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The African Union's Operations in the Comoros

MAES and Operation Democracy

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Sammanfattning

MAES, en insats som sattes upp av AU för att säkra valen på Komorererna, skulle inte ha kunnat leva upp till sitt mandat utan stöd från den komplimenterande intervenerande AU-insatsen 'Operation Democracy'. Operation Democracy å sin sida var ett genombrott för AU gällande planering och genomförande av fredsfrämjande insatser. Man måste dock vara försiktig med att dra alltför positiva slutsatser då Operation Democracy skiljer sig markant från tidigare AU-insatser. Om AU väljer att genomföra liknande insatser i framtiden kan det få konsekvenser för möjligheten att få till stånd insatser i mer komplexa konfliktmiljöer, vilket AU tidigare tagit på sig att genomföra. Dessutom kan ett eventuellt bristande stöd från vissa centrala aktörer påverka AU:s möjlighet att i framtiden agera på lämpligt sätt.

Nyckelord: Afrikanska Unionen, fredsfrämjande insatser, MAES, Operation Democracy, Komorererna

Summary

MAES, an AU mission set up to secure the elections in the Comoros, would not have been able to succeed in fulfilling its mandate without the complimentary intervening AU mission 'Operation Democracy'. Operation Democracy on the other hand has been a breakthrough for the AU when it comes to planning and conducting peace operations; and succeeded in accomplishing its tasks. One still has to be careful to draw too many positive conclusions for the future of AU PSOs based on the experiences in the Comoros since Operation Democracy differs from earlier Peace Support Operations (PSO) taken on by the AU. If the AU decides to conduct similar missions in the future, it might affect the possibility to conduct operations in more complex conflict environments, something the AU previously has taken on. Furthermore, the lack of support from key states might have consequences for the AU's ability to take appropriate and timely action.

Keywords: African Union, Peace Support Operations, MAES, Operation Democracy, The Comoros Islands

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Foreword

This report was written under the general framework of the FOI Studies in African Security programme, a research trust within FOI's Division of Defence Analysis. The work has taken place within the core project of this programme: Project Africa, funded by the Swedish Ministry of Defence. Currently, one priority for this project is to increase the knowledge and awareness about the African Union (AU) as a peace and security actor in contemporary Africa.

To help in providing understanding of the current capabilities and needs of the emerging AU Peace and Security Architecture, Project Africa has during 2008 conducted a series of studies of the peacekeeping missions undertaken by the AU so far. Reports, dealing with the experiences from the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB), the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) respectively have so far been published.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Context and purpose

The African Union (AU) has led its own Peace Support Operations (PSO) since 2003, when it deployed its first PSO, African Mission in Burundi (AMIB). Since then it has also taken on missions in Somalia – the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Sudan – the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), and most recently in the Comoros Islands – the African Union Electoral and Security Assistance Mission to the Comoros (MAES). Furthermore, AU member states have also conducted the military intervention ‘Operation Democracy’ on the Comorian island of Anjouan. Operation Democracy stipulated a new way of conducting PSOs for the AU since it was the first time the organisation took on a peace enforcement mission. MAES and Operation Democracy are two very different types of interventions and represent two different roles for the African Union in attempting to support peace and security on the African continent.

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of the AU’s involvement in the Comorian crisis in order to increase the understanding of the AU as a regional peace and security organisation, as well as the challenges facing the AU when conducting PSOs. It is part of a study series looking into the African Union’s PSO capabilities, which has so far covered all the AU’s previous missions. The AU is still a young organisation and its experience in the Comoros represent both the challenges currently faced by the organisation, as well as potential directions in which AU peace and security ventures might be heading. In combination with the previous studies, evaluating MAES and Operation Democracy might provide not only an understanding of the AU as such, but also of its future.

1.2 Method and outline

The study is based on a range of first and secondary sources, including official AU documents, academic publications and newspapers. It is also based on a complimentary interview with an AU official. Because of a lack of information regarding the Comoros and the AU operations there, the possibility to draw any far reaching conclusions has been somewhat limited.

After this introduction, the second chapter of this report outlines the history of the AU for a better understanding of the AU as a PSO provider. The third chapter looks into the conflict history of the Comoros Islands. This is done to put the AU engagement in the Comorian crisis into a context. The fourth chapter describes

the AU involvement in the Comorian crisis over the years, going through the different operations that the AU has undertaken. The fifth chapter looks at the consequences of this involvement while the sixth chapter summarizes the conclusions.

2 The African Union¹

In this chapter, a brief overview of the evolvement of the AU will be presented in order to create a better understanding of the AU's organisation and its involvement in crisis management on its own continent.² As will be shown, one explanation for the AU's engagement in the Comorian crisis can be found in its charter.

