

Operational Strategy of the un RDB Task Force in Supporting the Success of the Monusco Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Case Study: Monusco RDB Task Force, 2018)

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Abstract

Prolonged armed conflict in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has resulted in escalating violence, humanitarian crises, and security instability, despite the United Nations peacekeeping mission through MONUSCO having operated for more than two decades. As a combat unit within the framework of robust peacekeeping, the Rapid Deployment Battalion (RDB) Task Force is expected to suppress the activities of armed groups while protecting civilians. However, various reports indicate that violence against civilians continues to occur, suggesting that operational effectiveness has not yet been fully achieved. This study aims to analyze the factors influencing the operational performance of the RDB Task Force and to examine the operational strategies implemented to support the success of the MONUSCO mission. The study employed a qualitative research method with a case study approach. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The analysis was based on Carl von Clausewitz's theory of military strategy, the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Doctrine (2008), and Arthur F. Lykke Jr.'s Ends, Ways, Means strategic framework. The findings indicate that the RDB Task Force's operations are influenced by internal factors, including personnel competence, command structure, discipline, and logistical support, as well as external factors such as multinational cooperation, support from local authorities, the dynamics of armed groups, and the geographical conditions of the operational area. The operational strategies implemented include the integration of offensive operations and civilian protection, multinational coordination, personnel capacity building, optimization of logistical support, and the utilization of modern technology and intelligence. The study concludes that the success of the MONUSCO mission depends on the RDB Task Force's ability to optimize its internal factors and adaptively manage external factors through an integrated operational strategy to enhance operational effectiveness and civilian protection.

Keywords: Operational strategy, Rapid Deployment Battalion Task Force, MONUSCO, Peacekeeping, Civilian Protection



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INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has experienced one of the world's most protracted and complex armed conflicts, characterized by persistent violence, political instability, humanitarian crises, and the proliferation of numerous non-state armed groups. For more than two decades, eastern DRC has remained a conflict hotspot where organizations such as the March 23 Movement (M23), Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), and Cooperative for the Development of the Congo (CODECO) continue to threaten civilian security and regional stability (Longobardo, 2024). In response to this situation, the United Nations established the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) with the mandate to protect civilians, support state authority, and contribute to sustainable peace through multidimensional peacekeeping operations. The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2098 (2013) further strengthened MONUSCO by

establishing the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), enabling more robust military operations against organized armed groups while maintaining the principles of United Nations peacekeeping (United Nations, 2013).

Despite these institutional and operational developments, the security situation in eastern DRC has remained highly volatile. Reports issued by the United Nations Security Council indicate that armed violence has continued to escalate, resulting in thousands of civilian casualties and more than 7.8 million internally displaced persons. Large-scale attacks conducted by M23, ADF, and other armed factions during 2024-2025 demonstrated that military gains achieved through robust peacekeeping have not translated into sustainable peace (United Nations Security Council, 2025). Although MONUSCO and the Force Intervention Brigade have successfully conducted offensive operations to suppress armed groups, these achievements have largely been tactical and temporary because the structural causes of conflict including weak governance, social inequality, competition over natural resources, and limited state capacity remain unresolved (Mhango & Kithatu-Kiwekete, 2023; Giblin, 2024). Consequently, operational effectiveness should not be measured solely by battlefield success but also by the ability to protect civilians and support long-term regional stabilization.

Within this multidimensional peacekeeping environment, the Rapid Deployment Battalion (RDB) serves as one of the principal military components responsible for conducting rapid-response operations, protecting civilians, supporting offensive missions against armed groups, and assisting the implementation of MONUSCO's operational mandate. As a combat-ready battalion operating under the framework of robust peacekeeping, the RDB must continuously balance offensive military operations with the principles of impartiality, proportional use of force, and civilian protection as stipulated in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines (Capstone Doctrine) (United Nations, 2008). The complexity of this operational environment requires not only superior tactical capability but also effective multinational coordination, intelligence integration, logistical sustainability, and adaptive operational planning capable of responding to rapidly changing security conditions.

Previous studies have extensively examined the effectiveness of MONUSCO from perspectives such as civilian protection, humanitarian security, peacekeeping challenges, and institutional performance. Mkeremy and Lisakafu (2023) emphasized the inability of MONUSCO to adequately meet civilian security needs, while Kimathi et al. (2024) identified persistent challenges related to armed group attacks, logistical limitations, and insufficient cooperation with local authorities. Similarly, Rasevic (2025) argued that contemporary peacekeeping increasingly requires operational adaptation beyond traditional United Nations doctrines, whereas Amal and Paramitha (2026) concluded that robust peacekeeping has produced significant tactical achievements without generating sustainable positive peace. Although these studies contribute substantially to understanding MONUSCO operations, they predominantly evaluate mission effectiveness at the strategic or institutional level rather than examining how operational strategies implemented by the Rapid Deployment Battalion contribute directly to mission success.

