Do regional organisations provide a credible alternative to the UN in conducting peace operations?

Alexandru Strelet

Abstract

In light of an increased role of regional organisations (ROs) in conducting peace operations in recent years, this article examines the suitability of ROs as a credible alternative to the UN in this regard. In order to do this, it looks at two aspects that have received somewhat less attention in previous literature: consensus and impartiality. The article argues, firstly, that despite their homogenous membership, ROs do not actually display more consensus and internal cohesion when conducting peace operations – this has the potential to prolong the conflict and generate regional instability. Second, regional organisations are prone to partiality when conducting peace operations. Due to regional alliances that ROs have with conflicting parties, and also among themselves, ROs tend to be highly selective in the situations in which they wish to intervene while also holding predisposed views even after intervening. The article concludes that regional organisations cannot credibly substitute the UN in conducting peace operations. This does not imply, however, that they cannot complement the UN's efforts in this regard.

Keywords: Peace operations, regional organisations, UN.

Introduction

The end of the Cold War generated a recognition that the international community needs to assume a stronger role in dealing

with international crises.[1] This was accompanied by a surge in intrastate violence and political instability across the world.[2] In this context, the demand for United Nations peace operations has significantly increased to the point that the UN was managing 80,000 multinational troops in sixteen separate operations in October 1993.[3] The difficulties faced by the UN in dealing with this demand have generated a debate about whether regional organisations (ROs) should play a greater role in peace operations, leading the UN Secretary General at the time, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to argue that regional organisations 'can render great service if their activities are undertaken in a manner consistent with the purposes and principles of the charter.'[4] Calls for greater involvement of ROs also derived from expectations of certain potential advantages that they could bring to peace operations when compared to the UN, particularly aspects such as greater legitimacy, better knowledge about the conflict and greater commitment to solving the conflict. Can we now say that regional organisations provide a credible alternative to the UN in conducting peace operations? This paper will argue that this is not the case: regional organisations do not provide a credible alternative to the UN in conducting peace operations.

In the context in which the majority of the literature on this topic has focused on shortcomings of ROs, such as lack of resources or experience,[5] this paper will address two aspects of RO peace operations that have been disputed to a lesser extent: consensus and

---

[1] M. Berdal and S. Economides (eds.), *United Nations Interventionism, 1991–2004* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[2] Peace Research Institute Oslo, 'Trends in Armed Conflict, 1946-2014', in PRIO, *Conflict Trends*, Vol. 1 (2016), pp. 1-4.

[3] United Nations Peacekeeping, 'Troop and Police Contributors', 1993, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/oct-1993.pdf (last accessed August 19th, 2019).

[4] B. Boutros-Ghali, 'An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping' in *International Relations*, Vol. 11, no. 3 (1992), pp. 201-218.

[5] P. F. Diehl, 'New Roles for Regional Organizations' in Chester Crocker, Fen O. Hampson and Pamela Aall (eds.), *Leashing the Dogs of War* (USIP Press, 2007), pp. 535–551; Eric G. Berman, 'African Regional Organization Peace Operations', in *African Security Review*, Vol. 11, no. 4 (2002) pp. 32-44.

impartiality. It will argue that, contrary to what is commonly believed,[6] ROs do not in fact demonstrate greater consensus than the UN in conducting peace operations. Second, it will argue that peace operations conducted by ROs are characterised by a lack of impartiality. Both the lack of consensus and impartiality undermine the effectiveness and credibility of peace operations. This article will conclude that despite the fact that regional organisations cannot credibly substitute the UN in conducting peace operations, they can complement the UN's efforts in this regard. In developing its argument, this paper will look at examples of regional organisations such as the African Union (AU) and its engagement in Burundi, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its engagement in Liberia, as well as touching upon organisations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Regional organisations and peace operations: conceptual clarifications

For the purpose of clarity, setting the parameters for what the article regards as 'regional organisations' and 'peace operations' is necessary. The article takes a sufficiently broad approach as to what constitutes a regional organisation, adopting the definition suggested by Jon Pevehouse, who defines regional organisations as 'formal institutional bodies with nation-states as decision-making members'.[7] It must be noted that the UN itself, though making reference to regional organisations in its charter,[8] does not provide any definition of what constitutes a regional organisation. This paper will refer to 'peace operations' based on the definition provided by Bellamy and

---

[6] A. LeRoy Bennett, *International Organizations: Principles and Issues*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1991).

