



The African Mission in Burundi

The Successful Management of Violent Ethno-Political Conflict?

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Abstract

The African Union was established in 2002 to promote peace, security and stability on the African continent. Since then the AU has launched peace support operations to help regulate conflicts in Burundi, Sudan, Somalia and the Comoros. This paper evaluates the first of these endeavours: the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) in 2003-4. The purpose of this analysis is to explore the AU's nascent approach to peacekeeping and to investigate the relationship between the Union's aspiration, experience and prospect to provide 'African solutions to African problems' in the security realm. The AMIB case study suggests that both the capabilities of the intervener and the conflict context in which it intervenes affect a mission's chances of success. Not only the combination of the two, but also how they relate to each other matters. Different actors affect the contextual conditions for mission success. More support from one actor can to some extent compensate for less support from another. This was the case with AMIB, where South African commitment and capabilities made up for limited resources on part of the AU, its member states and institutions and insufficient interest from the international donor community.

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1. Introduction

The African Union (AU) was initially proposed at a summit of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in Libya in 1999. In the subsequent Sirte Declaration the OAU Heads of State and Government supported the establishment of the African Union in its predecessor's place. The purpose of the new organization was to accelerate the integration of the continent to enable it to play an increased role in international affairs whilst also addressing social, economic and political problems in Africa. The Constitutive Act of the African Union was adopted at the Lomé Summit in 2000, and the AU was officially launched at the 1st Assembly of its Heads of State and Government in Durban in 2002. The Union currently has 53 members and covers most of the African continent (Tavares, 2010: 21-34).¹

Amongst the key objectives of the African Union is to 'promote peace, security and stability on the continent' (Constitutive Act of the African Union, 2000: 3-f). To this end, the Union has undertaken peace support operations to help regulate conflicts in Burundi, Sudan, Somalia and the Comoros. This paper takes a closer look at the first of these endeavours: the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB). It begins by examining the constitutional provisions and institutional structures that allow the AU to intervene in civil wars. It then goes on to give a brief account of the Burundi conflict and previous external interventions. Subsequently, the paper examines the AU mission undertaken in the country from 2003 to 2004. It evaluates the mission vis-à-vis its mandated objectives and the conflict situation in which it engaged. The analysis assesses not only what the mission achieved, but also how it achieved this. The paper explores both the problems that AMIB encountered and the solutions put in place to overcome them. Based on these considerations, this contribution engages in a discussion of the factors that conditioned the success of the Burundi mission. The purpose of this final section is to consider the relevance of the AU's capabilities and the conflict context in which it engaged to the success of its intervention. The paper concludes

¹ Morocco has refused to formally join the AU because it opposes the membership of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. However, Morocco has special status within the AU and benefits from the services of the AU institutions. Moroccan delegates also participate at AU functions. Madagascar, Niger and Côte d'Ivoire have had their memberships suspended after irregularities in transfers of political power and leadership. Eritrea recalled its ambassadors to the AU after the Union called for sanctions against it due to its alleged support for Islamist rebels attempting to topple the Somali government (AU, 2011).

by discussing what this case reveals about the African Union's ability to provide peace, stability and security on the continent and about the conditions for success in peace support operations more generally.

2. The emerging AU approach to peacekeeping

In order to assess the AU's ability to bestow peace, security and stability on the African continent, it is useful to take a closer look at its provisions for intervention in the internal affairs of its member states. The following will examine the Union's constitutional mandate and institutional prerequisites for such interventions.

2.1 Constitutional provisions for intervention

The Organisation of African Unity was established in 1963. It set out to rid the African continent of colonialism, to promote unity and solidarity among African states, to facilitate the peaceful settlement of disputes between its members and to ensure human rights and better living conditions for African people (Organisation of African Unity Charter, 1963). Despite these great ambitions, the organization has been widely criticized for being little more than a talking shop, lacking both the will and the ability to enforce its decisions; thus, allowing the persistence of violent conflict and gross human rights violations on the continent. These failures are linked to the constitutional set-up of the OAU. Its most prominent principles were: respect for the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of states and non-interference in the internal affairs of its members (Mwanasali, 2008). This political straight jacket essentially barred OAU involvement in issues considered to be within the jurisdiction of its member states, unless it was explicitly invited to interfere. There were cases in which the OAU did intervene, but not without the consent of the belligerent parties.²

When the African Union succeeded the OAU in 2002, it dismissed the policy of non-interference and adopted a covenant of non-indifference instead. Like its predecessor, the

² The OAU sought to prevent the escalation of border disputes between Algeria and Morocco in 1963 and between Ethiopia and Somalia in the 1970s. It was actively involved in the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa in the early 1990s and it made concerted efforts to deal with the Comoros crisis in the late 1990s and early 2000 (Mwanasali, 2008: 41-61).

AU respects the national sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its member states. However, unlike the OAU, and many other international organizations, the AU has self-imposed a constitutional duty and explicit right to intervene in its member states under certain circumstances. The Constitutive Act of the African Union explicitly states

‘The right of the Union to intervene in a member state pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity’ (Constitutive Act of the African Union, 2000: 4-h)

Moreover, it stresses ‘The right of member states to request intervention from the Union in order to restore peace and security’ (Constitutive Act of the African Union, 2000: 4-j).

Three years later amendments to the Constitutive Act added a further right to intervene in case of ‘A serious threat to legitimate order to restore peace and stability to the member state of the Union upon the recommendation of the Peace and Security Council’ (Protocol on the Amendments to the Constitutive Act of the African Union, 2003: 4-h).

With these statements the AU initiated a new legal and doctrinal approach to conflict regulation. This signalled a departure from the OAU’s preferred institutional approach, which had focused less on intervention and more on establishing institutional early warning capacities. The AU is the first continental organization to give itself such a clear mandate to intervene in the internal affairs of its member states (Mwanasali, 2008: 41-61). It is explicitly committed to its ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P)³ and has already taken an interventionist stance in a number of internal conflicts, amongst them in Burundi, Sudan and Somalia.