Accordingly, a significant research gap remains regarding the operational strategy of the United Nations Rapid Deployment Battalion in supporting the success of the MONUSCO mission. Existing literature rarely analyzes how internal organizational factors, external operational environments, and the integration of military capabilities collectively influence operational effectiveness within the framework of robust peacekeeping. Moreover, limited studies employ the Ends–Ways–Means strategic framework to systematically evaluate the alignment between mission objectives, operational methods, and available resources in United

Nations peacekeeping operations (Lykke, 1989). This study addresses this gap by examining the operational strategy of the MONUSCO Rapid Deployment Battalion during the 2018 mission through an integrated strategic perspective that combines Peace Theory (Galtung, 1969), the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Doctrine (United Nations, 2008), and Lykke's Ends-Ways-Means Strategy Model. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the internal and external factors influencing the operational performance of the United Nations Rapid Deployment Battalion and to formulate an integrated operational strategy that enhances mission effectiveness in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. By employing a qualitative case-study approach, this research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of military strategy, multidimensional peacekeeping operations, and future United Nations missions operating in complex conflict environments

Research Gap and Novelty

Existing studies on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) have primarily focused on peacekeeping effectiveness, civilian protection, humanitarian intervention, and institutional performance. Although these studies provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by United Nations peacekeeping operations, limited research specifically examines the operational strategy of the Rapid Deployment Battalion (RDB) in supporting mission success within a robust peacekeeping environment. Moreover, previous studies rarely integrate operational strategy with the Ends-Ways-Means Strategy Theory, Peace Theory, and the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Doctrine to comprehensively analyze the relationship between mission objectives, operational methods, and available military capabilities (Lykke, 1989; Galtung, 1969; United Nations, 2008). This study addresses this research gap by analyzing the operational strategy of the MONUSCO Rapid Deployment Battalion during the 2018 mission through an integrated strategic framework that combines military strategy, peacekeeping principles, and operational capability. The novelty of this research lies in the development of a comprehensive operational strategy model that explains how internal organizational factors, external operational environments, and strategic alignment collectively influence mission effectiveness. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically to the advancement of military strategy and peacekeeping studies and practically to strengthening the operational effectiveness of future United Nations peacekeeping missions in complex conflict environments.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case-study approach to analyze the operational strategy of the United Nations Rapid Deployment Battalion (RDB) in supporting the success of the MONUSCO mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to explore strategic decision-making, operational implementation, and organizational capability in a complex peacekeeping environment rather than to measure variables quantitatively. The case study focused on the MONUSCO RDB Task Force in 2018, which was selected due to its strategic role in conducting robust peacekeeping operations, protecting civilians, and supporting the implementation of the United Nations mandate in conflict-affected areas (Yin, 2018). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with key informants directly involved in the MONUSCO mission, supported by document analysis of operational reports, United Nations policy documents, military doctrines, and relevant literature. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), consisting of data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was guided by three complementary theoretical

frameworks: Lykke's Ends–Ways–Means Strategy Theory to examine the alignment between mission objectives, operational methods, and available resources (Lykke, 1989); Peace Theory to analyze peacekeeping operations within the context of conflict resolution (Galtung, 1969); and the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines (Capstone Doctrine) to evaluate the implementation of robust peacekeeping operations (United Nations, 2008). Triangulation of data sources and methods was applied to ensure the credibility, dependability, and validity of the research findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Result

This section presents the research findings obtained through interviews with key informants, document analysis, and observations regarding the operational strategy of the United Nations Rapid Deployment Battalion (RDB) during the MONUSCO mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2018. The findings indicate that the success of the mission was determined by the interaction between internal organizational capabilities and external operational environments. Internally, mission effectiveness depended on personnel competence, leadership, logistics support, intelligence capability, operational planning, and interoperability among multinational contingents. Externally, the operation was influenced by the volatile security situation, the activities of armed groups, the geographical characteristics of eastern Congo, the United Nations mandate, and cooperation with local authorities and humanitarian organizations. These findings demonstrate that operational success cannot be attributed solely to military capability but also to strategic coordination and adaptive decision-making in complex peacekeeping environments. The study further identified that the operational strategy implemented by the RDB successfully supported the implementation of the MONUSCO mandate through rapid deployment, civilian protection, area domination, and offensive operations against armed groups. Nevertheless, several operational constraints were identified, including intelligence limitations, logistical challenges, difficult terrain, asymmetric threats, and restrictions imposed by the United Nations Rules of Engagement (ROE). Consequently, continuous improvements in operational planning, personnel readiness, intelligence integration, and multinational coordination remain essential for enhancing the effectiveness of future United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings

Strategic Aspect	Main Findings	Operational Implications
Personnel	Highly trained and experienced peacekeepers	Enhanced operational responsiveness
Leadership	Adaptive command and decentralized decision-making	Improved mission effectiveness
Logistics	Adequate but constrained by terrain and distance	Requires sustainable logistical support
Intelligence	Limited real-time intelligence	Need for integrated intelligence systems
Coordination	Strong multinational cooperation	Supports rapid operational deployment
External Environment	Armed groups, terrain, UN mandate	Requires flexible operational strategy