The predecessor to the AU, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was established in May 1963. The charter of the OAU stated that peace and security should be established and maintained in Africa.³ At the same time, the charter underlined the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the individual member states, which was later translated into a principle of non-intervention.⁴ Alongside only being able to take action when all member states had come to a consensus, this made the organisation a weak actor in promoting peace and security on the continent. Due to the political context it was operating in, the main focus of the OAU came to be the fight against apartheid and colonisation, and thus in 1994 when apartheid came to an end, so did the purpose of the OAU.⁵

During the 1990s several new conflicts struck the African continent. The failure of the international community to intervene against these, and particularly the failure to prevent the genocide in Rwanda, created a desire to find 'African solutions to African problems'. A wave of newfound pan-africanism that not only promoted cooperation on security issues, but also the principles of democracy, accountability, good governance and political openness, swept the continent.⁶ It was in this context and spirit that the African Union was born in Sierte, Libya in 1999. The Constitutive Act of the AU was later signed on 11 July 2000, with the inauguration of the organisation taking place in July 2002.⁷ Constituting all states on the African continent, except Morocco which opposes the membership of the

¹ This chapter is a modification of a chapter taken from Hull, Cecilia, Svensson Emma, 2008. 'African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)- Exemplifying African Union Peacekeeping Challenges'. FOI Report FOI-R--2596--SE.

² For a more lengthy exposition of the African Union and conflict management see Bogland, K et al. 2008. 'The African Union – A Study Focusing on Conflict Management'. FOI Report FOI-R--2475--SE

³ Organization of African Unity, 'Organization of African Unity (OAU) Charter'. <http://www.oau-creation.com/OAU%20Charter.htm>

⁴ Murithi, Tim. 2008. 'The African Union's evolving role in peace operations: the African Union Mission in Burundi, the African Union Mission in Sudan and the African Union Mission in Somalia'. *African Security Review* 17:1, p. 72

⁵ Bogland, K et al. 'The African Union', p. 13

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid. p. 14

Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara), the AU's central institutions can be found in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.⁸

The AU as an organisation works for political and economic cooperation between its member states in hope of reducing poverty, increase respect for human rights and promote peace and democracy. A key difference between the AU and the OAU, apart from stronger institutions, is the "right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity".⁹ The constitutive act also stipulates the "condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of governments".¹⁰ This statement effectively expresses the AU's willingness to engage in the prevention and recovery of coup d'états and take a clear stance against the policy of the AU's predecessor OAU, which rejected intervention in the internal affairs of its member states. This principle is important to bear in mind when looking at the AU involvement in the Comorian crisis.

Two important organs for AU's peace and security agenda are the Peace and Security Council (PSC) established in 2002 and the AU Commission. The PSC, the AU's main decision making body, can be compared to the UN Security Council. The AU Commission, on the other hand, works on day to day peace and security issues and has a role similar to the UN secretariat.¹¹ Within the Commission is the Peace and Security Directorate (PSD) which is the institutional body directly responsible for achieving the AU's goal of creating peace and security on the African continent. The Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD) rests within the PSD. The PSOD is the division responsible for managing the AU's PSOs.

AMIB¹² was the first PSO undertaken by the AU and provided an early sign of the organisation's willingness to intervene in conflicts on its own continent. The AU has since then also taken on missions in Sudan (AMIS and UNAMID)¹³, Somalia (AMISOM)¹⁴ and most recently in the Comoros. In 2004 the AU also

⁸ African Union, 'AU Member States'. <http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/memberstates/map.htm>

⁹ African Union, 'Constitutive Act of the African Union', Article 4h. http://www.africa-union.org/about_AU/abConstitutive_Act.htm#Article4

¹⁰ African Union. 'Constitutive Act of the African Union'

¹¹ Holt, V & M, Shanahan. 2005. 'African Capacity Building for Peace Operation: Un collaboration with the African Union and Ecowas'. Henry L. Stimson Centre: Washington DC. p. 15

¹² See Svensson, Emma. 2008. 'The African Union Mission in Burundi - Lessons Learned from the African Union's First Peace Operation'. FOI Report FOI-R--2561--SE

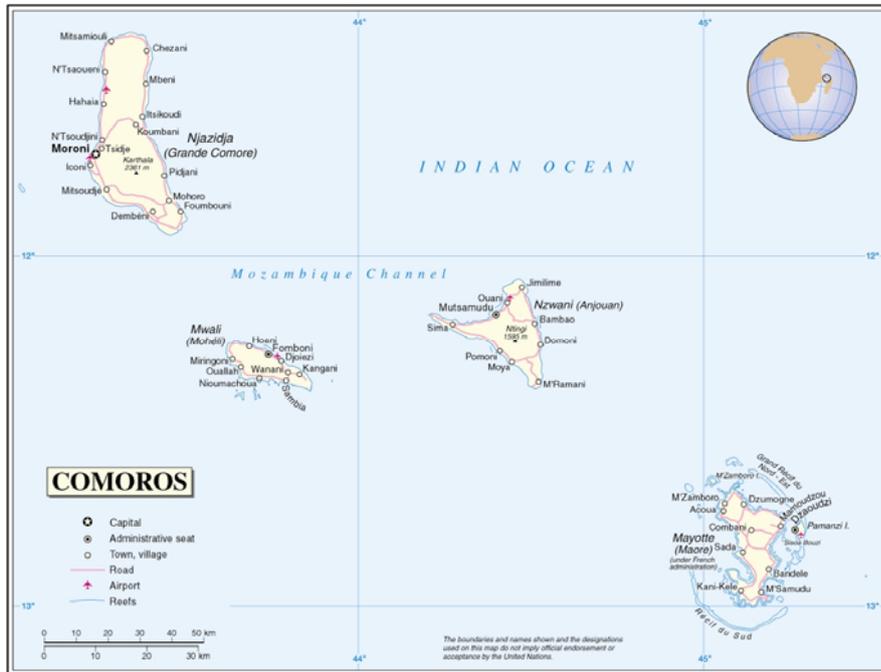
¹³ Ekengard, Arvid. 2008. 'African Union Mission in Sudan- Experiences and Lessons Learned'. FOI Report FOI-R--2559--SE

