Evaluating the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine: A Process-Tracing and Content Analysis of Interventions in Eastern Congo

A senior thesis submitted to the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University in candidacy for Honors for the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

Owen Schwartz

May 1, 2026

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Megan V. Davis, M.P.H., Ph.D., Adjunct Professor in the Department of Philosophy, George Washington University

Abstract

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine's invocation in recent interventions in the Conflict in the Eastern Congo is paired with increasing skepticism of R2P's relevance as an approach to humanitarian intervention. Existing research critiques the R2P doctrine but offers alternatives that work within its existing framework. It also fails to examine the doctrine's effectiveness in practice—potentially ignoring how it is operationalized. Using United Nations (UN) Security Council resolutions renewing MONUSCO's mandate from 2020 to 2025 and Reports of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO and the Peace, Security, and Cooperation (PSC) Framework from 2025, I conducted process tracing and content analysis, respectively, to evaluate how the R2P doctrine was invoked and operationalized in the Eastern Congo. Moving beyond critiques of the R2P doctrine, the analysis revealed a gap between invocation of R2P and its operationalization. The findings indicate that the R2P doctrine fails in practice with countries not upholding their financial obligations and peacekeeping efforts being met with worsening human rights conditions.

Keywords: Responsibility to Protect Doctrine, Conflict in Eastern Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Humanitarian Intervention, United Nations Security Council, Process Tracing, Content Analysis

Contents

1. Introduction *4*
1.1. Purpose of Study *4*
1.2. Ethics Review *4*
1.3. Research Questions *6*
1.4. Thesis Structure *6*
2. Literature Review *8*
2.1. Responsibility to Protect (R2P) *9*
2.2. Just War Theory *12*
2.3. Critiques to Existing Theory *13*
2.4. Gaps in Existing Research *15*
3. Methods *17*
3.1. Materials *17*
3.2. Design and Procedure *17*
4. Case Background *22*
4.1. Conflict Overview *22*
4.2. Key Actors *23*
4.3. Peace Processes *23*
5. Findings and Analysis *27*
5.1. UN Security Council Resolutions Renewing MONUSCO Mandate *28*
5.2. Reports of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO and the PSC Framework *30*
6. Discussion *34*
6.1. Theoretical Implications *34*
6.2. Policy Implications for Future Interventions *36*
6.3. Limitations *37*
6.4. Directions for Future Research *37*
7. Conclusion *38*
8. References *40*
9. Appendix A: Figures and Tables *46*

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness and practical application of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine in the context of the conflict in Eastern Congo. While the R2P doctrine is largely considered a normative and universal approach to preventing mass atrocities, its application in complex conflict situations remains contested. This study seeks to clarify and understand how the doctrine is invoked and operationalized in a region marked with ongoing violence and humanitarian crises.

Accomplishing its purpose, this study uses a mixed-methods approach that combines process tracing and content analysis. This research design allows the study to track how decision-making is guided by key intervention events and the extent to which these processes align with the R2P doctrine. By analyzing both the decision-making process and how these processes evolved, the study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of R2P's strengths, weaknesses, and implications.

Ultimately, this study's purpose is to contribute to understanding how R2P functions in practice and to evaluate whether the doctrine is applicable to present-day conflicts. The complexity and protracted nature of the conflict in the Eastern Congo and its accompanying peacekeeping missions presents a unique evaluation of how the R2P doctrine operates (or fails to do so) in a conflict marked by failed efforts and (neo)colonial influence.

1.2. Ethics Review

Before beginning my research, I sought to develop an epistemology that would both broaden my own perspectives and produce meaningful research on the Eastern Congo. To

accomplish this, I centered my research principles around decoloniality, reflexive practices, critical race theory, and positionality. This is, first and foremost, grounded in the work of Milner (2007) who emphasizes that researchers pursue both a deeper understanding of the culture they are studying as well as their own. Developing an introspective epistemology was imperative for acknowledging the colonial role of Western intervention in countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo which is the primary focus of this thesis.

Therefore, I incorporated destabilizing practices. This form of reflexive practice encourages the researcher to question existing theories, highlighting their flaws or lack of reflexivity (Alvesson et al., 2008). For reflexivity, "[t]he emphasis is on embodiment and lived experience in addition to language use, in relation to others who are not necessarily researchers" (Alvesson et al., 2008, pp. 480-481). This plays a vital role in beginning to decolonize research and incorporate critical race theory. However, I do not make the claim that my research is fully decolonized. Instead, I acknowledge that my position as a white, non-binary American researcher means that my research can never be fully decolonized. Decolonization, as defined by Denzin et al. (2008), is "a continuous process of anti-colonial struggle that honors Indigenous approaches to knowing the world, recognizing Indigenous land, Indigenous peoples, and Indigenous sovereignty—including sovereignty over the decolonization process" (in Datta, 2018, p. 2).

This research also implements critical race theory which posits that race and racism are ingrained into society, stories from people of color should be centered through narrative-counter narratives, and interest convergence (Milner, 2007). When examining motivations, especially within the Global North-South dynamic, implementing critical race theory helps center the narratives of Global South actors while avoiding a top-down approach to questions of intervention. This further strengthens this research's reflexive practices which challenge the

objectivity of an observer's own perceptions of the world (Alvesson et al., 2008). Recognizing that my own observations cannot truly be objective requires an acknowledgment that my own cultural background and experiences shape my own personal epistemology and ontology.

1.3. Research Questions

This thesis examines the research question: Is the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine still an effective tool for intervention in the context of the conflict in the Eastern Congo? And the following sub-questions:

- Which theoretical frameworks are explicitly or implicitly guiding intervention under Responsibility to Protect?
- How do these theories emerge in United Nations (UN) documents on the conflict in Eastern Congo?
- What role, if any, should the R2P doctrine play in human rights interventions today?

1.4. Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured to evaluate the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine by applying content analysis and process tracing to interventions in Eastern Congo. It centers this analysis on UN documents on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

The first chapter introduces the study, outlining the research problem and the significance of analyzing the R2P doctrine in Eastern Congo. It also provides an ethics review centering my positionality and concludes with the guiding research questions and a summary of the thesis structure.

The second chapter reviews the relevant literature, providing an overview of the two key theoretical frameworks of modern human rights intervention—the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and Just War Theory. The chapter identifies theoretical and empirical gaps as well as critiques of these existing frameworks that the thesis seeks to address while also situating it within the broader context of academic research.

The third chapter explains the rationale for using process tracing and content analysis for this study. It includes details on the research design, source selection, analytical methods employed, and methodological and empirical limitations of the study.

The fourth chapter provides background on the conflict in Eastern Congo, providing an overview of the conflict, key actors involved, and the major events necessary for understanding the research. This chapter provides the empirical foundation needed for the following section of analysis.

The fifth chapter presents the analysis of the selected documents, applying process tracing and content analysis to assess how Responsibility to Protect has been invoked and operationalized in the Eastern Congo by MONUSCO. This chapter evaluates how R2P principles applied during intervention as well as its inconsistencies.

The sixth chapter discusses the implications of the findings by connecting the results back to the theoretical frameworks discussed in the second chapter as well as broader debates on humanitarian intervention. This chapter reflects on the role the R2P doctrine plays in modern human rights intervention and outlines future research opportunities.

The thesis concludes by synthesizing the key findings of the study, providing a comprehensive evaluation of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine through its investigation of MONUSCO's intervention in Eastern Congo.

2. Literature Review

Across existing literature, two prominent concepts emerged when examining recent humanitarian interventions: Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and Just War theory. While the latter presents a broad moral argument for military intervention, the former provides an international policy framework rooted in moral obligation. R2P was first conceptualized in the late 1990s after repeated failures of the international community to respond to genocide and mass atrocities—most prominently the Rwandan genocide (Bellamy and Dunne, 2016). In the Outcome Document for the 2005 World Summit, members of the international community laid out the guiding policies of the R2P principle:

> Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means…The international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In this context, we are prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect

> their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. (United Nations General Assembly, 2005, p. 30)

The moral obligation of a state to protect its own population from mass atrocities and the obligation for other states to take action when another state fails to do so remains the primary focus of humanitarian intervention for the past two decades.

Just War Theory represents a long-standing philosophical argument for what justifies war, but in recent years has been used by cosmopolitan liberal theorists for application to human rights interventions. The theory posits two principles for intervention: last resort and proportionality. The last resort principle prevents states from using force if more peaceful means could achieve the same result while proportionality ensures that "the harm and injustice which will foreseeably be caused by war should be disproportionate to the expected good," (Rocheleau, 2021, p. 26). Walzer (2015) further explains that just wars are limited in scope and lie primarily within the sphere of self-defense against aggression. However, cosmopolitan liberal theorists have pushed this theory to encapsulate interventions that are either preemptive or are not intended to be self-defensive (Rocheleau, 2021).

2.1. Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

The existing literature agrees that the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine is flawed but does not form a consensus on how to improve it. Lepard (2021) focuses on the UN Security Council (UNSC) member states with veto power (United States of America, United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China). The extensive power it is granted blurs the line of when it is appropriate to intervene and if any legal obligation exists to do so. Lepard (2021) emphasizes that the R2P doctrine does not create a duty for member states to intervene, as it is not rooted in

the existence of specific rights-holders. However, Badru and Oluyemi (2024) posit that intervention is rooted in a duty to protect. Levine (2014) further emphasizes that intervention is rooted in moral obligation rather than legal obligation under international law.

The literature attempts to outline moral arguments and justifications for intervention under the R2P doctrine. Badru and Oluyemi (2024) argue that intervention requires moral grounds, methodology, and scope and ends. This mirrors the criteria for military intervention outlined by Ignatieff (2001) in his discussion of human rights as politics and idolatry. Similarly, Erameh and Ojakorotu (2022) attempt to blend both deontological perspectives (intervening based on protecting our shared humanity) and consequentialist ones (intervening because the outcome would be worse without intervention). However, Neilsen (2023) complicates the moral argument for intervention, arguing that a state's moral reputation influences its decision to intervene for fear of causing more harm through entanglement. Interventions that perpetuate worsening human rights discussed across the literature weaken this argument (Hlungwani and Muzuva, 2024; Jemirade, 2020; Krishnan, 2020; Okonkwo et al., 2025). In the end, the literature fails to identify an approach to R2P that accounts for both the intentions of intervening states as well as the outcome of these interventions.