The African Union’s commitment to the R2P concept and the human security paradigm challenges the realist notion of state security. It suggests that the sovereignty of states is conditional. Indeed it makes a legal provision for the Union to intervene if sovereignty is not being exercised ‘responsibly’ within its member states (Tavares, 2010: 21-34). The AU

³ Responsibility to Protect emerged as a concept following the work by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty in the early 2000s (Evans, 2008). The idea of R2P is to end mass atrocity crimes and ensure the protection of civilians, ideally by their own state, but if it lacks the will or the ability to fulfil this obligation, the international community shall support it, and if necessary intervene and take over responsibility for the protection of civilians within its territory. The concept was adopted by the 2005 United Nations (UN) World Summit on the future direction of the UN, confirmed by the 2006 UN Security Council Resolution 1674 on protection of civilians and the 2009 UN General Assembly sessions on implementing the Responsibility to Protect (Peen Rodt, 2011a).

constitutive principles proscribe engagement, interference and non-indifference, but how does that relate to AU policy and practice with regard to peacekeeping on the continent? The following section of the paper explores the institutional mechanisms, which underpin the AU approach to peacekeeping and security provision in Africa.

2.2 Institutional mechanisms for peacekeeping and security provision

The Constitutive Act set out the African Union's aim to promote peace and security in Africa but it did not establish mechanisms that would facilitate such a development. It simply outlined the main organs of the Union in rather general terms. Two years later the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council drew a more nuanced picture of the institutional mechanisms and governance structures that would shape the Union's policies in the security realm. Since then the AU has sought to set up a number of institutions and instruments intended to initiate, shape and implement a common African defence and security policy (Constitutive Act of the African Union, 2000; Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council, 2002; Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy, 2004).

The Assembly is the supreme organ of the AU. It consists of the Heads of State and Government of the Union's members. It meets twice a year and sets out the general guidelines and strategic direction of the Union. It determines common policies, takes decisions on recommendations from other AU organs and monitors the implementation of its policies and decisions. It adopts the budget, appoints the judges of the African Court of Justice and the Chairperson of the Commission. It also gives directives to the Executive Council with regard to the regulation of conflicts and other emergency situations. The Executive Council, composed of ministers from the member states, is tasked with the implementation of the Assembly's decisions and the composition of work programmes for the Union's interventions. It meets at least twice a year in ordinary session and can, like the Assembly, meet in extra-ordinary session more frequently, if necessary. The Permanent Representatives Committee, made up of the Ambassadors of the member states to Addis Ababa, prepares the work of the Executive Council. It sets up sub-committees and working

groups on the Council's instructions. The Pan-African Parliament (PAP) is gradually assuming some of the decision-making powers of the Assembly. In time it is intended to become the highest legislative body of the Union. Currently, the PAP has 265 elected representatives. The Authority, formerly known as the Commission, is the Union's secretariat. It comprises the President, the Vice-President and the Secretaries (former Commissioners), who together manage the day-to-day tasks and implementation of AU policies. These organs were all envisioned in the Constitutive Act in 2000 (Constitutive Act of the African Union, 2000; Tavares, 2010: 21-34).⁴

In 2002 the Union expressed its concern 'about the continued prevalence of armed conflicts in Africa and the fact that no single internal factor has contributed more to socioeconomic decline on the continent and the suffering of the civilian population than the scourge of conflicts within and between [African] states' (Protocol Establishing the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, 2002).

Consequently, the Union established the Peace and Security Council (PSC) as a standing decision-making body for the regulation of conflicts and crises in Africa. It was intended to be responsible for collective security and early warning arrangements as well as formulation and implementation of key political decisions in areas such as peacekeeping. The PSC is made up of 15 members representing the five sub-regions of Central, North, South, East and West Africa. Ten PSC members are elected for two-year terms and an additional five members are elected for three-year terms to ensure continuity. The members meet at the level of Permanent Representatives at least twice a month and at the level of Head of State and Government at least once a year with the possibility of more frequent meetings, if required. Alongside the PSC, the AU created the Panel of the Wise (PoW)⁵, the Continental

⁴ Plans for the establishment of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), the African Court of Justice, the Specialised Technical Committees and the African Financial Institutions were also set out in the Constitutive Act. However, these have been less relevant to the Union's peace support operations and are therefore not explored in this piece.

⁵ The PoW consists of five people, who have made an outstanding contribution to peace, security and development on the continent. There is one representative from each of the five geographic regions of Africa. The role of the PoW is to support the PSC and the Chairperson of the Commission in matters of peace and security (Protocol Establishing the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, 2002).

Early Warning System (CEWS)⁶, the African Standby Force (ASF)⁷, the Military Staff Committee (MSC)⁸ and the Peace Fund (PF)⁹ (Tavares, 2010: 21-34).

3. The Burundi conflict and early interventions

Burundi has experienced repeated clashes between Hutu and Tutsi groups. Despite the fact that the country is made up of an 85 per cent Hutu majority, the Tutsi minority of around 15 per cent enjoyed disproportionate levels of power following the country's independence in 1962. The Burundi Armed Forces (FAB), for example, were Tutsi-dominated, as was the government. The uneven power distribution, often exploited by the Tutsi leadership, caused a series of Hutu uprisings. In 1972 Hutu insurgents crossed into southern Burundi from neighbouring Tanzania and systematically persecuted Tutsis. The insurrection resulted in the death of between 2,000 and 3,000 Tutsi people. The incursion was met by a brutal retaliation from the Burundian army, which did not discriminate between Hutu rebels and civilians. Between 100,000 and 200,000 Hutus were killed. An estimated 150,000 fled the country, many to neighbouring Rwanda and Tanzania. The violence and oppression has since been described as reaching 'genocide levels' (Svensson, 2008: 8).

