Introduction

In September 2018, the government of Somalia announced that it was ready to send troops to war-torn South Sudan as part of a regional peacekeeping initiative – a decision endorsed by the regional security organisation IGAD (Inter-governmental Authority on Development). The announcement elicited surprise in some quarters; Somalia itself has – at the time of writing – been in the midst of civil war since 1988 and the site, since 2007, of the African Union (AU)'s largest and longest-running Peace Support Operation, AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia). 'Some may ask how it is possible a country like Somalia, a country that is coming out of conflict and enmity, can contribute to a peacekeeping force', noted Somalia's deputy education minister, who then asked, 'But what is stopping us from taking part in peace building in other parts of Africa where there is conflict?'[1]

While Somalia never did deploy troops, it is not the only conflict-affected, or recently post-conflict, state in Africa to declare an interest in peacekeeping. Uganda dispatched peacekeepers to Liberia in 1994, eight years after the conclusion of its own civil war and during a bloody counter-insurgency operation in the north of the country. Burundi sent its first contingent of peacekeepers to Somalia, to join AMISOM, barely two years after the conclusion of the 1993–2005 Burundian civil war, in the midst of a comprehensive Security Sector Reform (SSR) programme at home. Indeed, African states – conflict-affected, post-conflict or otherwise – are particularly prominent in

[1] Mohammed Yusuf, 'Somalia Says Ready to Send Troops to S. Sudan for Security', *Voice of America*, 19 September 2018; Joseph Oduha, 'Igad Endorses Somalia and Djibouti to Deploy Troops to S. Sudan', *East African*, 17 September 2018.

Table 1 Top twenty troop and police contributors to UN peacekeeping missions (as of 1 April 2021)

Ranking	State	Contribution
1	Bangladesh	6,711
2	**Rwanda**	**6,378**
3	**Ethiopia**	**6,297**
4	Nepal	5,711
5	India	5,429
6	Pakistan	4,761
7	Egypt	3,154
8	Indonesia	2,825
9	China	2,465
10	**Ghana**	**2,297**
11	**Senegal**	**2,237**
12	**Chad**	**1,843**
13	**Tanzania**	**1,759**
14	Morocco	1,710
15	**Togo**	**1,458**
16	**Burkina Faso**	**1,457**
17	Italy	1,159
18	Uruguay	1,158
19	**Cameroon**	**1,102**
20	**South Africa**	**1,088**

Source: UN Peacekeeping.

regional and international peacekeeping. As Table 1 demonstrates, for example, a third of the current top ten global contributors to UN peacekeeping are from Africa. This includes both number two (Rwanda) and number three (Ethiopia). Indeed, Africa accounts for half of the top twenty UN peacekeeping contributors today,[2] while a significant number of African states contribute troops to peace operations authorised by the African Union and regional organisations. In this book we examine how this involvement in peacekeeping has shaped contemporary Africa. Instead of focusing purely on the question of *why* states contribute troops, though, we explore *how* peacekeeping is woven into national, regional and international politics more broadly, as well as what the implications are for how we should understand the continent and its politics.

[2] Information correct as of 1 April 2021 (available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors). African sub-Saharan states are in bold.

In doing so, the book provides the first full-length study of African peacekeeping by focusing not on peacekeeping *in* Africa as such but, rather, peacekeeping *by* Africans. It therefore goes beyond existing studies which tend to concentrate on the nature and impact of UN and international interventions in Africa, interventions which are almost invariably led and dominated by non-African states, organisations and actors.[3] Instead, we switch the emphasis around and examine what African states themselves are doing in this arena and with what implications, for Africa as a continent and for peacekeeping itself. Our definition of 'African peacekeeping' is therefore peace operations (a term unpacked later in this chapter) that contain troop contributions from African states.