Under the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), African states have shifted from a policy of non-interference to one of non-indifference—in line with R2P's duty to protect (Hlungwani and Muzuva, 2024). However, the role of international and regional actors on the continent remains largely contested. Welsh (2021) notes how deference to regional actors remains problematic for the UNSC because of conflicts involving multiple states (e.g. the Democratic Republic of the Congo with Rwanda and Uganda). For Welsh (2021), pushing for regional control is focused on a Western-centric false hope that fostering democratic norms and

peace will maintain stability. Conversely, Hlungwani and Muzuva (2024) argue that Africa's policy of non-indifference and local ownership is complicated by international institutions and non-African states funding military operations and peacekeeping efforts.

Lepard (2021) proposes that intervention requires "unity of diversity" in which "[h]uman beings ethically ought to view themselves as members of a global human family" (p. 233). However, this approach to R2P does not recognize the lived realities of intervention in a post-R2P world. Badru and Oluyemi (2024) argue that the current framework assumes juridical equality of UN member states but only when interventions are Western states in non-Western states, not vice versa. The lack of reciprocation in intervention under R2P roots the doctrine in a Western-centric lens. Neilsen (2023) notes that R2P embodies "the colonial maxim of Euro-exceptionalism," but Global South states overwhelmingly show explicit support for the doctrine citing how collective action can uphold their obligations under R2P (p. 482). The author goes on to state that supporting R2P does not inherently assume similar moral culpabilities under the doctrine due to other factors that compelled them to join the collectivity.

The R2P doctrine lacks specific enforcement methods and "innovative means to hold states accountable," which Jemirade (2021) argues leads to Global North states intervening in "weak" states in the Global South (p. 53). This is echoed by Badru and Oluyemi (2024) and Neilsen's (2023) previously discussed arguments. Okonkwo et al. (2025) discuss how technological and economic changes have shifted what constitutes force. Beyond physical intervention, economic sanctions and remote warfare allow wealthier states to violate the sovereignty of other states from anywhere in the world. Hlungwani and Muzuva (2024) highlight these new forms of force with the United States, Turkey, Russia, China, and the European Union

playing an outsized role in military operations in Africa. These changing dynamics show a need for reexamining the current state of R2P two decades after it was first conceived.

2.2. Just War Theory

Underpinning the R2P doctrine is the more established philosophical argument outlined in just war (or cause) theory. Despite how ingrained just war theory is in the R2P doctrine (Bellamy and Dunne, 2016; Rocheleau, 2021), the existing literature remains skeptical about its application to human rights intervention. Rocheleau (2021) discusses the cosmopolitan liberalist theory of war which creates a new human rights paradigm that rejects traditional state sovereignty and posits that any violation of human rights creates just cause for war. Ignatieff (2004) and Walzer (2015) follow similar paths as cosmopolitans, justifying intervention as the "lesser evil" in Ignatieff's case or as a war of law enforcement for Walzer. Walzer (2015), however, would be careful to completely revise just war theory to include any human rights violation, noting that any revisionism risks a slippery slope. Rocheleau (2021) also refutes the cosmopolitan argument because it fails to recognize how human rights are aspirational. For Rocheleau, if no government is legitimate under the human rights paradigm, then what value does it hold as an international standard?

Realist arguments posit that states are motivated by their own interests rather than moral considerations and that they should act in line with these national interests rather than moral principles (Rocheleau, 2021). Ignatieff (2004), Walzer (2015), and Rocheleau (2021) push back against the realist argument with varying levels of justification for war beyond national interest. Ignatieff (2004) notes that "while international law clearly privileges state sovereignty, it does not deny the legitimacy of violence against occupation or colonial rule," (p. 92). Similarly, Rocheleau (2021) points to the moral obligations that states are unable to ignore to intervene

rather than for their national interests alone. Walzer (2015) also notes how the violation of other states' sovereignty violates international law, pushing against arguments that intervention to preserve a state's interests solely examines national interests while ignoring moral obligations under internal law.

Just war theory also reveals key distinctions that underpin the R2P doctrine and how intervention should be examined. Walzer (2015) notes how, under just war theory, examination "requires us to judge the conduct of a war independently of our judgment of its character," (p. 373). This argument reveals an important distinction for human rights interventions: even though an intervention is justified under the current "rules of war," the actions of soldiers and/or peacekeepers must be judged independently. Previously discussed literature illustrates how intervention can only be examined insofar as how universally it is applied (Badru and Oluyemi, 2024; Jemirade, 2021; Nielsen, 2023). Ignatieff's (2004) argument for the "lesser evil" approach emphasizes how the means in which a conflict is ended must justify the ends. Therefore, further abridgment of human rights through armed intervention would not be justified to alleviate current human rights conditions. However, Rocheleau (2021), Walzer (2015), and Ignatieff (2004) all agree that a certain level of human rights violation (e.g. mass atrocities and crimes against humanity) is justified under their individual arguments for intervention.

2.3. Critiques to Existing Theory

While existing literature on humanitarian interventions are rooted in R2P and the Just War Theory, significant challenges are discussed within this literature while others propose new pathways for how the international community thinks about humanitarianism. Quinton-Brown (2020) frames a primary problem of the current system: focusing on massacre and the prevention of loss of life. The author continues to discuss how this form of intervention justification creates

a double standard when Western countries are not seen as subjects for intervention. Instead, the current system for intervention justifies a Western-centric, uneven relationship between the Global North and South. The status quo separates the world into the vulnerable and invulnerable groups which reinforces a paternalistic power structure (Butler, 2020). Jemirade (2021) similarly outlines how the R2P doctrine fails as a "strict, perfect moral duty" because it relies on intervening states to have "compassionate and ethical motivations," (p. 57). Ultimately, R2P expects too much of states by fully rejecting the realist argument.

The literature also reveals structural barriers to the R2P doctrine's success. Welsh (2021) highlights the role of the UNSC in evaluating intervention on a case-by-case basis has led to atrocities not being properly addressed. The author notes the gross human rights violations in Sri Lanka and Myanmar that did not merit any formal discussion in the UNSC. While the literature heavily relies on both the securitization of human rights intervention and the continuation of the R2P doctrine, it ultimately fails to recognize how R2P fundamentally fails to intervene when human rights atrocities would warrant intervention under its doctrine. Wamaitha (2021) explains how the human rights framework is viewed as a success because it builds upon the growth seen in the Western world; therefore, it is believed to be capable of delivering progress in the non-Western world. The relativist argument recognizes the role that Western states played in establishing the human rights norms with non-Western states having unequal or silenced voices (Orentlicher, 2001), but it is unclear whether a relativist international system would be possible to construct from current human rights frameworks.

Ultimately, the literature proposes several solutions and alternatives for the R2P doctrine. Jemirade (2021) argues that the international community should shift towards other existing human rights conventions, noting that a decentralized approach to intervention allows for greater

flexibility. Similar to Quinton-Brown's (2020) arguments, a focus on flexibility allows the international community to move towards the unrealized juridical equality of states (Badru and Oluyemi, 2024). Rocheleau (2021) also provides greater flexibility for justifying intervention, suggesting that a state should only lose legitimacy if: "there is a massive expression of public will against that government or…there are massive rights violations such that the case for intervention is overwhelming," (p. 90). Unlike the cosmopolitan view, Rocheleau (2021) steers away from justifying intervention for any level of rights violations. Butler (2020) provides more nuance to what justifies safeguarding a population from violence, positing that those lives must be grievable and thus be valued if they were to be lost.

2.4. Gaps in Existing Research

Gaps in the existing literature exist within practical challenges to R2P and proposed alternatives as well as the evaluation of effectiveness for human rights interventions. Overwhelmingly, the literature details how practitioners can work within the R2P framework to improve interventions only by adjusting existing policies (Erameh and Ojakorotu, 2022; Hlungwani and Muzuva, 2024; Ignatieff, 2004; Neilsen, 2023; Walzer, 2015). Some authors detail how intervention is rooted in coloniality to some extent (Neilsen, 2023; Quinton-Brown, 2020; Wamaitha, 2021; Welsh, 2021). Failing to imagine a world beyond R2P, the literature presents several challenges to existing shifts in intervention policies. Hlungwani and Muzuva (2024) note the difficulty navigating the African Union's shift from non-interference to non-indifference, citing conflicts of interest for external actors and the impact it would have on national sovereignty. The authors further argue that more research is needed on how to balance external intervention with the APSA's emphasis on African ownership and leadership.

The literature also notes the wide gap between top-down perceptions and local realities. Sogge (2001) highlights how humanitarian agencies often fail to consult local communities, reducing their effectiveness to meet the needs of these communities. Hlungwani and Muzuva (2024) emphasize how this gap between local needs and agency actions stems from local perceptions of sovereignty not being fully examined. Without proper examination, local perceptions have not been considered when evaluating the effectiveness of international interventions. This perception gap necessitates an examination of the coloniality of intervention. The works of Quinton-Brown (2020), Neilson (2023), and Wamaitha (2021) re-focus arguments for and against intervention to a broader context, highlighting how power structures make any intervention inherently unequal.

With this re-examination of intervention, the literature identifies a need to reevaluate the role the Global South plays in intervention efforts. Hlungwani and Muzuva (2024) note that interventions by the African Union need greater research for the long-term outcomes and effectiveness of a regional approach. Similarly, Bellamy and Dunne (2016) highlight a need for shifting theory as new powers emerge within the Global South. As power structures shift within the Global South, research must examine whether the R2P doctrine still holds as a viable solution to intervention. Sogge (2001) notes a lack of attention paid to the “lower ends of aid chains” in the existing literature, decentering local communities and the impact that intervention and aid have on them.

The literature presents several avenues for change in the intervention framework. Bellamy and Dunne (2016) note how R2P, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding are often seen as independent agendas which research needs to examine how they can be—and are—mutually interdependent. While these agendas need to be analyzed as an integrated system, the literature

also demonstrates that more can be done to address the ambiguity in intervention. Torál (2023) advocates for research to focus on developing moral and legal rules that separate "virtuous wars" from human rights intervention. Similarly, Neilsen (2023) identifies that the literature fails to examine "whether the desire to preserve individual moral reputation paradoxically influences states to refrain from volunteering to join intervening coalitions–notwithstanding the ostensible ethical duty to do so," (p. 481).

