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AN APPRAISAL OF UNITED NATIONS ' CONFLICT MANAGEMENT EFFORTS IN AFRICA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

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This paper examines the United Nations' involvement in conflict management and resolution in 20th-century Africa. Within the context of its principle of collective security, the UN has not only striven to restore peace and stability in troubled spots of the world but has also taken steps to provide humanitarian assistance, protect civilians, and support political transitions and governance reforms in post-conflict settings. It is against this backdrop that this study undertakes an appraisal of the UN effort to stem the tide of conflict escalations in Africa. Using a qualitative methodology, the research draws on secondary sources, including published books, journal articles, and official UN reports. The study further deploys a thematic approach in focusing on case studies of selected conflict situations in Africa and the UN peace role therein. The study reveals that UN interventions have had varied successes, with notable achievements in Mozambique and Sierra Leone, contrasting glaring challenges in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. The research findings indicate that successful UN missions were products of clear-cut mandates, adequate resources, and comprehensive approaches addressing root causes of conflict. Conversely, UN missions with ambiguous mandates, insufficient resources, or poor coordination faced significant obstacles. Based on observed challenges faced by

UN Peace Mission in some cases, this paper's recommendations highlight the need for the UN to refine its strategies, ensuring clear objectives, strong leadership, and better coordination with regional and local actors to achieve sustainable and inclusive peacekeeping efforts.

Keywords: United Nations, Conflict Resolution, Africa, Peacekeeping, Intervention.

Introduction.

Post-colonial Africa was marked by significant political upheaval, as countries that had been under colonial rule sought to establish stable and sovereign governments. This period was fraught with ethnic tensions, border disputes, and power struggles, often leading to violent conflicts. The UN's interventions in Africa began in this context, aiming to support nascent states in maintaining peace and order while promoting development and human rights. The initial armed peacekeeping mission was the deployment of the First United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I) in 1956, aimed at resolving the Suez Crisis.¹ In 1960, the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) became the first extensive mission, with a peak deployment of nearly 20,000 military personnel.² The Congo peacekeeping operations set the stage for future UN missions on the continent. In 1989, the UN dispatched military personnel to Africa to assist in the transition to independence for Namibia. Buoyed by the success of this mission, the 1990s saw the initiation of over seventeen peacekeeping operations across the continent, marking a significant chapter in African peacekeeping efforts.³

Throughout this period, the UN adapted its strategies and mechanisms to address the evolving nature of conflicts in Africa. From traditional peacekeeping missions to complex multi-dimensional operations involving civilian and military components, the UN has sought to address both the symptoms and root causes of conflicts. These efforts have been guided by principles of impartiality, consent of the parties involved, and the non-use of force except in self-defense or defense of the mandate. However, the effectiveness of these interventions has varied, influenced by factors such as the political will of member states, the resources allocated, and the cooperation of local governments and communities.

The challenges faced by the UN in managing and resolving conflicts in Africa are numerous. These include logistical difficulties, limited financial resources, and the complex and often protracted nature of the conflicts themselves. Additionally, the organization's interventions have sometimes been criticized for being too slow, inadequate, or biased.⁴ Despite these challenges, the UN's presence in Africa has had a significant impact, contributing to the cessation of hostilities, the protection of civilians, and the promotion of dialogue and reconciliation. The lessons learned from these interventions continue to shape the UN's approach to peace and security in Africa and beyond.

Review of Related Literature.

A lot has been written about conflict and conflict management efforts at both regional and global levels with specific

reference to peace support missions in Africa. Cilliers and Mills (1999) expressed concern over the speed with which conflict escalations have spread from one African country to another. They observed that the greatest threat to peace in Africa is that some African states have continued to impose their own strategic objective upon their neighbours⁵. To stem the tide therefore, it was suggested that the sovereignty of the respective African states should be acknowledged and respected, in a manner that the sovereign right of all African states would be guaranteed, in order to ensure the peace and stability of the African continent.

