The Role of External Assistance and Neutral Leadership in Successful African Union Peacekeeping Initiatives: An Investigation of Burundi and Somalia

Kiran Basra, McGill University

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ABSTRACT

Peacekeeping initiatives on the African continent are an important tool in de-escalating conflict and providing humanitarian aid. Despite their utility, some regional peacekeeping initiatives are more effective than others, raising the question: what factors cause an African Union peacekeeping mission to succeed or fail? This paper answers this question by exploring the African Union's Mission in Burundi (AMIB) and in Somalia (AMISOM). In comparing both missions, I find that neutral leadership and an influx of external resources are crucial to ensuring a successful peacekeeping mission in the African Union.

Introduction

Since its creation in 2002, the African Union (AU) has engaged in several peacekeeping missions on the continent with the hope of restoring peace. Despite this goal, African peacekeeping initiatives have not always succeeded in controlling violence. This has raised the question: what factors cause an AU peacekeeping mission to succeed or fail? Considering this question is crucial to illuminate which factors are necessary to include in future initiatives and ensure that the African Union can become more conducive to restoring peace in the region.

To answer this question, it is important to examine two of the AU's most significant peacekeeping initiatives, Burundi and Somalia, which have yielded significantly different outcomes. This paper will argue that the AU's mission in Burundi was successful due to an influx of external resources and South Africa's leadership. Comparatively, the AU's mission in Somalia was unsuccessful due to a severe lack of resources and the biased leadership of Ethiopia. Therefore, neutral African leadership and a sufficient supply of resources are imperative to a successful AU peacekeeping initiative.

This paper will open by exploring the African Union's mission in Burundi (AMIB) and why it was considered a success. It will then argue that the financial and administrative assistance AMIB received from the external states and organizations, in combination with the leadership of Nelson Mandela's South Africa, were key to its success. Next, the paper will evaluate the African Union's mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to demonstrate why it was considered a failure. Then, it will explore how

the lack of financial aid and military troops, coupled with the biased leadership of Ethiopia which advanced its own political agenda under the guise of AMISOM, hindered the mission's success. Finally, the paper will conclude by arguing that a neutral African leader and an adequate supply of resources are crucial for the success of AU peacekeeping initiatives.

Burundi: How South Africa and External Support Allowed AMIB to Succeed

The Burundian Civil War of 1993 to 2005 was rooted in the unequal distribution of state power between the Hutus, who comprise 85% of the population, and the Tutsis, who constitute 14% (Vandeginste 2009). Despite being a significant minority, the Tutsis controlled major institutions in Burundi such as the military and the judiciary. This power imbalance aggravated many Hutus who were weary that state institutions controlled by Tutsis would ignore their interests. In 1993, Melchior Ndadaye became Burundi's first democratically elected Hutu president. Shortly after, Tutsi-extremist army officers launched a coup, assassinating Ndadaye and triggering the outbreak of civil war. Within a year, over 300,000 Burundians died due to violence between the two ethnic groups ("Burundi Profile - Timeline" 2018). By 1996, Tutsi leader Pierre Buyoya staged a coup to seize power, which was viewed unfavourably by Hutus, who saw Buyoya's rule as illegitimate. Despite growing hostility, Buyoya signed the Arusha Accords in 1998, which mandated a country-wide ceasefire. This ceasefire provided the basis for the African Union's deployment of their first peacekeeping mission, the African

Union's mission to Burundi (AMIB), on April 2nd, 2003 (Badmus 2017). AMIB stayed in Burundi for just over a year, concluding its mission on June 1, 2004, with a swift transition of responsibilities to the UN following their leave.

Results

In order to evaluate the success of the AU's peacekeeping mission in Burundi, it is crucial to assess whether the mission fulfilled its mandates. The mandates of AMIB were to "1) oversee the implementation of the ceasefire agreements, 2) support disarmament and demobilisation initiatives and advise on reintegration of combatants, 3) strive towards ensuring favourable conditions for the establishment of a UN peacekeeping mission; and 4) contribute to political and economic stability in Burundi" (Svensson 2008). In addressing the first mandate, AMIB was successful in implementing ceasefire agreements in the Arusha Accords under Chapter III Article 25, which called for the "permanent ceasefire and cessation of hostilities" in Burundi (Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement 69). This ceasefire agreement was negotiated by the leader of AMIB, South African president, Nelson Mandela. In response to the second mandate, AMIB was able to disarm 228 combatants and find suitable DC areas and Pre-Disarmament Assembly Areas (Badmus 2017). In addressing the third mandate, 95% of Burundi was relatively stable when AMIB ended its mission (Agoagye 2004). As a result, AMIB was able to stabilise Burundi to such an extent that the UN could deploy its own mission (ONUB) in 2004 following AMIB's departure. In completing the

fourth mandate, AMIB was able to politically stabilise the country by providing security for leaders returning from exile which assisted in the subsequent formation of a National Government (Svensson 2008). Furthermore, AMIB was able to complete these mandates in just one year, its efficiency proving a further testament to its success. Due to the efficient completion of AMIB's four mandates, the African Union's peacekeeping initiative in Burundi was ultimately a success.