3. Methods

3.1. Materials

Several UN documents were consulted throughout the research process; two sets of documents were selected: UN Security Council Resolutions renewing MONUSCO's mandate in Eastern Congo and Reports of the Secretary-General to the UN Security Council on the conflict in Eastern Congo. The UN Security Council Resolutions include six documents between the years of 2020 and 2025 to provide context on how MONUSCO's mission has developed over the past six years (see Table 1). Reports of the Secretary-General were restricted to 2025 to provide clarity on the current state of MONUSCO's mandate in Eastern Congo (see Table 2). These documents are the primary focus for the following research design.

3.2. Design and Procedure

The research design for this study was non-experimental and non-correlational as it studied the evolution of MONUSCO's mandate and the applicability of R2P in its present state. The study centers on UN documents that include descriptions of MONUSCO's activities and the parameters of its mandate. Documents were selected for the study based on their relevance to the conflict in Eastern Congo and their discussion of MONUSCO's activities in Eastern Congo.

Table 1. Summary of Findings for UN Security Council Resolutions on MONUSCO Renewal, 2020-2025

Reference Number	Date Issued	Focus Areas	Summary
S/RES/2556	12/18/2020	- Encouraging collaboration between DRC and MONUSCO - Commending UN and international partner efforts - Encouraging DRC and regional organizations for support - Extending MONUSCO's mandate with 14,000 troops - Acknowledging planned exit strategy	Extension in 2020 focuses on continued collaboration between DRC and MONUSCO to achieve peacekeeping efforts. While acknowledging regional cooperation, the document centers the work of MONUSCO and the DRC during the conflict.
S/RES/2612	12/20/2021	- Recognizing collaboration between DRC and MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) - Encouraging regional collaboration with MONUSCO and DRC - Commending UN and international partner efforts - Encouraging building State capacity by DRC - Extending MONUSCO's mandate with 13,500 troops	Extension in 2021 focuses on MONUSCO's role as a collaborator and, mainly, leader of peacekeeping efforts. The document mentions MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) and taking all necessary measures to protect personnel and carry out the mandate.
S/RES/2666	12/20/2022	- Encouraging regional cooperation on humanitarian needs - Emphasizing MONUSCO using all means necessary to carry out mandate - Emphasizing MONUSCO role as supporting DRC's efforts to build State capacity - Recognizing regional efforts such as the Luanda and Nairobi processes - Extending MONUSCO's mandate with 13,500 troops	Extension in 2022 focuses on regional efforts, such as the Luanda and Nairobi processes, to end the conflict in Eastern Congo. The document still emphasizes the collaborative role of MONUSCO in both regional organization's and the DRC's peacekeeping efforts.
S/RES/2717	12/19/2023	- Encouraging regional support alongside MONUSCO's efforts - Recognizing Luanda and Nairobi processes' efforts to bring peace - Recognizing regional efforts and encouraging ownership of peace processes - Recognizing conditions needed for sustainable withdrawal from Eastern Congo - Extending MONUSCO's mandate with 13,500 troops, reducing to 11,500 in July 2024	Extension in 2023 focuses on regional efforts, such as the Luanda and Nairobi processes, to end the conflict in Eastern Congo. The document acknowledges the need for African ownership of peace processes and outlines the sustainable withdrawal of MONUSCO from Eastern Congo.
S/RES/2765	12/20/2024	- Emphasizing sustainable withdrawal coupled with strengthening State presence - Recognizing multi- and bilateral agreements towards peace - Emphasizing role of DRC's efforts to build peace - Recognizing regional efforts to combat root causes of the conflict - Extending MONUSCO's mandate with 11,500 troops	Extension in 2024 focuses on the DRC's and regional organization's efforts to end the conflict in Eastern Congo. The document emphasizes a need to strengthen the DRC's state capacity and presence in the eastern region as part of MONUSCO's withdrawal.
S/RES/2808	12/19/2025	- Recognizing efforts by regional organizations building peace - Emphasizing role of MONUSCO in peacekeeping efforts - Centering DRC's role in building state capacity - Recognizing complexity of sustainable withdrawal with renewed hostilities - Extending MONUSCO's mandate with 11,500 troops	Extension in 2025 focuses on regional efforts to end the conflict in Eastern Congo while acknowledging MONUSCO and the UN's roles in working with these actors. The document highlights the complexities of further withdrawing from the conflict after renewed hostilities in Eastern Congo.

Table 2. Summary of Findings for Reports of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO and PSC Framework, March to December 2025

Reference Number	Date Issued	Focus Areas	Summary
S/2025/176	3/20/2025	- Progress in the combined Luanda and Nairobi processes - Advances made by M23 including the capture of Goma in North Kivu - Enhancement of MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade with Congolese forces - Rise of human rights violations in M23-controled areas of Eastern Congo - Delays to withdrawal from South Kivu due to deteroriated security situation	March's report on MONUSCO highlighted M23's increased hostilities, and MONUSCO's role in providing military force assistance to DRC. While regional efforts were mentioned, focus was placed on MONUSCO's documentation of human rights violations and the delays to its withdrawal from South Kivu.
S/2025/202	4/1/2025	- Progress in the combined Luanda and Nairobi processes - Deterioration in bilateral relations between DRC and Rwanda, DRC and M23 - Humanitarian efforts to repatriate IDPs and refugees between DRC, Rwanda, and UNHCR - Revitalization of the PSC Framework with regional cooperation efforts - Collaboration between international and regional actors for implementation of PSC Framework	April's report on the PSC Framework highlighted renewed interest in implementing its protocols in the region. Most of the report focused on regional and bilateral relations, including their increasing challenges, but also did note the role on UN agencies in facilitating efforts like refugee and IDP repatriation.
S/2025/403	6/23/2025	- US efforts towards the Washington Accords between DRC and Rwanda - Regional efforts to bring peace through non-military means, but faced with challenges - MONUSCO's role in training and helping military forces during the conflict - Challenges in Protection of Civilians (PoC) with M23's advances - Human rights violations committed by both state and non-state actors	June's report on MONUSCO highlighted multilateral efforts from the US and Qatar to bring peace to the region. While regional efforts were emphasized for their role in non-military approaches to bringing peace, MONUSCO's mandate for PoC and assisting military forces was highlighted more.
S/2025/590	9/19/2025	- US and Qatari efforts towards the Washington Accords and Doha Framework - MONUSCO's role in PoC with challenges in M23-controled areas of North Kivu - MONUSCO's role as police and military force as part of its mandate - Human rights violations committed by both state and non-state actors - Underfunding of the 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan	September's report on MONUSCO highlighted the implementation of US and Qatar's multilateral peace agreements. The report emphasized MONUSCO's role in PoC and as a police and military force in Eastern Congo. The report also notes how humanitarian responses are severely underfunded.
S/2025/615	10/1/2025	- AFC/M23 continue clashes and seeking rearmament - End of regional security efforts by SADC after decision to end its mandate - Joint Oversight Committee created by Washington Accords met to discuss implementation - African Union efforts to lead conflict resolution, reiterating its leadership in the matter - Humanitarian responses remain underfunded, hindering their ability to operate in Eastern Congo	October's report on the PSC Framework highlighted AFC/M23's renewed hostilities in Eastern Congo. The report notes how regional efforts are evolving, emphasizing the AU's position on its primacy in conflict resolution. It also notes how humanitarian responses are hindered by severe underfunding.
S/2025/779	12/1/2025	- Signing of the Doha Framework and implementation continuing on Washington Accords - Regional efforts to secure non-agression pacts at ICGLR summit - MONUSCO's role in PoC including building capacity for state and non-state forces to take over - MONUSCO's role in military force and training and implementation of DDR programmes - Underfunding of the 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan	December's report on MONUSCO highlighted the continued implementation of US and Qatar's respective peace agreements. Despite mentioning regional efforts for peace, the report emphasizes MONUSCO's role in PoC as well as training military forces and implmenting DDR. It also notes how the underfunding of humanitarian responses hinders their ability to function.

Qualitative analysis was conducted on the documents to answer the research questions posed by this thesis. Two primary methods of qualitative analysis were used during the study: content analysis and process-tracing.

The research used content analysis to trace themes that emerged from 2025 Reports of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO and the Peace, Security, and Cooperation (PSC) Framework. Content analysis follows four stages: condensation, coding, categorizing, and theme identification. Condensation shortens the text while preserving its meaning, coding provides a shorthand description of these condensed sections of text, categorizing groups like codes together, and theme identification adds meaning to the identified categories and codes (Erlignsson and Byrsiewicz, 2017). The selection of this method allowed the analysis to evaluate the most recent iteration of MONUSCO's mandate in Eastern Congo in 2025. Simplifying the UN documents on MONUSCO and the PSC Framework made discerning the broader themes of the intervention efforts and their (lack of) connection to the Responsibility to Protect doctrine.

The research employed process tracing to conduct a qualitative analysis of UN Security Council resolutions extending MONUSCO's mandate in Eastern Congo. Collier (2011) defines the process tracing framework as "the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analyzed in light of research questions and hypotheses posed by the investigator" (p. 823). The author elaborates that the framework evaluates causal claims of social or political phenomena. Selection of this method allowed the research to track how MONUSCO's mandate evolved and the role that the Responsibility to Protect doctrine played in driving MONUSCO and the UN Security Council's actions. The research used the Auxiliary-Outcome test which allowed the analysis to evaluate the inferential leverage that the weakening of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine had on shifting the MONUSCO mandate. This test does not necessarily imply

causality, but the derived inference can strengthen the independent variable's causal importance (Collier, 2011).

3.3. Case Selection

This study is framed around the conflict in Eastern Congo because it offers a complex environment for evaluating the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. The region has been marked by persistent armed conflict, mass displacement, and widespread human rights violations for an extended period (UN Security Council, S/RES/2808, 2025). The setting of this conflict highlights the core concerns of the R2P doctrine: protection from war crimes, mass atrocities, ethnic cleansing, and genocide (UN General Assembly, 2005). The case offers two areas of significance: theoretical and empirical relevance as well as vast analytical possibilities and broader discourse on intervention.