From a variety of dimensions to conflict management in Africa, Enuke (2015) in his book titled; “Conflict and Peacekeeping in Africa: The West African Peace Initiative 1990 – 1997”, traced the endemic escalation of conflict in Africa to the immediate post-cold-war era. While bemoaning the numerous horrendous consequences of such conflict eruptions, the book takes a swipe at the lukewarm attitude of the international community, the failure of OAU to act decisively, and the increasing responsibility of the United Nations in responding to numerous global conflicts as the reasons of incessant conflict eruptions in Africa. These same reasons according to the book can account for why other sub-regional bodies like ECOWAS, which was not originally established for peacekeeping responsibility to step into new roles of conflict management particularly in Liberia and Sierra Leon. Global organizations have been overburdened with these challenges, resulting in limited attention to some conflict areas as well as donor fatigue. In line with this, the United Nations and the

leading states of the world ignored the conflict and failing state of Liberia, in a time when the country and its people most needed help and attention. This left a gap that assumed the concern of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) whose leadership saw the Liberian conflict as a matter lying at their doorsteps and which cannot be ignored⁶.

The role of Nigeria as an individual country is well addressed by Eneke, in his book titled *Nigeria's Peace Roles in African Conflict: The Promptings, Pluses, and Pains*. While chronicling Nigeria's consistent promotion of peace in Africa, the book analyses the motivations for Nigeria's continuous peace roles in Africa's conflict. In the final analysis, the book weighs Nigeria's pluses in her numerous interventions in Africa's conflict against the achievements recorded in favour of either the Nigerian state, or in favour of the African region. Nigeria intervenes in the African conflict situation without recourse to the international political practice of reciprocity⁷. The case studies treated in the three cases cited above fall short of extending their scope to cover UN interventions and conflict management efforts. Thus, providing a jurisdiction for this study.

At a global level, the role of the UN contain both Intra-State & inter-state armed aggression and conflict is replicated in several chapters of Kegley and Blanton's "World Politics: Trends and Transformations". The UN, through its Security Council enabled by relevant sections of its charter has been empowered to preserve the post-war peace because it was believed that peace could not be maintained unilaterally by anyone of great power acting alone⁸.

Much as parts of the book dwell on the UN mitigating roles against armed aggression and conflict, the omission of UN intervention and management of any specific Africa conflict situation, creates a knowledge gap which this study tends to fill.

Definition of Terms.

The term conflict derives from the Latin word “Conflictus”, which means “Struck together”. Flowing from the above, the term can be seen as a clash, contention, struggle, controversy or quarrel between, and among entities. Other scholars hold divergent views about the concept of conflict. Such divergent views are borne out of the fact that conflict is a phenomenon that cannot be extricated from human societies. As such, there is no generally acceptable definition of the term. Thus, Quincy Wright views conflict as a social phenomenon based on inconsistencies. These inconsistencies arise from sentiments, purposes, claims, or opinions of social entities and a condition whose magnitude depended on the strength of the parties⁹.

Dougherty and Pflatzgraft see conflict as a condition in which an identifiable group of human beings: tribal, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, socio-economic or political is engaged in conscious oppositions to one or more other identifiable human groups because these groups are pursuing what appears to be incompatible goals¹⁰.

If we agree that conflict entails the entire gamut of clashes and struggles between and among groups and entities that pursue incompatible goals, it goes without saying that its consequences have

resulted in the search for peace as opposed to war. That takes us to the issue of conflict management, which literally means to control or handle conflict. It also extends to any act aimed towards conflict prevention, conflict control, and conflict resolution.

The management of conflict requires the tactical mobilization of types of machinery to stem the tide of conflict escalation, depending on the scope and magnitude of such conflict. Where the conflict has gone beyond the level of sub-national, and national, into the realm of international magnitude, it would require the mobilization of multinational forces and international organizations to manage it. The strategies deployed include; collective security; preventive diplomacy; peacemaking; peacekeeping; and peace enforcement. The above have been the strategies adopted by the United Nations over the years of its involvement in conflict management globally.

Theoretical Framework.

For a better understanding of the basis for continuous UN conflict management efforts in the world, two major theories readily come to mind; Ripeness and Readiness Theories of conflict resolution.

Exponents of the Ripeness Theory like Cantekin, and Schiff posit that conflicts become “ripe” for resolution when both parties recognize the costs of continued conflict outweigh the benefits of negotiation. At such point, the proponents point out that resolution becomes feasible, as any external interventions at that point could easily facilitate dialogue and potential peace agreements.

