

## Peacekeeping in the 21st Century: Old Impasses and New Models

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### 1. *A Brief History of Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peace Enforcement*

Much of this topic is focused on peace enforcement in Africa, where most UN peacekeeping troops are deployed. To get started with this topic, it is helpful to consider several key terms. The UN, when it was created in 1945, was envisioned to serve as a basis for international peace and security, though not through the means of a collective security architecture, which is what characterized the League of Nations. In this arrangement, an attack on one member of the collective security community would be regarded, by members, as an attack on all. The agreement bound member states by international law to respond to international aggression against member states in this fashion. But legal obligation, the world soon learned, does not dictate national interest. Aggression by the Axis powers during the 1930s was ignored by the member states. Worse yet, of course, the most powerful state in the international system - the United States - declined to participate in the League of Nations because it did not want to have legal obligations that would conflict with national interests. The Security Council of the new UN - which would supersede the League of Nations - offered a remedy for this problem. It created permanent members of the Security Council - Russia, China, the UK, France, and the U.S. - and gave these members the power to veto Security Council resolutions. This meant that the capacity of the United Nations to act on issues of international peace and security would depend on the consensus among the permanent members of the Council.

As the Cold War divided the permanent members of the Security Council along ideological lines, it appeared that the UN would exercise only minimal capacity to maintain international peace and security. UN diplomats, however, discovered more modest means through which peace could be advanced: through *peacekeeping* operations that would be deployed with the consent of the belligerent parties and whose tasks would be to maintain ceasefires between opposing military forces so that states could move from the conflict to peace negotiations. As the Cold War waned, regional conflicts around the world multiplied and intensified. The great majority of these conflicts were intrastate rather than interstate in nature. They were tied to the emergence of post-colonial states that included high levels of cultural pluralism - different religions, languages, ethnicities, and cultures - which generated conflict. Many of these conflicts posed the question of how to control violence, particularly in situations where the belligerent parties were interested in pursuing these conflicts because this is what sustained them politically, economically, and culturally (Kaldor 2012). One response of the UN which emerged throughout the 1990s was *peacemaking*, a procedure through which the deployment of UN peacekeepers would no longer depend on the acquiescence of the belligerent parties. The mission of the peacekeepers would be to forge peace where it did not exist and to offer citizens a form of cosmopolitan law enforcement in situations where incumbent states were unable to maintain the rule of law. Peacemaking was, in this sense, an answer to the emerging problems of state failure associated with increasingly weak post-colonial states. State failure occurs when states

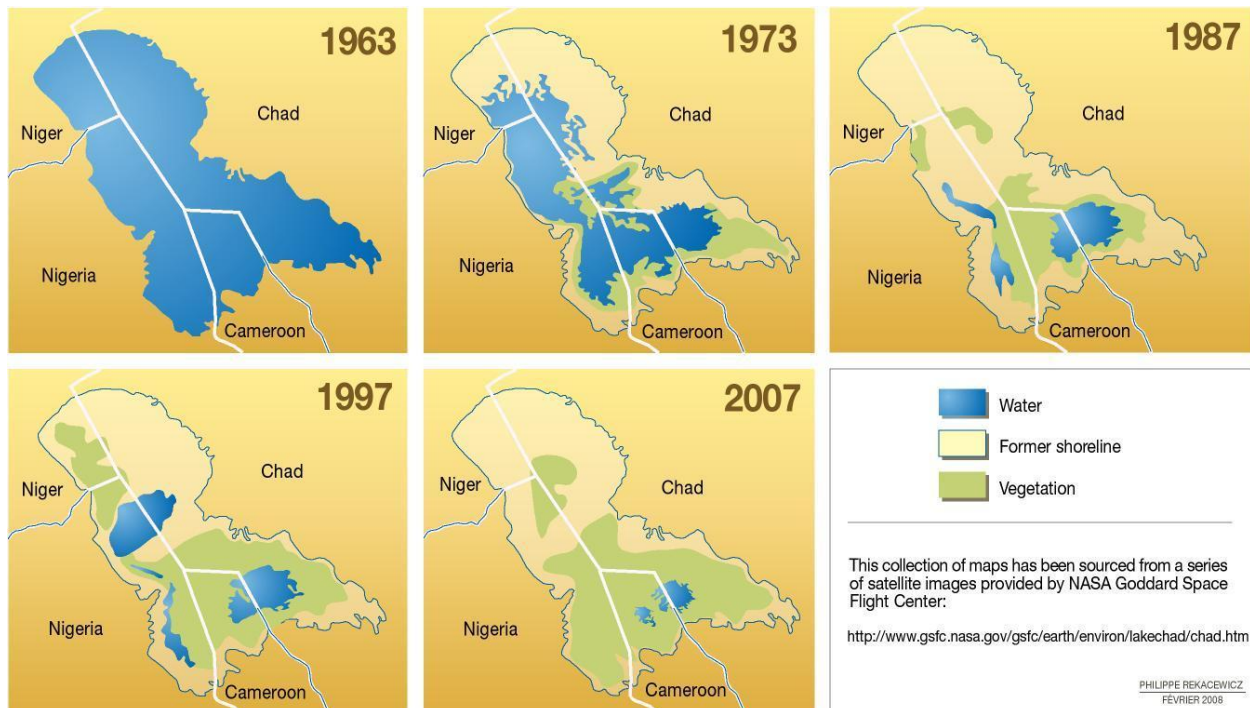
can no longer offer their citizens essential public goods, including the capacity of the incumbent state to protect the lives of its citizens.