As previously mentioned, the level of human rights violations and persistent armed conflict from multiple armed groups make the conflict in Eastern Congo an ideal fit for theoretical application. This case is especially pertinent to the application of the R2P doctrine's framework and how it influences international responses in complex and protracted conflicts such as the one in Eastern Congo. This case also has produced sizeable amounts of documentation that details how human rights conditions evolved over a long period of time as well as how peacekeeping missions, such as MONUSCO, have changed their approach (UN Security Council; S/RES/2556, 2020; S/RES/2612, 2021; S/RES/2666, 2022; S/RES/2717, 2023; S/RES/2765, 2024; S/RES/2808, 2025). This provides a vast evidentiary base that facilitates content analysis as well as over a long period of time for process tracing.

The complexity of the conflict in Eastern Congo creates an opportunity for a greater depth of analysis as well as new contributions to debates on humanitarian intervention in the R2P doctrine era. The conflict encompasses several state and non-state armed groups; regional, bilateral, and multilateral peace agreements; weakened state capacity; and overlapping economic and political drivers (UN Secretary-General, S/2025/779, 2025). Studying the R2P doctrine in this environment allows for analysis to move beyond whether the doctrine was invoked to how it interacts with multi-layered conflict dynamics. This adds to current discourse on the R2P doctrine and UN-led humanitarian intervention—especially in increasingly complex conflict environments around the world. This case creates the opportunity to study how R2P works, or fails to, through the lens of an enduring humanitarian crisis.

4. Case Background

4.1. Conflict Overview

The conflict in Eastern Congo is primarily rooted in the colonial history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Under Belgian colonial rule, DRC was (and continues to be) exploited for its minerals and rich natural resources. After gaining its independence, the resource-rich Katanga province seceded from DRC, aligning with its previous colonial ruler, Belgium. This tension coupled with the undermining of Lumumba's government, severely weakened the DRC's ability to govern its vast and diverse territory. This political turmoil led to the rise of Joseph Mobutu—another figure backed by Western powers to take control of the country (Panzi Foundation, 2025).

The conflict itself stems from the Rwandan Genocide of 1994 in which the ethnic Hutu population of Rwanda committed genocide against the ethnic Tutsi population. The end of the

Rwandan Genocide saw the Hutu government overthrown by the Tutsi-led Rwandese Patriotic Army. Many Hutu people fled to neighboring DRC and began to demographically dominate the Kivu provinces of Eastern Congo. Due to alliances between the Mobutu regime and Rwandan Hutus, attacks against Congolese Tutsi in the region were supported by the Congolese (then-Zairian) army. Fearing ethnic cleansing, the Congolese Tutsi initiated a preemptive strike against the Zairian National Army (ANZ), soon after Rwandan forces, and later Ugandan forces, invaded the DRC's territory in late-1996, beginning the First Congo War (Weiss, 2000).

4.2. Key Actors

The conflict in Eastern Congo has two primary state actors: the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda. On the DRC side, there are the state forces, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). On the Rwandan side, there are the state forces, the Rwandan Defense Force, as well as several non-state armed groups. Primarily, the conflict is driven by the Alliance Fleuve Congo/Mouvement du 23 mars (AFC/M23) but also includes several other non-state actors such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO), and Convention pour la révolution populaire (CRP) (UN Secretary-General, S/2025/779, 2025). Another key actor is the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in DRC (MONUSCO) which took over for the United Nations Organisation Mission in DRC (MONUC) in 2010 (UN Security Council, S/RES/1925, 2010).

4.3. Peace Processes

Five peace processes guide the region's push to end the conflict in Eastern Congo: Luanda Process; Nairobi Process; the Doha Framework for Peace; the Washington Accords; and the Peace, Security, and Cooperation (PSC) Framework. The oldest agreement, the PSC

Framework, was signed in 2013 after talks conducted by the African Union (AU), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the United Nations (UN). The framework aims to bring peace to the Great Lakes region of southern Africa through two pillars: non-intervention in DRC for neighboring states and commitments to national reforms by DRC. Notably, the agreement also calls for renewed efforts by the international community to assist DRC (Zounmenou and Kok, 2013).

In early 2025, the Luanda and Nairobi processes were officially combined after a joint summit between the East African Community (EAC) and the SADC. The joint processes seek to neutralize the FDLR while removing RDF from DRC while re-engaging all parties, including M23, in direct negotiations for the cessation of hostilities and immediate ceasefire (UN Secretary-General, S/2025/176, 2025). The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General urged non-African peace agreements, namely the Doha Framework and Washington Accords, to align themselves with the African-led peace processes, signaling a broader shift towards a regional approach to peace and stability (UN Secretary-General, S/2025/615, 2025).

Throughout 2025, two multilateral agreements led by the United States (US) and Qatar, respectively, were brokered with DRC with the backing of the AU. The Washington Accords establishes a peace agreement between DRC and Rwanda with six pillars: respect for territorial integrity, cessation of hostilities, disarmament and reintegration of non-state armed groups, regional economic cooperation, joint security mechanism, and respect for humanitarian law and protection of civilians. To implement this framework, the agreement also creates the Joint Oversight Committee which consists of representatives for DRC and Rwanda as well as Qatar, the US, and the AU facilitator (Barometer of Peace Agreements in Africa, 2025).

Building upon the Washington Accords, the Doha Framework establishes a peace agreement between DRC and AFC/M23. The framework signed in November of 2025 has six protocols: humanitarian access and judicial protection; restoration of state authority; Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) of local armed groups and neutralization of foreign armed groups; return of internally displaced persons (IDPs); economic recovery; and justice, truth, and reconciliation. The agreement was brokered through the collaboration of Qatar, the US, the AU, and the AU mediator from Togo (The Doha Framework for a Comprehensive Peace Agreement, 2025).

4.4. Present Conditions (early- to mid-2026)

MONUSCO's presence and the conflict itself are focused in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces along the eastern border of DRC after drawing down operations in South Kivu (See Figure 1). Starting in 2023, MONUSCO began the process of sustainable withdrawal and demobilization of its forces from Eastern Congo (UN Security Council, S/RES/2717, 2023). However, this process has been met with significant challenges, namely the resurgence of AFC/M23 in the North and South Kivu provinces at the beginning of 2025, expanding the group's presence in Eastern Congo and capturing the provincial capital of North Kivu, Goma (UN Secretary-General, S/2025/176, 2025). The conflict has led to the internal displacement of over seven million people due to persistent threats of violence and atrocities while approximately 1.1 million people, refugees of the conflict, live beyond the borders of DRC (Center for Preventive Action, 2026).

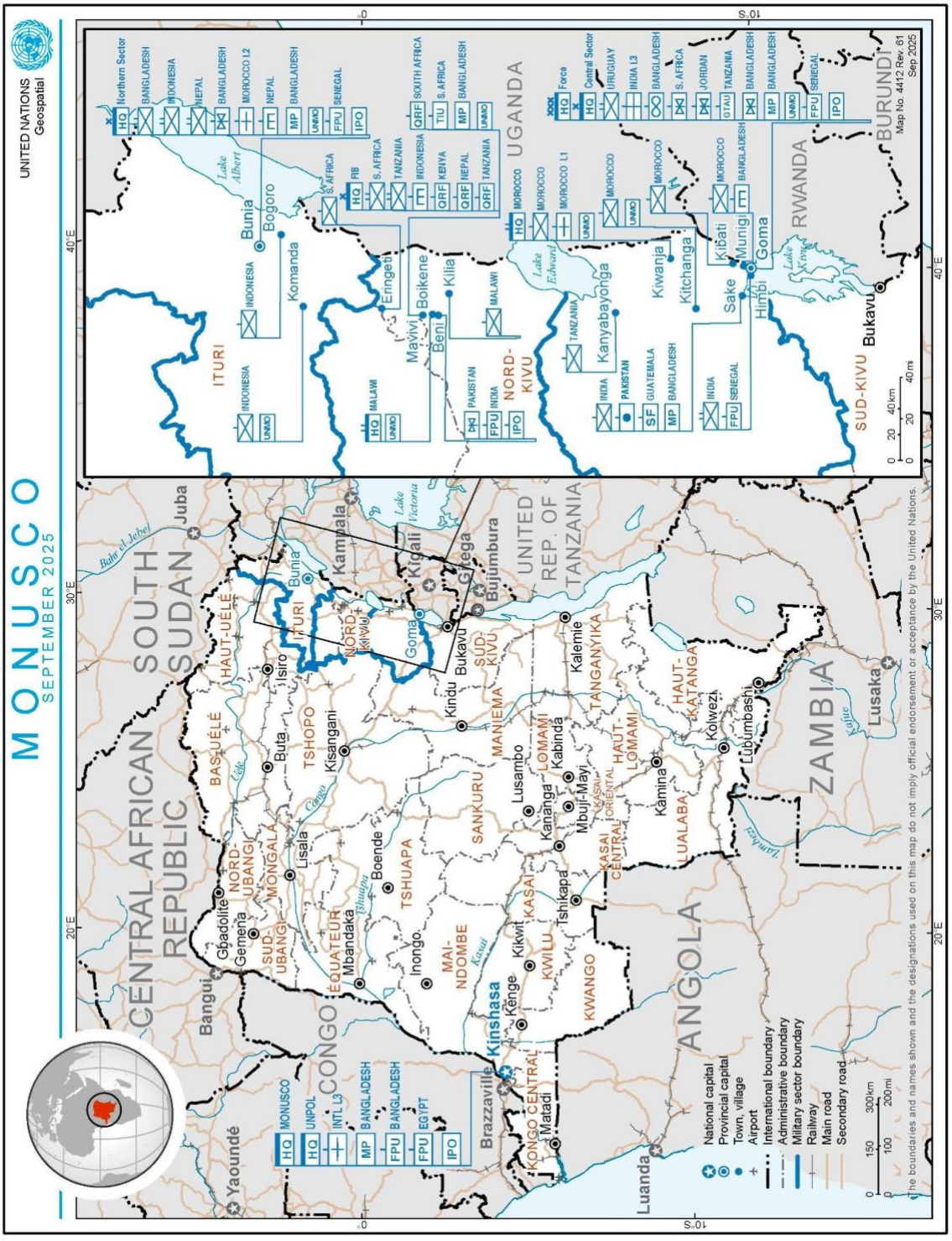

Figure 1. Map of MONUSCO's operations as of September 2025 (UN Geospatial Information Section, 2025)

5. Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the study and analyzes how the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine was invoked and operationalized in the context of recent intervention in Eastern Congo. The analysis draws on process tracing and content analysis conducted on UN Security Council resolutions renewing MONUSCO's mandate in Eastern Congo and Reports of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO and the PSC Framework, respectively, to reconstruct how justifications and focus evolved over the past six years of intervention in Eastern Congo.