The Readiness Theory on its part is built on the Ripeness theory by focusing on the internal motivations of conflicting parties such as their willingness to de-escalate and optimism about reaching a mutually acceptable agreement. Once there are indications that the parties to the conflict are willing to take advantage of any intervention to de-escalate, it means the situation is ripe and ready for peace.

Put together, the two theories (Ripeness and Readiness Theories) as explained above offer valuable explanatory frameworks for U.N. conflict management efforts in Africa and the world generally. In practical terms, U.N. interventions in cited conflict cases in succeeding sections of this article can only be explained from the lenses of the above theoretical frameworks.

The Evolution of UN Involvement In Africa's Conflicts.

The United Nations' involvement in African conflicts has evolved significantly since its inception in 1945, reflecting the changing nature of conflicts on the continent and the international community's responses to them. Initially, the UN's engagement in Africa was limited, primarily focused on supporting decolonization efforts and facilitating transitions to independence.¹¹ However, as newly independent African states began to experience internal conflicts and external pressures, the UN's role expanded to include peacekeeping and conflict resolution.

One of the earliest examples of UN involvement in African conflicts was in the Congo Crisis of the 1960s. Following the

independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from Belgium in 1960, the country plunged into chaos with secessionist movements, political assassinations, and widespread violence. The UN deployed its first large-scale peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC), to stabilize the situation.¹² Despite challenges and controversies, including clashes with secessionist forces in Katanga, ONUC's efforts highlighted the UN's growing role in addressing complex internal conflicts in Africa.

The UN's engagement continued to evolve through the 1970s and 1980s, often in response to the Cold War dynamics that exacerbated African conflicts. In Namibia, the UN played a crucial role in the country's struggle for independence from South African rule. The United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) was deployed in 1989 to oversee the implementation of the peace accords, supervise elections, and facilitate Namibia's transition to independence.¹³ This mission demonstrated the UN's capacity to support peace processes and nation-building efforts in a highly polarized environment.

The post-Cold War era saw a significant shift in conflicts and the UN's approach to managing them. The 1990s were marked by the tragic failures in Rwanda and Somalia, which underscored the limitations of the UN's peacekeeping mandates and the need for more robust and responsive interventions. The genocide in Rwanda in 1994, where the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) failed to prevent the mass slaughter of Tutsis and moderate Hutus, led to a critical reassessment of UN peacekeeping operations.¹⁴ The

experience in Somalia, where the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) faced severe challenges due to clan warfare and humanitarian crises, further highlighted the complexities of intervening in failed states.¹⁵

In response to these challenges, the UN adopted a more comprehensive and multidimensional approach to peacekeeping and conflict resolution in Africa. This included addressing the root causes of conflicts, such as poverty, governance issues, and human rights abuses. In Sierra Leone, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) played a key role in disarming and demobilizing combatants, supporting democratic elections, and rebuilding state institutions after a brutal civil war.¹⁶ Similarly, in Liberia, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was instrumental in stabilizing the country, overseeing the implementation of peace agreements, and facilitating post-conflict reconstruction.¹⁷

The UN's involvement in African conflicts has also increasingly emphasized the importance of regional cooperation and partnerships. The collaboration with the African Union (AU) and sub-regional organizations like ECOWAS has become a cornerstone of the UN's strategy in Africa. For example, in the Darfur region of Sudan, the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) was established to address the humanitarian crisis and protect civilians. This joint mission highlighted the potential for synergistic efforts between the UN and African organizations in managing complex conflicts.¹⁸

Overall, the historical context and evolution of UN involvement in African conflicts reflect a learning process shaped by successes,

failures, and the dynamic nature of conflicts on the continent. The UN's role has expanded from supporting decolonization to encompassing peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction, often in partnership with regional entities. This evolution underscores the ongoing challenges and the critical importance of adaptive and collaborative approaches to achieving sustainable peace in Africa.

The Case Studies of Major UN Interventions.

