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What is This Thing Called Peace?

Review Essay

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- Alan Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa — Learning from UN Interventions in Other People's Wars* (Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner Publishers,2020).
- Rachel Kleinfeld, *A Savage Order — How the World's Deadliest* Countries *Can Forge a Path to Security* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2018).
- Richard Caplan, *Measuring Peace — Principles, Practices, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,2019).

For the last decade of a professional career spanning more than forty years with the United Nations (UN), Alan Doss served in senior leadership positions at the frontlines of UN peacekeeping. Asked by Kofi Annan in late 2000 to oversee the UN's sprawling efforts to improve governance and stability in war-torn Sierra Leone, Doss went on to serve as deputy to the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) in Côte d'Ivoire in 2004, before taking charge of a fifteen-thousand strong operation in Liberia in 2005, another West African country emerging warily from the devastation of civil war. His last and most challenging assignment was in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where, from 2007 to 2010, he served as Ban Ki-Moon's special representative and the head of a mission whose authorised strength had reached more than 22,000 peacekeepers by the time Doss arrived on the scene, easily making it the largest UN operation at the time.

A *Peacekeeper in Africa* is Alan Doss' refreshingly honest, thoughtful, and highly readable account of his experiences at the frontlines of UN peacekeeping. For the light it casts on the history of peacekeeping-cum-peacebuilding in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as on the distinctive challenges faced by UN peacekeepers deployed in the midst of "other people's wars", Doss' memoirs represents an important and very welcome contribution to the literature.

Now, to say that *A Peacekeeper in Africa* is an important book, deserving of a wide readership, is not, of course, to suggest that

it offers a definitive account of UN's involvement in Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and the Congo. Nor is it meant to imply that the judgements and decisions reached by its author in the course of individual operations were either uncontroversial or unproblematic. He certainly makes no such claim. Indeed, one of the attractions of his account lies in his readiness to question the wisdom of policy choices made, to acknowledge errors of judgement, and to accept the force and the validity of alternative viewpoints. While setting out the reasons behind the decisions that generated controversy on his watch[1], emphasising to this end the constraints and conflicting pressures bearing on his room for manoeuvre, the tone is never self-exculpatory. Nor does he seek to put an unwarranted spin on the UN's record, least of all in the DRC. Of his time there, he frankly admits: "Not a lot went right and some things went badly wrong."[2] Such candour is in welcome contrast to the self-serving and defensive character of many actor-memoirs, and makes for a far more rewarding read than many, supposedly more detached and rigorous, policy papers and academic treatises.

Still more important, however, Doss' candid approach lends colour and credibility to what makes *A Peacekeeper in Africa* particularly valuable: the *field-level* perspective it provides on the challenges facing the UN — the UN, that is, *not* as a unitary actor but as a profoundly political and functionally fragmented organisation reliant on its member states for all that it undertakes — when it intervenes in internal conflicts. Thus, not unlike Conor Cruise O'Brien's classic account of his time with the UN in the Congo almost half a century earlier, Alan Doss, leaving aside obvious differences in style and presentation, provides the reader with a picture of "the United Nations as it actually works in practise — the functioning political entity, as distinct from the ideal conception and proceedings officially recorded."[3]

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[1] Perhaps the best example of this was the decision to provide UN military support for the notoriously corrupt and predatory Congolese national army (FARDC) in its renewed campaign, dubbed Kimia II, against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), itself a brutal and rapacious armed group, in eastern Congo in 2009. See, Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa*, pp.191-3.

[2] Ibid,p.151.

[3] Conor Cruise O'Brien, *To Katanga and Back — A UN Case History* (London: Hutchinson & Co.,1962),p.12.

While Doss' account of individual missions can be read as separate stories, a number of cross-cutting themes emerge from the book that are plainly of much wider interest to the discussion of the UN's role and record in helping build peace in divided and conflict-strewn states. Four such themes stand out: the importance of contextual awareness and "deep" knowledge of the conflict environment as a prerequisite for effective peacebuilding; the critical role played individuals and personalities in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations; the unique challenges that go with the job of Special Representative of the UN Secretary General; and, last but not least, the political and operational issues raised by the shift in the strategic priorities of UN peacekeeping since 1999 towards an ever greater emphasis on the protection of civilians (POC) in armed conflict.

