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The Conundrum of Entanglement: India's Participation in UN Peacekeeping Missions in the Congo

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Introduction¹

In recent years peacekeeping issues have undergone a significant re-examination from the normative point of view as well as at an operational level. This on-going reassessment has inspired a dynamic public debate and a rich amount of literature. Built on a comparison between the first involvement in the Congo through the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) in the early 1960s and today's participation in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), this article looks at India's role in United Nations peacekeeping operations (UNPKO) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from an historical perspective.

The rationale for choosing this distinctive viewpoint relies on the recognition that nowadays peacekeeping operations (PKO), regardless for the outcomes they may or may not achieve on the ground, represent a laboratory of political choices. A specific field that hosts and feeds the complexities of new forms of diplomacy where governments of the "global South" do have a greater say than in the past. The stakes involved in the

new rules and practices of peacekeeping (PK) are huge because they not only affect (and not always for the good) the people, territories and governments where they take place (mainly in the South and mainly in Africa), but also influence and are influenced by the changing foreign policies and national interests of troops contributors and donor countries, and engage directly with the very foundations of the United Nations (UN) as 'guarantor of peace and security' (Paddon Rhoads 2016: 3; Mampilly 2018: 171-172). Thus, investigating on PK is a major way to address, from a multiform perspective, the role played by new and old actors in the African continent as well as the agency of African states and African regional organisations.

Against the backdrop of an ever-increasing critical situation in the DRC,² where President Joseph Kabila, despite the 31 December 2016 agreement with the oppositions, is desperately holding on to power with every possible means, including the growing use of military force to silence uprisings in various parts of the country,³ on 27 March 2018 the UN Security Council has adopted a new resolution extending the MONUSCO mandate until 31 March 2019.⁴

Since its inception, in 1999, the Mission of the United Nations in the Congo (initially MONUC) has been pictured as "a 'litmus test' for the [UN] Council commitment to peacekeeping in Africa" (Paddon Rhoads 2016: 5; Stearns 2017: 34).⁵ The debate surrounding what should be the last stage of a mission that still is the largest and certainly one of the most complex and contested in the history of the Organisation represents therefore an interesting point of departure to look into the history of UN peacekeeping operations in the Congo through Indian lenses.

This specific perspective seems particularly noteworthy for two main reasons. First, India has been involved in the Congo since the Sixties at the outset of the first UN operation in the country, contributing troops and high-rank officials to ONUC from March 1961 (immediately after Patrice Lumumba's assassination) till June 1964. More recently, India has been among the supporters of MONUC since its inception in 1999 and since 2010 of its successor, MONUSCO. This consistent involvement allows us to analyse India's role in the Congo along a protracted historical trajectory and this, in turn, is a way to look into continuities and changes in Delhi's approach to PK as such. At the same time, this analysis enlightens how PK has changed in the last 50 years (and more) along with the changing attitudes of its constituting agents: recipient, donor and troop contributing countries.

Second, the rise of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister in 2014 impressed a new impetus on India's international stance. After a cautious beginning that gave some observers the impression that foreign policy was not to become a priority for the new Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, Modi began to emphasize the will to play a leading position in the international arena, not hiding the intention to challenge China's primacy in Asia and elsewhere.⁶ Whether this approach will impress an effective and long-lasting turn in India's foreign policy is early to say, but it definitely opened a series of questions in

terms of continuities and changes in India's attitude *vis-à-vis* international relations and her new and old partners.⁷ As the last India-Africa summit in October 2015 has pictured, Africa as a continent, and certain African countries in particular, fit into this global vision as important economic and political partners.⁸ Therefore, as this analysis will show, current Indian engagement in PK, which mainly operates within the African continent, represents an interesting observatory to look into some of the effects and constraints of this new Indian global reach.⁹

India and ONUC, 1960–64: a robust precedent

In order to rightly place the present stand of India in PK operation in the Congo it is useful to look into the story of Indian engagement in the African country, which is a long and complex one.

In the early summer of 1960, in front of the deterioration of the situation in the Congo, the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, clearly saw the extent of what was happening then: in the middle of the Cold War, one of the continent's biggest and richest countries, geographically placed in a central and crucial position, less than two weeks from the independence ceremony, had entered into a spiral of chaos of such proportion as to attract the attention of the major world powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, of all the independent African countries and certainly of the United Nations General Secretary, Dag Hammarskjöld.

26 It was in fact the UN Secretary General that right from the launch of an operation that he considered crucial to the very future of the UN itself wanted to tailor for certain Afro-Asian countries peculiar responsibilities and roles (Rognoni 2014). While Delhi sent troops to the Congo only from March 1961, right from the start of ONUC Dag Hammarskjöld had been asking India to make highly qualified staff available. The response was not long in coming: immediately after the approval of the Security Council Resolution no. 4387 of 14 July 1960, Indarjit Rijhye was appointed military adviser to the Secretary General; from 8 September 1960, Rajeshwar Dayal, a highly experienced Indian diplomat, became Special Representative of the Secretary General in the Congo. This was an essential role, undertaken in a particularly delicate moment of the crisis, when Patrice Lumumba's expulsion from office as Prime Minister triggered the institutional conflict that was, shortly after, to be resolved in favour of Lumumba's opponents, led by Joseph Mobutu.

