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**To cite this article:** Kilian Spandler (2020) UNAMID and the Legitimation of Global-Regional Peacekeeping Cooperation: Partnership and Friction in UN-AU Relations, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 14:2, 187-203, DOI: [10.1080/17502977.2020.1725729](https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2020.1725729)

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2020.1725729>



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Published online: 06 Mar 2020.



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# UNAMID and the Legitimation of Global-Regional Peacekeeping Cooperation: Partnership and Friction in UN-AU Relations

Kilian Spandler 

<sup>a</sup>School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden

## ABSTRACT

The ‘hybrid’ United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) was initially hailed as a model for peacekeeping cooperation between the UN and African regional organizations. However, UNAMID soon faced contestation from different stakeholders, and the UN and the AU have now essentially abandoned the hybrid approach. The article reconstructs how the mission’s deteriorating legitimacy relates to changing self-legitimation strategies by the two organizations. The UN and the AU pursued mutual legitimation when establishing UNAMID, but later mobilized historical narratives and diverging normative standards to promote competing authority claims. The article thus advances an understanding of inter-organizational relations as inherently political.



## KEYWORDS

Peacekeeping; hybrid missions; United Nations; African Union; UNAMID; legitimation

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Cooperation between the United Nations (UN) and regional organizations in the field of peacekeeping has undergone a significant transformation during the last decade. In the 1990s and early 2000s, ‘subcontracting’ of peace operations to regional actors by the Security Council (UNSC) was the dominant pattern. Now, there are more and more instances where the UN and regional organizations deploy missions in sequence, in parallel, or engage in some degree of joint planning, shared resourcing and integrated implementation (Balas 2011). The actors participating in these partnerships have presented them as more viable and appropriate responses to current security challenges (Yamashita 2012).

The African continent, traditionally the focus region of UN peacekeeping, is a main theatre of this trend.<sup>2</sup> In the Central African Republic, Somalia, Sudan and elsewhere, the UN has collaborated with the African Union (AU) and several sub-regional organizations to address security challenges jointly. The AU-UN peacekeeping operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which has been termed ‘hybrid’ due to its integrated command structures, is the most far-reaching manifestation of operational cooperation between the two

**CONTACT** Kilian Spandler  kilian.spandler@gu.se  @KilianSpandler

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organizations.<sup>3</sup> When it was established in 2007 to offer humanitarian assistance and civilian protection in Sudan's Western region, officials from both organizations hailed the hybrid approach as a model for peacekeeping in Africa more generally. Apart from the hope that cooperation would secure the necessary resources for an effective mission, the main original catalyst of a joint approach was the need to integrate different legitimacy demands, including those of the Sudanese government and advocacy groups for Darfur's civilian population.

The initial optimism soon gave way to considerable disillusionment. Evaluations note that UNAMID has been mired by disputes over its mandate, failed to meet most of its goals, and encountered ongoing challenges by the Sudanese government, rebel factions and civil society groups – the very stakeholders it was supposed to accommodate (Gelot 2012, 127–131; Heywood and Maeresera 2019). While some keep upholding UNAMID as a best practice (Gambari 2018), officials especially in the UN have all but abandoned the hybrid approach (Bashua 2014). A UN Special Research Report (Security Council Report 2011, 19) noted that 'several members of the Security Council have now began [*sic*] to point to UNAMID as a model to be avoided rather than emulated in the future', while the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (HIPPO 2015, 21) called it 'a mere shadow of its original purpose'.

Most observers attribute the shortcomings of UNAMID and the UN's African peacekeeping partnerships in general to operational problems, a lack of joint strategic vision, insufficient resources (e.g. Bah and Jones 2008; Bashua 2014; Heywood and Maeresera 2019). This article does not deny these issues, but argues that they only become problematized in connection with broader practices by means of which the UN and the AU assert, contest and negotiate their roles in African peace and security. Accordingly, it asks how the UN and the AU have legitimated the hybrid approach to peacekeeping in Darfur. Establishing legitimacy in the eyes of different audiences is considered central for both the effectiveness and ethical justification of international peacekeeping operations (Bjola 2005; Whalan 2013). In the case of UNAMID, the hybrid approach was introduced to signal responsiveness to demands by local, regional and global stakeholders. However, its implementation was tied up with unresolved questions of authority relations between the UN and the AU. In the age of UN subcontracting, top-down authorization by means of a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution was a relatively straightforward and unambiguous legitimation procedure. More recently, however, the AU has strived to redefine its relationship with the UN in a less hierarchical way. Additional frictions have arisen because the AU speaks to regional legitimation audiences with distinct normative convictions and historical narratives. It legitimates itself as the representative of a regional constituency with a common colonial past to challenge the UN's claims to universal representation in peace and security matters. As the two organizations increasingly claim different and competing bases of legitimacy, UNAMID's model of parallel and formally equal involvement of the two partners has lost most of its original appeal.