Conflicts of "layered complexity"

After more than two decades, peacekeeping operations in the Congo remain, in Doss' depressing verdict, "a recurring and tumultuous blend of hope and hubris."[4] A commendable feature of his own memoires, however, is a distinct lack of hubris, both with regard to the countries in which he served and the peacebuilding conundrum each of them posed for the UN. Indeed, *A Peacekeeper in Africa* is notable for its emphasis, implicit as much as explicit, on the vital importance of treating societies subject to UN intervention on their own terms, and, flowing logically from this, resisting the temptation — whether expressed in bureaucratic or "social scientific" form — to abstract the challenges of peacebuilding from what will always be a unique historical, political and cultural context. Doss' account plainly recognises this but also makes it clear that a long-standing difficulty facing the UN — at its headquarters in New York and in the field — has been not only how to acquire contextual knowledge in a systematic fashion but, crucially, how to integrate it into conflict analysis and feed it into policy.

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[4] Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa*,p.151.

The environment in which UN peacekeeping operations deployed in Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and the Congo, were all profoundly influenced by historical forces and continuities. In the case of Congo, the difficulties encountered by MONUC in key areas of policy — notably in its dealings with the Congolese security sector — cannot be separated from an understanding of the impact and legacy of Mobutu Sese Seko's decades in power, in the course of which a system of governance built on patronage, predation and pillage was established with the President himself, in Reyebrouk's evocative image, "perched atop a pyramid of clientelism where, directly or indirectly, thousands ate from his hand."[5] Doss, who, interestingly, was able to observe Mobutu's notorious *Systeme D*, or "*débrouillardise*", at close quarter while serving as UN Resident Coordinator in Zaire from 1987 to 1990, rightly stresses how the system "characterized the whole of the Zaire administration".[6] The logic and rules of that system persisted into the post-Mobutu era, adapting and reasserting themselves in mutated form in response to the dislocations and depredations of the two Congo Wars, the self-same wars that prompted the UN's return to and escalating involvement in the Congo. The conflict in Côte d'Ivoire was similarly one of "layered complexity", linked to the drawn-out "reordering of the patronage state" set up President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who, like Mobutu, had run the show since independence in 1960 until his death in 1993.[7]

The importance of context raises a number of issues and challenges for peacekeepers in the field.

On the one hand, peacebuilding requires knowledge and understanding of the historical legacies and cultural specificities of societies subject to intervention, how these interact and shape the conflict environment, especially at the local level. There is, accordingly, no template that can easily be transferred from one case to another, and behind the labels and analytical categories used to describe conflict settings — "rebels", "government forces", "greed and grievance", even "peace" — lurks often a more complex reality, quite especially "in regions and among communities far from

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[5] David Van Reyebrouck, *Congo — The Epic History of a* People (New York: Harper Collins, 2014), p.356.
[6] Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa*, p.160.
[7] Ibid,p.93.

the capital city."[8] On the other hand, the UN has long struggled to develop analytical capacities, based on systematic collection efforts, information management and assessment mechanisms, to support missions in the field. "Our capacity to defuse conflicts" in the DRC, Doss writes, "was limited by insufficient knowledge of the specific drivers of conflict as well as inadequate engagement with local communities."[9] In Sierra Leone, he made a determined effort to engage directly with chiefs, elders, ex-combatants, community and civil society groups. Still, he felt he "was only just touching the surface of life" in the country, adding, significantly, that this "sense of inadequacy — of not really understanding the societies that I was expected to assist — challenged me in all the missions that followed."[10]

Clearly, improving the analytical capacities of the UN is urgently needed, all the more so given the intrusive and transformative ambitions of contemporary mission mandates. As Richard Caplan concludes in his excellent study on measuring success in peacebuilding, "the lack of contextual knowledge is *the* chief obstacle to assessing progress towards achieving a consolidated peace."[11] While the need for improvement has long been recognised, however, *A Peacekeeper in Africa* suggests the UN "system" remains structurally and politically ill-equipped to develop and institutionalise those capacities, leaving practitioners to fall back, as Caplan perceptively observes, on "pre-conceived models or templates … to compensate for contextual knowledge."[12]

Heroes and Villains

Running through *A Peacekeeper in Africa* is a strong sense that individuals, human relationships and personal dynamics matter far more to the success or otherwise of efforts to build peace than is often recognised. This holds true *internally* for the workings and effectiveness of the UN mission itself, as well as for the course

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[8] Ibid,p.294.
[9] Ibid,p.295.
[10] Ibid,p.58.
[11] Richard Caplan, *Measuring Peace — Principles, Practices, and Politics* (Oxford: OUP, 2019),p.124. (My emphasis).
[12] Caplan,*Measuring Peace*,p.124.

and dynamics of individual peace processes. The importance of the
human factor is most obviously neglected in studies that tend to
privilege *structural* explanations over the role of individual
agency, contingency and the play of chance.

