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Research Article

African Union-Led Peacekeeping Operations: Constraints and Opportunities of Interagency Cooperation in the Experience of Burundi and South Africa

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ABSTRACT:

The multidimensionality of peacekeeping missions implies the involvement of many levels of actors fulfilling distinct functions and thus sharing responsibilities, risks and costs. This paper analyses the experiences of South African troops in Burundi and Burundian troops within AMISOM to understand the constraints and opportunities of inter-agency cooperation in the case of AU-led peacekeeping operations. Both examples show the importance of multilateralism in peacekeeping missions. The diversity of actors' experiences and capabilities, their cooperation, and the complementarity of their specific contributions are vital when dealing with the very complex and tangled challenges facing a conflict country. Several factors, including financial and military capacities, actors' own interests, domestic politics, policies, and standards, influence the level of trust and the nature of cooperation between actors and their positioning.

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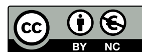

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1. Introduction

Peace and security, Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in September 2015 by UN member states, are at the heart of states' concerns worldwide.[1] Specifically, UN member states have committed to revitalising the global partnership in a spirit of solidarity so that no country is left

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behind in implementing the SDGs.[2] Achieving peace and stability should create lasting positive change for dignity, justice, and prosperity for the world's people. However, armed conflicts of various origins and intensities—intra-state civil conflicts, rebellions, inter-state wars, terrorism—have disturbed political stability and social and economic development in many countries, particularly in Africa. In 2019, almost half of the active armed conflicts in the world (25 out of 54) were recorded in Africa.[3] Some of these African countries, including Somalia and Burundi, have suffered over decades, including in terms of loss of life and property destruction, from deep fractures of ethnicised/polarised societies and are still struggling to stabilize.

Africa is also the continent where many regional and international peacekeeping forces operate. Six of the 12 UN peacekeeping operations currently active worldwide operate in Africa.[4] In addition, since 2002, the African Union (AU) has already mandated 14 peacekeeping operations on the African continent.[5] The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), established by the African Union Peace and Security Council on 19 January 2007 [6] and authorised by the UN Security Council on 21 February 2007,[7] is one of these operations still active. AMISOM is the largest multilateral peacekeeping operation, with an authorised strength of over 22,000 uniformed personnel.[8]

Field conditions differ from one country to another, making each peacekeeping mission unique with regards to the logistics, the number of troops contributing countries (TCCs), size of contingents, types of tasks, donor involvement and partnerships, and the risks. In high-risk peacekeeping missions, the involvement of many actors is a great opportunity in terms of sharing responsibilities, risks and costs. On the other side, diverging approaches, domestic policies, and perspectives can constitute serious constraints for full cooperation between actors.

This article seeks to analyse constraints and opportunities of inter-agency cooperation in the case of AU-led peacekeeping operations. Two case studies with contrasting field operation conditions were chosen. The first is the experience of South African troops in Burundi between 2001 and 2009. The mission was decided following a political peace agreement engaging the Burundian politicians to end hostilities. The second is the experience of Burundian troops in AMISOM in Somalia from 2007 onwards. There was no peace agreement to implement, and the mission still resembles a war operation more than a peacekeeping mission.

2. Contextualisation of Operations: Multi-benefit but Very High-risk Missions

2.1. South African troops at the MIAB

South Africa, and African Union as well, gained their first peacekeeping experiences in Burundi. South Africa participated and played a significant role in the four stages of peacekeeping in Burundi, from the South African Protection Service Detachment (SAPSD) mission to the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB), then

to United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB), and finally to African Union Special Task Force (AU-STF) mission. This sub-section focuses mainly on the experience of South Africa in AU peacekeeping initiatives.

2.1.1. Context and Opportunities

The deployment of an international peacekeeping force in Burundi was part of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Burundi (Article 8 of Protocol V) signed in Arusha in August 2000.[9] However, its implementation had been delayed due to a lack of troop-contributing countries. Some countries that had been approached for this purpose, namely Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal, did not want to take the risk, given that no ceasefire agreement had been concluded at that time with the main armed groups. Indeed, the negotiation process that led to the signing of the Arusha Agreement had involved only the political parties, thus excluding the armed movements. Therefore, the Arusha Agreement was only a political agreement that could not, without a ceasefire agreement, prevent the war from continuing.[10]

South Africa alone decided to deploy about 750 SAPSD troops in October 2001 to provide security for Burundian leaders returning from exile. In reality, this deployment was decided in haste, at the insistence of the mediator Nelson Mandela (former President of South Africa), to accomplish a task that had been entrusted to a Special Institution Protection Unit that was to be created, but whose implementation became impossible because the Burundian political actors could not agree on its composition.[11] Although the SAPS mission did not improve overall security, due to its limited size and mandate, it conducted a pioneering operation that showed that there was no need to condition a peacekeeping mission to a prior comprehensive ceasefire agreement. The SAPSD mission was then replaced by the AMIB, whose deployment was authorised in April 2003 for a maximum of 3,325 troops – the actual maximum deployment reached 3,128 troops and military observers, including 1,600 South African troops. South Africa was thus the main troop contributor, alongside Ethiopian and Mozambican contingents and some military observers from Burkina Faso, Gabon, Mali, Togo, and Tunisia.[12]