[7] J.C. Pevehouse, 'With a Little Help from My Friends? Regional Organizations and the Consolidation of Democracy', in *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 46, no. 3, (July 2002), pp. 611-626.

[8] United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, Chapter VIII. 24 October 1945, 1 UNTS XVI.

Williams, who suggest that 'peace operations involve the dispatch of expeditionary forces, with or without a United Nations mandate, to implement an agreement between warring states of factions, which may (or may not) include enforcing that agreement in the face of wilful defiance.'[9] One additional clarification that needs to be made is specifying how this paper interprets the concept of 'credible alternative'. A regional organisation would provide a credible alternative to the UN by successfully conducting peace operations on its own, *entirely replacing* the UN. In other words, the focus of this paper is not whether ROs can complement the UN in conducting peace operations; instead, it is whether they can successfully substitute the UN in this endeavour.

The Literature

The literature has extensively covered the subject which concerns the suitability of ROs when it comes to conducting peace operations. However, it has addressed this problem principally from the point of view of aspects such as the resources that ROs possess, their capacity, logistics and previous experience in conducting peace operations. For instance, Kingah and Langenhove suggest that the resource limitations of the African Union have been a major constraint for it to deploy more troops in countries like Somalia and Sudan.[10] Paul Williams focuses on logistical constraints of ROs, suggesting that constraints in logistics in general and adequate military personnel in particular became increasingly recognised as a serious impediment when the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was deployed to end Liberia's civil war in 1990.[11]

---

[9] A. J. Bellamy and P. D. Williams, 'Who's Keeping the Peace? Regionalization and Contemporary Peace Operations', in *International Security*, Vol. 29, no. 4 (2005), pp. 157-195.

[10] S. Kingah and L. Van Langenhove, 'Determinants of a Regional Organisation's Role in Peace and Security: the African Union and the European Union Compared', in *South African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 19, no. 2 (2012), pp. 201-222.

[11] P. D. Williams, 'Explaining and Understanding Security Cooperation in Africa', in *African Security Review* 19, No. 2 (2010), pp. 97-105.

Another important aspect that has been addressed previously in the literature is the issue of legitimacy: in an assessment of local perceptions of the legitimacy of the actors conducting peace operations, Sophia Sabrow argues that 'the regional force has high ideological legitimacy but disappoints in its performance on the ground', which suggests that higher legitimacy does not necessarily translate into higher effectiveness.[12] Other key aspects include the issue of whether ROs have a greater commitment to solving the conflict or better knowledge about the local context;[13] however, it is beyond the scope of this paper to cover those in detail.

While all the aforementioned aspects are crucial determinants of whether ROs can provide a credible alternative to the UN in conducting peace operations, this paper contributes to the body of literature by expanding on two factors which are equally, if not more, important in determining the suitability of ROs in conducting peace operations: consensus and impartiality. The following paragraphs will challenge widely held assumptions by arguing that ROs do not in fact exhibit a larger consensus, nor are they more impartial when it comes to conducting peace operations.

Consensus Within Regional Organisations

One of the most commonly attributed advantages that ROs have when conducting peace operations has been the presumably greater consensus and internal cohesion that ROs exhibit, due to a more homogeneous membership as well as geographic proximity to the conflict.[14] The homogeneity within ROs derives from the

---

[12] S. Sabrow, 'Local Perceptions of the Legitimacy of Peace Operations by the UN, Regional Organizations and Individual States–A Case Study of the Mali Conflict', in *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 24, no. 1 (2017), pp. 159-186.

[13] M. Marnika, 'Regional Peacekeeping: The Case for Complementary Efforts', in *Peacekeeping & International Relations*, Vol. 25, no. 3 (1996), p. 9; R. Jones and T. Duffey, 'Sharing the burden of peacekeeping: The UN & regional organizations' in *Peacekeeping & International Relations*, Vol. 25, no. 3 (1996), p. 4.

