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Somalia: the intervention dilemma

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INTRODUCTION

On 23 July 2010, the eve of the African Union's Summit in Kampala, AU Commission chairperson Jean Ping announced that he had asked countries, including South Africa, Angola, Nigeria, Ghana and Guinea, to send troops to Somalia to boost the under-strength African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), currently comprising Ugandan and Burundian forces. This move came against the background of suicide bombing attacks on 11 July 2010 that had killed 79 people in the Ugandan capital. Al-Shabaab, the militant Somali organisation with undefined links to al-Qaeda, claimed responsibility for the bombings, explaining that these were retribution for Ugandan and Burundian violence against the civilian population in Mogadishu. It would appear that the bombings were also aimed at testing the endurance of Uganda as a contributing country, as well as the resolve of other AU member states that may be contemplating contributing towards the required troop surge.

AMISOM was first deployed in 2007 to protect the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and strategic infrastructures (the port and airport) in Mogadishu from the insurgents who had strengthened their position as Ethiopian forces withdrew, and to provide support for humanitarian assistance for the Somali population. The proposed additional deployment to Somalia must be viewed in the context of the chronically unstable situation in Mogadishu and in Somalia as a whole.

In a nutshell, the AU decision to reinforce AMISOM by almost 2 000 troops would increase the size of the force from its current level of around 6 300 (4 Ugandan and 3 Burundian battalions), to the 8 000 mandated in 2007. Some AU member states had even called for the force to be augmented to between 14 000 and 20 000 troops.

This Policy Brief examines the apparent urgency to increase AMISOM force levels. It interrogates the AU's interventionist strategy in Somalia, including the planned troop surge, analyses the terrorist dimension of the bombings, drawing parallels with the Afghanistan case as a basis for suggestions for a clear and holistic approach to the conflict in Somalia.

A SYNOPSIS OF THE SOMALI CRISIS

The modern origins of the Somali crisis may be traced to the collapse of the state following the fall of President Siad Barre in 1991, when he was toppled in a coup with external support. He was toppled by clan-based forces. A confused period of civil war followed, particularly in the south and centre of the country, and numerous warlords and militias contested control of Mogadishu and its hinterland. In the north, the region now known as Somaliland sought to insulate itself from the mayhem by unilaterally declaring independence, a move yet to garner international recognition.

By 1992 the increasing instability in Somalia, and the humanitarian crisis that followed in its wake, persuaded the UN Security Council to mandate the deployment of a small peacekeeping mission, UNOSOM I. This was largely superseded in December 1992 by UNITAF, a multinational force some 37 000 strong under US command, with a stronger mandate to protect relief workers. This mission appeared to have been reasonably successful and was accompanied by negotiations that led to the conclusion of a peace agreement in Addis Ababa in March 1993. UNITAF then handed over to UNOSOM II, which was also given a robust mandate, with the additional task of supporting national reconciliation and

reconstruction. Unfortunately the 1993 peace agreement proved too fragile to restrain the ambitions of the numerous warlords and their business partners and UNOSOM II soon found itself in the midst of vicious intra-clan fighting. Efforts to disarm and neutralise one of the warring factions in Mogadishu embroiled the mission in combat, resulting in severe casualties and even heavier losses among the civilian population. In March 1994 the US withdrew its substantial troop contribution to UNOSOM II, a move followed by three European nations. In March 1995 the remainder of the force was evacuated; this signalled an embarrassing failure to achieve its most important goals and was to act as a barrier to international engagement for the next few years.

The abortive Addis Ababa accord (1993) was only the first of several attempts to achieve peace, reconciliation and the reconstruction of a functioning state in Somalia. In 2000 an agreement in Arta, Djibouti, established a Transitional National Government (TNG), but this survived only two years, its effective authority having been restricted to a part of Mogadishu. Further conflict eventually led to protracted talks in Kenya, which resulted in the establishment of a Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and other institutions (TFIs) in 2004. The TFG also experienced difficulty in establishing its control and legitimacy, partly because it was depicted as a surrogate of external parties, partly because its leaders hailed from the Puntland region and were seen as hostile to Mogadishu's clans, and partly because its constituent warlords refused to cede their military or financial power to the TFG. Internal squabbling and sporadic internecine violence made the TFG vulnerable to a coalition of Islamic courts, which emerged in an effort to restore some sort of order, in conjunction with traditional clan mechanisms. By late 2006, these formed the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), with its own formidable militias, and were ready to challenge the largely discredited TFG, which had called in Ethiopian military advisers. Unwisely some of the more radical among the ICU leadership also threw down the gauntlet to Ethiopia, arguing for the mounting of a *jihad* and the revival of irredentist claims to Ethiopia's Ogaden region.