The AMIB was the first experience of a peace operation deployed in an African state under the mandate of the African Union. It had much broader missions than its predecessor, the SAPSD. In addition to continuing to provide close protection to certain dignitaries, the AMIB was mandated to oversee the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreements, provide support to initiatives related to the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration of combatants, create conditions conducive to the establishment of a UN peacekeeping mission and contribute to political and economic stability in Burundi. Its deployment ended on 31 May 2004 and was replaced by the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1545.[13][14] ONUB was closed in December 2006 and replaced by a political structure mandated to support the peacebuilding process, the *UN Integrated Office in Burundi* (BINUB), at the insistence of the government of Burundi, while the peace process was

still fragile. In order to safeguard the progress already achieved in terms of stability and reach an agreement on the cessation of hostilities between the government and the last armed movement, PALIPEHUTU-FNL, which was finally signed on 26 May 2008, the AU considered that it was necessary to continue the mission. This decision allowed the South African contingent that was part of ONUB to remain in Burundi, this time as an African Union Special Task Force (AU-STF), until December 2009.[15] Its main mission was to oversee the beginning of the implementation of the ceasefire agreement that had been signed in 2006 between the government and PALIPEHUTU-FNL, including the protection of PALIPEHUTU-FNL leaders in cooperation with the government of Burundi, thus working with both the army and the police.[16]

In terms of logistics, South Africa invested its own resources,[17] particularly during the phase when its troops were alone on the ground in Burundi. The decision to send troops to Burundi was purely humanitarian. It was part of the strategy used by the mediator in the inter-Burundian negotiations, Nelson Mandela, to force a return to peace in Burundi. It should allow the implementation of the Arusha Agreement, which had reached an impasse due to the absence of ceasefire agreements, to begin. The stability of Burundi was also an important issue for South Africa in the context of its other commitments to the DRC peace process. Politically, South Africa also had ambitions to play an important role in international peace processes, particularly on the African continent.

2.1.2. Major Constraints

Sending its troops into a country still at war, with no real experience of peacekeeping, when other countries had been reluctant to participate, was a great adventure for South Africa.[18] Its troops had to deal with the uncertainties inherent in implementing a political agreement, while no ceasefire agreement had yet been signed between the government and the rebel movements. The significant risk was the susceptibility of the rebel movements to sabotage a peace process from which they felt excluded. Elements of the Burundian army had also expressed their opposition to the mission.[19] Confusion also resulted from the uncertainties linked to the duration of the operation, but also on the type of operation. Indeed, the individual protection of dignitaries[20] was not part of the ordinary functions of peacekeeping missions. Not only did SAPSD soldiers have to protect their homes, but they also had to accompany them everywhere, in official activities as well as in private visits. This accompaniment exposed the soldiers to the risk of attack because, on the one hand, they went to places they did not necessarily control. On the other hand, only one soldier accompanied the protected person while another guarded the house.

In practice, the South African troops were welcomed by the political forces involved in the Arusha Agreement, although there was a sense of mistrust among elements of the Burundian armed forces (FAB). For its part, the main rebel movement, the CNDD-FDD, had pledged not to interfere with the South African military detachment to be deployed in Burundi as long as it did not interfere with CNDD-FDD operations.[21]

2.1.3. Defeats and Successes

Although the involvement of South African troops in peacekeeping operations in Burundi was their first experience, and despite many challenges they faced, they carried out their mission successfully and without serious incident. Many favourable factors contributed to this success.[22]

First, South African troops were deployed in Burundi at a time when the belligerents were in a stalemate. Faced with diplomatic pressure and a geopolitical context that had become increasingly unfavourable to the activities of the rebel movements, the main armed group, the CNDD-FDD, agreed to adhere to the Arusha Agreement and sign a ceasefire agreement with the government in place in November 2003.

Secondly, the personality of the Mediator (Nelson Mandela) commanded the respect of all actors involved in the war in Burundi. During their mission in Burundi, the South African troops thus benefited from this notoriety of the Mediator.[23]

Thirdly, the belligerents in the Burundian conflict were aware that the South African troops came from a strong army. Thus, neither the FAB nor the rebel movements wanted to get into trouble by engaging in a very risky armed confrontation with the South African troops. In a sole rebel attack on a cantonment site protected by South African troops,[24] the success of the counter-offensive seemed to send a clear message about the South African troops' ability to defend themselves and strike a potential aggressor. No other such incidents were reported during the entire operation of the South African forces in Burundi.[25]

In the end, none of the politicians protected by South African troops were killed, and none of their soldiers were killed or injured in an attack on the South African contingent in Burundi. This was a real achievement for the South African soldiers who operated in sometimes challenging conditions.