The chapter is centered on the key theoretical frameworks identified in the second chapter. It first examines the UN Security Council resolutions renewing MONUSCO's mandate from 2020 to 2026, tracking the efforts that the resolutions highlighted over the designated time period. It then analyzes the implementation phase, evaluating the extent to which intervention measures are aligned with the R2P doctrine through Reports of the Secretary-General on DRC published in 2025.

Finally, the chapter evaluates the outcomes and limitations of these efforts, highlighting the gap between MONUSCO's normative commitments under the R2P doctrine and its operational reality. The analysis in this chapter demonstrates how R2P functions as a rhetorical tool in complex multidimensional conflict but fails to be incorporated through the implementation of peacekeeping and humanitarian responses. The findings provide an empirical foundation for the discussion in the following chapter where the broader implications for the R2P doctrine are considered.

5.1. UN Security Council Resolutions Renewing MONUSCO Mandate

This section traces the evolution of MONUSCO's mandate through renewal resolutions passed by the UN Security Council from 2020 to 2025 (see Table 3), seeking to identify how the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine was invoked and operationalized. The analysis follows the chronological progression of the UN Security Council resolutions, examining how each resolution frames the current efforts of MONUSCO, regional actors, international actors, and the DRC and Rwanda to achieve peace in the region. For the purposes of this analysis, regional actors refer to states or organizations within the Great Lakes region or that are African led while international actors refer to states outside of the Great Lakes region and Africa and organizations that encompass the entire international community.

The analysis follows three key events that occurred during the analyzed period (2020-2025): calls for developing an exit strategy for MONUSCO (2020), sustainable withdrawal from South Kivu (2023), and renewed hostilities from M23 (2025). At the beginning of the analyzed period, the majority (53.7%) of recognized efforts in the UN Security Council resolution were conducted in whole or in part by MONUSCO in Eastern Congo. This emphasis indicates the nascency of plans for MONUSCO to exit the Eastern Congo with transition of responsibilities to regional actors and the DRC not yet recognized. This step of the analyzed period aligns with the R2P doctrine's emphasis on intervening when a state does not have the capacity to act on its own to protect its own civilians.

The second step of the analyzed period follows MONUSCO's withdrawal from the South Kivu province. At this stage, regional actors and the DRC's efforts are recognized by the UN Security Council at a similar rate to MONUSCO (50.0% vs. 44.4%). The shift in how efforts are recognized indicates that MONUSCO's withdrawal followed the normative logic of the R2P

doctrine, following the increased state capacity of the DRC to protect its civilians. However, the recognition of MONUSCO's efforts still vastly outpaces recognition of the DRC's efforts (44.4% vs. 27.8%). This step of the analyzed period reveals inconsistencies in the application of the R2P doctrine during this stage of the conflict. While MONUSCO draws down its presence in South Kivu, it still has the single highest proportion of recognized efforts in the UN Security Council Resolution.

The final step of the analyzed period follows the renewed hostilities of M23 in the Eastern Congo. At this stage, the efforts of MONUSCO and the DRC are evenly matched in the renewal resolution (31.0%). The overall shift in how each actor is weighted follows the normative logics of the R2P doctrine but does not align with the realities of the conflict. M23's increased presence in Eastern Congo represents a significant change in the DRC's state capacity to protect its territorial integrity and, ultimately, its civilians. This step of the analyzed period illustrates that MONUSCO's efforts are weighted the same as the DRC, but the normative logic of the R2P doctrine would anticipate a need for a more expansive presence of MONUSCO.

Over the analyzed period (2020-2025), significant patterns emerged from the recognition of efforts during the drafting of UN Security Council resolutions to renew MONUSCO's mandate. The beginning of the analyzed period aligned with the normative logics of the R2P doctrine, but, as the steps progressed, this logic broke down under the changing circumstances of the conflict. Even as the conflict intensified, the number of DRC-led initiatives recognized in the renewal resolutions grew. These patterns indicate that the R2P doctrine's logic does not hold up in the empirical reality of the conflict in the Eastern Congo.

Table 3. Analysis of UN Security Council Resolutions on MONUSCO Renewal, 2020-2025

		Number of paragraphs focused on efforts led by:			
Reference Number	Date Issued	Regional actors	International actors	MONUSCO forces	DRC and Rwanda
S/RES/2556	12/18/2020	4 (9.8%)	3 (7.3%)	22 (53.7%)	12 (29.3%)
S/RES/2612	12/20/2021	3 (7.7%)	5 (12.8%)	20 (51.3%)	11 (28.2%)
S/RES/2666	12/20/2022	6 (22.2%)	1 (3.7%)	11 (40.7%)	9 (33.3%)
S/RES/2717	12/19/2023	8 (22.2%)	2 (5.6%)	16 (44.4%)	10 (27.8%)
S/RES/2765	12/20/2024	10 (24.4%)	4 (9.8%)	11 (26.8%)	16 (39.0%)
S/RES/2808	12/19/2025	7 (24.1%)	4 (13.8%)	9 (31.0%)	9 (31.0%)

5.2. Reports of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO and the PSC Framework

This section analyzes the textual data found in the Reports of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO and the PSC Framework in 2025 (see Table 4), focusing on the themes that emerged from the coding process. After conducting a content analysis of these reports, four themes emerged from the documents: (1) militarization of peacekeeping efforts, (2) peacekeeping efforts incongruent with human rights conditions, (3) sustained international presence in the peace process, and (4) failure to protect by international actors. These themes capture the present realities of MONUSCO and other peace processes in the Eastern Congo, revealing how the normative functions of the R2P doctrine fit into the empirical realities of the intervention.

5.2.1. Militarization of Peacekeeping Efforts

This theme captures the consistent role MONUSCO plays as either a joint operator with or trainer of police and military forces in Eastern Congo. It emerged consistently across Reports of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO and the PSC Framework (see Table 4), indicating that the complexity of the conflict in Eastern Congo pushes MONUSCO to enact extreme measures for the Protection of Civilians (PoC) on a regular basis. Across the analyzed documents,

MONUSCO plays either an active or facilitating role in empowering police and military forces in DRC to protect civilians from non-state armed groups. The Mission consistently engaged its Force Intervention Brigade to maintain the integrity of the mandate.

The consistent emphasis on military solutions to achieve MONUSCO's mandate indicates that the operational focus of the Mission does not necessarily align with the R2P doctrine despite its invocation in UN authorization documents. In Table 2, the documents noted that both state and non-state armed groups committed severe violations. However, MONUSCO continues to engage with state armed forces to execute its mandate. The paradox of militarized peacekeeping reveals how the R2P doctrine is loosely applied when examining the work of peacekeeping operations.

Table 4. Analysis of Reports of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO and PSC Framework, March to December 2025

Reference Number	Date Issued	Categories	Themes
S/2025/176	3/20/2025	- Regional cooperation efforts progress - Increased hostilities combined with increased militarization of MONUSCO - Stalling efforts to advance human rights and withdraw MONUSCO	- Militarization of peacekeeping efforts - Peacekeeping efforts incongruent with resulting human rights conditions
S/2025/202	4/1/2025	- Regional cooperation efforts progress alongside international frameworks - Bilateral relations producing mixed results - International and regional cooperation on implementing frameworks	- Peacekeeping efforts incongruent with resulting human rights conditions - Sustained international presence in peace process
S/2025/403	6/23/2025	- Reinforced role as military/police force for MONUSCO - Non-military means for peace met with obstacles - International influence in establishing peace frameworks	- Militarization of peacekeeping efforts - Peacekeeping efforts incongruent with resulting human rights conditions - Sustained international presence in peace process
S/2025/590	9/19/2025	- Reinforced role as military/police force for MONUSCO - International influence in establishing peace frameworks - International obligations for humanitarian funding not met	- Militarization of peacekeeping efforts - Failure to protect by international actors - Sustained international presence in peace process
S/2025/615	10/1/2025	- Increased hostilities combined with increased militarization of MONUSCO - Regional cooperation efforts progress but face challenges - International obligations for humanitarian funding not met	- Militarization of peacekeeping efforts - Failure to protect by international actors
S/2025/779	12/1/2025	- Reinforced role as military/police force for MONUSCO - International and regional cooperation on implementing frameworks - International obligations for humanitarian funding not met	- Militarization of peacekeeping efforts - Failure to protect by international actors - Sustained international presence in peace process

5.2.2. Peacekeeping Efforts Incongruent with Human Rights Conditions

This theme captures how the best efforts of MONUSCO to fulfill its peacekeeping mandate in Eastern Congo are met only with increasing hostilities and worsening human rights conditions. It emerged across Reports of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO and the PSC

Framework (see Table 4), indicating that intervention under the R2P doctrine is not leading to peace and stability. Across the analyzed documents, continued efforts by MONUSCO to protect civilians and prevent human rights violations fail to yield results. The documents highlight "increased hostilities" and "grave human rights abuses" that are not fully captured by MONUSCO's reporting due to AFC/M23 interference.

The lack of progress towards MONUSCO's mandate indicates that while R2P language is invoked to justify its intervention in Eastern Congo, the Mission, at best, fails to operationalize protections or, at worst, worsens the current conflict conditions. Regardless of the Mission's impact on the conflict, the R2P doctrine exists only normatively but falls apart when examining the empirical reality of the conflict. This theme demonstrates that the R2P doctrine is invoked for peacekeeping efforts but ultimately fails to materialize when the time comes to operationalize its tenants, namely the Protection of Civilians (PoC) against grave human rights violations.