The international community witnessed state failure occur in several different contexts: the civil war in the former Yugoslavia, the genocide in Rwanda, and the process of state collapse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire). Human rights advocates argued that state failure and collapse signaled a need to rethink the meaning of state sovereignty. Historically, state sovereignty was conceived in terms of the rights of states - the right to territorial integrity, the right to sovereign equality with other states, and so on. Now the discourse shifted from rights to responsibility. The central duty of the state was to protect the lives of its citizens and if states failed to meet this duty, then the responsibility to protect shifted from the state in question to the international community, represented by Security Council. This was the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect or R2P. The difficulty with R2P, however, was similar to the difficulties that states experienced with the League of Nations. R2P sought to place the legal and moral responsibilities of states above their interests. Like the League of Nations, this meant that, in practice, R2P would not be a doctrine that could exert control over the exercise of violence. In practical terms, however, *peacemaking* missions would have to secure consent for their activities from incumbent states, a condition that points back in the direction of peacekeeping rather than peacemaking, although not completely. A gray zone between peacemaking and peacekeeping would emerge in the form of peace enforcement. Through *peace enforcement*, the UN could devise peacekeeping missions that would advance elements of the peacemaking agenda - among them, the protection of the lives of citizens and the imposition of human rights norms on incumbent governments. This would generate tensions between incumbent states and UN peace enforcement missions. In the best of circumstances, these would be tensions that would move in the direction of improving the security of ordinary citizens.

## 2. *The Crisis of Peace Enforcement and the Rise of Boko Haram*

The current model of peace enforcement has, over the past 25 years, run aground. Some of the reasons for this are centered on the security agendas of the developed states, which, after the events of 9/11, turned towards counter-terrorism policy. In the process, peace enforcement interventions became increasingly detached from efforts to foment economic development. A key doctrine here was the development/security nexus, which held that there could be no development without security and no security without development. There was a retreat away from addressing the root causes of conflict - in the form of economic distress - and a turn towards addressing stabilization in African peace operations, characterized by the increased use of military operations “with no development strings attached” (de Simone and Iocchie 2022). In part, this reflected the emergence of new antagonists in African conflicts: terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and Boko Haram, which cut off negotiation options and led to peace enforcement and counter-terror operations being given more militarized missions and rules of engagement.

Peace enforcement verged more and more toward counterinsurgency conflict. Increasingly, the peace enforcers would be Africans rather than European or American forces. In 2010, the Boko Haram insurgency exploded in Borno, a northern state of Nigeria. Nigerian security forces proved unable to suppress the insurgency and it extended across international borders into the Lake Chad region, adjoined by Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. As the violence spread, governments in the region accorded more priority to stabilization policies, conceived as a prelude to political reconciliation and long-term development. In Nigeria, “stabilization” policies took the form of “the Super Camps Strategy” of establishing heavily fortified towns in which civilians and military personnel could reside while constraining movement outside of these towns and offering no protection to people living outside of them (de Simone and Iocchi 2022).