2.2. Burundian Troops in AMISOM

AMISOM, today's largest multilateral peace operation, was authorised by the AU Peace and Security Council in January 2007.[26] The decision was also endorsed by the UN Security Council one month later, which acted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, authorising the mission to take all necessary measures as appropriate to carry out the mandate.[27] First deployed in December 2007, the Burundian military contingent was the second to be deployed in Somalia after Uganda. It also ranked second in terms of the number of AMISOM uniformed personnel, totalling 5,432 soldiers, or six battalions, as of January 2019. It came after Uganda (6223) and was followed by Ethiopia (4395), Kenya (3664), and Djibouti (960).[28]

2.2.1. Opportunities

Compared to some countries contributing their troops to AMISOM, the motivations of the Burundian government to send its troops to Somalia are not obvious. For example, following the rise in insecurity in Kenya caused by the civil war in Somalia, creating a security buffer zone on the Somali side of the border

was the justification for the incursion of Kenyan troops in Somalia in 2011.[29] Burundi sent its troops to a country at war, far from its borders and with no direct effect on Burundi, while its army was still being restructured and poorly equipped. The official justification for Burundi's participation in AMISOM was humanitarian, including the moral obligation to help Somalia regain peace and contribute to the fight against global terrorism alongside other nations.[30] Beyond this reason, there were unofficial reasons based on economic, political, and diplomatic opportunities that AMISOM represents both for the individual soldiers and the Burundian state.

Despite the difficult conditions under which the Burundian contingent operated, the departure on the AMISOM mission was cherished by the Burundian military, and the Burundian government and troops remained highly motivated and committed, mainly because of the economic benefits they derived from it. For example, the delay in the payment of military allowances by the European Union in 2016 raised controversy in Burundian politics, even recommending the withdrawal of Burundian troops from Somalia.[31] With a monthly allowance for an AMISOM soldier of US$1,028, far higher than the monthly salary usually received from the Burundian government, which varied in 2007 between 15 and 450 dollars depending on the rank,[32] and the revenue from the rental of Burundian military equipment, AMISOM constituted a significant financial source, both for the government and the military.[33] It should also be noted that since it participated in AMISOM, the Burundian army has benefited from material and technical support from its partners, including professionalisation training. The government of Burundi also needed this support to succeed in the post-war period in the process of integration and stability of the country.

At the political and diplomatic level, Burundi's participation in AMISOM and other peacekeeping missions has been capitalised on by Burundi to increase its visibility and strength in international relations. Although Burundi was a fragile, post-conflict country still facing multiple challenges to its stability, the government of Burundi has used this metamorphosis from a country patrolled by foreign peacekeeping forces to a troop-contributing country to convince the United Nations to reconsider its relationship with Burundi. This finally allowed it to prematurely withdraw from the international monitoring mechanisms of the peace process.[34] The same argument enabled it to be admitted as a member of the African Union Peace and Security Council in 2014.[35] Yet reports pointed to growing authoritarianism and the fragility of the peace process, particularly in the run-up to the 2015 elections.[36]

2.2.2. Major Constraints

During the mission within AMISOM, the Burundian contingent faced a series of constraints that exposed it to serious risks. First, the Burundian troops experienced an acute problem of military equipment given the task they were called upon to perform. In March 2009, senior Burundian authorities expressed to the UN Secretary General "the concern of the government of Burundi regarding the equipment shortages of the Burundian contingent in AMISOM."[37] According to

a military source who requested anonymity,[38] "sometimes a soldier in operation was equipped with a rifle and one magazine. Armoured vehicles intended to ensure more secure transport of troops were mostly in poor conditions. And for those armoured vehicles still able to move, the problem was the machine guns mounted on them. These rifles, of an old model, often broke down." This information corroborates observations reported in other studies[39] and the findings of a Burundian parliamentarians' working mission to the Burundian contingent of AMISOM in 2013. In its report, the parliamentary delegation confirmed that "the Burundian contingent of AMISOM was faced with a problem of insufficient combat equipment and materials to effectively deal with the enemy, so that the contingent was at less than 50 % of its operational capacity."[40] There were also problems of repair, maintenance and/or replacement of material and equipment, including weapons, which have become outdated or obsolete. Under these conditions, the balance of power during combat could easily switch in favour of Al-Shabab, whose fighters were sometimes well-armed during attacks.

Secondly, Burundian troops were engaged in a peacekeeping operation in a very vulnerable country, where peace did not exist, and local actors (government and armed groups) were still far from committing to stability. Somalia was even considered by some analysts as a failed state.[41] Unlike some operations, such as the African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB) in 2003, whose mission was to ensure the implementation of peace agreements signed between the belligerents, AMISOM was created for a country (Somalia) that had no peace to supervise. Rather, Burundian troops, like other AMISOM troops, had to fight for peace from the outset. Thus, becoming the main protective barrier of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), especially after the complete withdrawal of Ethiopian troops in 2009, AMISOM troops became the main target of Al-Shabab attacks.

