluctance of being involved in unilateral military actions. Furthermore host countries try to assume the conduct of military operations as fast as they can in order to take the control of the monopoly of the use of force. However, is not always the case, that host countries have Armed Forces military capable and efficient to perform that task.

Taking into account the restrictions explained above UN conducted an strategy based on restrained offensive operations that are enough to achieve tactical victories but not enough to achieve strategic victory. When UN decides to lunch a strategy based on military offensive operations against rebel groups, they have a series of military advantages that often lead to a quick victory: 1) UN Force Commander decides where and when to engage allowing them to concentrate forces overwhelming the opponent; 2) UN and host country Armed Forces have superior technology allowing them to have higher firepower, mobility and intelligence; 3) UN forces tend to be more combat capable in open engagements against rebel groups and 4) usually at the beginning the attacker has the advantage of the surprise effect.

As a consequence of this offensives operations, rebel groups are tactically defeated retreating to areas of difficult access and mixing with local population choosing not to openly fight against UN and host country Armed Forces. This reduces the levels of violence and creates a ‘mission accomplished’ effect reducing the pressure of international community to Force Commander to conduct offensive operations.

However, in order to strategically defeat rebel groups UN forces should hold the terrain gained and exploit the initial victory by attacking the rebel sanctuaries (Galula 1964). That requires a higher level of military involvement that most of the countries are reluctant to commit because it increases the risk of taking more casualties, having more reputational costs derived of killing civilians (‘collateral damage’) and TCC ideological reasons for remaining as a neutral force as much as possible. This reluctance, is reinforced by the fact that counterinsurgency strategy requires larger number of troops and resources that UN is not capable to provide and this is when the restrain mechanism starts to work. It also happens that host countries are military incapable of securing the liberated areas or attack the safe havens.

As a result UN military forces do not exploit their initial success, keeps doing the same kind of operations or try to make host military and security forces that usually are not
well trained and equipped to finish the rebel groups. This gives time to rebel groups to reorganize themselves in their sanctuaries increasing their combat capability in terms of funding, recruiting and rearming. Once they achieved the minimum combat capability desired they start again with their attacks against government, civilians and UN peacekeepers relapsing the conflict. Based on economic sciences vocabulary, I will denominate this outcome as a ‘V’ shape stability effect. This causal mechanism is summarized in the following figure:

Based on the argument explained above I will test the following hypothesis: When a strategy based on restrained offensive operations is applied, it is likely that stability improves in the short term but deteriorates in the long term causing a ‘V’ shape effect. It is worth noting that testing a hypothesis in building theory is important cause it sharpens the construct definition, measurability and strengthen internal validity (Dooley, 2014).

Lastly, in spite of being a common place of social sciences to say that social phenomena are multi causal, I would like to stress that stability level in PKO does not depend only of how force is employed but there are other political factors which are highly important in order to bring security to local population.
4. Research design

Because of the lack of a theory to explain the effects of restrained offensive operations in PKOs, it is necessary to develop a theory-building framework based on qualitative research methodology, which tries to answer the following research question: *To what extent a military strategy based on restrained offensive operations affect the short and long-term of stability of an AoR compared to an AoR where these operations are not conducted?*

4.1. Method and Case Selection

The research design objective of this thesis has a heuristic purpose because it aims to build a new theory (George and Bennet 2005). However, I will use the theory testing framework, so the construction of this theory is subjected to the hurdles of empirical evidence contrast. This has the advantage of increasing the validity of the new theory. In order to test the hypothesis empirically, I will use the method of structured focused comparison. The method is structured in the sense that according to the research question the scholar should ask the same questions in order to standardize the collection of data that allows the systematic comparison (George and Bennet, 2005). By being focused means that it: ‘(...) should be undertaken with a specific research objective in mind and a theoretical focus appropriate for that objective.’ (Ibid 2005, 70).

This qualitative design is chosen because of two main reasons: 1) Because it permits to have a better understanding of the causal mechanism making the theory building more robust and 2) The lack of a large number of cases where the UN decided to apply offensive strategies. In this sense case selection is an important step in the research design because: ‘(...) the method of choosing cases and analysing those cases can be scarcely separated when the focus of a work is in one of few instances of some broader phenomenon’ (Gerring & Seawright 2008, 294). Moreover random sampling is not a suitable option when there are few cases, because it will be likely to select a case that does not represent the total population (Gerring, 2007).

Selecting cases strategy has two main objectives: 1) be representative of the total population (external validity) and 2) show variation on the aspects of theoretical of interest
(covariation) (Gerring & Seawright, 2008). Taking into account these two aspects I have selected as cases of study the UN Central and Southern sectors within the MONUSCO PKO. The selection of MONUSCO is due to the fact that ‘(...)UN peacekeepers are mandated, and expected, to use levels of force that are unprecedented in UN peace keeping missions [referring to DRC, Mali and CAR]’ (Aoi, De Coning and Karlsrud 2017, 16). Moreover MONUSCO has one of the most explicit mandates regarding the use of an offensive strategy. Thus, MONUSCO is the context where it is more likely to find a covariation between offensive strategy and the ‘V’ shape stability effect. As UN did not uniformly applied this strategy in all the operational sectors, then the most similar case comparison design is the most suitable to test the hypothesis mentioned above.

MONUSCO has divided the DRC in 4 Areas of Responsibility or UN sectors: 1) Western; 2) Central; 3) Northern and 4) Southern. This can be seen in the following map:

![UN Sectors](image)

Source: own elaboration based on map African Centre of Strategic Studies 2016

In each sector the military components of the mission (brigades, battalions and companies) are deployed to fulfil the mandate tasks. I selected to compare UN Central sector with UN Southern Sector because they were most appropriate for the most similar case comparative system. To begin with, these sectors registered the highest number of
incidents caused by rebel activity, during the period analysed, comparing with the other sectors (ACLED, 2018). Moreover, the most important rebel groups are concentrated in these sectors, especially in North Kivu and South Kivu. These two characteristics make more suitable to assess the effects of a military strategy in rebel activity. Thirdly, because they border each other, it also allows controlling for the geographical/weather characteristics, ethnic and political issues, and the border dynamics with Rwanda (rebel groups crossing the border).

It is worth to remember that the comparative design consists in selecting two or more cases (usually few), where all the potential explanatory variables are similar but for the variable or variables of interest. Most similar design system is based on the assumption that the main characteristics shared among the cases can be isolated one by one, as if it was an experiment (Pzeworski & Teune 1970). Then, the logic of this design is that if all variables hold constant but for one, this variable is the one that explains the variation in the dependent variable (Skocpol and Sommers, 1980). However, in real life experimental variables cannot be isolated. Moreover, although in ‘most similar’ design systems the number of differences among cases is limited, ‘(...) it will almost invariably sufficient large to ‘overdetermine’ the dependent phenomenon’ (Pzeworski & Teune 1970, 34). Henceforth if a hypothesis is confirmed the theory can have a reasonable explanatory power but it must take into account that this method does not reject other potential explanatory variables (Íbid 1970).

The advantage of the ‘most similar design’ is that it does not have the dependent variable potential bias selection of the ‘most different design’ (Geddes, 1990). The same potential bias problem can happen if there is no variation in the independent variable (Collier & Mahoney 1996). As this thesis aims to build a theory, the focus is centred in the potential outcome of the variation of the independent variable of interest (restrained offensive strategy) rather than in presence/absence of the dependent variable. In the UN sector selected there is variation of the independent variable so this thesis fulfils with the ‘contrast space’ criterion (Collier & Mahoney 1996).

The second criterion to avoid bias selection is causal homogeneity (Ibid, 1996). That means that the causal mechanism that explains the linking between the independent variable and the dependent variable should be the same in the cases selected. As the UN
sectors selected belongs to the same PKO, border each other, has the same mandate, etc. it is reasonable to assume that they are homogeneous. The trade-off of this causal homogeneity is the external validity of the theory. The idea of this thesis is trying to have a deep understanding of the causal mechanism by testing the theory in a most likely context. If the theory passes this first test, then it could be used to explain stability outcomes in Mali and CAR.

One important issue of the ‘most similar design’ is to control for other potential explanatory variables. In addition of the justification of the selection of UN Central and Southern sectors inside the MONUSCO also allows controlling for:

1) **Mandate**: during the period 2013-2017 the MONUSCO mandate was the same for all the sectors;

2) **Presence/absence of PKO and Peacekeepers**: in the period 2013-2017 peacekeepers were present in the sectors analysed;

3) **Number of troops deployed**: for the purpose of this thesis, this variable is an indicator to measure the level of offensiveness of the strategy in the UN sectors. However, I will argue that the number of troops in itself does not reduce/increase the level of violence but what does it matter is how these troops are used;

4) **Multilateral/Unilateral interventions and heterogeneity of contingents**: this thesis focus on the use of force of PKOs under the UN Security Council mandate which are multilateral and heterogeneous (also in the UN sectors selected). It is out of the aim of this thesis to compare the effectiveness of the use of force of this kind of PKOs against unilateral or regional military interventions authorized by the security council;

5) **Gender composition**: nevertheless that women military participation can contribute to increase operational effectiveness in PKO, there was not a special gender military strategy approach used by MONUSCO (e.g. United States use of female Culture Support Teams in Afghanistan).

6) **Military culture/ heterogeneity**: this variable is partially captured when the restriction mechanism is analysed. For instance, some TCC are more risk adverse than others and this affects the willingness of pursuing offensive
operations. It is also difficult to measure the impact of military culture when different TCCs jointly operate in the same UN sector. This limitation can be overcome by arguing that in spite of military cultural differences the offensive operations were launched;

7) Rebel military capabilities: the area where rebel groups operate is the Eastern region of DRC (North-South axis). The UN sectors selected, included this area where rebel groups operate across them. A limitation of this thesis is that it assumes that rebels groups do not vary in terms of strategy and capabilities. Although there are some rebel groups that are more powerful and organized than others, I argue they did not represent a special military challenge to UN forces. The reasons for this simplification were explained above.

The difference that it was found among the sectors is the military strategy applied. In the UN Central sector, where the FIB was deployed, it was used a strategy based on restrained offensive operations, whereas in the Southern sector the strategy used was based on deterrence by presence and robust use of force to protect civilians. Holding the other factors constant, if there is a variation in the dependent variable this should be because of the military strategy applied.