Writings on UN peacekeeping operations can easily slip into
the habit of treating the "UN" as an undifferentiated whole, a self-
contained actor struggling - sometimes valiantly, sometimes
incompetently - to implement mandates handed down from the Security
Council. It is a habit which official UN reporting naturally
encourages, and which member states and lazy journalists sometimes
find useful, especially when they wish to apportion blame for policy
failures. Those actually engaged on the front lines know reality to
be very different. In both Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire, Doss
observed how "poor relations among senior staff had imperilled" the
UN missions, and his own Senior Management Group in MONUC was, at
times, riven by internal divisions and tensions.[13]

Two underlying factors help explain why mission leadership
presents the unique challenges it does. Those factors, in turn, also
explain why individuals and personal dynamics assume outsized
importance to the effective functioning of missions.

At its base, and a large part of problem, is the built-in
fragmentation of the UN system along functional lines, evident in
the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by agencies and reflected in
their different institutional cultures and political priorities, all
of which naturally complicate — even at the best of times -
effective strategic coordination, let alone direction.[14] The system
as a whole was founded, in the words of Inis Claude, on "principle
of decentralisation modified by persuasive coordination, but not
authoritative control from the centre."[15] The resulting tensions are
replicated in the field, especially within large multidimensional or
integrated missions, involving multiple agencies and entrusted with

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[13] Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa*,p.269.
[14] This may be why Doss at one point, aptly and amusingly, describes the
"integrated strategic framework", a kind of policy planning tool used by
the Secretariat, as the "UN equivalent of the unified field theory — the
holy grail of theoretical physics".Ibid.p.221.
[15] Inis L. Claude, Jr., *Swords in Plowshares*, 4th edition, (New York:
McGraw-Hill, 1984),p.68. As Caplan also rightly emphasizes, there "genuine
differences of opinion among various UN entities and member states as to
the most effective and appropriate form of external engagement." Caplan,
Measuring Peace,p.38.

multiple mandates that are typically vague on actionable detail. And, in a striking passage, Doss points to a central fault-line in the set-up: "there is an undeclared but constant battle [within the Secretariat] between human rights and humanitarian organisations on one side and the political and operational entities on the other about the best way to achieve peaceful outcomes."[16] Further complicating the picture in peacekeeping operations is, of course, is the long-standing tendency for national contingents to refer matters to their own capitals rather than up the UN chain of command. Doss was sent to Sierra Leone precisely in order to improve in-country co-ordination of UN development, humanitarian and peacekeeping activities, and found, as he would in every assignment, that he needed to "navigate the institutional cross-currents and build relationships within and outside the mission."[17]

Second, Council resolutions often reflect uneasy political compromises and pressures that leave mandates and operative provisions, at best, ambiguous.[18] Council mandates thus require translation into realisable objectives on the ground, with the inevitable result that differences emerge within missions — especially in moments of crisis - over the sequencing and prioritisation of tasks. Writing of the Kivu crisis in the DRC, Doss recalls how "competing perceptions of what the mission should or should not be doing began to erode the morale and cohesiveness of mission staff, which was becoming ever more polarised."[19]

Now, the effect of these factors — bureaucratic fragmentation combined with multiple, often conflicting, mandates and tasks — is to magnify the importance of personalities and their scope for making a difference: good working relationships and readiness to improvise become all the more important to the effective functioning of a mission. In UN operations, such dependence on individuals,

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[16] Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa*,p.295.
[17] Ibid,p.18.
[18] This provides the background to one of Doss' key, and eminently sensible, recommendations for narrowing the gap between expectations and outcomes in UN operations: developing a "mission-specific political-security policy" that would "drill down on [the] mandate and explicitly assess and address the constraints and contradictions arising from it." Ibid,p.247.
[19] Ibid,p.179.

their abilities and "inter-personal skills", to borrow management jargon, can of course work both ways. "I have seen", Doss writes, "how a committed and flexibly minded commander can change the whole ethos of units under his command compared to his predecessor."[20] However, as Doss also found, politics plays a heavy part in staff selection for UN peace operations, with "the senior team put together without much consideration for personal dynamics."[21] All of this might have been less of a worry had it not been such a long-standing problem with so little evidence of meaningful progress made towards rectifying it. Indeed, as the 2015 High Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations rather depressingly concluded, "in operating environments that demand more tailored and flexible UN peace operations it appears that human resources policies may be moving in the opposite direction."[22]

Efforts to establish peace in different mission settings are also crucially influenced, for better or worse, by the personalities and actions of individual politicians and military leaders, ranging, in Doss' rich experience, from psychopathic warlords at one end, to politicians prepared to assume the mantle of national leadership at the other.