*Figure 1: Lake Chad: Almost Gone. Straddling the borders of Chad, Niger and Cameroon in West Africa, Lake Chad has been a source of fresh water for irrigation projects in each of these countries. Maps drawn from a series of satellite images show a dramatic decrease in the size of the lake over the past 30 years. Since 1963, the lake has shrunk to nearly a twentieth of its original size, due both to climatic changes and to high demands for agricultural water.*

**Year:** 2009

**From collection:** *Vital Water Graphics 2*

**Cartographer:** *Philippe Rekacewicz, February 2006*

Peace enforcement has been further complicated by environmental change in this region of the world. The Lake Chad region has experienced a 95% decline in the size of Lake Chad - once the size of the state of New Jersey (see figure 1). The encroachment of drylands, the rapid expansion of the population, and dislocation of the exchange patterns between communities as a result of the emergence of post-colonial states in the region have worsened human security in Lake Chad basin. Arable land and water are becoming increasingly scarce where security policies are being administered, as [Ben Taub](#) writes in *The New Yorker*, “...by soldiers that

answer to separate chains of command and don't speak the same language as one another, or their enemies, or citizens in the least developed, least educated region of the earth" (2017). The Lake Chad region and the Sahel, in general, are infested with guns and violence: some of the violence is committed by insurgents against civilians, and some of it is between farmers and pastoralists, fighting over increasingly scarce resources of land and water. The prevailing security policy has been to increase the capacities of military forces to keep a lid on existing conflicts. The Sahel is characterized by vast and relatively ungoverned spaces. The security imperative born of the war on terror is to assert control over ungoverned spaces by expanding the size of military establishments in the Sahel. The imperative to exert control, however, has failed to advance the security interests of people in the region.

Debates about security often revolve around the question of whose security. Historically, security politics in the region have been tied to the security interests of the great powers. In Chad, Hissene Habre became president in a coup that was sponsored by the CIA because the U.S. saw Habre as a geopolitical counterweight to the expansion of Muammar Qaddafi's power into the Sahel from Libya. As [Taub](#) discusses, the U.S. gave Habre massive security assistance, enabling him to construct a repressive security state that persecuted restive ethnic minorities and political opponents. U.S. national security objectives overrode the security interests of Chadians. This added to the pathologies of a predatory and ineffectual post-colonial state.

These dynamics were then exacerbated by counter-terrorism policies which focus on religious radicalization as a security threat. What this misses, suggests a study by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP 2023), [Journey to Extremism](#), are the political and economic grievances that motivate the engagement of citizens in the region with violent extremist movements. These include the despair of unemployment, widespread distrust of government, deeply held perceptions of impunity of the security actors, and widespread dissatisfaction with state services provision. Contrary to any simplistic, counter-terror perspective (where Islam is regarded as an extremist ideology), religious education and conviction often function as sources of resilience against adverse life circumstances rather than as triggers of violent extremism.

