

REVIEWS

**Fisher, Jonathan and Wilén, Nina. 2022. *African Peacekeeping*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 242 pp.
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In this monograph, Jonathan Fisher and Nina Wilén have collaborated to offer a rich and compelling contribution to the field of African security studies, peacekeeping, and research on international organisations. *African Peacekeeping* is an innovative and equally consistent continuation of both authors' previous work, whose joint monograph benefits greatly from their commonalities but also their individual foci and fieldwork experiences (i.e. Fisher 2019, 2020; Cheeseman and Fisher 2019; Wilén 2022, 2021, 2012).

At the outset, Fisher and Wilén highlight several important premises and approaches of their book. The first of these is that the peace operations they study and discuss did not only take place in Africa but were organised and implemented by African nations. This distinction, initially seemingly small, unfolds as the book progresses, primarily to identify historical influences on African peace operations, the political significance of peace operations for African nations – whether as “peacekept” or peacekeeper – and distinctive characteristics of African peacekeeping.

Another feature of *African Peacekeeping* is its non-evaluative nature. The authors themselves clearly emphasise that research on peacekeeping has long focused on measuring effectiveness, identifying positive or negative trends in various components of peacekeeping, and suggesting possible improvements. Fisher and Wilén therefore explicitly chose an alternative path, which “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” (p. 6).

This endeavour also corresponds to the theoretical orientation of the book, which is dedicated to practice theories (for an introductory text, see Bode 2020). Practice theories offer the advantage of examining peacekeeping as a performance or set of performances constantly in transition (p. 4). In doing so, the book usefully builds on existing foundational scholarship on practice theories (Adler and Pouliot 2011; Bueger and Gadinger 2018) and makes

thoughtful use of them to conceptualise the chosen field of research and simultaneously provide a valuable contribution as to how practice theories can be applied.

The substantial academic and practical value of *African Peacekeeping* stems not only from its beneficial utilisation of practice theories and its emphasis on the influence of African countries' colonial past on contemporary African peace operations but also from Fisher's and Wilén's combined practical experience. Fisher and Wilén themselves spent years researching a variety of African states, conducting hundreds of interviews with military, administrative, and diplomatic officials, whose practical experiences are repeatedly contextualised here to generate valuable new insights (p. 25).

Following the introduction, the first chapter takes a historical-chronological approach, highlighting elements of the colonial past that are relevant to today's peace operations and also traces the history of the emergence of African conflict interventions by several international organisations. Thereafter, the book is structured thematically and explores, successively, the (de)stabilising effect that participation in peace operations can have on a nation (Chapter 2); how local and global elements of African peace operations are interconnected (Chapter 3); which states want to form new identities through participation in peace operations and which states participate in peace operations due to changing identities (Chapter 4); how and why states that have themselves experienced conflict intervention participate in peace operations (Chapter 5); and finally, which distinctly African characteristics and patterns are exhibited by African peacekeeping (Chapter 6).

The first chapter is primarily a historical outline of the emergence of African peacekeeping. One of the core arguments of this chapter is that "African peacekeeping does not have a single history as such" (p. 30). To understand the role of the military and the wider security apparatus, which is often central to the political system of various African states, it is important to trace their origins as "colonial vehicles of conquest and counter-insurgency" (p. 31). Their often-strong political decision-making capacity, for instance, offers insights into the motivation to participate in peace operations and shows the dynamics that can arise from it (Chapters 2 and 3). At the same time, Fisher and Wilén provide a good introductory account of the genesis of African international organisations, such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the African Union (AU) and other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) or the Economic Community of West

African States (ECOWAS). In addition to historical events and influences of individual personalities, such as Kwame Nkrumah for the founding of the OAU or Muammar Gaddafi for the establishment of a far-reaching intervention mandate for the AU, normative developments such as the change from a Cold War-related “non-intervention” norm to the norm of “non-indifference” are also discussed herein.