Lastly, PKOs are military complex operations which are considered to be multidimensional. There a lot of domestic political factors and UN policies (e.g. DDR, SSR, monitoring elections, community peace initiatives, etc.) that are difficult to isolate and have an impact in the stability level of the areas of interest. By selecting two cases, inside the same PKO, it is assumed that these factors remained constant during the time period.

4.2 Time Period and Data Sources

The time period selected to analyse the MONUSCO use of offensive strategy is from 2013 till 2017. Since 2013 UN adopted the mandate that indicates the use of offensive operations to disarm the rebel groups. I will start to analyse MONUSCO offensive strategy since the first offensive operation against the M-23 rebel group in October 2013. The effect of the operation will be measured by year, due to the MONUSCO modus operandi that several operations were launched throughout that time period. The reorganization of the
The rebel group will be measured after one month after the military operation concludes till the rebel activity starts again.

The data sources can be divided in primary and secondary. Regarding with primary sources, I will use UN reports assessing the MONUSCO operations/activities and semi structured interviews to UN military/civilians as other people whose worked was related with MONUSCO (military trainers and researchers). In order to balance the potential bias of the interviewees, I will interview people from different countries, professional backgrounds and ranks.

Because it is a highly sensitive issue, the people I have interviewed asked not to be identified by their names. Some of them were more flexible to indicate some personal information and that is the reason that the identification varies. The idea was to interview people from the main professional backgrounds that are involved in MONUSCO: military, civilian officers (E.g. humanitarian affairs) and academics. The reason is to have different points of view according to the area of expertise, as well as balance the professional biases.

I reached this people through personal contacts through some courses I took on PKOs and professional networking, recommendation from the supervisor and through the contact information some put in their published articles. Due to the lack of time and the topic sensitivity, I only managed to conduct 7 interviews which provided some useful insights from the ground. However the number was insufficient to claim that the interviews provided me a full accurate picture of what happened in DRC during the period analysed.

I conducted 4 interviews to military people that worked or were involved to MONUSCO activities: one high rank officer from Latin America; one high rank officer from Middle East; one mid rank officer from South Africa and another one from Europe. Regarding civilian experts that worked for MONUSCO one European advisor for governance issues and one human rights officer that asked me not to provide further information. Lastly, I interviewed two academics specialized in African Studies from Europe.

The secondary sources I will use are: academic papers/ policy reports from experts about MONUSCO, humanitarian organizations, media articles and ACLED database. A limitation of this thesis is that datasets are based on media reports and underestimates the
real number of incidents. Therefore I will contrast the quantitative data with qualitative assessment of different sources.

4.3 Operationalization

In order to prove our hypothesis, it is necessary to operationalize the independent and dependent variables to empirically capture the concepts. Therefore I will develop a set of indicators for the independent and dependent variable.

4.3.1 Independent variable: Strategy based on restrained offensive operations.

A military strategy based on offensive operations requires larger contingents of troops in order to succeed due to the fact that it is easier to defend rather than attack (Clausewitz, 1989). The attacker must make the effort to disrupt the opponent defences, secure the terrain and continue with the attack in order to reach the opponent command structure. Henceforth our first indicator will be the number of troops in the mission sector.

Secondly, this kind of strategy requires military equipment with strong firepower, high mobility and long range capability (e.g. attack helicopters, armoured personal carriers, artillery) in order to overwhelmed the enemy defences. Therefore, the second indicator will be the type of military equipment deployed.

Thirdly, there is some kind of military units that because of its assault skills, high level of readiness and training can indicate an offensive attitude such as paratroopers, marines or Special Forces. The third indicator will be the type of military unit deployed.

Fourthly to measure a strategy based on military offensive operations degree is the number and kind of military operations conducted. This kind of strategy implies a higher number of attacks against the opponent. It also shows the willingness to proactively use the force. Hence, the fourth indicator will be the number of offensive operations conducted in the UN sector. Lastly, the indicators to measure the restriction will be the political and military reasons that lead to the decision to stop the offensive operations.
4.3.2 Dependent variable: Stability level

In order to measure the stability level in the UN sectors I will use the ACLED database that counts the incidents that are labelled as political violence. According to this dataset: ‘Political violence is the use of force by a group with a political purpose or motivation.’ (ACLED 2017, 1) As I am assessing the effects of the military strategy to defeat rebel groups, I will only take into account those incidents perpetrated by rebel groups and not the violence incidents perpetrated by the DRC government. From the previous research on DRC rebel groups, it is clear that violence is political driven. That is to say that the political incompatibility is clear and each incident registered is because of political issues and not criminal activity.

ACLED counts and classifies as a political violent incident the following categories:
1) Battles: ‘(...)are violent clashes between at least two armed groups’ (Ibid. 2017, 1)
2) Violence against civilians: ‘(...)involves violent attacks on unarmed civilians.’ (Ibid 2017, 1)
3) Remote violence: ‘(...)refers to events where an explosion, bomb or other weapon was used to engage in conflict, and did not require the physical presence of the perpetrator.’ (Ibid. 2017, 2).

In addition to that categories, I will take into account two more non-violent categories as non-violent takeover of territory and base establishment because it shows the capabilities of a rebel group.

I will not take into consideration the number of riots or protest events cause the nature of this violent protest are different from rebel activity and MONUSCO is not applying a military strategy to counter them. I will combine this quantitative measurement of the dependent variable with a qualitative analysis of the rebel combat capabilities.

A military capability is: ‘The ability to achieve a specified wartime objective (win a war or battle, destroy a target set). It includes four major components: force structure, modernization, readiness and sustainability.’ (O’Leary 2006, 299). Force structure is the resultant of the combination of organizational skills, numbers of combatants and recruitment. Secondly, modernization is understood as the sophistication of the military
equipment. Thirdly, readiness means the ability to perform the tasks expected and, lastly, sustainability is the ability to economically maintain the three first components. Therefore, I will analyse the main rebel groups capabilities taking into account this 4 major components described above.

5. Empirical analysis

5.1 Historical background

The ethnic and political armed conflict in Eastern DRC dates back to the colonial era and worsened due to it was neglected by the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko (1971-1996). After the Rwanda genocide, the Tutsi government invaded Zaire (at that time DRC was named Zaire) in 1996 to attack Hutu militias that have fled to DRC. Mobutu was ousted and Rwanda supported the new government of Laurent Kabila. However, this alliance was broken in 1998 and Rwanda invaded DRC spurring a conflict that involved Chad, Sudan, CAR, Tanzania, Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uganda and Burundi. The conflict, known as Second Congo war, caused more than 2.5 million deaths and 2 millions of Internal Displaced People. Moreover, the conflict left a constellation of Hutu, Tutsi and self-protection rebel groups which in October 2015 reached the number of 70 (Stearns & Vogel 2015).

In 2000 the UNSC established the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) to supervise the compliance of Lusaka Cease Fire Agreement. In 2003 France launched a military campaign to stabilize DRC and 3 weeks later gave back the full responsibility to MONUC. However, the dynamics of the conflict made the UNSC to expand the mission tasks and under Chapter VII of the UN charter, the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) was established in 2010. The mission mandate authorized the: ‘(...) use all necessary means to carry out its protection mandate, including the effective protection of civilians (...)’ (UNSC, Resolution 1925 2010, 6). Moreover the number of
troops increased from 10,415 in 2003 to 17,049 in November 2012 making MONUSCO the largest PKO of the world\(^2\) (UN, n.d)

In 2010 MONUSCO was criticized for not being able to prevent the raping of 300 civilians in North Kivu (Smith, 2010). Due to this attack and other violent acts against civilians, MONUSCO decided to launch some attacks against rebel groups and support the FARDC offensive operations. As a result: ‘During the period 2010–12, MONUSCO completed more than two dozen separate operations against Mayi Mayi militias, the FDLR [French initials for Liberation Democratic Forces of Rwanda], and the LRA [Lord Resistance Army]. *Efforts continued to strengthen and improve early warning mechanisms through the establishment of joint MONUSCO/FARDC protection monitoring posts, the expansion of the community alert network, and the recruitment of additional community liaison assistants*.’ (Doss 2014, 806). According to the UNSC the effects of this operations diminished the combat capability of these rebel groups (Ibid. 2014, 806).

Nevertheless, UN peacekeepers were not able to stop the rising levels of instability. In 2012 the total violent incidents (excluding riots) reached the peak of 992 of which 39% were violent acts against civilians (ACLED dataset DRC, 2018). Moreover, in April 2012 an army mutiny instigated by Bosco Ntaganda, leader of the rebel group National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) incorporated to FARDC as a political agreement, rapidly transformed into an open rebellion. CNPD, a North Kivu rebel group opposed to the central government, became the M-23 because of the date (23 March 2009) that the Congolese government and CNDP made the former agreement. The M-23 initiated a violent campaign that a European policy advisor’s summed up in this way: ‘I would describe the Eastern Congo situation in 2012 as critical and rapidly deteriorating. There was a huge increase of rebel activity, especially from the M-23, which was particularly aggressive perpetrating many acts of violence against civilians’. (2018).

The straw that broke the camel’s back was the fall of Goma into the hands of M-23, without forcibly opposition from MONUSCO (Plett, 2012). A MONUSCO spokesman argued that they fought against M-23 supporting FARDC but when the latter fled, it was not in the mandate to engage directly against M-23 (Doss, 2014). This interpretation

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\(^2\) Military experts/observers are not included because previous research proved their participation was not significant to the effectiveness of a mission.
contradicted the mission mandate of using ‘all the necessary means’ to protect the mission and civilians and previous unilateral use of force. It is worth noting, that in spite of the number of troops, firepower support from helicopters and the mission mandate, MONUSCO troops were not able to stop the advance of M-23. This made the international community to reconsider the strategy applied in DRC. This case illustrates the central argument of this thesis: it is not only the number of troops, type of mandate, peacekeepers presence, etc what creates stability but how are they employed. That is to say the military strategy applied.

5.2 UN Central sector.

5.2.1 Context

The UN central sector is composed by the provinces of Nord Kivu, Tshopo, Sankuru and Maniema (MONUSCO). During the period July 2013-December 2017 rebel groups perpetrated 750 incidents (34% of the whole DRC) including battles, violence against civilians and remote violence (own estimation based on ACLED dataset, 2018). The main rebel groups operating in this area during 2013-2017 were M-23, ADF and FDLR. In addition to this various local self-defence groups appeared commonly name as Mai-Mai ‘X’ (for instance Mai-Mai Matata).