In December 2006 Ethiopian forces entered Somalia to support the beleaguered TFG at the invitation of the TFG, a move tacitly supported by a US Administration alarmed at the ICU's alleged links to al-Qaeda. The ICU forces were quickly routed and the TFG returned to take control of Mogadishu and much of the south and central regions of Somalia. This did not end the insurgency, however, but moved it in more violent and radical directions, partly

because of the insurgents' success in linking ideological and nationalist aims, and also because of the destruction and heavy civilian losses inflicted during the TFG's military reaction.

The deployment of AMISOM, authorised in early 2007, was expected to replace in time Ethiopian troops in Somalia, a move eventually completed in January 2009. AMISOM was never brought up to its authorised strength of just over 8 000, but the initial Ugandan component was gradually reinforced and was augmented by troops from Burundi. The AU's assumption was that this was an interim mission, pending the arrival of a stronger international deployment with a UN mandate. Yet so unstable and violent was the situation in south and central Somalia, and so great the gains made by the insurgents, that neither other African states nor powerful UN members were willing to commit anything more than moral and financial support. Under these circumstances the TFG's position remained parlous, and the plight of the population dire.

CONTEXTUALISING THE SURGE: A HASTY DECISION

The AU's recent decision to call for the reinforcement of the AMISOM troop surge raises a number of pertinent questions. One of these is why the AU should make this appeal after four years during which regional and international actors have largely ignored the Somali crisis. What considerations informed the AU decision, and how did it envision the objectives and their achievement? Was the decision itself framed in such a way as to offer a rational response to the dire security and political situation in Somalia?

The AU's decision was influenced by two factors: the timing of the Kampala bombings less than a fortnight before its Summit; and their occurrence in the city where the meeting was to take place. These appear to have focused minds on the security situation in Somalia and the wider Horn of Africa. It seems unlikely that such a decision would have been taken so quickly in the absence of these provocations.

But although the bombings may have galvanised Africa's political will on the strategic course of its intervention at a critical juncture in the conflict, it is by no means certain that the AU's member states will be so swift and determined to contribute the requisite troops and capabilities to AMISOM, after their delegations return to their respective capitals and reflect upon the Somali situation.

The reality of the decision is that in keeping with its strategy of disengagement since the Somalia debacle of the mid-1990s, the international community continues to expect the AU and its member states to assume the burden of contributing troops, as the US and the UK have asked them to do.

In the wake of the bombings, the US, which reportedly has already provided US\$ 200 million in support of the intervention in Somalia, has promised to increase this level of funding, as well as to be consistent in its new commitment towards AU efforts in Somalia. This is the US view presented by Johnnie Carson, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa. In Britain's case, Reuters has reported that Henry Bellingham, Britain's minister for Africa, has welcomed the increase in troop levels, while at the same time calling on African states to provide the required forces. This division of responsibilities seems unlikely to alter the realities on the ground in Somalia in any significant way.

Besides the question of regional and international division of labour, there may still be uncertainties about African states' response to the surge. In the case of South Africa, for instance, the first reaction by the Minister for International Relations and Cooperation, Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, to the AU request for South African deployment was a careful one. The Minister was unequivocal that the situation in Somalia was a political problem and that deploying military forces in isolation would not be the appropriate solution. On the other hand, in the past South Africa has acted in terms of its dated 1998 White Paper on Peacekeeping. Within this framework, when requested to deploy peacekeepers to a conflict area, the political authorities sought technical military advice on the feasibility of deploying the required capabilities. During the Burundi crisis, the SANDF argued against the deployment, yet the government insisted, as was its right. In the current situation, however, it does not appear that the South African government is in favour of authorising any troop deployment to Somalia as part of AMISOM, even though it may consider the deployment of naval forces in support of operations against Somali piracy. Even so, the government may at a future date decide to deploy troops in support of the AMISOM operation.