Thirdly, the war was asymmetrical[42] because, on the one hand, the Burundian troops were trained and equipped mainly for conventional methods of fighting. Moreover, the Burundian troops were operating in terrain that they did not master well, while they, like the troops of other countries, had to struggle to gain the confidence of the population, which was particularly low at the beginning of the mission.[43] On the other hand, the Al-Shabab fighters, taking advantage of their control of the terrain and their location among the civilian population, practiced guerrilla methods. The precise location of the enemy by Burundian troops was very difficult in these conditions, which exposed them to surprise attacks and frequent ambushes, especially during patrol missions.[44] The guerrilla method also allowed Al-Shabab fighters to use the population as human shields and thus limited the effectiveness of using heavy weapons by Burundian troops. Incidents related to indiscriminate bombing of infrastructure and civilian populated areas led to violations of international humanitarian law in warfare.[45]

Fourthly, Al-Shabab fighters also used several combat methods, including suicide terrorist attacks involving inhumane, atrocious, and degrading treatment of captured soldiers to create intense fear and psychological shock in their op-

ponents.[46] For example, during the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II, March 1993-March 1995), terrorist practices led the United States to decide to withdraw its troops from Somalia because it considered that its forces were incurring unacceptable costs for humanitarian interventions.[47] In addition, participation in AMISOM posed a risk to troop-contributing countries, as Al-Shabab also carried out terrorist acts, as happened in 2010 in Uganda, in 2013 in Nairobi, and in 2015 at Garissa University College in Kenya.[48] In sum, the operating environment was very dangerous, making AMISOM a dangerous and high-risk mission.

2.2.3. Defeats and Successes

Having participated in AMISOM operations under the conditions described above, it is not surprising that Burundian troops often suffered great defeats. According to Burundian military sources, the total loss recorded in the Ministry of Defence between 2008 and 2018 was 383 soldiers, of whom 269 were killed on the battlefield, 111 were reported missing, and three were killed in a plane crash.[49] This figure is remarkably high for a single contingent. By comparison, the total number of casualties in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL, established in 1978) was 313 dead soldiers from 1978 to May 2019, UNIFIL being the UN operation with the highest number of casualties. It is equivalent to about one-tenth of the total number of casualties in UN peacekeeping missions from 1948 to May 2019.[50] This magnitude of soldier casualties shows that AMISOM is a higher-risk peace enforcement mission.

Burundian troops have also lost weapons and ammunition during clashes with Al-Shabab fighters, particularly from 2011 onwards. These losses included individual small arms seized from killed or captured soldiers, light and heavy weapons abandoned by soldiers fleeing ambush sites and combat zones or seized from stockpiles when Al-Shabab fighters took control of Burundian troop camp sites. The events that caused considerable losses of arms and ammunition were those marked by the death of a significant number of soldiers, when Burundian troops, dominated in the fighting by Al-Shabab fighters, suffered defeats. However, due to the almost total absence of media reports and official information on the loss of arms and ammunition by AMISOM troops, the loss of military equipment has received much less attention and is considerably underestimated in the literature.[51]

During the battles lost by the Burundian troops, the factors that worked in Al-Shabab's favour were the surprise effect resulting from the use of terrorist methods, particularly during its attacks using explosive charges carried by its fighters. This was the case with the 22 February 2009 attack on the Burundian troops' accommodation complex in Mogadishu.[52] Al-Shabab fighters also had better control of the battlefield, better information, and sometimes even better equipment. For their part, the Burundian troops were victims of their own weaknesses.[53] Among these, the most decisive were the lack of information on the location of the attackers, gaps in communication between the allied forces due to language differences, and the lack of adequate equipment. Lack of

ground control caused, for example, one of the heaviest casualties Burundian troops suffered on 20 October 2011 in the Dayniile district.[54]

Despite the difficulties encountered in carrying out their missions, the Burundian contingent remained committed. Well-trained and motivated, they scored overall success in pushing back Al-Shabab fighters from their areas of occupation and regaining control of many towns formerly occupied by Al-Shabab.[55]