To quote Rajeshwar Dayal, one of the closest advisors of the Indian Prime Minister at that time: "One of the founding principles of Nehru's foreign policy rested on the United Nations unconditional willingness to pursue peacekeeping activities, wherever necessary. He saw the operation in the Congo as a chance to demonstrate, very pragmatically, India's worries in relation to a young African country" (Dayal 1976: 11). The diplomat's words confirm one of the reasons for Delhi's support to ONUC: in order to give full visibility to a feeling of solidarity built up around the shared experience of

colonial rule, India supported the United Nations operation in the Congo as the best way to get rid of Cold War echo while re-establishing in the African country a context compatible with the achievement of the goals of independence. Continuing with Dayal's record of those days, we can grasp another aspect of Indian commitment: "Romantic as he sometimes was, Nehru was captivated by the idea that an Indian was directing the biggest and most complex operation undertaken by the international organisation until that time – a product of the Foreign Service that he himself had created" (*ibid.*). In short, Dayal does nothing to hide the fact that the Indian Prime Minister was fuelled by a fair amount of desire for prestige and visibility at a crucial time in the history of the United Nations and Africa itself.

The reinforcement of Afro-Asian solidarity, the desire for international visibility and prestige, and the possibility to gain operational experience within the scope of PKO were thus among the major reasons to explain India's stand at that time.

As mentioned, Delhi's military involvement in the Congo formally began in March 1961, when Nehru responded to Secretary Hammarskjöld's appeal and placed two infantry regiments and a fleet of six "Canberra's" belonging to the Indian air force at the ONUC's disposal.¹⁰ Nehru explained the government's position in a speech to the Indian Parliament: "About a month ago, the United Nations' General Secretary asked India to send military forces to the Congo. We informed him then that we had not approved the methods of action employed in the Congo up until that time. Consequently, we had no intention of sending our forces to the Congo unless there was a change in the United Nations' policy implicating a move closer to our positions. With the approval of the recent resolution of the Security Council, promoted by the United Arab Republic, Ceylon and Nigeria, the position has changed in part, and we now feel that it will be possible to pursue a more correct and effective policy. [...] The resolution has been the outcome of cooperation between numerous Afro-Asian countries [...] and this imposes a certain responsibility upon us" (Nehru, undated: 526-527).

In order to act upon this "responsibility", India sent almost 12,000 men to the Congo. To fully understand the significance of India's participation in the ONUC and its long-term consequences, we have to remember the particular moment that led to India's intervention: Lumumba's assassination had placed the very foundation of the United Nations' mission under scrutiny and by February 1961 it looked highly likely that the ONUC would fail. It was no longer a question of merely keeping the Cold War out of Africa but of avoiding the collapse of the organisation.¹¹ Only the severity of the situation allowed the Indian government, which had always paid attention to defending the principles of consent, impartiality and avoidance of the use of force within the scope of peacekeeping operations, to adhere to the ONUC in response to Security Council Resolution no. 161, dated 21 February 1961, authorising UN troops to use force not only in self-defence but also to contrast the extension of civil war and to complete the expulsion of foreign mercenaries.

Numerous studies dedicated to the history and evolution of peacekeeping operations agree in assigning a central role to ONUC, that proved capable of transforming the vision of international PK of the time (Bring 2014: 148-155). As for the present analysis, it is important to note that India's participation in the Congolese operation required a large economic effort by a country which was dealing with problems of underdevelopment and poverty at home. However, it also marked a turning point in relation to principles which, until then, had been considered essential in India's actions at international level (Beri 2008: 201). These considerations invite to pondering the real reasons behind this choice and its long-term consequences.

The reading of Nehru's speeches to the Indian Parliament in support of the choices made in the Congo confirms the existence of a dual aim with an ethical dimension linked to a good amount of political realism: India's involvement in the peacekeeping mission and the decision to become its main contributor focused on re-establishing peace in the area and avoiding a defeat which could have been fatal for the United Nations. Both points had positive implications for New Delhi's national interests and were also permeated by ethical value.

Following the disaster symbolised by Lumumba's assassination, perpetrated despite the presence of the UN troops, the decision to make a key contribution to the continuation of the UN mission, demanding a substantial reassessment, gave the Indian government the chance to present its policy as being decidedly Afro-Asian. It was a matter of re-establishing, or establishing *ex novo*, those local conditions that would allow the Congolese people to regain control of their institutions by reconvening the Parliament (following its ban by Mobutu) and creating a government of national unity which would heal the deep internal rifts that had characterised the early months of the independent Congo. This said, India's complete and strong adhesion to the ONUC would have avoided the political and operational failure of the operation, assigning Delhi a great visibility and international stature.

At that time, India paid a high price: 39 Indian Blue Helmets died in the Congo.¹² Nehru's consistent although conditional support to the Secretary General in every phase of the mission made the Indian government fundamental in the development of Dag Hammarskjöld's strategy in the Congo. The progressive growth of India's presence and, above all, the political front provided by Delhi allowed him to defend the mission's universal character, preventing the departure from the Congo field of the majority of Afro-Asian governments even in the most heated phases, thereby strengthening the credibility of his work, despite accusations, mainly by the Eastern Bloc, that he was biased.

