



Gavin Cawthra

## Peacekeeping Interventions in Africa

“War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength.”

## **About The Author**

Professor Gavin Cawthra holds the Chair in Defense and Security Management at the Graduate School of Public and Development Management (P&DM) at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. He is former Director of the Graduate School of Public and Development Management, and was previously coordinator of the Military Research Group, Director of the Committee on South African War Resistance, and Research Officer at the International Defense and Aid Fund (UK). Professor Gavin Cawthra holds PhD from King's College, University of London and BA Honours from the University of Natal. He has published numerous books as well as journal articles in the area of security studies. His publications have been translated into several languages. Mr. Cawthra has lectured in more than 20 countries all over Africa and does regularly consultancies for governments, NGOs and international organisations.

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## **Cover Art**

How have we become mere voters and passive participants instead of shaping our own destiny? This is the question that Mozambican artist, Nelsa Guambe, asks in her current exhibition, "Status quo". The paintings reflect on the current situation of the country, on collective debt, political conflict, devaluation of the local currency Metical and roaring inflation. The artist's canvases are filled with tension, fear, frustration, despair and uncertainty, echoed in the voices of Mozambicans, as they question themselves about their faith and the status quo. Drawn by self and collective interrogation, Nelsa uses visual art as a way not only to stimulate political dialogue and critical thinking, but also to challenge the notion of good governance and freedom of speech.

Born in 1987 in Chicuque (Mozambique), Nelsa Guambe is a self-taught artist who lives and works in Maputo. She holds a Bachelor's degree (2010) in Public Administration and Development studies from UNISA (University of South Africa).

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## Introduction

The sub-title of this chapter comes from the early cold-war novel *Nineteen Eighty Four*, penned by George Orwell in 1949. In his nightmares (or just from his proclivity to trash dictatorships – and communism in the bargain) he envisaged a world, centred on London, which in a few respects is similar to the panoptic states and the surveillance culture of the emerging 21st century.

More to the point, Orwell imagined that it might be possible for ‘Big Brother’, the all-seeing, to transform war into peace, at least ideologically or in propaganda. Africa would be the contested continent where war would be played out (Orwell 1949).

Here I assert that the practice of international peacekeeping through the UN’s global collective security arrangements is in danger of fulfilling elements of Orwell’s dystopic vision, and that Africa is a laboratory for newly-emerging hypocrisies of peace. It need not be so – there is much that is progressive and good for many Africans in the new world (dis)order, and peacekeeping on this continent is perhaps more than ever necessary – but there are dangers for the mostly weak states of Africa, as well as the people of the continent, in the way peacekeeping is evolving. Recent UN policy initiatives to review and revise peacekeeping have been accompanied by transformative practices such as on gender (arising from UNSCR 1325), improvements in relations with the African Union’s (AU’s) peacekeeping initiatives, a recognition of the need for local ownership and ‘the primacy of politics’ (and hence a move away from ‘template’ missions, and a recognition of the need to strengthen mediation and electoral support). All these developments, and more, are articulated especially in the UN’s Report on the High-level Independent Panel on Peace

Operations (HIPPO), released on 17 June 2015 (UN 2015). Much of this should be music to African ears, especially when Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon declares that ‘we have entered an era of partnership peacekeeping’ (UN S/2015/229).

But Africans are used to ‘partnerships’ that turn out to be disguised forms of domination and where values and international regimes are bent, often opportunistically and in a selective or asymmetric way, to the benefit of powerful global actors. In this spirit, I will briefly examine how the principles of peacekeeping have morphed since the UN first started peace operations in 1948, how this has played out in Africa and how the continent, along with the Middle-East, sits at a crossroads today.

To the extent that the cold war marked a peace, it was largely within Europe and its trans-Atlantic extensions. The cold war was a hot one in many parts of Africa and elsewhere in what is now called the global south. These were the contested continents, and still are, although the ideological bases of violent conflict has changed. It was the multifaceted conflicts in Africa and Asia – often arising from problems of decolonisation and state formation and bad governance but also from external factors - that mainly gave rise to UN peacekeeping. Many of these conflicts were amalgams of local and regional armed confrontations, overlaid by the international contest of the cold war.