The case study picks up the Special Issue's core themes of translocal politics, hybridization and friction by relating the fate of inter-organizational peacekeeping in Darfur to broader struggles over agency and authority in African peace and security (Moe and Geis 2020). It also draws on, and supports, the current move away in International Relations (IR) scholarship from static legitimacy assessments to research on legitimation as a practice (Tallberg and Zürn 2019). By empirically grounding our understanding of how authority is

asserted, contested and negotiated at the global-regional nexus, it reinforces an understanding of inter-organizational relations as inherently political. Actors can respond to complex legitimacy demands by exchanging symbolic resources, but also by advancing their particular authority claims. Despite its unique political context, the case of UNAMID is therefore representative of the ambivalent implications of complexity – understood as a pluralization of legitimation agents and audiences – for the legitimacy of global governance.

The following section briefly reviews the literature on the UN's peacekeeping cooperation with regional organizations and argues that, insofar as it makes claims about legitimacy, these usually rely on exogenous criteria and lack empirical grounding. Section three develops a framework for analyzing the legitimation of inter-organizational cooperation that centres on the idea of legitimation as a discursive practice involving multiple actors and audiences. Section four presents a longitudinal analysis of legitimation discourses by the AU and UN, which draws on official documents, expert interviews and secondary literature. It relates the mission's establishment to broader strategies of mutual legitimation between the two organizations. As these strategies gave way to more competitive self-legitimation and, occasionally, delegitimation, both the UN and the AU have come to view the hybrid structures of UNAMID more critically. Instead, they now usually opt for flexible cooperation models that safeguard their respective autonomy.

### Literature on UN peacekeeping cooperation with regional organizations

Most scholars agree that the poor record of UN peacekeeping after the Cold War was a main driver behind the intensification of peacekeeping ties between the UN and regional organizations especially on the African continent. The UN's slow response to urgent security challenges prompted regional actors to develop institutional capacities and a normative disposition to take matters into their own hands (Akuffo 2010, 78). The UN's initial reaction of subcontracting tasks to these new players soon drew criticism, as many regional security initiatives showed serious limitations. To counter the impression that it was abdicating its duties for global peace by pushing the political and human risks of peacekeeping onto ill-equipped subsidiaries, the UN gradually turned to a more proactive strategy of sharing responsibilities by taking over missions led by regional organizations or co-deploying alongside them (Bellamy and Williams 2005; Yamashita 2012). In support of these joint activities, the UN and regional organizations have sought to institutionalize their partnerships. Examples in the AU case include a Ten-Year Capacity Building Programme, a UN-AU Joint Task-Force on Peace and Security, regular consultations between the UNSC and the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC), and the establishment of a UN Office to the AU.

The trend towards multi-actor peacekeeping has received considerable attention by IR researchers, who have approached it from a variety of different angles. Some authors reconstruct the development of cooperation mechanisms over time, evaluate their effectiveness and make suggestions for policy-makers (Bah and Jones 2008; Boutellis and Williams 2013; Koops and Tardy 2015). These assessments naturally differ depending on their scope and standards of evaluation. However, most observers argue that while global-regional peacekeeping partnerships are inching towards greater institutionalization and

there are some achievements on the ground, diverging strategies, operational difficulties and rivalries over institutional authority persist.

Several scholars have interpreted the trend towards closer cooperation against the background of the overall ‘architecture’ of global and regional peacekeeping. While some emphasise the potential for a productive division of labour that puts regional organizations on more equal footing with the UN (Douhan 2016; Graham and Felicio 2006; Yamashita 2012), others see an increasing potential for friction (de Coning 2017; Moe and Geis 2020). African scholars in particular have used terms such as ‘hybrid paternalism’ to caution that closer cooperation will not necessarily eliminate asymmetries in UN-AU relations (Murithi 2008; Tieku and Hakak 2014). Recently, some authors have contextualized these discussions in IR theories on regime complexity and inter-organizational relations, and teased out the organizational politics shaping global-regional security relations (Aris, Snetkov, and Wenger 2018; Brosig 2020; Wallensteen and Bjurner 2015; Welz 2016). They argue that the emerging multi-actor settings open prospects for burden-sharing and efficiency-boosting cooperation if they are well coordinated, but also increase the potential for inter-organizational conflict and inefficiency due to duplications or incoherent approaches if the organizations want to preserve their autonomy (Brosig and Motsamai 2014).

