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## **Sending Peacekeepers Abroad, Sharing Power at home:**

### **Burundi in Somalia**

Nina Wilén      David Ambrosetti      Gérard Birantamije

#### **Abstract**

This article examines how the post-conflict political settlement between Burundian parties and external partners has impacted on the decision to deploy Burundian troops in multilateral peace operations in Africa. The authors claim that Burundi's decision to deploy troops, which took place in the midst of an overarching security sector reform, had a temporary stabilizing effect on the internal political balance due to several factors, including professionalization, prestige and financial opportunities. From an international perspective, Burundi's role in peacekeeping has helped to reverse the image of Burundi as a post-conflict country in need of assistance to a peacebuilding state, offering assistance to others, who are worse off. These factors taken together have also enhanced the possibilities of the Burundian government to continue its trend of demanding independence from international oversight mechanisms and political missions, while maintaining good relations with donors, despite reports of increasing authoritarianism and limited political space. The article draws on significant fieldwork, including over 50 interviews with key actors in the field and complements the scarce literature on African troop contributing states.

**Keywords:** peacekeeping, troop contribution, army, Burundi, stability, AMISOM

## Introduction

A number of African states that have suffered from internal conflicts have relatively rapidly taken on important roles in multilateral peace operations abroad following the end of their own conflicts. Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda in East Africa fit into the above description. These troop deployments have gained limited attention in the academic literature, with a few recent exceptions, notably: Philip Cunliffe's book on peacekeepers from the global south<sup>i</sup>, Jonathan Fisher's work on Uganda's AMISOM contribution and Danielle Beswick's research analysing Rwanda's engagement in several peace operations, particularly in Darfur<sup>ii</sup>. The last two authors have identified troop-contributing governments, which represent authoritarian, highly personalised power structures that are relatively free from the constraints of domestic debates. Yet, they maintain strong relations with their Western partners, in particular the British and the Americans. The latter are highly implicated in the regional and multilateral peace architecture in Africa through the long-standing slogan "African solutions to African problems"—especially when it comes to containing the Jihad threat<sup>iii</sup>.

This article aims to complement previous authors' attempt to explore the phenomenon of African post-conflict troop deployment with the case of Burundi. Burundi became a troop contributor to AMISOM at the end of 2007 in the midst of a process to come out of a fifteen-year long civil war, intersected by various peace accords and signed with different armed groups with diverse results. In other words, at the time of deployment to Somalia, the peace in Burundi was at best recent, but most likely still in progress as the last armed group just had come out of the bush (the Forces Nationales de Libération: FNL)<sup>iv</sup>. The Burundian army became thus a peace support operation army from 2007 onwards. Today it has contributed to several UN missions on the continent, including UNAMID in Darfur, MINURCAT in the Central African Republic and UNOCI in Ivory Coast. It is currently playing an important role in the African peace operation in Central African Republic, MISCA, and has recently been called to strengthen the UN mission in South Sudan, UNMISS. Most importantly however, is its heavy involvement in AMISOM. In a few years time, the whole Burundian army will have participated in at least one peace support operation, most probably AMISOM, which hosts 5 rotating Burundian battalions, or over 5000 troops on an all-around year basis<sup>v</sup>, counting the deployment of its 27nd battalion in 2014<sup>vi</sup>.

Our main purpose in this article is to examine how the recent deployment of Burundian troops in multilateral peace operations in Africa, particularly in Somalia, has impacted the post-conflict political settlement between Burundian parties and external partners. By this internal focus, we intend to enhance the understanding of why Burundi has become an important troop contributing country, and examine the internal post-conflict arrangement leading to such an international military commitment. A conjunction of interests has allegedly favored Burundi's decision to deploy and subsequently increase their presence in peace support operations: financial benefits, training, national and international reputation and cohesion of a newly composed army against a foreign enemy. This article examines how such interests have emerged in the midst of wide-ranging, structural army reforms in a fragile political post-conflict setting.

Our main argument, chiseled out through a combination of extensive fieldwork and literature review, holds that the Burundian government has used troop contribution to peacekeeping in order to solve internal problems and facilitate external relations with donors. This is neither a new nor original argument, as Cunliffe's impressive documentation of the Global South's contribution to peacekeeping missions shows<sup>vii</sup>. Yet, the topic is currently not sufficiently explored or analyzed in the academic literature. The present work is dedicated to complement the scarce material that exists on post-conflict peacekeeping contributions. This seems particularly relevant today (2014) since the future of the Burundian political balance, put in place and maintained since 2003, raises many concerns in what seems to be one of the most serious crises since the end of the internal conflict.

Methodologically, the paper builds on extensive fieldwork conducted by the three authors in Burundi at several occasions between 2011 and 2014. All together, 51 interviews have been conducted with both civilian and military actors in Burundi's security sector. A number of these have been followed up with telephone interviews at a later stage. In addition, official documents, NGO reports, press articles, and academic literature form part of the material sources. In terms of structure, a short overview of Burundi's conflict and internal post-conflict settings firstly shows the originality of Burundi's trajectory and sets the context for the following sections. In the second part, we revisit the agreement between the two rival political-military forces and examine how the subsequent military reforms – in particular the massive demobilization of soldiers – have created a politically sensitive context. The deployment in Somalia has tempered this

particular tension, making the relations between the government and the army smoother. The third part highlights three kinds of benefits from troop deployment for the Burundian military: professionalization, national and international prestige, and financial benefits. All together, these factors have weakened ties from the conflict and thereby also avoided a generalized dissatisfaction from the demobilized and their families or from officers facing temporary standstills in their career plans, at least in the short run. A final section questions the sustainability of these ‘successes’ in a strongly authoritarian context where a new political crisis, starting at the end of 2013, appears to increase in complexity day by day.

## **I. The Originality of the Burundian Case: a Historical Contextualization**

The Rwandan and Ugandan governments have during the last ten years been increasingly active troop contributors to peace operations. These governments, similarly to the Burundian, came to power after years of armed conflict and in the Rwandan case, after genocide. However, before their deployments abroad, their governments enjoyed uninterrupted power between ten (Rwanda) and twenty years (Uganda) with the same lead figures throughout this period (Paul Kagame and Yoweri Museveni). Burundi started its transition from conflict to peace radically differently, within the frame of a comprehensive power-sharing deal between the government and its major political and military challenger<sup>viii</sup>. The aim of this section is to underline the originality of this situation for a newly active troop contributing country, and describe the historical path leading to this specific configuration.

