

“Africa’s regional organizations will . . . need to urgently improve their rapid-response capacity to ensure that the continent does not keep relying for its security on self-interested external powers.”

UN Peacekeeping and the Quest for a Pax Africana

ADEKEYE ADEBAJO

The Kenyan scholar Ali Mazrui presented the idea of a “Pax Africana” in a seminal 1967 study, arguing that Africans should muster the will to create and consolidate peace on their own continent. Mazrui wrote in the aftermath of the Congo crisis of 1960–64, when the United Nations was struggling to keep peace amid a traumatic civil war. The fact that the world body still struggles with peacekeeping in the same country, four decades later, is an eloquent metaphor for the arduous and continuing quest for a Pax Africana.

Peacekeeping efforts in Africa are often portrayed in Manichean terms. They are either spectacular “successes,” as with the short-term victory of a 3,000-strong Southern African Development Community (SADC) force that routed the M23 rebels in eastern Congo as part of a UN mission in 2013; or else they are spectacular “failures,” as with the current inability of 2,000 French troops and about 6,000 Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) peacekeepers—“rehatted” as UN troops—to stop sectarian massacres in the Central African Republic. UN missions in South Sudan (some 8,500 troops) and Sudan’s Darfur region (more than 19,000 troops) are also counted as failures.

Often forgotten by Western observers are the ongoing efforts of the Ugandan-led, 22,000-strong African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission in Somalia and the Nigerian-led, 750-strong

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) mission in Guinea-Bissau. In fact, about 75 percent of the UN’s 98,350 peacekeepers, and eight of its sixteen current peacekeeping missions, are deployed in Africa. Five of the top ten contributors to UN peacekeeping are African nations: Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, and Ghana.

LAW OF THE JUNGLE

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council, which are mandated to maintain global peace, account for about 70 percent of the arms sales that continue to fuel conflicts on the continent. This group has come to resemble several of the characters in Aesop’s fables. The United States is the lion—the king of the jungle—that lays down the law and hunts other beasts. The bear, of course, is Russia; the lion and the bear fought over a goat, according to Aesop, just as the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in a global Cold War, with proxy conflicts in Africa.

Meanwhile, China is like an elephant, sometimes dismissed as “big for nothing,” given its aversion to taking proactive stances on the Security Council. However, the elephant has big ears and listens more than it speaks. It also has a long memory, and appears to be playing a long game to acquire more power before showing its strength.

France is like the wolf in sheep’s clothing, hunting vulnerable lambs. It deployed troops in Rwanda in 1994 on the pretense of launching a “humanitarian intervention,” having earlier armed and trained militias that committed the genocide in which 800,000 people perished. As in Aesop’s tale, the wolf is fooled by its own shadow into believing that it is bigger than it actually is, and suffers from delusions of grandeur. Britain,

ADEKEYE ADEBAJO is the executive director of the Center for Conflict Resolution in Cape Town. He has served on United Nations missions in South Africa, Western Sahara, and Iraq. His books include *The Curse of Berlin: Africa After the Cold War* (Columbia University Press, 2010); *UN Peacekeeping in Africa* (Lynne Rienner, 2011); and the edited volume *Africa’s Peacemakers: Nobel Peace Laureates of African Descent* (Zed Books, 2014).

for its part, is like the sly fox that is often prepared to betray friends—recalling historical memories of “Perfidious Albion” and Lord Palmerston’s dictum that countries have neither permanent friends nor permanent enemies, but only permanent interests.

UN peacekeeping in Africa is effectively a story about the games that great powers play. These games have often determined the outcomes of peacekeeping missions in Africa and elsewhere. After the deployment of the first armed UN peacekeeping mission to end the 1956 Suez crisis, Cold War politics overshadowed future missions—most dramatically illustrated by the Congo crisis four years later.

