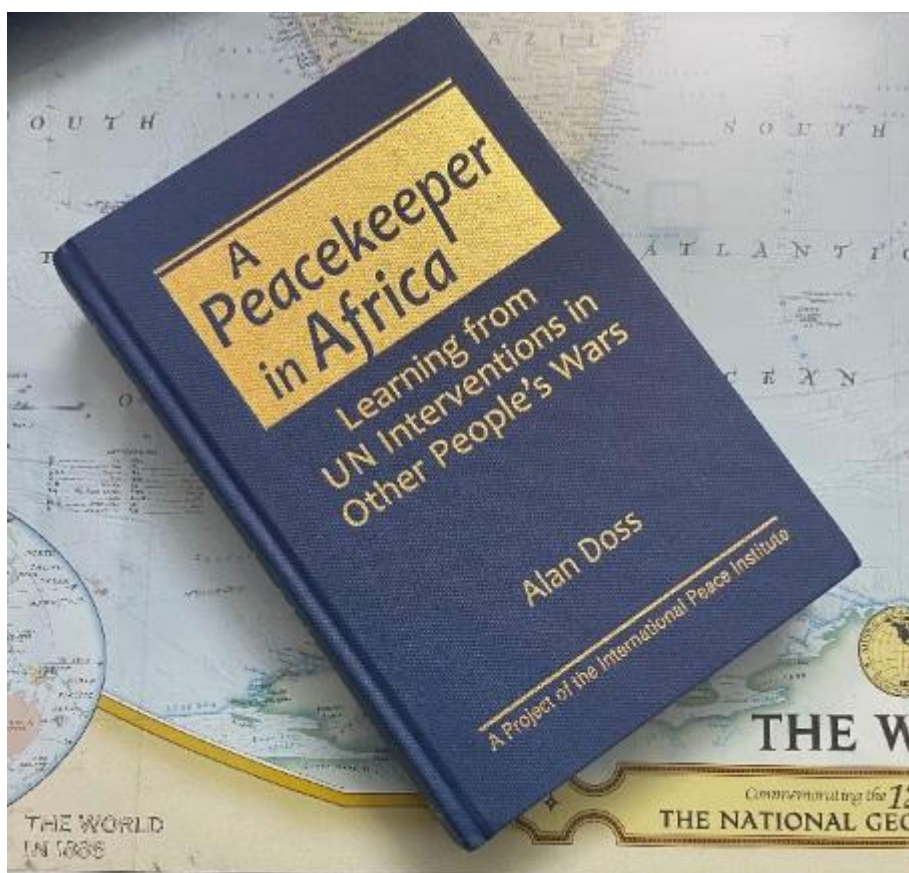


A Peacekeeper in Africa: Learning from UN Interventions in Other People's Wars, Alan Doss, Colorado

A Peacekeeper in Africa is by Alan Doss, who served at the highest levels in some of the most difficult and complex peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This is not a contribution of an academician but the first-hand account of someone who served and experienced challenging times as the head of the missions and took some hard decisions. At a time when the government of Mali has asked MINUSMA to wind up immediately and I believe that even MONUSCO too will follow suit soon, thoughts of Doss seem to have reverberated. With the ability to foresee, he did feel even as early as 2009, that the peacekeeping mission in DRC should close. For several reasons, it has continued.



The best part of the book is the way he has described his experiences in a language the reader may find easy to understand and logically flowing down to the last chapter “Moving Forward: Peacekeeping Today and Tomorrow”. The biggest challenge of any UN peacekeeping mission is to provide sustainable protection to civilians. No matter if the task of protecting civilians is the responsibility of the state, those who suffer the most, look up to the international organisation to alleviate them from their misery. The local population is not interested to read what is there in the mandate. One such example is the local population in the troubled eastern region of DRC was aggrieved over MONUSCO’s failure to stem violence in eastern DRC, mostly attributed to the resurgence of the M 23

group which comprises ex-Congolese Tutsi soldiers. Their frustration resulted in attacking the UN compound on 25 July 2022, resulting in the death of three UN peacekeepers, at least five civilians, and some 50 wounded. MONUSCO seems to be going through a decision dilemma.

Doss explains it as “The Primacy of Politics and the Paradox of Protection”. This is best understood from the impact of the Malian government asking MINUSMA to pack off immediately. Pending the decision of the Security Council on the fate of MINUSMA, Paul D Williams and Nina Wilen suggested a few limited options.^[1] But MINUSMA’s time has run out and the Security Council has decided to close MINUSMA.^[2] Doss has observed that the primacy of politics begins with the conclusion of a comprehensive peace agreement. When the foundation of the peace agreement is shaky and based on a negotiated settlement, such an agreement is likely to break down leading to the recurrence of violence and making a political solution to a conflict is a difficult proposition. Referring to the recent case of MINUSMA, it seems that the peace agreement was not based on a solid foundation. While the UN Security Council’s decision is its affirmation of principles of peacekeeping, strict adherence to the principles imperils the civilians (if the Malian government fails to fill up the vacuum created by MINUSMA’s exit). On the other hand, ignoring the host state’s withdrawal of consent and staying put to protect the civilians would have risked the lives of the peacekeepers. Either way, it has raised the ethical question of the moral responsibility of the peacekeepers to protect civilians. Doss’s explanation of Paradox is so apt. I can go on writing more about other recommendations of the author. But then it is better for the readers to find these themselves. I have enjoyed reading *A Peacekeeper in Africa* and learned a lot and it is a must-read!

^[1] <https://www.egmontinstitute.be/the-un-security-council-and-the-future-of-minusma/>

^[2] UN Security Council, S/RES/2690 (2023), June 30, 2023

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