The United Nations has played a significant role in addressing conflicts in Africa through various interventions. These interventions have ranged from peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance to facilitating peace agreements and supporting post-conflict reconstruction. Some major UN interventions in Africa include:

Congo Crisis (1960-1964): The Congo Crisis represents one of the earliest and most significant UN peacekeeping operations in Africa. After the Democratic Republic of the Congo gained independence from Belgium in 1960, the country quickly descended into chaos with internal conflicts and secessionist movements, most notably in the Katanga region. The UN responded by deploying the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC). This mission aimed to stabilize the situation, support the new Congolese government and prevent the country from becoming a battleground. ONUC faced significant challenges, including logistical difficulties, hostile environments, and complex political dynamics. Despite its mandate to remain neutral, ONUC troops were often drawn into conflict,

particularly in Katanga. The mission's efforts were critical in preventing a total collapse of the Congolese state and in eventually reintegrating Katanga into the Congo.

Namibia's path to independence (1989-1990): The United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) was a landmark mission in Namibia, facilitating the country's transition to independence from South African rule. The mission was established following the signing of the Tripartite Accord, which called for the withdrawal of South African troops and free elections in Namibia. UNTAG's responsibilities included monitoring the ceasefire, overseeing the return of refugees, supervising the electoral process, and ensuring the withdrawal of South African forces. The mission successfully navigated numerous challenges, including political tensions and sporadic violence. In November 1989, Namibia held free and fair elections under UNTAG's supervision, leading to the establishment of an independent government in March 1990. UNTAG's success demonstrated the UN's ability to facilitate peaceful transitions and build sustainable governance structures.

Rwanda Genocide (1994): The UN's involvement in Rwanda is often cited as one of its most significant failures. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was deployed in 1993 to monitor the peace agreement between the Rwandan government and the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). However, the mission's mandate was limited, and it was severely under-resourced. In April 1994, the assassination of President Juvénal Habyarimana triggered a genocidal campaign against the Tutsi population and moderate

Hutus.¹⁹ Despite warnings from UNAMIR's commander, General Roméo Dallaire, about the impending genocide, the international community failed to act decisively. Over 100 days, approximately 800,000 people were slaughtered.²⁰ The UN's inability to prevent or stop the genocide led to widespread criticism and a reevaluation of peacekeeping mandates, emphasizing the need for timely and robust intervention in situations of mass atrocities.

Sierra Leone Civil War (1991-2002): The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was a significant intervention that played a crucial role in ending the country's brutal civil war. The conflict, marked by extreme violence and widespread human rights abuses, necessitated an international response. Established in 1999, UNAMSIL's mandate included disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of combatants, as well as supporting the implementation of the Lomé Peace Agreement.²¹ The mission faced severe challenges, including attacks on peace keepers by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels. However, the intervention of British forces in 2000 helped stabilize the situation, allowing UNAMSIL to carry out its mandate more effectively. By 2002, the war was officially declared over, and UNAMSIL successfully transitioned to a peace building mission, aiding in Sierra Leone's recovery and rebuilding efforts.²²

Darfur Conflict (2003-2024): The conflict in Darfur, Sudan, has been one of the most protracted and complex crises in Africa. In response to the humanitarian catastrophe, the UN and the African Union (AU) established the United Nations-African Union Hybrid

Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in 2007. This hybrid mission was tasked with protecting civilians, facilitating humanitarian assistance, and supporting the peace process. UNAMID faced numerous challenges, including restricted access to conflict zones, attacks on peacekeepers, and political obstacles from the Sudanese government. Despite these difficulties, UNAMID played a crucial role in reducing violence and providing critical support to millions of displaced people. The mission's collaborative approach with the AU highlighted the importance of regional partnerships in addressing complex conflicts.

Liberia Civil Wars (1989-2003): The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was established in 2003 following the end of Liberia's second civil war. The conflict, characterized by widespread atrocities and a complete breakdown of state institutions, necessitated a comprehensive international response. UNMIL's mandate included disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of combatants, security sector reform, and support for the implementation of the peace agreement.²³ The mission was instrumental in stabilizing the country, facilitating free and fair elections, and rebuilding state institutions. By the time UNMIL concluded its mandate in 2018, Liberia had made significant strides towards peace and stability, showcasing the potential for successful post-conflict reconstruction with sustained international support.

Mechanisms and Strategies for Conflict Resolution.