The Suez mission resulted from the machinations of Britain and France and, to a large extent, set the tone for the Congo crisis. There, the United States and Britain lined up on the side of pro-Western Congolese leaders and sought to use the UN peacekeeping mission to oppose the “radical,” Pan-African prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, in order to prevent the spread of Soviet communism (Moscow was supporting Lumumbist elements) to the huge country at the heart of Africa. This strategy eventually produced the ruinous four-decade dictatorship of the Western-backed Mobutu Sese Seko. France, meanwhile, refused to pay any peacekeeping dues; and from the 1970s on, it attempted to draw Congo into its neocolonial francophone sphere of influence in Africa.

The end of the Cold War and the increased cooperation between the United States and Russia facilitated the deployment of UN peacekeepers to Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, and Somalia between 1989 and 1992. None of these missions would have been possible during the Cold War era of proxy wars waged by the superpowers. During UN missions in Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast after 2000, the British and the French still demonstrated some residual attitudes of guilt and possessiveness toward their former colonies. Historical ties largely determined American support for a UN mission in Liberia, which had been a US client under the autocratic Samuel Doe during the 1980s. Likewise, Moscow was able to nudge former Marxist allies in Angola and Mozambique to the negotiating table when the Soviets sought improved ties with the West in the late 1980s during the reformist era of Mikhail Gorbachev. China

similarly pushed the government of Sudan—its third-largest trading partner in Africa—to accept a UN peacekeeping force in Darfur in 2007.

The games that these powers play must always be placed at the center of any analysis of UN peacekeeping missions, for it is often these games that help determine the fate of such interventions. Peacekeeping has often operated on the basis that those who pay the piper also call the tune, and Western interests (particularly those of the United States, Britain, and France) have tended to dictate where and when these missions are deployed, and for how long.

ALIGNING INTERESTS

A successful peacekeeping mission brings stability by implementing the key tasks of its stated mandate—typically, a cease-fire; disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation; and elections. Perhaps the most important measure of success, however, is whether stability endures after the peacekeepers have departed, even if all their tasks have not been completed.

Since the UN’s peacekeeping successes and failures are often contingent on the domestic, regional, and external dynamics of conflict situations, it is important to pay close attention to the politics of peacekeeping and not just focus on technical and logistical constraints. While these constraints are important, political consensus—particularly among the powerful members of the Security Council—is often more significant in determining the success or failure of missions in Africa. Technically deficient peacekeeping missions can still succeed with strong political support, while the most technically brilliant peace operations are likely to be undermined by a lack of commitment. For example, the UN succeeded in Namibia (1989–90), Mozambique (1992–94), and eventually in Sierra Leone (1999–2005) and Burundi (2004–6), despite logistical and financial constraints, whereas well-resourced missions in Somalia (1992–93) and Angola (1995–97) were spectacular failures.

Based on a thorough assessment of 15 major UN peacekeeping operations in Africa between 1960 and 2014, three key factors stand out as having most often contributed to success. First, the interests of key permanent members of the Security Council must be aligned with efforts to resolve

Africa has been a giant laboratory for global peacekeeping over the past six and a half decades.

the conflict in question, and those members must be willing to mobilize diplomatic and financial support for peace processes. Second, the belligerent parties must be willing to cooperate with the UN to implement accords; in cases where such cooperation is not forthcoming, it is essential to develop an effective strategy to deal with potential spoilers who are prepared to use violence to wreck peace processes. Third, regional players must cooperate, as well as provide diplomatic and/or military support to UN peacekeeping efforts.

The alignment of interests at these three interdependent levels—external, domestic, and regional—has often shaped the course and outcomes of UN missions in Africa. One must highlight the critical role of the most powerful members of the Security Council, since they are the only actors who have the power to start or end peacekeeping missions by the world body. The Security Council must ensure the consent of domestic parties to implement peace agreements, and has the authority to develop incentives for cooperation or sanctions for noncompliance.

