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On the Agenda

The future of the world's largest refugee camp remains uncertain

Dadaab is the world's largest refugee camp. It is also, according to Kenya, a hotbed of al-Shabaab activity and a staging ground for terrorist attacks. Kenya briefed the PSC on Dadaab's future last month.

It is no secret that Dadaab refugee camp is a headache for Kenyan authorities, who have long been advocating for its closure or removal. Take this statement from then-Interior minister Joseph Ole Lenku in November 2013, several weeks after the al-Shabaab attack on Westgate shopping centre in Nairobi: 'All the camps should be closed and the debate on whether or not it is appropriate has been passed by time.'

Or this, from Kenyan Deputy President William Ruto, in the wake of the horrific al-Shabaab attack on Garissa University, which claimed 147 lives in April this year. 'We have asked the UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] to relocate the refugees in three months, failure to which we shall relocate them ourselves ... The way America changed after 9/11 is the way Kenya will change after Garissa ... We must secure this country at whatever cost.'

The three-month deadline to close Dadaab has been missed and the camp remains open

This three-month deadline has been missed and Dadaab remains open. However, this could be about to change. Kenya took its campaign to do something about Dadaab to the AU on 24 August as Kenyan officials made an extraordinary presentation to the PSC, whose agenda read: 'Presentation to the PSC by Kenyan Officials on the Government's efforts in fighting al-Shabaab and its plan of relocating the Dadaab Refugee Camp.'

In a press statement published on 31 August, the PSC expressed its 'deep concern' over the continuing threat posed by al-Shabaab and condemned the 'heinous acts' perpetrated by the group in Kenya.

'Council took note of the planned relocation of the Dadaab refugee camp, as part of the Kenyan government's overall efforts to prevent attacks by the al-Shabaab terrorist group. Council agreed to undertake further consultations on this issue with all concerned stakeholders, with a view to contributing to the search for a sustainable solution that would take into account Kenya's overall national security concerns, whilst respecting relevant international and African instruments, ' says the PSC in the statement. It has asked the AU Commission to submit a report on the issue by early October 2015.

A growing population

Dadaab refugee camp was established by the UNHCR in 1991 in reaction to the violence and instability in Somalia. It was originally designed to host 90 000 people. Today its population is an estimated 350 000, many of whom were either born in the

PSC Chairperson

H.E. Ambassador Naimi SH Aziz

Ambassador of Tanzania to the AU and the ECA.

Current members of the PSC

Algeria, Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, The Gambia, Guinea, Libya, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda

camp or have lived there most of their lives. This number is still growing, albeit a lot more slowly: 3 719 new refugees were recorded in the most recent two-week-long registration drive in July this year (Kenya only allows refugees to be registered in specific windows, so this represents several months' worth of arrivals).

Kenya's concerns over Dadaab are not difficult to discern. For one thing, the camp has begun to look very permanent and, on the basis of its sizeable population, has become one of Kenya's largest cities. More importantly, however, the Kenyan government views the camp as a hotbed for al-Shabaab militants and a staging post for terrorist attacks on Kenya.

Serious efforts to close the camp began with talks in April between Kenya, Somalia and the UNHCR (known as the Tripartite Commission), who agreed to scale up assistance to refugees willing to return home. A total of 116 people made up the first batch of returnees under this agreement, and they were airlifted from Dadaab to Mogadishu on 5 August 2015. Despite the ongoing insecurity in Somalia, the UNHCR judges that there is interest in voluntary repatriation, albeit very limited.

Any feasible plan to close Dadaab will require forced repatriations

'Despite the fragile security environment situation in Somalia, refugees in Dadaab have responded to signs of increasing stability and started to return. Since December 2014, 3,078 Somali refugees have returned with UNHCR support. More still have returned spontaneously without receiving assistance from [the] UNHCR,' said a UNHCR statement.

Forced repatriations could be illegal

These numbers, however, represent the tip of the iceberg – and, taking new arrivals into account, the camp's population is remaining more or less the same. This means that any feasible plan to close Dadaab in the near future will require forced repatriations, which are of dubious legality – especially if refugees are made to return to Somalia.

'That has a lot of legal implications. One is that once you move the refugees into Somalia, they are no longer refugees; they are internally displaced persons [IDPs]. The whole range of laws and humanitarian responses that applied to refugees on the Kenyan side suddenly might not apply. It has implications on fundraising and on the willingness of humanitarian actors to work on the Somali side of the border,' explained Andrews Atta-Asamoah, a senior researcher with the Institute for Security Studies, in comments to the media earlier this year.

No easy fix

Therefore, as the PSC considers Kenya's plans for Dadaab's future, whatever they may be, it is worth bearing a few things in mind.

First, Kenya is obligated under international law to provide refuge for persons fleeing from conflict, as per the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (both signed by Kenya). The UNHCR has repeatedly warned that any unilateral closure of the camp, without adequate provision for the resettlement of its population, would violate these obligations. To its credit, Kenya has vowed to uphold its obligations: 'Kenya has been, and will continue,

90 000

DADAAB'S PLANNED POPULATION

350 000

THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE
IN DADAAB

fulfilling its international obligations,' said President Uhuru Kenyatta in May, in the context of the debate over Dadaab.