UN Central Sector Map

Source: own elaboration based on map African Centre for Strategic Studies 2016.
5.2.2 Strategy based on restrained offensive Operations

5.2.2.1 Restrictions at the Strategic level

As it was mentioned before the fall of Goma and previous failures of MONUSCO to protect civilians made the UN to take a more offensive strategy. Then it was one of the first missions to incorporate in its mandate the explicit task of defeat of rebel groups. However, the FIB creation and the mandate to execute offensive operations faced the resistance from some members from the Security Council and especially from some of the TCCs like Guatemala and Pakistan that were: ‘(...) concerned about the blurring of the lines between traditional peacekeeping and robust peace enforcement both as a matter of principle and because their own peacekeepers lives are at greater risk.’ (Adoption of a resolution (…) 2013). This concerned was reflected in the mandate that the Security Council had to introduce a clause stating that the creation of an intervention brigade with task to defeat rebel groups was done upon ‘(...) an exceptional basis and without creating a precedent or any prejudice to the agreed principles of peacekeeping’ (UNSC Resolution 2098 2013, 9).

According to a high rank officer from Latin America interviewed: ‘Although some European countries wanted to participate in the creation of the FIB, it was more an initiative of SADC countries. They were worry about M-23 and other rebel groups operating in DRC. Many African countries also expressed their concern about the hypothetical creation of European or ‘Western-like’ brigade because they perceived it as a kind of interventionist approach that violates their sovereignty. They were really clear that they will not accept that option.’ (2018). This division between FIB and rest of MONUSCO forces resulted in ‘A mission inside a mission imposed by force. I would say that but for FIB countries, the vast majority of TCCs did not want to conduct offensive operations or engage against rebel groups’ (Former South African military Officer, 2018). This issue seriously affected the performance of offensive operations conducted by MONUSCO due to the fact that the rest of TCCs were highly reluctant to conduct this kind of operations (Tull, 2016). ‘This passivity has contributed to repeated failures to protect civilians and an overall negative view of MONUSCO.’ (Day, 2017)

Another reason for the lack of willingness to engage with rebel groups is that TCCs were risk-adverse: ‘Of course you know that TCCs are there for political reasons. So, it is all about politics. Nobody wants to explain casualties at home. Nobody wants to get into
the jungle to risk their soldiers.’ (European military Officer, 2018). This resulted in: ‘(...) a dual chain of command. General Santos [MONUSCO Force Commander] made a big effort to make the TCCs engage in the new strategy implemented by the FIB. He treated them equally and encouraged the participation of all. But, each country has its own policy and he had to face some challenges regarding the UN chain of command and each TCC chain of command’ (Latin American high rank officer 2018). In this sense: ‘(...) certain TCC refuse that their troops engage in foot patrols or patrol far from COBs. Together with the Congo’s infrastructural deficiencies, such conditions have rendered the mission [MONUSCO] relatively inert and have limited its radius of action.’ (Verweijen 2017a, 371).

Lastly, although MONUSCO had the mandate to act unilaterally most of the times depended on the DRC government to operate. Moreover because of political reasons General Santos explained that: ‘The government is the owner of the situation, the most important element in the process. And we are here to support the government. In the military [context], the government is [represented by] the FARDC. We follow the planning of the FARDC and we support them (...)basically, we need to follow the FARDC, who decide the pace and priority of any action.’ (Darren, 2014). This restrained the freedom of action of MONUSCO to target rebel groups as it happened with the FDLR in 2014. As it will be later explained FDLR was a former allied of DRC government during the Second Congo War and in spite of the international pressure, Kabila managed to delay the operation till 2015. The consequence was that MONUSCO were unable to stop the FDLR violent incidents against civilians during 2014.

5.2.3.4 Restrictions at Operational/Tactical level

One of the most common critiques against DPKO is that the UN peacekeepers are not properly equipped to conduct the operations that are asked to execute. MONUSCO is the largest PKO in terms of troops, unique in the sense they have an intervention brigade tasked to conduct offensive operations and also deployed Special Forces, attack helicopters, artillery and first time in PKO history Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAV) for intelligence gathering.
The military units deployed can be summarized in the following table:

**MONUSCO Deployment by year**

**UN Central Sector**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Armoured Infantry</th>
<th>Special Forces</th>
<th>Engineer</th>
<th>Artillery</th>
<th>Helo Attack</th>
<th>Helo Tpt</th>
<th>Aircraft Tpt</th>
<th>Med.</th>
<th>Total Troops UN Sector</th>
<th>Total Troops MONUSCO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 2013-March 2014</td>
<td>8 Bat. (x850)</td>
<td>2 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>3 Bat. (x850)</td>
<td>2 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>1 Flight (x140)</td>
<td>3 Flights (X140)</td>
<td>1 Flight (x21)</td>
<td>1 Co. (X165)</td>
<td>10756 (55%)</td>
<td>19558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2014</td>
<td>7 Bat (x850)</td>
<td>1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>1 Section (X40)</td>
<td>3 Bat. (x850)</td>
<td>2 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>2 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>1 Flight (x140)</td>
<td>3 Flights (X140)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 Co. (X165)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2015-March 2016</td>
<td>7 Bat. (x850)</td>
<td>2 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>3 Bat. (x850)</td>
<td>2 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>1 Flight (x140)</td>
<td>2 Flights (x140)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 Co. (X165)</td>
<td>9885 (53%)</td>
<td>18552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2016-March 2017</td>
<td>6 Bat. (x850)</td>
<td>1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>3 Bat. (x850)</td>
<td>1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>1 Flight (x140)</td>
<td>2 Flights (x140)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 Co. (X165)</td>
<td>8910 (52%)</td>
<td>16964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2017-December 2017</td>
<td>6 Bat. (x850)</td>
<td>2 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>2 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>2 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>2 Flight (x140)</td>
<td>2 Flights (X140)</td>
<td>1 Co. (X165)</td>
<td>8425 (51%)</td>
<td>16436</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Source: estimation made on my own elaboration based on MONUSCO deployment map, interviews and UN Peacekeeping Infantry manual 2012.

From that table it can be seen than slightly more than the 50% of the troops deployed during the period 2013-2017 were allocated to Central Sector. In spite of the troops cut, this proportion was kept. According to all the military interviewed, most of the infantry units were light equipped and not properly done. According to a high rank officer from Latin America (2018) this was: ‘Because TCCs that operate in MONUSCO belong to third world countries, whose equipment is old, and do not have enough resources to modernize it or their priority are not peacekeeping missions.’

Moreover during this period about 30-40% of the Armoured Infantry Units were assigned to central sector till their withdrawal in 2017. It is worth to highlight that this units are particular important to conduct offensive operations because its combination of mobility and firepower. In areas of poor road infrastructure and frequent raining mobility is a key component to conduct an offensive operation. Tracked Armoured Personal Carriers (APC) and transport helicopters (50% in Central Sector) were an important military asset for MONUSCO.

Nevertheless: ‘Due to budget restrictions of TCCs, the minority of the APC were tracked. This is a constraint when you have a poor road infrastructure and it frequently rains’ (Íbid. 2018). In the same sense, there were few transport helicopters operating. From public sources, I estimate a range of 5 to 15 transport helicopters (5 helicopters for each flight) which allows moving from 100 to 300 troops (assuming they were all operative). This constituted another restraint for mobility regarding offensive operations.

Secondly, 50%-66% of the Special Forces of MONUSCO were operating in Central Sector. According to a high rank officer from Latin America: ‘Special Forces were used to conduct raids against rebel positions and intelligence gathering, but there were not resources and military capabilities to use these guys as United States did in Afghanistan. I mean, to mix [refers to Special Forces] with the population, conduct psychological operations or train host armed forces’ (2018). As it was explained, above the MONUSCO offensive operations were intelligence led, so Special Forces were an important part of them. Furthermore its capability to attack behind the enemy lines made them also an important asset. However, the deployment of one to two companies of Special Forces for a
complex geographical area of multiple rebel groups operating was not enough to produce a significant effect.

Thirdly, regarding with fire support, the only artillery unit deployed in DRC was designated to Central Sector. Furthermore, 50%-66% of the attack helicopters were deployed in Central sector (based on public sources I estimated from 3 to 7 operating). The attack helicopters allowed the MONUSCO to attack in the depth of rebel controlled areas of difficult access and also improved the time response to repel a rebel attack. Nevertheless, its capability was limited by the rebel tactic use of mixing among civilians and using them as human shields (Spink 2017).

Fourthly, regarding intelligence MONUSCO were highly dependent on FARCDC (Verweijen, 2017a). A serious deficit of MONUSCO was the lack of analysts and people able to communicate with host population to collect information (High rank officer from Latin America, 2018). Moreover FARCDC took advantage of this weakness and planned the military operations alone and only told MONUSCO the details at the very last moment. (Spink 2017) Therefore MONUSCO was limited to execute the operations according to agenda and priorities of FARCDC. What is worse it lacked of the sufficient time to assess potential collateral damage of the operations. As MONUSCO mostly backed FARCDC and did not have enough staff to conduct assessment of collateral damage it is difficult to analyse the extent of unintended consequences (Ibid. 2017).

Moreover, attacking rebel groups without the proper intelligence can be dangerous as rebel groups mix with population or use them as human shields. During a unilateral operation MONUSCO attacked with helicopters rebel groups in the village of Pinga. The governor and local society complained that 4 innocent villagers were killed during that operation affecting the image of MONUSCO (Moloo, 2016).

Lastly, the Force Intervention Brigade, the offensive unit of MONUSCO, was deployed and mostly operate in UN Central sector. It was composed by 3 infantry battalions, one artillery regiment situated and operated in the Central Sector. It was supposed to be the spear of the peacekeepers e whereas the rest of the forces would have been the shield to protect the civilians. As I will explain in the next chapter the FBI was the most offensive unit but most of its capabilities were restrained for political reasons of the TCCs and DRC government.
Based on the evidence presented above it can be concluded that the military deployment of MONUSCO in Central Sector responded to an offensive conception but its material capabilities were restrained because of the budget and political reasons.