In Sierra Leone and Liberia, the continued presence and malign influence of warlords proved a major impediment to ending the war in both countries. Foday Sankoh, leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, and Charles Taylor, warlord-turned-president in Liberia, were both deeply sinister characters, responsible for acts of great cruelty. But they were also charismatic and, in their own fashion, effective leaders, of the kind commonly propelled to the top in the ruthless Hobbesian context of civil war, capable of channelling both the greed and the grievances of their followers. Doss provides a telling contrast between Sankoh, "Papa" to his followers, and Issa Sesay, the RUF commander who stepped in as interim leader following Sankoh's capture and imprisonment in May 2000. Turning up to meetings "high and drunk" surrounded by a fidgety group of teenage bodyguards, Sesay possessed none of the "charisma, eloquence and cunning" of

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[20] Ibid,p.242.
[21] Ibid,p.279.
[22] "Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Operations (HIPPO)", 16 June 2015, para.295.

Sankoh, and, unsurprisingly, he proved unable to provide political direction for the movement.[23] With Sankoh out of the way, the "RUF lost its voice."[24] To be sure, other factors contributed to ending the war: a supportive Security Council, RUF's ill-judged intervention in Guinea in late 2000, and UK's robust military action and galvanizing diplomatic engagement thereafter, all played their part. But, as in Liberia, the removal of a key individual was critical to the comparative success of peace-making efforts. Taylor and Sankoh were both "incapable of leaving behind their warlord ways and adapting to peacetime leadership … Once they were out of the game, their fighters and sympathizers were rudderless, bereft of charismatic leadership."[25] Conversely, the consolidation of peace in both countries, especially during its early and most delicate phase, was aided by the readiness of Presidents Ahman Tejan Kabbah in Sierra Leone and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in Liberia to put national above partisan interests. These were not Mandela-like displays national leadership and, indeed, their overall record in office is decidedly mixed. Yet, at a key moment in the transition from war to peace, both were "willing and able to reach beyond their immediate political base to engage with communities and individuals previously hostile to them."[26]

The importance of individuals and leadership in effecting positive, violence-reducing change - not merely at the national level but also within communities - is also a central finding of Rachel Kleinfeld's rich and incisive study of societies in the grip of seemingly inescapable levels of violence. As her case studies, ranging from Colombia and Mexico to Georgia and India, bear out: "history sets the stage, but actual people need to put on the play".[27]

Special Representative of the Secretary General

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[23] Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa*, p.23.
[24] Ibid,p.32.
[25] Ibid,pp.148-49.
[26] Ibid,p.260
[27] Rachel Kleinfeld, *A Savage Order — How the World's Deadliest* Countries *Can Forge a Path to Security* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2018). p.123.

Jean-Marie Guéhenno, head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in New York for much of the time that Doss was in the field, has written of the position of the SRSG that it is "one of the most difficult, and most unrecognized, jobs on earth."[28] *A Peacekeeper in Africa* shows just why this is the case. There are several aspects to this.

Closely related to the difficulties of mission leadership discussed above is the all-important relationship which any SRSG necessarily must cultivate with the Security Council in New York. In what is arguably *the* understatement of the book, Doss writes that "Council mandates do not always provide clarity of direction and SRSGs can find themselves caught between competing visions of what a mission is expected to achieve."[29] In truth, tensions arising from lack of direction and competing visions are a feature of most contemporary peace operations. They have only been reinforced by what Doss describes the Council's preference for "incrementalism": small, reactive and largely tactical adjustments to changing circumstances on the ground, the effect of which is to leave UN mission "crippled" and ill-prepared in the face of sudden crises.[30] With the exception of UNMIL in Liberia, which was unusually well-resourced owing to strong US support, in UNAMSIL, ONUCI and MONUC peacekeepers "all struggled to dominate their respective theatres of operation."[31] The SRSG's room for manoeuvre is often further complicated by the uncertain loyalty of troop contributing countries (TCCs), whose insistence on national caveats impairs a mission's ability to realign forces in response to developments on the ground.[32] In Doss' experience, even the UN headquarters in New York, in theory responsible for the higher management peacekeeping, was unable to contribute much to resolving tensions generated by contradictory mandates and less-than-reliable TCCs. A principals committee system introduced by Ban Ki-Moon in 2007 — including representatives from all key departments and agencies — failed to frame options on policy and operational matters in actionable form,