Another wave of violence, this time in the North of the country, followed President Buyoya's seizure of power in 1987 and the continued repression of the Hutu population. This caused Hutu retaliations in which a number of Tutsis were killed. The military's response cost approximately 20,000 Hutus their lives. Once again many people fled the country. The

⁶ The CEWS is designed to anticipate conflicts and formulate policy recommendations to prevent them. When fully operational this system will comprise an observation and monitoring centre, the so-called Situation Room, which is to link closely to the Regional Economic Communities' (REC) observation and monitoring units. The idea is that this network will collaborate with the UN agencies, other international institutions, non-governmental organizations and research centres. This system is intended to provide intelligence, analysis and recommendations regarding potential conflict situations. These are to be transmitted through the Chairperson of the Commission to the Peace and Security Council. The Commission Chairperson can consult belligerent parties and attempt to resolve the conflict, he or she so desires. The Chairperson may also consult the PoW before bringing the situation to the attention of the PSC (Protocol Establishing the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, 2002).

⁷ The ASF is currently under construction. The plan is that it will comprise regional brigades ready for rapid deployment on missions decided upon by the PSC or interventions authorized by the Assembly (Makinda and Okumu, 2008: 87-93).

⁸ The Military Staff Committee is being set up to advise and support the PSC in all matters relating to military and security (Makinda and Okumu, 2008: 87-93).

⁹ The Peace Fund was established to provide funding for operational activities related to peace and security, amongst these peacekeeping. The fund is made up of financial appropriations from the regular AU budget, voluntary contributions from member states, private sector, civil society, individuals and fundraising activities within and beyond Africa (Protocol Establishing the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, 2002).

refugee camps became breeding grounds for Hutu radicalism and future uprisings. Within Burundi, rebel groups formed within two different constellations: the National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD) and the Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People (PALIPEHUTU), each of which have fragmented further since then (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010; Svensson, 2008).

3.1 The Burundi civil war

The most recent violent conflict occurred shortly after the introduction of a multi-party system in Burundi in 1992. The new system introduced the country's first democratically elected Hutu President Ndadaye Melchior and a Parliament dominated by the Hutu Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU). In October 1993 President Melchior was assassinated. This caused revenge attacks on Tutsis across the country, which in turn provoked retaliation against Hutus by the Tutsi-dominated armed forces. Soon after Melchior's successor Hutu President Cyprien Ntaryamira and Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana were killed when their plane was shot down over Kigali, the circumstances of which are still disputed. Another Hutu, Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, was appointed President of Burundi in October 1994. However, within months, the mainly Tutsi Union for National Progress (UPRONA) withdrew from Parliament, sparking a new wave of violence. The events that followed threw the Great Lakes region into turmoil. In Burundi an estimated 300,000 people, most of them civilian, were killed. Across the border an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in the Rwandan genocide (BBC News, 2010; Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010).

3.2 Early interventions

Regional efforts to restore peace in Burundi began when former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere convened meetings between the Hutu FRODEBU and Tutsi UPRONA in 1996. As these initial efforts failed, Nyerere proposed a summit in Arusha for the regional Heads of State to discuss the situation in Burundi. FRODEBU and UPRONA were both represented at the summit. Tanzania and Uganda sought to persuade Burundi to accept a regional peacekeeping force, but the Burundi army resisted. Upon their return, Tutsi Major Pierre

Buyoya reclaimed power in a coup d'état supported by the army. In response, the regional powers imposed a blockade on Burundi. This in turn provoked Burundi's withdrawal from the Arusha peace process and convinced many Tutsi that Nyerere, who led the process, was partial to the Hutu cause (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010; Svensson, 1998).

After his own attempt to reach an internal settlement failed, Buyoya eventually agreed to join a second round of talks in Arusha. The Presidents of Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania all took part in these negotiations. When Nyerere died in 1999, former South African President Nelson Mandela took over as chief negotiator. This marked the beginning of South Africa's involvement in the peace process (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010; Svensson, 1998).¹⁰

The Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi was signed in August 2000.¹¹ The agreement was intended to consolidate the peace process in the country. However, the armed wings of CNDD and PALIPEHUTU, Forces of Democracy (FDD) and National Forces of Liberation (FNL), respectively, had broken away from the negotiations, demanding representation in their own right. Unable to break the deadlock, discussions continued with the political leadership, leaving out the military factions. In effect, these armed groups were not signatories to the peace agreement.¹² Continued negotiations eventually led to ceasefire agreements between these groups and the Burundi government but they were not all incorporated into the peace process until 2006 (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010; Svensson, 2008; Tavares, 2010: 29).

¹⁰ Mandela was later replaced as chief negotiator by Jacob Zuma, who was South Africa's Vice-President at the time (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010).

¹¹ The Arusha Agreement introduced provisions for a transition led by an interim government to result in democratic elections; the creation of a Senate and amendments to the composition of the National Assembly; judicial and military reforms to decrease Tutsi domination and facilitate the integration of rebel forces into the army; establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission; an independent investigation into the alleged genocide; and an international military force to assist in the transition (Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, 2000).

¹² The Arusha agreement was signed by the Burundi government, the National Assembly, CNDD, PALIPEHUTU, FRODEBU and UPRONA as well as Alliance Burundo-Africaine pour le Salut, Alliance Nationale pour le Droit et le Développement, Alliance des Vaillants, Front pour la Libération Nationale, Parti Socialiste et Panafricaniste, Parti pour le Redressement National, Parti Indépendant des Travailleurs, Parti Libéral, Parti du Peuple, Parti pour la Réconciliation du Peuple, Parti Social-Démocrate, Ralliement pour la Démocratie et le Développement Economique et Social and Rassemblement du Peuple Burundais (Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, 2000).

4. The African Mission in Burundi

The Arusha Agreement made provision for an international peacekeeping force in Burundi. The October 2002 ceasefire agreement between the Transitional Government of Burundi (TGoB) and the Armed Political Parties and Movements (APPMs) stressed that the truce should be verified and controlled by a peacekeeping mission, either mandated by the UN or undertaken by the AU. The ceasefire agreement signed in December 2002 confirmed that the verification and control of that agreement should be conducted by the African Union (Agoagye, 2004). The next section of the paper takes a closer look at the AU mission that followed.

