



Coverage of Peacekeeping in the DRC in the New York Times

Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement in Southern Africa

Lusaka Zambia
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Aims of the study

- To examine trends in the coverage of peacekeeping in the DRC from its inception to the present (1999-2012)
 - How was the quantity of the coverage (overall/chronologically)?
 - What aspects of the operations were the object of focus?
 - How was blame apportioned for failures?

Background

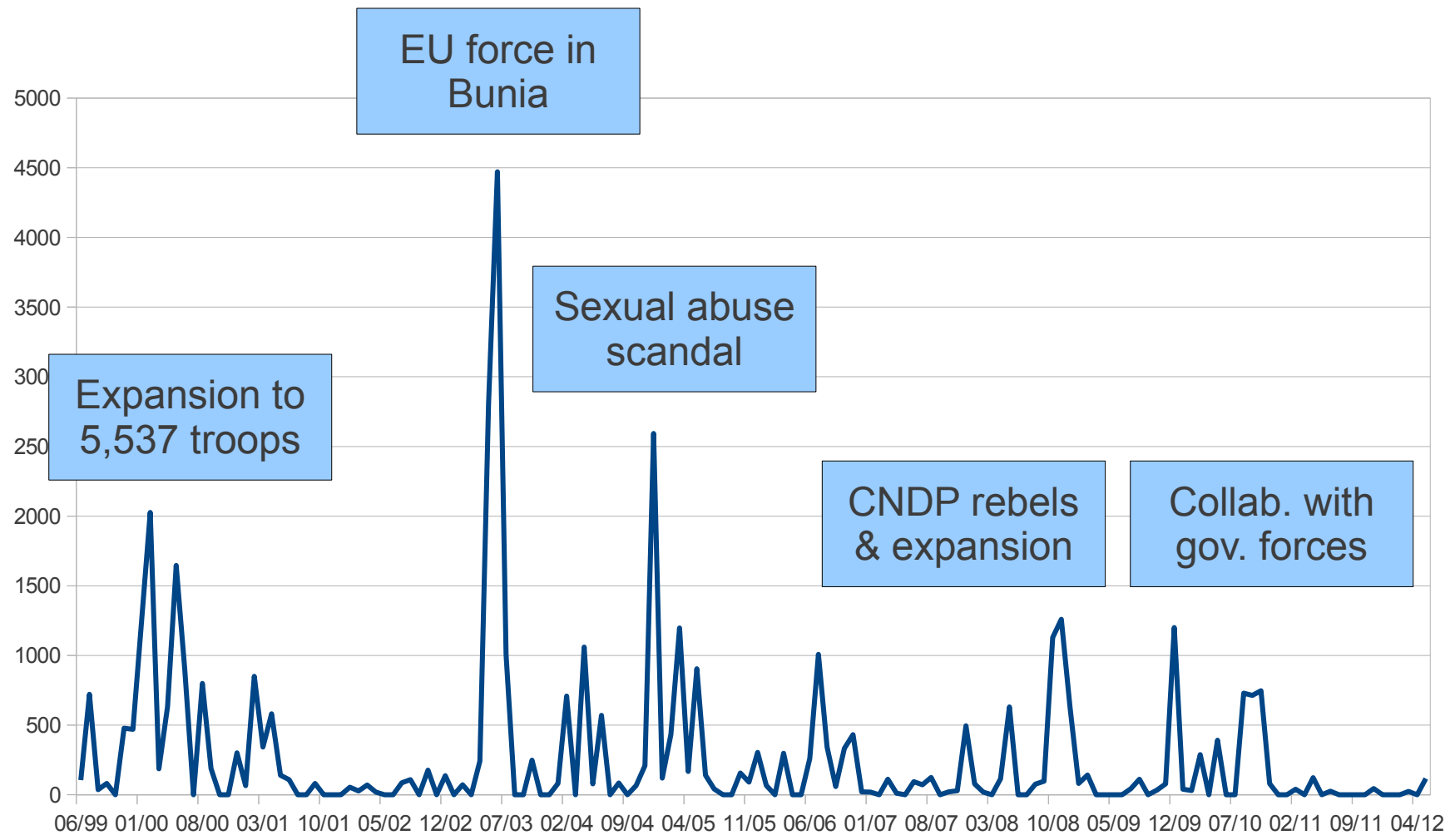
- The evolution of operations the DRC in numbers:
 - Nov 1999: 500 (observers)
 - Feb 2000: 5,537
 - Dec 2002: 8,700
 - Jul 2003: 10,800
 - Dec 2008: 22,016
 - May 2010: 19,815 (MONUSCO)
- + EU force in Bunia (2003): 1,400