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[28] Jean-Marie Guéhenno, *The Fog of Peace — A Memoir of Internal Peacekeeping in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p.16.
[29] Doss,*A Peacekeeper in Africa*,p.282.
[30] Ibid,p.165.
[31] Ibid,p.242.
[32] Ibid,p.165.

and "never really confronted the difficult, unavoidable trade-offs that we faced on the ground."[33] None of these challenges it should be stressed, which is also why they bear special mention, are unique to Doss' experience of mission leadership.

And yet, demanding as these aspects of the job are, operating in the midst of "other people's wars" presents SRSGs with a still more fundamental test. It is succinctly expressed by Jean-Marie Guéhenno:

> "All at once, you become a key political figure in a country that is not your own. The foundation of your role is the trust you are able to build with the people of the country: they expect you to be their advocate and protector; but your influence on national leaders is directly linked to the perception they have of your influence with key international stakeholders, who themselves want you to be the implementer of their often conflicting agendas."[34]

This role of the SRSG as a *political actor*, ineluctably drawn into and forced to navigate the politics of countries riven by internal conflict, is arguably *the* central storyline of Doss' peacekeeping memoires. The difficulties and dilemmas, political and moral, to which that role inescapably gave rise were most acute in the DRC, where "armed violence was a constant and pervasive reality."[35] Crucially, Congo was also where the UN was charged *both* with protecting civilians caught up in violence *and* with helping the Congolese government to strengthen State institutions, including by supporting governance and security sector reforms.

Protecting Civilians in Other People's Wars

When Alan Doss joined peacekeeping from the development side of the UN system in 2000, discussion about the future of peacekeeping among member states and within the UN Secretariat were framed, entirely understandably, by the harrowing memory of the Rwandan genocide and the Srebrenica massacre. Those horrors prompted a shift in the normative expectations around UN operations. They also ensured that Doss' peacekeeping career came to coincide

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[33] Ibid,p.248.
[34] Guéhenno,*The Fog of Peace*,p.16.
[35] Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa*, p.166.

perfectly with the rise of the protection of civilians as a core peacekeeping mandate and, closely connected to this very development, a growing emphasis on more "robust" peacekeeping.[36] Given that UN missions are now routinely entrusted with POC responsibilities in situations of unfinished civil war – as currently the case in South Sudan, Darfur, Mali, CAR and DRC – Doss' sobering account of MONUC's efforts to protect civilians in the DRC is pregnant with wider significance. Within DRC, it was, above all, the recurring crises in the Kivus between in 2007 and 2009 that tested MONUC's capacity to implement its POC mandate.[37]

That test was partly practical in nature. A grossly inadequate troop-to-task ratio meant that peacekeepers could never hope to provide effective protection throughout the territory of the DRC. Writing of France's refusal to provide MONUC with a surge capacity in late 2008, when it looked as if the city of Goma in North Kivu was about to be overrun, Doss, in a rare but telling moment of frustration directed against individual leaders, writes of president Sarkozy, that he "seemed to have no idea of the multiple security challenges that we faced in a country the size of Western Europe with a population larger than that of France but with a military deployment not even the size of the Paris police force."[38] As with other UN operations, inadequate numbers of peacekeepers were compounded by capacity gaps in key areas ranging from logistics and engineering to intelligence, aviation support, command and control. Cumbersome, politicized arrangements governing finance, procurement and human resources in New York did not help MONUC in the field. None of this, however, lessened the pressure – from humanitarian NGOs, understandably horrified by the levels of violence against civilians, and from the Security Council – for "action" to be taken to deal with protection emergency.