### *3. The End of MINUSMA in Mali*

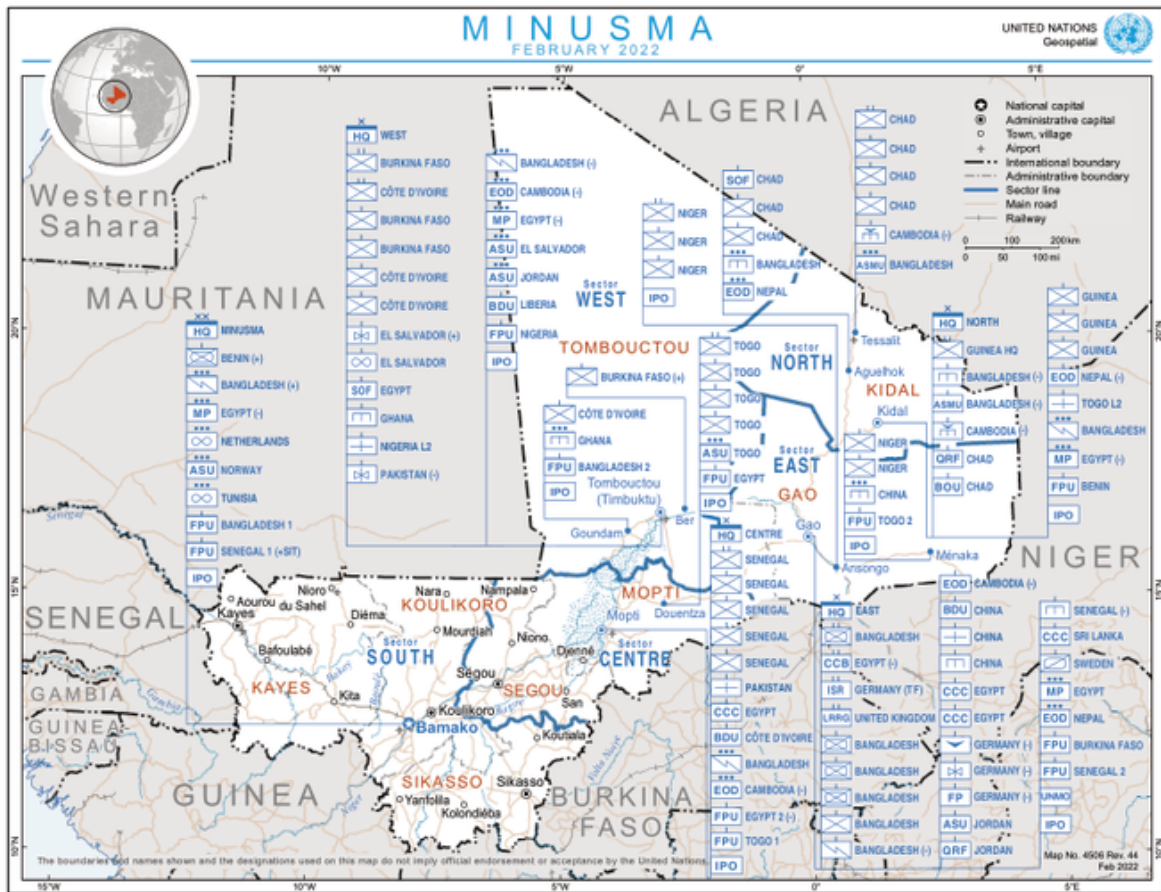


Figure 2: Map of MINUSMA Deployment to Mali, image sourced from [Relief Web](#) (February 2022)

Mali is another key state in the Sahel region which, since 2010, has experienced a protracted Islamic insurgency. In May 2023, a major UN peacekeeping mission in the region, MINUSCA, consisting of 13,000 troops, was terminated by the UN, largely at the insistence of the host country, Mali. Lisa Sharland, writing for [Relief Web](#), offers the following analysis. MINUSMA had a protection-of-civilians mission (POC). Sharland wonders how that mission will continue in the context of the MINUSMA force drawdowns. The POC mandate included, “facilitating the implementation of a comprehensive politically-led strategy to protect civilians” through several approaches: support the Malian authorities to stabilize key population centers, develop enhanced early warning measures, prevent the return of armed groups through direct operations, strengthen community engagement, and provide specific protection to women and children. But this mandate entered into conflict with the views of the Malian authorities in the wake of military coups in Mali in 2020 and 2021 and the unwillingness of the government to support peace enforcement and human rights monitoring.

For peacekeepers, MINUSMA has been a particularly deadly deployment. More than 300 peacekeepers were killed in the last decade in hostile acts including extensive use of roadside



improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The composition of peacekeepers deployed has shifted toward African soldiers, who are less well-equipped than their European counterparts. Mali has interfered with the capacity of MINUSMA to deploy air-born assets, such as drones, to improve situational awareness. The upshot of these developments is the MINUSMA has to direct more of its resources toward force protection (defending against attacks on its forces) and less on its mission, the protection of citizens (POC).

Largely coterminous with MINUSMA has been the French counter-terror operation *Barkane*, which, after making initial progress against Islamist insurgents has stalled. *Barkane* has resulted in numerous French attacks against Malian citizens - for example, [a 2021 airforce bombing of a wedding](#), (King 2023) killing 19 people, which the French mistook for a terrorist gathering. Incidents like these combined with the persistence of the Islamist insurgency have led public opinion to turn against not only France and *Barkane* but also against MINUSMA. The military government in Mali, the result of the 2021 coup, has abetted this shift by stoking anti-terrorist sentiment and also by turning toward the Russian Wagner Group as a paramilitary force that could take up counter-terror operations.