The United Nations employs a variety of mechanisms and strategies

for conflict resolution, each tailored to the specific needs and complexities of the conflicts it addresses. These strategies range from diplomatic initiatives and preventive diplomacy to peacekeeping operations and post-conflict reconstruction. Preventive diplomacy involves efforts to prevent disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of conflicts when they occur. This strategy often includes early warning systems, diplomatic interventions, and mediation efforts. The UN's Department of Political Affairs plays a central role in these initiatives, deploying envoys and special representatives to engage with conflicting parties. For example, in the case of Kenya's 2007-2008 post-election violence, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan led a mediation team under the auspices of the African Union. His efforts resulted in the signing of the National Accord and Reconciliation Act, which established a coalition government and helped to stabilize the country.

Peacekeeping is one of the most visible and significant tools of the UN for conflict resolution. Peacekeeping missions are deployed to help maintain peace and security, monitor ceasefires, protect civilians, and support the implementation of comprehensive peace agreements. These missions often include military, police, and civilian components working together. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is an illustrative example. Established in 2003, UNMIL was tasked with overseeing the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of combatants, reforming the security sector, and supporting the implementation of the peace process. UNMIL's presence was instrumental in stabilizing Liberia,

conducting free and fair elections, and rebuilding state institutions.

Peace-building involves efforts to address the root causes of conflict and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. This includes rebuilding political, economic, and social structures, promoting good governance, and fostering reconciliation among conflicting parties. In Sierra Leone, following the end of the civil war in 2002, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) transitioned to a peace building mission. The UN supported the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court for Sierra Leone to address war crimes. The peace building efforts in Sierra Leone have been widely regarded as successful in helping the country recover from years of conflict.

During conflicts, the UN often provides humanitarian assistance to alleviate suffering and support the needs of affected populations. This assistance includes food, shelter, medical care, and other essential services. Humanitarian agencies such as the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are typically involved in these efforts. In Darfur, the UN and its partners have provided critical humanitarian aid to millions of displaced people. The United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) has facilitated the delivery of this aid while working to protect civilians and support the peace process.

The UN Security Council can impose sanctions on parties that are contributing to conflict or obstructing peace efforts. These

sanctions can include arms embargoes, travel bans, asset freezes, and other measures aimed at pressuring parties to comply with international norms and peace agreements. For instance, in response to the civil war in Angola, the UN imposed sanctions on the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), targeting its leadership and restricting its ability to finance its operations through diamond sales. These sanctions, combined with diplomatic efforts, eventually contributed to the end of the conflict and the signing of the Lusaka Protocol in 1994.

Promoting democracy and good governance is a key strategy for conflict resolution and prevention. The UN supports electoral processes, constitutional reforms, and the establishment of inclusive political institutions. In East Timor, after the country voted for independence from Indonesia in 1999, the UN established the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). This mission was responsible for administering the territory, supporting the development of political institutions, and facilitating the transition to independence. UNTAET successfully organized elections and supported the drafting of a new constitution, leading to East Timor's full independence in 2002.

Building local capacity is essential for sustainable conflict resolution. The UN provides training and support to national institutions, security forces, and civil society organizations to enhance their ability to manage and resolve conflicts independently. In Somalia, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) has focused on capacity-building initiatives. This

includes training Somali security forces, supporting the establishment of local governance structures, and promoting the rule of law. These efforts aim to create a stable environment where Somali institutions can effectively address conflict and provide services to their citizens.

Collaboration with regional organizations and other international partners is crucial for the success of UN conflict resolution efforts. The African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), and various regional bodies often work alongside the UN in addressing conflicts. The UN's collaboration with the African Union in Darfur through UNAMID is a notable example of such a partnership. The hybrid operation combined the resources and expertise of both organizations to address the complex conflict, highlighting the importance of joint efforts in peacekeeping and conflict resolution.

Challenges and Limitations of UN Interventions in 20th Century Africa

The United Nations (UN) interventions in 20th-century Africa faced numerous challenges and limitations, which often hindered their effectiveness. These obstacles include:

Political Complexities and Sovereignty Issues: One of the primary challenges the UN faced was navigating the political complexities inherent in African conflicts. Many African governments were wary of UN interventions, viewing them as infringements on their sovereignty. This resistance often stemmed from fears that external interference could undermine national

authority or favors one party over another. For example, during the Rwandan Genocide in 1994, the UN's inability to act decisively was partly due to the reluctance of the Rwandan government and some member states to accept a more robust intervention. The initial UN mission, UNAMIR (United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda), was hamstrung by a limited mandate and insufficient resources, which prevented it from effectively stopping the genocide that claimed the lives of approximately 800,000 people.