The five permanent members of the Security Council have frequently played a key role in orchestrating regional cooperation, since they often have influence over regional actors that they

can employ to encourage cooperation (sometimes even funding the participation of regional contingents in peacekeeping efforts, as with the AU missions in Darfur and Somalia). They can also sanction countries supporting spoilers by “naming and shaming” them through UN reports, or by applying diplomatic or economic pressure on them. Such actions were used against Angola’s Jonas Savimbi, Liberia’s Charles Taylor, and more recently, the government of Paul Kagame in Rwanda.

The increasing security emphasis of US policy toward Africa has often complicated rather than assisted regional and UN peacekeeping efforts. The presence of 1,500 American soldiers since 2002 in Djibouti to track terrorists on the Horn of Africa has done nothing to support state-building efforts in Somalia or South Sudan. The US Africa Command (AFRICOM)—which is deeply unpopular across the continent—now costs Washington \$300 million a year, with 100 training programs and exercises in 35 African countries. Based in Germany, AFRICOM was involved in NATO’s “regime change” campaign in Libya in 2011 and is currently combating piracy and oil bunkering on the Gulf of Guinea, as well as fighting narcotrafficking in West Africa. One hundred American special forces troops were deployed to the Great Lakes to hunt the Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony in 2011, followed by a deployment of US warplanes to Uganda in March 2014. Washington has provided \$355 million to the AU mission in Somalia, though many African armies complain that they need more logistical support and equipment for peacekeeping—not counterterrorism training.

FRENCH MEDDLING AND MALI

The French intervention in Mali in January 2013 to repel an offensive by Islamic militants from the north may have brought temporary stability to France’s former West African colony and allowed elections to take place in July and August 2013, but it also reinforced French neocolonial influence. Africans should be wary: France is offering to provide security while shamelessly promoting more parochial political, strategic, and economic interests. Since 1960, France has acted like a pyromaniac fireman, intervening over 50 times in Africa to prop up or depose assorted tyrants and maintaining a sordid web of relationships known as *Françafrique*. More recently, Paris provided military support to prop up autocratic

From the archives
of *Current History*...

“Economic sanctions against Rwanda were never on the agenda. Although they would have taken too long to have any effect in the short term, the issue was never even raised. If the crime had been committed on nearly any other continent, there can be little doubt that moves would have been initiated by at least some major Western countries to initiate sanctions. Why not in Rwanda? The triumph of humanitarianism is part of the answer; the agenda was being set by international relief organizations. The other element is the characterization of the crisis as ‘uncontrollable tribal anarchy.’”

Alex de Waal and Rakiya Omaar

“The Genocide in Rwanda and the International Response”

April 1995

HISTORY IN THE MAKING
100
years
1914 - 2014

regimes in Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2006, and again in Chad in 2008. Africa is the only area in the world where France continues to wield such influence; there are still 7,000 French troops deployed across the continent.

Following the dubious French role during the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the fall of Congo's Mobutu three years later, Paris now seeks to multilateralize its previously unilateral interventions. France persuaded the UN and the European Union to support the deployment of francophone African or European troops in the CAR between 1998 and 2000, and in Chad and the CAR between 2008 and 2010. Paris currently has 450 troops in Ivory Coast alongside UN peacekeepers, and maintains a military presence in Senegal, Chad, Djibouti, Gabon, and the CAR. While stability may have improved in some of these cases, it was incidental to protecting more important political and economic interests in France's historical *chasse gardée* (private hunting ground).

As Islamic and Tuareg militants advanced toward Mali's capital, Bamako, in January 2013, routing weak and demoralized Malian government forces, France launched "Operation Serval," deploying 4,000 troops. Alongside troops from autocratic Chad, the French retook the major towns in northern Mali, forcing many of the militants to melt away into the desert and mountains of the Sahel. Paris's clout within the UN Security Council and in its French-led Department of Peacekeeping Operations was demonstrated by the creation of a UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in July 2013.