The UN practice of peacekeeping was done on the hop (and in the hope) that something could be achieved within the interstices of the cold war, and could be slotted in as an ad hoc arrangement somewhere between Chapters VI (the ‘pacific resolution of disputes’, involving non-forceful measures such as negotiation and arbitration and peacekeeping deployments

which fall short of the use of force) and VII of the UN Charter (which allows for punitive and forceful measures),. The envisaged high command and standby forces of the self-anointed permanent members of the security council were to be geared up for war-fighting, albeit (not for the first time in history) only in the grand cause of ending war and within the rubric of the intended global peace. After the first peacekeeping missions in 1948, more were authorised by the Security Council in various hotspots around the world, but all tended to follow the same pattern of lightly-armed interpolation operations following ceasefires, carried out by forces from fairly neutral countries.

Since the disastrous UN operation in the Congo in the early 1960s, Africa has become more primal in UN peacekeeping, so that today it is both the main object and subject: the continent absorbs more UN peacekeeping efforts than any other continent, but also contributes more, in terms of soldiers and police. In 2015 UN statistics showed 100 000 peacekeepers in Africa, 80 000 of them military personnel, while seven of the top ten troop contributing countries were African (UNDPKO 2015). The money for UN peace operations comes mainly from elsewhere, as does the politics of deployment, although the politics of disorder and conflict is a transaction shared between African and international actors.

One of the few Africans to stride the world stage, Jan Smuts, penned the idealist preamble to the Charter of the UN in the seminal conference held in San Francisco in 1945: the harvest of the nations that won the Second World War. His hand-written draft, together with his own editing and self-doubts (given the racial repression he was instituting in his own country, never sufficient) can be seen today at his home near Pretoria – which is

actually the transported corrugated-iron-and-timber edifice of the Kimberley Officer's club. His introductory words, and what follows, is the text that has framed the UN approach to global security ever since.

The idealism of the preamble to the charter, in the name of ‘we, the peoples of the United Nations’, asserts the primacy of fundamental human rights and freedoms and claims an end to war, as well as promoting ‘social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom’ (UN 1945: 1). But these claims sit uneasily with the assertion of the ‘equal rights ... of nations large and small’ and an insistence on state sovereignty and the principle of non-interference in internal affairs (UN 1945). The people seem to have been largely forgotten in the substantive clauses of the charter, although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights did something to right this some years later.

One of the key issues in the evolution of the global collective security system has been how the idealist (albeit politically compromised) suppositions of the preamble to the UN charter articulate with the realist assertions of state sovereignty and non-interference, and how this has played out in the practice of international conflict-resolution and peacekeeping. Most starkly, this has more than often boiled down to how the ‘peoples of the United Nations’ can assert human rights and freedoms in a member state without interfering in its internal affairs. After a long stasis during the cold war and then a partial metamorphosis, these contradictions seem to be coming to a head in Africa and the Mid-East now, in the practice of peacekeeping and the way the realities of power and greed have asserted themselves on national and international stages.

## From principle to practice and from practice to contingency

As is not well-enough known, the term ‘peacekeeping’ does not appear in the UN Charter. In the heady days of 1945 a new international order was envisaged by the countries that became the permanent five members of the security council, policed by a UN military command and standby forces (in an arrangement similar to that which the African Union has been devising today) (UN 1945). The Cold War, of course, made all that impossible and so the practice of peacekeeping evolved along the familiar principles of consent of the parties to the conflict, impartiality, and non-use of force (except in self-defence). To this I would add another tacit (and not strictly enforced) principle: countries with a geo-strategic interest in the conflict, often meaning those in close propinquity but also major powers and former colonial ones, should not be deployed as peacekeepers, so that smaller, relatively neutral, countries including the Scandinavians, became big players in global peace missions. Typically, peace operations involved the insertion of blue-hatted multinational troops into ceasefires, usually freezing the conflicts without necessarily resolving them – how to end them is only now being addressed (UN 2015). Extraordinarily, the initial two operations of 1948 are both still extant and require an annual renewal of UN budgets, while other somewhat less hoary missions like Cyprus and Western Sahara continue with no political solution in sight.

This does not mean that UN peacekeeping as a whole has stultified. Since the end of the cold war in particular, and even more noticeably in the twenty-first century, fairly radical shifts have taken place in politics and

field craft, which inflect greatly on African peacekeeping today, particularly in relation to military interventions.