[14] Bennett, *International Organizations*; Chuka Enuka, and Samuel Nwagbo, 'Regional International Organizations as Conflict Managers: The Limits and Capabilities,' in *African Research Review*, Vol. 10, no. 2 (2016), pp. 16-30.

assumption that 'states in a regional organization are more likely to be at the same development level; share historical, ethnic or tribal roots; and have similar political outlooks stemming from facing common regional problems.'[15] Consequently, it is argued that this 'makes authorisations for peacekeeping operations easier' and that this 'should allow ROs to deploy peacekeepers relatively quickly';[16] both factors are believed to increase the effectiveness of peace operations. Additional weight is added to this argument in light of the general frustration that exists in relation to the presumed ineffectiveness of the UN decision making system within the Security Council, particularly because of the veto right arrangement that blocks many important peace operations, sometimes for political reasons unrelated to aspects of the peace operations themselves. One relevant example in this regard is when China vetoed the UN peacekeeping missions to Macedonia and Guatemala as a result of those countries' recognition of Taiwan.[17]

Clearly, this is a strong case made by the proponents of the argument that ROs exhibit more consensus when conducting peace operations. There is little doubt that regional organisations display more homogeneity, especially when compared to the UN. However, the idea that a more homogenous membership results in more consensus on how to act should be viewed critically. Homogeneity between countries does not necessarily mean that their view over how to best address a conflict will coincide. In fact, as Diehl argues, 'most common threats to regional peace – internal threats – are exactly those

---

[15] *Ibid*.

[16] O. Bures, 'Regional Peacekeeping Operations: Complementing or Undermining the United Nations Security Council?', in *Global Change, Peace & Security*, Vol. 18, no. 2 (2006), pp. 83-99; P. D. Williams, 'Global and Regional Peacekeepers: Trends, Opportunities, Risks and a Way Ahead' in *Global Policy*, Vol. 8, no. 1 (2017), pp. 124-129.

[17] A. Angelov, 'Regional Involvement in Peace Operations: An Analysis of the Debate within the UN Security Council' in *Conflict, Security & Development*, Vol .10, no. 5 (2010), pp. 599-623.

least likely to generate consensus'.[18] Lack of consensus will in turn undermine the effectiveness of a peace operation.

The peace operation conducted by ECOWAS in Liberia in the 1990s is a relevant example that points out to the deficiencies of the argument that more homogeneity results in greater consensus on how to address a conflict. Differing political interests of the participating states and existing cleavages such as the Francophone vs Anglophone divisions led to significant problems for ECOMOG and undermined its effectiveness at several levels. Those differing interests manifested into a situation whereby while ECOMOG's stated aim was to fight against Charles Taylor, the leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), other member states such as Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire supported Taylor. Adding to the incoherence of aims of participating states of ECOMOG was the fact that, as Herbert Howe argues, there was a division between countries supporting ECOMOG's role as a peace enforcer and those countries supporting its role as a peacekeeper;[19] thus there was lack of consensus over what the very aim of the peace operation should be.

The absence of consensus undermined the effectiveness of the peace operation. Disagreement also distracted member states from accomplishing the aim of the peace operation and generated incentives to engage in competition with other member states. As Robert Mortimer argues, the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia 'is more a classic study of competing national interest in the West African subregion than…a case study in regional peacekeeping.'[20] The lack of consensus within ECOMOG did not only undermine the effectiveness of the peace operation, it also damaged peace prospects in Liberia by significantly prolonging the conflict. This led to the spill over of the conflict into Sierra Leone, the toppling of the Gambian government,

---

[18] P. F. Diehl, 'Institutional alternatives to traditional UN peacekeeping: An assessment of regional and multinational options', in *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 19, no. 2 (1993), pp. 209-230.
[19] H. Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and regional peacekeeping', in *International Security*, Vol. 21, no. 3 (1997), pp. 145-176.
[20] R. Mortimer, 'ECOMOG, Liberia, and Regional Security,' in Ed Keller and Don Rotchild (eds.), *Africa In the New International Order* (Lynne Rienner, 1996), p. 162.

and an increase of refugees into several countries.[21] Consequently, instead of fostering peace in Liberia and thus the wider region, ECOMOG did exactly the opposite, contributing to regional instability.