Beyond considerations of efficiency and autonomy, few authors have so far explored legitimacy considerations behind – and implications of – global-regional peacekeeping cooperation (Biermann 2017). Most of these works assume that joint initiatives combine the relative legitimacy advantages of both sides.<sup>4</sup> In a process of mutual exchange of symbolic resources within a ‘legitimacy pyramid’ (Coleman 2007; Gelot 2012), regional organizations tap into the supreme authority vested in the UN, while the UN can draw on regional organizations as ‘legitimacy brokers’ which raise the acceptance of peacekeeping by local stakeholders, as it tried to do with the Arab League on Libya (Tieku and Hakak 2014; Wajner and Kacowicz 2018).

While much of these arguments are implicitly or explicitly founded on normative theories of legitimacy and generally plausible, they often lack empirical grounding. Researchers usually apply static, external and ostensibly objective criteria, such as principles of International Law (Douhan 2016; Prinsloo and Van Niekerk 2017) or ideas about representation and subsidiarity (Gelot 2012; Vogt 2018, 382). However, in political practice, there is no checklist of legitimacy criteria that, if ticked off, guarantees public acceptance for peacekeeping cooperation (Williams 2013, 47). Security actors can strategically choose among an array of different legitimacy claims and strategies to address different audiences and make the case for or against certain missions.

Because they are actively constructed and contested, we cannot know *a priori* which legitimacy judgements matter in concrete instances of global-regional peacekeeping cooperation. Neglecting the contingency of legitimacy ideas is problematic for three reasons: first, theoretically derived legitimacy claims often contradict each other. While many authors highlight the mutual benefits of cooperation, some argue that it can be detrimental to the legitimacy of one or both sides. Multi-actor peacekeeping might be challenged if it is ineffective due to a lack of resources and capacities, if Western states push military risks onto African troops (Albrecht and Cold-Ravnkilde 2020, 212), if it is perceived as geopolitics and neo-colonialism in disguise, and if it leads to rivalries over political

leadership and diluted accountability due to opaque decision-making (Tardy 2014, 109–113; Weiss and Welz 2014, 899–804).

Second, global and regional actors may promote competing ideas about what counts as legitimate peacekeeping (Williams 2013). Frictions may arise because of divergent normative backgrounds or because one or both organizations come to see cooperation as detrimental to their respective authority and interests. In such cases, the relation between global and regional security actors is not a positive-sum game in which both sides benefit from exchanging legitimacy as a symbolic resource, but contains elements of competition (Akuffo 2010).

This is also possible, third, because the normative framework for global-regional cooperation is ambiguous (Nel 2020, 238). Formal arrangements like Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which places regional peacekeeping within overall UN authority, as well as informal principles of cooperation like subsidiarity and complementarity have been subject to competing and changing interpretations (Douhan 2016). Cooperation cannot rely on shared and fixed understandings of legitimate peacekeeping roles and responsibilities (Wajner and Kacowicz 2018, 496). To unpack how the UN and the AU navigate this context, the deductively dominated literature on the legitimacy of global-regional security cooperation must be complemented with empirical studies of its legitimation, i.e. the practices through which the legitimacy of cooperation is endogenously established and contested in concrete instances. The following section develops a theoretical framework for such an approach.

### Analysing the legitimation of global-regional security governance

As a sub-set of the vast literature on the legitimacy of global governance, legitimation research examines the processes through which different actors assert, contest and negotiate the appropriateness of global governance (Coleman 2007; Tallberg and Zürn 2019). Unlike normative approaches that seek to formulate and prescribe standards for legitimate global governance, it takes an empirical point of view and problematizes legitimacy as it relates to political struggles over status, authority and influence. A legitimation perspective makes it possible to move away from studies of UN-regional organization cooperation that treat legitimacy as an objectively given category. Instead of viewing the institutional and legal qualities of the involved actors or their performance as sources of their authority, it conceptualizes the organizations themselves as arenas (due to their function as fora for intergovernmental debates and decision-making like the UNSC) and agents of legitimation (by means of their politico-administrative bodies like the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, DPKO) (Zaum 2013, 13–16).