The turn taken by events following the removal of Lumumba, harshly stigmatised by Nehru, and later Lumumba's assassination, prevented the development of subsequent positive bilateral relations. Both president Kasavubu and Mobutu were always very critical of Dayal's work, and this attitude only served to negatively influence relations

with New Delhi. Consequently, India's presence in the Congo between 1960 and 1964 remained confined to the action deployed through the United Nations and ONUC. When the mission was over and when Mobutu came fully into power in 1965, Indo-Congolese relations remained minimal. Even when, in the mid-'70s, the 'Zairisation' process, the transfer "to well-connected Zairians" (Mthembu-Salter 2012: 7) of most of the properties owned by foreigners in the country involved the Indian community in the Congo (which had become Zaire), there was no reaction from the Indian government (*ibid.*): this passive acquiescence was not peculiar to Zaire but it occurred on similar occasions in other parts of the continent, too, when nationalisation policies touched the interests of much bigger Indian communities (Bhattacharya 2014).

From peacekeeping to a new Indian style?

Between the 1960s and the 1990s no commercial or political interests conveyed significant weight to the bilateral relationship. In 1993, with the start of the eclipse of the Mobutu regime, India recalled its ambassador to Zaire, appointing his replacement only in 2006 (Mthembu-Salter 2012: 7). Participation in the ONUC undoubtedly marked the height of India's involvement in African politics of the time. Over the years that followed, New Delhi had little to offer to a continent busy, just like India, dealing with its colonial inheritance and striving to achieve 'development'. Unlike China, India did not set out on the road to competition to gain African support (Beri 2012: 3) to spend internationally.¹³

In fact, it was Indian impressive economic growth, triggered by the reforms of the early 1990s, and the simultaneous transformations that many African countries were also going through, that changed the pattern of Indo-African relations (Sidiropoulos 2014: 78-83; Mullen 2016; Husar 2016: 92-93; Dubey, Biswas 2016: 30-32).

Today there is no doubt that India is among the countries that look to the continent with an ever-increasing interest.¹⁴ "The new growth pole", as Africa had been referred to at the second Indo-African Forum in 2011, has gained even greater momentum and is now up to a "partnership for prosperity" (Beri 2012: 1), as Prime Minister Modi declared at the third India-Africa Summit gathered in New Delhi in October 2015. Beyond the conventional rhetoric several data confirm "India's reinvigorated relationship with Africa"¹⁵ grounded on consistent yet growing domestic concerns that can be summarized around three broad issues: energy supply, search for new markets and security (Basur 2017).

From a broad perspective, it is interesting to notice that since the end of the Cold War New Delhi has taken part in every peacekeeping operation promoted by the United Nations in Africa, from Sudan to Namibia.¹⁶ It therefore comes as no surprise that in 1999, following the signing of the Lusaka Agreement¹⁷ and with the creation by the UN Security Council of the MONUC, India was one of the first governments asked to take part in the new mission in the Congo.

Discussing the events that led the United Nations to undertake a new peacekeeping operation in the Congo goes beyond the scope of the present analysis. What is relevant is understanding the rationale for India's participation in this new phase of engagement within the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to elucidate whether there are elements of continuity (and discontinuity) with the action carried out in the early 1960s and whether that experience, which took place a long time ago but remains fundamental, influences present New Delhi's approach and stance (Clark 2011).

In the early 1960s, a well-played out South-South solidarity allowed India, who had dared to speak out at a very delicate moment, to conquer a leading role among Afro-Asian states and to influence the decision-making with regard to the mission in the Congo (Beri 2003: 217-218). On the threshold of the new millennium, New Delhi's continuous commitment towards post-Cold War peacekeeping missions is certainly rooted in the Nehruvian rhetoric and is inspired by a will of having a greater say in the decision-making process surrounding PKO as she did in the early Sixties. At the same time, this commitment can be seen from different perspectives too (Debiel, Wulf 2017: 49-57).

To sustain Indian involvement in peacekeeping missions, the usual discourse portrayed by diplomats as well as by researchers identifies three sets of motivations: the promotion of peace, the development of bilateral relations and the need to recruit support for Delhi's candidacy to the Security Council. If the commitment to the promotion of peace has always been central to Indian foreign policy since 1947 and refers to the Indian Constitution,¹⁸ it would seem that one of the biggest differences compared to the past lies in the degree of influence that participation in peacekeeping missions can have on the bilateral relations of the countries involved: this dimension is often neglected. Given the interest by both India and African countries in the strengthening of reciprocal economic and political relations, and considering the operational and normative implications of "third generation" peacekeeping operations,¹⁹ it is easy to understand how participation in these missions today opens a series of questions that were never asked or used to be asked differently in the past. In other words, the stakes these days seem to be much higher than they used to be. From this point of view, it seems interesting to observe that the debate around India's role as a peacekeeping contributor has only recently begun to include critical readings alongside more traditional interpretations, aimed at bringing out the positive aspects only (Mampilly 2014).