The role of the Burundian army has been central in Burundi’s history since its independence in 1962 from Belgium. A military coup in 1966 by the Minister of Defence, Captain Michel Micombero, ended the ruling monarchy and intensified a concentration of economic opportunities and power to a Tutsi clique from the southern Bururi province. This was particularly evident within the military, where a purge of Hutu officers preceded the coup in 1966<sup>ix</sup>. In 1972, tensions between ethnicities culminated with the first mass killing after the army repressed a Hutu-instigated uprising causing thousands of civilian Tutsis’ deaths. Estimates

vary, but approximately 200,000 Hutus were killed in the months of April to November in 1972, with the consequence of mass flight or death of all educated Hutus<sup>x</sup>.

The years following the genocide were characterized by tensions, as the threat of a forthcoming genocide against Tutsis became a factor that the political-military elite used in order to legitimize their violent domination over the country<sup>xi</sup>. This scene did not change until the end of the 1980's despite continuous talk about national unity. In 1987, Major Pierre Buyoya seized the power in a bloodless coup from the second military head of state, Colonel Bagaza, also a Tutsi from the Bururi province, like Micombero, and like Buyoya. International pressure and yet another cycle of civilian massacres in 1988 convinced Buyoya to initiate reconciliation and democratization<sup>xii</sup>. The reforms included opening up places for Hutus in the national officer academy, the *Institut supérieur des cadres militaires* (ISCAM) and preparing democratic elections<sup>xiii</sup>. Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu civilian and founder of a new Hutu-dominated political party, the *Front pour la démocratie au Burundi* (FRODEBU), was elected by a large majority in the first democratic elections in 1993, defeating Pierre Buyoya and his Tutsi-dominated *Union pour le progrès national* (UPRONA). Yet, only a few months into Ndadaye's rule, he was killed by parts of the Tutsi-dominated army, the *Forces Armées Burundaises* (FAB) in a coup attempt<sup>xiv</sup>. The murder set off new cycles of massacres of civilians on both sides, and became the starting point for the following civil war. Parties to the conflict largely followed lines of ethnicity, pitching UPRONA and to a certain extent the government forces FAB against different Hutu parties, including the hardliner Hutu rebel group PALIPEHUTU- FNL (*Parti pour la libération de peuple Hutu*), formed in 1980, and later in 1993-1994 the subsequently largest rebel group, the *Conseil National Pour la Défense de la Démocratie-Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (CNDD-FDD), divided in both a military and political division and eventually led by Pierre Nkurunziza, Burundi's actual president.

The Arusha peace agreement, signed in 2000 with considerable reservations from several of the Tutsi parties and with the two largest Hutu rebel groups (Palipehutu-FNL and CNDD-FDD) absent became nonetheless one of the first steps to a formal and legal end to the war although the actual conflict continued well after 2006 when the last Hutu rebel group, the Palipehutu-FNL, signed a peace agreement with the government<sup>xv</sup>. The 2000 agreement decided on the creation of a transitional government during three years, between FRODEBU and UPRONA, monitored by

international observers, including South African observation troops under the OAU label in 2000 and in 2003 the African Union's first peacekeeping mission, AMIB (African Mission in Burundi) who prepared the arrival of the forthcoming UN troops (ONUB) in 2004<sup>xvi</sup>.

During 2003, one of the two last remaining rebel factions, CNND-FDD, changed direction and signed a new peace accord and in 2006, and the former rebel leader Pierre Nkurunziza became the new president, re-elected in 2010<sup>xvii</sup>. Since 2003, the Burundian peace process has thus been characterized by a politico-military deal based on strict quotas of shared positions between Hutu dominated FRODEBU (led by Domitien Ndayizeye) and CNDD-FDD (Pierre Nkurunziza) on one side, and UPRONA (Pierre Buyoya) largely supported by the Tutsi-dominated ex-FAB on the other. There have nevertheless been several violent clashes with the FNL<sup>xviii</sup> and the leading party has exerted political violence against the opposition at several occasions despite close observation by both regional and international peace operations on the ground<sup>xix</sup>.

Yet, the difference with Rwanda and Uganda is tangible: Burundi's government is characterized by a power-sharing deal with regular multi-party elections. The Burundian president has therefore not had the time, or the conditions, to cement his hegemony in the same way as his Rwandan and Ugandan neighbours<sup>xx</sup>. Another point of comparison is that Burundi has not only deployed troops, but also received international troops, firstly from the African Union (AU) and thereafter from the UN. Rwanda shares this experience, but the context is different. In Rwanda, a very small observer mission from the OAU preceded the infamous UN mission arriving in late 1993, which lacked both means and political support to prevent, let alone stop, the genocide. However, ten years passed in between this international failure in Rwanda and Rwanda's troop contributions abroad. In Burundi, the international military presence has been substantial since AMIB then ONUB (African Union then United Nations Missions in Burundi) intervened in 2003 and 2004 to assist the implementation of the Arusha Agreement. In 2006, the victorious CNDD-FDD decided to play the sovereignty card and ask the UN to substitute its military mission by a significantly smaller UN integrated office (BINUB)<sup>xxi</sup> and finally an even smaller BNUB. We will come back to the relations between the Burundian government and the UN in the last part of the article, discussing sovereignty issues and authoritarian rule.

