Debates

Peacekeeping as Occupation: the African Union Mission in Somalia

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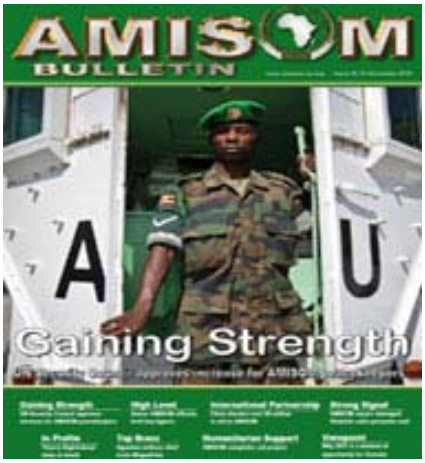
In November 2012, in the wake of a UN report accusing Uganda of backing the M23 rebel group in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Ugandan government threatened to withdraw its peacekeeping troops from Somalia. With Ugandans constituting at least one third of the 17,000 strong peacekeeping mission in Somalia, the media warned of the potential for a 'security vacuum' absent the Ugandan forces. The spatial metaphor of emptiness implied by this term is striking considering the massive influx of arms and military actors in Somalia since late 2006, all in the name of 'peace'. While Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni did not follow through with his threat, he was exercising newfound leverage as one of the continent's leading brokers in the market for violent labor.

In *The War Machines* (2011), anthropologist Danny Hoffman suggests that we think of violence as a mode of work. Like their counterparts in Sierra Leone and Liberia where Hoffman conducted his ethnographic study, violent work has become an increasingly secure source of employment for Ugandan men who work as armed 'rebels' in Congo, as 'peacekeepers' in Somalia, and as private security 'contractors' in Iraq. Crucial to the nature of this work, according to Hoffman, is flexibility of movement: the 'ability to allow for the temporary colonization of space and then, when necessary, the rapid redeployment of bodies to another location' (Hoffman 2011: 172). While Hoffman points to multiple sources of the demand for this form of labor, from transnational mining companies, to private security, to the state itself, he devotes less attention to the discourses and practices that produce and define the movement of monies, arms, and troops, naturalizing some while criminalizing others (see Maurer, Coutin, and Yngvesson 2002). Through an examination of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), I suggest that 'peacekeeping' is a form of violent labor– – an occupation of two sorts – characterized not only by the colonization



of space but also by a substantial amount of legitimation work by transnational governing bodies like the United Nations and the African Union.

From the seemingly banal text of UN Security Council resolutions, to AMISOM's flashy monthly magazine celebrating the opening of Mogadishu's FIFA-refurbished soccer stadium, to mind-numbing EU funding reports, the institutions and bureaucrats that design peacekeeping operations devote considerable energies to portray the sudden influx of armed labor as a legitimate, 'neutral' and stabilizing presence in foreign territories. Like discourses of development, UN rhetoric on peacekeeping subsists on a logic that appears to stand outside political-historical context, inserting itself to fill seemingly vacuous minds and territories as needed.

Launched with an initial six-month mandate in January 2007, AMISOM is formally operated by the African Union. In effect, however, AMISOM constitutes the UN Security Council's legalization of an illegal military operation:[1] just one month before the Security Council vote, 50,000 US-backed Ethiopian troops had invaded Somalia with the declared objective of unseating the Islamic Courts Union—the first stable government Somalia had seen in years (Hagman and Hoehn 2009; Lindley 2010; Kamola 2013). Despite the illegality of the Ethiopian

Rationalisation of AMISOM'S Work in Progress

intervention, both US and UN officials discouraged their immediate withdrawal, stating their concerns, again, about a potential 'security vacuum.' With as many as 20,000 deaths and 2 million displaced in a matter of months, this military adventure had indeed wreaked an incredible amount of destruction. Rather than demand an investigation, however, the UN authorized the continued presence of foreign troops with the declared goals of restoring stability and supporting national reconciliation. In just one document (Security Council Resolution 1744), the UN simultaneously affirmed its respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia, and rendered legal the illegal presence of foreign troops. [2] It is in this sense that I suggest we think of peacekeeping operations not just as territorializing practices, but also as bureaucratic ones, in which creative rule-making procedures are integral to the circumvention or re-writing of existing international laws (see de Goede 2007). While the territorializing dimension is performed through the conquering of space, the legitimating dimension is performed through press conferences, workshops, AMISOM publications, and Security Council resolutions.