On a mandate that has been gradually extended and transformed through various resolutions by the United Nations' Security Council, MONUC initially started out to observe the Ceasefire Agreement²⁰ but was quickly assigned growing tasks according to the changing requirements on the ground.²¹ Since 2010, MONUSCO has taken the place of the previous mission and, with the UN Security Council Resolution no. 1925 (28 May 2010), it obtained "authorisation to use every means necessary to fulfil the

mandate regarding, among other things, the protection of civilians".²² Eventually, Goma's capture by the March 23 Movement (better known as M23) in 2012 epitomised the fallacies of the whole stabilization process and prompted the UN and the AU to sponsor the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework finally signed in April 2013 by 11 African governments. The UN Security Council Resolution no. 2098 (28 March 2013), accordingly, launched the first "United Nations offensive combat force" and created the Force International Brigade (FIB) – formed by troops from South Africa, Tanzania and Malawi – with the aim of "neutralising and disarming" the M23 and other Congolese rebel movements, as well as foreign armed groups operating in the Eastern part of the country, thus entering a new phase in peacekeeping history with a multifaceted new type of operation.²³

At the political level, it is important to stress that Indian diplomats and politicians have in the last years, in particular, engaged a debate calling, among other issues, for a more transparent relation between Troops Contributor Countries (TCC) and the Security Council members, insisting on the importance of increasing dialogue between the various actors involved at every stage of the process.²⁴ At present, the failures to implement this kind of communications reveal the mission's inconsistencies at a local, national and international level.

As some recent analyses have shown (Paddon Rhoads 2016: 121–160; von Billerbeck 2017),²⁵ there is often a lack of coherence between action taken (or a lack of it) on the ground and the content of the mandate, as well as weaknesses and fallacies in pursuing the mandate objectives. At a national level, fluctuating relations between President Kabila and MONUSCO headquarters have contributed to project a negative image of the mission and have negatively impacted on its performance as a whole.²⁶

In this contested setting, what can lead India to uphold its commitment to MONUSCO? Does New Delhi not risk jeopardising its international image by continuing to participate in an operation which has raised criticism and that risks being labelled as a failure? Could the participation in the controversial MONUSCO risk compromising India's long-term interests in one of Africa's potentially richest regions?

These questions bring us back to the comparison between the situation in the early 1960s and the present: elements of continuity, but also significant changes emerge. As we have seen, the balance of India's commitment in the Congo in the early 1960s generated a bivalent result. Today, in view of the actual and potential interests shared by Delhi and Kinshasa, the same type of balance could produce a negative overall result. If we assume that African states, particularly those rich in natural resources, can boast a growing contractual power *vis-à-vis* the various international players competing with one another to get a prominent place in the new relationship,²⁷ it is easy to see how, in the Congo today, India is not simply playing on the level of its international prestige, but is, at the same time, setting precedents that could have implications in the future, especially in a bilateral key.

Given its duration, the extent of its mandate, the degree of financial and logistic commitment asked to the participating states, and the local, national and regional challenges it has to face, MONUSCO (as had already happened with the ONUC) represents a reference point for peacekeeping operations in general. This high visibility, usually seen as an advantage for the contributors, can, in fact, turn out to be counterproductive if controversies prevail over positive accomplishments. By the way, it is easy for contentions to arise in a climate as unstable as the one that still characterises some areas of the Congo, not to mention the fact that the extent of the mandate and the challenges that the MONUSCO is asked to undertake represent critical elements capable of compromising the expected result. Suffice it to mention the issue of the conduct of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), officially a major contributor to the mission, whose officials and ranks have often turned perpetrators of those very crimes the mission is supposed to stop and prevent.²⁸ In addition to this, one of the pillars of peacekeeping operations has always been based upon the explicit consent of the country in which the operation is taking place.²⁹ From this point of view, too, the Congolese operation has been a peculiar case, since the 1960s. In the days of the ONUC – between 1961 and 1964 – India's interest in the positive outcome of the mission took precedence over the strict observance of the principle of non-interference. As the Indian representative at the UN recalled in a speech in 2009: "India is not unfamiliar with the concept of 'robust' peacekeeping. In December 1962, an Indian officer, General Dewan Prem Chand, led an acclaimed UN military operation, largely with Indian troops deployed in ONUC, which ended the Katangese secession and restored authority to the Congo government. ONUC, where India lost 39 peacekeepers, was the first UN 'robust' peacekeeping operation".³⁰ In fact, since February 1961, the severity of the situation on the ground in the Congo encouraged the Indian government to abandon a strict interpretation of the principles of consent, impartiality and avoidance of the use of force – until then pillars of India's participation in PKO – and to fully support the continuation of ONUC. Today, when the much-contested President, Joseph Kabila, expresses his concerns in relation to MONUSCO's presence,³¹ showing his desire to turn it to his advantage,³² New Delhi is once again called upon to very carefully consider the implications of its commitment. These considerations are currently influenced by factors that have little to do with the operation itself. Nevertheless, India cannot ignore them: one such case is competition with China, which can boast, at India's detriment, not only a deep-rooted economic presence in the Congo, but also a permanent seat at the Security Council.³³ So, for example, it frequently occurs that dissatisfactions expressed by Kabila are picked up by China and echoed throughout the Security Council, to the benefit of the Chinese positions in the Congo.³⁴ In the same way, China, probably on the strength of what is now a consolidated relationship with Kinshasa (Kabemba 2016) and being among the countries that contribute to the MONUSCO,³⁵ has repeatedly confirmed

that it will support Kabila if he asks, as often threatened, for the definitive withdrawal of the mission. The condescending Chinese attitude towards the Congolese political establishment is nothing new in Sino-African relations. This type of willingness, however, and particularly the advantages that Beijing might gain, could be of importance in a general review of the Indian choices for the Congo. We must not forget that China represents a direct competitor for Indian interests, in the Congo and in the rest of Africa (*ibid.*).