One of the most pressing priorities for the ruling CNDD-FDD was to reform the security sector, whose exclusionist composition, rule and behaviour had played major roles in the civil war<sup>xxii</sup>. A



typical post-conflict patchwork's process of security sector reform (SSR) started already in 2004 and former rebel groups were merged into the bloated new defence corps, *la Force de Défense Nationale* (FDN), which included the former *Forces Armées Burundaises* (ex-FAB). The forces were put to test quickly: less than half a year after the blue helmets left Burundi, the new government decided to contribute troops from the newly composed army to African Union's peacekeeping mission in Somalia, later called AMISOM<sup>xxiii</sup>. The Burundian army deployed to Somalia in the middle of restructuring and reforms, to a large extent inspired and supported by external actors with the overarching objective of avoiding renewed violence in Burundi. Uganda and Rwanda have also, to different extent, been involved in such security sector reforms, promoted by external actors, but here again, these experiences date back in time and were characterized by a very strong local control<sup>xxiv</sup>. More importantly, these reforms did not occur simultaneously as they were deploying troops abroad under an international mandate. Yet, in Burundi, the SSR process, and more specifically the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants (DDR) process, appear to have been aided by the decision to deploy troops to peace operations and in this sense also contributed to cement the politico-military deal between the new and old political authorities.

## **II. A New Army for a New Polity in the Making: Demobilization and Reforms as Initial Threats to the Military's Power-Sharing Goodwill**

The political authorities in Burundi judge the military contribution to Somalia as a sign of success for the army reform, which is considered as one of the most crucial political projects for peace in Burundi. In a speech held by the Burundian President at the opening of the academic year of the Higher Military Academy (ISCAM) in January 2010, the Head of State was keen to underline this success:

The international community today appreciates, and rightly so, our country in general and the Armed Forces in particular. A telling example is the participation of the FDN members in different peacekeeping and observer missions in countries like Somalia, Chad, Ivory Coast, Sudan, Central African Republic, Burundi having been designated by the UN as a 'country contributing troops to peacekeeping'<sup>xxv</sup>.

This is clearly a way for the President to let the international donors know that their efforts are useful and worth to be continued. Yet a local dimension shines through here, which is even more important politically. It is the link that unites the new Burundian power to its army, which is in the midst of major transformation. Here we need to go back to the beginning of CNDD-FDD's arrival in power in 2005 to understand the relationship between the civilian power and the military elite in Burundi. CNDD-FDD's entrance in the political arena was characterised and to a large degree conditioned by a political-military compromise that gradually evolved after the previous political regime in Bujumbura initiated it. Pierre Buyoya decided to launch negotiations with the armed Hutu rebels – without renouncing a possible military victory during the internal conflict. The subsequent agreements eventually sealed a form of alliance between the CNDD-FDD's new political leadership<sup>xxvi</sup> and the politico-military establishment linked to UPRONA, loyal to Buyoya. In turn, Buyoya accepted the main condition advanced by the Hutu forces: to provide the country with an ethnically mixed army that could protect the Hutus against threats of extermination.

The Arusha Accord's provisions and later the “*Accord technique des forces*” in 2003, recognize the crucial role that the Burundian army and other security services (the *Gendarmerie*, the *Documentation* and the community security structures, such as the *Gardiens de la paix*, or the armed groups attached to the political parties) play in the maintenance of an ethnically balanced peace. For the Hutu armed groups, the solution to the conflict was indeed the disappearance of the “monolithic Tutsi army”, which was created after Michel Micombero's coup in 1966 and the mass violence in 1972. Since this traumatism, the Hutu opposition has feared the Tutsi soldiers who, strongly ethno-centred and regionalized, have responded to attacks on Tutsi civilians with episodes of brutal repressions against Hutu civilians<sup>xxvii</sup>.

The third Arusha protocol established therefore a balance between the ethnicities in order to prevent genocides or coups, making sure that the defence and security institutions never exceeded 50% of a particular ethnic group<sup>xxviii</sup>. The Technical Accord from November 2003 reserved for example 40% of the officer positions to the CNDD-FDD and guaranteed ethnic equality for the commanding positions, all under international oversight<sup>xxix</sup>. In this partnership between the former belligerents from 2003 onwards, the military authority played an important role. Lead figures, such as the former Minister of Defence, Lieutenant-General Germain

Niyoyankana, and the former chief of the intelligence services (*Administrateur général du Service National des Renseignements*), Adolphe Nshimirimana, were mentioned in the interviews as key actors for the rather smooth integration between the two main forces, CNDD-FDD and the ex-FAB<sup>xxx</sup>.

The Burundian national programs for DDR and SSR became interesting cases for the growing field of international experts in these domains, which guaranteed Burundi international attention and support<sup>xxxix</sup>. Apart from restructuring the army, these programs assisted the transformation from armed political movements to political parties, the prime example being the CNDD-FDD<sup>xxxii</sup>. This, in turn, helped the latter to prepare its victory in the 2005 elections without any serious impediment from the former militaries close to UPRONA. As a result, Pierre Nkurunziza became responsible of trying to maintain this favourable political climate which supported the power-sharing deal between Tutsis and Hutus, and especially between the militaries coming from the old regime and the newcomers from the armed opposition (called the Armed Political Movements and Parties, PMPA). It is this political deal between the leaderships of the two former rival political powers (UPRONA and CNDD-FDD) and their respective armed forces (ex-FAB and CNDD-FDD), which is the focus for our analysis.

The new political authorities and the military staff reminiscent of the old regime have contributed to the FDN enjoying a certain prestige in the political society overall, but also among its external partners by voluntarily organizing this power-sharing structure in the Burundian army. During our fieldtrips to Burundi in 2011 and 2013, several international and local actors in charge of these SSR programs pointed at the success of the army in terms of restructuration, ethnic balance, reconciliation and internal cohesion, bridging cleavages from the conflict<sup>xxxiii</sup>. How has the Burundian military contribution to AMISOM contributed to this success? In the following sections we identify difficulties and opportunities that the Burundian civilian and military authorities have encountered during this transition period with regards to the reforms in the army. This makes it possible to evaluate the political ‘utility’ that a military contribution to an international mission such as AMISOM can represent for a regime that is keen to maintain good relations with its army and its external partners<sup>xxxiv</sup>.

The reform programs of the FDN and the large contributions to AMISOM came in the midst of a sensitive politico-military context: the new authorities, CNDD-FDD, needed to deal with the supporters of the old regime, in particular those in the army. At the same time, both forces took part of political negotiations with the last rebel movement, the Palipehutu-FNL. These political negotiations were also subject to the very sensitive topic of integration and demobilization of former combatants – all under a tight budget. The result, which at the moment appears as rather successful (November 2014), makes it easy to overlook the tensions that the military authorities and the political direction dealt with during the reforms.