Causes

Two major factors led to AMIB's success in Burundi. The first was the external assistance, which the mission received from states and organizations. AMIB received significant assistance from the UN including administrative, logistical and technical support, headquarters administration and access to public information (Badmus 2017). AMIB also frequently consulted with international agencies like the EU, UNICEF and the World Bank, specifically with regard to the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programme and in implementing the ceasefire agreement tasks (Badmus 2017). In addition to administrative assistance, AMIB was also given significant financial donations by external donors. This included UN organizations which provided $6 million, the EU and the World Bank, which each gave $33 million, and the US which provided $6 million (Cocodia 2017). The resource and financial support given to AMIB was crucial to the mission's success due to the initiative being severely underfunded by the African Union. Despite the mission having a budget of

$110 million, AMIB was initially only given funds of $60 million which could not afford to implement the initiative's mandates. By the time AMIB concluded its mission, however, the budget had grown to $134 million, an amount that the initiative could not have fulfilled without its external backing.

The second major factor which contributed to AMIB's success was the leadership of South Africa. Under South Africa's direction, AMIB was able to set forth a clear agenda for the mission to follow under the leadership of President Nelson Mandela. Mandela took over as the facilitator for the Arusha Accords in 1999, which negotiated terms for a ceasefire and opened the door for the AU's peacekeeping mission. Once AMIB entered, "South Africa took the initiative of creating a platform facilitating [Burundi's] democratic transformation" (Cocodia 2017). In addition to Mandela's leadership, South Africa was the largest supplier of troops for AMIB. The nation contributed 1,500 troops throughout the mission including the South African Protection Support Detachment (SAPSD), which was responsible for protecting politicians returning to the country in order to ensure that the peace process was maintained (Svensson 2008). South Africa's leadership in AMIB was therefore invaluable to the mission's success, because it directed the initiative under a clear strategy through the mentorship of Mandela, while South Africa's commitment to providing valuable resources in military assistance filled AMIB's deficiency gaps.

Somalia: How Ethiopia's Biased Leadership and a Lack of Resources Hurt AMISOM

The Somali Civil War began in 1991, following the overthrow of dictator Siad Barre. His assassination in 1991 created a power vacuum, triggering armed conflict between clan-based warlords fighting for control over the country (Düsterhöft et al. 2013). This conflict led to the collapse of customary law and a power struggle between clans, which precipitated the arrival of the first UN Peacekeeping Mission UNOSOM in 1992 (Cocodia 2017). During its mission, the UN experienced extensive backlash from Somali citizens who opposed Western intervention and killed multiple peacekeeping soldiers. As a result, UN peacekeeping missions withdrew in 1995 and have since looked to the African Union to restore peace in Somalia. The African Union deployed its own peacekeeping mission called AMISOM to Somalia in 2007 and has remained in the country for the past 14 years, despite limited change in the perpetuation of violence.

Results

AMISOM was mandated to pursue three objectives: "1) Enable the gradual transition of security responsibilities to the Somali security forces, 2) Reduce the threat posed by Al-Shabaab, and 3) Assist the Somali security forces in the stabilization, reconciliation and peace-building of Somalia ("AMISOM Mandate" 2000). Despite efforts by AMISOM to address the first mandate, AMISOM concluded that there was an "inability of Somali security forces to take over from AMISOM", due to the fragmented nature of Somalia's government

and security forces (Williams et al. 2018). In regards to the second mandate, the threat of al-Shabaab has actually increased, not reduced, as "AMISOM has found it very difficult to sustain effective offensive operations against al-Shabaab" (Williams et al. 2018). The mission was therefore unable to limit the group's influence over Somalia because al-Shabaab continues to pose a deadly threat to the country by infiltrating institutions and conducting regular attacks against Somali citizens and AU forces. AMISOM has also failed to complete the third mandate as they have yet to achieve stabilization, reconciliation and peacebuilding in Somalia because the civil war has not yet ended, and violence continues to wreak havoc today as it did thirty years ago, when the conflict first began. In fact, stabilization was obstructed because the AU and the Federal Government could not agree on a shared stabilization plan as the two organizations had different visions of what stabilization looked like for Somalia (Lotze 2016). Thus, not only was AMISOM unsuccessful in completing any of its mandates, the mission has not changed the status of the conflict in the country, demonstrating its ultimate failure.