Second, although the situation in Somalia is arguably improving, it remains unstable and dangerous. The government in Mogadishu is still not in control of most of the country, and many areas are still active conflict zones. Terrorist attacks in Mogadishu and elsewhere are common. This means that no one in Somalia is in a position to guarantee the safety and security of returning refugees.

Finally, it is worth considering the security implications of shutting down, relocating or downsizing a camp of Dadaab's size. If there is indeed a link between Dadaab and al-Shabaab attacks in Kenya, as the government claims – and this claim is disputed by analysts – then it is important to question whether closing Dadaab would improve the security situation. Is Dadaab itself really the problem? Or is it just a symbol of deeper, underlying issues that a holistic counter-terrorism policy should address first?

There is no doubt that Dadaab's situation is far from ideal. Dealing with it, however, raises a whole new set of complications. As Kenya brings the matter to the attention of PSC members, it will be hoping that the AU Commission in its report sympathises with its plight, endorses its assessment of the security threat that Dadaab represents, and weighs in on the appropriate balance between security and the rights of refugees and asylum seekers (this would certainly strengthen Kenya's hand when it comes to dealing with the UNHCR and the Somali Federal Government). This issue of balancing security with legal rights is not limited to Kenya and Dadaab, of course – which means that if the PSC does pronounce on the issue, it has the potential to be an important, precedent-setting decision.



Situation Analysis

In Darfur, things have changed – but not for the better



The PSC undertook a field mission to Darfur and Khartoum in August amid growing concern about the situation in Darfur. The AU has been involved in attempts to solve the Darfur conflict for over a decade, having started to send peacekeepers to the area in 2004.

In June 2015, the United Nations (UN) Security Council voted to extend the mandate of the UN–AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), citing a ‘significant deterioration of the security situation’. The unanimous vote represented something of a defeat: an admission that after 11 years of international involvement, the region remains as dangerous and unstable as ever.

It is important not to underestimate the scale of the Darfur conflict, and its cost – in both human and financial terms. Since the fighting began in earnest in 2003, more than 300 000 people have been killed and an estimated 2.5 million more displaced (this from a population of around 6.2 million).

Over the years, however, the conflict has changed, becoming ever more fractured and internecine

The AU has had a presence there since 2004, in the form of the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS), which morphed into UNAMID in 2007. UNAMID’s mandate provides for 15 845 military personnel, 1 583 police personnel and 13 formed police units of up to 140 personnel each, which are drawn from 37 different countries. Its budget is currently US\$1.1 billion per year. The International Crisis Group (ICG) estimates that the total international cost of the war in Darfur, including humanitarian aid, has exceeded US\$20 billion since 2003.

This investment of money, personnel and diplomatic capital has failed to resolve the situation, however. Even though a high-profile peace deal – the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) – was signed in 2011 between the government of President Omar al-Bashir and various rebel groups, the fighting has intensified over the last 18 months. This has left policymakers wondering whether UNAMID is fit for purpose, and what it should be doing differently.

Changing nature of the conflict

Understanding the tangled web of alliances and motivations that underpin the conflict has never been easy, although when the fighting began it was possible to observe the broad trend, which pitted non-Arab tribes against government forces and government-sponsored militia groups (known pejoratively as the Janjaweed). It is on this basis that peace talks proceeded, and the DDPD reflects this understanding, even though several major rebel groups refused to sign the document.

Over the years, however, the conflict has changed, becoming ever more fractured and internecine. ‘Violence in Darfur has continually evolved. In 2003–2005, it was

mostly due to attacks by pro-government, largely Arab militias targeting non-Arab communities accused of supporting the rebels. While those continued and intensified again in 2014, violence has mutated since 2006, with Arab communities and militias fighting each other and, to a lesser extent, non-Arab communities targeting non-Arab communities. Arab militias also turned against their government backers, while rebel factions fragmented and fought against each other as well,' said the ICG in a report in April 2015 entitled 'The chaos in Darfur'.

It is also important to note that the conflict has outgrown Darfur itself, especially with the occasional cross-border incursion by Chadian forces, and the deal between several major Darfuri rebel groups and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states to form the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SFR).

This poses challenges for any effective peace talks (although the prospect of new peace talks remains illusory, as the Sudanese government resolutely refuses to renegotiate the DDPD). Where should the international community begin: With the rebels and the government? With the government and the Janjaweed, themselves increasingly resistant to Khartoum's dictates? With the intra-Arab spat between the Salamat and Misseriya, or the resource-fuelled dispute between the Beni Husein and *abbala* Reizegat? With the long-standing tensions between the non-Arab Zaghawa and other non-Arab militias? With the faction fighting between fragmenting rebel groups?

Involving armed groups in parallel processes

'Resolution of Darfur's diverse conflicts requires many things, including a rethink by the international community, in particular the UN Security Council, of many aspects of its relationship with Sudan. One element of that resolution, however, must be to involve as many armed groups as possible in parallel peace processes, including local inter-tribal conferences; Darfur regional security talks; and the national dialogue. In particular, Arab militias need representation in all processes, and government and rebels must acknowledge that they do not fully represent those communities,' concluded the ICG.