¹⁴ See Hull, 'African Union Mission in Somalia'

initiated the creation of an African Standby Force and a Common Security and Defence Policy.¹⁵

¹⁵ Francis, David. 2006. 'Uniting Africa: Building Regional Peace and Security Systems'. Ashgate. pp. 128-130

3 Comoros Islands Conflict History¹⁶



Map of the Comoros. Ref: UN Cartographic Section. Comoros No.4088, Rev 1 January 2004

As has been shown, the history and the charter of the AU can explain the AU’s involvement in the Comorian Crisis. In order to further enhance the understanding of why the AU saw a need to intervene and put the intervention into context it is also of value to explore the Comorian conflict history.

The Comoros islands originally consisted of four islands: Grande Comore (Njazidja)¹⁷, Mohéli (Mwali), Anjouan (Nzwani) and Mayotte. In the mid 19th century Mayotte came under French control. Fifty years later the other islands followed suit. In 1947, the Comoros was given the status of an overseas territory

¹⁶ This section will mainly focus on the time from the independence and forwards.

¹⁷ French and Comorian names respectively. Here the French names will be used since these are the most common ones in the material used for this study.

and in 1961 became self-governing.¹⁸ After a referendum, three of the islands – Mohéli, Grand Comore and Anjouan – became independent in 1975, while the fourth island, Mayotte, remained under French administration.

The history of the Comoros since its independence has been marked by instability. There has for example been around 20 coup d'états over the past three decades. Much of the unrest is a consequence of a continuous power struggle between the three islands. Over time, more and more of the decision-making has been centralized to Grande Comore, where the capital Mohéli is located, angering the populations on Anjouan and Mohéli.¹⁹

In 1997 Anjouan and Mohéli declared their respective islands independent, something that was not recognized by neither Comorian government on Grande Comore nor the International Community. To solve the disagreement and facilitate decentralisation the three islands – whilst remaining part of the Comoros – were given their own president, parliament and local government as a result of the OAU-brokered 'Antananarivo Agreement', from 2001. In addition, a presidency for the Union of the Comoros, which would rotate between the islands every four years, was established.²⁰ The Comoros thus became a federation. This was complemented by an agreement signed by the Comorian parties in 2003, stipulating the holding of elections before the end of 2004.²¹

Despite the newfound self-determination established on Anjouan and Mohéli by the creation of the federation, secessionist sentiments still existed on the islands, particularly on Anjouan.

Apart from having local governance, the islands also managed their own finances. Nonetheless, each island had to contribute to the federal budget and in 2003 a revenue sharing agreement – according to which all the islands, as well as the Union as a whole, should receive a certain percentage of the total revenue – came into effect.²² Those who were in favour of secession on Anjouan disliked the revenue sharing mechanism mainly because Anjouan was the richest of the islands – due to its hosting of the only deep-water port inside the Union, which gave control over the international trade – and did not wish to share these reve-

¹⁸ BBC. 'Timeline: Comoros'. 7 November 2008
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1070770.stm

¹⁹ IMF Country Report No. 06/385, 2006. p. 18
<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2006/cr06385.pdf>

²⁰ Ayangafac, Chrysantus. 'Situation Critical, The Anjouan Political Crisis'. *Institute for security studies Situation Report*. 5 March 2008 p. 3

²¹ Peace and Security Council. 'Report of the chairperson of the commission on the Situation in the Comoros'. PSC/PR/3(VI), 29 April 2004

²² IMF 2006 pp.18

nues. Economic disparity and the control of resources were thus important drivers in the conflict that would later result in the establishment of MAES and Operation Democracy.