Indian diplomats, officials and practitioners involved at different levels in the peacekeeping field, have often restated perplexities and fears with regard to the conception and implementation of missions on the ground, in general, and this is particularly true for MONUSCO.³⁶ As early as February 2011, during a special session of the Security Council devoted to peacekeeping and international security, the Indian representative, speaking then as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, had reaffirmed "the Indian commitment to sharing its vast experience, accumulated in over six decades of nation-building to intensify the efforts aimed at development and security", but also emphasised the need to devote more funds to collective efforts to achieve economic progress. At the same time, he was critical of "the temptation" that emerged within the international community, "to create a new orthodoxy aimed at imposing from above instead of listening": an attitude "to be avoided at all cost".³⁷ This position set the standard for India's subsequent approach to the issue.³⁸

Today, the Democratic Republic of the Congo accounts for a limited share of Indian direct investments and Indo-Congolese trade has yet to reach its full potential,³⁹ but there are signs of an expanding trend. Sectors of major Indian interest are infrastructures, telecommunications, and the pharmaceutical and mining industries. India and the DRC attach considerable importance to bilateral consultation,⁴⁰ while maintaining a free market-oriented attitude based on largely indirect governmental support of India's business initiatives, which continue to be mostly private.⁴¹ Nevertheless multiple actions have been taken at governmental level since 2006 to encourage the opening of credit lines for development projects, along with an increase in donations and loans.⁴² As elsewhere in Africa, New Delhi is also investing on capacity building thanks to specific programmes within the India-Africa Forum initiative. The combination of these commitments and the presence of a quite consistent community of non-resident Indians (about 9,000)⁴³ draws a picture undergoing complete transformation, where the need to "look beyond peacekeeping"⁴⁴ is stripped bare of circumstantial rhetoric to take on very tangible meanings (Naidu, Rwigin 2015).⁴⁵

Concluding remarks

As has always been the case, today international visibility and prestige are among the reasons why governments decide to contribute to peace operations in critical contexts. A mix of ethical motivations and the pursue of diverse national interests constitute the

backbone for these engagements, being it on the side of UN Security Council permanent and non-permanent members or on the side of Troops Contributor Countries.

The more missions have turned complex and multifaceted the more difficult it has been to fully accomplish the goals set through mandates that, being the result of complex diplomatic compromises, are often overstretched, vague and controversial. The very international prestige and visibility obviously linked to the operational success of the missions are put into question. More often than not, PK operations are in fact subject to scrutiny and contentions and risk to be counterproductive for the actors involved.

This has been the case in the Congo since the first UN mission, back in 1960. Because of the high costs of the operation, the contested ways in which it has been conducted, the often divergent objectives of the parts involved, ONUC has been subject to strong criticism, in particular by countries of the "South", that at that time was not "global" yet, but certainly through the Congolese crisis managed to advance common stands and claims with India spearheading on the lead. Coming to more recent years, in the case of MONUC first and MONUSCO later this trend has been even clearer: in New York since 1999 and in various ways until the last resolution adopted on 27 March 2018, the distance between P3 (United States, United Kingdom and France), P5 (China and Russia), TCCs and the hosting state has made it difficult to set clear-cut mandates with obvious negative repercussions at every stage of the process. No surprise then that both the normative and the operational purposes of the operation have so far failed to be accomplished despite its long duration: almost 20 years overall.

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Against this backdrop India has always played a major role in all UN operations in the Congo since 1960, not only as a TCC but also in terms of political endorsement and at times political lobbying, trying to tailor for herself the role of spokesperson for the Afro-Asian countries. In order to pursue that aim already in the 1960s Nehru had to compromise between the respect of the fundamental principles of PK to which India has always professed allegiance – the consent of the hosting country, the non-use of force (or progressively a strictly limited use of force) and impartiality – and the growing complex requirements that called for a flexible understanding (if not a disregard) of those principles.

Today, in face of what have been called robust operations or third generation PK missions – and MONUSCO certainly falls into this broad category – this conundrum is all the more evident for Indian politicians and diplomats. But if this dilemma is continuously posing operational difficulties on the ground – suffice it to mention the constraints and inability in implementing the protection of civilians – it allowed India to take the lead in questioning the attitude of the P3 and their inability or unwillingness to consider non-P3 requirements, thus advancing new advocacy for a different non-Western and possibly "global-South" perspective. This perspective calls for a much greater attention for the needs of TCCs mainly composed by states from the South and of Regional Organisations equally involved on the ground (the case of FIB in the Congo is a case

in point), and for a deeper focus on the political and social dimensions of PK, which in the last years have been sacrificed for an ever-increasing attention to the security and military dimensions.⁴⁶

Finally, taking into consideration the implications of Indian engagement in PK on the bilateral relation with the host country, the DRC, and with the region affected by the intervention, my conclusions are mixed.