Figure 3: African Peacekeepers deployed in Mali. Image sourced from [The Institute for Modern War](#).

Former diplomat [Dennis Jett](#), writing for West Point's Institute of Modern War offers a more scathing critique of the security policy in the Sahel. Jett notes that in the wake of 9/11, the U.S. provided political and military support to the governments in the region that promised to crack down on Muslim terrorist threats. The effect of 9/11 was to license authoritarian governments whose crackdown on Muslims validated the ideological claims of Al Qaeda, a process that, as Jett writes, "created enemies where they did not previously exist." A broader approach followed in 2005, the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), which, even though labeled an "all-of-government approach," Jett remarks, "has nonetheless been

lopsidedly favorable to using military means to solve the problem. And it has failed.” As of 2022, there is an updated version of the TSCTP, which attempts to focus attention on governance and human rights abuses as well as improve governance, activate civil society, increase employment opportunities, girls' education, and women's political participation. These efforts will not succeed because Mali, as a state, is too far gone, in Jett's view. This underscores the point that peace enforcement operations are quite dependent on host state collaboration. Where this does not exist, these operations cannot conceivably succeed.

Mali has notably increased defense spending from 1.16% of GDP in the 2013 to 3.3% in 2020. But this does not generate more security. It merely creates a more bloated state, full of soldiers with low morale because the regime in power is not worth dying for. The same can be said of peacekeepers who have deployed to the region. Can anything change the dismal trajectory of Mali and the region? There has been a failure on the part of the U.S. and other developed countries to leverage ODA flows to secure better governance. Meanwhile, Mali and the rest of the Sahel continue to score high on the Eurasian Group's [Atlas of Impunity](#).

#### *4. The Future of African Peacekeeping*

These elevated levels of impunity underscore the failure of security and development partnerships between the post-colonial states and the leading developed countries. As these partnerships fray, the model of UN peacekeeping will likely become decentralized and operate through the African Union rather than the UN. For the African Union, this is a curious reversal as the predecessor organization of the AU, the Organization of African Unity, upheld the norm of non-intervention in the sovereignty of other states. Such a stand reflected the concerns of newly independent states to safeguard their political autonomy. Now, however, the sovereignty of African states appears to be increasingly conditional for the AU. This shift is occurring as UN missions in the region are downsizing or ending.

[The International Crisis Group](#) reports that there are currently four major peace operations ongoing in Africa with 60,000 total peacekeepers deployed across each of these missions. MINUSMA accounted for 13,000 of these peacekeepers. The other major operations - of roughly the same size, are based in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and South Sudan. Each operation has a similar mission in terms of the protection of civilians. The mission in the DRC has slated the end at the end of 2023, following elections in the DRC. The other missions will continue for the foreseeable future. But there is a transition in the modalities of African peacekeeping missions currently in the works, whereby the UN will come to rely more on regional peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions staffed by the African Union and paid for using “assessed contributions” - “an obligatory levy on member states based on their economic weight”. The three African members of the Security Council - Mozambique, Ghana, and Gabon - have lobbied for UN support for AU peacekeeping missions. If violence escalates in Mali, the Security Council may move quickly to adopt this new approach. Ultimately, it appears that the UN will contract out peacekeeping responsibilities to regional bodies like the African Union.

What difference will that make in terms of the general human security situation in Africa? There are two general points to consider here. First, as peacekeeping shifts from the UN to the African Union, will there also be a normative shift in the objectives of the peacekeeping missions? *Is it likely peacekeeping will increasingly focus on military stabilization rather than protecting the lives of civilians and engaging in human rights enforcement?* The answer to this question depends, in part, on how AU peacekeepers are funded. The Security Council has been debating different funding formulas with the AU over the last decade. The current proposal would have the UN paying 75% of the cost of AU peacekeeping and the AU 25%. A substantial UN role in funding AU peacekeeping raises the question of what kind of voice the UN should have in shaping the norms of AU peacekeeping. More generally, the failure of major UN peace operations in Africa to achieve their objectives poses the question of what can be learned from these experiences and incorporated into the work of AU peacekeeping operations in the region.