While scholars have identified different modes of legitimation and delegitimation, including behavioural and institutional strategies (Bäckstrand and Söderbaum 2018), this article focuses on *discursive* (de)legitimation because other types of practice usually obtain their specific 'legitimatory' meaning through discursive communication (Steffek 2009, 314–315). Agents do not simply evaluate governance arrangements against fixed criteria like performance, equality and autonomy, although each of these issues can play a role. They actively construct and organize relevant legitimacy perceptions in processes of framing. Legitimation frames elicit moral evaluations from key legitimation audiences and justify policy prescriptions by situating judgements within a broader discursive

context. Such contextual notions can include historical narratives, norms and legal frameworks, or notions of effectiveness and efficiency.<sup>5</sup>

In the case of global-regional peacekeeping cooperation, legitimation is a multi-layered process involving a plurality of arenas and agents. It includes situational discourses, in which the UN and other actors justify and evaluate policies and missions like UNAMID in a specific conflict setting. Importantly, however, these (de-)legitimation processes do not simply reflect the successes and failures of peacekeeping on the ground. They unfold in the context of broader strategies of self-legitimation (Gronau 2016), in which the involved organizations try to establish and maintain their own authority as security actors.

The self-legitimation practices of two or more agents can interact in different ways: mutual legitimation occurs when the organizations' self-legitimation strategies are reinforcing one another, for example by explicitly acknowledging each other's status or expertise (Biermann 2017, 340). In competitive legitimation, meanwhile, the self-legitimation of one organization indirectly subverts the authority of another. For example, African regional organizations have implicitly challenged the UN's self-understanding of a *primus inter pares* in African security matters by demanding more ownership and 'African solutions to African problems'. Finally, mutual delegitimation results from conscious attempts of the organizations to undermine each other's authority. Scapegoating for peacekeeping failures is one example (Tieku and Hakak 2014, 131). Competitive and delegitimation strategies are often accompanied by frames that evoke diverging legitimation audiences. For example, the UN has presented itself as the impartial vehicle of the 'international community' to distinguish itself from regional organizations, which it has occasionally delegitimated as potentially biased. In turn, the AU has portrayed the UN as a distant actor with a potentially neo-colonial agenda that lacked the trust of regional states and a mandate by local populations.

The following empirical section applies this framework in a longitudinal case study of the UN's and AU's legitimation discourses surrounding the establishment and implementation of UNAMID. It reconstructs the main legitimation frames by analysing the contents of the arguments through which they promoted, assessed and criticized the mission, and relating them to the organizations' broader self-legitimation discourses. To carve out the strategic dimension of these statements, it inductively identifies the main audiences that are explicitly addressed or implicitly inferred in these statements. In line with their dual role as the main legitimation arenas in peacekeeping matters and agents in their own right, the analysis uses records of debates (representing member state claims) as well as resolutions and other joint statements (representing the organizations' aggregate voice) of the UNSC and the PSC as sources. It also takes interventions by subsidiary agents like the UN Secretariat and the AU Commission into account, and uses secondary literature and interviews with UN officials to complement the analysis.

The goal of the case study is not causal explanation in a positivist sense but to reconstruct how the involved actors make sense of and represent their cooperation. The central theoretical claim is that situative (mission-specific) and broader self-legitimation processes are related in a mutually constitutive way. On the one hand, public debates over the validity and success of hybrid peacekeeping in Darfur were framed within the UN's and AU's broader self-legitimation strategies. The initiative for a hybrid mission for Darfur initially gained traction not just due to political necessities but also because it embodied a new



partnership thinking in UN-AU relations. It was only when the two organizations moved from mutual legitimation to more competitive legitimation – and, in extreme cases delegitimation – that mission-specific legitimacy problems were openly addressed. On the other hand, the delegitimation of UNAMID has also fed back into the broader discourse on the UN's and AU's respective roles in African peace and security. Consequently, the experiment of hybrid peacekeeping turned from a promising model for UN-AU partnership into a site where conflicting authority claims and normative frictions manifested.

### Legitimizing UNAMID

The UN and AU launched UNAMID in 2007 as a follow-up mission to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), which had tried with limited success to contain the escalating violence in Darfur and pave the way for a peace process since 2004.<sup>6</sup> The main mandate of the new operation was to ensure the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement signed between the government and rebel groups the previous year, protect the civilian population, support humanitarian work in the region and facilitate the safe return of internally displaced persons. As noted in the introduction, it has only partially managed to meet these tasks. While the mission can boast some success regarding the humanitarian situation and that of internally displaced persons, its record in civilian protection is poor. Among the main obstacles identified are a lack of personnel and resources, management and command-and-control problems, and persistent obstructionism on part of the government. Almost all evaluations attribute these shortcomings to a lack of dialogue and strategic congruence, including on the interpretation of the mandate, and interoperability problems such as incompatible procedures between the UN and the AU (Bashua 2014, 99; Heywood and Maeresera 2019; Tardy 2014, 112; UNSC 2011). Consequently, they suggest 'managerial' solutions like enhanced communication to improve strategic coherence and policy coordination, which feed into broader calls for a better institutional framework for UN-AU relations (Bah and Jones 2008; Boutellis and Williams 2013; Darkwa 2016).