Causes

Several factors contributed to AMISOM's failure to achieve peace in Somalia. The first contributing factor was the biased leadership imposed by Ethiopia. Since Ethiopia is positioned beside Somalia, the country wanted to ensure that the power vacuum opened by the Somali Civil War would produce a pro-Ethiopian government to solidify its hegemony in the Horn of Africa. To do so, Ethiopia took leadership within AMISOM to direct the mission's strategy in accordance with its own biased political agenda. Specifically, Ethiopia advanced their political agenda by "picking winners in the competition to create the new regional administrations and [. . .] acting as the power behind the throne of the FGS [Federal Government of Somalia]" (Williams et al. 2018). By using AMISOM as a vehicle to camouflage their intentions, Ethiopia succeeded in directly shaping the AU's position on how to implement peace in Somalia. However, Ethiopia's nefarious intentions were not oblivious to all. Many African states saw their influence in AMISOM as a deterrence to participate, so they were unwilling to contribute military resources to an initiative that was viewed as "little more than a politically symbolic appendage to provide Ethiopian troops with a greater degree of international legitimacy" (Williams 2009).

The second factor that played a large role in AMISOM's failure was the mission's severe lack of resources: specifically a shortage of military capacity and monetary aid. After assessing the level of violence in Somalia, AMISOM was expected to deploy 8,000 troops in order to successfully complete its mandate. Despite this estimate, the African Union struggled to secure just over half of that number (Williams 2009). As a result, the African Union's low military capacity was not able to adequately counter the threat of al-Shabaab and clan-based warlords who possessed strong armed capability and superior knowledge of the land. Besides a shortage of troops, AMISOM also struggled with a severe lack of funding. Limited financial capital

created uncertainty on important questions like the number of peacekeepers being deployed, the duration of the mission, the intensity of operations and the equipment being used. In addition, many external donors withdrew their financial support as the mission went on. The European Union, one of AMISOM's three key donors, cut funding by 20% in 2016. As a result, "the Ugandan and Burundian troops were deployed into Somalia without funding" causing the presidents to withdraw their troops as they refused to sacrifice wages (Cocodia 2017). This left AMISOM with a smaller budget and fewer troops, severely hindering the mission from effectively challenging violence in Somalia and completing its mandates.

Main Takeaways for a Successful Mission

The cases of Burundi and Somalia have revealed two key factors which are necessary for a successful peacekeeping initiative in Africa: a neutral regional leader and a sufficient supply of resources. Firstly, missions deployed by the African Union must be led by a neutral African actor. The clear leadership of Nelson Mandela assisted in the efficient completion of AMIB's mandates because it prevented a shared coalition of competing interests from pulling the mission in different directions, which would waste time and resources. Neutral leadership is crucial, as demonstrated by Mandela, who was viewed by Burundis as unbiased compared to his predecessor Nyerere, who was accused of displaying bias for Hutus (Cocodia 2017). This neutral leadership was imperative to AMIB's success because "being neutral in the exercise of its mandate gave credibility to the mission

and aided stability" (Cocodia 2017). A lack of neutral leadership, as exemplified by Ethiopia in AMISOM, deters other regional actors from cooperating, weakening the mission as a collective force and limiting its resources. In addition, the perception of a biased leader deters local acceptance of a mission, as demonstrated by the Somalis' hesitance to accept AMISOM knowing that it was guided by their neighbour who sought regional influence. Without local acceptance, peacekeeping missions will struggle to implement objectives, as demonstrated in 1993 by a backlash against UN peacekeeping troops in Somalia. This leader must also be African, whether they represent a state or an independent African institution, in order to reflect the decolonial process of the continent and to gain acceptance from citizens of the weak state. Therefore, AU peacekeeping initiatives must appoint a neutral regional leader in order to ensure their success.

While appointing a neutral leader is imperative, many scholars argue it is extremely difficult, as explained by the theory of realism. According to realism, "international anarchy fosters competition and conflict among states and inhibits their willingness to cooperate" in a self-help system (Grieco 1988). When cooperation does occur, it is shallow and short-lived because the constraints of anarchy remind states that they cannot rely on other countries for their own survival. Therefore, many realists argue that regional peacekeeping missions are doomed because they require cooperation which is unlikely. Moreover, since power is relative, a state can only become more powerful if another country becomes weaker. Thus, peace-

keeping missions offer strategic opportunities for regional actors to exploit the initiative in order to advance their own political interests and ensure their power, as exemplified in the case of Ethiopia which tried to install a pro-Ethiopian government in Somalia. Since countries like Ethiopia must value their own power over restoring peace to another country due to the self-help system of anarchy, realists argue that it is unlikely regional actors will cooperate, but when they do it will often be to take over the mission for their own benefit.