Nevertheless, the South African view about the need for a political process to inform other interventions, particularly the need for peacekeepers, would appear to be the predominant view shared by a number of other African states. This seems to be so with Djibouti, which has offered around 400 soldiers, but remains constrained by security challenges along its common border with Eritrea. Even Guinea, which is under sanctions from the AU, has also pledged a battalion to AMISOM. Given the prevailing lack of troop contributions, the AU may well overlook the applicability of sanctions. Apart from these two countries, Nigeria, which had earlier pledged troops, has remained quiet following a reconnaissance mission to Mogadishu in March 2008, and no decision may be expected before the country's presidential elections in early 2011. Similarly, Ghana and Malawi have not acted on their earlier promises of troops. Under these circumstances, it would not be surprising if the additional 2 000 troops again were to come from Uganda and Burundi.

## AMISON PEACEKEEPING: TO WHAT STRATEGIC ENDS?

In theoretical terms, any Somalia strategy review should consider the AMISOM mandate as one of a number of tools to address the country's decades-long conflict. Sadly, this has not been the case, partly because of misplaced expectations about the outcome of a Somalia Reconciliation Conference. The AU perspective appears to be that the TFG must be protected as embryonic government for the whole of Somalia. Thus, in accordance with its 2007 mandate, deriving from the Communiqué of the 69th AU PSC meeting on 19 January 2007, AMISOM will continue to: '... conduct peace support operations in Somalia to stabilise the situation, including the takeover from Ethiopian forces, and to create a safe and secure environment in preparation for the transition to the UN'.

On this view, AMISOM would only undertake such 'peacekeeping' mission tasks as those revolving around 5 core activities:

- Protection of the TFG and key installations (K7, seaport and airport)

- Liaison with the TFG and other stakeholders

- Support for humanitarian assistance, including a meagre 'hearts and minds' medical care effort for some 500 patients daily

- Collection and demolition of unexploded ordnance (UXO)

- Coordination with the international maritime task force

Although AMISOM seems to have done a good job under difficult conditions, and with limited human and material resources or international political support, the operation has failed to fully realise the concept of operations as envisaged in 2007, at least in terms of the 3-phase expansion throughout Somalia (see Map 1). Even though the mission claims credit for facilitating Ethiopia's withdrawal, it is arguable that this was predicated on the deployment of AMISOM, which has failed subsequently to impact upon the security and humanitarian situations – in either Mogadishu or Somalia as a whole.
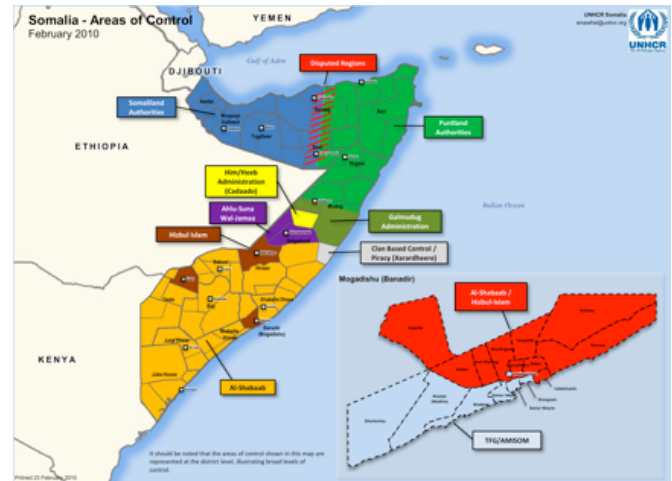
Map 1. AMISOM deploy in 3 phases
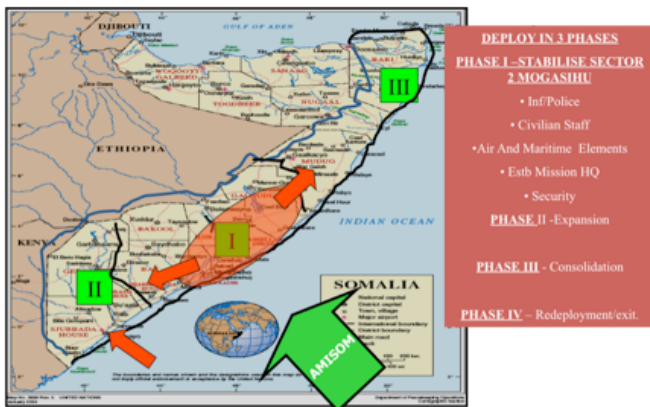
According to AMISOM, the political and security situation in Mogadishu and Somalia remains dire, volatile and unpredictable. Also, AMISOM is of the view that even though Somaliland remained calm, tension there was still high.