Resource Constraints and Funding Issues: Resource constraints significantly limited the UN's capacity to implement its missions effectively. Peacekeeping operations are resource-intensive, requiring substantial financial, logistical, and human resources. However, the UN often struggled with insufficient funding and inadequate contributions from member states, which impeded its ability to sustain long-term operations. In the case of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), both UNOSOM I (1992-1993) and UNOSOM II (1993-1995) faced severe logistical and resource challenges. The missions struggled with insufficient troop contributions and a lack of necessary equipment, which hindered their capacity to stabilize the situation and deliver humanitarian aid effectively. The missions' inability to secure Mogadishu and other key areas underscored the critical impact of resource limitations.

Operational Challenges and Hostile Environments: The UN often had to operate in extremely hostile and volatile environments, where peacekeepers and personnel faced significant risks. The lack of security not only endangered UN staff but also complicated efforts

to deliver aid and implement peace agreements. The UN mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL (1999-2005), encountered significant operational challenges. Rebel groups, notably the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), frequently attacked peacekeepers, leading to hostage situations and casualties. The mission faced difficulties in disarming combatants and maintaining secure conditions for humanitarian operations. Despite these challenges, UNAMSIL eventually played a crucial role in stabilizing the country, but the early years were marked by severe operational difficulties.

Lack of Political Will and Commitment: Effective UN interventions often require strong political will and commitment from the international community and local stakeholders. In many cases, the lack of such commitment has undermined the UN's efforts to resolve conflicts. The intervention in Angola is a case in point. The United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM I, II, and III) and the subsequent United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA) faced considerable challenges due to the lack of commitment from the warring parties—the Angolan government and UNITA. Ceasefire agreements were repeatedly violated, and the peace process was marred by mistrust and non-compliance, ultimately leading to the resumption of hostilities.

Complexity of Multidimensional Mandates: UN missions often have multidimensional mandates that include peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and support for political processes. The complexity of these mandates can lead to coordination problems and mandate overload, where missions struggle to address multiple

objectives simultaneously. The United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), established in 1999, faced such complexities. Its mandate included facilitating humanitarian assistance, supporting the disarmament of armed groups, and assisting in the political transition. The scale and scope of the mission, coupled with the vast and challenging terrain of the DRC, made it difficult to achieve all these objectives effectively. Coordination between various components of the mission and other international actors was often problematic, leading to inefficiencies.

Cultural and Social Dynamics: Understanding and navigating the cultural and social dynamics of conflict-affected areas is crucial for effective interventions. However, the UN has sometimes struggled to engage meaningfully with local communities and understand the underlying social fabrics that influence conflicts. In the case of the UN Operation in Burundi (ONUB, 2004-2006), the mission faced challenges in comprehending the deep-rooted ethnic tensions between Hutu and Tutsi communities. While ONUB contributed to the peace process, the mission's effectiveness was limited by its initial lack of cultural sensitivity and understanding of local power structures, which impeded its ability to build trust and foster reconciliation among communities.

Bureaucratic and Institutional Limitations: The UN's bureaucratic and institutional framework can sometimes hinder its responsiveness and flexibility. The decision-making processes within the UN, particularly within the Security Council, can be slow and subject to political maneuvering, delaying critical interventions.

For instance, the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC, 1960-1964) during the Congo Crisis faced significant bureaucratic hurdles. The mission struggled with delays in troop deployment, inconsistent directives, and a lack of coherent strategy. The bureaucratic inefficiencies within the UN system exacerbated the mission's challenges, limiting its ability to stabilize the newly independent Congo effectively.

The Impact and Effectiveness of UN Efforts.

The impact and effectiveness of the United Nations (UN) efforts in managing and resolving conflicts in 20th-century Africa vary significantly across different missions, and include:

Restoring peace and stability: The UN has played a crucial role in restoring peace and stability in several African countries. One of the most notable successes is the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ), which was established in 1992 to oversee the implementation of the peace agreement between the Mozambican government and the Renamo rebels. ONUMOZ facilitated the disarmament of combatants, the organization of free and fair elections, and the return of refugees. By the time the mission ended in 1994, Mozambique had transitioned from a war-torn nation to one on a path towards peace and reconstruction.²⁴ The success of ONUMOZ is often cited as a model for effective UN peacekeeping. Similarly, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) had a significant impact on ending the brutal civil war that plagued the country from 1991 to 2002. Despite early setbacks and operational

challenges, UNAMSIL's efforts in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants, coupled with its support for the 2002 elections, were instrumental in stabilizing Sierra Leone. The mission's robust mandate and proactive engagement with local communities helped restore order and lay the groundwork for long-term peace.