## The grey areas

The beginning of the end of the Cold War, when presidents Reagan and Gorbachev agreed to resolve regional superpower-charged conflicts after their initial contact in Reykjavik, made much more ambitious peacekeeping possible, in the form of multifunctional ‘second generation’ missions. For Africa, the apogee of this was the UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia (Mozambique was somewhat similar), starting at the end of the 1980s, where the UN took on tasks as varied and ambitious as cantoning combatants, repatriating refugees, holding elections, maintaining law and order and dealing with some aspects of transitional justice – falling just short of establishing a UN ‘government’.

Inevitably this led to a blurring of the boundaries of the shibboleths of consent, impartiality and non-use of force. In Namibia, Marti Artissari, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and hence the top UN official, took the decision on the first day of the formal transition to authorise the deployment of South African special forces to counter a large incursion of SWAPO fighters – ‘returning’ from Angola as SWAPO would have it, or ‘invading’ Namibia according to the South African occupiers (and whatever the case, in violation of the terms of the peace agreement). The result was a bloodbath, but one that was largely passed over as most parties had a greater interest in peace. In many other missions, these ‘grey areas’ became a feature of UN peacekeeping.

## Humanitarian intervention

‘Second generation’ ambitions for multifunctional missions took a battering with the humanitarian and political disasters in Somalia (1991), Angola and Rwanda (1994). UNUSOM II in Somalia was the first time the UN authorised a mission to protect (and feed) civilians – it was the first case of humanitarian intervention. It failed, and the ‘Black Hawk Down’ incident put paid to US commitments to peacekeeping in Africa. Indeed, President Clinton’s virtual prohibition on deployments was one of the reasons why the Rwandan genocide was not called as such for a long time in the USA - and also stymied international rescue.

Much reduced mandates were on offer and the UN was obliged to do peacekeeping on the cheap, as in the disastrous operations in Angola. But still mission creep was prevalent and the grey areas became even murkier.

It does not require a great deal of imagination to link the doctrine of humanitarian intervention to the growing popularity, especially amongst international NGOs, of the idea of human security – certainly the ideational constructs are shared. Popularised by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994 – although it had its antecedents a few years earlier in Africa with the Kampala Conference on Stability, Security, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CCDSCA) - this long international debate reached its confluence in the Canadian formulation ‘freedom from fear and freedom from want’. This was all very well but begged the question, surprisingly lacking from the discourse at the time, of what role the state should play in meeting these human securities, especially in developing countries and more especially in Africa. The rather simplistic division between human security and state

security acolytes has given way in the 21st century to a more nuanced approach (in which Africa again has played a leading role) in which the two are seen as opposite sides of the same coin, or rather as overlapping and eliding and preferably mutually self-reinforcing. In the domestic and developing world contexts at least, secure citizens tend to make for secure states since they have little desire to undermine the security provided by the state; nor does the state need to undermine its citizen’s security through extreme repression since they do not threaten it – assuming that is, that sub-state groups are also secured and that political rights are in place.

## R2P and its discontents

There was to be a further evolution of the human vs state security debate. Emboldened by their successful championship of the human security concept, the Canadians as a self-declared middle-power and believing themselves able to contribute to a denser set of rules governing international affairs, promoted the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. As is well known, this contributed to the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) – the obligation of member states of the UN to protect citizens and other civilians against the failures or depredations of other states (International Commission 2001). R2P pushes the boundaries of humanitarian intervention and has profound consequences for international order. It is not merely that it asserts that states may intervene in the ‘internal affairs’ of other countries but that they are obligated to do so, albeit under extreme circumstances. The implication is that such interventions, because they are to be done without the agreement of the recipient state, will usually necessitate military force.

This principle – as with some others adopted by the ‘international community’ - actually

gained its first formal recognition in Africa, in the Charter of the African Union adopted in 2002, which asserted that in times of genocide, gross violations of human rights or challenges to the constitutional order intervention would be necessary (AU 2002). It should be noted, however, that such interventions should only take place under extreme circumstances and within the framework of the global collective security agreements.

Many countries – including the BRICS bloc and many of the 125 countries in the G77 group of the ‘Global South’ dispute the universality of R2P or at least the way it is interpreted and acted upon. The Brazilians were toting the somewhat disingenuous notion of ‘responsibility while protecting’ as one response, while the Chinese have called for ‘responsible protection’ and the Indians and others have reasserted the old realist mantras of ‘territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of individual states’ (Banerjee 2013, Zongze 2015). The sometimes unspoken fear is that powerful states will use the principle to further erode the sovereignty of smaller nations, which is already deeply compromised by the liberal economic and political order, and even use R2P as a cover to carry out domestic regime change through external intervention, even if this is justified in terms of human rights and securities.