That the lack consensus within ROs undermines the effectiveness of peace operations, however, does not, in itself, prove that the UN is a better option. After all, due to the lack of consensus in the UN Security Council, many peace operations were never authorised while humanitarian disasters were taking place. In this context, the ease and rapidity of deployment of peace operations by ROs is an asset that must be acknowledged. Often ROs would engage in peace operations in situations where the UN would not act, as demonstrated by the case of the African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB). This is not to say that the UN is incapable of rapidly deploying peace operations, as demonstrated by the UNISFA (United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei) in 2011.[22] Rather, it is to point out that ROs are typically better at more rapidly deploying peace operations. However, despite having the merit of potentially ameliorating immediate suffering, rapidity does not necessarily mean that consensus exists nor that the peace operation is effective. AMIB is a case in point. Despite a relatively rapid response where the UN did not act, AU member states still displayed significant disagreements over how to best resolve the conflict. In particular, the role of Tanzania and Uganda in supplying weapons to various factions was questioned by South African then-Deputy President Zuma who objected to those states' troops being deployed as part of AMIB.[23]

While ROs usually tend to appear successful in deploying operations rapidly, this has not always been the case. In the case of the AU response to the crisis in Libya in 2011, differing views between AU member states led to no coherent action being taken at all, despite there having been an expectation that the Libyan crisis would be

---

[21] Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia,' pp. 145-176.
[22] P. D. Williams and A. Boutellis, 'Partnership peacekeeping: challenges and opportunities in the United Nations–African Union Relationship', in *African Affairs*, Vol. 113, no. 451 (2014), pp. 254-278.
[23] Bellamy and Williams, 'Who's Keeping the Peace?', pp. 157-195.

solved within the AU framework, guided by the 'African solutions to African problems' approach.[24] As Kasaija argues, 'from the very beginning, AU members did not speak with one voice on how to resolve the crisis; and Qaddafi ignored the organisation's call to end the crisis peacefully, eventually resulting in the organisation being over-ridden by the Western powers through means of the UN Security Council (UNSC).'[25] This case, as well as the cases outlined above, reinforce the view that more homogenous membership of regional organisations does not necessarily mean that they exhibit more consensus on how to address a conflict, as is widely assumed. The absence of consensus within ROs has led to the failure to achieve the aims of the peace operations conducted by them. This makes it difficult to acknowledge ROs as credible alternatives to the UN in this regard.

Lack of Impartiality

When considering the extent to which regional organisations provide an alternative to UN peace operations, perhaps more important than the lack of consensus that dominates and undermines the success of peace operations, is that RO peace operations are characterised by a lack of impartiality. Despite the fact that impartiality has never been presented as an asset of RO peace operations, considerations about ROs *lack* of impartiality and the implications of this have received less attention in the literature. On the contrary, after views which started to challenge the impartiality of the UN started to emerge, the idea that 'the more the impartiality of the UN is questioned, the greater the probability of regional involvement becomes' started to gain ground.[26] This section will point to the acute lack of impartiality that characterizes ROs and will elaborate on how it undermines RO peace operations and renders

---

[24] P. A. Kasaija, 'The African Union (AU), the Libya Crisis and the Notion of 'African Solutions to African Problems'', in *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 31, no. 1 (2013), pp. 117-138.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Angelov, 'Regional Involvement in Peace Operations,' pp. 599-623.

them unable to constitute a credible alternative to UN peace operations.

The lack of impartiality of regional organisations can manifest itself in different ways. First, ROs are partial in a sense that they are selective when making decisions about engaging in peace operations. This depends on factors such as economic interests and arrangements between members of the RO or political or even personal allegiances or hostilities. For instance, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)'s passive reaction towards the conflict in East Timor was arguably due to the allegiances of some South Asian states to the government of Indonesia.[27] In response, it could be said that the UN arguably is confronted with the same problem and because of the veto arrangements in the Security Council it can appear selective as to where it chooses to intervene due to political motives of its members (as the earlier examples demonstrate). Nevertheless, when it comes to the impartiality of the peacekeeping mission itself, once the mission authorized, the UN seems to have a much better record in this regard when compared to ROs.