The PSC extracted significant concessions from al-Bashir while in Sudan

There are encouraging signs that the AU is cognizant of the need for a new, inclusive peace process, particularly in the wake of the PSC's field mission to Darfur and Khartoum from 19–21 August. Following this visit, the PSC met to discuss the

activities of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) for Sudan and South Sudan, and issued a communiqué that emphasised the importance of national dialogue. Most significantly, the communiqué indicated that the PSC had extracted significant concessions from al-Bashir while in Sudan:

'[The PSC] notes the statement made by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir that the Government of Sudan is ready to observe a two-month ceasefire in order to create the necessary confidence for all stakeholders, including representatives of the armed movements, to join the National Dialogue process, and further notes the commitment made by President al-Bashir to grant amnesty to members of the armed movements to enable them to attend the National Dialogue in safety,' said the communiqué.

Despite its faults, Darfur's civilians would be worse off without UNAMID

This is a 'big picture' issue, however, and if it is to have any chance of success it will need a great deal of political will, and time. In the short term there is still an important role for UNAMID and the international community to play. But to do so they may need to focus on smaller, more readily solvable issues.

Room for improvement

In assessing the effectiveness of any peacekeeping mission, there are two distinct levels of analysis. Firstly, would the situation be worse without the presence of the mission? And secondly, what can the mission do better?

To the first point: almost certainly, Darfur and its beleaguered civilian population would be worse off without UNAMID. The mission not only provides protection to various camps for internally displaced persons but also conducts regular patrols and containment operations to minimise the opportunity for violence. According to the most recent report of the UN secretary-general on UNAMID, during the period from 26 February 2015 to 15 May 2015, the mission 'conducted 10 376 patrols, comprising 5 567 routine patrols, 682 short-range patrols, 204 long-range patrols, 2 007 night patrols, 178 humanitarian armed escorts and 1 738 logistics and administrative armed escorts. A total of 5 008 villages were covered during these patrols.'

In addition to this, UNAMID provides protection and support for other humanitarian operations, and support for high-level mediation efforts. All these go some way towards improving the situation on the ground, even if only marginally.

'What can UNAMID do better? This question can be answered by asking another question. What would Darfur look like if

UNAMID was not there? Clearly, the situation without UNAMID would have been much worse than the situation on the ground now. It is not perfect, but I believe the mere presence of UNAMID contributes a lot,' said Meressa Kahsu, a Researcher and Training Coordinator for the Institute for Security Studies who has visited Darfur recently.

UN spokesperson describes 'conspiracy of silence'

Despite its obvious impact, UNAMID has not been immune to criticism that it could and should be doing more to fulfil its mandate, especially when it comes to protecting civilians. Most damaging were the revelations from former mission spokesperson Aicha el Basri, who resigned from her position to reveal what she described as a 'conspiracy of silence' to mask the mission's shortcomings. She said that UNAMID troops had repeatedly failed to intervene to protect civilians, even when incidents happened before their eyes; and that the mission was also guilty of covering up the scale of these incidents. 'I felt ashamed to be a spokesperson for a mission

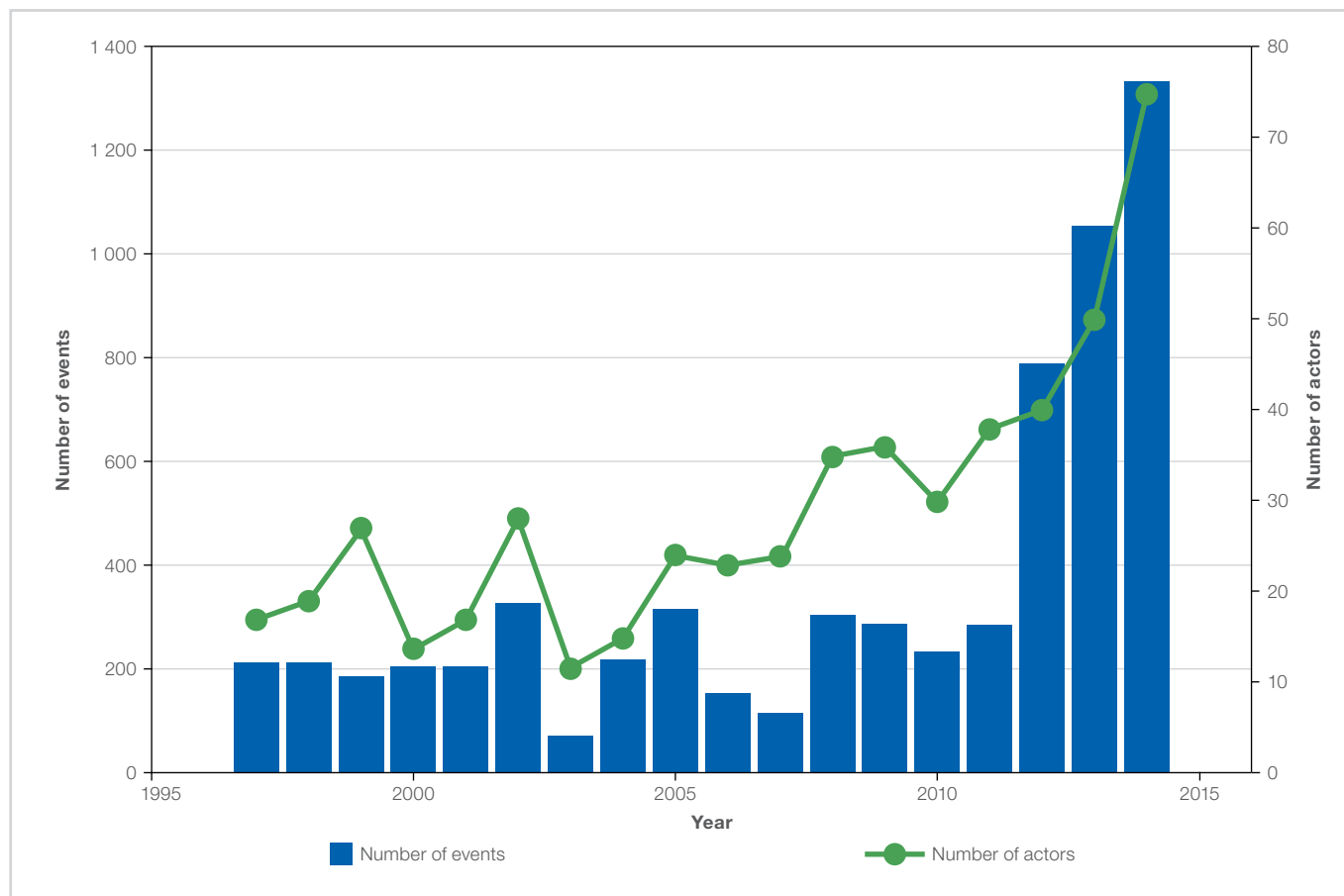
that lies, that can't protect civilians, that can't stop lying about it,' she told the BBC.