Although the world body had previously dragged its feet before pledging half-hearted support to a 3,300-strong African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) in December 2012, the UN failed to provide the pan-African force with logistical and financial resources until the French intervention a month later. Paris used its clout to ensure that the EU approved a training mission for the Malian army, guaranteeing continuing Gallic influence. France further announced that it would maintain a 1,000-strong garrison in Mali to work alongside MINUSMA, undertaking counterinsurgency and peace-enforcement missions.

One of the greatest disappointments of Barack Obama's presidency for Africa is that he has con-

tinued to support, rather than challenge, neocolonial French actions in countries like Mali, Ivory Coast, the CAR, Chad, and Libya. Washington provided logistical support for France's deployment in Mali. By 2013, it had also deployed drones to Niger to target militants in Mali, and had a small number of soldiers operating on the ground in Mali—a key country for the US-led Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership. Between 2009 and 2012, the United States had spent \$41 million training officers who went on to carry out a disastrous 2012 coup in Mali, including their leader, Captain Amadou Sanogo. Before the coup, Washington had shifted resources from Mali to Mauritania and Niger because it felt the Malians were not focused enough on American counterterrorism and anti-narcotics priorities. In response to the coup, the United States pressured Algeria (which has historically been wary of French influence in the region) to back an African-led military intervention in Mali.

Despite its supposedly humanitarian intervention in Mali, France has long had economic interests in the country's uranium sector, and sent troops to guard uranium mines in neighboring Niger in 2013. About 75 percent of French electricity production relies on nuclear power. A French government white paper issued in April 2013 singled out Africa as a priority area for defense and security, envisaging future interventions like the one in Mali and urging Paris to maintain at least four military bases on the continent.

The African mission in Mali was clearly set up for failure, and had to be resurrected as MINUSMA. In the international community's grisly aristocracy of death, the lives of African peacekeepers are still considered to be worth less than those of Western peacekeepers. After the French military intervention, the UN authorized a force that was four times as large as the proposed African force, exposing the duplicity of its Western-dominated Security Council. AFISMA was a cheap way of sending African troops as cannon fodder to be slaughtered by Islamic militants, in the full knowledge that the troops lacked the numbers, logistics, and financing to sustain themselves in the field. Their initial strength of 3,300 was tripled to 9,500 shortly after the French intervention, and the support that had previously been

*International donors are spending
a pittance on peace-building
projects in Africa.*

denied suddenly appeared. This is the Ivorian model, employed since 2003: France deploys troops outside the UN chain of command while the world body subsidizes stability in a country in which Paris has political, strategic, and economic interests. French interventions clearly will not bring long-term stability to Africa.

REGIONAL GATEKEEPERS

France has been more successful than South Africa and Nigeria at exerting hegemony in its francophone sphere of influence in Africa, due to nearly a century of colonial rule during which it entrenched its cultural, political, and economic dominance, particularly among the elites. Thirteen francophone African states tied their currencies to the French franc, with Paris effectively controlling the zone's central banks and the French treasury holding all their foreign reserves. French industrial giants continue to monopolize francophone African markets, while Paris has preserved priority access to strategic minerals such as uranium, bauxite, and oil. Neither South Africa nor Nigeria has yet been able to leave such a lasting political and cultural imprint on its respective subregion.

In the CAR, where France and South Africa have had rival mineral interests, Paris outmaneuvered Pretoria by using francophone Chad as a proxy, while the killing of 13 South African troops forced Pretoria in April 2013 to withdraw from the CAR and a subregion it did not really understand. South Africa had earlier faced French obstructionism in its peacemaking efforts in francophone Ivory Coast and Madagascar. Nigeria and France clashed over Mali; Paris used its clout with francophone Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast in mediation efforts, as well as on the UN Security Council, to frustrate Nigerian influence. That led to the West African Gulliver's withdrawal of 944 of its 1,200 peacekeepers from Mali by 2014, leaving a token force.

An important aspect of hegemony is a "gate-keeping" role in which regional powers seek to fence off their region and keep external powers out. Could South Africa and Nigeria, in the future, formulate a continental Monroe Doctrine that keeps France out of Africa? The two African powers appear to be starting to collaborate more closely in response to continuing Gallic influ-

ence in countries such as Mali and the CAR. They would, however, need to work with other important African states like the North African hegemon, Algeria, which shares a similar antipathy to French interventionism.