5.2.3. Sustained International Presence in the Peace Process

This theme captures how international actors play an outsized role in current peace process negotiations between the DRC, Rwanda, and AFC/M23. It emerged across Reports of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO and the PSC Framework (see Table 4), implying that international actors hold significant power over the brokerage of peace in Eastern Congo. Across the analyzed documents, the reports emphasized the role of the United States and Qatar in drafting a series of peace accords, namely the Washington Accords and the Doha Framework, which build off one another. Both documents highlight the "important role" that MONUSCO plays in the current conflict.

The consistent emphasis on international actors' roles in negotiating peace coupled with their highlighting of MONUSCO's role in executing these peace processes indicates that non-local contexts inform the invocation of the R2P doctrine. The way the doctrine is employed in international agreements illustrates the disconnect between its normative application and actual results. This theme demonstrates that R2P language is invoked in high-level agreements that are disconnected from local contexts, but it fails to be operationalized within the conflict in the Eastern Congo.

5.2.4. Failure to Protect by International Actors

This theme captures how international actors have failed to protect civilians in Eastern Congo through the underfunding of humanitarian responses. It emerged consistently across later Reports of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO (see Table 4), indicating that the current conditions of the Mission are influenced by the level of funding provided by international actors. Across the analyzed documents, the reports referred to humanitarian responses that were "underfunded" and expressed that the lack of funding posed an operational risk to executing these responses.

The emphasis on the level of funding suggests that the R2P doctrine is only relevant when rhetorically invoked for justifying peacekeeping operations that involve humanitarian intervention into conflict zones. However, the doctrine has significantly less influence in encouraging states to contribute financially to funds that also aim to protect civilians from human rights violations. This theme demonstrates that while R2P language is invoked for peacekeeping operations, its applicability to the broader responsibility of states to support humanitarian efforts is limited, raising questions about how effective it is in promoting human rights protections in Eastern Congo.

5.2.5. Synthesis

The themes identified largely align with one another, highlighting the way R2P language is invoked to justify intervention but rarely is applied in practice. While the militarization of peacekeeping efforts partially aligns with the R2P doctrine, safeguarding civilians from the harm of armed groups, the incongruence of peacekeeping efforts with human rights conditions illustrates how the tendency to pursue military solutions has not yielded results for civilian populations. A similar pattern occurs with international actors not providing humanitarian response funding, limiting the ability for human rights to be safeguarded through peaceful means. The themes reveal an overarching inconsistency where the R2P doctrine is invoked but does not materialize once intervention is put in practice.

6. Discussion

This study identified a key critique of the R2P doctrine: despite its language being consistently invoked to justify intervention, the reality of these interventions rarely aligns with the principles of the doctrine. The lack of evolving MONUSCO efforts to adjust for state capacity, incongruence of peacekeeping efforts with resulting human rights conditions, and severe underfunding of humanitarian responses are main drivers of this critique. The findings reveal key implications for existing theory and literature which further informs the future of humanitarian intervention policy.

6.1. Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study further support some of the existing theory and literature on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine and humanitarian interventions while also refuting others. The findings highlighted the structural issues of the peacekeeping mission led by

MONUSCO in the Eastern Congo. In line with Krishnan's (2020) argument, the lack of legal frameworks for peacekeeping missions left MONUSCO without guidance on its role in the conflict, often asserting itself as a quasi-military force for the Protection of Civilians (PoC). The balance between the regional role and MONUSCO's remains uneven despite increasing recognition of regional efforts in the conflict. Hlungwani and Muzuva (2024) highlighted how a collective approach has not been empirically analyzed, and the findings illustrate that this is the case because collective efforts remain deeply intertwined with international actors like MONUSCO and Global North states.

Neilsen (2022), Levine (2014), and Jemirade's (2021) arguments are affirmed by the findings of this study. MONUSCO's role remained rigid and often without guidance on where its mandate ended in the conflict. Levine (2014) noted how the United Nations lacks a framework for where the PoC ends for peacekeeping operations. At the same time, Jemirade (2021) suggested that more flexible methods were needed for the R2P doctrine to be successful. While the findings indicate that MONUSCO's role was partially supplanted by other efforts to bring peace to the region, its overall role remained protecting civilians with the most prevalent measure being engagement in military and police forces. The findings critically revealed that states failed to fund humanitarian responses at levels that would be effective in the conflict in the Eastern Congo, aligning with Nielsen's (2022) argument that states' moral reputations play a role in their decision to intervene.

The study's findings also refuted the arguments made in the existing literature. Lepard (2021) argued that the R2P doctrine does not mean that states are obligated to protect under the doctrine. However, regardless of how effectively the obligations were fulfilled, the findings illustrate that peacekeeping is treated as a duty to protect civilians from human rights atrocities.

Lepard's argument further ignores the coloniality of conflict, including the role Global North states play in perpetuating them, which stands opposite Pogge's (2005) argument that wealthy states have a negative duty to protect the world from systems that perpetuate harm. Similarly, Welsh (2021) was wary of deferring human rights protection to regional actors, but the findings indicate that these actors may be better suited to leading efforts aimed at building peace in the region. Badru and Oluyemi's (2024) moral grounds, methodology, and ends test, as applied to this conflict, shows MONUSCO failing because it lacks the moral ends component, peacekeeping while human rights conditions worsen.

6.2. Policy Implications for Future Interventions

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine puts peacekeeping missions in an impossible situation: pursuing intervention in conflicts that are untenable to peaceful solutions for the restoration of human rights. The analysis revealed that the R2P doctrine is often invoked to justify intervention but is not employed in practice. Human rights practitioners need to rework the doctrine with considerations based around decoloniality and shifting conflict dynamics. While protection implies a paternalistic role for Global North states, support and reconciliation move the doctrine toward a collaborative process that addresses the colonial origins of many present-day conflicts, including the Eastern Congo. This proposed Responsibility to Support and Reconcile doctrine (R2SR) is a normative reorientation of R2P and needs additional development for proper implementation.

The first pillar of the R2SR doctrine focuses on support for regional efforts to address and resolve conflict. The process tracing analysis indicated that recognition of regional efforts grew over time, but it did not replace the peacekeeping role of MONUSCO. A reimagined R2P

doctrine would center regional and local efforts to address conflict, seeking to eliminate the entanglement considerations posited by Neilsen (2023).

The second pillar of the R2SR doctrine focuses on reconciling the role wealthy Global North states play in perpetuating the root causes of conflict in Global South states. This pillar mirrors Pogge's (2005) argument that wealthy nations have a negative duty to protect the global poor because of their role in perpetuating an unjust global order. The R2P doctrine transforms into a duty to contribute to protection through financial means, alleviating the incongruence with R2P created by underfunding humanitarian responses.

6.3. Limitations

There are a few limitations identified in this study. While the study examines the R2P doctrine as it is invoked and operationalized by UN institutions, its focus on the conflict in Eastern Congo could prevent its generalizability across all R2P contexts. The analysis' concentration on UN documents biases the study to empirical evidence presented through an institutional lens, potentially decentering the differing experiences of the indigenous people of the eastern region of DRC. Lastly, the study focuses on an evaluation of the R2P doctrine and the role it plays in intervention, limiting its findings and analysis to a critique of the doctrine.

6.4. Directions for Future Research

Future research has the potential to build upon the research findings of this study. This study left unexamined the path forward for Global South states to take control of human rights interventions. More research needs to be conducted on how these states can improve their present capacity to move beyond frameworks and peace negotiations to regional cooperation on

human rights promotion. Similarly, this study does not examine the effectiveness of regional actors in promoting human rights, either through human rights intervention or diplomatic means.

More research also needs to be done on the broader implications of challenging the R2P doctrine. What other international frameworks are flawed and improperly implemented in practice? More research is needed to evaluate how other frameworks are invoked and operationalized compared to their normative structures. Additional research must be conducted to examine how these frameworks fell apart empirically while still being justified based on its original operationalization.

While this study focuses on the conflict in Eastern Congo, additional research on other conflicts where the R2P doctrine was invoked will provide more depth to the study of its current effectiveness in intervention. This cross-case comparison would allow for additional insights to be drawn and potentially identify additional themes that emerge from institutional rhetoric and actions. By increasing the number of cases being studied, the correlational pattern that emerged in this research could be further strengthened.

7. Conclusion

This thesis examined whether the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine is still an effective tool for intervention by examining the conflict in the Eastern Congo. Through the course of the research, the thesis also aimed to identify the theoretical frameworks that guide intervention under R2P, how these theories emerge in UN documents on the conflict, and what role should the R2P doctrine play in human rights intervention. The study found that despite invocation of the R2P doctrine to justify MONUSCO's role in the Eastern Congo, the Mission failed to protect civilians from human rights violations. The invocation of the R2P doctrine also

failed to garner financial support for humanitarian responses. Lastly, MONUSCO's efforts are increasingly decentered in favor of regional or localized efforts to bring peace to the Eastern Congo.

Through these findings, the study indicates that the R2P doctrine's rationale and practicality have significantly weakened since its conception in 2005. The operations of humanitarian intervention are flawed, but the issue itself is rooted in the philosophical justifications that drive them. MONUSCO and the United Nations Security Council invoke the R2P doctrine for the Protection of Civilians (PoC), but human rights conditions continue to worsen. Intervention without a plan to support a region-led approach, either with personnel or financial contributions, will not be successful. The invocation of the R2P doctrine extends beyond the conflict in the Eastern Congo, and it is time for the United Nations, its peacekeeping missions, and the international community to re-examine how their efforts are addressing the root of these conflicts and reconcile the colonial legacies that drive them.

8. References

Alvesson, M., Hardy, C., & Harley, B. (2008). Reflecting on Reflexivity: Reflexive Textual Practices in Organization and Management Theory. *Journal of Management Studies*, *45*(3), 480–501. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2007.00765.x

Badru, R. O., & Oluyemi, T. O. (2024). Responsibility-to-Protect and a Tri-dimensional Methodology: Exploring the Epistemic-Morality of an Interventionist Principle. *Africa's Global Engagement: Perspectives from Emerging Countries*, 17–40. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-8163-2_2

Barometer of Peace Agreements in Africa. (2025). *Washington Peace Agreement* . https://www.peacebarometerafrica.org/washington-peace-agreement

Bellamy, A., & Dunne, T. (2016). *The Oxford Handbook of the Responsibility to Protect*. Oxford University Press.