Furthermore, while the autonomous region of Puntland may be relatively quiet, Sheikh Mohammed Saiid 'Atom', purported to be allied to Al-Shabaab and leading an al-Qaeda oriented rebel group, is threatening to shatter that peace with a new local insurgency. The political and security situation in Somalia is also informed and compounded by state failure since 1991, a situation that has resulted in piracy off its coast and well into the Indian Ocean, international terrorism and an unprecedented humanitarian emergency.

The security realities on the ground in Mogadishu and Somalia variously present a number of scenarios ranging from civil war to localised insurgencies, in which Al Shabaab, Hizbul Islam and other protagonists control the central and southern regions, as well as large parts of

Mogadishu, excepting only the few square kilometres of the presidential compound and the other vital areas already mentioned (see Map 2). The TFG and other transitional institutions are weak and lacking in national legitimacy.

Map 2. Somalia, areas of Control (February 2010)

As regards the precarious humanitarian situation, Refugees International has indicated that there are 'approximately 1.5 million IDPs and over 500 000 Somali refugees in neighboring countries ... more than 3.6 million Somalis (40 percent of the population) are dependent on external assistance' (http://www.refugeesinternational.org). This situation is expected to worsen given Al-Shabaab's destruction of relief stocks in recent times.

The AMISOM deployment and mandate implementation are threatened with failure because of a lack of attention to the key principles of peacekeeping established by the UN after decades of experimentation. This Brief draws on some of the salient principles proposed by the Lakhdar Brahimi Panel (2000). The Panel had cautioned that the UN should not deploy to post-conflict environments where there was no peace to keep. It added that should the mission be expected to create such a condition then the pre-requisites must include:

- An appropriate, achievable and robust mandate to ensure that the mission (operation) does not cede the initiative to attackers, but to protect that mandate

- Political support and sufficient means and resources for professional and successful mandate accomplishment, as well as the capability for force

and mission protection (self-defence)

These are critical benchmarks against which the AU, in the first instance, should have calibrated its decision to deploy AMISOM in 2007, and also considered in reviewing its realistic chances of impacting the situation in Mogadishu and Somalia.

The AMISOM mandate is not achievable because, contrary to the requirements set out by the Brahimi Panel, the force lacks the means and resources to do the job properly. The prevailing AMISOM mandate, besides being weak, is also not achievable because of the lack of substantive political support from within the region and internationally. Since Western disengagement in the mid-1990s the AU has assumed much greater leadership and involvement on the continent. In addition to leading on the peace process and attempting to find African solutions to African problems, Africa has been called upon to 'spill blood', while the international community, particularly the West, simply donates money.

It is unreasonable to expect AMISOM, given the weakness of its mandate and lack of means and resources, to deliver anything resembling the conditions for peace in an increasingly challenging environment. Even though the political rationale for the intervention is plausible, the AU should not throw caution to the wind and, against Brahimi's wisdom, apply best-case planning assumptions to situations where the local actors in Somalia historically have exhibited worst-case behaviour.

In the existing situation, the AMISOM operation, coupled with regional, UN and other international support, appears increasingly to be serving as a magnet to 'internationalise' the conflict, attracting foreign elements to the side of Al-Shabaab and other insurgents, and more pertinently, radicalising such armed groups and the local population.