At a first glance, today as back in the early 1960s, India seems not to be gaining much from her involvement as the second largest troop and police contributing country in the Congo. Given the fluctuating position Kabila has been showing towards MONUSCO and FIB and his ability to play it for the sake of his short-term needs by constantly putting into question his consent to the mission, often portrayed as an external and unwanted intervention, India's exposure might play against her interests in front of the present Congolese leadership. Here stands another aspect of the conundrum and the India-China rivalry seems to be the right case in point to enlighten it: as India, China is a TCC (although a minor one) but is also a permanent member of the Security Council, which India of course is not; contrary to Delhi's constant although increasingly controversial commitment to MONUSCO, Beijing has managed to maintain a relative detached position and has so far used all possible means to accommodate Kabila's stand, most obviously not to compromise her extensive financial and economic deals in the African country. The China-DRC partnership looks today firm and strong as ever. As this analysis has tried to show, PK operations can indeed be seen as laboratories of political choices. India's participation in MONUSCO allows to place India's different moves against the backdrop of the multiple roles New Delhi's government plays within that context. India in the Congo is in fact, at the same time, a troop contributor country, an aspiring global player and a rampant economic force. These three dimensions give rise to different and possibly uncoherent sets of choices. As a TCC, India has often pursued the role of spokesperson for the fellow TC partners that mainly come from the Global South. As an aspiring global player New Delhi might need, *vice versa*, to downplay certain anti-Western claims in order to avoid potential counterproductive confrontational attitudes towards the other global players, in particular the US, the UK and France. As a rampant economic force India has to measure pros and cons of her PK commitment not to jeopardize to others' advantage (China) increasingly promising bilateral relations. No surprise then if PK is currently under scrutiny, in India as elsewhere, not only because it can rarely keep up with the high expectations linked to its very *raison d'être* – especially when it comes to extended mandates as in the case of MONUSCO – but also because it creates room for highly contentious political choices where ethical principles meet power politics and national interests.

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NOTES:

- 1 - The article mirrors the situation in December 2018, before the presidential elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- 2 - Cf. UNSC (2017); Congo Research Group (CRG), *The Art of the Possible. MONUSCO's New Mandate*, NYU-CIC, March 2018: <http://congoresearchgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/The-Art-of-the-Possible-MONUSCOs-New-Mandate-23Feb18.pdf>.
- 3 - A synthesis of recent developments can be found in *Africa Research Bulletin* (2017, 2018) and Stearns (2017: 42).
- 4 - Cf. https://monusco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/resolution_24092018.pdf (02/2018).
- 5 - See also J. Stearns, *Can Force Be Useful in the Absence of a Political Strategy? Lessons from the UN Missions to the DR Congo*, Centre on International Cooperation, December 2015: <http://cic.nyu.edu/publications/can-force-be-useful-absence-political-strategy-lessons-un-missions-dr-congo>.
- 6 - See for instance Modi's speech at the recent Davos Economic Forum, in «The Indian Express» (on-line): <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/full-text-pm-modis-keynote-speech-at-plenary-session-of-davos-wef-5036533>. On the possible hiatus between India's new global role and her attitude *vis-à-vis* the so-called global South and the Non-Aligned Movement in particular, see, among others, T.P. Sreenivasan, *Farewell to NAM*, in «The Hindu» (on-line), 7 October 2016: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/columns/Farewell-to-NAM/article15473111.ece>.
- 7 - See for instance the special issue of *International Affairs* (2017), devoted to India's new foreign policy outlook.
- 8 - To grasp the current rhetoric on India-Africa relations see Modi's speech at the inaugural ceremony of the third India-Africa summit. *Speech by Prime Minister at the Inaugural Ceremony of the Third India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi*, "Ministry of External Affairs – Government of India", 29 October 2015: http://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/25977/Speech_by_Prime_Minister_at_the_Inaugural_Ceremony_of_the_Third_IndiaAfrica_Forum_Summit_in_New_Delhi_October_29_2015.
- 9 - In his recent article, Mampilly (2018: 190-194) focuses on the impact of national interests and foreign policy objectives on PK performance.
- 10 - See *United Nations Operation in the Congo*, "United Nations", n.d.: <http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/onuc.htm>.
- 11 - "We also sit on a volcano with the pleasant quality that, if it erupts, even the Organisation is likely to disappear underground. This may be meagre consolation but it creates the proper kind of philosophical approach": so wrote Hammarskjöld to Dayal, emphasizing the severity of the moment and the possible repercussions which could have reverberated from Africa throughout the entire United Nations' organisation; in Kungliga Biblioteket, shelf n. L179, box 155, "Congo crisis, code cables, incoming/outgoing 17 June-30 September, 1960", Outgoing code cable, from Secretary General to Dayal, New York 30 Sept. 1960.
- 12 - Van Rooyen (2010: 9). Cf. also *Fatalities Geographic Map*, "United Nations Peacekeeping", n.d.: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/fatalities-geographic-map>.
- 13 - *Ibid.* A "visibility deficit" has been attributed to India for her scarce attention to the African continent until recently, especially if compared with the concern and visibility of other major actors.
- 14 - Cf. *Speech by Prime Minister at the Inaugural Ceremony of the Third India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi*, cit.
- 15 - This is the title of an accurate report acknowledging the core of this partnership in the different domains, from economy to politics: R.D. Mullen, K. Arora, *India's Reinvigorated Relationship with Africa*, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, updated December 2016: <http://www.cprindia.org/research/reports/india-s-reinvigorated-relationship-africa>.
- 16 - For a summary of the various missions cf. Beri (2008: 204-205). See also Mohan, Gippner (2013: 21-28) and Banerjee (2013).
- 17 - This is the ceasefire agreement signed on 10 July 1999 between the DRC and five states in the region: Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Rwanda. The agreement imposed a temporary halt upon one of the bloodiest conflicts in the continent's recent history. For the text of the agreement, cf. *Ceasefire Agreement (Lusaka Agreement)*, "United Nations Peacemaker", 10 July 1999: <https://peacemaker.un.org/>

drc-lusaka-agreement99. For an analysis of the negotiations and the implications of the agreement, see, among others, Prunier (2009: 203-226) and Reyntjens (2009: 247-250).