The former combatants' frustrations, whether integrated into the FDN or demobilized, could have resulted in radicalized positions along old enemy lines. Some events threatened for example to disrupt the whole process: the attempted mutinies within the FDN in February 2009 related to the housing allowances for the junior officers and the enlisted; the paycheck raise of 34% to all civil servants except the military (although the latter had benefitted from a notable increase of their salary conditions in 2006)<sup>xxxv</sup>. Adding to this, when the Chief of Staff of the army, Major General Niyombare, and the Minister of Defence Niyoyankana gave contradictory comments to explain the causes of the crisis, they painted a picture of a divided army with several competing decision-making centres<sup>xxxvi</sup>. In addition, the CNDD-FDD's Senator Richard Nimbasha's claim that many former FAB soldiers had voted for the opposition parties in 2010 showed that some members of the army had not cut the umbilical cords with their former political parties<sup>xxxvii</sup>.

In March 2004, a mixed General Staff for the army was created with the mission to integrate a large part of the combatants into the new National Defence Force and to oversee the demobilization and reintegration into civilian life for the other former combatants<sup>xxxviii</sup>. They received international support from actors such as the AU (AMIB), the UN (UNOB, OCHA, UNICEF) and the World Bank with its ambitious Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP), targeting several post-conflict countries in the region<sup>xxxix</sup>. As a result, from December 2004 to 2008, 41,000 ex-FAB and 15,500 ex-PMPA were demobilized in order to achieve the aim of a maximum of 25,000 soldiers fixed by the World Bank and the Burundian Government<sup>xl</sup>. The extensive demobilization program, which in reality implicated a demobilization of mostly ex-FAB soldiers, showed that the leadership of the General Staff and the Ministry of Defence had chosen to confront the risks of such an approach<sup>xli</sup>. Yet, the strategy

backfired slightly as at the end of 2007, the numbers turned around 28 000 personnel without adding the future integration of more than 2,250 fighters from the Palipehutu-FNL following the peace agreement signed in 2008 with the government. In order to meet the requirements the last phase of demobilization concerned more than 7000 Tutsis from the former government forces (FAB). The latter protested against this last demobilization of mainly Tutsis by refusing to leave the caserns, prompting a pressured government to ask the World Bank to temporary suspend the implementation of the MDRP programme<sup>xlii</sup>.

It is hence during this problematic period that a Burundian contingent is deployed to AMISOM. The decision to deploy troops to the AU mission in Somalia was taken in great haste, according to one of the generals involved in the decision-making. *“Ethiopia was withdrawing troops and they needed a new contributor, so we [Burundi] decided to do it fast”*<sup>xliii</sup>. It was a turbulent time for the new government, which had signed a ceasefire agreement with the FNL-Palipehutu in September 2006 but still failed to implement it. This resulted in a fragile security situation, which the South African troops on the ground were proof of<sup>xliv</sup>. At the same time, an internal political crisis was ensuing, as the CNDD-FDD’s president, Hussein Radjabu, was ousted from the party, starting what later in the year became a parliamentary deadlock with a power-sharing dispute with the opposition<sup>xlv</sup>.

However, as soon as the first battalions were deployed at the end of 2007, the forced demobilizations touching former FAB soldiers stopped<sup>xlvi</sup>. The military authorities quickly identified this ‘social’ side effect of the deployment and rapidly decided to involve all troops by setting up an altering system whereby everyone would be deployed and enjoy the financial benefits connected to AMISOM<sup>xlvii</sup>. The deployment helped hence to reduce frustration within the new FDN as it made it possible to engage the ‘surplus’ soldiers and to temporary justify it to donors, which consequently reduced the pressure to demobilize. The authorities avoided therefore threatening the fragile ethnic balance, which had been identified by a Senate investigation in July 2008. Instead, other advantages independent of ethnicity and touching all segments of the army, were found in the troop deployment process, including professionalization, prestige and financial benefits.

### **III. A Promise of Military Professionalization, Prestige and Increased Opportunities**

The Somalia experience implied new risks for the Burundian soldiers linked to the difficult mandate in the fluid Somalia politico-military context<sup>xlvi</sup>. Yet it also implied changing working conditions and new opportunities for both soldiers and officers.

One important aspect of these conditions and opportunities is linked to their hopes of ‘professionalization’ and to acquire prestige in the Burundian society, but also in the encounter of foreign soldiers and officers outside of Burundi<sup>xlix</sup>. Here, we understand professionalization as the introduction of modern military equipment, established procedures for recruitment and promotions and the acquirement of knowledge and imported standards from multilateral and bilateral partnerships<sup>l</sup>. The UN mission in Burundi started planning a series of “harmonization” trainings from 2005 onwards with the aim to increase the capacity level of the former rebels and reinforce the ‘team spirit’<sup>li</sup>. In June 2006, Burundi was chosen as one of the first two countries to participate in UN’s new Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), strongly promoted by the first president of the Commission, Carolyn McAskie, who previously happened to be the Secretary General’s Special Representative in the UN mission in Burundi<sup>lii</sup>. The PBC supported a project directly aimed at enhancing the capacity and cohesion of the new army, focusing on a new code of ethics for the military and housing for the whole FDN<sup>liii</sup>.

Among the international partners, the Netherlands and the US significantly contributed to the training and professionalization of the military forces. Belgium also restarted military collaboration with the Burundian army in 2006 with amongst other, harmonization training of the new army<sup>liv</sup>. This international support contributed notably to the relatively rapid decision to deploy troops in AMISOM<sup>lv</sup>. In addition Burundi became a member of the U.S. African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program<sup>lvi</sup>. In December 2007, the first Burundian troops arrived in Somalia, with an ACOTA training session behind them<sup>lvii</sup>. ACOTA falls into the category of a typical ‘capacity-building’ organisation, as it provides extensive field- and staff training and exercises for battalions, brigades and multinational force headquarters personnel. In addition, it provides equipment for African peace support operation trainers and peacekeepers<sup>lviii</sup>.