Allegations of the revenue sharing mechanism not being properly adhered to by all the islands halted the cooperation between the islands prior to the 2006 Union of the Comoros presidential election, as the custom revenue from the Moroni port, located on Grande Comore, decreased significantly.²³ Even so, the elections took place as planned and, due to the rotation of the presidency, Ahmed Abdallah Sambi from Anjouan was chosen president of the Union. The elections were widely regarded the first democratic transition of power in the Comoros.²⁴

In 2007, the elections of the presidents of each island were held. Prior to the elections the constitutional court ruled that the term of the elected president of Anjouan, Mohamed Bacar, was over and that he should step down. Bacar had previously come to power through a coup in 2001 and then got elected president in 2002. Bacar argued that the court ruling was biased and questioned the legitimacy of the court, refusing to surrender his power. As a consequence incidents of violence and intimidation occurred on Anjouan. In the turmoil ensuing from the government of the Union trying to enforce the court order, two national soldiers were killed by the Anjouan security forces, and as a result of the instability, the government of the Union postponed the elections.²⁵ Nevertheless, Bacar went ahead with elections as originally planned and declared victory, claiming to have won 90% of the votes.²⁶

Both the AU and the government of the Union of Comoros rejected the result of the election, declaring it invalid. In an attempt to put pressure on Bacar, the AU imposed targeted sanctions on him and other political leaders on Anjouan during the fall of 2007.²⁷ These, however, had little effect and in early 2008 the president of the Union therefore asked for more support from the AU to increase its backing of the government of the Union's attempts of regaining control over Anjouan. This resulted in the establishment of Operation Democracy, which is further described later in this report.

²³ Ibid. p.22

²⁴ US State Department. 'Background Note: Comoros'. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5236.htm>

²⁵ IRIN. 'Comoros: Anjouan Road to Recovery Now Open'. 29 April 2008
<http://www.google.se/search?hl=sv&q=Comoros%3A+Anjouan+Road+to+Recovery+Now+Open&btnG=S%C3%B6k&meta=>

²⁶ Ayanfac. 'Situation Critical'. p. 2

²⁷ Peace and Security Council. 'Communique', PSC/PR/Comm (XCV), 10 October 2007

3.1 The role of external actors

Several key players that have influenced the conflict in the Comoros, as well as the AU engagement on the islands, are worth mentioning in order to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the crisis.

3.1.1 France

As the former colonial power, France has greatly influenced the situation in the Comoros. At the time when Anjouan and Mohéli sought to secede from the Union in 1997, their first alternative was not independence, but to once again become a part of France.²⁸ France, in its turn, was not interested in such a solution, but the separatist movement still used Mayotte as its base from which to launch its activities. It is also possible that when the AU froze the economic assets of Anjouan's political leaders, some of the assets was passed on to Mayotte in order to avoid the sanctions, further strengthening Mayotte's position as a stronghold for protests.²⁹

France has also been involved in the Comorian crisis in a more indirect way. The French citizen Gilbert Bourgeaud, more known as "Colonel" Bob Denard, has played a significant role in the Comorian conflict history. Denard was a mercenary that directed coup d'états all over Africa during several decades. Denard himself argued, and probably accurately so according to a renowned British newspaper, that he had the tacit approval of the French government, as well as Western states in general, for his involvement in these African conflicts.³⁰ He has certainly had a large impact on the situation in the Comoros, being highly involved in many of the most important coups on the islands: overthrowing Ahmed Abdullah, who had declared the Comoros independent, as well as his successor, for example. During the 1980s Denard was the head of the presidential guard in the country and the "virtual ruler of the Comoros".³¹ His final attempt to oust the president of the Comoros was, however, hindered by France in 1995 and he was arrested.³²

²⁸ Utrikespolitiska institutet, 2007. 'Länder i fickformat 208 Madagaskar/Comorererna'. p. 30

²⁹ Ayangafac. 'Situation Critical'. p. 7

³⁰ The Independent. 'Bob Denard- mercenary operating in Africa'. 16 October 2007.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/bob-denard-396988.html>

³¹ The Independent. 'Bob Denard'

³² IRIN. 'On the edge of a "military solution"'. 22 February 2008

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200802221100.html>

3.1.2 South Africa

South Africa has been one of the main African players when it comes to the Comorian crisis. South Africa's connection to the Comoros goes back to the time of apartheid when the South African government was given support from the Comoros in the fight against anti-apartheid movements.³³ Today the Comoros is strategically important to South Africa, as well as other African states, because of its adjacent location to an important sea route. Furthermore, the Comoros have been vital for South African investments due to the tourism industry in the Comoros. As the coordinator of regional conflict resolving efforts in the Comoros, South Africa has favoured a diplomatic approach rather than a military intervention and has also opposed an endless engagement of AU peacekeepers in the Comoros.³⁴ This is most likely why South Africa only participated in the first phase of MAES during the elections in 2007 and resisted the establishment of Operation Democracy. South Africa's attitudes towards Operation Democracy will be further touched on in later sections.