Our approach throughout the book is informed by two central arguments that run across the narrative and analysis. The first of these is the importance of emphasising historical legacies and the colonial enterprise. As Chapter 1 reveals, the 'story' of African peacekeeping often begins in the 1950s and 1960s, with the bulk of the narrative focusing on the post–Cold War period. There are solid reasons for this, yet a holistic understanding of the phenomenon nonetheless requires a longer-term perspective. This entails, in particular, acknowledging and accounting for the legacy of European colonialism – a deeply disruptive and traumatic set of processes which continues to impact profoundly upon post colonial Africa.

This heritage has played a central role in the evolution of African peacekeeping in a range of ways. On the one hand, histories of foreign oppression, domination or manipulation have inspired some African states to pursue peacekeeping as a means of asserting themselves on the international stage, demonstrating their independence and providing support and solidarity to fellow African states in need. On the other hand, even AU – and regionally led – African peacekeeping operations continue to be financed largely by Western states and the UN, compromising their autonomy.

Colonial practices of oppression also centralised the role of the security sector in many states, both increasing its importance relative to other state institutions and supporting the creation of unaccountable and undemocratic organisations working against, rather than for, the citizenry. This heritage is still visible today in the military's prominent, and often politicised, role in many contemporary African states.

[3] See Suggested Readings at the end of this chapter.

Moreover, colonial officials drew the boundaries of many twentieth-century African states, dispersing some African peoples – such as the Somali – across multiple sovereign states. This led to tensions between these new states that continue to influence both neighbourhood relations and peacekeeping dynamics. Indeed, the origins of African peacekeeping itself can be found, at least in part, in colonial-era 'pacification' missions and conscription campaigns, although contemporary political realities and immediate practicalities are, of course, of critical importance to understanding current practices.

Our second core argument is that African peacekeeping is best understood through the lens of practice theory in order to capture both the recurrent performances and the multiple transformations that shape African peacekeeping. Adopting such a perspective allows us to demonstrate just how deeply embedded in both domestic and foreign policy-making peacekeeping has become over time. For some states, participating in peacekeeping has become a fundamental element of state- and region-building itself. For many, particularly more authoritarian states, it is a central dimension of both internal regime management practices and foreign relations, undergirding domestic power balances and critical geostrategic relationships with major powers including the United States, the European Union (EU) and, increasingly, China. It represents, in this regard, a mechanism to secure valuable international security assistance and training, as well as diplomatic cover. In all states, including those that remain authoritarian and those transitioning away from autocracy, it also provides a vehicle to placate, remunerate, professionalise and circulate potentially troublesome armies. For others, including in states as different as Rwanda and South Africa, it offers an opportunity to reshape and reframe national identity in the aftermath of divisive and violent conflict and dictatorship.

Studying African peacekeeping through the lens of practice theory means that we understand peacekeeping as a repeated performance – or set of performances – which builds on background knowledge and a certain competence.[4] It is thus both a block or a pattern that can be filled out by a multitude of single actions – hence *practice* as an entity – and *practices* as a set of performances which are reproduced over time.

[4] Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, 'International Practices: Introduction and Framework', in Emmanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, eds., *International Practices*, pp. 3–36 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Such a standpoint allows us to capture how the elements of a practice such as peacekeeping, which include both material aspects, such as troops' equipment and logistics, and ideational elements like the details of know-how, the meanings and purposes of peacekeeping and its characteristics, are constantly reproduced and gradually reconfigured.[5]

Applying Adler and Pouliot's five dimensions of 'international practice' to peacekeeping can be useful to illustrate our perspective here: first, peacekeeping operations are performances; they consist of a number of actions and processes that take place in real time, from the decision to set up a peace operation to the actual deployment of troops. Second, these performances develop a pattern. While each peace operation has its own mandate, there is a regularity in how they are set up, which actors can set them up, what rules are to be applied and which actors are allowed to contribute. Thirdly, participating states often have a degree of competence as they contribute troops to peace operations. Yet this competence may vary depending on the state, as some need more training, equipment and supporting logistics than others to deploy. Fourth, the performances are often based on a form of background knowledge that is bound up in practices. Most states who contribute troops are well aware of the requirements and the rules necessary to participate, and with time they build on their previous experiences to form this background knowledge. Finally, peacekeeping operations are both ideational and material: they are the result of ideas and decisions conceived in different organisations, such as the UN and the AU, yet the operations themselves consist of material elements, including the actual deployment, training and equipping of the troops.[6] Throughout this book we will therefore use 'practice' and 'practices' interchangeably to refer to this perspective.