For a post-conflict country like Burundi, the advantages of an American top-notch training appear obvious<sup>lix</sup>. The fact that both of its neighbours, Rwanda and Uganda, are ACOTA partners has also played its part in Burundi's decision to participate in the programme. Uganda being the prime partner of Burundi in Somalia also means that common training promotes interoperability and overall efficiency, in particular as Uganda already uses planning systems similar to the U.S. military<sup>lx</sup>. The actual ACOTA training is carried out by the contractor Northrop Grumman in batches of nine weeks to each battalion at a cost of \$1.2 million per battalion for a total of \$103 million<sup>lxi</sup>.

These new training programs modified the landscape of the existing military cooperation programs with Burundi, particularly those from the Belgian and French partners, which have been involved in Burundi for decades<sup>lxii</sup>. Although the French diplomatic and military cooperation played a key role in the initial Burundian involvement in AMISOM, the French programs have progressively been considered to complement the ACOTA training<sup>lxiii</sup>. The Netherlands has also sailed into Burundi's security sector during the last few years, to become one of the most important partners in Burundi's SSR. The Netherlands constructed the "camp de la paix" in Tenga, which housed the first integrated unit of the FDN<sup>lxiv</sup> and in April 2009, the Netherlands signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Burundi for a jointly created 8-year program called Development of the Security Sector (DSS)<sup>lxv</sup>. Noticeably, this program is said to have survived the drastic cuttings inflicted on the Dutch international cooperation budget by the new right wing governmental coalition elected in Netherlands in 2010, thanks to the existence of the AMISOM and its anti-al Qaida dimension<sup>lxvi</sup>. The Netherlands is also contributing to the peace support operations training directly within the ACOTA program<sup>lxvii</sup>. Germany is another partner providing the Burundian contingent in AMISOM with, among others; material support. In addition, the FDN signed a new agreement with the US army in 2014 to receive a new, advanced anti-terrorist formation<sup>lxviii</sup>.

So far, it seems as if the AMISOM 'experience' passed the test. The army reforms after the agreements in 2000 and 2003 have been considered successful, both by national political authorities and their international key partners. The army and its political authority therefore see the deployment to other peace operations as a sort of reward. Recent nominations of Burundians to high positions, both civilian and military in multilateral organizations in charge of peace and

security on the continent have reinforced this feeling. The number of Burundians in important international positions has indeed exploded in recent years: former president Buyoya was firstly the head of MISMA, then, since 2012, High Representative of the AU in Mali. Major General Cyrille Ndayirukiye has been the current Director of the Eastern Africa Standby Force Coordination Mechanism since 2010. In addition, Brigade General Athanase Kararuzza became the Deputy Force Commander of the MISCA in Central African Republic, while Silas Ntirwurirwa became the first Burundian AMISOM Force Commander since December 2013.

Apart from these international nominations, which mainly have affected the higher levels of the Burundian army, the Somalia experience has also proved to be a source of professionalization and valorisation on an internal basis, altering the prestige of the army as a whole. Unlike the trainings for officers (like in the Dutch DSS program for example), the pre-deployment trainings for Somalia concern all types of military staff. These trainings have gradually been integrated in the military's general training plans<sup>lxxix</sup>. In addition the Burundian troops regularly participate at joint exercises with other armed forces of the East African community<sup>lxxx</sup>. The internal structure of the army has also experienced some reorganization because of the Somalia deployment, integrating special units (demining, engineering, health services, news services), thereby amending command functions<sup>lxxxi</sup>. The transformation which has attracted most attention concerns however the integration of the former enemy combatants in the same army which is an important academic question<sup>lxxxii</sup>. It is on the field that this new FDN has achieved its greatest success and has received a certain respect for Burundi among external partners. The army, it is said, is a better example than the politicians<sup>lxxxiii</sup>. The current Minister of Defense supports this vision: *“there is the diplomacy and the prestige is obviously increasing, so that is an added value. Other countries would not be able to do what we have done, so we are proud”*<sup>lxxxiv</sup>.

Indeed, in line with traditional state formation literature<sup>lxxxv</sup>, the common, foreign enemy in Somalia has appeared as the archetypical example of what is needed in order to solidify a new army made up by former opposing forces. A preliminary experience of fighting, side by side, was given to the former enemies in March 2005, when they fought against the FNL and contributed to the ceasefire agreement signed in September 2006. From December 2007, Al-Shabab has offered the new indisputable figure of the common enemy. But in the official



discourse this has not been seen as crucial for the cohesion: “to leave for AMISOM was continuity. The solidarity in the *Force de Défense Nationale* was already there”<sup>lxxvi</sup>.

The partnerships and trainings have also brought financial benefits. The soldiers deployed to AMISOM in 2013 received a monthly 1028\$ allowance paid by the African Union (which to a large extent came from the European Union, through the European Development Fund’s Facility for Peace)<sup>lxxvii</sup>. Yet, it is largely said in the diplomatic community in Bujumbura that the Burundian government retains 200\$ on each allowance. The rest still remains an enormous increase in salaries for the soldiers who normally gain approximately 40\$ per month<sup>lxxviii</sup>. In other words, for each new battalion sent to AMISOM, the Burundian government not only seizes training opportunities that will eventually enhance its army’s capabilities, but it also improves the material conditions of a growing number of soldiers and manages to gain important sums from the deployments. According to some observers, Burundi earns about 45 \$ million per year from its military participation, counting that over 5,000 troops receive a monthly paycheck<sup>lxxix</sup>. This new income is said to fall into the general budget of the state rather than to the Ministry of Defense, which may explain why some officers recalled material penury during their missions where they had to complement Somali army contributions with their own ammunition<sup>lxxx</sup>. In other words it is doubtful that the financial benefits from AMISOM actually serve the purpose of building and improving a new army, which in turn poses questions with regards to the financial transparency and accountability of the Burundian government<sup>lxxxi</sup>. The government’s recent purchase of a new presidential jet plane has for example been attributed to the use of AMISOM funds by the anti-corruption agency OLUCOME<sup>lxxxii</sup>.