18 - This type of rhetoric has not stopped India from going to war and from stocking up on nuclear weapons; as noted by scholars of Indian foreign policy, there is a certain dichotomy between India's stance on an international level and the choices made by Delhi at regional level. As a regional power, in fact, India tends to take a different and much more aggressive approach. Cf. among others Sitaraman (2012), Nadkarni (2013) and Husar (2016: 80).

19 - It is the progressive extension of the MONUC (now MONUSCO) mandate by the United Nations' Security Council that has led analysts to talk about "third generation" operations. Cf., among others, Clark (2011: 372).

20 - On the evolution in size and scope of the UN mission in the Congo from 1999 on, see, among others, Paddon Rhoads (2017).

21 - On the understanding by the international donor community of the period 2008-12 in the DRC and its impact on the UN missions see Marijnen (2015: 208-214).

22 - Cf. *Resolution 1925 (2010)*, "United Nations", 28 May 2010: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1925\(2010\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1925(2010)). For a critical analysis of MONUSCO activity cf. Clark (2011: 373-383).

23 - Cf. *Resolution 2098 (2013)*, "United Nations", 28 March 2013: <https://monusco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/n1327381.pdf>. See also J. Stearns, *Can Force Be Useful* cit. On FIB cf. J. Benson, *The UN Intervention Brigade. Extinguishing Conflicts or Adding Fuel to the Flames?*, A One EarthFuture Discussion Paper, June 2016: <https://oneearthfuture.org/news/un-intervention-brigade-extinguishing-conflict-or-adding-fuel-flames> (05/2018). On the role played by the Africa Union and African regional organizations at this stage of the crisis see, among others, Dersso (2017: 87-92, 97-100). For the reaction of Beijing to this resolution see *UN okays first-ever intervention force for DR Congo*, "People's Daily Online", 29 March 2013: <http://en.people.cn/90777/8187422.html>.

24 - Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), *Statement by Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Mr Rahul Kaswan, at the Thematic Debate on Agenda Item 56 - Comprehensive Review of the Whole Question of Peacekeeping Operations in All Their Aspects at the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) of the UN General Assembly on November 4, 2015*, n.d.: https://idsa.in/system/files/newsletters/twir_11_5_2015.pdf.

25 - CRG, *Impasse in the Congo: What Do People Think?*, Investigative Report n. 2, October 2016: <http://congoresearchgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Final-Poll-CRG-BERCI.pdf>.

26 - On Kabila's floating attitude towards MONUC first, in particular after the 2006 elections, and, later, towards MONUSCO, since 2011, see Paddon Rhoads (2017: 129-131). See also Kabila's speech at the UN General Assembly, September 2017: *DR Congo, at General Assembly, calls on UN mission there to focus more on development*, "UN News", 23 September 2017: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/09/566722-dr-congo-general-assembly-calls-un-mission-there-focus-more-development>; *Briefing Security Council on Democratic Republic of Congo, Special Representative Underscores Need for Credible Electoral Process, Despite Unrest*, "United Nations", 7 March 2018: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13238.doc.htm>.

27 - An example of the increasing competition among international partners to strike deals with the DRC government evolves, for example, around the cobalt supply chain; see T. Wilson, *We All Be Relying on Congo to Power Our Electric Cars*, in «Bloomberg News» (on-line), 27 October 2017: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-10-26/battery-boom-relies-on-one-african-nation-avoiding-chaos-of-past> (01/2018).

28 - J. Verweijen, *Strange Battlefields Fellows. The Diagonal Interoperability between Blue Helmets and the Congolese Army*, in «International Peacekeeping», 14 March 2017: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13533312.2017.1294486?needAccess=true> (01/2018); cf. Paddon Rhoads (2017: 130) and Stearns (2017: 39).

29 - On the evolution of India's position on this issue see, among others, Khanderkar (2015).

30 - Cf. *Statement in the UN Security Council on Peacekeeping in New York*, "Hardeep Singh Puri", 5 August 2009: <http://hardeepsinghpuri.com/statement-by-shri-hardeep-singh-puri-permanent-representative-in-the-un-security-council-on-peacekeeping-in-new-yorkS-422>.

31 - Despite his constant official endorsement, Kabila's perspective on MONUSCO has always been marked

by suspicion if not hostility, especially after UN adoption of the so-called conditionality policy for military cooperation with FARDC. See J. Reynaert, *MONUC/MONUSCO and Civilians Protection in the Kivus*, IPIS, n.d.: https://monusco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/monuc-monusco_and_civilian_protection_in_the_kivus.pdf; J. Verweijen, *Do U.N. Forces Work Closely with Host Country Governments? Not in Congo*, in «The Washington Post» (on-line), 3 April 2017: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/04/03/do-u-n-forces-work-closely-with-host-country-governments-not-in-congo/?utm_term=.58ba02b52401. On the pitfalls of the need to retain Kabila's support to the stabilization approach, see Marijn (2015: 217-218).