Center for Preventive Action. (2026, February 18). *Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo#RecentDevelopments-1

Collier, D. (2011). Understanding Process Tracing. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, *44*(4), 823–830.

Datta, R. (2018). Decolonizing both researcher and research and its effectiveness in Indigenous research. *Research Ethics*, *14*(2), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1177/1747016117733296

Erameh, Nicholas Idris, & Ojakorotu, Victor. (2022). Consequentialism Deontology Theorising, Armed Humanitarian Intervention, and the 2012-2013 Central African Republic Crisis. *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 14(4), 383-408.

Erlingsson, C., & Brysiewicz, P. (2017). A hands-on guide to doing content analysis. *African Journal of Emergency Medicine*, *7*(3), 93–99. Sciencedirect. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.afjem.2017.08.001

Hlungwani, P. M., & Muzuva, P. (2024). African Peace And Security Architecture (Apsa): The Dichotomy Of Non-Interference And Non-Indifference In Promoting Peace And Security In Africa. *Journal of African Union Studies*, *13*(3), 57–74. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27353737

Ignatieff, M. (2004). *The Lesser Evil*. Edinburgh University Press.

Ignatieff, M. (2011). *Human Rights as Politics*. In Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry (A. Gutmann, Ed.) (pp. 3-52). Princeton University Press.

Jemirade, D. (2021). Humanitarian intervention (HI) and the responsibility to protect (R2P): the United Nations and international security. *African Security Review*, *30*(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2020.1847153

Krishnan, S. (2020). UN Peacekeeping, Responsibility to Protect and Humanitarian Intervention. *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*, *76*(1), 120–135. https://doi.org/10.1177/0974928419901198

Lepard, B. D. (2021). Challenges in Implementing the Responsibility to Protect: The Security Council Veto and the Need for a Common Ethical Approach. *The Journal of Ethics*, *25*(2), 223–246. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/45385631

Levine, D. H. (2014). *The Morality of Peacekeeping*. Edinburgh University Press.

Milner, H. R. (2007). Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen. *Educational Researcher*, *36*(7), 388–400. https://www.jstor.org/stable/30136070

Neilsen, R. (2022). Reluctant to Protect? The Role of Moral Reputation in Joining Military Coalitions. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, *17*(4), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2022.2130672

Okonkwo, U. T., Antai, G. O., Akwaji, F. N., Ngwu, G. E., Nwonovo, O. S., Nwaechefu, H., Obisesan, O. O., John, D. J., Asadu, N., & Chinweze, U. C. (2025). Doctrine of Non-Interventionism Enshrined in the United Nations Framework: The Reality of Sovereign Integrity And Chapter Vii in the 21st Century. *Journal of African Union Studies*, *14*(2), 49–66.

Orentlicher, D. (2011). *Relativism and Religion*. In Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry (A. Gutmann, Ed.) (pp. 141-158). Princeton University Press.

Panzi Foundation. (2025). *Understanding the Genocide in the Congo*. https://panzifoundation.org/war-in-congo/

Pogge, T. (2005). World Poverty and Human Rights. *Ethics & International Affairs*, *19*(1), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7093.2005.tb00484.x

Quinton-Brown, P. (2020). The South, the West, and the meanings of humanitarian intervention in history. *Review of International Studies*, *46*(4), 514–533. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210520000236

Rocheleau, J. (2021). *New Interventionist Just War Theory*. Routledge.

Sogge, D. (2001). Subalterns on the Aid Chain. In the Humanitarian Studies Unit (Ed.), *Reflections on Humanitarian Action: Principles, Ethics and Contradictions* (pp. 120–141). Pluto Press.

The Doha Framework for a Comprehensive Peace Agreement. (2025, November 15). African Union. https://au.int/en/documents/20251115/doha-framework-peace-agreement

Torál, T. C. (2023). *Forging new just war principles for the virtuous war era*. https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37373993

United Nations Geospatial Information Section. (2025). *MONUSCO September 2025 [cartographic material]*. http://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4090629

United Nations General Assembly. (2005). *2005 World Summit Outcome* (A/RES/60/1). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/556507

United Nations. Secretary-General. (2025, April 1). *Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region: Report of the Secretary-General* (S/2025/202). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4080447

United Nations. Secretary-General. (2025, December 1). *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Report of the Secretary-General* (S/2025/779). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4095274

United Nations. Secretary-General. (2025, June 23). *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Report of the Secretary-General* (S/2025/403). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4084595

United Nations. Secretary-General. (2025, March 20). *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Report of the Secretary-General* (S/2025/176). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4079320

United Nations. Secretary-General. (2025, October 1). *Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region: Report of the Secretary-General* (S/2025/615). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4090515

United Nations. Secretary-General. (2025, September 19). *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Report of the Secretary-General* (S/2025/590). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4089438

United Nations Security Council (2010, May 28). *Resolution 1925 (2010) / adopted by the Security Council at its 6324th meeting, on 28 May 2010* (S/RES/1925). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/683422

United Nations Security Council (2020, December 18). *Resolution 2556 (2020) / adopted by the Security Council on 18 December 2020* (S/RES/2556). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3895605

United Nations Security Council (2021, December 20). *Resolution 2612 (2021) / adopted by the Security Council on 20 December 2021* (S/RES/2612). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3951983

United Nations Security Council (2022, December 20). *Resolution 2666 (2022) / adopted by the Security Council on 20 December 2022* (S/RES/2666). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3998331

United Nations Security Council (2023, December 19). *Resolution 2717 (2023) / adopted by the Security Council at its 9512th meeting, on 19 December 2023* (S/RES/2717). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4030899

United Nations Security Council (2024, December 20). *Resolution 2765 (2024) / adopted by the Security Council at its 9824th meeting, on 20 December 2024* (S/RES/2765). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4069994

United Nations Security Council (2025, December 19). *Resolution 2808 (2025) / adopted by the Security Council at its 10075th meeting, on 19 December 2025* (S/RES/2808). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4096723

Walzer, M. (2015). *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (5th ed.). Basic Books. (Original work published 1977)

Wamaitha, N. (2021). The False Promise of Progress: Human Rights and the Legitimation of Inequality. *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, *41*(2), 297–314. https://doi.org/10.5840/jsce202111950

Weiss, H. (2000). War and Peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. *Current African Issues*, *20*, 1–28. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/105528/22.pdf

Welsh, J. M. (2021). The Security Council's Role in Fulfilling the Responsibility to Protect. *Ethics & International Affairs*, *35*(2), 227–243. https://doi.org/10.1017/s089267942100023x

Zounmenou, D., & Kok, N. (2013, March 8). *Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC: hopes and challenges*. ISS Africa. https://issafrica.org/iss-today/peace-security-and-cooperation-framework-for-the-drc-hopes-and-challenges

9. Appendix A: Figures and Tables

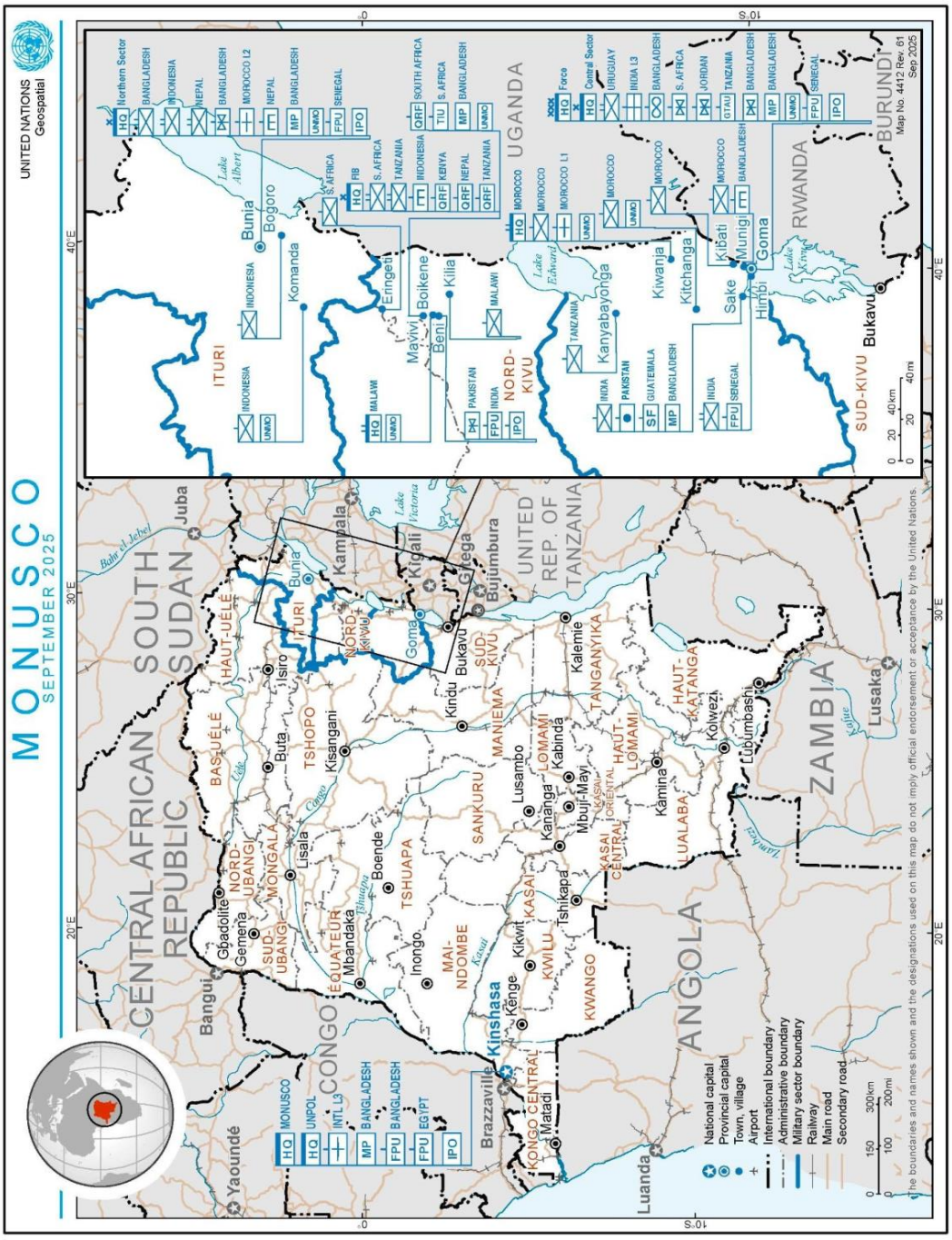

Figure 1. Map of MONUSCO's operations as of September 2025 (UN Geospatial Information Section, 2025)