Given that intensified consultations are a relatively low-cost solution to issues with very high stakes, it is notable how slow they have been to materialize. The late long-time UN and AU official Margaret Vogt (2018, 383) was puzzled by the reluctance of UNSC members regarding the idea of more strategic interaction with the PSC in light of the obvious problems of UNAMID. While both sides remain committed to cooperation in Darfur, the increasingly competitive legitimation of the mission demonstrates that they do not see it as *intrinsically* desirable. Rather, the contentious standing of UNAMID corresponds to changing dynamics in the broader UN-AU partnership that revolve around the question of authority in African peace and security matters.

### Phase 1: Mutual legitimation from AMIS to UNAMID

The AU's initial legitimation of UNAMID mainly reflected the gap between its own ambitions and abilities. Becoming a leading security actor on the continent was one of the founding notions of the AU and a main rationale behind the establishment of the African Peace and Security Architecture. These initiatives built on the ideas of pan-African solidarity and collective responsibility expressed through the 'African Solutions



to African Problems' slogan and the concept of a Pax Africana, which aimed to increase regional ownership in peace and security matters (Karbo 2018). Rooted in a narrative of a common colonial past, these claims aimed to self-legitimize the organization vis-à-vis its national constituencies and an international audience, so as to assert the AU's increasing international role and reject excessive interventionism by external powers.

For many inside and outside the organization, Darfur was a 'litmus test' (Gambari 2018, 201; Mansaray 2009) for these aspirations. The then South African President and former AU Chairman Thabo Mbeki expressed this mind-set when he explained the reluctance of African states to admit external troops to the region at a White House press conference with the then U.S. President George W. Bush: 'It's an African responsibility, and we can do it' (US GPO 2005, 909). However, the more AMIS showed the limitations of exclusively 'African solutions' (Williams 2008), the more did AU representatives depict Darfur as a global issue and legitimate the UN as a partner. In 2006, the then Tanzanian Representative Augustine Mahiga appealed to the UNSC:

by its own admission, [the AU] is overwhelmed and overstretched by the magnitude and complexity of the task of restoring peace to Darfur. Without the [AU] abdicating its responsibility, it is right and proper that the rest of the international community, through the United Nations, should assume joint responsibility to help the Sudan resolve this long-running crisis [...]. (UNSC 2006a)

Many UN member state governments agreed that the problems of AMIS drove home the need for a more robust reaction, both in terms of mandate and resources. The UN still portrayed the AU as an important actor in Darfur. Its local knowledge made it 'well positioned to understand the root causes of many conflicts closer to home' (UNSC 2007d, 2). However, mounting criticism of the UN's inactivity from a vocal civil society campaign, led by the Save Darfur Coalition, instilled in it a moral imperative and urgency to provide a more effective solution (UN Secretary-General 2005). This catalysed the adoption of Resolution 1706, which foresaw the replacement of AMIS by expanding the existing UN Mission in Sudan from the South of the country to the Darfur region.

Some AU actors were sceptical about the idea of a UN takeover and preferred strengthening AMIS through more UN backing (Bashua 2014, 95). However, the AU ultimately supported Resolution 1706, which provided that the military presence should maintain an 'African participation and character' and 'invited' the consent of the Sudanese government, thus acknowledging two central demands of the AU (AU PSC 2006; UNSC 2006b). Still, the government of Omar al-Bashir vehemently rejected the idea of UN troops in Darfur. Having emphasized the principle of host state consent, the UNSC now had to acknowledge that the PSC enjoyed a higher level of legitimacy in the eyes of the Sudanese government as a crucial legitimization audience (Bashua 2014: 96–97). It came to see the AU as a broker for a UN presence and consequently endorsed its leadership in implementing the peace agreement. At the High-Level Consultations between the UN, the AU and the Sudanese government in November 2006, the idea of a hybrid mission eventually secured the consent of the administration in Khartoum and paved the way to an agreement for a comprehensive peacekeeping operation (Prinsloo and Van Niekerk 2017, 407–412).