Recognising shortcomings

The UN denied these accusations, but it is well aware of other shortcomings in the mission. In his report, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlined several factors that prevent it from fulfilling its mandate effectively. These included 60 attacks and hostile incidents against UNAMID personnel in the 90-day reporting period; other attacks against UN agencies and other humanitarian actors; restrictions on movement, access denial and denial of clearances imposed on UNAMID and humanitarian actors, most often by local government officials; and delays or denials of visas for UNAMID staff. These add up to an extremely hostile operating environment.

'The mission is like a prisoner who can't move outside the jail. UNAMID can't move outside the base without permission from the Government of Sudan. So how can it be effective in implementing its mandate? One example is the media reports on an incident of mass rape in the village of Tabit towards

The proliferation of actors in conflicts in Sudan



The conflict in Darfur has been characterised by the proliferation of actors over the last four years. At the end of 2014 over 75 distinct groups were responsible for violence in Sudan, mostly in Darfur. These include the Sudanese army, pro-government militias (now called Rapid Support Forces), the Darfur Joint Resistance Forces, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – North (SPLM-N) and various ethnic militia groups.

Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.

the end of 2014,' said Kahsu. 'UNAMID was unable to reach the village in a timely manner and investigate the alleged cases, only gaining access some days after the incident. This brings the credibility of the UNAMID report on the incident into question.

'Consent of the host country is one of the principles of UN peacekeeping. In my view, this consent is no longer there,' said Kahsu. In fact, things have become so bad that the government has demanded that UNAMID leave the country entirely. In response, UNAMID is examining possible options for an exit strategy.

If some of these challenges are beyond UNAMID's control, it can work harder to address other criticisms. One that is well within the mission's control is to improve cooperation between the UN and the AU, which is not always as good as it should be. The hybrid nature of the operation poses difficulties, but it also represents an opportunity: by leveraging the UN's experience with the logistics of such missions and the AU's political influence with the government in Khartoum, UNAMID should be able to punch well above its weight – and make a real difference. At the moment, Institute for Security Studies research shows that this is not happening.

The international community may not be able to solve the situation in Darfur in the near future. It can, however, take concrete steps to make UNAMID more effective, thereby allowing the peacekeeping force to better fulfil its mandate. Already, UNAMID's presence is able to mitigate the worst effects of the violence for thousands of Darfuris, and there is no reason why it cannot play this role even more effectively. In fact, if it is truly to live up to its mandate, it must do so.

