Introduction to Special Issue

Alternative Perspectives on African Peacekeeping

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This Special Issue of the Journal of International Peacekeeping aims to explore the conceptual periphery of multidimensional peacekeeping by shedding light on some of the concepts, activities or actors that are understudied or tangential to peacekeeping as usually understood or analysed. This is done through the African prism, as Africa has been the main laboratory of peacekeeping operations over the last two decades.

Africa hosts most of the United Nations (UN)-led peacekeeping operations,¹ and it is also a continent that can benefit from the involvement of its own regional and sub-regional organizations – be it the African Union (AU) or the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) – with over the last years operations ranging from the AU-led AMIS I and II in Darfur and the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the AU Mission in

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Somalia (AMISOM) or the more recent African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA).\footnote{2} In the meantime, African conflicts and missions have provided the grounds for all recent peacekeeping-related conceptual and normative developments, from the issue of protection of civilians\footnote{3} to that of robust peacekeeping\footnote{4} or, in the margin, the concept of the responsibility to protect (RtoP).\footnote{5}

Against this backdrop, peacekeeping has become overstretched as an activity and as a concept.\footnote{6} Contemporary peacekeeping is defined simultaneously by a certain number of key principles such as impartiality, consent and non-resort to force and by recent developments that pertain to the evolution of state sovereignty, the concept of intervention or the use of force in international relations. While the key principles remain the bedrock of UN-led peacekeeping operations – as reasserted in the 2000 Brahimi Report\footnote{7} and the 2008 Principles and Guidelines\footnote{8} – operations have also become more intrusive, multidimensional and often coercive, thus broadening their scope but also questioning their conceptual coherence.

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