4.1 Mission and mandate

The African Mission in Burundi was the AU's first deployment of military forces. The mission was approved by the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in February 2003. AMIB was mandated for one year and was deployed from April 2003 to May 2004. It was an integrated mission comprising military contingents from Ethiopia, Mozambique and South Africa as well as observers from Burkina Faso, Gabon, Mali, Togo and Tunisia. Mozambique initially committed one strengthened company of 228 persons to the mission. Ethiopia promised to provide one battalion and two additional companies, 858 persons in total. South Africa agreed to send one battalion, two additional companies and other elements, a total of 1,600 soldiers. Once fully deployed, the mission numbered 3,335 people. South Africa, the lead nation and main contributor to the mission, appointed Force Commander Major General Binda and Ethiopia assigned Deputy Force Commander Brigadier General Azele. Head of Mission Ambassador Mamadou Bah was also the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission. Ambassador Bah was assisted by two deputies from South Africa and Tanzania: Ambassador Welile Nhlapo and retired Lieutenant General Martin Mwakalindile, respectively. A third deputy from Uganda was initially planned but never deployed (Agoagye, 1994; Boshoff and Francis, 2003; Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010; Svensson, 2008; Tavares, 2010: 21-34).

AMIB replaced the South African Protection Support Detachment (SAPSD) in Burundi. Since October 2000 South Africa had deployed some 700 troops in the country to guarantee the security of politicians, especially Hutu leaders, returning to Burundi to participate in the peace process. This force was initially intended to be multi-national; however, planned contingents from Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal were never deployed, allegedly due to the precarious security situation in Burundi at the time (Agoagye, 2004; Svensson, 2008).

AMIB was primarily mandated to supervise, observe, monitor and verify the implementation of the Arusha Agreement, the ceasefire protocols and the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme in the country.¹³ The Arusha Agreement spelled out how political and military powers would be shared in post-war Burundi, whilst the ceasefire agreements mapped out how to reincorporate the former rebels into society (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010; Tavares, 2010: 21-34). The mandate clearly articulated the desired end-state of the mission: 'AMIB will have fulfilled its mandate after it has facilitated the implementation of the ceasefire agreements, and the defence and security situation in Burundi is stable and well-managed by newly created national defence and security structures' (Communiqué of the Ninety-first Ordinary Session of the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, 2003: 2).

AMIB's four main objectives were to supervise the implementation of the ceasefire agreements; to support disarmament and demobilization initiatives and advise on the reintegration of combatants; to create favourable conditions for the presence of a UN peacekeeping mission; and to contribute to political and economic stability in Burundi. These objectives translated into a number of operational tasks, namely: to establish and maintain liaison between the parties; to monitor and verify implementation of the ceasefire agreements; to facilitate the activities of the Joint Ceasefire Commission and the technical committees for the establishment of national defence and police forces; to secure identified

¹³ The World Bank approved a US\$33 million grant for the DDR programme in Burundi. Its joint planning group, which became known as the 'DDR Cell', started designing the DDR process in 2003 and its work is still ongoing. The group consists of representatives from the Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme, the Executive Secretariat of the National Commission for Demobilisation, Reinsertion and Reintegration and AMIB (later replaced by the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) assisted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It presents its plans to the Joint Ceasefire Commission for approval and implementation and is closely linked to the international donor community (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010).

assembly and disengagement areas; to provide safe passage for the parties during planned movements to designated assembly areas; to assist with and provide technical assistance to the DDR process; to help with the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including aid to refugees and internally displaced persons; to coordinate mission activities with those of the UN in the country; and to provide protection for designated leaders returning to Burundi (Communiqué of the Ninety-first Ordinary Session of the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, 2003: 2-3).

4.2 Operational achievements

AMIB has been described as ‘one of the AU’s biggest success stories’ (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010: 69). This perception is shared by a number of senior military personnel, observers and analysts.¹⁴ However, the mission was not without its faults. The following section examines the achievements and implementation of the mission in Burundi. AMIB will be evaluated both according to its mandated mission objectives (outlined above) and with regard to its impact on the conflict in Burundi. This is important in order to reflect both the interests of the policy actor and the target as well as the purpose of such an operation, that is, to militarily manage the violent aspect of the conflict. Furthermore, to make a nuanced judgement of a mission’s overall success it is important not only to evaluate the ends achieved but also the means applied.¹⁵

4.2.1 Provision of peace and security

In terms of its first operational objective: to supervise the implementation of the ceasefire agreements, AMIB by and large succeeded. Through its presence and deterrence activities the force was able to discourage violence and contribute to the creation of a security environment conducive to the peace process. The force managed the violent aspect of the conflict and prevented further diffusion, escalation and intensification of violence. The violence only continued in Bujumbura Rurale. The highlight of the mission’s achievements in

¹⁴ Interviews conducted with policy analysts, academics and former military personnel in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Stellenbosh and Cape Town in September 2010.

¹⁵ For further discussions of how to evaluate success in military conflict management operations please see Peen Rodt, 2010, 2011b and forthcoming.

this regard was the way in which it assisted the CNDD–FDD’s return to Burundi and allowed it to formally take part in the peace process. AMIB committed significant resources to ensure the safe arrival of the movement’s members in Burundi. AU troops also helped facilitate the return of refugees and internally displaced people and the delivery of humanitarian aid (Murithi, 2008; Svensson, 2008).

4.2.2 Support for the DDR process

With regard to its second key objective: to support disarmament and demobilization initiatives and advise on the reintegration of combatants, the mission experienced greater difficulties. AMIB was initially intended to implement the DDR programme funded by the World Bank. However, due to TGoB delays in meeting the World Bank’s requirements, the implementation of the programme did not start until December 2004, half a year after AMIB was officially replaced by the UN Operation in Burundi (ONUB) (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010).