Methodology

- Search (LexisNexis database) for:
 - All NY Times articles (1999-2012) including the words “Congo” and “peacekeeping”, “peacekeepers” or “United Nations”
- Extract all sentences containing references to peacekeeping
- Do monthly word count of references
- Sort references according to the aspect of peacekeeping covered
- Examine other trends in coverage content

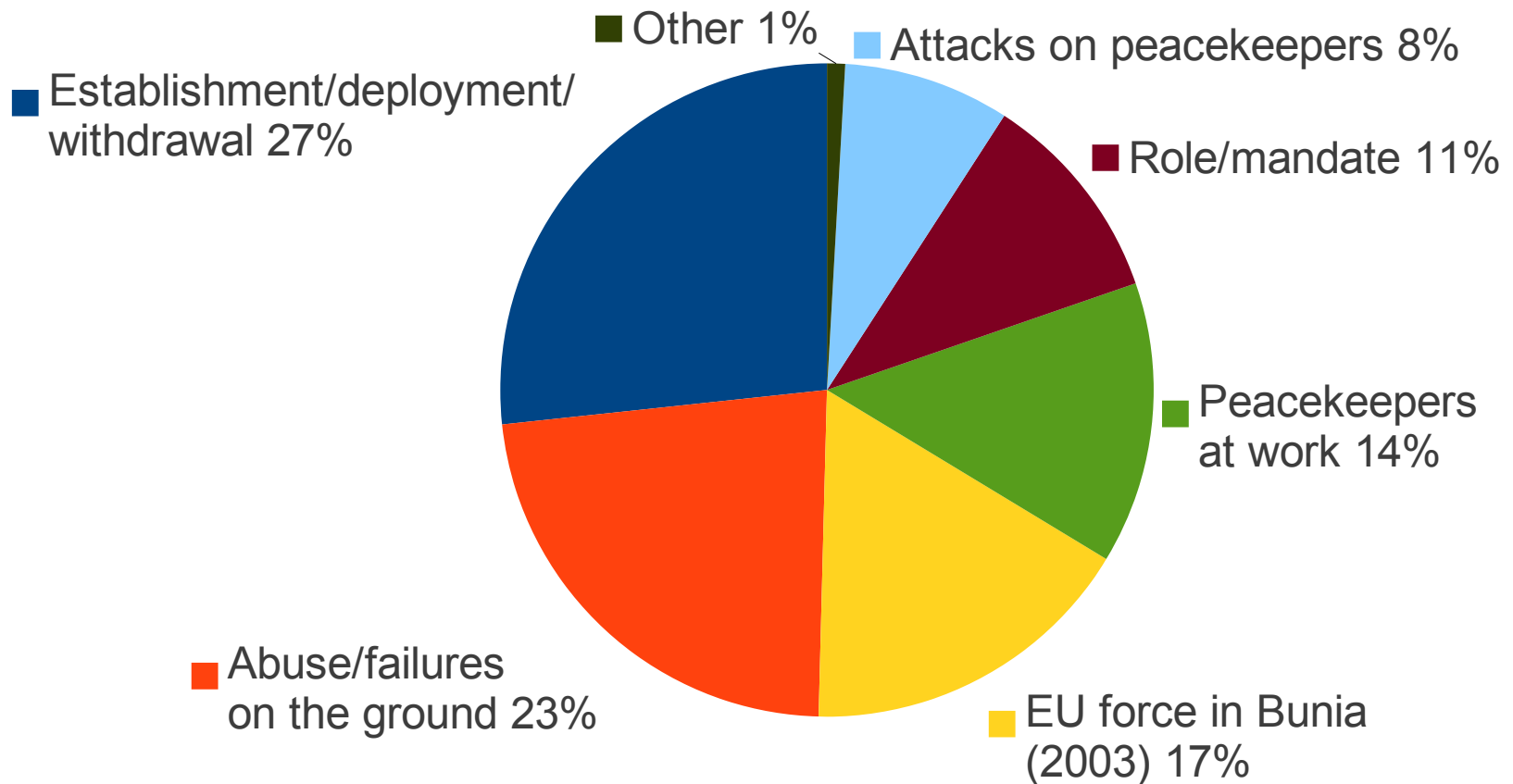
Coverage timeline: Peacekeeping in DRC

New York Times, 1999-2012 (word count)



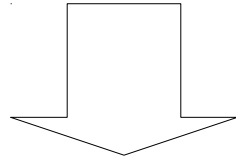
Breakdown of coverage of peacekeeping in DRC

New York Times, 1999-2012 (word count)



A shift in perspective (2005 ~2006)