A few months after his arrival to power, president Nkurunziza proved that an improvement of the conditions in the army was important in order to avoid military outbreaks. The government passed a reform of the military status in July 2006 granting the army a quite privileged position compared to other Burundian administrations<sup>lxxxiii</sup>. This, in combination with the financial opportunities attached to the contribution to AMISOM gave the regime a new lever to reduce unaddressed tensions and strengthen the military’s loyalty. A whole neighbourhood in Gitega has been constructed by AMISOM ‘veterans’ as a result of their improved financial situations<sup>lxxxiv</sup>. Motivation for deployment is also increased by the fact that a death in Somalia is worth more than in Burundi: a death in Somalia implies that the surviving family gets 50,000 US dollars

from the African Union<sup>lxxxv</sup>. It should however be noted that delays in the payment have caused considerable complaints, both within the Burundian and the Ugandan armies<sup>lxxxvi</sup>.

## **V. Reaffirmation of National Sovereignty and the Authoritarian Trend**

Politically, the Burundian contribution to AMISOM and the intense international military cooperation it provoked have had some repercussion on the diplomatic stage in Bujumbura and the region. As in the cases of both Rwanda and Uganda, the international limelight often shadows national problems of governance, as major diplomatic actors are not keen to disapprove their partners' misbehaviors officially<sup>lxxxvii</sup>. International partners appear to have agreed that a "good enough" peace, characterized by relative stability is the best option in Burundi<sup>lxxxviii</sup>. This "laissez-faire" attitude has been reinforced by the government's strong insistence on the Burundian sovereignty and its unwillingness to accommodate external missions<sup>lxxxix</sup>. The declaration of four high UN Representatives as persona non grata is a clear sign of this reluctance to foreign observation<sup>xc</sup>, just as the government's repeated demands for a decreased UN presence<sup>xc</sup>. The government has however not just bluntly rejected external interference; it has strategically used key concepts, such as 'national ownership' to mold the international assistance to fit its own objectives<sup>xcii</sup>. This should be seen against growing claims from international and local NGOs about oppression against the opposition; limited political space and continuous arrests of individuals posing problems to the regime, as well as the latest political crisis in 2013 when the government sidelined parts of the opposition, causing major tensions and political chaos<sup>xciii</sup>. The regime's talk about changing the constitution to allow the president to run for a third time, appears to be in line with discussions in neighboring states such as Rwanda, Congo and Uganda and confirms, if not an authoritarian rule so at least the attempt to install one<sup>xciv</sup>.

In a complex relationship between the Burundian government and the international actors, the former has thus been able to maintain a rather authoritarian and violent rule without major complaints from the latter, to a large degree related to the urgent need for a 'success story' in a region that has counted so many failures (Rwanda, the DRC, Ethiopia/Eritrea, the two 'Sudans'). The international investments made during and after the Arusha agreement may simply be too

costly to risk subvert the current fragile stability by demanding for good governance and a more positive peace<sup>xcv</sup>. Burundi's active deployment of troops to various peacekeeping missions fits into this logic, as it makes it possible for the Burundian authorities to claim a certain progress in its post-conflict development. This progress in turn enables the government to ask its international partners to temper their criticisms concerning the use of intimidation and political violence in the country. By pointing at its relatively successful reform of the army and the deployment of the latter abroad to countries that are 'worse off', the Burundian government is also able to ask for a decreased presence of external actors on its territory<sup>xcvi</sup>.

## **VI. Conclusion**

This article has attempted to answer the questions of how Burundi has become a sustained contributor to AU peacekeeping missions and the role played by the internal post-conflict political settlement between Burundian parties, and international partners in the decision to deploy. In Burundi, the local politico-military deal between former combatants, which constitutes the basis for the relative stability of the country, appears to have benefitted from the decision to deploy troops in Somalia due to a number of factors. Firstly, the deployment has eased tensions within the army as it, at least temporarily, has stopped forced demobilization, and contributed to financial opportunities for the militaries deployed. Secondly, the promise of professionalization and prestige through both pre-deployment training and actual deployment has benefitted the integration between former combatants and enhanced the overall expertise of the army. Finally, the Burundian army's increasingly good reputation abroad has resulted in further Burundian peacekeeping activism in other current conflicts (Central African Republic today, South Sudan tomorrow). It has also contributed to Burundians, both civilian and military, getting high positions in international missions – reinforcing the image of Burundi as a country that is contributing to stability and peace, rather than the victim of an internal conflict<sup>xcvii</sup>. These factors, taken together, have also enhanced the possibilities of the Burundian government to continue its trend of demanding independence from international oversight mechanisms and political missions – a trend which has accompanied its increasingly authoritarian rule.

Following this, we argue that the Burundian government has used troop contribution to peacekeeping in order, on the one hand, to solve internal problems and ease tensions, and on the other hand, to create a new type of relationship with external actors. The Burundian government extracts notable benefits from the troop contributions, benefits that might gradually be considered as institutionalized and thus necessary to maintain, hence provoking a new dependency. This gives nevertheless Burundi a new means of leverage to change its international status from that of a “failing state”, to one of a peacebuilder. The ‘peacebuilding’ status becomes a strong argument in the Burundian government’s quest for independence from international observation and presence, which risk circumscribing the latter’s increasingly authoritarian rule.

With the forthcoming 2015 elections in sight, concerns arise over increasing political tensions in Burundi. Both top officials and Burundian national actors have called for the UN to ensure a supervising role during this critical time<sup>xcviii</sup>. Local BNUB officers have recently brought attention to the distributions of arms to the youth movements linked to the ruling party (the *Imbonerakure*) by two generals of the FDN, former CNDD-FDD combatants, which resulted in the government declaring another UN official persona non grata<sup>xcix</sup>. This most recent political crisis shows that the reluctance of a large part of the former CNDD-FDD fighters to respect the Arusha agreement (which they were pressured to adhere to without participating in the negotiations) runs the risk of jeopardizing the entire politico-military deal. This indicates that the contribution of troops might just have served the current regime as a temporary stabilizer at a precise moment in time, more than a sustainable solution to internal tensions.

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## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Cunliffe, “Legions of Peace”.

<sup>ii</sup> Fisher, “Managing Donor Perceptions”, 404-423; Beswick, “Peacekeeping, Regime Security”, 739-754; see also, Wilén, “Hybrid Peace”, 1323-1336.

