

# Justifying Interventions in Africa

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**(De)Stabilizing Sovereignty in Liberia,  
Burundi and the Congo**

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# Contents

<i>Preface to the Paperback Edition</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xii
<b>1 The Study of Sovereignty, Intervention and Peace Operations in International Relations</b>	<b>1</b>
I. Situating the study	4
II. Methodological reflections	5
<b>2 Analysing a Moving Target: The Complex Concept of Sovereignty</b>	<b>10</b>
I. The sovereign state: Prerequisites	12
II. Analysing the interpretation of sovereignty	23
<b>3 Intervention, Justifications and Interpretations: The Case of ECOWAS in Liberia</b>	<b>39</b>
I. A complicated history: Liberia	40
II. The actors and the decision to intervene	45
III. The reactions from the international community	52
IV. Partial conclusion: Destabilizing sovereignty?	59
<b>4 Sanctions, Justifications and Reactions: The Case of the Regional Initiative in Burundi</b>	<b>63</b>
I. A segregated society: Burundi	63
II. The actors and the decision to impose sanctions	70
III. The reactions from the international community	79
IV. Partial conclusion: Destabilizing sovereignty?	88
<b>5 Intervention, Justifications and Interpretations: The Case of the SADC in the Congo</b>	<b>92</b>
I. The Congo crisis becoming the endless crisis	93
II. The actors and the decision to intervene	97
III. The reactions from the international community	106
IV. Partial conclusion: Destabilizing sovereignty?	112

<b>6 Capacity-Building and Local Ownership: Indicators of Sovereignty?</b>	<b>116</b>
I. Translating sovereignty to operational indicators	117
II. A practical vision of field concepts: Unclear definitions give vague functions?	125
III. The functions of capacity-building and local ownership: Reinforcing the target states' sovereignty and/or the United Nations' legitimacy	136
IV. Partial conclusion: How do the paradoxical functions of capacity-building and local ownership affect the interpretation of sovereignty?	142
<b>7 (De)Stabilization: So What? An Analysis of the Political Consequences of the Interventions on a Regional and International Level</b>	<b>145</b>
I. The practical consequences of the regional interventions in Liberia, Burundi and the Congo	146
II. The United Nations in Liberia, Burundi and the Congo: Building unstable states?	158
III. Partial conclusion	175
<b>8 Concluding Remarks</b>	<b>179</b>
I. The utility of the analytical framework	180
II. Empirical findings	181
III. Theoretical findings	185
<i>Notes</i>	190
<i>Bibliography</i>	195
<i>Index</i>	219

# Preface to the Paperback Edition

This timely book addresses some of the most pressing concerns in contemporary international relations such as the challenges of international interventions to protect civilians against atrocities by warring parties, the creation of stable states characterized by good governance and sustainable peace, and how to manage spoilers trying to derail such developments. The author provides compelling and controversial answers to these challenges by interrogating the legitimacy of the international community's claims about its 'responsibility to protect' and the unintended consequences of international statebuilding and peacebuilding missions. It explores the tensions between external statebuilding processes and local ownership and expectations of sovereignty. Empirically the book draws on fieldwork in Africa where these concerns clearly are at the forefront in statebuilding and peacebuilding processes. In the three cases, Liberia, Burundi and Congo interventions were justified on reasons linked to stabilization such as peace and order, and to humanitarian concerns. Yet, the analysis in this book demonstrates that the interventions despite perhaps good intentions were precarious and had unintended and counterproductive effects on stability and sovereignty.

Most contemporary interventions such as peacekeeping operations, peacebuilding missions and sanctions are made with the stated aim to restore order in a precarious state where peace and security is absent. Hence, it is from this perspective the analysis of the puzzle of international intervention proceeds: how to stabilize a country through external intervention without destabilizing the sovereignty of the targeted state. The pressing theme of the book is to explore how sovereignty is interpreted by a systematic comparison of international and regional interventions aimed at restoring stability in three African states, Liberia, Burundi and Congo. More specifically, it critically examines the justifications for the interventions provided by the external, intervening actors, the (re)interpretations of sovereignty that follows from these justifications, and the consequences for the conceptual development as well as the practice of sovereignty.

Written from a social constructivist perspective this insightful book contributes to theorizing the field of international peacekeeping, a

field often mistakenly criticised for being atheoretical. Nina Wilén ambitiously sets out to explore the complex relationship between three key contested and interlinked concepts in International Relations: Sovereignty, Stability and Intervention. Two related, and deeply complex aspects of sovereignty are challenged: the sovereign state and the state of sovereignty as the author tackles the question of how sovereignty can be de-stabilized and what this actually means both theoretically and in practice. Mainly concerned with the changing aspects of sovereignty, the legal aspects of sovereignty seen as representing continuity is put aside while the political aspects of sovereignty allowing for change is put in focus. In so doing the analysis captures change in the concept as well as in the practice of sovereignty and it explores how change comes about and the driving forces behind such change. The notion of stability is explored in terms of sovereignty and the book demonstrates various destabilizing influences on sovereignty both from internal and external sources and yet, the author attempts to disentangle and distinguish the various destabilizing influences on sovereignty to be able to distil the impact of external actors. The distinction between internal and external becomes blurred as external actors destabilize both the external and the internal dimensions of sovereignty. The concept of intervention is elaborated on in relation to sovereignty and stability and is interpreted widely as external efforts to influence politics of a sovereign state, but not to govern the state in question, nor to take over part of their territory.

A major strength of the book is the in-depth, theory-based empirical analysis. An important reason for this success is the well-developed, coherent theoretical framework. The study moves from the higher levels of abstraction down the *ladder of abstraction* to lower levels. At the highest level of abstraction sovereignty is viewed as an international norm and/or theoretical concept. Then, the study shifts to the lower levels of abstraction where sovereignty is regarded as practice challenged by intervention. Here sovereignty is operationalized in terms of local ownership and capacity building to provide answers to questions about how peacekeepers interpret the notions of sovereignty in the field. Such research assists in deepening the understanding of how international actors undermine local agency i.e. capacity to uphold sovereignty, create aid dependencies, and result in brain drain while reducing the local actors to the role of spectators. No doubt, this relates to the fact that capacity building and local ownership are not implemented in practice but as the author points out, function as “rhetorical legitimiser”. This insightful discussion adds to the many strengths of the book.

*Justifying Intervention in Africa: (De)Stabilizing sovereignty in Liberia, Burundi and the Congo* is a well-argued, logically structured and theoretically stringent contribution to the debate about challenges and changes of a key concept such as sovereignty in IR-theory. I consider the book to be a true value added to the growing literature concerned with peacebuilding, statebuilding, as well as to the research on humanitarian interventions and the responsibility to protect. The analysis brings new and important theoretical insights as well as breaks new empirical ground. In conclusion, this is a well-written and thoroughly researched monograph. Due to its original approach it manages to contribute and add value to the broad debate about challenges and changes to sovereignty and to theorize peacekeeping, peacebuilding and sanctions as well as statebuilding.

Professor Annika Björkdahl, Lund University , Sweden

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# Abbreviations

AFDL	Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo–Zaire
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AMIB	African Mission in Burundi
AU	African Union
BINUB	United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi
CIAT	Comité International d’Accompagnement de la Transition
CIMIC	civil–military coordination
CNDD–FDD	National Council for the Defense of the Democracy–Forces for the Defense of Democracy
DDR	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOMIL	ECOWAS Mission in Liberia
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FDLR	Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda
FLS	Frontline States
FRODEBU	Front for Democracy in Burundi
GEMAP	Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program
ICG	International Contact Group
ICGL	International Contact Group of Liberia
IEE	L’Institut d’Etudes Européennes
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INPFL	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
ISDSC	Interstate Defense and Security Committee
LNP	Liberia National Police
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MDP	Mutual Defence Pact

MLC	Movement for the Liberation of the Congo
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MONUC	United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
MPLA	People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola – Labour Party
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OAU	Organization of African Unity
ONUB	United Nations Operations in Burundi
OSLEG	Operation Sovereign Legitimacy
PALIPEHUTU–FNL	Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People–National Liberation Forces
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission
PMAD	Protocol for Mutual Assistance on Defence
RCD	Congolese Rally for Democracy
RSCC	Regional Sanctions Coordinating Committee
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
SMC	Standing Mediation Committee
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SWAPO	South West African People's Organization
TWP	True Whig Party
ULIMO	United Liberation of Liberia Movement for Democracy
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOL	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Liberia
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UPRONA	Union for National Progress
US	United States