AMIB had initially been expected to accommodate and disarm approximately 20,000 combatants. Due to the problems outlined above, this ambition was never realized. However, the mission did achieve remarkable results considering its lack of support and resources. The first cantonment area was established in Muyange, Bubanza, in the summer of 2003. A second cantonment area opened as the African mission drew to a close in May 2004. The AU barely had resources to sustain the AMIB force and could not support a large number of ex-combatants. In effect, AMIB was only able to contain a limited number of people in Muyange. In the beginning, the site had no food or medical supplies and no noteworthy infrastructure. However, AMIB managed to convince the EU to supply food, and later medical aid, as the combatants started flowing through the area in August 2003. Despite the very limited resources, 189 members of the CNDD–FDD and FNL were assembled, disarmed and kept in safe custody by AMIB in this area. By November this number had risen to 228 people. In addition to running the cantonment site, AMIB also identified and managed to reach agreement on 11 Pre-disarmament Assembly Areas

(PDAAs).¹⁶ Ex-combatants gathered at Muyange were moved to the PDAAs in December 2003 and January 2004 (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010; Svensson, 2008).

4.2.3 Preparation for the UN mission

With regard to its third objective: to create favourable conditions for the presence of a UN peacekeeping mission, AMIB succeeded. It managed to stabilize Burundi to such an extent that the UN thought it possible to take over AMIB's responsibilities one year on. The fact that the UN was reluctant to deploy a peacekeeping mission in the first place illustrates the precarious security situation in Burundi at the time of the AU deployment. The peace process and ceasefire agreements were fragile and not all parties to the conflict had consented to the presence of peacekeepers. There was a real chance that the country could return to full-scale violent conflict. Nonetheless, the AU intervened and AMIB successfully managed the violent aspect of the conflict. In effect, a UN evaluation team in February 2004 concluded that the conditions were appropriate for a UN deployment. The ICG argued that the subsequent UN operation was an indication that there was now no going back on the peace process (ICG, 2004).

The AU mission was initially mandated for one year with the possibility of extension, if the UN was not ready to deploy as planned. The fact that the handover went ahead without an extension of the AMIB mandate is testament to AMIB's success in establishing conditions suitable for a UN deployment.¹⁷ However, it is important to note that the handover was made possible by the fact that a significant number of re-hatted AMIB troops remained in Burundi under the ONUB banner (Murithi, 2008).

4.2.4 Contribution to stability and future prosperity

With regard to its fourth and final objective: to contribute to political and economic stability in Burundi, the mission also succeeded. Despite AMIB's success in managing the violent

¹⁶ Muyange was eventually recognized as a 12th PDAA and renamed Buramata when ONUB took over from AMIB in June 2004 (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010).

¹⁷ In December 2006 ONUB was replaced by the UN Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB). Its security sector reform unit was intended to oversee the completion of the DDR programmes and small arms control (Tavares, 2010: 21-34).

conflict, a host of challenges remained for the future political and economic stability of Burundi. Among other things, the refugees, mainly situated in three camps in Tanzania, and the internally displaced persons should be reintegrated into society and allocated access to land to ensure their livelihood. The need for economic development and opportunity was shared by the ex-combatants who were gradually disarmed and demobilized and now needed reintegration into Burundi society (Murithi, 2008). Like many peace support operations, AMIB left the country with much to be desired in this respect. The question is how much it should be expected to deliver. The role of military peacekeepers is primarily to manage the violent aspect of a conflict and thus enable political, economic and social development to take place. In this respect the AU mission succeeded.

4.3 Impact on the Burundi conflict

AMIB achieved the majority of its mandated objectives. It managed the violent conflict and secured conditions conducive to the implementation of the peace and ceasefire agreements, the DDR programme, the UN deployment and future political progress and economic development in Burundi. During the African mission the CNDD–FDD began to demobilize. In December 2003 the CNDD–FDD joined the government and the security situation subsequently improved throughout the country (ICG, 2004). The FNL, the sole rebel group still active in the field, was significantly weakened by a series of joint operations undertaken under a new integrated high command of the Burundi army and the FDD. On 21 April 2004 the FNL was forced to declare a unilateral truce. As a result, the ICG could report that:

‘Burundi has become much safer, and for the first time in more than a decade, the country could be headed towards a genuine end to conflict. Since the signing on 16 November 2003 of the comprehensive ceasefire agreement between the transitional government and CNDD–FDD rebels headed by Jean-Pierre Nkurunziza, both sides have demonstrated total respect for the cessation of hostilities. Bujumbura Rurale is the only province where members of the PALIPETHUTU–FNL (FNL) still clash with government forces, which now include members of the FDD’ (ICG, 2004).

For the purpose of this analysis, the key question is to what extent AMIB played a role in the conflict's positive transformation. The ICG concluded that Burundi had made considerable progress in consolidating its transition during the AMIB deployment (ICG, 2004). The findings above support this assessment and suggest that the mission had a significant hand in the transition process.

4.4 Mission implementation

The next section investigates the implementation of the mission with regard to its timeliness and effectiveness as well as the appropriateness of its use of force, because in order to accurately assess a mission's success, it is important to examine not only at what it achieved, but also how it achieved what it did.