Today, AMISOM consists of over 17,000 armed personnel and dozens of civilian staff.[3] With forces drawn from Burundi, Uganda, Djibouti Kenya, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Mali, Senegal, and Zambia, AMISOM fulfills Alexis de Toqueville's call for the creation of a special 'African army,' [4] designed to minimize the cost in European lives but with substantial financial and bureaucratic support from outside Somalia. With an approximate annual budget of $700 million[5] , funding comes in various forms (arms, 'logistical' materials, trainings, salaries for troops) from the US, UN, European Union, NATO, China, Turkey, and Qatar. Collectively, these actors constitute the thought and practice behind a dizzying array of governing bodies that remain relatively invisible in contrast to the black bodies of AMISOM that constitute the operation's pubic face: UN Support Office for AMISOM, the Joint Security Committee, the Joint Financial Management Board, the Technical Selection Committee, the National Security and Stabilization Plan, the Somali Reconstruction and Development Plan, the International Contact Group on Somalia, the UN Trust Fund for AMISOM, the African Peace Support Operations, the AU commission for African Peace Facility, the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia, and the Restructuring and Rebuilding Fund for Somali Security Sector Reform. In this web of committees, commissions, plans, and 'support' offices, mid-level bureaucrats are tasked with producing public and not-so-public documents that account for their institution's role and that delineate the legitimate from the illegitimate (whether in the use of violence or the flow of monies). It is this legitimating work that distinguishes peacekeeping operations from other forms of violent labor.

Public documents (reports, press releases, etc.) celebrate the latest round of trainings, while semi-public ones (grant reports, TORs) account for money spent or to be spent. By studying these documents, we observe the painstaking preoccupation with terminology, characterized by debates over when to use the terms *peace-building, peace-keeping, peace-support, or peace enforcement*. While each term is intended to signify a different type of operation, all are intended to be distinguished from war and violence, and instead be associated with the politically neutral and morally righteous (see Pugh 2007).

Further examination of public documents teaches us about ongoing 'capacity building' efforts: US military and private security companies train Ugandan troops in Kampala prior to their deployment; US private security companies obtain State Department contracts to transport the Ugandans to Mogadishu; and upon arrival, the Ugandan government (like its Burundian counterpart) hires the 'non-profit' US security company Bancroft Global to 'transform' these 'conventional combat forces' into a 'much more sophisticated peace-support operations capability.' (Not announced publicly is the fact that the State Department reimburses the Ugandan and Burundian governments for the Bancroft-led trainings rather than pay Bancroft directly). Ugandan troops then train Somalis, but the Somalis also fly to Kigali and Djibouti City for (re)-training by Rwandan and Djiboutian forces, who themselves are trained by US or private security actors. And to ensure ultimate 'professionalism,' private security companies like Bancroft (including Dyncorp and Pacific Architects and Engineers) conduct follow up trainings of these same Somali forces. Collectively these seemingly endless 'capacity building' projects serve to legitimate the movement of certain troops, monies, and arms into specific spaces.

But what of the daily realities of life in Somalia? Without direct observation, we know little of the content of these trainings and the extent to which they emphasize operational 'flexibility' over the rule of law. We hear little of the salaries not paid, of arms sold on the black market, and of lives lost – at least one source places an estimate at 3,000 AMISOM troops, which may surpasses the total number of UN peacekeepers who have died in all previous operations.[6] Nor do we hear of abuses committed by the peacekeepers themselves against the population they were called on to protect. While UN reports have documented black market arms sales by AMISOM troops to Al-Shabaab, Human Rights Watch reports of indiscriminate mortar and rocket attacks by AMISOM in civilian areas, leading not only to loss of life but repeated displacement.[7] And while key decision-makers may have reasons to keep such stories from the public eye, mid-level bureaucrats are steeped in emails, trainings, conferences, and paperwork. The documents they produce – and the very process of producing them – work to simplify complexity, avoid ambiguity, and generate a common framework of knowledge and meaning tied not to any specific place or incident, but that extends elastically across time and space (See Feldman 2012). At the same time, however, they are designed to conjure a kind of political complexity and precarity that justifies the need for bureaucratic 'expertise'. In some ways, the rationalization of AMISOM's work by AU, EU, State Department, UN, and Somali bureaucrats seems to serve not only the purpose of public legitimation, but also a kind of self-hypnosis though which bureaucratic officials persuade themselves of their high moral purpose (See Scott 1992). In this sense, the contracting of violent labor seems as much about the empty clichés of rule of law and democracy promotion as it is about physical occupation of a given territory. While it is on the streets of Kismayo and Mogadishu that violence is made real, it is in the bureaucratic offices of Nairobi, Geneva, and New York that it is made banal.

Notes

1. When the Kenyan army launched its own (illegal) invasion of southern Somalia in October 2011, the UNSC again legalized their presence by authorizing an increase in the number of peacekeepers from 12,000 to 17, 731 in order to account for—and assume responsibility for paying the salaries of— the Kenyan forces.

2. United Nations, 'Security Council Authorizes Six-Month African Union Mission in Somalia,' Security Council Resolution 1744, http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/sc8960.doc.htm3 Difficult to determine exact figures, especially when factoring in the various funding arms with agencies/offices focused on AMISOM. Perhaps this is worth emphasizing in the text itself?4

3. Writing in 1841, Alexis de Tocqueville warned of the potential human and financial cost to France of long-term French military engagement in Algeria: This is an intolerable state of things that, if it continues, will nullify our actions in the world and will soon force us to abandon Africa. We must therefore find a way to make the same effort with fewer men, fewer illnesses, and less money. The best means to achieve this is the creation of a special African army '(Tocqueville 2001: 75). http://forums.ssrc.org/kujenga-amani/2012/11/19/towards-more-effective-partnership-peacekeeping-in-africa/ 6

4. James Traub, 'From Black Hawk Down to Standing Up,' http:/ www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/05/31 from_blackhawk_down_to_standing_up7HRW, 'Somalia: Stop War Crimes in Mogadishu,' (Feb 2011). See also HRW, 'Harsh War, Harsh Peace,' (April 2010)

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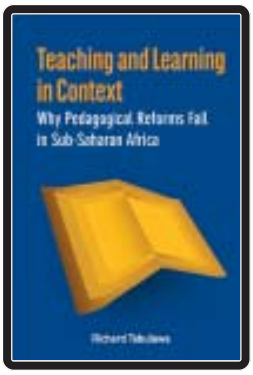
Kujenga Amani, November, 2012. Available at http://forums.ssrc.org/kujenga-amani/2012/11/19/towards-more-effective-partnership-peacekeeping-in-africa/· In 2008 the UN Monitoring Group estimated that as much as 80% of the arms, ammunition and other material supplied to support the TFG had been diverted for private purposes, to the Somali arms market or to opposition groups. (Wezeman quoting a UN report)



Teaching and Learning in Context

Why Pedagogical Reforms Fail in Sub-Saharan Africa

By Richard Tabulawa

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Since the 1990s, sub-Saharan Africa has experienced unprecedented attempts at reforming teacher and student classroom practices, with a learner-centred pedagogy regarded as an effective antidote to the prevalence of teacher-centred didactic classroom practices. Attempts at reform have been going on all over the continent. This book attempts to explain why pedagogical change has not occurred in spite of the much energy and resources that have been committed to such reforms. The book also takes us inside what the author calls 'the socio-cultural world of African classrooms' to help us understand the reasons teachers dominate classroom life and rely disproportionately on didactic methods of teaching. Its conceptual analyses capture the best of both the sociology and the anthropology of education in contexts of poverty, as well as the politics of education. The book concludes that a socio-cultural approach should be the basis for developing culturally responsive indigenous pedagogies, though these may or may not turn out to be in any way akin to constructivist learner-centred pedagogies.