The second main chapter focuses on the relation between state participation in peace operations and its impact on domestic political stability. Illustrating political developments in Uganda and Burundi, Fisher and Wilén argue that participation in peace operations has both economic value for states and can contribute to political consolidation and regime maintenance in semi-authoritarian states (p. 95). In the case of Uganda, the authors reflect on peace operations participation and its stabilising effect for Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Movement (NRM), and in the case of Burundi for Pierre Nkurunziza and Évariste Ndayishimiye. Nevertheless, they also emphasise, for instance, that the coup d'état that elevated Yahya Jammeh to the presidency of the Gambia was only made possible by the country's participation in peacekeeping and the resentment caused by the failure to pay salaries to soldiers (pp. 94f.).

In their third main chapter, Fisher and Wilén focus on the link between local and global elements in African peacekeeping. They focus on how African states interact with international partners, considering that African peacekeeping is still heavily dependent on financial aid. However, they also trace a trend that shows how Western states have increasingly departed from direct military intervention and have become financiers of African peacekeeping, enabling African states over time to “carve out significant room for maneuver” (p. 126). Simultaneously, the authors use the example of Chad to illustrate how authoritarian regimes have been able to improve their international status through participation in peace operations. This was one way in which the Chadian Idris Déby regime was able to rise “from an international pariah in the 1990s to an externally sponsored regional hegemon by 2010” (p. 109).

In their fourth main chapter, Fisher and Wilén examine in detail how national identities of different African states affect(ed) their participation in peacekeeping and how participation in peace operations can affect a state's identity. For example, Nigeria's perception of peacekeeper and its economic position of strength have had a significant impact on the development of ECOWAS responses to conflict, as Nigeria has long dominated the organisation

as a regional hegemon (p. 140). Using Rwanda as an example, the authors also make it very clear that the country's experience of the 1994 genocide influenced its national identity to such an extent that Rwanda subsequently participated primarily in African peace operations, rather than UN peacekeeping. Rwanda's participation in African peace operations also went hand in hand with a blurring of its autocratic governance and involvement in conflicts in the region. South Africa, on the other hand, developed its peacekeeper identity primarily as a distinction from its apartheid history (p. 162).

The book subsequently addresses the question of how states in which peace operations once took place, or even still take place today, become peacekeepers themselves. Fisher and Wilén argue that, on the one hand, the financial aspect of troop and police contributing is attractive to post-conflict states. At the same time, these states also gain valuable new contacts through international cooperation in such missions, including with countries with which they may have previously been in confrontation. Moreover, states suggest both internally and externally that they have entered a stable political situation and are, as Fisher and Wilén aptly note, "showcasing agency" (p. 193).

Finally, the authors try to identify the characteristics of African peacekeeping and again address the debate on Africanisation, referring to peace operations that have a particularly large number of African personnel or resources, and African ownership, referring to peace operations self-determinedly organised and carried out by African states. A major factor worthy of discussion is the continuing financial dependence on non-African actors in the establishment of African peace operations. At the same time, African peacekeeping and its continuation in various forms can also be seen as a Pan-African achievement, through which African states are able to support each other in times of crisis. The evolution of international norms of intervention within this system and the establishment of a viable alternative to UN peacekeeping reflect a transformation that the founders of the OAU might have viewed with enthusiasm, perhaps with suspicion, but most certainly with an appreciation for the continued cooperation among African states.

Lastly, to embed the monograph in the current state of research, it should be emphasised that *African Peacekeeping* deserves to be included in the list of flagship publications on African security studies and conflict interventions in Africa. Fisher and Wilén have provided a monograph that enables readers to easily access this field of research through a clear structure. This makes the book valuable for those looking for an introduction to elements of African

security or contemporary peacekeeping, but it is also valuable for those who have been working in this field for a longer time, since, for instance, the connection between colonial history and contemporary peacekeeping or the interplay between national identities and participation in peacekeeping offer innovative perspectives on this field of study. Thus, *African Peacekeeping* appeals to a broad audience, without getting caught up in specifics and overburdening itself, but always maintaining a clear view of details that is constantly capable of producing new insights.

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