The African Union has deployed numerous peace enforcement missions in Africa. Included below is a brief description of each of these missions, drawn from the Wiki pages on each mission. Descriptions of these missions offer a useful starting point for considering the challenges that would face AU peacekeeping operations in Africa as UN operations recede.

- African Standby Force: “The African Standby Force (ASF) (French: Force africaine en attente)[1] is an international, continental African, and multidisciplinary peacekeeping force with military, police, and civilian contingents that acts under the direction of the African Union. The ASF is to be deployed in times of crisis in Africa.[2] Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, serves as the Force’s Headquarters. Douala, Cameroon, was selected in 2011 as the site of the AU’s Continental Logistics Base (LOGBASE).”  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African\\_Standby\\_Force](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Standby_Force)
- African Union Mission in Burundi: The African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB) was a regional peacekeeping mission deployed by the African Union to Burundi in 2003 during the latter stages of the Burundian Civil War.[1] The mission, consisting of 2,870 troops from South Africa, Mozambique, and Ethiopia, remained in the country for one year when it was replaced by the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) under the United Nations. The official transfer of authority from AMIB to ONUB took place on 1 June 2004. The South African component of the force remained and was formed into the African Union Special Task Force (AU STF).[1]  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African\\_Union\\_Mission\\_in\\_Burundi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Union_Mission_in_Burundi)
- African Union Mission in Sudan: The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) was an African Union (AU) peacekeeping force operating primarily in the country’s western region of Darfur to perform peacekeeping operations related to the Darfur conflict. It was founded in 2004, with a force of 150 troops. By mid-2005, its numbers were increased to about 7,000.[1] Under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1564, AMIS was to “closely and continuously liaise and coordinate ... at all levels” its work with the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS).[2] AMIS was the only external military force in Sudan’s Darfur region until UNAMID was established. It was not able to effectively contain the violence in Darfur. A more sizable, better-equipped UN peacekeeping force



was originally proposed for September 2006, but due to Sudanese government opposition, it was not implemented at that time. AMIS' mandate was extended repeatedly throughout 2006, while the situation in Darfur continued to escalate until AMIS was replaced by UNAMID on 31 December

2007. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African\\_Union\\_Mission\\_in\\_Sudan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Union_Mission_in_Sudan)

- African Union Mission to Somalia: AMISOM was created by the African Union's Peace and Security Council on 19 January 2007 with an initial six-month mandate.[3] On 21 February 2007, the United Nations Security Council approved the mission's mandate.[4] Subsequent six-monthly renewals of AMISOM's mandate by the African Union Peace and Security Council have also been authorized by the United Nations Security Council.[5][6] The duration of AMISOM's mandate had been extended in each period that it has been up for review, until it was replaced on April 1, 2022, by the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African\\_Union\\_Mission\\_to\\_Somalia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Union_Mission_to_Somalia)
- African-led International Support Mission to Mali: The African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) is an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) organized military mission sent to support the government of ECOWAS member nation Mali against Islamist rebels in the Northern Mali conflict. The mission was authorized with UN Security Council Resolution 2085, passed on 20 December 2012, which "authorizes the deployment of an African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) for an initial period of one year." [1] Initially, the mission was to begin in September 2013, but after an unexpected advance by the rebel forces in early January 2013 and the subsequent French intervention, ECOWAS decided to immediately deploy the AFISMA forces. On 17 January, Nigeria began deploying air and ground forces to Mali. [2][3] The Nigerian deployment was followed by the arrival of a 160-man contingent from Burkina Faso the following week. [4] The first commander of AFISMA is Nigerian Major General Abdulkadir Shehu. [5] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-led\\_International\\_Support\\_Mission\\_to\\_Mali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-led_International_Support_Mission_to_Mali)

Several observations can be made based on these accounts. First, AU missions have much smaller military footprints than UN-led missions. Second, these missions have operated in conjunction with UN missions. In some cases, AU missions have been superseded by UN missions. The mandates for these missions were approved by the United Nations. With these points in mind, delegates to this committee should review some of the [recent debates](#) in the United States regarding the AU's role in peacekeeping operations. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, discusses the threat environment that peacekeepers face in Africa and the need for AU capacity building:

Underlining the pressing need to “put AU peace operations on solid footing”, she observed that, in Africa and elsewhere, rising insecurity is characterized by increased use of asymmetric and sophisticated tactics by armed groups and the expanding influence of transnational organized crime. “The case for adequately funding AU-led peace support operations is beyond solid,” she stressed, expressing hope that the

Council will agree to provide its backing — including by allowing access to assessed contributions.