This leads to the second way in which the partiality of ROs is manifested, namely the fact that ROs are less likely to conduct impartial peacekeeping on the ground after an operation has been authorised. This is related to the previous point that members of regional organizations have political, economic and military ties with conflicting parties, which makes it difficult for them, if not impossible, to conduct impartial peacekeeping operations. The regional alliances that members of ROs have amongst themselves not only does not help in bringing about peace, it might also exacerbate the conflict. For instance, as Walter Dorn relates, 'there is no conceivable way that NATO, which includes both Greece and Turkey, could "peacekeep" in Cyprus.'[28] While NATO cannot be regarded as a regional organisation in the same way as can the African Union or European

---

[27] *Ibid*.

[28] W. Dorn, 'Regional Peacekeeping is not the Way', in *Peacekeeping & International Relations*, Vol. 27, no. 4/5 (1998), pp. 1-4.

Union, this example can be applied to regional organisations more broadly.

A third way in which RO peace operations suffer from lack of impartiality is that the majority of RO's do not have sufficient numbers of personnel trained in peacekeeping techniques and philosophy, which means that they are drawn from national regular armies.[29] Such forces may have a difficulty meeting the neutrality standard established by the UN, especially if they are not able to draw the bulk of their troops from outside of the immediate conflict neighbourhood.[30] In these circumstances, adhering to the impartiality standard set by the UN is very difficult to sustain. There have been numerous instances in which peacekeepers have openly aided one, or another conflicting party, and have even engaged in activities such as looting or corruption. The ECOMOG operation in Liberia is a relevant case in point, where all of these activities took place. Even if ROs were able to provide professional peacekeeping training to their forces, it would still be difficult to establish a peacekeeping force that was formed of nationals outside the countries with a stake in the conflict.[31] In these circumstances, it is not surprising that peacekeepers get drawn into the conflict or are at least viewed with hostility by the conflicting parties. As Angelov points out, 'the armed attacks on regional peacekeepers (e.g. on ECOMOG in Liberia, the OAU in Chad, the AU in Darfur and Somalia) may be interpreted as a sign that one or all of the belligerent parties do not consider those troops impartial.'[32]

It must be emphasised that the UN is not perfect in this regard either. UN peacekeepers have themselves been viewed with hostility by conflicting parties in peace operations in Rwanda, Bosnia and the DRC, for example. However, the reason for this was not the lack of neutrality, but rather other factors such as the UN's perceived lack of legitimacy or that it was seen as an obstacle to a strategic aim. In comparison to ROs, the UN has a much better track record of

---

[29] Bures, 'Regional Peacekeeping Operations,' pp. 83-99.
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] Diehl, 'Institutional Alternatives to Traditional UN Peacekeeping,' pp. 209-230.
[32] Angelov, 'Regional Involvement in Peace Operations,' pp. 599-623.

preserving its impartiality. In addition, the UN has learned from its failures and has been engaged in constant efforts to improve its practice of conducting peace operations, as evidenced, for example, by the Brahimi report.[33] In contrast, no major RO has been engaged in significant undertakings to reform and improve the way they are engaged in peace operations.

The main implication deriving from the lack of impartiality of peacekeepers is that they are essentially no longer a peacekeeping force once they become partial to one or more sides in a conflict. They get drawn into the conflict and become one of the conflicting parties, as illustrated by the example of ECOMOG in Liberia. Another instance where the lack of impartiality has led to prolonging the conflict include the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD)'s involvement in Sudan. The IGADD peace process for southern Sudan was a proximate cause of the 2003 Darfur rebellion because the negotiations and emerging agreements between Khartoum and the SPLM excluded Darfur. As a result, they were perceived by Darfuri communities to further entrench their long-standing marginalization.[34] It may well be the case that these ROs never intended on being impartial in the first place; yet, regardless of whether this is true or not, it does not help enhance the credibility of ROs as impartial actors in peace operations. Partiality, at the same time, undermines the political acceptance of the peacekeeping operation, both within the host government and population, but also among the members of the peacekeeping operation. In these circumstances, a peacekeeping operation is highly unlikely to succeed.

---

[33] L. Brahimi, 'Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations,' United Nations, A/55/305-S/2000/809, 13th November 2000.