As France's economic support for its former colonies declines, there may be an opportunity for South Africa and Nigeria to upstage Paris in influencing the course of future peacekeeping missions in Africa. France's economy is sickly, and it has reduced its military spending, cutting the size of its army from 88,000 troops to 66,000 and freezing its defense budget. This will surely have serious implications for France's ability to launch future military interventions in Africa.

DIVISION OF LABOR

In his 1992 report *An Agenda for Peace*, then-UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali argued forcefully for humanitarian intervention in places like Somalia, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, advocating the use of regional security arrangements to lighten the UN's heavy peacekeeping burden. Two decades later, there is still a pressing need to establish a proper division of labor between the UN and Africa's fledgling security organizations, which must be greatly strengthened.

Rwanda's 1993 Arusha peace agreement, the 1999 Lusaka accord for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the 2000 Algiers accords that ended the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict all revealed the military impotence of the Organization of African Unity (replaced by the AU in 2002), whose members lacked the resources to implement agreements they had negotiated without UN peacekeepers. In Sierra Leone (in 2000) and Liberia (in 2003), the UN took over peacekeeping duties from the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group—a mission for which Nigeria suffered 1,500 fatalities and expended over \$1 billion. The UN also took over the South African-led AU mission in Burundi in 2004 and the ECOWAS mission in Ivory Coast that same year, as well as the AU mission in Darfur in 2007. Yet the Security Council has not done enough to strengthen the capacity of regional organizations and to collaborate effectively with them in the field.

The missions in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi, and Congo could, however, signify an innovative

*UN peacekeeping in Africa
is effectively a story about the
games that great powers play.*

approach to peacekeeping in Africa based on regional pillars supported by local hegemony like Nigeria and South Africa. Their political dominance of such missions is diluted by multinational peacekeepers from outside their regions. Placing regional forces under the UN flag can allow peacekeepers to enjoy the legitimacy and impartiality that the world body often provides, while some of the financial and logistical problems of regional powers can be alleviated through greater burden sharing. These missions should also be more accountable, since the peacekeepers will have to report regularly to the Security Council. This in turn might force the Council to focus more effectively on African conflicts, which account for about 60 percent of its time, a quantity of engagement frequently not matched by sufficient resources or strategies.

In 2005, Boutros-Ghali's successor as UN secretary general, Kofi Annan, called on donors to devise a 10-year capacity-building plan with the AU that aimed to develop an African Standby Force (ASF) for peacekeeping. This 15,000-strong pan-continental force was supposed to have been ready for deployment by 2010, but the deadline was moved to 2015. South Africa has pushed for the creation of an interim force. The ASF is to be based on five subregional brigades built around members of the SADC, ECOWAS, ECCAS, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (in East Africa), and the Arab Maghreb Union.

By the time UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon delivered a progress report on the AU capacity-building program in February 2011, it was clear that not much progress had been made in establishing sustainable support for regional peacekeeping efforts in Africa. The UN had provided support to the AU Commission in Addis Ababa to help establish the ASF; the UN Office to the African Union was coordinating activities between both bodies by July 2010; and annual meetings are now held between the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council (though Washington has made clear this is not a meeting between two equal bodies).

But the funding for implementing Annan's initiative was never approved—necessitating ad hoc support from existing projects—and no full-fledged program of activities was developed to fulfil the objectives of the 10-year plan. African nations must ensure that the UN assumes its proper responsibilities on the continent, supporting and then taking over regional peacekeep-

ing missions to ensure sufficient legitimacy and resources.