5.3. Military operations UN Central Sector

5.3.1 Mandate interpretation and concept of operations

The Special Representative of the Secretary General, (SRSG), Martín Kobler planned a stabilization strategy based on the ‘Islands of Security concept. This strategy was based on a: ‘(...) ‘shape-clear-hold-build’ logic, MONUSCO (primordially the FIB with FARDC) wants to regain authority – with and for the DRC government – over increasing parts of the Kivu provinces.’(Vogel 2014, 5) In military terms this was translated into an offensive strategy. General Santos Cruz describe its military strategy in the following way: ‘We are going to protect civilians, eliminating, neutralizing the threats. We go to the threats. We are not going to wait that the threats come here against the civilians’. (Al Jazeera, 2014). In this sense an African former officer interviewed stated that: ‘The centre of gravity of the new MONUSCO strategy was the defeat of irregular groups. They [the MONUSCO political and military leaders] thought in this way: if we defeat them [rebel groups], we will bring stability and security to people. Then, after that, we would have won all that thing of ‘Hearts and minds’’ (2018).

According to military doctrine the centre of gravity: ‘(...) exerts a certain centripetal force that tends to hold an entire system or structure together; thus a blow at the centre of gravity would throw an enemy off balance or even cause the entire system (or structure) to collapse.’ (Echevarria 2003, ).It is worth to highlight that this military oriented approach is totally different from the classical counterinsurgency theory. This theory stress that defeat of the rebels will not be achieved through direct engagement against rebel groups but by protecting the population and isolating the rebel groups. Protecting the population is the centre of gravity according to counterinsurgency theory.

Why then MONUSCO adopted a direct strategy? According to a high rank Latin American officer: ‘It is impossible to protect the whole population in Congo. It’s a huge country with hard terrain conditions, jungles, mountains...and How many soldiers does MONUSCO have? 15.000? 20.000? You can’t protect every single village with that numbers. Also the Islands of Security Strategy also failed. Why? Well, because the
readiness level of most TCCs was low, so they couldn’t be on time to repeal the [rebel] attacks when people called them. But, in order to provide health, education, jobs you must first provide security. Defeating the rebel groups was thought as the way to provide security.’ (2018).

On the other hand an EU policy advisor stated that: ‘(...) MONUSCO lacked of people who can do conflict analysis. So, its approach was really militaristic. Especially, Kobler and Santos were obsessed with defeating the M-23. They forgot the other 100 groups and their intricate links. Stability is not only a matter of military aspects. You should address the sources of conflict’. (2018) Moreover: ‘MONUSCO doesn’t hold the terrain after a military operation. They think that is a task for FARDC but FARCDC were not capable of doing it.’ (Former UN human rights officer in MONUSCO, 2018).

Whether the reason was ideological or because of capabilities restriction or a mix of them, MONUSCO decided to conduct/support direct military operations. These operations to defeat the rebel groups were based on three steps: ‘Intelligence gathering to identify where the rebels are, cordon and then attack them.’ (European military officer, 2018) This operations in order to be effective were supposed to be intelligence driven but as it was explained above MONUSCO depended of FARCDC. Therefore its effectiveness was limited.

4.3.2 A promising start. The defeat of M-23 August-December 2013.

After almost one year (since the fall of Goma in November 2012) MONUSCO considered that M-23 was not negotiating its disarm and demobilization. Therefore in October 2013 they decided to launch an offensive operation to make the M-23 surrender. Previously MONUSCO conducted a series of military operations in charge of the Indian and Egyptian battalions. They consisted in joint patrols with FARCDC in Goma, showing force in the surrounding villages to deter potential attacks and secure key civilian/UN infrastructure. Once the main areas of Nord Kivu were secured, the offensive operations started in 26 October and finalized the 4 November.

MONUSCO and FARCDC attacked M-23 doing a pincer manoeuvre launched from two main fronts in North Kivu: A) North: Kiwanja city and South: Kanyamahoro. (Darren, 2013) MONUSCO supported the offensive of FARCDC with ground troops from the FIB, attack and transport helicopters, artillery and mortar fire, as well as logistics support
Logistics was a critical asset for the success of FARDC because of their deficient military equipment and the poor roads conditions. In addition to this MONUSCO blocked the roads and secured positions freeing the FARDC to continue the pursuit of M-23. After a series of direct engagements in which the M-23 was taken by surprised the rebel group fled to the Rwandan mountainous border and finally announced its willingness to disarm and demobilize in November (Darren, 2013). After that operation the FDLR announced its willingness to disarm and demobilize.

4.3.3 From momentum to stagnation (2014-2015)

After the initial success President Kabila announced that MONUSCO should withdraw from DRC and started to plan an exit strategy. This limited the initiative of UN to exploit its success against M-23. Moreover because: ‘(...) its limited resources [refers to MONUSCO], could only focus on 10 of them [rebel groups] and was able to conduct intelligence-led operations against 4. The main actions were being taken against the ADF, the FDLR, and the FRPI.’ (Kuele & Cepik 2017, 54).

However, from mid-January till March 2014 MONUSCO and FACRD initiated an offensive operation named Sukola I against ADF and APCLS. The military operations were conducted in the triangle formed by Beni, Kamango and Irumu (Stupart, 2014). According to UN experts: ‘The operation was carried out with limited logistical support from the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), including a medical evacuation mission to Goma.’ (UN Overview of Secretary(…) 2014a, 8). MONUSCO also provide intelligence and air fire support from the South African attack helicopters (See Kuele & Cepik, 2017). In spite of not being involved in direct ground combat operations against the ADF MONUSCO conducted 17 military operations consisting in foot, air and motorised patrolling and showing force in the city of Goma and the territories of Nyiragongo, Rutshuru, Masisi and Walikal.

From April to May 2014, MONUSCO provided ground and helicopter air support to conduct operations against the APCLS. Moreover, MONUSCO reinforced its presence by conducting day and night patrols in Liwbo and Kilambo (UNSC UN Overview of Secretary(…) 2014b). In the second semester of 2014 the UN reports to the Security Council showed that MONUSCO provide logistic support, joint planning, situational
awareness and air fire support to FARDC operations, especially Sukola I (UNSC Overview of Secretary(…) 2014c).

During this time they were several discussions to engage against the FDLR. As a matter of fact they were initial plans to start offensive operations against the FDLR in 2014 but the DRC government and MONUSCO preferred to negotiate a DDR process with this rebel group: Some specialists argued that this was because of the former military alliance between the FDLR and DRC government against the Rwanda invasion and pro Rwandan militias (Mugenzi, 2015). In that period only few FDLR combatants surrendered (mostly people incapable of fighting) and handed in guns. After the ultimatum deadline ended on 2 January MONUSCO decided that was going to initiate offensive operations against the FDLR. Nevertheless the DRC government designated two generals accused of human rights violations in charge of the operation against the FDLR (Sukola II).

As a consequence, there was a disagreement between MONUSCO and the DRC government. The former wanted President Kabila to remove the generals in charge of the operations against FDLR and as he refused to do it, UN stopped the support of operations against the FDLR in February 2015 (Nichols, 2015). As a consequence, FARDC not only unilaterally conducted operations against FDLR (Sukola II) but also: ‘The suspension reduced MONUSCO influence on the unfolding military operations and limited possibilities to address civilian protection issues.’ (Verweijen 2017b.) As I will explain below there was a relative decline and stagnation of UN military operations in 2015.

From January till March 2015, MONUSCO conducted jointly offensive operations against ADF (UMOJA II and UMOJA III) near Medina location in Nord Kivu (UNSC 2015 S/2015/172) From March till June 2015 MONUSCO reduced its role in conducting offensive operations and there was a relative stagnation of the military activity. UN peacekeepers support to FARDC through aerial reconnaissance, supressing fire and foot patrols. In addition to this they conduct a series of operations to show force and deter possible attacks and established a warning security system with local leaders to respond in case of rebel attacks (UNSC Overview of Secretary(…) 2015a).

In the second semester of 2015, MONUSCO seemed to change its approach and tried to implement: ‘(...) non-military initiatives and community-based protection tools such as the community alert networks and to enhance engagement with local populations
through outreach, sensitization and dialogue activities.’ (UNSC Overview of Secretary(…) 2015b, 2). Finally, in the last quarter of 2015 MONUSCO limited to provide ‘occasional support’ to FARCDC military operations (Overview of Secretary(…) 2015c ,5).

4.3.4. Restarts and decline of offensive operations 2016-2017

After a year of negotiations, UN and DRC government reached a formal agreement in January 2106 to resume the full cooperation of military operations. MONUSCO had to relax the HDRPP guidelines and make a new one that ‘(...) allows MONUSCO to support individuals against whom allegations of grave human rights violations have been made provided that ‘mitigating measures’ are taken to reduce the risk of human rights abuses.’ This new approach was welcomed by both UN peacekeepers and the DRC government that found the previous one too rigid.