The subsequent authorization of UNAMID through Resolution 1769 asserted the UN's authority as the global provider of effective peace and security. At the same time, it

reacted to criticism of the failed Resolution 1706 by acknowledging AU ownership in both the military and the political process. In this, the launch of the mission resonated with a parallel push by the UN to harness the benefits of including regional organizations in global peacekeeping more generally, while maintaining its own authority (UN Secretary-General 2008). Insofar, while the mission was crafted ad hoc out of the necessity of ensuring host state consent, it transcended the immediate political constellation in Darfur. In the words of the then Norwegian Ambassador to the UN, Johan Ludvik Løvald, UNAMID was ‘more than just a joint peacekeeping operation’, as it combined the UN’s experience in security matters with the AU’s ‘regional anchoring’ (UNSC 2007c, 17). Representatives of UNSC Member States hailed it as a ‘key formula’ (UNSC 2007b, 8) to put the partnership rhetoric in practice and as a potential model for future UN-AU cooperation (UNSC 2007a, 17).

These sanguine appraisals contrasted with considerable conflict behind the scenes. Protracted arguments over the exact operationalization of the mission’s ‘African character’ as well as over command and control issues had preceded Resolution 1769, which only provided a fragile compromise (Plaut 2007; Xinhua News Agency 2007). Deployment proceeded slowly. However, UN and AU representatives saw past these issues because UNAMID reflected the compatibility and mutually reinforcing nature of the UN’s and AU’s self-legitimation in this phase. The AU constructed the mission as a means to maintain its ambitions while legitimating the UN as a partner to ensure effectiveness in light of the shortcomings of AMIS. Noting the AU’s problems and under moral pressure to engage more actively, the UN supported this arrangement, thereby validating the AU’s growing role in African peace and security matters (Gelot 2012, 125–132).

### *Phase 2: Competitive legitimation and delegitimation*

It was only when frictions in broader AU-UN peacekeeping relations emerged that the cooperation in UNAMID became problematized openly. From around 2009, the AU grew doubtful whether the peacekeeping partnership with the UN contributed to its aspirations of increasing its security footprint on the region. The Agenda 2063 reform process with its renewed emphasis on Pan-African discourse as a source of self-legitimation for the AU formed an important background to this shift (Gelot and Söderbaum 2018). In the field of peacekeeping specifically, frustration mounted that promises of more ownership and UN support did not materialize. AU officials argued that by refusing to engage in a discussion about more systematic funding to AU peacekeeping efforts, the UN was foregoing its self-ascribed responsibility for global peace and security (Antonio 2014). Against this background, the AU PSC (2015, 9) emphasized the larger significance of its regional peacekeeping work, arguing that ‘African peace operations represent local responses to global problems and effective African peace operations thus represent a significant contribution to the global common good’. The AU even delegitimated the UN by arguing that African states pay particular attention to international norms and colonial history, issues that regional actors like the AU were supposedly more responsive to:

The political legitimacy of external actors is proving controversial as conflicts shift from inter-state to intra-state. External interventions are increasingly being viewed with reluctance by

national actors for a range of reasons, including sovereignty, historical reasons and perceptions linked to impartiality. This is where regional and sub-regional organizations have shown their comparative strength. [...] their role is often less controversial than other external actors, primarily because their actions are anchored on the principles and norms that their members have subscribed to. In essence, regional organizations enjoy a high degree of legitimacy. (AU Commission 2012, 26)

Thus invoking regional rather than global audiences, the AU legitimated itself as a leader in African peace and security matters. It called on the UNSC to take the AU's position and priorities into account (AU Commission 2012, 12), demanded more UN funding for AU operations, and pushed for a more 'innovative' and 'flexible' interpretation of the provisions of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter (AU Commission 2012). Although these appeals remained rather vague, they were clearly geared towards relaxing legal hierarchies, including the requirement of prior authorization of AU peace operations by the UNSC, and eliciting more material support for such operations (Lotze 2018, 292–231).

Apart from being sidelined in Mali and Libya (Welz 2018), the AU was particularly dissatisfied with the role the UN accorded it in Darfur. Its preference for a more integrated, inclusive approach led by Sudanese stakeholders did not fit with the UN's critical stance towards the government – another example of frictions emerging from different priorities regarding legitimation audiences (AU PSC 2011a). The International Criminal Court's arrest warrant against the then president Omar al-Bashir in 2009 despite the AU's appeal to the UNSC to defer the proceedings was a turning point in this respect. In response, the AU demanded due consideration of its role in UNAMID (African Union 2011) and asserted its independent actorness as a mediator in the peace process outside of the mission (Akuffo 2010, 82–84; AU PSC 2011b).