<sup>iii</sup> Franke and Esmenjaud, “Who Owns African Ownership?”, 137-158.

<sup>iv</sup> ICG, “Burundi”, 28 August 2007.

<sup>v</sup> Tshitenge, “Burundi: l’armée en paix”, *Jeune Afrique*, 25 September 2012.

<sup>vi</sup> Ciza, “Retour des militaires”.

<sup>vii</sup> See for example note i above, chapter 5.

<sup>viii</sup> Vandeginste, S., “Power-sharing, conflict and transition in Burundi”, 63-86.

<sup>ix</sup> Samii, “Military Integration in Burundi”, 213.

<sup>x</sup> Lemarchand, “Genocide in the Great Lakes”, 5-6.

<sup>xi</sup> Lemarchand, “Burundi”, pp.xxii-xxiii.

<sup>xii</sup> Reyntjens, “Burundi. Prospects for Peace”, 7-8.

<sup>xiii</sup> See note viii above, 214.

<sup>xiv</sup> Weissman, “Preventing Genocide in Burundi”, 6.

<sup>xv</sup> ICG, “Burundi: To integrate the FNL successfully”; Boshoff, H, et al., “The Burundi Peace Process”.

<sup>xvi</sup> Boshoff, et al., *ibid.*

<sup>xvii</sup> Remacle, et al., “*L’Afrique des grands lacs : Des conflits à la paix*”, 11.

<sup>xviii</sup> See note iv above, 1.

<sup>xix</sup> Devon, “The International Peacebuilding Paradox”, 88.

<sup>xx</sup> See for example note i above.

<sup>xxi</sup> UNSC, 1719, 25 October 2006.

<sup>xxii</sup> See for example, Arusha Accords, 2000 ; Birantamiye, *La crise de l’Etat*, 179-183; Rumin, “Burundi”, 71-72.

<sup>xxiii</sup> BBC News, “Burundi joins Somalia peace force”.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Wilén, “Hybrid Peace”; Alao, “Privatization of Security”.

<sup>xxv</sup> Opening speech of President Pierre Nkurunziza, 20 May 2013 (authors’ translation).

<sup>xxvi</sup> In October 2001, Pierre Nkurunziza, the Executive Secretary of the CNDD-FDD, toppled the leader of the movement, Jean-Bosco Ndayikengurukiye, and became the new leader of the movement, Nindorera, *Le CNDD-FDD au Burundi*, 17-18.

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- <sup>xxvii</sup> Lemarchand, *Burundi*; Chrétien, *Le défi de l'ethnisme* ; Nsanze, *Le Burundi contemporain*.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Arusha Accord, Protocol III, art. 14, §g ; Constitution, art. 257.
- <sup>xxix</sup> The Pretoria Protocol; see also Boshoff & Gasana, *Mapping the road to peace in Burundi*, 3; Nimubona, et al., “The process”, 145.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Interview with a Burundian Brigadier General, Bujumbura, 5 March 2014; Burundian Colonel, former member of *Etat-major general intégré*, Bujumbura, 23 April 2014.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Rumin, “Burundi”, 71-114; Johnson, “Les cadres stratégiques”, 7.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Nindorera, *Le CNDD-FDD au Burundi*.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Phone Interview with former officer in charge of bilateral cooperation program on SSR in Burundi, 31 October 2012; Interview with an officer in charge of police reform in a bilateral cooperation program, Bujumbura, 2 May 2013.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> On this point see, Beswick, “Peacekeeping, Regime Security”, 739-754; Wilén, “Hybrid Peace”, 1323-1336.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Ngabire, et al., “Dossier Contradiction”, 1-8.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Ngabire, et al., “De l’opinion incendiaire”, 2-3.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Boshoff & Frey, “Burundi’s DDR”, 44; République du Burundi, *Plan d’opérations conjointes*; The Defence Minister later creates a general direction dedicated to the former combatants.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> The MDRP provided the National Commission for DDR and UNICEF with 79,5 million dollars: 18 months of salary and 600.000 Burundian Francs (375 US\$) to support income-generating activities to avoid tensions around this demobilization. There were several volunteers for demobilization from all camps, see Uvin, “Ex-combatants in Burundi”.
- <sup>xl</sup> Commission nationale chargée de la Démobilisation, de la Réinsertion et de la Réintégration des ex-combattants (CNDRR), rapport d’activité 2008.
- <sup>xli</sup> Reyntjens, “Chronique politique”, 10-11 ; Rumin, “Burundi”, 88 ; see also : *Jeune Afrique*, “Burundi. Bruit de bottes”, 24 March 2010
- <sup>xlii</sup> Ndayisaba, “Etat d’avancement de la réforme de la FDN”.
- <sup>xliii</sup> Interview with General in Bujumbura, Burundi, 4 March 2013.
- <sup>xliv</sup> Africa Research Bulletin (ARB), “Burundi: New Security Measures”; 17195; ARB, “Burundi: FNL Rapprochement”, 16976; ICG, “Burundi: Restarting Political Dialogue”.
- <sup>xlv</sup> ARB, “Burundi: Party leader under fire”, 16929.
- <sup>xlvi</sup> CIGI, “Burundi”, 4.
- <sup>xlvii</sup> Interview with a Burundian Colonel, Bujumbura, May 7, 2013.
- <sup>xlviii</sup> Kron and Ibrahim, “African Union Peacekeepers killed in Somalia Battle”.
- <sup>xlix</sup> Nitunga, “Quel est l’objectif de l’Exercice de Poste de Commandement (CPX)? ”, 4.