Like SRSGs before and after him, Doss responded to the mismatch between MONUC's capacities and POC expectations by improving tactical interventions, strengthening early warning

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[36] Doss' fist peacekeeping mission, UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, was also the first mission expressly mandated under Chapter VII of the Charter "to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. S/RES/1270, 22 October 1999, paragraph 14.
[37] Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa*, p.168.
[38] Ibid,p.182.

mechanisms and, generally, adopting new and innovative practices. One such innovation centred on the notion of "protection through proximity" and involved the dispersal of small groups of peacekeepers to forward-operating or mobile-operating bases, aided by improved intelligence collection and reporting. It was not a bad idea *per se* and, indeed, achieved some results. But, as MONUC learned, the dispersal of troops "had the unintended effect of reducing the mission's ability to quickly concentrate force to deal decisively with major challenges to its authority as the peace process collapsed."[39]

Another aspect of the response, of course, was more "robust" use of force.

In 2005, a dynamic Dutch general and MONUC's Eastern Division Commander, Patrick Cammaert, engaged in offensive operations against armed groups in eastern Congo. Though before his time with MONUC, Doss suggests that those operations had their successes.[40] Jean-Marie Guéhenno, sent to the DRC by the Secretary-General in March 2006 to assess their impact, however, sounded a more sceptical and cautionary note about their *strategic* effects. Whilst acknowledging some positives, the results of aggressive military operations in the East were in his view clearly mixed, with "negative consequences" — reprisals against civilians by armed groups targeted by the UN, new waves of internally displaced, and looting, pillaging and abuses committed by members of MONUC's partner in the field, the Congolese army — pointing to the need for a shift away from "aggressive pursuit."[41] As he reported back to New York, "the reality is that foreign armed groups will need to be dealt with in the longer-term, in tandem with an economic and political strategy, and in a way that does not threaten civilian populations".[42]

Guéhenno assessment is of interest in this context not only because it highlights the deeper political challenge in the way of effective POC: it also chimes more closely with the lessons Doss himself drew from his experience, reflected in his frank recognition that "MONUC could not fundamentally alter the protection equation."[43]

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[39] Ibid,p.178.
[40] Ibid,p.245.
[41] "DRC: Report on Visit 6–15 March 2006", DPKO, UN Document.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa*,pp.228-9.

At the heart of the problem, was MONUC's relationship to Kabile's government, which the UN was there to support and whose legitimacy and State institutions it was meant to bolster, but also whose human rights performance it was asked to monitor. Most problematic of all were relations with the FARCD, with whom MONUC found itself in "the paradoxical position of having to help plan military operations that could have serious repercussion for civilians while also protecting them from the consequences of those operations."[44] Unsurprisingly, given their appalling record, "FARCD's operations in eastern Congo became a millstone for MONUC."[45]

What broader lessons emerge from the protection crises in the DRC? In its response to Council and wider normative pressures for action to address the plight of civilians, MONUC, as Doss readily acknowledges, focussed on immediate symptoms, not on the deeper roots of the emergency and the possible political pathways out of it. The importance of devoting "time and energy seeking out and pushing for political ideas and solutions to the protection crisis"[46], is now widely, and rightly so, recognised as essential.[47] What the emphasis on political solutions means in practice, however — what it requires of the Security Council, of Member States, of UN missions and their political engagement with conflict actors — has received much less attention. This raises another issue.

The UN's travails in the Congo strongly suggests that as UN missions become ever more enmeshed in the politics and political economy of the country to which they have deployed, their ability to leverage their presence in support of peacebuilding and positive political change is certain to diminish. In part, this has to do with the inevitable, often very rapid, dissipation of the political capital initially enjoyed by an outside actor in a conflict setting, a tendency far from unique to UN interventions. "In any intervention', as Guéhenno recalls in his own peacekeeping memoirs, "the political credibility of foreigners is a wasting asset…"[48] Doss too urges prospective SRSGs to "take heed of the law of diminishing

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[44] Ibid,p.169.
[45] Ibid,p.244.
[46] Ibid,p.209.
[47] As the 2015 HIPPO report puts it, for "a UN peacekeeping to operate with even limited success … [its] mandate must be clear, achievable and linked to a political strategy." HIPPO, paragraph 113(i).
[48] Guéhenno,*The Fog of Peace*,p.159.

influence."[49] In its most recent resolution on DRC the Security Council, again, drew attention to "recurring and evolving cycles of conflict and persistent violence" in the country.[50] The picture painted by the Council helps explain Doss' suggestion, or heavy hint, that the UN may in some respects not only have outlived its usefulness but is now part of the problem that is preventing forward movement. How long, his discussion of the UN in Congo ends by saying, will "the mission remain in the name of civilian protection only to find itself protecting the regime from its own failings."[51]

Building and Measuring Peace

The great strength of *A Peacekeeper in Africa* is to offer an insider's account of the "crises, accidents, and disasters" that are the "staples of peacekeeping operations."[52] In doing so, it manages to convey - in ways that aspirational commitments to improve peacekeeping *à la* the recent *Action for Peacekeeping* initiative frankly do *not* (as Doss himself gently points out)- the "sharp contradictions and uncomfortable trade-offs that so frequently confront peacekeeping operations and the people who run them."[53] Imparting this to a wider audience is a precondition for a more enlightened and balanced discussion of the UN's record and actual functioning.