Once this agreement was signed, MONUSCO there was an increase of the use of offensive operations that last to the end of 2016. MONUSCO started to support operation Sukola II and conducted jointly planned military operations to target the FDLR leadership (UNSC Overview of Secretary(…), 2016a ). Especially, MONUSCO directly reinforced FARDC operations against FDLR in Rutshuru territory including the deployment of ground troops in Kanyabayonga, Nyanzale, air assets and intelligence. During operation Sukola II MONUSCO deployed some units, temporarily, to strategic areas in order to secure the civilian population. (UNSC Overview of Secretary(…), 2016b )

Secondly, MONUSCO increased its support to operation Sukola I against the ADF during 2016. UN peacekeepers used drones to localize ADF positions and shelled them with artillery and air assets in many occasions. Moreover they reinforced the presence in Nord Kivu with rapid deployable battalions and both day and night patrols. (UNSC Overview of Secretary(…), 2016c) Furthermore they launched coordinated operations (Usalama I) with FARCDC in the in the triangle between Bilimani, Madina and Sesele to destroy ADF bases and deny their freedom of action. MONUSCO deployed elements of FIB and Special Forces which were were directly engaged in that coordinated operation (UNSC Overview of Secretary(…), 2016a) MONUSCO also provided air mobility, artillery
support, facilitated front-line medical evacuations as well as logistical support such as food, water and ammunition. (Ibid, 2016a)

In the second semester of 2016 MONUSCO and FARCDC launched the Operation Usalama II in order to dislodged the ADF positions in the Eringeti area. Basically they continued the pressure on the ADF attacking their bases. However it was different of the previous operations in the sense that: ‘The Mission instituted new tactics, emphasizing the use of foot patrols to ensure better situational awareness and to provide a more frequent, visible presence in areas where civilians are at risk’ (Ibid, 2016a, 9) From October to December 2016 MONUSCO only conducted forward foot patrols to deter possible attacks. This change in the tactics came after the UN assessment that ‘Challenges persist, however, in terms of geographical coverage, mobility and information flow, resulting in limitations on the capacity of MONUSCO and the national security forces to reduce violence, instability, human rights violations and population displacement in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo’ (Ibid, 2016a,10)

At the end of 2016 there was a series of clashes among different Mai-Mai militias and against the FDLR. This clashes were mostly driven by inter-ethnic tensions and MONUSCO together with FARDC deployed troops in order to prevent a further escalation of violence. During those incidents MONUSCO fought against unidentified Mai-Mai rebels and had to reinforced its presence around Luhanga. (Ibid, 2016a)

At the beginning of the 2017 continue its support of operations against ADF and FDLR and targeted the sources of illegal mining of that rebel groups ( ). However they changed the orientation of the military operations. The UN group of experts for DRC reported that: ‘In 2017, senior FARDC officers informed the Group that the Sukola 1 operations against ADF had slowed down’ (UNSC Final report (…) 2017a, 10) From April to June 2017 MONUSCO limited its actions to joint patrolling in order to deter possible attacks in Nord Kivu. Later, MONUSCO conducted a pilot operation consisted in a bottom-up approach to strengthen community-based mechanisms in order to improve the protection and early warning in that province including gender conscious awareness.

The new approach responded to the protection through projection concept. Basically MONUSCO reduced the number of COB and choose to concentrate mobile forces with a
high level of readiness capable to assist on time the population under immediate threat. As this new approach was launched quarter of 2017 it was not possible to measure its effects.

### 4.4. UN Southern Sector

#### 4.4.1 Context

During the period July 2013–December 2017 rebel groups perpetrated 486 incidents (22% of the whole DRC) including battles, violence against civilians and remote violence (own elaboration based on ACLED dataset, 2018). This number made the UN South Sector the second most violent after the UN Central Sector. The main rebel groups operating in this area during 2013-2017 were FDLR and a wide array of local Mai-Mai militias.

**UN South Sector Map**

![UN South Sector Map](image)

Source: own elaboration based on map African Centre for Strategic Studies 2016.

#### 4.4.2 Strategy based on ‘robust’ use of force

As UN South Sector belongs to the same mission the mandate and the restrictions MONUSCO faced it were the same. However, the military strategy applied was different. In this section, I will only focus on the differences between the two sectors in order to avoid unnecessary reiterations. As it was mentioned before, the offensive operations were assigned to the FIB, which mostly operated in the UN Central Sector. Hence, according to
the MONUSCO mandate the military strategy applied in the South Sector should have been based on the robust use of force.

For the UN this is: 'The use of force by a United Nations peacekeeping operation at the tactical level, with the authorization of the Security Council, to defend its mandate against spoilers whose activities pose a threat to civilians or risk undermining the peace process.' (UN 2008, 98). That is different from peace enforcement which is the use of force at the strategic level under Chapter VII and does not require the consent of the host country.

The introduction of a more robust approach in DRC in 2010 was due to the previous failures of UN to protect civilians mentioned in the historical background section. The UN primary concern was to avoid peacekeepers became bystanders of civilian’s massacres by allowing them to have a more proactive use of force. The reason of this strategy was to give credibility to the UN peacekeepers deterrence capability, so they were able to affect the cost/benefit analysis of potential spoilers. It is worth to remember that credibility is a key component of deterrence, so it can be effective: 'In order to make a credible threat, in other words, one must be technically capable of carrying it out, and willing to do so despite any costs that are likely to accrue as a result' (Sloan 2012, 210).

As a matter of fact MONUSCO mandate authorized UN forces (both FIB and regular peacekeepers) to use ‘all the necessary measures’ to fulfil the stabilization objectives, including the protection of civilians. Moreover it also increased the number of troops deployed in 2013. However, it is a bit difficult to characterize the MONUSCO military strategy, applied in the South Sector throughout the 2013-2017 period, as a simple robust approach. This is because of the ambiguity of what it should be understood by ‘all the necessary measures’. On the one hand Martin Kobler constantly pushed the non-FIB TCCs to be proactive in the use of force to protect civilians and even to join the FIB to conduct restrained offensive operations. As a result MONUSCO supported few offensive operations in Southern Sector, though to a much lesser extent that UN Central Sector.

On the other hand, it was not the responsibility of the other TCCs to defeat the rebel groups. The discussion of what is an ‘immediate threat’ and when the ‘defence of the mandate’ authorizes a pre-emptive attack is something that is arguable and theoretically depends on the interpretation of both the SRSG and the Force Commander. However, in
reality it was proved that it also depended on the interpretation that each military contingent commander made of it according to its national interest as it was seen above.

To sum up, the military strategy applied by MONUSCO in UN Central Southern was mostly based on a robust approach. Due to some pressures from the SRG and the Force Commander, there was some few restrained offensive operations conducted and many times because of the mandate interpretation the use of force were less robust that it should have.

4.4.3 Restrictions in the tactical level

In order to avoid unnecessary repetitions I will only present the number and type of troops deployed in UN Southern Sector.

**MONUSCO deployment by year in UN Southern Sector**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>August 2013- March 2014</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Armoured Infantry</th>
<th>Special Forces</th>
<th>Engineer</th>
<th>Helo Attack</th>
<th>Helo TpT</th>
<th>Med.</th>
<th>Total Troops UN Sector North</th>
<th>Total Troops MONUSCO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Bat. (x620) 4 Co. (x165) 3 Sections (x40)</td>
<td>4 Bat. (x850) 1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>2 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>1 Flight (x140)</td>
<td>2 Flights (X140)</td>
<td>1 Co. (X165)</td>
<td>5920 (30% MONUSCO)</td>
<td>19558</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>March 2014- March 2015</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Armoured Infantry</th>
<th>Special Forces</th>
<th>Engineer</th>
<th>Helo Attack</th>
<th>Helo TpT</th>
<th>Med.</th>
<th>Total Troops UN Sector North</th>
<th>Total Troops MONUSCO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Bat. (x620) 4 Co. (x165) 1 Section (X40)</td>
<td>4 Bat. (x850) 1Co.(x165)</td>
<td>1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>2 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>1 Flight (x140)</td>
<td>2 Flights (X140)</td>
<td>1 Co. (X165)</td>
<td>5920 (30% MONUSCO)</td>
<td>19528</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>March 2015- March 2016</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Armoured Infantry</th>
<th>Special Forces</th>
<th>Engineer</th>
<th>Helo Attack</th>
<th>Helo TpT</th>
<th>Med.</th>
<th>Total Troops UN Sector North</th>
<th>Total Troops MONUSCO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Bat. (x620) 3 Co. (x165) 5 Sections (x40)</td>
<td>2Bat. (x850) 2Bat. (620)</td>
<td>1 Co.(x165)</td>
<td>2 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>1 Flight (x140)</td>
<td>2 Flights (x140)</td>
<td>1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>5625 (30% MONUSCO)</td>
<td>18552</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>March 2016- March 2017</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Armoured Infantry</th>
<th>Special Forces</th>
<th>Engineer</th>
<th>Helo Attack</th>
<th>Helo TpT</th>
<th>Med.</th>
<th>Total Troops UN Sector North</th>
<th>Total Troops MONUSCO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Bat. (x850) 3 Co. (x165) 1 Co. (120)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>2 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 Flights (x140)</td>
<td>1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>5075 (29% MONUSCO)</td>
<td>16964</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As it can be seen the proportion of troops deployed were constantly around 30% throughout the period 2013-2017 compared to 50% of UN Central Sector. Moreover this sector lack of Artillery and had less air attack assets and armoured infantry units. Therefore it can be concluded that the deployment of troops in the UN Southern Sector were less offensive than in Central Sector. However the tactical restrictions described in the later were the same.

4.5 Military Operations UN Southern Sector

4.5.1 Mandate interpretation and concept of operations

The problem with the ‘robust’ use of force is that the definition is enough vague that it can be interpreted in a reactive way. That is to say, UN peacekeepers will intervene when civilians are under imminent threat or they will respond once the civilians are under attack. This has the strategic disadvantage of given the initiative to the rebel groups and sacrifice freedom of action

Because of the mandate interpretation, risk aversion and/or lack of level of readiness MONUSCO was not always able to properly protect civilians as I explained before. Furthermore some scholars argued that because of the offensive task assigned to FIB: ‘(...)the other UN troops (the so-called ‘framework brigades’) to fall into apathy. By designating the FIB as the ‘robust’ element of the mission, the other troops are implicitly let off the hook. This passivity has contributed to repeated failures to protect civilians and an overall negative view of MONUSCO’ (Day, 2017). Hence not only the framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>March-2017-December 2017</th>
<th>sections (x40)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>8425 (33% MONUSCO)</th>
<th>16436</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Bat (x850)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>2 Co. (x165)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 Flights (x140)</td>
<td>1 Co. (X165)</td>
<td>16436</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Co. (x165)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Co. (x125)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: estimation made on my own elaboration based on MONUSCO deployment map, interviews and UN Peacekeeping Infantry Batallion Manual 2012.
brigades did not proactively attack rebel groups, which it can be argued that was not their responsibility, but also failed to act as a shield to protect civilians.

Although Martin Kobler and General Santos tried TCCs to adopt the motto ‘One Mission, One Mandate, One Force’ the result was different. After one year of its implementation, Kobler complained about the passivity of the other contingents. The area was less active in terms of military operations compared to UN Central Sector. Arguably the predominant concept of operations in the Southern Sector was the ‘protection by presence’. UN peacekeepers in key strategic areas will provide security by the deterrence effect of having peacekeepers in key areas (‘Island of Security’ concept). This approach is very similar to the French COIN strategy denominated ‘Oil-spot’ developed during their colonial wars at the end of XIX century (see Rid, 2010). The ‘oil-spot’ represents a key city/area that once it is assured it attracts people to migrate to that area and later it grows spreading out security, like a drop of oil in water. The logic behind this strategy is to undermine rebel military capabilities by isolating them from population. The problem is that in DRC rebel groups did not depend so much on population support, as traditional rebel groups used to.