4.4.1 Timeliness

The ceasefire agreement on the 2 December 2002 stated that an AU force would be deployed in Burundi by 31 December 2002. However, there were initial delays to the deployment and AMIB was not launched until April 2003. Meanwhile, there were daily breaches of the ceasefire. President Buyoya and FDD leader Pierre Nkurunziza both called for the deployment of an African peacekeeping force to monitor the ceasefire, stressing that without international support the truce was likely to collapse. South African Vice-President Jacob Zuma, who facilitated the talks between the two, stated that the troops could be ready to deploy within a week. Forty-two AU observers arrived to observe the implementation of the ceasefire, but the observers had little impact on the conflict until the military mission was launched several months later. Consequently, FDD soldiers started withdrawing from the original encampment area. They soon came under attack from the BAF, who claimed that the FDD movement was a violation of the truce. This started a new spiral of violence, which continued until AMIB was eventually deployed. In the meantime, civilians were killed and thousands were displaced as a result of the renewed fighting, which was at least partially down to the delayed AMIB deployment (BBC News, 2003; Boshoff, 2003). Once the decision to launch was finally taken on 3 February 2003, AMIB was set to deploy within 60 days of the provision of its mandate. Advance elements arrived in

Bujumbura in early April, just short of the initial deployment deadline, and mission headquarters were established on 27 April. The Mozambican and Ethiopian contingents, however, did not arrive until much later and the mission was not fully deployed in October 2003 (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010).

4.4.2 Effectiveness

Once the mission was fully deployed, AMIB achieved its goals by establishing and maintaining liaison between local parties. It monitored the implementation of the peace and ceasefire agreements and facilitated the activities of the Joint Ceasefire Commission and the technical committees for the establishment of national security forces. It started to secure the identified assembly and disengagement areas and provided safe passage for the relevant parties to these areas and provided VIP protection for designated leaders returning to Burundi. It also helped with the delivery of humanitarian assistance and coordinated its activities with those of the UN and other international actors involved in the peace process (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010; Tavares, 2010). In other words, the mission did what it set out to do in the way that it had planned to do this. The mission achievements outlined above suggest that this was an effective manner in which to use the very limited resources at the mission's disposal to achieve as much as possible.

4.4.3 Appropriate use of force

AMIB's mandate restricted its use of force. It was allowed to use force in self-defence, to ensure its freedom of movement and protect its troops and equipment as well as civilians under imminent threat. Svensson (2008) has argued that this mandate was too restrictive. However, it constituted a clear mandate in accordance with UN principles and standards, international humanitarian law and the laws of armed conflict. Moreover, it was a forceful enough mandate for the AU troops to complete their mission to the extent that its resources allowed. With regard to the appropriateness of its use of force, AMIB successfully defended the Muyange cantonment area when it came under attack in July 2003. Considering the danger that this threat posed and the manner in which the AU responded, this was an appropriate use of force. 12 casualties were reported and 8 enemy fatalities

have been confirmed, none of which were civilian. The AU did not lose any soldiers during the attack and no further violent threats on either AMIB or ONUB camps occurred (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010; Svensson, 2008). This indicates that the AMIB response was appropriate. It also suggests that the robust defence of the camp had a deterrence effect. Finally, it confirms that AMIB did not need a more forceful mandate. Its use of force was proportional to the challenge at hand and made the appropriate distinction between combatants and non-combatants.

5. AU capabilities in Burundi

This final section takes a closer look at the context in which AMIB was undertaken in order to review the impact of the conflict context on the mission's achievements. It will investigate the AU capabilities to act, to fund and to cooperate and coordinate its efforts during the Burundi mission. Finally, it will discuss the extent to which these circumstances combined affected the success of the African Mission in Burundi.

5.1 Capability to act

AMIB was initially envisioned at a total strength of 3,500 people, including 120 military observers. In reality, it counted a total of 3,335 staff of which 43 were observers. In terms of its manpower AMIB did, thus, more or less have the resources it was promised. This was in large part attributable to its lead nation. South Africa provided the majority of personnel both in the field and in headquarters. It also seconded the Force Commander and one of the two deputy Heads of Mission. It deployed the first and the biggest military component of the mission and operated on its own until the Ethiopian and Mozambican contingents were ready to deploy. South Africa's bilateral military operations and diplomatic efforts in Burundi before, during and after AMIB helped to facilitate its success. The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) had soldiers deployed in the country both before and after AMIB and South African politicians like Nelson Mandela and Jacob Zuma played a crucial role in the peace process (Svensson, 2008). South Africa's strong commitment to the mission could to some extent make up for the limited contributions from other AU members. Ethiopia and Mozambique did eventually provide troops and other personnel to

the mission, although their deployments were delayed and dependent on US and UK support, respectively. Other AU member states did little to actively support the mission.

AMIB did also not enjoy the institutional support from the AU that it might have hoped for. The infant organization had a number of teething problems. Its headquarters in Addis Ababa were under-staffed and its under-developed bureaucratic structures meant that the AU did not properly support the mission. For example, it did not efficiently distribute all the external donor funds that were allocated to the desperately under-funded mission (Svensson, 2008: 18).

Although formally established in 2002, the PSC was not inaugurated until May 2004. That is, after the African Mission in Burundi had been completed. Instead AMIB was approved and mandated by the OAU's Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. Other institutional tools like CEWS, PoW, ASF and MSC were also not properly up and running by the time the AU mission in Burundi was undertaken. Again, South African support for the mission to a large extent made up for the Union's institutional shortcomings and facilitated the relatively successful implementation of the mission. This underlines South Africa's commitment towards the mission and its political dedication to its success. It also illustrates how strong support from a lead member state and dedicated donor support can to some extent make up for weaker support from the AU institutions and member states.

5.2 Capability to fund

Although the mission eventually reached its desired number of personnel it remained under-equipped in other ways. Throughout the mission AMIB suffered from serious funding problems. The AU, its member states and the international community demonstrated a shared unwillingness and inability to fund the mission sufficiently for it to perform all its tasks properly. Based on what it called the 'concept of self-sustainment', the AU ruled that the troop contributing countries would pay for the first two months of their deployments. This decision was taken despite the fact that this would be an impossible requirement to

meet for many of the Union's member states. Ethiopia expressed concerns with regards to its ability to fund its share of the mission from the beginning. Ultimately, the United States financed the Ethiopian deployment and the United Kingdom paid for the deployment of the Mozambican component (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010; Svensson, 2008). Despite this external support, the main body of the Mozambican and Ethiopian deployments were significantly delayed.