REAL COMMITMENT

Africa has been a giant laboratory for global peacekeeping over the past six and a half decades. Between 1948 and 2013, about 40 percent (28 out of 68) of the UN's peacekeeping and observer missions were deployed in Africa; 27 of the 55 UN peacekeeping missions in the post-Cold War era have been on the continent. The "Katanga rule" (peacekeepers may use force in self-defense and to assist missions to fulfill their tasks) and the "Mogadishu line" (avoiding "mission creep") were both influenced by African cases. Two Africans—Egypt's Boutros-Ghali and Ghana's Annan—served as UN secretaries general during the critical post-Cold War years. Boutros-Ghali, Annan, Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi, and South Sudanese scholar-diplomat Francis Deng led some of the most important conceptual debates and initiatives on UN peacekeeping and interventions after the Cold War. But despite this history, the UN still struggles to support peacekeeping effectively in Africa.

If future peacekeeping missions are to succeed, real commitment is needed. Nearly 90 percent of funding for UN peacekeeping missions goes directly to support the salaries and other needs of the operations themselves, not

From the archives
of *Current History*...

"Partitioned among different colonial powers, Africa is aware of the patterns of colonial policies of these different powers, but in all, Africans know that whatever the differences, colonialism is essentially the same. It exploits a people, it denies them their basic right to self-determination, and by a difference of degrees it subjects a people to a state of human indignity and humiliation, making them into second or third rate citizens in their own country."

Tom Mboya

"Our Revolutionary Tradition:
An African View"
December 1956

HISTORY IN THE MAKING
100
years
1914 - 2014

to rebuilding war-torn countries. Only if substantial resources are provided to rebuild state institutions and security sectors can the root causes of conflicts be genuinely addressed, and countries be saved from relapsing into war after peacekeepers have left. International donors are spending a pittance on peace-building projects in Africa—compared, for example, with the billions of dollars that were spent restoring the Balkans to health in the 1990s.

Three African conflicts are particularly important to prioritize: those in South Sudan, the CAR, and the DRC. Oil-rich South Sudan became Africa's newest state in 2011, and its current conflict, in which over 1,000 people have died and 400,000 have been displaced, is tragic. The conflict has militarized ethnic tensions between the largest groups, the Dinka and the Nuer. These fissures will need to be carefully managed by regional actors like Ethiopia and Kenya and external powers like the United States and China.

In the CAR, nearly one million people have been displaced and thousands killed. France's autocratic client, Chad, has played a leading and sometimes dubious peacemaking role in the CAR, while French interests in the mineral-rich country remain a source of concern for Africa, as do its interests in Mali and Ivory Coast. Although stability is clearly essential in managing the CAR's religious and ethnic fault lines, the international community—including the EU, which is hesitating to implement an earlier promise to deploy peacekeepers—must not simply subsidize French interests in the country. A genuinely international force under UN command is

essential. Africa's regional organizations will also need to urgently improve their rapid-response capacity to ensure that the continent does not keep relying on self-interested external powers for its security.

The DRC is a territory the size of Western Europe in which a two-decade conflict fueled by resource and citizenship issues, and involving meddling regional spoilers like Rwanda and Uganda, has resulted in over three million deaths. Sanctions, such as the withdrawal of donor assistance to Kigali in 2013 for backing rebels in the DRC, should continue to be employed. The South African-led SADC force—also including Tanzania and Malawi—helped rout M23 rebels in the Kivu region. The future is likely to test the SADC's political will, since its force will almost certainly face increased risks on this dangerous mission.

Another priority for Africa is the need to bolster its regional pillars. Five countries that contribute 75 percent of the AU's regular budget are currently experiencing diverse challenges. South Africa continues to be dogged by the negative effects of growing socioeconomic inequalities. Nigeria is engaged in an internal battle with Boko Haram terrorists. Military-dominated Algeria faces accusations of exporting its domestic terrorists to neighboring Mali. Egypt (which was suspended from the AU in 2013 following a coup) has returned to a thinly veiled form of military rule, while large parts of Libya are controlled by local warlords. These problems will constrain the leadership of the regional pillars and their ability to promote peacekeeping in Africa. The quest for an elusive Pax Africana will thus continue. ■