But the UN's experiences in Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and the DRC, plainly, also raise deeper questions about the international community's approach, through the UN, to building peace in war-torn societies, in particular whether conventional modalities and tools of engagement — the reliance on elections, the promotion of Security Sector Reform (SSR), the pursuit of robust peacekeeping — offer viable pathways to lasting peace. Many of these

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[49] Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa*, p.231.
[50] UNSC Resolution 2502, 19 December 2019. By late 2019, nearly 16 million Congolese were reported by the Council to be "in need humanitarian assistance", while the number of internally displaced persons had grown to just over 5 million as a result of continued violence.
[51] Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa,* p.231.
[52] Ibid,p.275.
[53] Ibid,p.289. For the woolliness of the *Action for Peacekeeping* initiative, see "Declaration of Shared Commitments", September 2018 (https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/a4p-declaration-en.pdf)

more searching, one might say almost heretical, questions are not always explicitly posed, but the issues they raise certainly do emerge from the detailed account of individual operations.

Take the case of elections in war-to-peace transitions. Of these Doss writes: "The international community generally considers elections a touchstone of legitimacy and a vital step on the road to lasting peace."[54] This may well be the attitude of the "international community", but should we, after thirty years of post-Cold War experience, hold on to it unqualifiedly? After all, as America's last ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann, pointedly observed of the country's "first venture in democracy", the Yugoslav elections of 1990, they did usher in democracy but they also "helped strangle it in its cradle."[55] It was with those elections, he perceptively added, that "the age of naked nationalism" began.[56] Since then, the consequences of introducing electoral competition into fractured, war-torn and divided societies have, all too often, been to exacerbate rather than mitigate conflicts, in some instances with catastrophic consequences. The 2006 elections in the DRC, Doss notes, "intensified discord" in the Kivus, as indeed have electoral competition in a number of "post-conflict" countries, from post-Dayton Bosnia to Cambodia, Afghanistan and Burundi.[57] Another area of peacebuilding activity where hoped-for results have been, to put it at mildly, disappointing, is security sector reform. Doss' excellent discussion of this, especially in the DRC, is as illuminating as it is depressing, and raises questions about the deeper sources of persistent failure that go beyond what has tended to preoccupy the Secretariat, to wit, how improve the design, coordination and *delivery* of elaborate multi-donor and multi-agency programmes.

Some of those sources are the subject of Rachel Kleinfeld's *A Savage Order*. This may seem a curious contention given that her excellent book is not about UN peacekeeping.[58] And yet the book forms

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[54] Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa*, p.257.
[55] Warren Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe* (New York: Times Books, 1996),p.65.
[56] Ibid,p.70.
[57] Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa*, p. 168. It might be added here that Doss has devoted part of his post-UN career with the Kofi Annan Foundation to the very issue of how to improve the integrity of elections in conflict-ridden societies.
[58] That said, she does make references to the DRC while also covering cases where the UN has been involved, to greater or lesser degrees, in support of

a thought-provoking companion to Doss' discussion of the peacebuilding challenges facing the UN, not merely because the subject matter is countries in the grip of endemic violence, but because it examines - in ways deeply relevant to "post-conflict" settings elsewhere - *why* violent social orders take such deep roots, and *how*, in spite of this, those same orders can still be overturned.