3.1.3 Tanzania

Tanzania has been highly active in pushing for an AU engagement in the Comoros, especially Operation Democracy. The reasons for this are several. First of all, the current chairperson of the AU is the Tanzanian president Jakaya Kikwete and Richard Reeves argues that a success in solving the Comorian crisis would be a personal success for Kikwete as chairman of the AU, bolstering his diplomatic credentials.³⁵ However, the Tanzanian interest in the Comorian crisis goes further back than the present chairmanship. Tanzania has for example been involved in the regional efforts to solve the Comorian crisis. In addition, Tanzanians make up one of the ethnic groups living on the Comoros and Comorian refugees in Tanzania were the ones who initiated the independence movement in the 1960s.³⁶ In contrast with South Africa, Tanzania thought that the negotiations and diplomatic options had been exhausted, especially after the sanctions proved to have no or little effect.³⁷ The active role of Tanzania in trying to solve the

³³ Ayangafac. 'Situation Critical'. p. 7

³⁴ Reeve, Richard. 'Into Africa- Peacekeeping challenges in 2008'. *Janes Intelligence Review*. 10 April 2008
http://www4.janes.com/subscribe/jir/doc_view.jsp?K2DocKey=/content1/janesdata/mags/jir/history/jir2008/jir10374.htm@current&Prod_Name=JIR&QueryText=

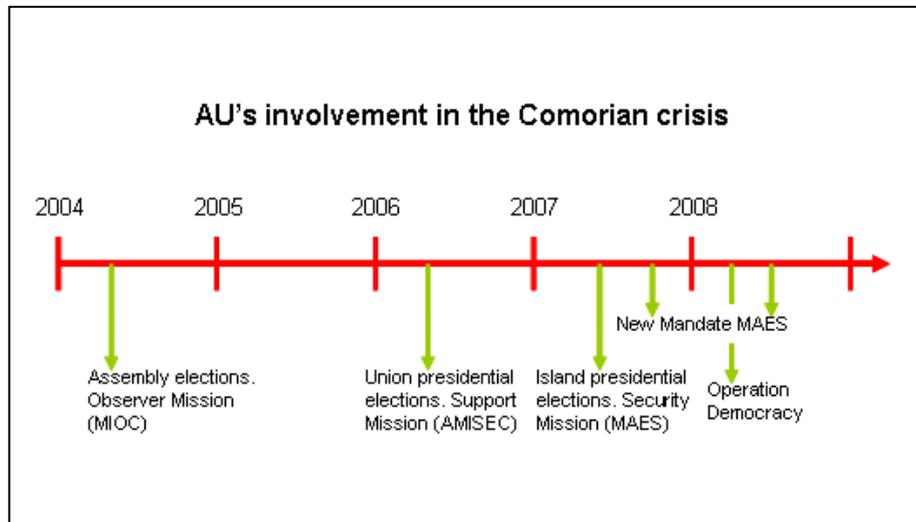
³⁵ Ayangafac. 'Situation Critical'. p. 8

³⁶ Ibid. p. 7

³⁷ Thomas, Juma. 'Tanzania to send 750 soldiers to Comoros'. 15 march 2008
<http://www.ippmedia.com/ipp/guardian/2008/03/15/110416.html>

Comorian crisis is especially interesting considering the very limited military role Tanzania has previously had within the AU.

4 The AU involvement in the Comorian crisis



The AU has in different ways been involved in the Comorian crisis for several years. The AU predecessor, the OAU, was, as mentioned before, involved in the making of the Antananarivo peace agreement in 2001. The AU has, however, also been involved militarily on several occasions.

As the 2003 agreement mentioned above stipulated, elections for the assemblies on both the local and the national levels were held in March 2004. The AU sent the AU Observer Mission in the Comoros (MIOC), consisting of 39 military observers mandated for four months, to oversee the elections. The elections were held in a calm atmosphere even though there were some minor disturbances noted on Anjouan.³⁸

The next round of elections was held in 2006, this time to elect a president of the Union of the Comoros. The government once again asked for assistance with monitoring the elections due to the unrest caused by the allegations of the revenue sharing mechanism not being used properly. In response to the request the African Union Mission for Support to the Elections in Comoros (AMISEC) was

³⁸ PSC/PR/3(VI), 29 April 2004

established, consisting of 462 military and civilian police personnel.³⁹ The major contributor was South Africa who also became the lead- nation of the mission. Egypt, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Madagascar and Mauritius also participated. AMISEC was mandated to do the following:

- (i) support the reconciliation process;
- (ii) provide the necessary security before, during and after the elections;
- (iii) ensure that the security forces were not involved in the elections; and
- (iv) protect its own personnel and civilians near the polling stations.⁴⁰

The mission started deploying to all the three islands in spring 2006 and was in place throughout the election period until its mandate ended on 9 June 2006. The goal was to have soldiers deployed at all polling station on the three islands.⁴¹ The elections were, as mentioned earlier, widely regarded the first democratic transition of power in the Comoros.⁴²

In 2007 further elections, namely those of each island's presidents, were to take place. Also this time, the need for an electoral mission arose due to the turmoil caused by Bacar refusing to step down. Hence, The African Union Electoral and Security Assistance Mission (MAES) was authorised on 9 May 2007, with the following mandate:

- (i) to assist in the creation of security and stability for the holding of elections;
- (ii) to make sure that the Comorian Security forces play their role in ensuring that the elections run smoothly;
- (iii) to monitor the electoral process;
- (iv) to encourage the parties to talk to each other; and
- (v) to assist and facilitate the regaining of authority of the Union government on Anjouan.⁴³

³⁹ Peace and Security Council. 'Communique on the situation in the Comoros'. PSC/PR/Comm.1(XLVII), 21 March 2006

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Letaoana, Lebohang, 2006. 'Securing the elections in the Comoros'. <http://www.dod.mil.za/news/news2006/jul/page14.pdf>

⁴² US State Department. 'Background Note: Comoros'. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5236.htm>

⁴³ Peace and Security Council. 'Communique on the situation in the Comoros'. PSC/MIN/Comm.1(LXXVII), 9 May 2007

The original troop contributors were South Africa, Senegal, Sudan and Tanzania.⁴⁴ MAES, however, had little or no effect on the Anjouanese election process since, as mentioned above, Bacar went ahead with the election process without the AU being able to monitor it. MAES was originally mandated until 31 July 2007 but has since been prolonged. By the time of the first prolongation, South Africa ended its commitment of contributing troops while Sudan and Tanzania stayed on as troop providers.

Since little happened after the AU had declared the Anjouanese election invalid the AU decided to take stronger actions against Bacar to force him to step down. To this end, the AU Peace and Security Council decided at its meeting on 10 October 2007 to put in place targeted sanctions consisting of travel bans and the freezing of the economic resources of Bacar and his supporters. At this stage, the mandate of MAES was also reviewed to enable the deployment on Anjouan in order to undertake the following:

- (i) facilitate the organisation of elections of the president of Anjouan and provide the necessary security for the elections to be free, fair and transparent;
- (ii) supervise the Anjouanese Gendarmerie at their campsite during the electoral process and their disarmament and integration into the Comorian National Army;
- (iii) assist in the establishment of an internal security force on Anjouan, and
- (iv) facilitate the restoration of the Union's authority on Anjouan.⁴⁵

Bacar, however, did not allow MAES access to Anjouan and as a result the reinforcement of MAES' mandate had little effect on the conflict situation. At the 10th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union in early 2008, the head of state of the Comoros therefore asked the member states' support to re-establish the authority of the Government of the Union of Comoros on Anjouan, a request reiterated by the AU Assembly.⁴⁶ Tanzania, Senegal, Libya and Sudan favourably accepted the request, expressing their willingness to assist in the intervention, which was to be named 'Operation Democracy in the Comoros'. As a response to the appeal, these countries met with the Comorian Union Government and agreed on the measures needed to re-establish the authority over Anjouan. This meeting "reiterated AU's commitment to the unity, territorial integrity and sov-

⁴⁴ Peace and Security Council. 'Communique on the situation in the Comoros'. PSC/PR/COMM(LXXVIII), 9 June 2007

⁴⁵ Peace and Security Council. 'Communique'. PSC/PR/Comm (XCV), 10 October 2007

⁴⁶ Peace and Security Council. 'Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the situation in the Comoros since the 10th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union Held in Addis Ababa from 31 January to 2 February 2008'. PSC/PR/2 (CXXIV), 30 April 2008

ereignty of the Comoros”.⁴⁷ The meeting then agreed on practical, military, and security issues with regards to the decision of supporting the re-establishment of the authority of the Government of the Union.

Next step was for a military planning team to visit the Comoros to finalize the plan for a military intervention. Experts from all the four contributing states participated. In preparation of the intervention, the Comorian forces carried out two incursions into Anjouan in order to acquire information to be used in the planning process.⁴⁸

On 11 March 2008 Tanzanian troops started to arrive in the Comoros and were soon followed by Sudanese troops. Senegal and Libya eventually decided not to contribute troops to the mission, but Libya arranged the transportation of the Sudanese troops and provided the Comorian National Army for Development (AND) with equipment. France also gave some logistical support, which was the only assistance coming from outside of Africa.

With a total troop strength reaching just above 1500, Operation Democracy commenced on 25 March 2008 when the forces invaded Anjouan.⁴⁹ During the first stage of the intervention the operation focused on securing key strategic areas. The Comorian troops took control of the airport while the Tanzanian forces seized the capital’s seaport. By the following day the whole island was under the control of the intervening forces. Bacar was, however, able to escape to the Reunion Island , where he sought asylum to Mayotte.