Some of this resistance has dissipated, and the objectors within the Global South are now less inclined to dismiss the idea of R2P than to scrutinise it and restrict its universality. From this author’s viewpoint, the context, the criteria, the thresholds and the process of decision require regional and international consultation and negotiation if the doctrine is to be mainstreamed and not regarded as cover for powerful global interests to score quick political points, or to lead to the political dead-

ends, failed outcomes, and gross violations of human rights of some recent military interventions in Africa and the Middle East.

## Military interventions and protecting civilians

The author recently convened a research project examining four fairly contemporary military interventions on the African continent, funded by the Social Science Research Council (USA) under the rubric of the African Peacekeeping Network project.

The four interventions were done in the frame of peacekeeping as currently understood by the UN, and carried out under, or in the context of, UN Security Council mandates, involving national states, regional economic communities with security mandates, and a range of international actors. As noted above, Chapter VII of the UN charter allows for military actions to be authorised by the Security Council, including those carried out by regional organisations. As the UN has no inherent war-fighting capacities, military interventions need to be devolved to states, coalitions or regional organisations that have the armed capacities.

The four interventions were Libya, a mainly NATO air operation; Cote D’Ivoire, dominated by the French but mandated by the UN and supported by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) action against the M23 rebels in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) which was initiated by the Southern African Development Community (SADC); and the Central African Republic (CAR) in which South African forces were deployed in a complex multinational context. The CAR operation was not formally a

peacekeeping operation and, although there was a UN mission there, the focus of the research project and resulted from bilateral agreements. It constituted part of the research project but the focus was on the South African military deployment and the ‘Battle of Bangui’ in which South African forces took on Seleka rebels attacking the capital. It is not considered here, but the other interventions are presented as very brief case studies.

There are, of course, other recent examples of military interventions carried out under the auspices of the UN, the AU or other multinational structures, notably Somalia and Darfur in Sudan. Others may be looming : South Sudan and Burundi (although the latter seems unlikely).

All of these case studies were complicated, multilateral but initially mostly military endeavours, and in most cases they were carried out under the claim of protection of civilians (POC). While protecting people in UN peacekeeping operations has understandably been high on the agenda since the 1990s massacres in Rwanda and the Balkans – especially Srebrenica - it carries with it the difficulty of what used to be called ‘mission creep’ and makes demands on UN peacekeepers that they may not be able to meet, because UN contingents are not usually geared up for war-fighting which might be needed in these types of situations. In some cases, authorisation by national authorities for troops or police to deploy on UN missions also comes with the baggage of national mandates, laws and political restrictions which prevents peacekeeping contingents from engaging in the combat that might be needed to protect civilians. (This was certainly the case with the Dutch contingent at Srebrenica.)

## Libya: Natofication of peace missions?

There is something of a global peacekeeping apartheid. The rich countries and those aligned with the west, in other words mostly the countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) privilege operations under the rubric of NATO or coalitions of the willing – in most cases, but not always, authorised by the security council. There is perhaps not much new in this, as the exigencies of the cold war dictated that the UN as an organisation was incapable of carrying out military operations and passed the mandate to coalitions of the willing – the first (and very unusual case) being the Korean war. The UN has remained incapable of waging war as an organisation and mostly unwilling to authorise war on its behalf, although the latter might be changing in Africa and the Middle East.

Peacekeeping as war-fighting is gaining new credence, although this is not universally accepted. The second Gulf War to push Iraq out of Kuwait set a precedent, followed in short order by another war against Iraq and then the offensive against Afghanistan, all of which involved coalitions of the willing, although the largely US and Nato operation that led to the fall of Bagdad was not accepted by most African and developing countries as authorised by the security council (a grey area not on the operational but the politico-legal level).

The AU, under South African leadership at the time, had a political plan to resolve the Libyan crisis when the contradictions inherent in that polity created first by the Arab and then by European colonists became intolerable and putative democratic forces faced up against Gaddafi’s personalised, cruel, capricious but tightly-controlled rule (Koko & Bakwesegha-

Osulu 2012). Jacob Zuma, as chairperson of the African Union, ran out of negotiating time and the AU's plans were rapidly overwhelmed by events on the ground (and in the air). The UN security council adopted resolution 1973 of 2011 which authorised a no-fly zone, supported by South Africa and other African non-permanent members of the council (Russia, India, China, Germany and Brazil abstained) (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/Africa>).