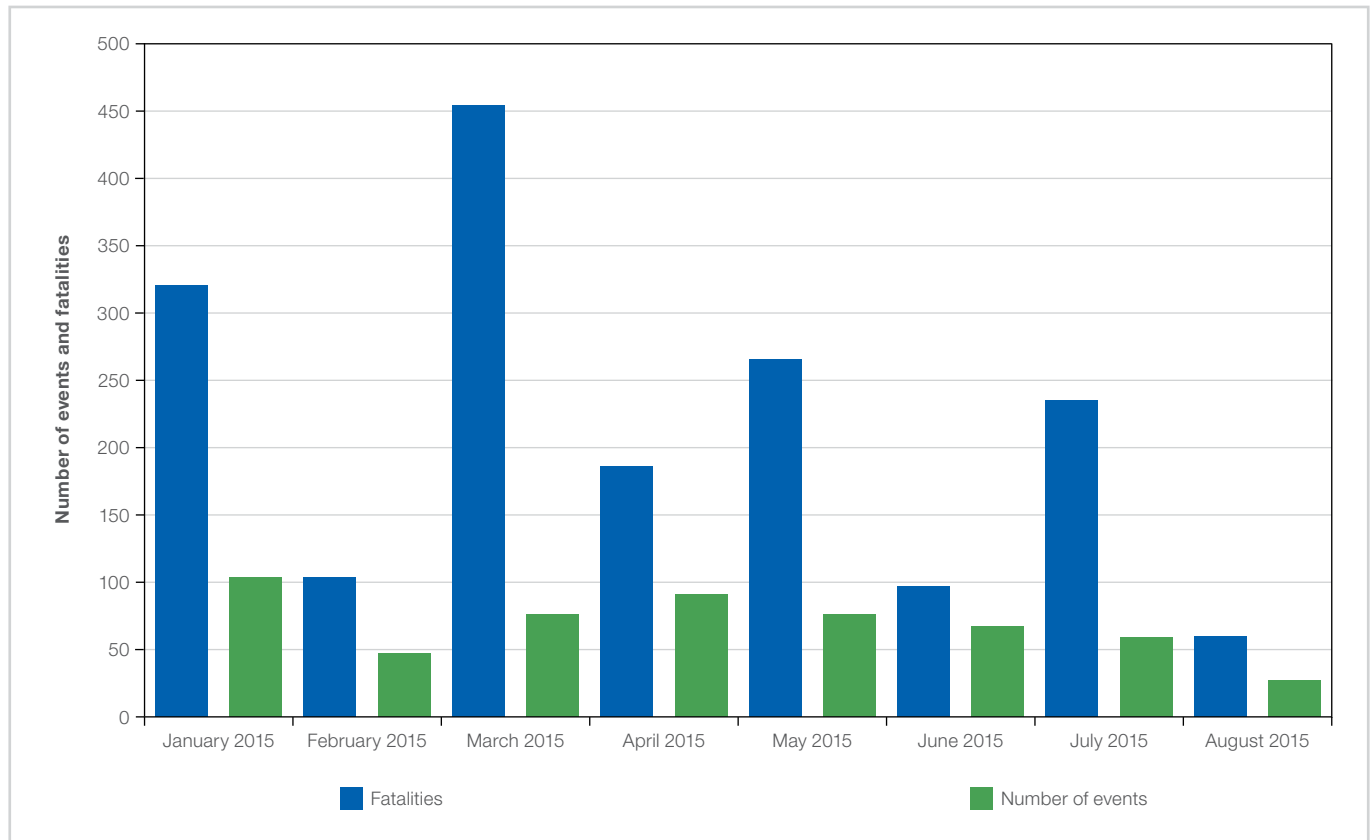
Relevant documents

Communiqué of the 539th meeting of the PSC on the activities of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) for Sudan and South Sudan (<http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-539th-meeting-of-the-psc-on-the-activities-of-the-au-high-level-implementation-panel-auhip-for-sudan-and-south-sudan>)

Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, 26 May 2015 (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/378)

UN Security Council Resolution 2228 (2015) [extending UNAMID's mandate until 30 June 2016] ([http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2228\(2015\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2228(2015)))

Number of events and fatalities in Darfur in 2015



Violence in Darfur continued unabated in the first half of 2015, with large numbers of casualties recorded in January, March, May and July this year. In March, clashes between tribal militias near Mellit in North Darfur were in part responsible for the spike in casualties, according to local media reports.

Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.

Addis Insight

Obama snub irks South Sudan's government



United States (US) President Barack Obama's visit to Kenya and Ethiopia from 24–28 July 2015 dominated the political and security debates in the Horn of Africa for several days. The visit came ahead of a new round of talks between the belligerents in the conflict in South Sudan. Obama organised a mini-summit with heads of state to discuss the conflict, but South Sudan's president Salva Kiir was not invited.

Obama's recent visit to Kenya and Ethiopia was significant for various reasons. Both countries are strategic allies of the US in the quest for peace and security in the region. Kenya and Ethiopia play leading roles in the fight against the radical Islamist group al-Shabaab in Somalia and are at the forefront of efforts to resolve the civil war in South Sudan. The visit also included an address to the AU, making Obama the first sitting US president to visit the continental body.

Kenya grappling with the threat of terrorism

Obama's visit to Kenya took place barely four months after the most devastating terror attack in the country's history at Garissa in the north of the country and amid Nairobi's efforts to secure its borders and prevent future attacks. Debates over the nexus between security and freedom and issues surrounding international obligations and humanitarian responsibilities in the fight against terror preceded the visit. In the past two years Kenya has suffered a series of bombings, suicide attacks, ambushes and raids by the Somali militant group al-Shabaab.

Kenya and Ethiopia play leading roles in the fight against the radical Islamist group al-Shabaab in Somalia

The country is frustrated both by the attacks and by the lack of an effective response to halt them. It was hoped that the visit would result in enhanced cooperation in intelligence sharing and technology transfer, as well as training and armaments support from the US to help the country better respond to arguably the single biggest security threat it faces at the moment.

At a joint news conference with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta at the end of his visit to Kenya, Obama said that his government would scale up its support to fight terror in the Horn of Africa. He pledged that his administration would expand support for the Kenyan security forces and support Nairobi's counterterrorism efforts through increased training.

South Sudan crisis topped the agenda

Ethiopia's partnership with the US is mostly anchored in cooperation in the fight against terrorism, violent extremism and efforts to preserve regional peace and security. South Sudan topped the security agenda of the visit, as the humanitarian crisis deepened and faith in the process led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) faded.