Interestingly, South Africa, which had been an initial troop contributor to MAES during the elections in 2007 and even led the operation, strongly opposed Operation Democracy. The president at the time, Thabo Mbeki, even called the operation ‘unfortunate’ since the diplomatic efforts in his view had not yet been exhausted.⁵⁰

As a result of Operation Democracy and the reinstatement of the authority of the government of the Union on Anjouan, MAES was again given a new mandate for a period of six month until the end of October 2008. This included the following actions:

- (i) support the collection of arms and ammunition on Anjouan;

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ PSC/PR/2 (CXXIV)

⁵⁰ Heitman, Helmoed-Römer. ‘Comoros operation: the positives and negatives’. *Janes Defence Weekly*. Vol 45 issue 15 2008. p. 33

- (ii) assist in the organization of election of the president of Anjouan and provide the necessary security for the elections to be free, fair and transparent;
- (iii) assist in the work of reorganizing the AND;
- (iv) provide assistance regarding governance; and
- (v) provide support in the work of defining the constitutional competences between the Union and the autonomous Islands.⁵¹

At this time MAES consisted of 356 military and civilian personnel from Tanzania and Sudan while the troops that had participated in Operation Democracy withdrew.⁵² An interim government was installed on Anjouan by the AU and the government of the Union of the Comoros until elections could be held. On 15 June 2008 the first round of elections to vote for a new president took place.⁵³ The second round was held 29 June 2008 and was deemed free, fair and transparent.⁵⁴

As of now the mandate for MAES has expired. MAES has according to the AU been able to fulfil its mandate, except from the work of assisting with the reconstruction of the AND. This means that the military components will most likely withdraw very soon while an AU Liaison Office will stay in place to support the Inter Comorian dialogue.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Peace and Security Council. 'Communique'. PSC/PR/Comm(CXXIV), 30 April 2008

⁵² Brigadier General Jaotody Jean de Matha, Head of the Operations and Support Unit within the Peace Support Operations Division of the AU

⁵³ AFP. 'Anjouan votes to replace ousted president'. 15 June 2008

http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5jFO_FopM5VUqkDlvDeupFSSTf9Hw

⁵⁴ IRIN. 'Comoros: Cautions Optimism After Calm Anjouan Elections'. 2 July 2008

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200807020943.html>

⁵⁵ Brigadier General Jaotody Jean de Matha

5 Consequences

The AU has, as been shown above, been involved in conflict management in the Comoros Islands for several years. When looking at the consequences of this engagement, the focus will be on the most recent efforts: MAES and Operation Democracy, since these have portrayed new ways of conducting PSOs for the AU and are the focal point of this report.

5.1 MAES and Operation Democracy- fulfilling its mandates?

The official sentiment within the AU, according to Brigadier General de Matha at the AU PSOD, is that MAES is a successful operation since it has succeeded in providing a secure environment for the holding of free and fair elections, as well as bringing back security on Anjouan by assisting in the establishment of an Anjouanese Security Force.⁵⁶ It is true that the AU has contributed to this achievement and therefore has fulfilled its mandate in almost all areas. However, when first deployed MAES did not reassure free and fair elections on all three islands. Not even when sanctions were imposed to put more pressure on the Anjouanese authorities did the AU presence seem to make a difference to the situation. It was not until a more forceful measure, through Operation Democracy, was used to oust Bacar that MAES began to have a visible effect in the Comoros. Operation Democracy did accomplish what it was there to do: restoring the authority of the Government of the Union by taking control over the island in just about 24 hours. By doing so, the mandate of MAES could also be fulfilled. This implies that when the AU applies appropriate strength, in proportion to the type of crisis it is supposed to solve, it might indeed accomplish what the mandate has stipulated.

5.2 Operation Democracy- a new type of PSO

Operation Democracy has been a breakthrough for the AU when it comes to planning and conducting peace operations. The force generation process was quick and the mission reached the number of troops that was needed to accomplish its mandate. In comparison with other AU PSOs, it did so with almost no support from partner countries. Yet, one has to be very careful seeing this as a new trend for AU peacekeeping. It is, for example, not possible to compare Op-

⁵⁶ Brigadier General Jaotody Jean de Matha

eration Democracy with the AU's previous PSO experiences, due to the fact that Operation Democracy was a completely different type of operation than AMIS, AMISOM and also, to a great extent, AMIB. Operation Democracy was much narrower in its mandate and deployed in a far less complicated conflict environment with relatively little resistance from Bacar and his security forces, which made it fairly easy for the operation to gain control over Anjouan. In contrast, two out of three of the AU's previous deployments have been in areas ranked amongst the most complex conflict areas in the world, namely Somalia and Darfur. At the same time one should not diminish the success of Operation Democracy. When compared to other peace operations, Operation Democracy shares several features with, for example, many European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) missions; such as a limited scope, set time and clear objectives. These operations have been considered significant successes, at least by the European Union (EU), and their contribution should, like that of Operation Democracy, not be any less appreciated simply because they had a more specific task and limited scope.

According to Brigadier General de Matha the big question for the AU right now is whether what was done in the Comoros can be repeated elsewhere.⁵⁷ For the international community, however, the most interesting question may be whether the success experienced on the Comoros will lead the AU, exhausted from engaging in complex conflicts where it has often had limited impact, to undertake less ambitious operations in the future. The AU has established itself as the guardian of African populations on a moral ground that has 'required' it to intervene in situations where no one else will; a stance that has led it into both Somalia and Darfur. These operations have been very draining for the organisation, and the question remains; if the AU will not take on the more complex operations, who will? The EU seems to favour operations that are more limited in scope and mandate than these situations require and the United Nations (UN) struggles to get enough troops to the missions it is already responsible for. Furthermore, the UN has as a principle to not deploy until there is a comprehensive peace agreement signed, which makes it less likely to deploy in a very complex environments. The AU's next move will be important to follow as a forecast for the organisation's future ambitions.