3. Interagency Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities

3.1. Flow of information

Information on the toll of African-led peacekeeping operations, including fatalities, military equipment losses, or seizure of arms and ammunition from adverse camps, is incomplete and as diverse as its sources. Data on soldiers killed from official sources, either from the authorities of the contributing countries or from AMISOM itself, is usually far less than the actual facts. An illustrative case was the report on the damage inflicted on Burundian troops by Al-Shabab fighters during the Dayniile battle of 20 October 2011. While the Burundian army spokesperson admitted only six soldiers killed and 18 wounded,[56] the AU spokesman referred to 10 soldiers killed and four wounded,[57] while statements by people who saw the bodies of the killed soldiers displayed by Al-Shabab reported more than 60 victims.[58] In the case of the Burundian authority, "not communicating the real data was a deliberate choice to maintain morale and deprive the enemy of information on the impact of their actions. The contingent command and government communication departments were afraid of demoralising their troops on the ground or encouraging the enemy to continue their actions."[59] This miscommunication by official sources would leave journalists skeptical of official sources, leaving the media free to speculate. For example, according to BBC, between 800 and 1,000 Burundian soldiers were killed during operations in Somalia between the end of 2007 (the beginning of their mission) and the beginning of 2019.[60] Although Al-Shabab has repeatedly inflicted heavy casualties on Burundian troops, the loss of life had not reached such a level (a plausible figure was given in subsection 2.2.3).

The problem of inconsistent reporting was also observed at other levels of AMISOM. For example, a South African daily news estimated that AMISOM had already lost "perharps over 4,000" soldiers by early 2015.[61] At a press conference in 2013, UN Under-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson revealed the extent of AMISOM's military losses in the following terms: "You would be shocked to learn that maybe it is up to 3,000 AMISOM soldiers that have been killed during these years that AMISOM has been there."[62] Of course, AMISOM is the most dangerous mission. Still, these figures were greatly exaggerated compared to an estimate of 1,884 AMISOM fatalities derived primarily from comprehensive data drawn from AU's financial statements on AMISOM's death and disability compensation records.[63] Curiously, no corrective communication was made either by the AMISOM or by the AU authorities.[64]

The systematic communication on AMISOM operations was lacking and characterised by inconsistent narratives, opacity, and lack of transparency. Yet AMISOM had a good practice of internal communication. According to information obtained from some Burundian officers, the different troop units of a contingent drew up the order of battle and the situation of military equipment every evening (including all weapons lost and those recovered from the enemy). In the case of Burundian troops, the day's situation map was transmitted each morning from the lowest echelon to the high command of the contingent, which in turn relayed the consolidated report to the AMISOM force command. At each command level, a debriefing session was also held every morning to discuss the various situation reports. It seems obvious that other actors were also informed, in this case, the African Union and the European Union, at least for calculating compensation for losses. So, the question is, where is the bottleneck for the flow of information?

From the above, it appears that information about the operations is shared in a closed system successively from the troop-contributing country to AMISOM, African Union, and donors. Thus, the major problem is the impairment of the official communication strategy by the competent authorities for the public. A culture of silence was therefore observed at the level of the troop-contributing countries, AMISOM, and the African Union. The African Union and AMISOM consider that communicating on the operations, particularly with regard to sensitive matters such as losses suffered, is the responsibility of the TCCs.[65] However, disclosure of information by TCCs would have been possible if transparency and accountability were well-developed governance practices in their administration. Unfortunately, this is not the case, especially in the defence and security sector.

Unlike the Burundian troops in AMISOM, the experience of South African troops in peacekeeping in Burundi did not provide enough data to make a judgement on South Africa's strategy of official communication on events in African-led peacekeeping operations. Indeed, South African troops carried out their mission in a generally favourable operational context that did not cause significant losses. However, according to media sources, military equipment and supplies were lost or diverted, but the related official communication was incomplete. The possible losses were only made public following investigations by the South African newspaper *The Star*, which revealed that between 2003 and 2006, South African troops had lost military equipment and supplies including vehicles, guns, ammunition and bombs, and supplies.[66] The same *Star* newspaper revealed that some of this missing equipment had been found in possession of Palipehutu-FNL rebels and Burundian government forces. The March 2006 report on the financial statements of the Ministry of Defence submitted to Parliament by the Auditor General had denounced weaknesses in internal control within the Ministry of Defence to the extent that cases of losses were not followed up on a regular basis and that in some circumstances were not even reported.[67]

There is a need for the AU and its member states to adopt a strategy for systematically reporting on events, both successes and defeats, in the operations of troops engaged in AU-mandated peacekeeping missions, as the UN does. While at present no level appears to be held accountable for communication in AU-mandated peacekeeping operations such as AMISOM, such a strategy would establish rules and clarify responsibilities for communication with respect to national, regional, or international legal obligations to which troop-contributing countries are subject. Such a strategy would allow the public to know from an official source the actual level of sacrifice made by troops in peacekeeping missions. This is a culture of transparency and accountability that African leadership must develop. Furthermore, governments' manipulation and concealment of information on facts was common practice in the era of one-party rule when governments had a monopoly on the tools of communication and information.[68] The political developments in Africa promoting freedom and access to information, coupled with the development of new communication and information technologies, and the plurality of media and social networks, make it obsolete for governments to conceal the truth about events. It is even uncomfortable for spokespersons to conceal the truth about incidents when, for example, images and other evidence about them have been produced instantly and are circulating in social networks and independent media. Finally, access to information about incidents in AU peacekeeping missions would also enable the different chains of actors and decision-makers to think about more efficient contributions to building appropriate support for the missions and minimise the loss of personnel, weapons, and ammunition during operations.