Table 1. Summary of Findings for UN Security Council Resolutions on MONUSCO Renewal, 2020-2025

Reference Number	Date Issued	Focus Areas	Summary
S/RES/2556	12/18/2020	- Encouraging collaboration between DRC and MONUSCO - Commending UN and international partner efforts - Encouraging DRC and regional organizations for support - Extending MONUSCO's mandate with 14,000 troops - Acknowledging planned exit strategy	Extension in 2020 focuses on continued collaboration between DRC and MONUSCO to achieve peacekeeping efforts. While acknowledging regional cooperation, the document centers the work of MONUSCO and the DRC during the conflict.
S/RES/2612	12/20/2021	- Recognizing collaboration between DRC and MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) - Encouraging regional collaboration with MONUSCO and DRC - Commending UN and international partner efforts - Encouraging building State capacity by DRC - Extending MONUSCO's mandate with 13,500 troops	Extension in 2021 focuses on MONUSCO's role as a collaborator and, mainly, leader of peacekeeping efforts. The document mentions MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) and taking all necessary measures to protect personnel and carry out the mandate.
S/RES/2666	12/20/2022	- Encouraging regional cooperation on humanitarian needs - Emphasizing MONUSCO using all means necessary to carry out mandate - Emphasizing MONUSCO role as supporting DRC's efforts to build State capacity - Recognizing regional efforts such as the Luanda and Nairobi processes - Extending MONUSCO's mandate with 13,500 troops	Extension in 2022 focuses on regional efforts, such as the Luanda and Nairobi processes, to end the conflict in Eastern Congo. The document still emphasizes the collaborative role of MONUSCO in both regional organization's and the DRC's peacekeeping efforts.
S/RES/2717	12/19/2023	- Encouraging regional support alongside MONUSCO's efforts - Recognizing Luanda and Nairobi processes' efforts to bring peace - Recognizing regional efforts and encouraging ownership of peace processes - Recognizing conditions needed for sustainable withdrawal from Eastern Congo - Extending MONUSCO's mandate with 13,500 troops, reducing to 11,500 in July 2024	Extension in 2023 focuses on regional efforts, such as the Luanda and Nairobi processes, to end the conflict in Eastern Congo. The document acknowledges the need for African ownership of peace processes and outlines the sustainable withdrawal of MONUSCO from Eastern Congo.
S/RES/2765	12/20/2024	- Emphasizing sustainable withdrawal coupled with strengthening State presence - Recognizing multi- and bilateral agreements towards peace - Emphasizing role of DRC's efforts to build peace - Recognizing regional efforts to combat root causes of the conflict - Extending MONUSCO's mandate with 11,500 troops	Extension in 2024 focuses on the DRC's and regional organization's efforts to end the conflict in Eastern Congo. The document emphasizes a need to strengthen the DRC's state capacity and presence in the eastern region as part of MONUSCO's withdrawal.
S/RES/2808	12/19/2025	- Recognizing efforts by regional organizations building peace - Emphasizing role of MONUSCO in peacekeeping efforts - Centering DRC's role in building state capacity - Recognizing complexity of sustainable withdrawal with renewed hostilities - Extending MONUSCO's mandate with 11,500 troops	Extension in 2025 focuses on regional efforts to end the conflict in Eastern Congo while acknowledging MONUSCO and the UN's roles in working with these actors. The document highlights the complexities of further withdrawing from the conflict after renewed hostilities in Eastern Congo.

Table 2. Summary of Findings for Reports of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO and PSC Framework, March to December 2025

Reference Number	Date Issued	Focus Areas	Summary
S/2025/176	3/20/2025	- Progress in the combined Luanda and Nairobi processes - Advances made by M23 including the capture of Goma in North Kivu - Enhancement of MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade with Congolese forces - Rise of human rights violations in M23-controled areas of Eastern Congo - Delays to withdrawal from South Kivu due to deteroriated security situation	March's report on MONUSCO highlighted M23's increased hostilities, and MONUSCO's role in providing military force assistance to DRC. While regional efforts were mentioned, focus was placed on MONUSCO's documentation of human rights violations and the delays to its withdrawal from South Kivu.
S/2025/202	4/1/2025	- Progress in the combined Luanda and Nairobi processes - Deterioration in bilateral relations between DRC and Rwanda, DRC and M23 - Humanitarian efforts to repatriate IDPs and refugees between DRC, Rwanda, and UNHCR - Revitalization of the PSC Framework with regional cooperation efforts - Collaboration between international and regional actors for implementation of PSC Framework	April's report on the PSC Framework highlighted renewed interest in implementing its protocols in the region. Most of the report focused on regional and bilateral relations, including their increasing challenges, but also did note the role on UN agencies in facilitating efforts like refugee and IDP repatriation.
S/2025/403	6/23/2025	- US efforts towards the Washington Accords between DRC and Rwanda - Regional efforts to bring peace through non-military means, but faced with challenges - MONUSCO's role in training and helping military forces during the conflict - Challenges in Protection of Civilians (PoC) with M23's advances - Human rights violations committed by both state and non-state actors	June's report on MONUSCO highlighted multilateral efforts from the US and Qatar to bring peace to the region. While regional efforts were emphasized for their role in non-military approaches to bringing peace, MONUSCO's mandate for PoC and assisting military forces was highlighted more.
S/2025/590	9/19/2025	- US and Qatari efforts towards the Washington Accords and Doha Framework - MONUSCO's role in PoC with challenges in M23-controled areas of North Kivu - MONUSCO's role as police and military force as part of its mandate - Human rights violations committed by both state and non-state actors - Underfunding of the 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan	September's report on MONUSCO highlighted the implementation of US and Qatar's multilateral peace agreements. The report emphasized MONUSCO's role in PoC and as a police and military force in Eastern Congo. The report also notes how humanitarian responses are severely underfunded.
S/2025/615	10/1/2025	- AFC/M23 continue clashes and seeking rearmament - End of regional security efforts by SADC after decision to end its mandate - Joint Oversight Committee created by Washington Accords met to discuss implementation - African Union efforts to lead conflict resolution, reiterating its leadership in the matter - Humanitarian responses remain underfunded, hindering their ability to operate in Eastern Congo	October's report on the PSC Framework highlighted AFC/M23's renewed hostilities in Eastern Congo. The report notes how regional efforts are evolving, emphasizing the AU's position on its primacy in conflict resolution. It also notes how humanitarian responses are hindered by severe underfunding.
S/2025/779	12/1/2025	- Signing of the Doha Framework and implementation continuing on Washington Accords - Regional efforts to secure non-agression pacts at ICGLR summit - MONUSCO's role in PoC including building capacity for state and non-state forces to take over - MONUSCO's role in military force and training and implementation of DDR programmes - Underfunding of the 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan	December's report on MONUSCO highlighted the continued implementation of US and Qatar's respective peace agreements. Despite mentioning regional efforts for peace, the report emphasizes MONUSCO's role in PoC as well as training military forces and implmenting DDR. It also notes how the underfunding of humanitarian responses hinders their ability to function.

Table 3. Analysis of UN Security Council Resolutions on MONUSCO Renewal, 2020-2025

		Number of paragraphs focused on efforts led by:			
Reference Number	Date Issued	Regional actors	International actors	MONUSCO forces	DRC and Rwanda
S/RES/2556	12/18/2020	4 (9.8%)	3 (7.3%)	22 (53.7%)	12 (29.3%)
S/RES/2612	12/20/2021	3 (7.7%)	5 (12.8%)	20 (51.3%)	11 (28.2%)
S/RES/2666	12/20/2022	6 (22.2%)	1 (3.7%)	11 (40.7%)	9 (33.3%)
S/RES/2717	12/19/2023	8 (22.2%)	2 (5.6%)	16 (44.4%)	10 (27.8%)
S/RES/2765	12/20/2024	10 (24.4%)	4 (9.8%)	11 (26.8%)	16 (39.0%)
S/RES/2808	12/19/2025	7 (24.1%)	4 (13.8%)	9 (31.0%)	9 (31.0%)

Table 4. Analysis of Reports of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO and PSC Framework, March to December 2025

Reference Number	Date Issued	Categories	Themes
S/2025/176	3/20/2025	- Regional cooperation efforts progress - Increased hostilities combined with increased militarization of MONUSCO - Stalling efforts to advance human rights and withdraw MONUSCO	- Militarization of peacekeeping efforts - Peacekeeping efforts incongruent with resulting human rights conditions
S/2025/202	4/1/2025	- Regional cooperation efforts progress alongside international frameworks - Bilateral relations producing mixed results - International and regional cooperation on implementing frameworks	- Peacekeeping efforts incongruent with resulting human rights conditions - Sustained international presence in peace process
S/2025/403	6/23/2025	- Reinforced role as military/police force for MONUSCO - Non-military means for peace met with obstacles - International influence in establishing peace frameworks	- Militarization of peacekeeping efforts - Peacekeeping efforts incongruent with resulting human rights conditions - Sustained international presence in peace process
S/2025/590	9/19/2025	- Reinforced role as military/police force for MONUSCO - International influence in establishing peace frameworks - International obligations for humanitarian funding not met	- Militarization of peacekeeping efforts - Failure to protect by international actors - Sustained international presence in peace process
S/2025/615	10/1/2025	- Increased hostilities combined with increased militarization of MONUSCO - Regional cooperation efforts progress but face challenges - International obligations for humanitarian funding not met	- Militarization of peacekeeping efforts - Failure to protect by international actors
S/2025/779	12/1/2025	- Reinforced role as military/police force for MONUSCO - International and regional cooperation on implementing frameworks - International obligations for humanitarian funding not met	- Militarization of peacekeeping efforts - Failure to protect by international actors - Sustained international presence in peace process