The escalating logic of no-fly mandates had been seen before in Iraq: so that they cannot fly we need to fly; we need to nullify their air defences to do so; we need to take out command and control; then it is justified to take out the ultimate command. Such was the instrumental military logic of the Libyan intervention, where Nato airstrikes combined with militia uprisings to destroy the regime in the cause of protecting civilians. Many would argue that it was not merely an instrumental military logic, but that the entire operation was conceived by the P3 with the ultimate objective of dislodging Gaddafi and security regime change under UN cover (see the arguments put forward by the former Australian Prime Minister, Gareth Evans).

No doubt some civilians, especially those in Benghazi, the node of the uprising, were saved. But few would argue that civilians are better off in post-intervention Libya today than they were under Gaddafi. The country has degenerated into militarised city-states and swathes of territory controlled by sectarian, mostly Islamist, militias that often use cruelty and terror as modes of control and expansion. The precedents for such military interventions were set in the 1989 bombing of Belgrade and the no-fly escalations against Bagdad - they have come home to Africa and we cannot deny culpability, for the reality is that other

actors were faster off the mark and the AU was unable to protect Libyan civilians.

### The DRC and Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23): Intervention by neighbours

The action by the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in the eastern DRC, specifically northern Kivu province, was the first offensive peacekeeping operation that the UN has authorised using blue-hatted troops (and white-painted armour). The operation was carried out under UN command with a security council mandate but it was initially mooted as a SADC operation, the first real test of the African Standby Force and its regional nodes. The politics behind the transfer of political and operational authority from SADC to the UN mission in the Congo, MONUSCO, is complex but was politically necessary. The M23, a breakaway from one of the numerous rebel movements in the DRC, is supported by Rwanda, and some regard it as an offshoot of the Rwanda armed forces. The result of an SADC force engaging with the M23 surely would have exacerbated conflicts between the regional organisation, which supports the powers-that-be in Kinshasa, and the regime in Rwanda which is not a member of SADC and has a history of efficient militarism.

The outcome was trumpeted by South African and allied Tanzanian and Malawian military forces. The operation was spearheaded to the delight of South African military experts by its UN-flagged Rooivalk attack helicopters. But as military strategists as long ago as Sun-Tzu have pointed out, politics and the art of war takes primacy: while the battle has been won it is not clear that the war has. The next phase of the operation was meant to have been against the Democratic Forces for the

Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), another equally brutal militia, but that one is sometimes backed by Kinshasa in order to put pressure on Rwanda, so the brakes have been put on. Instead attention was redirected towards an originally Ugandan-based Islamist militia, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Critics argue that the FIB operation demonstrates all too clearly the danger of the UN taking sides. It might make operational sense, but the long-term consequences for the UN as an honest-broker are immense.

Despite the crowing about military success, which was real given that M23 had managed to seize the regional capital Goma with a force much smaller than that of MONUSCO as well as three divisions of the Congolese army (DPKO 2015), the operation cannot really be regarded as a switch by the UN to war. The blue-hatting of the FIB was controversial to say the least and required extensive political negotiations with national, regional and international structures, including the International Commission on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) on which Rwanda is represented. UNSCR 2147 which authorised the mission was circumspect in the extreme, noting that all operations had to take place within the frameworks of international law and were regarded as exceptional.

### Cote D’Ivoire: Francafricque restored?

Cote’D Ivoire’ s decolonisation was at best superficial, as it retained (along with Niger and Benin) an extremely close relationship with the metropole: the 1961 defence agreement with the former colonial power included a strong strategic relationship, and under Houphouet-Boigny’s long rule, the country became known in West Africa as Francafricque (Meehan 2011). But it seemed to work, as the country became

an island of peace and relative prosperity (although not democracy) in a turbulent region, which attracted hundreds of thousands of migrant workers from neighbouring countries. After the founder-president’s demise in 1993 an economic and political crisis broke out, revolving to a significant degree around the status of migrants, now making up a quarter of the population. By 2002 the country had descended into civil war along ethnic, political and geographic lines, with rebel Forces Nouvelles seizing the northern half of the country. The gyrations of the conflict and peace processes need not concern us here, but an election in 2010 led to what appeared (at least to the regional body, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and thence the AU) to be a narrow victory by the opposition candidate, Alassane Ouattara. Critically, the election took place before a demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) process called for in various peace agreements had been completed, and armed conflict re-ignited. Despite the view of ECOWAS, the apparently defeated incumbent Laurent Gbagbo, had support from some African countries, notably Angola and South Africa.