While this argument is persuasive, it fails to account for cases like South Africa, which willingly led AMIB despite living 2,500 miles away from Burundi. Moreover, peacekeeping missions can offer several inherent benefits for participating countries. Firstly, decreasing conflict in the region and restoring peace ensures that violence will not spill over to their country or raise tensions with similar ethnic or linguistic groups within their state. Moreover, mitigating violence in the region decreases the chances that refugees will flee their homeland and spread to their country. Finally, participating in missions fosters a positive reputation for involved countries and increases their likelihood of being trusted on the international stage, leading to alliances, and inclusion in treaties like valuable trade agreements.

Despite the benefits of cooperation, nations with biased leadership like Ethiopia threaten AU peacekeeping missions, so the African Union must be wary of the power that states can hold disproportionality in the mission. The AU can do this by reflecting on how missions can be used as a tool to enforce regional he-gemony in the area, and assessing the motives of lead nations and their expected benefits. By being more critical of the roles of state actors in each mission, the African Union can ensure it selects neutral regional leaders to guide peacekeeping initiatives.

Secondly, in order to be successful, AU missions must be accompanied by external support and UN assistance. Currently, the African Union is at a severe disadvantage because the institution is heavily underfunded. Over 40% of member states do not pay yearly contributions to the institution which has made the African Union "heavily dependent on donor funding to run its programs and operations" ("Sustainable Financing" 2021). As a result, the African Union does not possess enough resources to accurately achieve the mandates it sets in its missions. In the case of Burundi, despite the mission's severe underfunding by the AU, it received significant external funding and resources which allowed it to finance tasks in order to achieve its objectives. Despite also being initially underfunded, AMISOM did not receive the same level of external support that AMIB did, and external actors withdrew resources and financial aid as the mission persisted. By depleting the mission's military and financial capability, AMISOM was unable to fund the tasks needed to complete to achieve its mandates. Therefore, AU missions must be sufficiently funded and the institution must set realistic mandates according to the budget. It is crucial to note that relying on external support should only be a temporary solution, as the ultimate goal is to create an institution that is self-sustainable. However, until the Afri-

can Union has enough money to fund its own missions, the organization is dependent on the contribution of external actors. Forming strong ties with other organizations like the EU, UN, and World Bank is thus crucial to maintaining financing in future missions.

Strengthening the African Union is imperative to the restoration of peace on the continent. Unlike the AU, other peacekeeping institutions like the UN or external intervening actors like the US and UK generate an inherent distrust from the African population due to their colonial legacies. This has been demonstrated by the backlash UN peacekeepers and US soldiers faced in Somalia in 1993 when citizens shot down their helicopters, killing 18 American soldiers and 2 UN soldiers, and dragged their bodies through the city ("Black Hawk Down" 2017). Therefore, the AU possesses the unique capability to intervene without the burden of institutional imperialism like other peacekeeping institutions. Thus, strengthening its financial and military capacity is essential to anti-imperialist peacekeeping missions on the continent.

Conclusion

A comparison of the African Union's peacekeeping missions in Burundi and Somalia reveals how two similar missions can reap drastically different outcomes. In the case of Burundi, the clear leadership of South Africa, coupled with assistance from external states and organizations, enabled the success of AMIB. In comparison, the nefarious leadership of Ethiopia combined with a significant lack of military resources and financial aid severely hindered the success of AMISOM in Somalia.

The difference in outcomes between AMIB and AMISOM highlights two crucial factors that are imperative to the success of peacekeeping missions from the African Union. First, the neutral leadership of an African state ensures that the mission is led in a clear direction with the central purpose of restoring peace. Second, having sufficient resources like troops and monetary aid is necessary for the peacekeeping initiative to fund the tasks necessary to complete the mission. If the African Union can ensure that both factors are involved in all future peacekeeping missions, the organization possesses a higher chance of achieving success and restoring peace in the region.

This evaluation is important because the African Union is one of the only regional organizations on the continent that is capable of restoring peace without the entrenched colonial and imperialist legacies that plague other actors like formal colonial regimes or institutions that have perpetuated colonial legacies, like the United Nations. Therefore, the duty of restoring peace in Africa is uniquely designated to the African Union. Through the implementation of these two key factors of success, the African Union can strengthen their peacekeeping missions in order to increase its ability to mitigate conflict and prevent future violence from erupting on the continent.

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