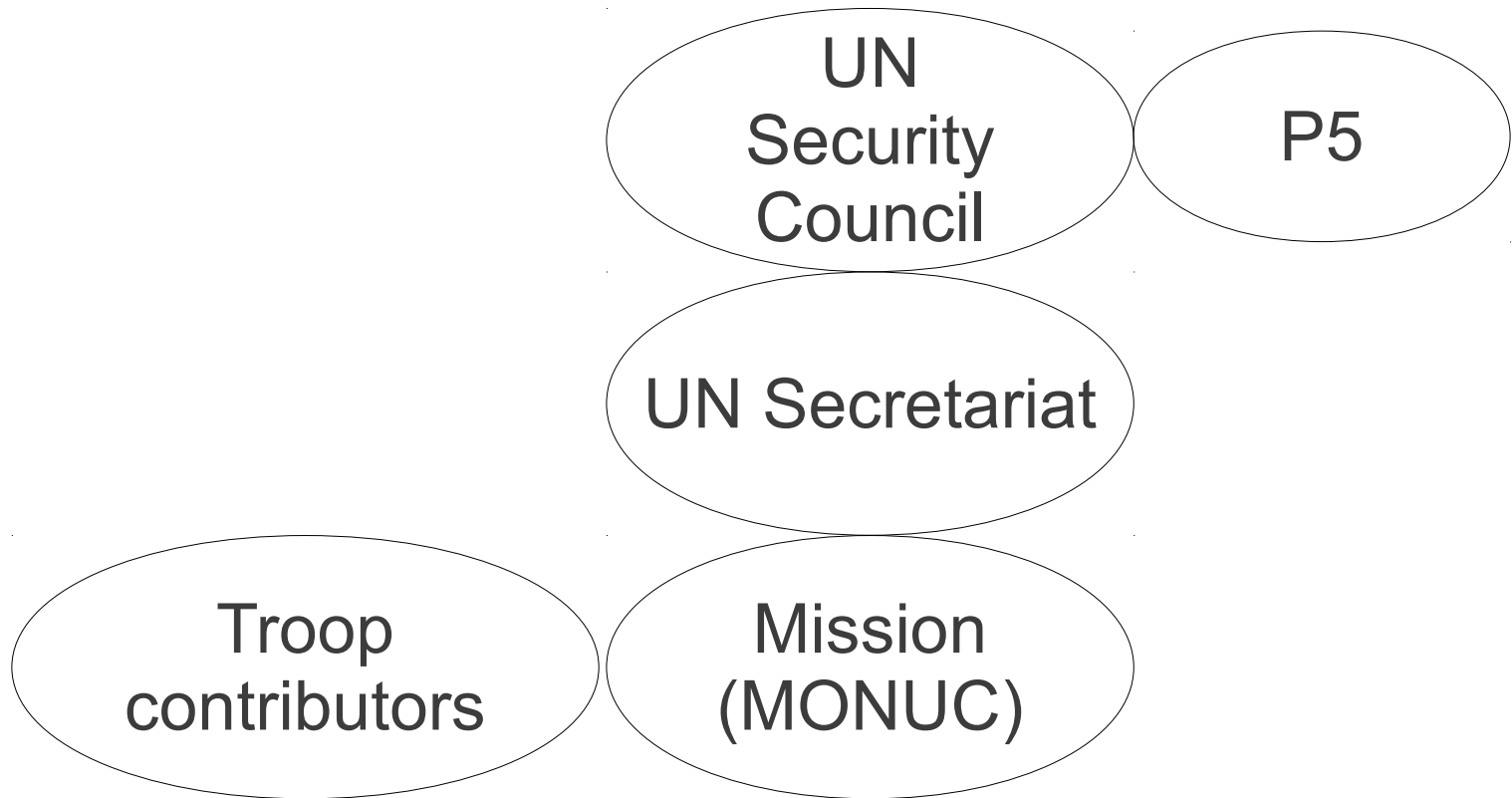
“With 16,000 troops, this is the biggest United Nations force in the world, **but** it is spread very thinly in a nation half the size of Europe.”



“The violence in eastern Congo has continued unabated for several years now, **despite** the presence of the United Nations' largest peacekeeping force, with more than 17,000 troops.”

Failures and responsibility

- Who is responsible for peacekeeping operations?



Coverage of failures

"If the United Nations is serious about peacekeeping, the protection of civilians, if they are going to prevent mass killings, this is a critical test."

"...the United Nations is largely at fault. Not only has it failed to stop the killing..."

"Despite a mandate to use force to stabilize eastern Congo, the United Nations has been criticized before for not doing enough."

Summary of findings

- Western peacekeepers were heavily (disproportionately) covered
- A lot of bad news with little context
 - Almost no mention of achievements (bad news is major determinant of newsworthiness)
 - Limitations in mandate/numbers given some coverage, but not for long
- The 'United Nations' is painted as the cause of failure (with little context)