Source: Processed by the author based on field interviews and document analysis (2025)

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the operational success of the United Nations Rapid Deployment Battalion was largely determined by the strategic alignment between mission

objectives, operational methods, and available military resources. This finding supports Arthur F. Lykke Jr.'s Ends–Ways–Means Strategy Theory, which argues that an effective military strategy requires a balanced relationship between strategic objectives (ends), operational approaches (ways), and available capabilities (means) (Lykke, 1989). In the MONUSCO mission, the alignment between the United Nations mandate, operational planning, and the deployment of trained personnel enabled the RDB to conduct rapid-response operations while maintaining compliance with the principles of robust peacekeeping. However, the study also indicates that operational effectiveness depends on the continuous modernization of equipment, intelligence systems, and organizational readiness to address increasingly dynamic conflict situations.

From the perspective of Peace Theory, the findings confirm that peacekeeping operations extend beyond military intervention and should contribute to sustainable peace through civilian protection, conflict prevention, and institutional stabilization (Galtung, 1969). Likewise, the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines (Capstone Doctrine) emphasizes that robust peacekeeping requires the integration of military capability, political engagement, humanitarian coordination, and respect for international law (United Nations, 2008). The experience of the MONUSCO RDB demonstrates that successful peacekeeping operations require not only tactical superiority but also effective civil-military cooperation, strategic communication, and coordination among multinational contingents operating under a unified command structure. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with contemporary studies on multidimensional peacekeeping operations. Karlsrud (2015) argues that modern United Nations missions increasingly demand flexible force structures capable of responding to asymmetric threats while simultaneously protecting civilians. Similarly, Howard (2019) emphasizes that operational effectiveness in peacekeeping depends on organizational adaptability, intelligence sharing, logistical sustainability, and multinational interoperability. These observations are reflected in the MONUSCO mission, where operational challenges such as armed group mobility, difficult terrain, and logistical constraints required continuous adaptation by the Rapid Deployment Battalion. Therefore, strengthening personnel competency, intelligence capability, mobility, and integrated command systems should become strategic priorities for future United Nations peacekeeping operations. Overall, this study proposes an integrated operational strategy that combines strategic planning, organizational capability, operational readiness, intelligence support, logistics sustainability, and multinational cooperation. Such a strategy is expected to improve the effectiveness of Rapid Deployment Battalion operations in supporting future United Nations peacekeeping missions conducted in complex and high-risk conflict environments.



Figure 1. Integrated Operational Strategy of the MONUSCO Rapid Deployment Battalion
Source: Developed by the author based on Lykke's Ends–Ways–Means Strategy Model (1989) and research findings

Figure 1 illustrates the integrated operational strategy of the United Nations Rapid Deployment Battalion (RDB) in supporting the success of the MONUSCO mission. The model adopts Lykke's Ends–Ways–Means strategic framework, demonstrating that mission effectiveness is achieved through the alignment of operational objectives (ends), operational planning and military actions (ways), and available organizational capabilities (means). The findings indicate that the successful implementation of robust peacekeeping operations depends not only on military strength but also on effective leadership, personnel readiness, intelligence integration, logistical sustainability, and multinational coordination. Consequently, this integrated strategy enhances the RDB's capability to protect civilians, stabilize conflict-affected areas, and support the implementation of the United Nations mandate in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Lykke, 1989; United Nations, 2008).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the operational success of the United Nations Rapid Deployment Battalion (RDB) in supporting the MONUSCO mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was influenced by the integration of organizational capability, operational planning, leadership, logistics, intelligence, and multinational coordination. The findings indicate that the alignment between mission objectives, operational methods, and available resources enabled the RDB to effectively implement robust peacekeeping operations while fulfilling the United Nations mandate for civilian protection and regional stabilization. However, the study also identified several operational challenges, including asymmetric security threats, intelligence limitations, logistical constraints, and the complexity of the operational environment, which require continuous organizational adaptation and capability enhancement (Lykke, 1989; United Nations, 2008).

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that strengthening the operational effectiveness of future United Nations peacekeeping missions requires an integrated strategy emphasizing personnel professionalism, leadership development, intelligence integration, logistics sustainability, technological modernization, and enhanced interoperability among multinational contingents. Consistent with Peace Theory, sustainable peace cannot be achieved solely through military operations but also requires cooperation among military, political, humanitarian, and local stakeholders (Galtung, 1969). Therefore, the strategic model proposed in this research contributes both theoretically and practically by providing a comprehensive operational framework for improving the performance of Rapid Deployment Battalion units in multidimensional peacekeeping operations and supporting the achievement of long-term peace and security in conflict-affected regions (Howard, 2019; United Nations, 2008).

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