We therefore view African peacekeeping as a set of sociopolitical practices which are part of a broader, historical negotiation, expansion, re/structuring and re/invention of African state authority and identity over time. This perspective complements the more functional approaches found in much existing scholarship. The latter often

[5] Elizabeth Shove, Mika Pantzar and Matt Watson, *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life and How It Changes* (London: Sage, 2012), 5.

[6] Emmanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, 'International Practices', *International Theory* 3, no. 1 (2011): 1–36; Christian Bueger and Frank Gadinger, *International Practice Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 3.

adopt more narrow, instrumental perspectives on peacekeeping – focusing on a particular mission's legal mandate and stated objectives, assessing how far these objectives were achieved, and examining the reasons for a mission's perceived success or failure. This book focuses less on the question of whether or not African peacekeeping 'works' and more on what it *does* and has done – on how it has shaped, and continues to shape, constellations and configurations of power in Africa, at domestic, regional and international levels. As the book will demonstrate throughout, for many African states, peacekeeping is occurring at the very heart of African politics, governance and international relations. With regard to peacekeeping, this means that we are both interested in general trends on a macro level, like the development of continental norms such as non-indifference to humanitarian crisis, and in micro-level processes such as individual peacekeepers' training and education and the impact of these processes at national, regional and continental levels.

In advancing these arguments, the book largely excludes the North African states of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt and the disputed territory of Western Sahara from the analysis. Broadly speaking, North African states and societies possess collective sociocultural and political histories, political trajectories, and regional frames of reference that render them distinct from African states and societies to their south and closer analytically to those of the Middle East. Their proximity to Europe and the Mediterranean has also meant that their peacekeeping 'stories' and broader international relations have been somewhat different to states on the rest of the continent. Unless otherwise stated, then, references to 'Africa' and 'African' in the book do not include Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia or Western Sahara. We accept that some readers may not agree with this conceptual approach, and, while it is commonplace for African Studies scholars to draw the geographical distinction that we do, we also acknowledge that this choice is the subject of considerable debate and ambiguity.[7] In the context of peacekeeping, it is also notable that, while a considerable literature exists around peacekeeping by states in

[7] Max de Haldevang, 'Why Do We Still Use the Term "Sub-Saharan Africa"?', *Quartz Africa*, 1 September 2016 (https://qz.com/africa/770350/why-do-we-still-say-subsaharan-africa/; accessed 1 November 2020); Herbert Ekwe-Ekwe, 'What Exactly Does "Sub-Sahara Africa" Mean?', *Pambazuka News*, 18 January 2012 (www.pambazuka.org/governance/what-exactly-does-%E2%80%98sub-sahara-africa%E2%80%99-mean; accessed 1 November 2020).

East, West, and Southern Africa, there is no such comparable scholarship on peacekeeping by North African states. This reflects, we suggest, the different position that peacekeeping holds in the domestic, regional and international politics of states in North Africa compared to in other regions of the continent.

Understanding 'Peacekeeping': From Theory to Practice

Given that we approach African peacekeeping from a practice perspective, our definition of peacekeeping in the African context is informed as much by what happens in reality as it is by the language and aspirations of official documents and UN/AU resolutions. This is not only because of the significant empirical gap between the two which is often – and increasingly – observable in African peacekeeping but also because a range of African governments de facto define peacekeeping somewhat differently to the UN and scholars. Indeed, from Abuja to Kigali, African states are actively challenging – in word and deed – what counts as peacekeeping and what does not. The most visible evidence of this is that the AU terms its missions Peace Support Operations (PSO) rather than peacekeeping operations. In this book, however, we will use peacekeeping, peace operation and Peace Support Operation interchangeably to refer to different types of missions conducted by Africans on the African continent under different umbrellas, including, but not limited to, UN and AU missions.