Bitania Tadesse, Program Director of Amani Africa, suggested that the debate was not about how much financial support the UN would provide for AU missions, but rather about freeing future generations from the scourge of war, an objective that AU forces can achieve:

As the progress made in Somalia attests, the African Union's peace support operations are willing and — when properly resourced, able — to use peace enforcement to create conditions for peace. "This is not about writing a blank cheque, nor is it a matter of charity," she asserted. Rather, it is about the Council crafting the framework for shouldering its part of the responsibility in the shared global public good of maintaining peace and security in Africa.

She added, further, that an enhanced role of the AU in African security is indeed necessary to avoid a dangerous security vacuum likely to emerge with the retreat of UN-based peacekeeping missions.

The representative for Ghana underscored the general support that African countries have for strengthening the role that the AU plays concerning African security.

The representative of Ghana, also speaking for Gabon and Mozambique, underlined that African-led peace support operations have demonstrated their capability to understand the context and dynamics of conflicts in Africa, pre-empt the same, and advance durable strategies to address them. Detailing the African Union's commitments in the areas of compliance, financial transparency, and burden-sharing, he expressed support for the Secretary-General's call for adequate, sustainable, and predictable funding, from assessed contributions, for African Union-led peace support operations.

The delegate further added that the AU must also maintain compliance with both human rights and international humanitarian law. This follows from the fact that if the UN is going to support AU peace enforcement operations, it must also require that core human rights norms will also be upheld. This was also an expectation laid out by the delegate from Brazil in this debate: "There must," he said, "also be an adequate set of frameworks on human rights, international humanitarian law, troop conduct, and discipline compliance, he said, noting that such standards become even more critical when African Union missions perform tasks with higher risks, as is often the case when operations go beyond peacekeeping."

##### *5. Delegate Preparation for this Topic*

1. Delegates should be familiar with the general history of peacekeeping outlined in this background paper. This includes distinctions between peacekeeping, peacemaking, the responsibility to protect, and peace enforcement.

2. Delegates should have an understanding of the political and economic contexts of the current security crises in Africa, particularly the Sahel region of Africa. These are alluded to in this background paper, but they are also clearly discussed in a recent op. ed that appeared in the New York Times by regional expert, [Alex de Waal](#). Here are a couple of points from his analysis:
  - a. “The biggest rocks in today’s avalanche [which besieges the Sahel] are economic. African countries need foreign investment, but outside of oil, gas, and minerals, they hardly ever deliver the rates of return that can compete with the leading stocks on Wall Street. Too often, investors want quick deals and rapid returns. Africa loses almost \$90 billion — or 3.7 percent of its gross domestic product — in illicit financial flows each year, according to the United Nations, mostly through mispriced transactions within transnational companies. There’s also a new African debt crisis, with much of the money owed to China for mining, transportation, and telecommunications.”
  - b. To this, de Waal adds that the Sahel is flooded with cheap goods from China (and elsewhere), and suffers from declining agricultural productivity - the consequences of climate change and population growth. The economic situation is made even worse by the Russian war in Ukraine and the reduction of food exports and the rise of food prices to African countries. European countries add to the problems of the Sahel by blocking emigration from the region to Europe. U.S. foreign policy, characterized, since 9/11, by a larger U.S. military footprint, is focused on stability and counter-terrorism policy. Any larger, transformational agenda for the U.S. is blocked by the catastrophic outcomes of the NATO intervention in Libya.
3. Delegates should be mindful of the motivations of extremist fighters in Africa. In this background guide, these were discussed in conjunction with recent [UNDP](#) studies done on the beliefs and formative experiences of extremists. If there is one thing that the world’s experience with the U.S. war on terror should have taught everyone (but probably did not), it is that the grievances of extremists are important to consider in the crafting of security responses to their violent uprisings.
4. Delegates should focus on the potential role of the AU in African peacekeeping, considering the specific types of capacities that would need to develop to be successful in their missions and also the normative expectations that they would be held to about international human rights doctrines and laws.

### *Suggested Readings*

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