Another problem with the Islands of Instability strategy, is that it reinforced the instability trend of the rest of the areas where UN peacekeepers were not present. This is because the ‘Islands’ were not strong enough to spread out due to lack of good governance, human rights abuses of FARCDC and MONUSCO lack of capacity to implement reforms aiming to improve the quality of the governance (Barrera, 2015).

The typical military tactics that respond to that concept of operations are patrolling, denying the presence of insurgents in the area and showing force to intimidate potential spoilers and build trust among the population. However the problem with this approach was that: ‘MONUSCO contingents were too garrison-oriented. They did not patrol very far from their bases’ (European advisor). In addition to this, as it was mentioned above, MONUSCO/FARCDC was not always capable of being on time to repel a threat: ‘(…)related incidents occurred in inaccessible areas. Other obstacles included an insufficient number of FARDC and Congolese national police deployed in those areas, lack of logistical means at the disposal of the national security forces to respond promptly, the incomplete regimentation process of FARDC troops deployed in Tanganyika, and the
fleeing of suspects before a response team could reach the areas’ (UNSC Overview of Secretary(…), 2015c, 12) In the following section, I will summarized the military operations conducted in the Southern Sector during the period 2013-2017.

4.5.2 Increasing the presence and patrolling 2013-2014

At the end of 2013 MONUSCO was mostly engaged fighting the M-23 in North Kivu so there was not any significant military activity in Southern Sector. The operations limited to joint patrolling with FARCDC. (UNSC Overview of Secretary(…), 2013). Due to the unstable situation in Southern Sector, MONUSCO decided to redeploy units in that AoR during the first quarter of 2014. SGRS Martin Kobler claimed that the UN peacekeepers: ‘(...)must be robust, flexible, highly mobile and well-trained, as well as fully able to deploy across the country, including the most inaccessible areas.’(UNSC United Nations mission(…) 2014) As a result MONUSCO supported a military operation against a Mayi-Mayi Cheka rebel group in the Mpofi-Walikale Centre axis. That operation managed to dislodged the group’s former strongholds in Buniyampuli and on the Kibua-Pinga axis. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that this supported offensive operation was the only one conducted by MONUSCO during 2014.

In June of 2014 there was a massacre against civilians that exemplifies the limitations afore mentioned of the protection by presence strategy. On 6 June MONUSCO received the information that an attack against civilians was happening in Muturale, a village situated 9 Km. from the UN base in Sange. In spite of the request for help the ‘The commander of the base, Pakistani Major Shaban, did not dispatch troops to investigate the situation; indeed, he did not send troops to Mutarule until the morning of 9 June.’ (UNSC Final report(…) 2015, 9). It is worth to remember that Pakistan was one the countries that was reluctant regarding to the proactive use of force. This incident proved the limitations of the protection by presence approach and the failure of Kobler to make other TCCs more proactive in the use of force and the dual-chain of command problem.

Lastly, during the second semester of 2014 MONUSCO increased its presence by implementing ‘Islands of Stability’ in Sange, deployed temporary base in Mitwaba to facilitate the surrender of local militias, as well as the creation of an island of stability in that locality. (UNSC Overview of Secretary(…), 2014d)
4.5.3 From stagnation to trying to become more robust 2015-2016

At the beginning of 2015 MONUSCO supported a led FARCDC offensive operation, Kamilisha Usalama II, against the Burundian rebel group, the National Liberation Forces (FNL) and other Mai-Mai groups that used to operate in the Ruzizi plain. This was conceived as preliminary step to conduct a major military campaign against the FDLR. As a result those groups were pushed from their strongholds. However, because of the human rights abuse issues of the FARCDC generals, MONUSCO suspended all military cooperation to fight the FDLR. As a consequence FARCDC conducted unilaterally all the military operations against the FDLR.

After this exceptional support of an offensive operation, MONUSCO continue its regular activity of patrolling in the Southern Sector. During the first semester about 1,452 patrols (including UN Police forces) were conducted by the South Kivu Brigade in addition to air reconnaissance and evaluation missions (Andriamamonjitarinaoa, 2015). In addition to this humanitarian assistance operations, such as mobile medical consultations, building schools and offering work skills capacitation to young people, were also conducted to assist the population (Ibid, 2015). On a different note, MONUSCO also conducted a series of mediation processes in the Tanganyka province with the aim to reduce the inter-ethnic conflicts (UNSC Overview of Secretary(…), 2015c).

On 2016 MONUSCO and FARCDC reached a new agreement of cooperation solving the human rights issues. As a consequence, MONUSCO also started to support SUKOLA II operations against the FDLR in Kabare, Kalehe, Mwenga and Shabunda territories South Kivu. However, it was ‘(...) largely inactive in South Kivu province’. (UNSC Overview of Secretary(…), 2016d,7) Moreover, it is worth to highlight that FARCDC have previously targeted this group during 2015, producing: ‘(...) a noticeable shift in the mean center of events from near the border of North and South Kivu northward to central North Kivu. As reflected in the reduction of the standard ellipse postintervention, while previous events of violence against civilians were spread across the Kivus, Katanga, and Oriental provinces, post-intervention events appear almost exclusively in North Kivu.’ (Benson 2018, 7) Therefore it can be argued that the support operations of MONUSCO in South Kivu were not so relevant. On the contrary, what it was relevant to undermining the
capabilities of the FDLR was the support and collaboration of FARDC to Mai-Mai militias to fight against the Rwandan rebels.

On the other hand ‘MONUSCO improve early warning capacities and address the threats posed by armed groups. It responded to emerging protection threats and increased its presence by deploying temporary forward bases to areas of concern in Haut-Uélé, South Kivu and Tanganyika Provinces. In Tanganyika Province, in response to a recent outbreak of violence, MONUSCO conducted a series of missions to assess the humanitarian situation, monitor human rights violations and initiate reconciliation between the Luba and Twa communities.’ (UNSC Overview of Secretary (…), 2016e, 7)

4.5.4 Between robustness and transition 2017

At the beginning of 2017 MONUSCO supported FARDC led operations which main objective was: ‘(…) targeting FNL camps around Sange, Uvira territory, with the aim to restrict their freedom of movement and access to resources.’(UNSC Overview of Secretary (…), 2017a, 2) In addition to this, as a consequence of budget and troops cuts, there was a transition from protecting by presence (stationary approach) to protecting through projection. This new concept relies on rapid, mobile and more light-equipped deployable battalions that were supposed to respond the threat on time. (Spink, 2017) This battalions also worked with civilian humanitarian affairs teams in order to make more effective their actions and improve the relationships with the local population. Throughout 2017 MONUSCO was challenged to do more, or at least the same, with less resources. At the moment of writing this thesis there is not a clear result of this new approach in terms of improving stability. A huge challenge for this approach was the 35% reduction of air transport assets (Vogel & Stearns, 2018)

On the other hand, during the surge of rebel activity in 2017 MONUSCO had to support the FARDC in South Kivu and Tanganika against Mai-Mai attacks. Moreover MONUSCO together with FARDC successfully defended the city of Uvira (second in importance in South Kivu) against the attacks of Mai Mai militias. The military actions consisted ‘(...) in blocking positions at the entry points to the town, succeeded in repelling an attack on the city’s prison and provided support from attack helicopters, which managed to destroy the boat fleet of Mai-Mai Yakutumba. MONUSCO also communicated directly with
Yakutumba, the group’s leader, to dissuade him from attacking the town and made it clear that MONUSCO would act to protect civilians’ (UNSC Overview of Secretary (…) 2018, 10) Those were examples of what it can be denominated defence a robust approach to defend the mandate and protect civilians. It is also interesting MONUSCO reinforced its deterrence credibility by communicating their intention to use the force against that group in case they would have decided to attack.

Lastly MONUSCO started to implement across the Eastern region of DRC a series of mediation actions and enhanced community building programmes in order to reduce inter-ethnic conflict (Íbid, 2018). Examples of this kind of action were seen in the mediation and patrolling efforts to bring security in Kabare, Kalehe, Fizi, and Uvira territories at the end of 2017 (UNSC Overview of Secretary (…) 2017b).

4.6. The stability consequences of restrained offensive operations UN Central Sector

As it was stated in the research design, a limitation of this thesis is that the real number of violent incidents perpetrated by rebel groups in DRC is difficult to estimate. According to experts interviewed, most databases underestimate the real number caused their datasets are based on public sources that do not have access to remote villages, where many of this incidents happens. Therefore the number of incidents (battles, remote violence and violence against civilians) should be interpreted as an indicative trend, rather than a completely accurate description of the stability level in both UN Central and South sectors. It is worth to highlight that for the purpose of this thesis, it only counts as incident when the perpetrator is a rebel group and not MONUSCO/FARDC. This is in order not count when rebel groups fight to defend themselves from the offensive operations.

Since MONUSCO started to conduct offensive operations only at the end of 2013 only against the M-23, I consider that it is more appropriate to start to analyse the effects since 2014. The evolution of the stability level of Central sector can be observed in the following chart:
The graph shows that the years with the highest number of incidents were when MONUSCO was more active conducting/supporting restrained offensive operations (2014 and 2016). In spite of the fact that rebel activity tends to reduce the following year that offensive operations are conducted (2015 and 2017), the reduction observed is not significant. Moreover in the period analysed the instability levels raised again after its reduction in 2015\(^3\). This pattern may indicate a V shape in the levels of stability in the UN Central Sector, tough the reduction and the conflict relapse was less significant than it was expected. This can be because rebel groups still retain the capability to attack especially to retaliate on civilians during the retreat phase. Therefore it is necessary to analyse the effects of restrained offensive operations in a qualitative way in order to have a better understanding of the causal mechanism that tend to generate a ‘V’ shape and in order to confirm that this pattern is not random. In Sector North, I will mostly focus in the three most important rebel groups to test my hypothesis.