3.2. Cooperation of Contributing Troops

South Africa was a peacekeeper in Burundi under four successive labels, from SANDF label to TCC under AU green helmet, then TCC under UN blue helmet, and finally TCC under AU STF label. It operated solo during the first and last missions, while it was the lead nation under the AU- and UN-led missions.[69] The AMIB was provided with a civil-military coordination structure, including the Head of Mission (The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission in Burundi). The military component was led by a Force Commander (South Africa) and its deputy (Ethiopia). The AMIB's concept of operation was based on the operational sectorization of responsibilities. For example, the protection of the demobilisation centres was under the responsibility of South African and Ethiopian troops (but providing it in separate areas), while Mozambican troops were responsible for the protection of AMIB's logistic convoys and of all other movements, including those of humanitarian NGOs.[70] The task that received the most visibility was that of close protection or "bodyguard" of some political leaders ensured by a South African Protection and Reaction Unit.[71] Although this specialised task was omitted from the mandates of ONUB,[72] it continued to be carried out by South African troops until it again became its main mission under the AU STF mandate. So, in carrying out their mission in Burundi, the South African troops had to collaborate with troops provided by other coun-

tries, especially under the AMIB (and ONUB) missions. However, the short duration of the missions (one year for AMIB) and the very favourable operational conditions, compared to AMISOM, prevented noticing the flaws in the collaboration between contingents.

Burundian troops in AMISOM operated in a very complex environment along with other external actors besides AMISOM. These included the unilateral intervention of Ethiopian troops from 2006 to 2009, from 2011 to 2013, and from 2013 to 2016, and Kenyan troops in 2011. Coordination of troops on the ground was therefore necessary to ensure complementarity of interventions.

AMISOM has a structure and an administration whose objective is to ensure the coordination of the mission. Its political and top Head is the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (SRCC) to Somalia. In its operational component, the mission has a military component, a police component, and a civilian component.[73] The military component of AMISOM, which currently includes troops from five countries, is led by the force commander, with the role rotating between TCCs. The troop deployment on the ground follows a country-based sectorisation (six sectors). Each country contingent is responsible for a specific geographical area in Somalia (sectors 1-5) while the sector 6 (Kismayo) is a multinational military deployment.

This troop deployment sectorisation confers to national contingents a significant organisational and functional autonomy. In fact, self-sustenance by the TCCs was the concept of logistic support for AMISOM as decided at the time of its authorisation by the AU Peace and Security Council. At several points, AMISOM has been modelled after the AMIB[74] with regard to the TCC's self-sustenance, the reduced number of countries contributing troops, and consequently a very large number of soldiers per country contingent. On the contrary, AMISOM's troop deployment is profoundly different from UN's troop deployments which involve larger number of countries in the form of true coalition. Examples are the United Nations Integrated Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) with 18 TCCs or the United Nations Integrated Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) with 34 TCCs as of December 2020.[75]

On the one side, this AU-led missions' decentralised system of governance and field operations has some advantages, including less bureaucracy before decision-making, less investment in the harmonisation of operational approaches and procedures, and ease of communication within members of the same contingent, including the use their local language. Also, each country's troops use procedures they are already used to. Moreover, the system offers the latitude to each contingent to assess with its country the degree of risk to be taken when, for example, planning an offensive.

On the other side, the AMISOM's decentralised governance system poses considerable challenges, including insufficient coordination of the AMISOM's military force.[76] AMISOM is structured in the form of a loose coalition lacking centralised authoritative capability for command and control.[77] The national contingents interact more with their respective capitals than with the AMISOM

command. For example, the Burundian contingent commander refused in February 2019 to carry out orders from the AMISOM commander to hand over certain positions in the area under Burundian troop control in the Joar region to Somali forces. The Burundian troop commander reportedly informed the AMISOM commander that he was more in line with the orders of his country's General Staff.[78] Without control over the national contingents, the AMISOM force command has difficulty coordinating the troops in the different sectors and cannot even decide on a plan for mutual reinforcement of the contingents in case of an offensive or defensive attack. Mutual reinforcement could have allowed, for example, the Burundian contingent to take advantage of the heavy equipment of other contingents and thus fill its equipment gaps. According to the testimony of Burundian officers interviewed, mutual support between contingents is based more on informal inter-contingent relations. For example, arrangements between the Burundian and Ugandan contingents have, from time to time, allowed Burundian troops to improve their protection on the move by using armoured transports lent by the Ugandan contingent.