Obama was critical of both Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar. In his AU address he held both leaders accountable for the situation, saying that ‘in South Sudan, the joy of independence has descended into the despair of violence. Neither Salva Kiir nor Riek Machar has shown any interest in sparing their people from this suffering or in reaching a political solution.’

The PSC understands that the US has expressed its disenchantment with the IGAD-led peace talks in order to resolve the crisis in South Sudan. The regional body has repeatedly warned the parties that it would take action if they violated the terms of the series of agreements signed since the start of the conflict. IGAD, however, has thus far not acted on these threats despite both parties’ having violated the agreements, according to a recent report by the International Crisis Group.

The past few months have seen growing frustration with and concern about the proliferation of various peace processes to resolve the crisis in South Sudan. Some countries have started their own initiatives, to the concern of the IGAD mediation team.

Obama and his National Security Advisor Susan Rice met regional leaders to discuss peace and security in the region on 27 July. As expected, the discussions on South Sudan dominated the meeting. It was attended by Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, Uganda’s President Yoweri Museveni, Kenya’s Kenyatta, Sudan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Ibrahim Ghandour and AU Commission Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma.

According to sources, despite the frustration over the mediation process and rumours of disenchantment, the US president did reassert Washington’s strong support for the IGAD-led peace process. He commended the efforts by IGAD and recognised it as the only process to support.

Both parties to the South Sudan conflict were left out of the discussions. Kiir’s government was especially disappointed that it was not invited to the talks. Its foreign minister, Barnaba Marial Benjamin, complained in strong terms to the AU and

IGAD and accused the two organisations of breaching protocol by refusing to inform or invite the ‘constitutionally elected’ head of state, and equating a rebel group with a government. There were concerns that this resentment could affect the outcome of the talks in Addis Ababa.

The US is part of the so-called Troika that is accompanying the South Sudan peace talks (the other members are the United Kingdom and Norway). This Troika is now included in the IGAD Plus process, which also includes the AU, five African countries (South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Chad and Rwanda) the United Nations, the European Union and China. The mini-summit with IGAD leaders and the AU Commission chairperson also discussed the situation in Somalia and efforts to fight extremism and terrorism in the region.

Pressure on parties to reach an agreement

Obama’s visit and his discussions about the situation in South Sudan with officials of the Ethiopian government, the leaders of the IGAD region and the AU are believed to have put extra pressure on the leaders of both warring groups in South Sudan to meet the new deadline set by the mediation team. Talks resumed in Addis Ababa and Machar signed the peace agreement on 17 August 2015. Despite reservations, Kiir also signed it during a ceremony in Juba on Wednesday 26 August.

The talks in Addis Ababa did start on a positive note with the announcement by the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-In-Opposition, led by Machar, that it would accept IGAD’s proposal to demilitarise the capital Juba. As usual, details of the transition – including the roles of the president, vice president and prime minister, the make-up of the army and its leadership, and the cabinet set-up – were points of contention.

The US president and regional leaders noted that failure to respect the August 17 deadline could be followed by serious measures. In his AU speech Obama said if the deadline was not met, ‘the international community must raise the costs of intransigence’. These could include more serious sanctions targeting the assets and movement of individuals and an arms embargo.

Quotable quotes from Obama’s speech at the AU

- ‘The bottom line is when citizens can’t exercise their rights, the world has a responsibility to speak out, and America will, even when it is uncomfortable.’
- ‘Alongside new wealth, hundreds of millions of Africans still endure extreme poverty.’
- ‘When a leader tries to change the rules in the middle of the game just to stay in office, it risks instability and strife, like we’ve seen in Burundi.’

Addis Insight

An early warning on Africa's early warning system



The PSC held an open session on early warning at the end of last month to discuss ways to 'turn early warning into early response'. The AU has made important strides in this regard, but still lacks the capacity to analyse raw data about potential conflict situations and it does not always act on warnings about imminent crises.

The idea behind the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) – one of the five pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) – is simple. If we do not know about trouble that is brewing, then we can do nothing to prevent it.

It is a good idea – a vital idea – and already the AU has come a long way in operationalising its early warning capabilities, according to Vasu Gounden, Executive Director of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD).

Gounden was speaking to the PSC at an open session on 29 July, but it's not the first time he has addressed the continental body on this subject. He remembers a similar session at the Organisation of African Unity in 1995, and notes that things have changed dramatically since then.

'20 years later, I think we have made huge progress...however, conflicts have become more complicated since then. And having early warning does not necessarily mean we have effective responses,' he told the assembled PSC representatives, diplomats and civil society representatives.

AU data collection is far advanced

At its most basic, there are three stages to any good early warning system. The first is information gathering. Without the raw data, without the facts on the ground, it's impossible to even know where action needs to be taken. It is in this area that Gounden believes the AU has made the most progress, with a comprehensive data collection operation that is managed by the Situation Room located inside the AU. It is not perfect, of course, but it is a good start – and has positioned Africa ahead of its regional peers. 'This is a project in progress. We are far advanced compared to other regions of the world, and we have made huge strides as a continent,' he said.

The second stage is the analysis of that information. Unless someone can make sense of it, no amount of raw data is going to help. 'The quality of our response depends on the quality of our analysis,' said Gounden. Currently, this is a weak point for CEWS, which does not have the necessary army of highly-trained analysts with lots of experience and a track record of getting things right. Moreover, it doesn't have the necessary geographic representation within the Situation Room that might help when it comes to grasping regional and local nuances.