The AU set up a special fund to pay for the rest of the mission, but this too was dependent on external donor support. The estimated cost of the mission was \$110 million; however, in reality the mission cost \$134 million; that is, more than one third of the entire AU Commission budget for 2003. Only \$50 million were pledged to the AU trust fund, and in the end it only received an estimated \$10 million, excluding the US and UK contributions (ACCORD, 2007; Boshoff, 2003; Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010; Svensson, 2008). The lack of donor support can to some extent be explained by widespread international unfamiliarity and uncertainty with regard to the AU, established only a year earlier. The dubious reputation of its predecessor and the fact that this was the AU's first military deployment also did not encourage donations.

The lack of funding affected the DDR process in particular. AMIB's limited resources resulted in insufficient food, medical supplies and infrastructure in the cantonment areas it established. The AU struggled to sustain its own troops, let alone the ex-combatants it was trying to help through the DDR process. AMIB managed to accommodate some of these limitations by persuading external partners like the European Union (EU), the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) to donate funds for food, medicine and other supplies for the cantonment areas (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010; Svensson, 2008). This is an example of how limited capabilities in one area, i.e. funding, can to some extent be compensated for by stronger capabilities in another area, namely: cooperation and coordination. This also demonstrates how a concerted effort by the Head of Mission and the Force Commander can positively affect what a mission is able to achieve. Likewise, the lead nation played an important role in persuading donors to support AMIB.

5.3 Capability to cooperate and coordinate

AMIB was but a small part of the peace process in Burundi. Cooperation with local, regional and international actors involved in this process was essential to the mission's success, both in facilitating the implementation of the ceasefire agreements and DDR. It is clear from the above that AMIB did not have sufficient capabilities to fund its deployment, which in turn affected its capability to act. However, through the determined efforts of the mission's leadership, AMIB was able to coordinate its efforts with other actors involved in the peace process. Throughout the mission, AMIB worked closely both with partners within and beyond the African Union. In effect, it managed to raise sufficient support from international donors, local and regional parties to fulfil most of its mandate.

5.3.1 Cooperation and coordination with AU partners

The AU, and the OAU before it, has been involved in Burundi since the outbreak of the war in 1993. Likewise, a number of its member states, among them South Africa and Tanzania in particular, have long been involved in the regulation of the conflict. These efforts were channelled through the Regional Peace Initiative on Burundi. AMIB coordinated its activities well with other initiatives undertaken by AU member states and institutions before, during and after its deployment. By way of example, AU military observers and South African troops were deployed in the country before AMIB. Upon its arrival, these elements were incorporated into the African mission, whose activities were also coordinated with AU and SA's diplomatic efforts in the peace process at the time (Agoagye, 1994).

As already mentioned, South Africa played a crucial role in making AMIB a reality and a relative success. It prepared for the AU mission – diplomatically and militarily. It provided essential resources such as funding, troops, equipment and logistics and made arrangements for procurement, maintenance, training and service of equipment (Svensson, 2008). It operated alone when contributions from AU member states, institutions and donors were delayed or remained outstanding.

5.3.2 Cooperation and coordination with external partners

Prior to the AMIB deployment, the CNDD–FDD had threatened that they would attack the mission if it encroached on their area of operations. Had the violent conflict continued, this would have endangered the peace process as well as AMIB’s role within it. Coordination and cooperation with external parties involved in this process was therefore essential. As AMIB was launched, observers stressed the continued importance of the Facilitator’s efforts in the peace process. This was essential in order to bring the remaining belligerent parties to the negotiating table, to persuade them to adhere to the ceasefire agreement and to become part of the Military Technical Planning Team for DDR. International pressure and engagement was crucial to get the CNDD–FDD and FNL fully on board. To facilitate cooperation and coordination with the relevant agencies on the ground AMIB established a Civil Military Coordination Centre. It also entered the joint planning group set up by the World Bank’s Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (Boshoff, 2003; Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010; Svensson, 2008).

The AU also made a concerted effort to coordinate its activities with the different UN agencies involved in Burundi. It established strategic-level AU–UN engagement to mobilize resources for both organizations. In theatre it received administrative and logistical assistance from the UN system. Amongst other things, AMIB received technical support from the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC). AMIB benefited from MONUC’s experience with regard to public information campaigns, headquarters administration and DDR. Likewise, the transition from AMIB to ONUB was facilitated by the re-hatting of a number of staff. 2,612 AMIB troops formed the first contingent of the UN force. ONUB was intended to number 5,650 military personnel, including 200 military observers, 120 police and up to 1,000 national and international civilian staff. However, the force generation process was delayed by slow responses from the member states (UN News Centre, 2004; Svensson, 2008). The AU mission’s withdrawal and the UN mission’s launch were thus only possible because of cooperation between the

two organizations. It also ensured a degree of continuity and institutional memory on the ground.¹⁸

6. Relevance of the conflict context for AMIB's success

Prior to the AMIB deployment the biggest concern of its military planners related to the entry criteria in Burundi. The ceasefire did not include all the belligerent parties and those who had signed the truce were not upholding it. The Rules of Engagement gave the AU troops no mandate to intervene in the conflict between the rebel groups and the Burundi security forces (Boshoff and Francis, 2003). AMIB was therefore dependent on the cooperation of those involved both in the conflict and its regulation. At the state and sub-state levels, this meant the Transitional Government and the security services as well as the various political groupings and violent factions amongst the rebel movement, most importantly the FNL and CNDD–FDD. Their cooperation was facilitated through the Arusha peace process and the subsequent ceasefire agreements (Svensson, 2008). For AMIB to be able to complete its mission successfully, it was dependent on these fragile institutional arrangements to hold water.

The positive interventions of neighbouring states and regional powers like South Africa and Tanzania helped facilitate the cooperation at the state and sub-state levels, which was necessary for AMIB to succeed. Regional powers were involved in the Regional Peace Initiative for Burundi and through the personal involvement of regional leaders like Nyerere, Mandela and Zuma in the Arusha peace process and the subsequent ceasefire negotiations. Regional structures like the AU, and the OAU before it, also played a role in this process (Svensson, 2008).