Humanitarian Assistance and Protection: The UN has also been pivotal in providing humanitarian assistance and protecting civilians in conflict zones. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have been crucial in addressing the needs of displaced populations. For instance, during the Rwandan Genocide in 1994, despite the failure of UNAMIR to prevent the genocide, UN agencies played a vital role in delivering humanitarian aid to millions of refugees in neighboring countries like Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Tanzania. The swift response by UNHCR and WFP helped mitigate the humanitarian crisis, although the international community's overall response to the genocide remains heavily criticized. In the Darfur region of Sudan, the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), established in 2007, has worked to protect civilians amidst ongoing conflict. While the mission has faced significant challenges, including limited resources and access restrictions, it has nonetheless provided critical support in terms of humanitarian aid and protection for vulnerable populations. UNAMID's presence has helped reduce the scale of violence and improve the security situation, albeit with mixed results.

Supporting Political Transitions and Governance: UN missions have often supported political transitions and governance reforms in post-conflict settings. The United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB), which operated from 2004 to 2006, supported the implementation of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. ONUB assisted in the disarmament process, the return of refugees, and the establishment of democratic institutions. The mission's support was crucial in the successful conduct of the 2005 elections, which marked a significant milestone in Burundi's peace process. In Liberia, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was deployed in 2003 following the end of the Second Liberian Civil War. UNMIL played a critical role in stabilizing the country, supporting the DDR process, and assisting in the organization of the 2005 elections, which saw the election of Africa's first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The mission also supported reforms in the security sector, justice system, and other key governance areas, contributing to Liberia's recovery and development.

Despite these successes, the effectiveness of UN interventions has often been undermined by various challenges. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has struggled to bring lasting peace. Despite its extensive mandate and significant resources, MONUSCO has faced difficulties in disarming rebel groups, protecting civilians, and supporting the government in stabilizing the country. The mission's limitations have highlighted the complexities of addressing deeply

rooted conflicts in vast and volatile regions. The intervention in Somalia also underscores the challenges faced by the UN. The United Nations Operation in Somalia I (UNOSOM I) and the United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNOSOM II) aimed to provide humanitarian relief and restore peace during the Somali Civil War. However, these missions were hampered by the lack of a functioning government, the presence of numerous armed factions, and high levels of insecurity. The 1993 Battle of Mogadishu, where 18 US soldiers and hundreds of Somali fighters were killed, exemplified the risks and difficulties of operating in such an environment. The eventual withdrawal of UN forces in 1995 without achieving lasting peace highlighted the limitations of the intervention.

Conclusion.

The study set out to examine the United Nations' involvement in conflict management and resolution in 20th-century Africa. The primary objectives of the UN were to restore peace and stability, provide humanitarian assistance, protect civilians, and support political transitions and governance reforms in post-conflict settings. The UN aimed to address both immediate security concerns and underlying political, social, and economic factors contributing to conflicts. The work revealed that while the UN has had significant successes in certain areas, such as Mozambique and Sierra Leone, it has also faced substantial challenges in other regions, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia. The effectiveness of these interventions has been influenced by the complexity of the

conflicts, the mandates and resources available, and the level of cooperation with regional organizations and local stakeholders.

It also found out that UN interventions have been most successful when they had robust mandates, adequate resources, and comprehensive approaches that addressed root causes of conflict. Successful missions, such as ONUMOZ and UNAMSIL, demonstrated the importance of clear objectives, strong leadership, and community engagement. Conversely, missions with ambiguous mandates, insufficient resources, or lack of coordination with local and regional actors, like MONUSCO and UNOSOM, faced significant obstacles and often failed to achieve lasting peace. The study underscores the need for the UN to continually adapt and refine its strategies to address the evolving nature of conflicts and to ensure that peacekeeping efforts are sustainable and inclusive, thereby contributing to long-term stability and development in conflict-affected regions.

Endnotes.

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