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- <sup>l</sup> Kamrava, “Military Professionalization“, 68.
- <sup>li</sup> Interview with Burundian Colonel, Bujumbura, May 6, 2013; Nindorera, *La réforme du secteur de la sécurité au Burundi*, 33; Ndayegamiye, “Les restructurations militaires“, 7.
- <sup>lii</sup> Wilén, *Justifying Interventions in Africa*, 167.
- <sup>liii</sup> UN, S/2007/682, § 48.
- <sup>liv</sup> Belgian Defense, Internal Document, “Engagements de la défense au Burundi”.
- <sup>lv</sup> Interview with Military Officer, Bujumbura, Burundi, 10 May 2013.
- <sup>lvi</sup> Williams, “U.S. Army Africa Command Team”.
- <sup>lvii</sup> ARB, “Somalia: December Diary”, 17357.
- <sup>lviii</sup> US. Department of State, “African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) Program”.
- <sup>lix</sup> Dickinson, “For tiny Burundi, big returns”.
- <sup>lx</sup> See reference lii above.
- <sup>lxi</sup> US Embassy Burundi, “20<sup>th</sup> Battalion Graduates from ACOTA”; *Globe Newswire*, “Northrop Gruman”.
- <sup>lxii</sup> See for example : Paroqué and Reyntjens, “Le rôle de la Belgique au Rwanda et au Burundi”, 285-306.
- <sup>lxiii</sup> Email correspondence with Belgian Military Strategic Officer, 2 August, Brussels, 2013. Internal Document, “PPM Burundi”, Defence Ministry, Belgium, Brussels, 2013.
- <sup>lxiv</sup> Interview with a Burundian Colonel, Bujumbura, 6 February 2014.
- <sup>lxv</sup> MOU between the Burundian Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Cooperation and Development and the Defence of the Netherlands on the Development of the Security Sector, Hague/Bujumbura, April 2009.
- <sup>lxvi</sup> This could be compared to Fisher’s emphasis on the importance that the image of Uganda as an ally in counter-terrorism activities play in donors’ perception, see: Fisher, “Managing Donor Perceptions”, reference i above.
- <sup>lxvii</sup> Interview with Dutch Officer, Embassy of the Netherlands, Bujumbura, Burundi, 6 March, 2013.
- <sup>lxviii</sup> “Burundi-USA: la FDN va commencer une formation contre le terrorisme”.
- <sup>lxix</sup> Interview with a Burundian Major, Bujumbura May 8, 2013.
- <sup>lxx</sup> Interview with a Burundian Colonel, Bujumbura, May 6, 2013; Mbonimpa, “FTX Mashariki salam 2013 a été couronné de succès”.
- <sup>lxxi</sup> Interview with a Burundian Major, Bujumbura May, 5, 2013.
- <sup>lxxii</sup> See for example, Licklider, R., “New Armies from Old”; Simonsen, “Building ‘National’ Armies – Building Nations ?”, 571-590.



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- <sup>lxxiii</sup> Interview with Former Burundian Ministry of Defence, Germain Niyoyankana, 14 December 2011, Bujumbura.
- <sup>lxxiv</sup> Interview with Burundian Minister of Defense, 8 March 2013, Bujumbura.
- <sup>lxxv</sup> See for example: Tilly, *The Formation of National States*.
- <sup>lxxvi</sup> Interview with Burundian Colonel, 10 May 2013, Bujumbura.
- <sup>lxxvii</sup> Ambrosetti and Esmenjaud, “Whose Money Funds African Peace Operations?”, 73-89.
- <sup>lxxviii</sup> Ndayiziga, “Enjeux autour de l’intervention”, 4.
- <sup>lxxix</sup> See reference liii above.
- <sup>lxxx</sup> Law n°1/13 from 30 July 2013 in the revised general budget of Burundi for the exercise in 2013 under the heading: “Recettes exceptionnelles”, 4; Interview with Burundian General, 4 March, Bujumbura, 2013.
- <sup>lxxxi</sup> Interview with a Burundian colonel, Bujumbura, May 6, 2013.
- <sup>lxxxii</sup> Ndabashinze and Nzosaba, “Burundi: Le gouvernement confirme l’achat”.
- <sup>lxxxiii</sup> Law n°1/15 29 April 2006 on the status of FDN Officers.
- <sup>lxxxiv</sup> See for example : “Gitega : le Quartier Somali”; Esbjörnsson, “Vi som bor här”
- <sup>lxxxv</sup> Interview with a Burundian colonel, Bujumbura, May 5, 2013; Ndayiziga, “Enjeux autour de l’intervention”, 4.
- <sup>lxxxvi</sup> Clotey, “AU Envoy says AMISOM Troop Payments Remain in Arrears”.
- <sup>lxxxvii</sup> ARB, “Uganda-US, America’s Friend”, 17027; see all references under ii.
- <sup>lxxxviii</sup> Devon, see reference ix.
- <sup>lxxxix</sup> Wilén, see reference lvii, 165-166.
- <sup>xc</sup> UNDP, “Burundi government expels UN official”; Le Figaro, “Burundi: départ du représentant de l’ONU”.
- <sup>xc</sup> RFI, “Au Burundi, le gouvernement demande la fermeture du bureau de l’ONU”; Madirisha, “Le Burundi accorde un sursis de 6 mois au BNUB”.
- <sup>xcii</sup> Devon, see reference ix, 89. On this strategic use of ‘ownership’ in SSR, see: Rayroux and Wilén, “Resisting Ownership”, 24-44.
- <sup>xciii</sup> HRW, “You Will Not Have Peace”; HRW, “Closing Doors?”; ICG, “Burundi: From Electoral Boycott”; ICG, “Burundi: Bye-bye Arusha”; Jeune Afrique, “Burundi: la crise politique”; Ndikumana, E., “Le Burundi s’enfonce dans la crise politique”; Devon reference ix.
- <sup>xciv</sup> See for example discussions in Rwanda and the Congo; BBC Africa News, “DRC Congo unity government”; Smith, D., “Paul Kagame hints at seeking third term”.
- <sup>xcv</sup> Devon, see reference ix, 88-89.
- <sup>xcvi</sup> UNSC, “Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2137 (2014)”.
- <sup>xcvii</sup> See Cunliffe, “Legions of Peace”, pp.176-177.

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<sup>xcviii</sup> Declaration from Russ Feingold, Special Representative for President Obama in the Great Lakes region on the political situation in Burundi, March 2014; Alliance des Démocrates pour le Changement (ADC-Ikibiri), Letter to the UN Secretary General with the topic “Prévention d’une catastrophe humanitaire en perspective au Burundi”.

<sup>xcix</sup> UNDPI, “Burundi gov’t expels UN official”.

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