In the context of a high-risk mission, as is the case with AMISOM, risk sharing is important to mitigate the damage incurred during the mission. This is not possible in the context of country-based sectorisation of troops on the ground.[79]

3.3. Cooperation with Local Troops

The deployment of South African troops to Burundi took place in a climate of worries about their consideration on the ground and the success of their mission. Indeed, some similar initiatives in the past left bad memories. For example, the AU's predecessor, the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), had failed to deploy the Protection and Observation Mission to Re-establish Confidence in Burundi (MIPROBU) decided in December 1993 following strong resistance from the Burundian army and opposition parties, despite the government's strong demand for it.[80] Even after deploying a scaled-down version of the project, the International Observation Mission for Burundi (MIOB, 1994-1996), it failed to restore stability because the operational conditions remained unfavourable. The major problem behind the failure of the OAU initiative was the dysfunctional institutions caused by a politico-ethnic disagreement between, on the one hand, the FRODEBU (Front for Democracy in Burundi, Hutu party) government, which was very much in need of a foreign protection force, and, on the other hand, the opposing Tutsi parties supported by the (mono-ethnic Tutsi) army against foreign intervention. In other words, the government, having no control over the military, had the legitimacy to engage the country but lacked the real power to implement its commitments. Also, in 1998, the South African troops' intervention in Lesotho to reverse what was described as an imminent military coup was initially resisted by elements of the Lesotho army.[81]

Sometimes before the deployment of South African troops in Burundi in 2001, elements of the Burundian army expressed their opposition to the mission.[82] However, unlike the period of the OAU initiative, the political-ethnic configuration of the ruling institutions had changed following the 1996 coup

d'état, ending the institutional dysfunction. The government (this time Tutsi) had real control over the army. Thus, once deployed, the South African troops carried out their missions without any resistance from the Burundian armed forces since the government had consented to their arrival. Furthermore, in its initial conception, the South African troops had to collaborate, on a bilateral basis, with structures of the Burundian army, provided that these structures were largely inclusive. This was the case for a special institution protection unit that South African troops had to facilitate and train, expecting that the IPU would eventually take over from the South African soldiers.[83]

On the ground, it soon became clear that South African and Burundian troops pursued the same objective of restoring peace and stability but did not share the same strategies for achieving the goal. This made it difficult for them to cooperate before the 2003 Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement with the main fighting group, CNDD-FDD. While waiting for the establishment of the special institution protection unit in 2004, the South African troops provided protection for the returning leaders on their own. On its side, the Burundian army continued its offensives against the rebel groups in an attempt to win the war militarily.[84] The signing of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement was a trigger for the normalisation of cooperation between the Burundian army and the troops of the peacekeeping missions present in Burundi, resulting in the acceleration of the peace process. Overall, and during the whole period of the successive peacekeeping missions in Burundi, no incidents were reported. The most striking achievement of these missions includes establishing inclusive defense and security forces and the supervision of the holding of the 2005 general elections, which marked the end of the 1993 war.

While the cooperation between South African troops (and troops from other countries) and the Burundian army took place within the framework of the implementation of peace agreements and ceasefire agreements, the Burundian experience in Somalia was of a different nature since there was no peace to maintain. Somalia was a prototype of a failed state torn apart by a war between numerous armed groups competing to control territory. The TFG was even unable to defend itself against attacks from armed groups.[85] Al-Shabab, a newly created armed group with ties to al-Qaeda,[86] was on the rise and was the most threatening through terrorist practices.

In this context, Burundian troops, as well as troops from other countries, had to rely on their own capabilities to accomplish their mission. In its first phase, between February 2007 and July 2010, AMISOM's main mission was to take charge of the security aspects of all the key points that would allow the resumption of government activities and life in Somalia: (1) protect the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs, including the TFG), (2) provide security conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance and free movement of peacebuilding actors, (3) contribute in the effective re-establishment and training of all-inclusive Somali security forces, and (4) provide protection of AMISOM's personnel and logistics.[87]

Although AMISOM troops had collaborated with TFG forces in regular fights in Mogadishu, it was only with the creation of a new Somali National Army (SNA) from 2010 by the European Union Training Mission (EUTM Somalia) that AMISOM troops were able to have reliable local partner forces.[88] As the Burundian contingent enjoyed acceptance by Somali authorities as a legitimate peacekeeping actor, it had no problem collaborating with the SNA. Cooperation with the SNA has gone through stages depending on the evolution of the situation on the ground and in parallel with the transition of the AMISOM's mandates from the warfighting operation to a stabilisation agenda.[89] Collaboration consisted in the joint conduct of targeted offensive operations to expand territorial control, the sharing of places to be secured (in particular in Mogadishu), the exchange of information, and mutual support of various kinds.

For example, the SNA had helped Burundian troops to recover their abandoned arms and ammunition after a deadly Al-Shabaab ambush in the north of Balad town in March 2018.[90] According to information gathered from Burundian military personnel contacted, Burundian troops have also handed over to the Somali army arms and ammunition recovered from the enemy or voluntarily handed over by some converted Al-Shabab fighters. In the absence of AU guidelines on the management of weapons and ammunition recovered, especially with regard to obligations to respect international standards, the handover of recovered weapons to the Somali state followed informal procedures through the Somali military unit operating in the same area as Burundian troops.