The origins of peacekeeping itself can be found during the nineteenth century, as European states in the post-Napoleonic period took collective action to preserve peace. This cooperation was extended beyond the European realm in the creation of the League of Nations after the end of the First World War, with the aim of delivering collective security, yet it was not until the early activities of the UN, founded in 1945, and its efforts to reshape a world wracked by years of violence, war and genocide that substantial and structured peacekeeping practices developed.[8] The organisation's charter included 'chapters' which made peacekeeping both legal (according to international law) and, increasingly, inevitable. Chapter VI obliges Member States to 'seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, arbitration,

[8] Alex J. Bellamy, Paul D. Williams and Stuart Griffin, *Understanding Peacekeeping*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 71–80.

judicial settlement . . . or other peaceful means of their own choice' to 'any dispute',[9] while Chapter VII goes a step further and gives the UN Security Council the authority to maintain or restore international peace and security with the use of armed force.[10] In short, Chapter VII reflects the conviction that the use of force may sometimes be necessary for the cause of peace.

Defining peacekeeping has, however, become increasingly difficult – not least, as we discuss throughout the book, because of the ever-changing character of peacekeeping in both theory and practice. The UN's own definition of peacekeeping exemplifies this, in a definition which is so all-encompassing that its utility is questionable: 'one among a range of activities undertaken by the United Nations to maintain international peace and security throughout the world'.[11] The three core principles of UN peacekeeping – the so-called holy trinity of the non-use of force (except in self-defence), impartiality, and consent of the host state and main parties to the conflict – enjoyed wide acceptance as the bedrock of peacekeeping during the Cold War.

These definitions and interpretations have, however, been increasingly stretched in the contemporary era to fit in the new demands of peace operations. In particular, there has been an increased emphasis on the protection of civilians (PoC), state-building and stabilisation, which has often resulted in a 'doctrinal mismatch' between the 'enforcement peacekeeping' perspective and the vision of peace operations outlined in the Capstone Doctrine from 2008, which advocates for comparatively less use of force. This confusion has also played out on a practical level over which norms and principles are to be prioritised.[12]

The three factors central to successful peacekeeping outlined by the Capstone Doctrine – legitimacy, credibility and local ownership – have also increased expectations around what the UN can and should deliver.[13] Indeed, even the UN itself acknowledges that the

[9] *Charter of the United Nations* (New York: United Nations, 1945), Chapter VI, Article 33.
[10] *Charter of the United Nations* (New York: United Nations, 1945), Chapter VII.
[11] *United Nations Peace Operations*, 'Terminology', https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/terminology.
[12] Emily Paddon Rhoads and Maron Laurence, 'Peace Operations, Principles, and Doctrine', in Oliver Richmond and Gëzim Visoka, eds, *The Palgrave Encyclopaedia of Peace and Conflict Studies* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11795-5_20-1.
[13] Cedric de Coning, Julian Detzel and Petter Hojem, 'UN Peacekeeping Operations Capstone Doctrine', Report of the TfP Oslo Doctrine Seminar, 14–15 May 2008.