32 - On the consequences resulting from the link between the UN Security Council's decision to support the DRC government in the implementation of the stabilization policy and the instrumental use of the very presence of MONUSCO by President Kabila see Paddon Rhoads (2017: 130-132).

33 - On the subject of rivalry between China and India in this setting, see also V. Vira, *India and UN Peacekeeping: Declining Interests with Grave Implications*, in «Small Wars Journal», 14 July 2012: <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/india-and-un-peacekeeping-declining-interest-with-grave-implications>. For Chinese economic interests in the DRC cf. also CRG (2016: 33).

34 - In 2011, for example, China guaranteed its support to Kabila to avoid the appointment of an undesirable candidate at the *Group of experts*, strongly irritating the United States, Great Britain and France. Cf. Mthemba-Salter (2012: 9). See also the Chinese stand at the Security Council 7910th Meeting debating the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate. *Security Council Grants Mandate Extension for United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo, while Reducing Troop Ceiling*, "United Nations", 31 March 2017: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12772.doc.htm> (01/2018).

35 - As for 31 March 2018 China contributes to MONUSCO with 228 units of personnel, see https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/3_country_and_mission_1.pdf (12/2018).

36 - See, for example, the statement pronounced on 12 Feb. 2013 by Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative of India at the UN, during the Open Debate on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts: <http://hardeepsinghpuri.com/security-council-statement-by-ambassador-hardeep-singh-puri-permanent-representative-of-india-at-the-open-debate-on-protection-of-civilians-in-armed-conflict> (01/2018). A general review of the MONUSCO installation was hoped for by the International Crisis Group, among others: see, in particular, ICG - International Crisis Group, *Open Letter to the United Nations Security Council on the Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, "International Crisis Group", 11 June 2012: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/democratic-republic-congo/open-letter-un-security-council-situation-democratic-republic-congo>; *Statement by Ms. Pawan Kapoor, Joint Secretary, on High-Level Meeting on the Democratic Republic of Congo at the ECOSOC*, "Ministry of External Affairs - Government of India", 27 September 2012: <https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/pdf/India-foreign-relation-2012.pdf>, pp. 1961-1962.

37 - See *Security Council Open Debate on the Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Interdependence Between Security and Development*, "PeaceWomen", 11 February 2011: http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/jdn_ips_feb2011_0.pdf. The background of these Indian stances must not be forgotten: the intervention in Libya, which was given the go-ahead with a contested decision of the Security Council (Resolution no. 1973 dated 17 March 2011, passed with ten votes in favour and five abstentions by India, Brazil, China, Russia and Germany), was not fully supported by New Delhi, which launched a dedicated campaign to review the whole field of the approach to and implementation of peacekeeping. On this matter and on the repercussions of the Indian decisions for the MONUSCO, cf. Mampilly (2014).

38 - On this matter see also Abiew, Gal-Or (2014). On the reasons behind this India's posture and its consequences on her participation in MONUSCO see Mampilly (2018).

39 - Cf. *India - Democratic Republic of Congo Relations*, "Ministry of External Affairs - Government of India", 8 December 2016: https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Bilateral_Briefs_DRC_2016.pdf. See also the analysis describing the Indo-African economic partnership with data on Indo-DR Congo interests in Dubey, Biswas (2016: 189-191).

40 - In 2016 there were three official visits to India by the Congolese Minister of Trade, of Energy and Water Resources and of Foreign Affairs. In November 2017 it was the turn of the new Congolese Minister

of Foreign Affairs and Vice Prime Minister to pay a two-day visit to Delhi. See *Visit of Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to India*, "Ministry of External Affairs – Government of India", 10 November 2017: <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29109/Visit+of+Vice+Prime+Minister+Minister+of+Foreign+Affairs+and+Regional+Integ+ration+of+the+Democratic+Republic+of+the+Congo+to+India+November+0910+2017>.

41 – Cf. Mthembu-Salter (2012: 21). In an interview granted to the author, an official of the Indian embassy in Kinshasa stated: "We are not in competition with China, and unlike them, we do not exchange minerals for infrastructure. When Indian companies come here, they might seek advice from us, but we do not open doors for them. Our businesses know how to do their job. Indian businessmen are very smart".

42 – R.D. Mullen, K. Arora, *India's Reinvigorated Relationship* cit.

43 – See *India – Democratic Republic of Congo Relations*, cit. On the role of Indian diaspora in Indo-African relations: Dubey, Biswas (2016: 120-121, 132-136).

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45 – S. Naidu, E. Rwigin, *India's Africa Trade Policy under Modi Government*, ICTSD, March 2015: <http://www.ictsd.org/bridges-news/bridges-africa/news/india's-africa-trade-policy-under-the-modi-government-business-as>.

46 – Cf. *UN Security Council Open Debate. Protecting Civilians in the Context of Peacekeeping Operations. India Statement, Ambassador Tanmaya Lal, Deputy Permanent Representative*, "Permanent Mission of India to the UN", 10 June 2016: https://www.pminewyork.org/pdf/uploadpdf/31640dpr_28july_sc.pdf (05/2018).

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