Pro-active response needed from the AU

Finally, that analysis needs to be acted on – which is where the PSC comes in. A major part of CEWS' mandate is to 'advise the PSC, on potential conflicts and threats to peace and security in Africa', according to the AU website. But there are two

difficulties here: first, that the quality of communication between CEWS and the PSC is poor, meaning that the PSC does not always get the timely warnings it needs to make the necessary decisions; and second, that the PSC does not always act on the information it is given. This latter point was acknowledged by the PSC Chairperson for June, Ambassador Ndumiso Ntshinga of South Africa, who said: 'The gap is on consumption. How do we make the information get us to act in time?'

Gustavo de Carvalho, a senior researcher with the ISS, concurs. 'Response to early warning systems is the most important part of the CEWS. The AU needs to become more pro-active in ensuring that is good in not only identifying warning signs, but that is also effectively equipped to respond to them. It is important that the CEWS and other pillars of APSA become better integrated, and the PSC can have a critical role in that integration,' he said.

None of these issues are new to the PSC. In a May 2014 statement, Peace and Security Commissioner Smail Chergui observed: 'At present, four challenges remain in the integration of CEWS, namely: (1) full integration of the data collection and monitoring functions on the one hand and the conflict and cooperation analysis functions on the other, (2) horizontal integration of early warning and conflict prevention between the different pillars of APSA and within the AU Commission, (3) vertical mainstreaming of early warning and conflict prevention between the AU and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs)/Regional Mechanisms (RMs), and (4) finally, harmonisation and collaboration of early warning activities and standards of the different RECs/RMs. The AU Commission is optimistic that most of these challenges will be dealt with successfully by 2015.'

Lasting solutions depend on the political will to implement them

2015 is here, however, and the PSC still has some way to go in dealing with these challenges. Fortunately, Gounden had some practical recommendations, which were largely met with approval by PSC members in comments made after his address.

These recommendations included:

- Updates from CEWS as a standing PSC agenda item
- The secondment of focal points from the AU Situation Room to RECs, and vice versa
- Combined CEWS-PSC retreats
- Increased human capacity, specifically the recruitment of more qualified analysts

'These recommendations are critical in ensuring CEWS is a functioning and pro-active mechanism within the AU system, that allows it not only to identify the sources of problems, but links these to an executive organ that can take meaningful action,' said de Carvalho.

Ultimately, however – and as with so many other issues faced by the AU – any lasting solution is dependant on finding the necessary political will to implement it. 'Over the last 20-odd years, we have a very deep understanding of what's possible ... but what we need at the end is the political will to turn that early warning into early response,' concluded Gounden.



POLITICAL WILL IS NEEDED TO
TURN EARLY WARNING INTO
EARLY RESPONSE

Addis Insight

AMISOM's new offensive creates more questions than answers



The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has launched a new offensive against al-Shabaab in Somalia. It claims to have had major strategic victories. Analysts, however, warn that al-Shabaab cannot be wiped out with military force alone. Questions are also being asked about the significant role played by neighbouring Ethiopia in the latest campaign.

On Friday 26 June 2015, AMISOM suffered one of its greatest setbacks yet. In the town of Leego, al-Shabaab attacked an AMISOM military base that was supposed to be well fortified and well defended by a contingent of Burundian troops. It was not. Al-Shabaab militants killed dozens of soldiers (the exact body count is still disputed, but reports suggest that more than 50 were killed), taking full control of the base in the process.

Beyond the tragic loss of life, the attack was devastating because it showed that al-Shabaab is far from the weakened force it was supposed to be by now. AMISOM has been in the field for eight years, but the Islamist militant group is by no means on its last legs. It can do more than just suicide bombings and hit-and-run attacks, and it remains capable of taking AMISOM on at its own game – and winning.

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The Leego attack also raised uncomfortable questions about AMISOM's role in Somalia. Had the multinational force grown complacent? Was its Burundian contingent – deeply embarrassed by the defeat – distracted by the ongoing instability in Bujumbura?

AMISOM launches Operation Juba Corridor

AMISOM's response was not long in coming. A month later, it released details of a new active military offensive against al-Shabaab. 'This offensive, code-named Operation Juba Corridor, is aimed at further degrading al-Shabaab by removing them from their strongholds in the Gedo, Bakool and Bay regions of Somalia,' AMISOM said in a statement.

Within a week, AMISOM was claiming major strategic victories and territorial gains. 'Since the start of Operation Juba Corridor, which involves troops from the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) and Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) contingents of AMISOM, supporting units of the Somalia National Army (SNA), and acting in collaboration with some of our strategic partners, major towns and villages such as Taraka, Jungal, Duraned, Eel-elaan, Habakhaluul, Meyon, Magalay, Duraned and the major town of Bardhere in the Gedo region have been recovered from al-Shabaab.

In the Bakool region, the operation has resulted in the recovery of Buur-dhuhunle, Kulun-jareer, Moragabey, Legaly and Gelewoyni while Ufurow, Eesow, Hasanow-Mumin, Llidaale, Makoon, Dhargo and Manaas have been liberated in the Bay region,' it said in a statement.

Do territorial gains mean real progress?