'boundaries between conflict prevention, peace-making, peacebuilding and peace enforcement have become increasingly blurred'.[14] In an effort to provide an overall understanding of peace operations, some scholars have divided these operations into 'generations', reflecting the evolution and practices characterising different periods,[15] yet these 'frozen' definitions miss the malleable dimension of peacekeeping, which reflects the changing needs and demands of different states in power rather than the changing character of conflict.[16] Indeed, classifying peacekeeping according to type, period or function plays down its inherently 'ad hoc, political nature and conceal[s] disagreement[s] about [its] ultimate purposes'.[17]

The difficulty of providing frozen definitions of peace operations is also applicable to the operations of the AU, the major institutional actor in the domain of peace and security in Africa. For while the UN's 'holy trinity' has provided a broader framework for that institution's peacekeeping missions, these principles are not applicable to the AU's peace operations. As noted, the AU does not, for example, use the term 'peacekeeping' for its missions but rather 'Peace Support Operation'.[18] This is reflective of the fact that AU operations for the most part have been synonymous with stabilisation operations. These are heavily militarised operations which entail intervening in places where there is no peace to keep and, at times, clearly taking sides against a belligerent in an armed conflict.[19]

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), for example, is theoretically a peacekeeping mission, yet it was deployed at a time when there was no ceasefire or peace deal in place, meaning that in

[14] *United Nations Peace Operations: Principles and Guidelines* (New York: Peacekeeping Best Practices Section, 2008), 14.

[15] Kai Michael Kenkel, 'Five Generations of Peace Operations: From the "Thin Blue Line" to "Painting a Country Blue"', *Revista Brasilieira de Politica Internacional* 56, no. 1 (2013): 122–43; Ramesh Thakur, *The United Nations, Peace and Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 37–41.

[16] Philip Cunliffe, *Legions of Peace: UN Peacekeepers from the Global South* (London: Hurst and Co., 2013), 6.

[17] Bellamy et al., *Understanding Peacekeeping*, 14.

[18] While recognising the difference between AU and UN peace operations, we use the terms 'peacekeeping' and 'peace operations' interchangeably throughout the book, as the aim is not to make a clear distinction between the two organisations' approaches but rather to understand *how* peacekeeping/Peace Support Operations affect contributing states' domestic, foreign and regional relations and policies.

[19] Cedric de Coning, Linnéa Gelot and John Karlsrud, *The Future of African Peace Operations: From the Janjaweed to Boko Haram* (London: Zed Books, 2016).

practice it has been functioning more as a counter-insurgency operation than a peacekeeping operation.[20] The *practice* of peacekeeping therefore rarely fits neatly into categorisations, principles or theoretical concepts. In addition, many peace operations end up being 'one of a kind', due to the complex network of actors, institutions and mandates involved in their creation, making it almost impossible to provide a clear-cut definition which fits all. Regional peace operations in Africa are also supposed to be the consequence of burden-sharing and subsidiarity, where regional organisations handle upcoming security issues in their own regions yet are authorised and guided by the AU.[21] In practice, however, stronger regional organisations, such as ECOWAS in West Africa, have at times sidelined the AU, resulting in politically and practically complex situations which have eluded any clear definition.

In this book we therefore do not focus on any single, specific definition of peacekeeping but instead study the practices of peacekeeping and their impact on troop contributing states. The core practice in question is the actual deployment of troops to a peace operation abroad. Yet, this practice entails a number of other elements, including planning for troop contribution and training and equipping troops. Moreover, in states where the decision to contribute troops is subject to parliamentary approval, it also implies preparing for, and following, an institutional decision-making process. For many states, as we will see throughout this book, these elements are woven into the political and discursive realm of both foreign and domestic policy, playing a significant role in how states perceive themselves and want to be perceived by others.

Peacekeeping practices are also increasingly blurring the lines between the domestic and international spheres. Long-term experiences of peacekeeping abroad by national troops, for example, have had important effects on domestic security sectors. Examples of this include structural reforms of the military to better prepare it for peace operations and the embedding of new concepts and norms. The use of peacekeeping troops for internal security aspects is another practice which has evolved from troop contribution to international peacekeeping missions.

[20] Paul D. Williams, *Fighting for Peace in Somalia: A History and Analysis of the African Union Mission (AMISOM), 2007–2017* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[21] See, for example, the African Union's *Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security between the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities and the Coordinating Mechanisms of the Regional Standby Brigades of Eastern Africa and Northern Africa* (Addis Ababa: African Union, 2008).