Peacekeeping deployments involved ECOWAS, the UN (through UNOCI) and French forces operating through their bases in West Africa – their use was formalised through UNSCR 1975 of 30 March 2011. The mandate was under Chapter VII, to use all necessary means to protect civilians, who, amongst other things, were under attack from Gbagbo forces in Abidjan using heavy artillery and armoured vehicles. Gbagbo was attacked by French and UN helicopters at his presidential compound and captured (Smith 2011). The outcome was widely regarded in Africa and internationally (at least in the west) as welcome, although Russia and China expressed reservations about the

UN's actions: President Dmitry Medvedev said that the UN had developed a 'very dangerous tendency' to take sides (Anishchuk 2011). France's role was also questioned, as it evidently had very strong interests in Cote D'Ivoire but had not intervened in perhaps more egregious humanitarian crises in neighbouring Liberia and Sierra Leone. Countries and non-government organisations supporting the intervention argued that it was necessary to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe and to protect the legitimate electoral victory of Ouattara.

It is impossible to imagine that some ECOWAS countries and France did not have strategic interests in the outcome and were prepared to use force to achieve a political outcome, and it is difficult to believe that the claims of protection of civilians and R2P were the primary strategic drivers. But there is also little doubt that the decisive use of military force stabilised and contained the conflict, prevented it from spilling over into neighbouring ECOWAS countries, and led to a political solution of sorts (this was cemented with Ouattara's overwhelming victory in the largely peaceful elections of 2015). Whether more civilians were protected or saved from the military intervention is moot, as thousands were killed by both sides after the military defeat of Gbagbo forces in April 2011. Revenge attacks involving group punishment, abductions, executions, rape of women and children (and sometimes men) and the common atrocities of war were carried out by the victors for many months (Human Rights Watch October 2011).

On balance – if there can be such a thing in politics and war – the decisive use of military force in Cote D'Ivoire has restored something like the status quo before the conflict. Abidjan is a boom-town. The French and UN contingents are everywhere. But the outcome of the UN-authorized military intervention in

Libya has been a humanitarian tragedy, while the deployments in Eastern Congo have not yet been decisive, and it is difficult to imagine, given the divisions in the DRC, that they will soon turn out to be so.

## The myth of African solutions to African problems

In all the above cases the conflicts were not merely African, but resulted from a complex interplay between African and international economic and political interests, manifested through local, national and regional dynamics. This involves complex interplays between local elites, international companies, the strategic interests of external powers competing with each other, often in alliance with putative or actual African 'regional powers'. Much of the interaction revolves around the familiar 'resource curse': conflict can be fairly closely mapped in Africa to the presence of valuable mineral and other resources (although this is not always the case: sometimes, although rarely, African countries manage to control rent-seeking and resource extraction). Further complexity is provided by militias and rebel groups, often supported by one or another of the actors identified above, who may nurse grievances but are often propelled and sustained by greed.

If the 'problems' are not really African, or only partially such, why then should the 'solutions' be African? This is apart from the oft pointed out issue of resources: given the disparities between African and developed countries and the extent of the 'African battlespace' – bigger than the USA, China and Western Europe combined – it is clearly impracticable for African countries to solely source the materiel and funds needed for extended peace operations. Moreover, African countries do not only deploy on peace missions on the continent, just as a conflict in say, Haiti, is not

regarded merely as a Caribbean problem. This is not to say that African countries do not have the first responsibility for dealing with conflicts. The emerging consensus is that RECs and the AU should be the first to respond, but that the wider international community needs to be brought in to find sustainable solutions through peacebuilding and other initiatives.

The complexity lies in how to calibrate the relations between the increasingly dense institutional and regime environments at state, sub-regional (REC), regional and international levels, and above all, how to deal with the long-overdue challenges in the whole spectrum of peace operations, ranging from preventive diplomacy, through mediation, to political interventions, peace operations of all types, peace enforcement, and post-conflict peacebuilding. This must entail asserting the primacy of the political and the importance of mediation and peace-making. From an African point of view, the importance of ‘partnerships peacekeeping’ cannot be overemphasised, but the nature of such partnerships has to be continually interrogated given that the playing field is not level. The short case studies of intervention in this article illustrate this all too clearly. As both objects and subjects of peacekeeping, African actors have to be more active in the politics, the mandates, the deployments and the outcomes of peacekeeping. This is no more important than in relation to military interventions, which are becoming increasingly common under the rubric of UN peacekeeping.