Furthermore, whatever is done in Somalia needs to be sustainable. It would therefore appear tempting to suggest an AU/UN hybrid operation in Somalia (UNASOM), replicating the experiences in Sudan's Darfur in 2007. Such an engagement, however, though likely to improve the mission level capabilities, would be a cosmetic change unless it confronted the huge command and control challenges and found a way of neutralising radicalised armed groups.

The danger here is that the Africans, through various unsustainable and once-off enticements by individual partners, will be cajoled into Somalia and then be starved of resources at the same time as donors blame AMISOM for

inefficiency and negotiate among themselves over control of strategy through their financial donations. Thus, AMISOM would not be able to inspire confidence and would in all likelihood be blamed for not meeting expectations, being saddled with a chaotic administration and overwhelmed by demands to account for the numerous assistance and aid commitments.

The peacekeeping strategy would also be affected by the regional polarisation between Djibouti, Kenya, Ethiopia and Eritrea. For Ethiopia and Kenya, historically, their sovereignty and territorial integrity are directly threatened by Somalia's irredentism, as espoused by Al-Shabaab and other political and armed movements. It is doubtful, therefore, whether these dire political, security and humanitarian circumstances can be significantly impacted by AMISOM, even after its reinforcement.

In the final analysis, it would seem that the AMISOM peacekeeping mandate will continue to fail to stabilise Mogadishu and the country. On the contrary, in trying to protect the TFG the mission will continue to be involved on daily running gun-battles with Al-Shabaab. The mission's failure would largely be the result of lack of a capable force to deal with the activities of the destabilisers. Because of an absence of a tangible all-inclusive peace process, reinforcing AMISOM while leaving it with a weak mandate would not yield the desired results.

THE SURGE: HISTORICAL PARALLELS AND LESSONS FROM AFGHANISTAN

It is important to also look at the merits of the surge in historical terms and the lessons that ought to be learned from the UN and international interventions in the 1990s. As the Somalia situation deteriorated the UN deployed UNOSOM I. Not surprisingly, the failure of the mission compelled the UN to act as the AU is contemplating now. The UN Security Council mandated the deployment of the far larger US-led UNITAF and gave it a more robust security mandate to 'take appropriate action, including enforcement measures, to establish throughout Somalia a secure environment for humanitarian assistance, and complete the task of UNITAF through disarmament and reconciliation'. Even then, both enterprises failed to pacify Somalia, leaving the UN with the option of mandating the deployment of the 28 000-strong UNOSOM II, to 'use all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia'.

Even though all these missions failed in the same battle space of Mogadishu, one important lesson that they present is that the respective surges were accompanied by mandate revisions. However, what we are seeing now is an insufficient surge without any review of the weak, insufficient peacekeeping mandate of AMISOM.

The Ethiopian military intervention in Somalia in support of the TFG from December 2006 to January 2009 can be seen as another lesson the AU and the international community is ignoring. Ethiopia had to drastically increase its force level to as many as 20 000 troops to deal with the ICU, but with limited success because of the lack of acceptance of the TFG and the fact that the population viewed the Ethiopian forces as foreign invaders. One would therefore ask the question: what has changed now and why would a surge in troops to less than earlier levels be able to stabilise the situation?

The Somalia situation also presents parallels with Afghanistan, where the US and NATO countries (coalition forces) have been involved in fighting the Taliban since 2001. There the surge in US and NATO forces has had the opposite effect to that intended, and, instead of stabilising the situation and providing security for the Afghanistan government, has led rather to increasing attacks on the coalition forces and government structures. The excessive use of force and killings of civilians in drone and other attacks, including crossfires, have played into the hands of the Taliban. They have helped undermine the 'hearts and minds' efforts as the population has turned against the coalition forces.

In the Afghanistan situation, too, setbacks in the security situation have compelled the coalition command structure, and indeed the US government, to rethink their strategy, including dialogue with the Taliban. One would therefore ask why such best practice cannot be applied in Somalia, and why the peace brokers would not engage with Al-Shabaab. Increasing AMISOM's strength may fail if there is no coherent political process, no common regional approach and continuing divisions within the international community. External interventions have not enhanced the prospects of a durable solution in Somalia and will not be able to do so under existing circumstances.