4.6.1 M-23 case

The quick defeat of M-23 seemed to give the UN that offensive operations were the right tool to improve stability by attacking rebel groups. Paradoxically the M-23 military strength and high level of organization was its main weakness. As this rebel group chose to fight MONUSCO/FARCDC in a conventional way it was quickly defeated. The military capabilities of the former overwhelmed their own capabilities. Moreover the international

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\(^3\) Since the academic experts interviewed reported that the numbers may have some error I will not analyse the results in terms of percentage because it can be misleading.
pressure to Rwanda to not support the M-23 made difficult to this group to find a safe haven in the border and this was a key issue achieve a decisive victory (Stearns, 2013). It is worth noting that M-23 lack of support of Congolese people. According to a former Human Rights Officer from MONUSCO: ‘People support the government and was happy when they attacked the M-23. It was more a nationalistic thing. They perceived it as a Rwandese invader militia’. (2018)

A combination of heavy casualties, lack of support from local population and the denial of a safe haven made them to surrender. It is beyond of what the theory stated but the M-23 also helps to analyse the limitations of offensive operations. Because a failure of a comprehensive DDR process in 2017 a fraction of 150 former M-23 escaped from the Camps and reorganized. In February 2017 there were some clashes with the FARCD (UNSC Overview of Secretary (…) 2017c) Regarding the M-23 offensive operations were effective in combination with other political factors but still were not able to address a permanent solution. ). It can be argued that M-23 case also show a pattern of attack, retreat, regroup and relapse of the conflict.

4.6.2 ADF Case

During 2014 MONUSCO and FARCD were highly active conducting offensive operations against the ADF in the framework of operation SUKOLA I. The result of this operation was that ADF was expelled in March 2014 from their main strongholds near Madima and suffered about 541 casualties (UNSC Overview of Secretary (…) 2014a)\(^4\). This forced the ADF to split and retreat to the forest in smaller groups. In May and June MONUSCO and FARCD pursued the ADF forcing them to leave their woman and children and losing many soldiers according to the testimony of former ADF combatant (UNSC Final Report (…) 2015). Moreover at least 300 people escaped from ADF as they suffered a severe famine from July to August (Ibid, 2015). In spite of the critical situation they still retain the capability to recruit people and to sustain their operations. (Íbid, 2015).

The main funding sources were timber, international and local financing networks and

\(^4\) UN acknowledged that this numbers were exaggerated. A European mid officer who served in MONUSCO explained that FARCD officers usually inflate numbers in order to show the High Command their good performance.
robbing FARCDC soldiers. At the end of 2014 ADF was able to conduct attacks on civilians.

During 2015 the ADF was forced to split in 5 groups that: ‘(...) reorganized and returned to the general area of their former strongholds and set up new bases in late 2014 and early in 2015.’ (UNSC Overview of Secretary (…) 2016d, 14) The different groups were able to recruit people during 2015 because MONUSCO/FARCDC were not able to disrupt their funding sources. The arrest of one of its leaders in April 2015 and ideological differences against attacking civilians made difficult to the ADF to operate together (Íbid, 2016). Taking advantage that ‘(...) FARDC took a largely defensive approach (...) [ADF] operated with relative ease in the forested areas east of the Beni-Eringeti road and repeatedly attacked FARDC positions.’ (Ibid 2016, 14) Moreover they were also able to conduct attack against civilians.

Throughout 2016 MONUSCO and FARCDC executed two large-scale offensive operations (Usalama I in May and Usalama II in September) against ADF attacking three camps and its defences. It is worth noting that this time MONUSCO was more engaged than the previous year and attacked with ground troops. An enemy force of 200-300 combatants was faced and a system of bunkers was found after the ADF was defeated. UN reported that they interrogated ADF prisoners and they told them that the bunkers were built in order to protect from aerial and artillery attacks and also to hide from MONUSCO UAVs. (S/2016/1102, 2016) This proved that during 2015 ADF was able to reorganize and built an infrastructure to fight against the FARCDC. Moreover: ‘Each time, FARDC withdrew after the operation and, as at mid-October, the Baluku group [ADF section] had returned to and reoccupied the camps’. (UNSC Overview of Secretary (…) 2016e, 10).

That was the typical effect of restrained offensive operations that MONUSCO/FARCDC push the rebels groups but after the operations ended they are still able to retaliate on civilians. The former UN officer explained that: ‘When UN sent us to investigate raping, killings, looting against, the people tell you that was because the ADF or FDLR or whatever the militia that was in the zone say to them: ‘UN attacked us because you collaborated with them, now you will pay for that’ (...) the attacks were not something really prepared or sophisticated. Many of the killings were made with machetes’ (2018). DRC rebel groups can do that because they do not depend on the population in order to
subsist. Furthermore this tactic can be effective in the sense that: ‘Protecting civilians is very difficult in Congo. But what is worst is that when they killed people in one village then you lost all the credibility for that people. It will be impossible to get information or support of that people afterwards.’ (Former African mid rank military officer, 2018). Another effect of this tactic is that also undermines the credibility of MONUSCO not only with local population but also with the international donors. Without the support of international donors MONUSCO is forced to retreat. However it was not possible to prove that DRC rebel groups aiming for this international effect. Lastly, during the course of 2017 as the operations against the ADF scaled down the attacks against civilians were reduced. However they managed to keep the structure of the organization and continue the recruiting through kidnapping.

4.6.3 FDLR Case

The MONUSCO political differences on human rights with the DRC government, made it to delay the support of military operations till 2016. As a result, during 2015 FARDC conducted the Sukola II operations unilaterally. FARDC focused most of its operations in North Kivu, because it was where FDLR leadership was concentrated (UN /S/2015/486 :4). As it was explained before the FDLR chose not fight, however ‘(...)the FDLR [was] seriously destabilized by military operations undertaken simultaneously by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo — FARDC) and two Congolese Mai Mai groups in 2015 and 2016. Those actions accentuated internal rifts, undermined the command and control capacities of the FDLR leadership and disrupted income generation’ (UNSC Overview of Secretary (...) 2016d, 6). During 2015, it is estimated that their force of 1,500-2000 was reduced to about 800 (Florquin & Seymour, 2016). In November 2015, there was also an internal split (because of differences about tactics) which divided the FDLR in two groups, the FDLR-Foca and the FDLR/CNRD (National Council for the Democratic Renovation). However it is worth to highlight that the FDLR factions were able to still recruiting Congolese people even during the support of MONUSCO to Sukola II.Throughout 2016, hutu militias under the umbrella of Nyatura (similar to Mai Mai militias) were forced to choose one side, either
FDLR-Foca or FDLR/CNRD. There were also some clashes among those groups. (Íbid, 2016)

In spite of the pressure of FARDC/MONUSCO, at the end of 2017 the weakened FDLR factions were able to create new alliances with Nyatura and other rebel groups, bribe FARDC soldiers and make contacts with local leaders. In addition to this they were able apply guerrilla tactics against FARDC, which made MONUSCO to still consider them a threat (UNSC Overview of Secretary (…) 2017d).

To sum up, but for M-23, the evolution of the activity rebel of the groups analysed, showed the kind of reaction expected after restrained offensive operations were conducted. However, taking into account their capabilities they were I some cases able to attack during the retreat and reorganize phase. This made that the ‘V’ shape were less pronounced that it was expected.

4.7 The stability consequences in Southern Sector

As it was explained before the aim of this thesis was to build a theory that can explain the effects of restrained offensive operations in PKO. Therefore it was expected to find a different kind of pattern in the stability level evolution. Based on ACLED database and with the limitations explained above it was found the following results:

Source: own elaboration base on ACLED dataset 2018
As it was explained before the UN Central Sector was much more active in terms of military activity and in number of offensive operations, which is the variation of the independent variable between the two sectors. As a result, the rebel activity level was less affected by the military strategy applied by the UN. On the contrary, the rebel activity seems to be more affected by the FARDC military operations conducted in that area. But for the FDLR group whose activity was explained before, there were not big rebel groups in Southern Sector. For this reason, the stability of this sector will be analysed as a whole.

During 2014 MONUSCO and FARDC were negotiating the DDR process with the FDLR which was the most important guerrilla group in South Kivu. In spite of having a robust approach strategy and the patrols conducted, MONUSCO showed in many occasions, a less proactive use of force. On the other hand the DRC government did not want to engage against the FDLR. As a result, the FDLR had enough freedom of action to continue its illegals activities and organized its resistance to the announced offensive operation against them. Throughout 2014 Mai-Mai militias clashed against the FDLR making the security situation of South Kivu unstable. Because of the lack of the presence of the government, Mai- Mai militias also expanded their activity to Tanganyka.

During the 2015 FARDC conducted offensive operations against the FDLR and Mai Mai militias without the support of MONUSCO. The FDLR: ‘(...) response was to retreat and abandon strongholds without fighting. Reports indicate that combatants knew when to abandon their camps thanks to advance warnings from the FARDC’ (Florquin & Seymour 2016, 2). As it was explained, FDLR retreated to North Kivu to reorganize. Therefore, during 2015-2016 period the largest rebel group of South Kivu significantly reduced its rebel activity in that AoR. That explains the sharp decrease of rebel activity from 2014 to 2015. Nevertheless, some elements of the FDLR were able to retake some of its former positions in South Kivu due to the incapability of FARDC to hold the terrain. (UNSC Final report (...) 2015).