5.3 Unconstitutional Changes of Government

Why the AU chose to become so heavily involved in a crisis that was actually quite limited and most likely did not pose any considerable threat to either the

⁵⁷ Brigadier General Jaotody Jean de Matha

region as a whole or any nearby countries can be explained in several ways. One reason might simply have been the AU ceasing an opportunity to display its PSO capabilities and capacity to actually undertake successful and well planned peace operations.⁵⁸ Another reason is to be found in the AU Constitutive Act. As mentioned earlier, the act stipulates the “condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of governments”.⁵⁹ Before 2007 the, AU had not yet actively implemented this standard, but the principle can be taken as the standpoint by which the AU became engaged in the Comorian crisis. Operation Democracy was a direct response to Bacar’s refusal to step down from the presidency that he, according to the AU, had illegitimately won in the 2007 elections. If the AU will consistently continue to take action against unconstitutional changes is too early to say. The recent coup that took place in Mauritania in August 2008 has not yet resulted in any similar action by the AU, even though the AU has reacted strongly, suspending Mauritania’s membership in the Union. Nevertheless, the moral qualifications for actions taken against unconstitutional changes of governments might be diminished in the eyes of the International Community if countries such as Libya and Sudan continue to take part in these missions, which was the case on Anjouan. Libya and Sudan are unlikely guardians of democratic values and the true motives for such interventions may be questioned if they are undertaken by states which do not seem to support such values within their own borders.⁶⁰

5.4 Without support from the major players

As mentioned above, Operation Democracy was conducted and planned in a completely new fashion in comparison with previous AU operations. Another distinguished feature is that “the AU planned and conducted the Comoros intervention without any of the three countries usually seen as key players – South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya – playing a part”.⁶¹ If it is the beginning of a new trend, it could have both positive and negative implications for AU’s future PSOs.

On the positive side one can note that an AU operation succeeded in performing its mandate without any of the usual pivotal states participating. South Africa even openly opposed Operation Democracy, favouring diplomatic efforts. This might mean that the AU will become less dependent on a few core member states

⁵⁸ Wolfe. ‘African Union Mission to Topple Rebel Leader Goes Largely Unnoticed’. *World Politics Review*. p. 33. See also ‘AU troops invade Anjouan’. *African research Bulletin*. 17464 March 2008

⁵⁹ African Union. ‘Constitutive Act of the African Union’

⁶⁰ See Wolfe. ‘African Union Mission to Topple Rebel Leader’

⁶¹ Heitman. ‘Comoros operation: the positives and negatives’. p. 33

when it comes to carrying out PSOs, leaving the AU more flexible and with more options, at least when dealing with smaller and more manageable conflicts.

On the other hand, if one foresees the next AU mission to be more like AMIB, AMIS or AMISOM, with a far more extensive scope and mandate, the need for support from the key states might be crucial since these carry most of the military capacities on the African continent and are the only ones that can contribute with troops in any larger amount. The relationship between South Africa and the AU has been negatively affected due to the Union proceeding with Operation Democracy without the consent of South Africa. This might influence South Africa to take a less active role in future PSOs. At the same time Kenya and Nigeria are suffering their own internal instability which may affect their ability to partake in PSOs.⁶² In a worst case scenario, this could result in the AU standing without a major troop contributor when next time needed, further weakening the AU's ability to take appropriate and timely action. Therefore, the AU might need to be careful in balancing the integrity of the organisation and the will of its member states in the future.

⁶² Heitman. 'Comoros operation: the positives and negatives'. p. 33

6 Conclusion

MAES and Operation Democracy was, as mentioned before, a new way of conducting PSOs for the AU. This engagement could be seen in the light of the principle of condemnation of unconstitutional changes of government. The missions did succeed in accomplishing its tasks; however, one still has to be careful to draw too many conclusions since Operation Democracy is very different from earlier PSOs taken on by the AU. It will be important to follow the organisation's next move to determine if the AU will continue to undertake less ambitious operations – such as the ones on the Comoros – or return to more difficult tasks that no one else are prepared to take on. It will also be interesting to see how the key players will react to future request from the AU to participate in PSOs, something that will affect the future capability of the AU when it comes to conducting PSOs.

Abbreviations

AMIB	African Mission in Burundi
AMIS	African Union Mission in Sudan
AMISEC	African Union Mission for Support to the Elections in Comoros
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
AND	Comorian National Army for Development
AU	African Union
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
MAES	African Union Electoral and Security Assistance Mission to the Comoros
MIOC	Observer Mission in the Comoros
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PSC	Peace and Security Council
PSD	Peace and Security Directorate
PSOD	Peace Support Operations Division
PSO	Peace Support Operation
UNAMID	United Nations and African Union Mission in Darfur

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