[34] L. Nathan, 'Anti-Imperialism Trumps Human Rights: South Africa's Approach to the Darfur Conflict', in *Crisis States Working Paper*, Series 2, no. 31 (February 2008).

Can Regional Organisations Complement the UN?

So far, this article has focused on the aspects which make regional organisations unable to represent a credible alternative to the UN in conducting peace operations. However, this does not imply that the UN and ROs cannot work together in this endeavour. In fact, ROs play a crucial role in complementing the UN in conducting peace operations. Without the benefits brought about by ROs, it would be significantly harder for the UN to conduct such peace operations, particularly in those regions where ROs already operate. This section will provide a brief overview of the ways in which ROs, while not representing an alternative to the UN in itself, are essential in complementing the UN when conducting peace operations.

While it has been mentioned previously that rapidity of deploying peace operations does not make regional organisations capable of substituting the UN entirely, this is precisely one area where ROs can complement the UN. This was the case in several West African missions during the 1990s, and in Mali and CAR in the 2010s, where African states from the subregion assumed the role of first responders before UN missions took over.[35] In a similar fashion, while ROs do not have the resources and capabilities to replace the UN as peacekeepers, the resources and capabilities they *can* bring can greatly benefit the UN's efforts. The EU, for instance, has provided approximately €2 billion to African peace operations since 2004 through its African Peace Facility. Similarly, NATO has sometimes been crucial in conducting airstrikes (e.g. in Bosnia) and providing strategic lift capabilities to deploy African peacekeepers in a variety of theatres, including Darfur and Somalia.[36]

For such cooperation to be effective, however, it is important to ensure that it is adequately conducted. With different international organizations likely to maintain distinct approaches to peace operations, the policy challenge is how to ensure the resulting international division of labour can deliver effective peace operations

---

[35] Williams, 'Global and Regional Peacekeepers,' pp. 124-129.
[36] *Ibid*.

in particular crises. In this respect, some valuable suggestions have been made by Paul Williams.[37] He argues that in order to ensure that cooperation between UN and ROs results in effective peace operations, a few preconditions need to be ensured. First, it would be useful to clarify the limits of UN peace operations, so that there is no room for misunderstanding between the actors involved. Second, the nature of strategic partnerships between the UN and ROs such as the African Union needs to be clarified, with particular emphasis to mechanisms of funding. Finally, political leaders at the UN and within regional organizations must remember 'the primacy of politics' and ensure that peace operations are only deployed as part of a viable conflict resolution strategy to end the war or crisis in question.[38] While these represent valuable suggestions, implementing them in practice might not be as straightforward, particularly when it comes to William's third recommendation which concerns 'the primacy of politics'. One reason for which it may not be easy to achieve is the very partiality to which ROs are often prone to. Despite the difficulties, however, it is not impossible for the UN and ROs to complement each other when conducting peace operations, as illustrated in the examples above. Efforts to foster cooperation in this domain are crucial for the prospects of keeping peace worldwide.

Conclusion

This article has argued that despite the fact that the role of regional organisations in conducting peace operations has increased in recent years, they do not provide a credible alternative to the UN in this regard. Two main reasons have been provided. First, regional organizations, despite their homogenous membership, do not actually display more consensus and internal cohesion when conducting peace operations – this has the potential to prolong the conflict and generate regional instability. Second, regional organizations are prone to

---

[37] *Ibid*.
[38] United Nations, 'Uniting Our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People', A/70/95-S/2015/446, 16th June 2015.

partiality when conducting peace operations. Due to regional alliances that ROs have with conflicting parties, and also among themselves, ROs tend to be highly selective in the situations in which they wish to intervene while also holding predisposed views even after intervening. At the same time, in conditions in which RO peacekeepers are not trained in accordance with the UN impartiality standard, the standard of neutrality becomes even harder to preserve. This undermines peace operations due to the fact that peacekeepers actually get drawn into the conflict as opposed to keeping the peace, which compromises the whole purpose of the peace operation. This does not mean, however, that regional organizations are not helpful and necessary in conducting peace operations; indeed, they can complement the UN in various areas. Yet, crucially, complementing the UN does not mean substituting it; and, regional organizations are neither capable, nor qualified, to entirely replace the UN in conducting peace operations.