Perhaps the most striking insight offered by Kleinfeld's analysis overall is simply that many conflict-ridden countries supposedly in transition out of violence "aren't 'transitioning' anywhere".[59] The reason for this, she is careful to stress, has nothing to do with cultural and societal pathologies; countries are not inherently or congenitally prone to conflict and violence.[60] Rather, transitions stall because underlying power structures, in which political and economic elites see functional utility in continued violence, turning to it as a "governing strategy", remain fundamentally unchanged.[61] The route to this state of affairs, *A Savage Order* persuasively argues, involves a deliberate weakening of the State or, which goes for the same, *no* interest in making it function properly. As elites "turn to private violent groups to maintain economic and political control", politicizing and weakening state security forces in the process, citizens respond by looking to "militias, rebels, and criminals for security."[62] In politically fractured and economically deeply unequal societies, such orders become entrenched, resting as they do on political leaders "locked in collusive relationship with violent groups".[63] Now, because of this, exiting or transitioning out of violence may require what Kleinfeld calls "dirty deals" or elite bargains to be struck, so named because "they are made among people who wield power through money, politics, and especially violence."[64] Such deals do not buy peace but they can, Kleinfeld suggests, provide a necessary "breathing room to build institutions and govern more inclusively."[65]

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war-to-peace transitions, including El Salvador, Guatemala, Afghanistan and Colombia.
[59] Kleinfeld, *A Savage Order*,p.39.
[60] Ibid,p.116.
[61] Ibid,p.39.
[62] Ibid,pp.59-60.
[63] Ibid,p.282.
[64] Ibid,p.110.
[65] Ibid,p.112.

A Savage Order is rightly careful to warn about the difficulties, likely reversals and morally complex trade-offs in the process of arriving at such arrangements, noting that "dirty deals are necessary beginnings, but … must be unravelled quickly."[66]

While any *formal* operationalisation of the concept in UN mission settings is hard to imagine, *A Savage Order* does highlight the need to confront the logic of underlying power structures and the informal, exploitative and violent governance arrangements they spawn in countries transitioning from war to peace. Interestingly, in this context, perhaps the most upbeat story offered by Doss in his memoires – the early phase of peace consolidation in Liberia — appears to lend some support to Kleinfeld's basic argument. The Liberia Comprehensive Peace Agreement, signed in Accra in August, 2003 was a "dirty deal" in all but name, setting up a National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) that included the major armed groups that had fought the civil war and "functioned on patronage and pillage" pure and simple.[67] The economic consequences of the peace were catastrophic as former warlords seized the opportunity to enrich themselves and divide the spoils. Crucially, however, the Peace Accord established a two-year term limit for the NTGL, stipulating that its "Chairman and Vice-Chairman, as well as all principal Cabinet Ministers" would not be allowed to run for office in the 2005 elections.[68] In terms of ensuring that violence did not flare up, the arrangement worked. In Doss' words:

> "The NTGL was an economic disaster for the country. And yet paradoxically it was a political success. By bringing the factions into government, it gave them an incentive to abide by the Accra agreement, which afforded the UN time and space that was needed to organise DDR, elections, and other key provision stipulated by the accord."[69]

For all its grim statistics, Kleinfeld's is fundamentally an upbeat book, insisting that genuine transitions out of violence, whilst

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[66] Kleinfeld, *A Savage Order,* p.115.
[67] Doss, *A Peacekeeper in Africa,* p.111.
[68] Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Liberia and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and Political Parties, (Accra Accord, 2003) 18 August 2003, Article XXV (4).
[69] Ibid, p.113.

they require dirty deals and depend on "courageous leaders and equally brave followers"[70], are possible.

  A Peacekeeper in Africa and *A Savage Peace* may, ultimately, both be seen as engaging with a similar overarching question: What is this thing called peace? That is also a central theme of *Measuring Peace,* Richard Caplan's elegant and persuasive study of how progress towards peace can be meaningfully assessed. The title is in fact strictly misleading: the suggestion made is *not* that peace can *actually* be measured by relying on metrics and borrowing from the natural sciences. This, in part, because "there are no hard measures or indicators of peace."[71] Instead, drawing on a judicious mix of qualitative and quantitative analyses — recognising the value but also the inherent limitations of the latter[72] — Caplan makes a compelling case for understanding peace as a much "more varied and heterogenous concept" than that typically found in the much of policy and academic literature.[73] Crucially, he convincingly argues that embracing "conceptualisations that reflect the degrees of fragility/robustness of peace in post-conflict environment can provide the basis for sounder peacebuilding strategies."[74] It is a finding that resonates powerfully with the stories told by Doss and Kleinfeld.

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[70] Kleinfeld, *A Savage Order*,p.294.
[71] Caplan,*Measuring Peace*, p.4.
[72] In particular, Caplan rightly stresses the limitations of the many numerical indices, such as the Global Peace Index and the Fragility State Index, that have been developed to capture "highly complex phenomenon as peace, stability and fragility." Ibid,p.70.
[73] Ibid,p.8.
[74] Ibid,p.8