One of the main unintended consequences of Sukola II, is that significantly altered the balance of power among the rebels groups in South Kivu, by taking out the most important rebel group of the area. As a result Mai-Mai militias started to appear and fight for power: ‘These dynamics are a continuation of armed group mobilization that dates back
over two decades, rooted in land conflicts, local power struggles, and economic racketeering’ (CRG 2018, 8). Moreover, as rebels groups divided in fractions as a strategy to survive, there was increase of rebel groups from 70 to 120 in the 2015-2017 period. As a result during the 2015-2016 period there was a permanent fighting between Mai-Mai militias mostly driven by local issues and ethnic reasons. For instance, in March, 2015 : ‘(...)near Nyunzu village, Luba self-defence groups called ‘Eléments katangais’ set on fire a camp for internally displaced persons hosting nearly 300 Twa and killed at least 62 civilians. On 2 May, ‘Eléments katangais’ targeted MONUSCO, setting on fire the bushes surrounding a MONUSCO deployment following rumours that MONUSCO was supporting the Twa community’. (UNSC, Overview of Secretary(...) 2015a, 6)

It was also common for Mai-Mai militias to attack FARDC positions in which some occasions MONUSCO had to support the latter. In all the reports to the UN security Council, above cited to qualitative analysed UN Southern Sector, the situation during 2015 is often portrayed as instable and usually highlights that rebel groups continue to be a threat. An example of this kind of constant skirmishes happened on June 2016: ‘In South Kivu, FARDC continued operations against Mayi-Mayi Raiya Mutomboki and other Mayi-Mayi groups in Fizi, Mwenga, Shabunda and Uvira territories. The situation remained volatile in the Ruzizi Plains and in some parts of Kabare, Kalehe, Mwenga and Shabunda territories, where the presence and activities of armed groups continued to be a destabilizing factor.’ (UNSC, Overview of Secretary(...)2016a,7)

In 2016 there was a shift t when MONUSCO supported Sukola II in South Kivu. Altough, there were some offensive operations they were fewer and much more limited that in UN Central Sector. Moreover, it can be argue that its effect was not so significant due to the fact most of the FDLR forces had been previously retreated. As a consequence 2016 was also a year of low rebel activity. However, this militaristic approach sowed the seeds of instability of 2017. To begin with, it was a matter of time the proliferation of many Mai-Mai militias increases the number of attacks. The logic of events was similar when Colombia defeated the most important cartels of Medellin and Cali. As a result, the existence of this multiple small militias also disseminated the attacks, making more difficult for MONUSCO/FARCDC to respond.
Secondly: ‘(...) a new coalition of armed groups in South Kivu was established in mid-2017 with the explicit aim of overthrowing the government, a call that has been echoed by several other groups and coalitions in North and South Kivu’ (Stearns & Vogel 2018, 9) This coalition of 12 Mai-Mai groups, which most important was Mai-Mai Yakutumba, were able to temporarily capture important FARDC positions near a gold mine in Misisi. The political excuse to start this rebellion was the negative of President Kabila to end his mandate in 2016.

Thirdly, during the 2017 the FARDC decreased its pressure on offensive operations in the framework of SUKOLA II. All this three factor combined contributed to the sharp rise of rebel incidents during 2017. To sum up, in UN Southern Sector because of a stationary military disposition and reluctance of TCCs to proactively engaged against rebel groups, the robust strategy did not work to improve the stability level in UN South Central. Although, the instability level in this sector showed a more pronounced ‘V’ shape than UN Central, it was not because of UN military strategy. Although it is a common place, it is worth to remember that covariation does not necessarily mean causality. The instability level in UN Southern Sector was the result of a particular chain of events that responded to previous internal dynamics and FARDC actions.

5. Conclusions

The main conclusion of this thesis is that restrained offensive operations did not improve the long term stability level. These operations were enough effective to undermine some military capabilities of rebel groups during a short period of time but not strong enough to achieve a decisive victory. As a result, rebel group retreated, reorganized and later started to attack again. Based on that evidence, it was found some support to claim that a strategy, based on restrained offensive operations, tend to create a kind of ‘V’ shape pattern in terms of stability. By contrast, in the Southern Sector despite similarities in the mandate, numbers of peacekeepers, multinational composition among other factors, the strategy of protection by presence did not significantly influence the stability level.

The main theoretical implication of this thesis and main contribution to the research field that focus in PKOs effectiveness, is that a military strategy significantly affects the stability level of the country/area of responsibility. Contrary to the findings of Beardsley &
Gledistch (2015), I claim that explaining the effectiveness of a PKO based only in the mandate is not enough. This is because the military strategy can geographically vary, in the same mission, affecting the levels of instability in a different way. Moreover, as it was proved in this thesis, how TCCs interprets the mandate affects how military force is used and thus the effectiveness of, for instance, the protection of civilians.

In this sense, it seems that the deterrence argument of the presence of peacekeepers (Ruggeri et al: 2017) does not completely address the issue of credibility of the use of force. That is to say, if rebel groups know that peacekeepers are unwilling to use force or are incapable of reacting in time the deterrence is not effective. This thesis addressed this issue explaining the constraints of the use of force in PKOs and how they affected the performance of the mission.

Lastly, it is no clear that more troops properly equipped will reduce the battlefield deaths in PKO as Hultman et al (2014) claims. I argue that number of troops and equipment are enablers to improve the performance of a PKO, but they are not sufficient conditions to reduce the battlefield deaths. MONUSCO is the largest PKOs in terms of troops and military equipment deployed but this fact did not correlate with an improvement of the stability. To what extent and how the Force Commander can use this troops and make use of the technology available, is what matters the most. This was proved by showing different patterns of stability in both UN Central and Southern Sector.

However, it must be noted that in Central Sector ‘V’ shape was not as pronounced as it was expected. That can be explained because rebel groups could easily retaliate on civilians, since nor MONUSCO neither FARCD, were able to hold the terrain after a military offensive operation was finished. Therefore, during the retreat period, some rebel groups were somewhat able to cause incidents. Moreover the offensive operations made the rebel groups split as a survival strategy. It also altered the balance of power /alliances among them and produced that new rebel groups appear. Those effects also increased the numbers on incidents making the ‘V’ shape effect less pronounced. It would be interesting to research whether the attacks after a rebel groups split are less deadly and sophisticated. If so there would a paradoxical effect of increasing number of rebel group’s attacks at the same time they become less dangerous.
Another plausible explanation that the ‘V’ were less pronounced than it was expected, is that I found that the offensive operations were more restrained, that I have previously thought. But for some exceptions, MONUSCO most of times performed a subsidiary role supporting the FARCDC operations. Even more, the FIB was underused in terms of its offensive capabilities. Taking into account the military limitations of both FARCDC/MONUSCO it is likely that the effects of offensive operation in destroying/disrupting enemy capabilities were less than expected.

On the contrary, in Southern Sector the pattern of stability was much more related with the effects of military operations conducted by the FARDC and the rebel groups local competition dynamics. It seems that the robust approach was not effective either to bring stability but, it must be noted, that this was mainly because of the passivity and reactive posture of the TCCs deployed in the sector. It is also worth to highlight that the UN Southern Sector did not present a ‘V’ shape stability pattern but a ‘U’ shape. That is to say a decrease followed by an stagnation period and then a rise in rebel activity. However we cannot determine whether this pattern was a matter of specific conditions or it has a theoretical reason. It was out of the scope of this thesis to analyse the effects of a ‘typical’ robust mandate strategy and how does it affect the levels of stability. To what extent this result was only related with DRC or it also happens in other PKOs is something that this thesis cannot determine. Analysing the effects of the tactics of this approach is highly challenging because of the lack of public information of number of patrols, manoeuvres to show force and the skirmishes/battles to defend civilians/infrastructure. Therefore further research is needed to address this gap of the effectiveness of this way to use force in PKOs.

There is an exception when restrained offensive operations might work in PKO. If TCCs and a host government reached a consensus that there is a spoiler affecting a peace agreement or an important negotiation, offensive operations can be used to pressure the spoiler to return to the negotiations table. As restrained operations were effective to undermine the spoilers capabilities during a short period of time they can be effectively combined with a long term diplomatic effort. However, these operations should be exceptional, limited in time and space and precise in terms of the targets they choose in order to avoid spurring the conflict.
One limitation of this thesis is that it was assumed that the differences of rebel groups in terms of capabilities and military tactics employed were not significant. In spite of the fact that rebel groups showed some kind of common patterns their differences were somehow relevant to explain different outcomes. For instance, the conventional tactical approach of M-23 lead to its quick defeat whereas the guerrilla tactics of ADF allowed this group still be a considerable threat for DRC. Hence further research is needed in order to assess the effects of restrained offensive operations taking into account the rebel group strategy. This is particular relevant in DRC where there are about 120 rebel groups operating in its Eastern region.

Another important limitation of this thesis is that the effects of FARDC corruption, collusion with rebel groups and human rights abuses were not deeply analysed. This is a common problem of the UN, when it has to deal with host governments. The negative effects of those factors in terms of stability, civilian’ safety and military performance are crystal clear. However, human rights abuses, collusion with rebel groups were also present before the UN adopted a strategy based on offensive operations. Henceforth, further research is needed to analyse whether the use of restrained offensive operations worsens that issues.

Thirdly, this thesis only superficially mentioned the geopolitical interests of the TCCs involved. It would be interested to analyse how the geopolitical interests (Manpilly: 2018) and the military culture of the TCCs (Ruffa: 2017) affects the decision to use a specific military strategy. In this thesis was stated how some TCCs were more risk-adverse or reluctant to use force but the causal mechanism to explain that was not fully addressed.

The fourth limitation of this thesis is its external validity. As the aim of this research was building a theory it was beyond of its objectives to immediate generalize its conclusions. I argue that my main contribution is to prove how important is the use of force, that is to say military strategy, to improve or worsen the stability level in PKO. It would be interesting to test the theory of restrained offensive operations in other PKO with offensive mandates such as MINUSMA or MINUSCAR.

The fact that restrained offensive operations did not improve long term stability should not lead to the conclusion that the solution is conducting full fledge offensive operations. For instance, the US and NATO interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, that did
not have the limitations of PKO, are examples of how costly and ineffective those operations can be. Moreover it is important to stress that increasing numbers of peacekeepers does not automatically improve stability because that depends of how TCCs interpret the mandate and how force is employed. Therefore it is relevant to take into consideration, that the trend of becoming more and more robust, or to implement war-fighting mandates are not the best solution to bring peace and stability.

It is also worth noting that military should not be blame about the lack of results in PKO. But for those cases that like negligence, corruption, human rights and sexual abuse where military were clearly responsible, there are under serious pressure of overstretched mandates. ‘Doing more with less’ sounds good but is not a realistic approach and can be really dangerous for peacekeepers and civilians affected by the internal conflict. On the contrary, it must rethink what are the unique capabilities that Armed Forces have, and how to get the best of them within a comprehensive political strategy. In this sense because of its multiplier force effects, culture awareness and versatility, Special Forces can offer a wider menu of options in PKO than conventional troops.

Lastly, as long as the world remains anarchical, the balance of power and the national interest will continue to be the main driving forces to create stability or disorder. Regarding with PKOs, it would be more productive to try to reach consensus of what realistically can be done taking into account to what TCCs are willing/capable to do.
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