It is an impressive list, but analysts question whether these territorial gains really represent substantive progress. 'The problem AMISOM has faced in previous offensives is that al-Shabaab just retreats, so AMISOM has had a hard time really destroying al-Shabaab assets rather than just dislodging them. So if it can improve on this then it could deal al-Shabaab a real blow.

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However, the bigger problem is that it is impossible to completely wipe out al-Shabaab through military force. It's also impossible for AMISOM to stop them doing the types of asymmetric and terror attacks they have focused on since 2013. For these, al-Shabaab don't need much money, weapons or troops and they can bide their time and choose their targets at will,' said Paul Williams, Associate Professor at George Washington University and co-author of *Counterinsurgency in Somalia: lessons learned from the African Union Mission in Somalia, 2007–2013*.

The offensive also raised a couple of uncomfortable questions about AMISOM's tactics, and its reliance on neighbouring countries.

The first is to do with several claims that significant civilian casualties were incurred during the Operation Juba Corridor offensive. One example: in an AFP report, elders from five villages in the southern Bakool region claimed that dozens of civilians had been killed as AMISOM troops passed through. 'The number of civilians we have counted so far is over 50, but there are also more still missing after they have been arrested,' said elder Abdulahi Isgowe. 'We have never witnessed such a mass killing before.'

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AMISOM has not responded directly to this claim in particular (and AMISOM's spokespeople did not respond to repeated attempts by the *PSC Report* to contact them), but it has

responded to other claims that its troops killed civilians in the Lower Shabelle town of Marka – although the statement shed little light on what actually happened. '[O]ur troops' supply convoys have come under recurrent attacks by al-Shabaab. During these, in self-defence, troops have proportionately responded to such attacks. Nevertheless AMISOM regards any loss of innocent lives as tragic and we take all reports of such incidents seriously.' AMISOM has pledged to investigate the claims, and recalled the officer in charge of troop operations in Marka as a precaution. It has also conducted meetings with local elders to try to calm the situation.

'With regard to civilian casualties, this is what the militant group capitalises on to sway the Somali public to its side. It is a difficult terrain, but it is imperative that [AMISOM and the Somali National Army] do their utmost to limit collateral damage. The offensive against al-Shabaab should consciously include some form of integrated approach [that] addresses the local population's needs and makes them feel secure. This may include facilitating political organisation and quick-impact projects,' said Emmanuel Kisiangani, a senior researcher at the Institute for Security Studies.

Questions over Ethiopia's role

The second question is about Ethiopia's prominent role in Operation Juba Corridor. Ethiopian troops have spearheaded the new offensive, which has also been supported by air strikes by Ethiopia's air force. In Ethiopia itself, the offensive has received major airtime on public broadcasters, with reporters embedded with Ethiopian military units. This is unusual, and indicates that Ethiopia has decided to take an even more active role in the conflict.

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While there is no doubt that AMISOM needs all the support it can get, it is far from clear that Ethiopia is best placed to provide it, given the long and contentious history between the two countries. It is worth remembering that although both the Kenyan and the Ethiopian forces are now part of AMISOM, their involvement began unilaterally, and they only assumed the mantle of the continental force retroactively. In other words, both countries have their own interests in Somalia, which may not always be aligned with AMISOM's stated objectives.

'Peace operations everywhere run a big risk when neighbouring states are the key troop-contributing countries.

In this case having Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti as key AMISOM players might help militarily but it complicates the politics of the mission and perhaps also the broader search for conflict resolution and reconciliation in Somalia,' said Williams. It is to avoid exactly these potential conflicts of interest that the United Nations generally discourages neighbouring countries from participating in peacekeeping operations.

Although AMISOM is hailing Operation Juba Corridor as a triumph, the truth is that it remains too early to make that determination. Because of the nature of al-Shabaab, retaking territory is not necessarily a marker of success; far more significant would be to degrade the militant group's middle and senior leadership positions. And those claims of civilian casualties, if left unchecked, may strengthen al-Shabaab's propaganda and weaken local support for AMISOM and the Somali Federal Government. Ethiopia's high-profile involvement, meanwhile, could also backfire if it is perceived as another Ethiopian invasion rather than a genuine peacekeeping mission (many argue that Ethiopia's 2006 invasion of Somalia to remove the Islamic Courts Union from power is what precipitated the al-Shabaab problem in the first place).

What we can conclude from the new offensive, however, is that the defeat at Leego was only a temporary setback. AMISOM remains a potent fighting force, and a key player in the long fight for a stable Somali state.

Newsflash

- Al-Shabaab attacked AMISOM at its base in Janale district, lower Shabele region, south-west of Mogadishu, on 1 September 2015, killing scores of soldiers. AU Commission Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma condemned the attack and paid tribute to the Ugandan peacekeepers who lost their lives.
- 'The chairperson reiterates that the attack will not lessen the determination of AMISOM forces and reaffirms the commitment of the AU to continue to support the Somali government and people in their effort to achieve sustainable peace,' the AU stated in a press release.
- The AU has not released the official figure of the number of casualties, but Kenyan media reports state that over 50 peacekeepers were killed and more than 50 kidnapped.



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The Institute for Security Studies is an African organisation that aims to enhance human security on the continent. It does independent and authoritative research, provides expert policy analysis and advice, and delivers practical training and technical assistance.

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