3.4. Cooperation between the Troops and Their Partners

During AMIB and solo missions, South Africa relied on its own capacities in terms of technical operationality, funds, and resources, and it covered itself the financial cost of its involvement. However, although South Africa was the largest economy on the African continent at the time, it could not cover all logistics costs of the missions. South Africa needed the contributions of other partners to succeed in its missions. For example, due to the inability of the African Union to finance the costs of AMIB operations, the implementation of certain tasks—for example, supplies in food, medical services, and infrastructure to the ex-combatants cantonment areas—was possible thanks to financial support from external partners, including European Union and the German Cooperation Agency, GTZ.[91] In this type of cooperation, neither South Africa nor its troops needed external incentives or took financial or material advantages from the other partners, but rather the cooperation was such that each made its contribution for the benefit of Burundi.

For its side, Burundi's experience in AMISOM showed a strong dependence of Burundi and its troops on multi-faceted support from external partners. It also showed how fragile could be the cooperation between actors in peacekeeping operations. In fact, some decisions have so far created tension and controversy.

Unlike South Africa, Burundi had low financial capacities, and its troops had limitations in terms of professional and operational capacities. In addition, the

nature of AMISOM's operations, warfighting for peace, required TCCs to have a high level of capacity in terms of material, financial and technical logistics. Thus, external support for Burundi and its troops began with training to prepare the troops and continued in terms of equipment, payment of soldiers' allowances, rental of military equipment and supplies deployed to AMISOM, payment of compensation for loss of weapons and ammunition, and compensation paid to the families of soldiers killed during the mission. Much of the partner support to Burundian troops was provided by the EU for the payment of troop allowances, the United Nations (including through UNSOA and then UNSOS) for logistics, and the United States for training and military equipment.

However, these external incentives were fraught with serious challenges and dilemmas related, on the side of donors, to the political conditionalities of foreign aids, and on the side of the beneficiary (Burundi), to the principles of State sovereignty. For the EU and its member states, their partnership with African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) Group of States is implemented "with a view to contributing to peace and security and to promoting a stable and democratic political environment."[92] Therefore, the external support ultimately became a matter of contention when the EU (and its member states) sought to reframe it according to the EU's position regarding the political dynamics in Burundi. During the political crisis that started in 2015 following President Pierre Nkurunziza's controversial third term in office, partners tried to use foreign aid, including AMISOM support, as an instrument of economic and diplomatic pressure on the Burundian government. Diplomatic and cooperation relations between Burundi and its partners deteriorated, leading to sanctions by most key partners, including the decision of March 2016 by the EU Council to suspend direct financial support to the Burundian administration in the application of Article 96 of the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement.[93] Pursuant to this decision, discussions within the EU to try an alternative way of paying Burundian troops allowances without paying money to the Burundian government caused a 10-months delay in the disbursement of EU funds to pay these allowances in 2016 and 2017.[94] The EU planned a different allowance payment procedure for Burundi, including paying soldiers directly, but the attempt was openly rejected by the government of Burundi as well as by the AMISOM Military Operations and Coordination Committee [95] and the AU.[96] According to the Burundian Minister of Defence, this delay had demoralised Burundian troops operating in Somalia.[97] The rise in tension was followed by threats from the Burundian authorities to withdraw Burundian troops from AMISOM in the case of the continued non-payment of allowances to Burundian troops.[98]

Burundi government also expressed its dissatisfaction with the AU when the latter unilaterally decided to pull out 1,000 Burundian troops from the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) early in 2019.[99] The AU decision was part of a gradual disengagement programme in the mission to hand over the security responsibilities from AMISOM to the Somali security forces.[100] While initially, each TCC had to repatriate some of these 1,000 soldiers in proportion to the number of soldiers deployed in Somalia, the decision to only repatriate Burundian sol-

diers was motivated by the fact the Burundian contingent had an acute problem with its (military) equipment. The Burundian army had contested the decision through a statement from its spokesperson. The Burundian government tried to challenge the decision it deemed unfair, arguing that a reduced contingent would endanger the remaining of its troops.[101] But, according to some opinions, the main reason behind the contestation of the decision was likely financial, as the reduction of the Burundian contingent should lead to a shortfall for Burundian public finances.[102]

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Gervais Rufyikiri has a diverse background in both academic research and politics. He has held a high political position in the Executive as Vice-President of Burundi in charge of the coordination of economic and social ministries. Before that, he was President of the Senate of Burundi. Thus, he contributed to building post-conflict institutions for ten years, initiating and implementing reforms aimed at promoting good governance practices, political stability, and economic growth. Gervais has written numerous scientific articles in agriculture, the environment, and the political field. He has also taught and directed theses at universities. Gervais obtained his PhD degree at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. He is currently a visiting researcher at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP).