

Abstract

Despite efforts to better understand and address the root causes of conflict, violence continues to affect nations and communities around the world, displacing millions and avoiding resolution. Global institutions, developed to promulgate a more cooperative and peaceful world order, have failed to adequately resolve conflicts, with many spanning multiple decades, regionalising, and involving an increasing number of non-state actors. Through historically situating the roots of liberal peacebuilding and analysing recent UN and AU approaches to peace consolidation and conflict resolution, this dissertation seeks to better understand the ways in which these institutions' pasts have influenced their present approaches. By bringing together historicist and sociological approaches to peace research, and following in a constructivist IR tradition, this dissertation traces norm formation at these institutions and contextualises calls for more "locally-led" approaches. I use historical research to situate the roots of UN and AU approaches and conduct thematic analysis to investigate norm shifts related to state sovereignty, protection of civilians, conflict prevention, gender, development, democracy, peacebuilding, and bottom-up approaches to peace. I find that while norms have shifted significantly in both institutions since the 1990s, influenced by the rise of human security and non-indifference norms, these norms continue to clash with earlier sovereignty-focused norms. Though they have different historical roots, the UN and AU have embedded similar norms and face similar challenges in reconciling tensions between these norms. As global conflict continues to evolve and institutions grapple with their efficacy, newer norms focused on gender, peacebuilding, and bottom-up efforts may provide opportunities for new conceptions of security that centre new referent actors as vital to peace consolidation.