¹⁸ The UN Security Council later approved another AU mission in Burundi. The African Union Special Task Force in Burundi was deployed in January 2007. It was intended to oversee the completion of the demobilization of the rebel forces by December 2008 and to facilitate the implementation of the Dar es Salaam Peace Agreement. The force was composed of a re-hatted SA battalion, which previously served under ONUB. SANDF withdrew the bulk of its troops in August 2009. Only 300 soldiers remained for the 2010 elections. In April 2009, the chairperson of the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism confirmed that the FNL had handed over its weapons and that demobilized FNL combatants had started moving into the country's military and police barracks. The FNL also registered as a political party in 2009 (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010; Tavares, 2010: 21-34).

It is important to see the conflict and interventions in Burundi in the wider context of the Great Lakes. This region has experienced a number of intertwined conflicts. Belligerent parties in Burundi have influenced and been influenced by conflict dynamics elsewhere in the region, predominantly in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). For example, Hutu refugees from Burundi took part in the Rwandan genocide in which 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed. Likewise, when Paul Kagame took power in Rwanda after the genocide, this caused many Hutu to flee the country, some of which formed alliances with Hutu rebels in Burundi. Rwandan and Burundi armed forces have fought rebel groups together on the border between them and in neighbouring DRC (Accord, 2007; Svensson, 2008). This regional context explains why regional actors were particularly dedicated to the military management and peaceful settlement of the Burundi conflict. Agoagye (1994) has supported this line of argument and stressed the positive developments in the peace processes in the DRC and Rwanda at the time of the AMIB deployment. He has argued that the AU deployment in Burundi was aimed at adding momentum and synergy to the peace effort in the wider region.

It is important also to consider the wider international context at the time. This mission was but one piece in a much greater puzzle of international involvement in the regulation of the violent conflict in Burundi and the Great Lakes. In this respect, AMIB's most important function was the bridging and enabling role it played in support of the UN involvement in the country and the region. At the international level powerful states and organizations therefore supported AMIB – in word if not always in deed. The US and the UK were particularly important partners to the mission through their active support to the Ethiopian and Mozambican contingents. Other countries such as Denmark, Italy and Germany provided financial support to the operation. Likewise, the mission worked closely with the UN and its agencies in Burundi. Other international organizations like the EU and the WHO as well as the German GTZ provided aid to the cantonment areas, where AMIB could not (Agoagye, 2004). In this way, many international actors had a positive effect on the conflict situation and consequently for the success of the mission.

This illustrates how the AU's capabilities to act, to fund and to coordinate its mission in Burundi was closely linked to its cooperation with local, regional and international actors involved in the conflict and its regulation. Combined with the level of support for the mission from the AU member states and institutions, this external support determined the mission's success. The Burundi case also illustrates how the relationship between these different actors is inter-linked in the sense that more support from one can make up for less support from another.

7. Conclusion

The current political situation in Burundi is far from stable. The country's democratic transition is threatened by the opposition's withdrawal from political dialogue after its defeat in the 2010 elections. The FNL has returned underground and there have been recent clashes between the security forces and unidentified armed groups in the West of the country. However, despite the deteriorating political context, sustained violent conflict has not recommenced and is not expected to do so (ICG, 2011).

AMIB played an important part in securing the conflict transition in Burundi. Its achievements with regard to the military management of the violent conflict were substantial. It was able to stabilize the country to an extent that the UN was willing and able to deploy. Agoagye (2004) has estimated that 95 per cent of the country was stable at the end of the AMIB deployment. Only the region outside Bujumbura remained insecure. The AU troops protected leaders returning to the country, so that they could take part in the peace process and eventually help form a government. In this way, AMIB supported the political settlement of the conflict. This illustrates how a relatively small AU mission can make a significant contribution to both the military and political management of a violent conflict, even when the UN is unable or unwilling to do so. As such, the AU has proved itself a valuable partner for the UN in managing difficult and dangerous conflict situations on the continent.

In terms of the DDR process, the mission's achievements were more modest. This was in part due to the belligerent parties' inability to agree on relevant issues like the location of

the cantonment areas and to meet the World Bank's conditions for financing the process. Lack of sufficient support from the AU, its member states and donors added to AMIB's difficulties in facilitating DDR in Burundi. AMIB did not have sufficient resources to establish and safeguard all the planned cantonment areas or to sustain the expected number of ex-combatants. The UN Secretary General acknowledged this at the time: 'The financial and logistical constraints under which AMIB is operating prevent the force from fully implementing its mandate' (Svensson, 2008: 16). Nonetheless, the mission did a remarkably lot with the little funding it had, which helped it persuade donors eventually to increase their support for its efforts.

This case study suggests that both the capabilities of the intervener and the conflict context in which it intervenes affect its chances of success. Not only the combination of the two, but also how they relate to each other matters. Different actors affect the contextual conditions for mission success. More support from one actor can to some extent compensate for less support from another. This was the case with AMIB, where South African commitment and capabilities made up for limited resources on part of the AU and lack of interest from the international donor community. One could argue that despite its relative success, AMIB did not bode well for AU peace and security provision on the continent, because of South Africa's dominant role in the mission. However, the Union is made up of its member states, and if they are committed to its endeavours and willing to dedicate the necessary capabilities to support them, a mission of this nature is more likely to succeed.

Since the African Mission in Burundi, the AU has continued to develop. Its institutional and operational capabilities are steadily improving through a series of capacity building programmes. The ASF, PSC and CEWS are under continuous development. As the Union becomes a more credible actor in the security arena, it receives more support both from its member states and international donors. Nonetheless, the AU faces serious challenges and only with a substantial increase in resources can it successfully provide peace, security and stability on the continent in the future.

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