The UN did not entirely accommodate these concerns. It reasserted its supreme authority, while at the same time rejecting the notion that by authorizing a peacekeeping mission it would automatically assume fiscal responsibility for it (HIPPO 2015, 64; UNSC 2012, 5). The Western UNSC members in particular pushed back against what they perceived as demands that they should foot the bill for regional peacekeeping adventures (Tieku and Gelot 2017, 131–132). To delegitimize such claims, the UN questioned whether regional organizations have the necessary impartiality in regional conflicts to ensure effective peacekeeping (HIPPO 2015, 29), thus invoking its standing as impartial representative of the global 'international community', which constituted its main legitimation audience.

At the same time, the UN realized that many of the world's most pressing security threats defied its classical approach to peace and security. Secretary-General António Guterres acknowledged that some of the principles of his organization's peacekeeping doctrine, such as impartiality and host-state consent, had prevented it from intervening effectively in non-traditional conflicts involving armed non-state actors (UNSC 2017). This creates a rationale for drawing on actors without those restrictions. In turn, the AU has argued that its own flexible and robust normative framework for peace operations allows more rapid and effective deployment than the UN's (AU PSC 2015, 2; de Coning 2017).

In an attempt to tap the productive potential of doctrinal distinctions, the two organizations have started exploring more flexible frameworks for cooperation.<sup>7</sup> Various models

for financial burden-sharing, joint planning and consultative (rather than joint) decision-making, as outlined for example in the HIPPO report (2015) and the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security (2017), are on the table. The common denominator in these debates is the notion of complementarity, i.e. the idea that regional organizations would leverage their comparative advantages in areas such as rapid crisis response, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency, while the UN would focus on backing up initial deployments with more long-term missions (Lotze 2018, 226). The concept leaves room for interpretations that accommodate both organization's self-legitimation strategies. The AU can claim that complementarity represents a commitment by the UN to move away from a hierarchical relationship and promises ownership (AU PSC 2015), whereas the UN can emphasize the effectiveness-boosting impact of regional partnerships based on a division of labour (UN General Assembly and Security Council 2015).

Against the background of these dynamics, UN and AU assessments of UNAMID's viability have become increasingly negative. Both sides doubt that the rigid hybrid approach relying on parallel and formally equal involvement of both partners is an appropriate form to realize complementarity. Internal criticism of UNAMID's structures especially on part of the UN has reinforced this perception. A special research report noted already in 2011 that the complexities of the mission have exacerbated the general tensions between the UNSC and the PSC (Security Council Report 2011, 2). UN and UNAMID officials have pointed to several unintended effects of the hybrid design: the requirements of dual command and doctrinal distinctions increased coordination costs; the insistence on an 'African character' unnecessarily limited the recruitment options of the mission; and the Sudanese government was able to play the UN and the AU against each other in negotiations over mandated activities (Forti 2019, 5; Prinsloo and Van Niekerk 2017, 410–1).<sup>8</sup>

These evaluations bear out those advocating a clearer division of labour between the UN and the AU instead of hybrid missions. Notably, even the main original legitimating notion of UNAMID, its 'African character', is being handled flexibly to ensure sufficient troop contributions (Henke 2016). At times, half of the top ten troop contributing countries were from outside the continent, although numbers have shifted towards a stronger African component more recently.<sup>9</sup> At the time of writing, the UNAMID website boasts UN peacekeeping as a '[g]lobal contribution for global peace', arguing that the UN's globally recruited troops 'bring different cultures and experience to the job' – which is diametrically opposed to the original idea that local cultural affinities and knowledge make regional responses more legitimate.<sup>10</sup> Routine mandate renewals preserved UNAMID's hybrid structure for the simple reason that both organizations continued to benefit from the mission in its specific political context. The UN uses the AU to maintain the Sudanese government's consent, while the AU can look past its factual lack of ownership because it can use UNAMID to leverage its claim to be a leader in African peace and security.<sup>11</sup> Beyond the unique Darfur context, however, hybridity does not serve their self-legitimation interests anymore, and there are currently no indications that the model will be replicated elsewhere after the drawdown of UNAMID, the exact timeline of which is still unclear at the time of writing.<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion

This article investigated the development of the hybrid UNAMID operation from a harbinger of a new era of global-regional peacekeeping cooperation to a ‘model to be avoided’ in the eyes of its creators. Drawing on the IR literature on legitimation, it argued that assessments of the mission’s legitimacy do not directly reflect criteria of performance and interoperability. While these issues matter, they are filtered through broader self-legitimation processes in which the UN and the AU assert, contest and negotiate their roles in African peace and security. These self-legitimation dynamics provided a constitutive context for the (de-)legitimation of UNAMID. Over time, an initial process of mutual legitimation gave way to competitive legitimation and occasionally even delegitimation between the two organizations. In this latter phase, the UN and the AU prioritized different audiences that judge peacekeeping against divergent interpretive contexts – a Western-centric ‘international community’ concerned about effective peacekeeping and impartiality on the one hand and a regional political community founded upon notions of a shared colonial history on the other. Moving towards a discourse of complementarity rather than integration and equality, the UN and AU created a context in which UNAMID was delegitimated because the hybrid approach tied them into a rigid form of cooperation that was incompatible with their changing role conceptions. UNAMID’s poor performance did not initially and exclusively *cause* these changes in self-legitimation, but – inverting the constitutive relationship – it is now widely mobilized to justify further recalibrations in AU-UN relations.

These insights demonstrate that the recognition of new agents and audiences in global-regional peacekeeping creates opportunities for synergies, but also increases the potential for friction (Williams 2013). Accordingly, research on cooperation between the UN and regional organizations needs to move away from static conceptions of hierarchy between the organizations and an overemphasis on mutual legitimation. Assuming that the UN and the AU see cooperation as a means to increase peacekeeping effectiveness, researchers and policy analysts routinely propose managerial solutions for improving interoperability and policy coherence (Biermann and Koops 2017, 26). It is easy, then, to become frustrated over the failure of the UN and the AU to agree on a formalized partnership framework. However, such perspectives ignore that effectiveness is only one dimension of much more complex legitimation discourses in African peacekeeping, which also express competing authority claims, conflicting historical narratives and diverging normative commitments. Any consensus on legitimate goals and structures can therefore only be limited and situational. Managerial solutions are of limited use under these conditions. The case of UNAMID thus reinforces the central claim of the special issue that the trend towards inter-organizational security governance generates frictions that draw our attention to the politics of navigating hybrid settings and processes (Moe and Geis 2020). By grounding our understanding of how authority is asserted, contested and negotiated between different actors under these circumstances, we can begin to make sense of the inherently contentious nature of global governance in a world characterized by increasing complexity.

## Notes

1. This article is based on original research by the author, including three months of field research at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City carried out in 2018, which

was funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

2. The dataset by Balas (2011) shows that the largest share of countries in which multi-actor peacekeeping operations have been deployed are located in Africa (11 out of 24).
3. While there are broader (Aboagye 2007; Jones and Cherif 2003) and more narrow (Balas 2011) definitions of hybridity, the term is commonly used to denote peacekeeping activities that contain an advanced level of joint planning, resourcing, coordination and monitoring between two or more security actors.
4. These accounts connect to a longstanding normative debate on the relative merits of global vs. regional security governance (Schreuer 1995).
5. This broad heuristic is inspired by case studies of legitimation processes in domestic and European contexts, see for example Vaara (2014) and Van Leeuwen (2007).
6. Barltrop (2011) offers a detailed account of the international politics of the Darfur conflict.
7. Interview with UNDPKO officials, June 12 and June 19 2018, New York.
8. See also interview with a UNDPKO official, May 3 2018, New York.
9. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unamid>, accessed February 2 2019.
10. <https://unamid.unmissions.org/military>, accessed January 10 2020.
11. Interview with a UNDPKO official, June 12 2018, New York.
12. The original drawdown plans, initiated in 2017, foresaw an exit of the last remaining troops in June 2020. Following the ouster of al-Bashir in April 2019 and the ensuing political transition in Sudan, the UNSC put troop reductions on hold and extended the mandate until October 2020 (Forti 2019, 17–22).

## Acknowledgments

Many colleagues have helped me refine my arguments at different occasions. Special thanks go to Hortense Jongen, Bryan Mabee, Mark Raymond, Fredrik Söderbaum, Daniel F. Wajner, the special issue editors and the anonymous reviewers.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

This work was supported by the German Research Foundation (DFG) under project number 377842675; and the German Academic Exchange Service under Stipend 57386478.

## Notes on contributors

*Kilian Spandler* is postdoctoral visiting researcher at the School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. His research focuses on comparative regionalism and the legitimacy of regional and global governance. He is the author of *Regional Organizations in International Society*, Palgrave, 2018.

## ORCID

*Kilian Spandler*  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1507-4988>

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