THE TERRORISM DIMENSION: A CRITICAL FACTOR FOR A HOLISTIC STRATEGY

Terrorism is not mindless violence. Its intention is to elicit a reaction that will serve a particular purpose. Al-Shabaab attacked the Kyandondo Rugby Club and the Ethiopian Village restaurant in Kampala with the explicit intention of drawing additional foreign forces into Somalia and further inflaming what is already a regional crisis. This was similar to what al-Qaeda successfully achieved with its 9/11 attack on New York – possibly the most cost-effective terrorist attack in history. In a spasm of overreaction the US eventually invaded a country that had little, if anything, to do with the attacks on the US: Iraq. It largely ignored the real source of the problem, Afghanistan, until it was too late. The result is evident. Pashtun guerrillas operating with impunity from Pakistan into Afghanistan are slowly wrestling the great US military to the ground. Coalition forces in Afghanistan have suffered almost two thousand casualties with the number of Afghan civilians killed and maimed in the process many times greater, even though a large part of this civilian toll is attributed to the Taliban. US overstretch is achieving what Bin Laden set out to do – undermining its global hegemony and inflaming passions worldwide against a *pax-Americana*.

But despite the fact that feelings in Somalia are currently aroused by the same toxic ideology – radical Islam – as in Afghanistan, there will be no comparable international developmental or military push in Somalia because the international community has still to re-engage there after earlier failures and it would involve tremendous operational challenges. Even though Somalia does not have rugged and inaccessible terrain such as that of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, the greater Somali nation straddles borders well into neighbouring Ethiopia and Kenya, providing a hinterland for the spread of radicalism – and giving good reason for alarm. The related costs could also be counted in terms of military as well as collateral civilian casualties that impact negatively on the hearts-and-minds aspect of the intervention.

The danger in Somalia is that foreign invasion (which is how AMISOM is being portrayed by Al-Shabaab) could lead to increased terrorism. Imagine the scenario were suicide bombings to become more frequent in the region and roadside bombs commonplace in Burundi, Uganda and elsewhere, as terrorists spread their destructive message. The more partners such as the US get behind and are involved in Somalia, the

worse the situation could become for the neighbouring countries as they eventually are left to face the brunt of the consequences of intervention. This then, is the first key ingredient of any effort in Somalia – real African leadership and ownership, which is different from African topdressing at the bidding of others.

Among the requirements of such an approach is control over clandestine US and other military strikes and operations into Somalia from Camp Lemmonier in Djibouti, home to the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa, and from navy ships offshore. The escalation of US Predator drone strikes into Pakistan may be killing some terrorists, but they are also killing and maiming many locals, and inflaming sentiments – arguably contributing more to inflame passions than the military impact is worth. For all its money and resources the single most important factor in Somalia must be to keep the Americans out for they serve as a magnet, drawing international radicals from elsewhere. US support is important, but it should be provided through mechanisms such as the UN Trust Fund that has been set up for AMISOM.

TOWARDS A COHERENT SOMALIA STRATEGY: DIFFICULT CHOICES AND OPTIONS

The key problem in the approaches by the AU and the international community is that there is no peace to keep in Somalia. The desire of the US and its allies for the AU and its forces to prop up and defend the TFG in Mogadishu is not a peacekeeping mission. It is also not a peace enforcement mission, for there is no peace agreement that can be 'enforced' and the prospects of assembling a coalition large enough to provide stability in Somalia remain distant. Although 8 000 troops will certainly be better than 6 000, they will still be insufficient. Quite probably, a surge in troop deployment is not a realistic answer.

In Afghanistan ISAF/NATO have deployed almost 120 000 troops. A similar troop-to-population ratio in Somalia would point to a need for 40 700 soldiers. There has been some mention of a future AMISOM troop figure of 20 000 – two-and-a-half times the current ceiling – but even this target can be reached only with considerable international assistance and not entirely by or within Africa. The Ethiopian military deployed anything between 15 000 to 20 000 troops in Somalia earlier for a specific military purpose and then withdrew, aware of the dangers of being trapped in an operation that was only going to get worse and still not achieve any durable security in Somalia.