Furthermore, while the envelopes should be pushed, peacekeeping has its limitations and cannot be seen as a substitute for the usual processes of governance and development. As argued above, they have changed over time, but derive their primary purpose from the UN Charter and the need to deal with ‘threats to

and breaches of the peace’. All sorts of things can be added to peacekeeping, and have been. But as the UN’s High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operation sHIPPO puts it, ‘there are outer limits for UN peacekeeping operations ... Extreme caution should guide the mandating of enforcement tasks to degrade, neutralise or defeat a designated enemy. Such operations should be exceptional, time-limited and undertaken with full awareness of the risks and responsibilities for the UN mission as a whole’ (UN 2015: 12).

One of the biggest casualties of unsuccessful military interventions carried out for real or ostensible humanitarian reasons, which may actually result in worse humanitarian crises than the one that sparked the intervention (Libya notably) is that the emerging doctrine of R2P has been set back if not fatally undermined. The catastrophe of the Syrian civil war, where humanitarian intervention was firmly opposed by many actors, including South Africa which had supported the Libyan ‘no fly’ principle, is a case in point. As it was put by one of the architects of R2P, Gareth Evans, the former Australian foreign minister: ‘A solution simply has to be found to the current post-Libya stand-off if R2P is to have a future’ (Cited in Fabricius 2015). Alas, such a solution seems not closer but further away.

## Conclusion: Orwell revisited

**War is not peace.** Robust mandates, protection of civilians and firm military intervention can lead to peace but the evidence is far from compelling. Much depends on the primacy of politics, local ownership (and knowledge) and the articulation between levels of actors. When combat operations become peace operations (or vice-versa) surely language is stretching the conceptual frameworks and principles.

**Freedom is not slavery.** The drive to protection of civilians and more especially R2P should not lead to the erosion of the rights of peoples, states or nations. In the Libyan intervention, civilians suffered greatly and continue to do so; in the case of the DRC the outcome has not yet been determined; in Cote D’Ivoire the intervention was followed by months of mayhem but stability and security seems to have been restored. The balance between state and human security, human rights and freedoms, and the sovereign equality of nations needs to be re-examined if the global collective security system is to progress. Where this balance lies is ultimately a political and ethical issue. There is open talk in UN and AU circles about placing South Sudan under a new form of the old governorship arrangements of colonialism, or perhaps more accurately restoring the principle of international governance and control of ‘mandated territories’. This may become necessary, given the egregious failures of the South Sudanese polity and leadership, but it is not an issue to be taken lightly.

**Ignorance is not strength.** More research and engagement from an African perspective is needed on these issues. Many initiatives have been taken, especially by South Africa when it was (twice) on the security council, to promote African voices in determining mission mandates and enhancing cooperation between the security council and its African counterpart, the AU’s Peace and Security Council, as well as between DPKO and other structures of the UN and the AU’s commission.

If these things are not addressed, Orwell’s dystopian vision may yet come to pass, especially in the contested continent of Africa.

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## FES Peace and Security Series No. 18

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### About this study

Gavin Cawthra critically reviews the logics and approaches that have informed UN peacekeeping interventions on the African Continent. Closer attention is given to the examination of recent interventions in Libya, the DRC and Côte d'Ivoire. Cawthra warns that the practice of international peacekeeping through the UN's global collective security arrangements is in danger of fulfilling elements of the dystopic vision of the world, which British writer George Orwell constructed in his early cold-war novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and where war is peace, freedom is slavery and ignorance is strength. However, the author concludes that we doesn't have to go down this road and that

there are progressive and good things for Africa in the new world (dis)order. Peacekeeping on this continent is perhaps more necessary than ever, but has to consider regional security environments and the rights of states and people. In other words: **War is not peace.** Robust mandates, protection of civilians and firm military intervention can lead to peace, but the evidence is far from compelling. **Freedom is not slavery.** The drive to protection of civilians and more especially R2P should not lead to the erosion of the rights of peoples, states or nations. **Ignorance is not strength.** More research and engagement from an African perspective is needed on these issues.