The most important component of peace in Somalia remains missing – a legitimate all-inclusive political process that involves all key stakeholders, not only the TFG, but also Al-Shabaab and Hizbul-Islam who control almost 80% of Somalia; it also has to be inclusive of Puntland and Somaliland. This is something that cannot be imposed from outside, as is borne out by the experiences of the US, the British, the Canadians and the rest of the 40 members of the coalition in Afghanistan. Fifteen successive efforts at facilitating a peace process in Somalia have failed largely because they have been imposed from outside, to suit groups of external interests and actors. Until such time as an appropriate internal process is initiated, the best AMISOM can do is to provide a fragile safe haven where people can seek refuge from time to time and a 'green zone' for the TFG, to show that the existing approach is more attractive than the brutal and oppressive regime of Al-Shabaab.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS ON THE WAY FORWARD

In the face of a deteriorating situation in Somalia since 1991, the UN and the international community, including the AU, have made a number of interventions, all of which have failed to restore peace and security in Somalia. One reason for this is the perception among Somalis that the attempted solutions are externally imposed.

The disengagement of the international community since the mid-1990s has compounded the situation, especially as some powerful states have sought to use neighbouring countries as a proxy in the global war on terror. Coupled with the radicalisation of Somali armed resistance and emergent linkages with al-Qaeda, the terrorist attacks against Uganda may constitute a new phase of the conflict and this calls for a holistic and coherent strategy, taking into consideration that the only time since 1991 that Somalia enjoyed some measure of generic peace, or the prospect of that kind of home-grown peace, was when Somalia was left to its own devices. That peace was a collaborative political project between and among the ICU, the business community and civil society groups.

The AU may have been challenged by its constitutional right of intervention (Article 4(h)) or the request for intervention (Article 4(j)) in grave circumstances. It may also have been emboldened by its qualified successes in the interventions in

Burundi and Darfur in 2004, both of which created the conditions for mandate transfer to the UN. In spite of this track record, however, the AU approach of embarking on a surge in the strength of AMISOM without a review of the mission's mandate and without a coherent, all-inclusive political process may be yet another incoherent effort to find a solution to the Somalia debacle. Politically, the strategy of achieving stability in Somalia before a wider inter-Somali dialogue is a mistaken one and keeping Somalia divided will continue to exacerbate the conflict.

To find a lasting solution to the Somalia problem will involve a recognition on the part of the international community that the TFG does not appear to offer the best basis for reconciliation. In conjunction with the international community, the AU should embark on a more comprehensive political process that brings onboard the other Somali 'states' (Somaliland and Puntland), and all entities and institutions that have a stake in the future peace and stability of the country.

In seeking a lasting solution the AU and the international community must recognise the critical regional dimensions to the Somali conflict revolving around others' interests and concerns, especially those of Ethiopia and Eritrea. It is doubtful whether a lasting solution can be found without the fundamental involvement of these two countries. The challenge for the AU and the international community will be to prevail upon neighbouring countries such as Ethiopia whose populations include substantial numbers of Somalis, to de-link their security concerns centring around ethnic Somali populations (Oromo and Ogaden) from the main conflict in Somalia. On the other hand, however, they should also encourage these countries to find political solutions to their respective intrastate ethnic (Somali) tensions, while other neighbouring states such as Eritrea and Yemen are prevailed upon to guarantee not to inflame the conflict.

With such political arrangements in place, the AMISOM peacekeeping mandate should be transferred to the UN, which has much more institutional expertise and is better resourced for such complex missions. The mission should not be configured as a hybrid operation, and should be given a robust, humanitarian mandate to ensure security in support of emergent transitional institutions and assistance.

While it is tempting to argue for strategies such as the stabilisation operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, these are inappropriate and are neither practically nor politically feasible. Despite the temptations of analogies it would be counterproductive to contextualise the Somali conflict principally within the war on terror, even though that dimension cannot be ignored.