

The role of the African Union in Somalia:

Where to go from here with the AMISOM peace operation?

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The political and security context in Somalia has improved substantially over the last year.

The security situation remains fragile, however, and the African Peace Support Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is in need of a new mandate. In light of these developments, a Special Committee of Experts from the African Union assessed the mandate of AMISOM, after six years of deployment. This policy paper, which is targeted at both researchers and practitioners working in the field of peace and security, analyses AMISOM's successes and failures so far, in order to define the crucial elements that have to be taken into account when renewing the mandate. Examining the trends that AMISOM might develop in the coming months, it provides several strategic recommendations for identifying how AMISOM can best contribute to the stabilization of Somalia and align its activities to the priorities of the Federal Government of Somalia.

Context

After years of fighting with limited resources, which has led to a significant number of casualties among soldiers, AMISOM's achievements so far would be viewed by many as a "timid success". Thanks to the support of AMISOM and the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF), the Somali national forces have effectively evicted Al-Shabaab, the Islamist group which emerged in 2006, from most major urban centres in southern Somalia, including Mogadishu (which was recaptured by the Somali National Army, with the support of AMISOM, on 9 December 2012), Baidoa, situated in south-central Somalia, and the port cities of Marka and Kismayo. However, since asymmetric attacks and intimidation of the local population in those areas remain a reason for concern, AMISOM's military success is still fragile and reversible. Moreover, AMISOM needs the presence of the Somali National Security Force (NSF) and its allied forces (the Ethiopian forces) in vulnerable areas to prevent Al-Shabaab from regaining control, as happened in southern Galgadud in June 2012.

After 21 years of being a collapsed state Somalia is now, partially thanks to AMISOM's stabilisation efforts, facing a post-transitional situation that will rely very much on the strategic approach of this AU Peace Support Operation. This new context has been characterised by the launch of a new interim Constitution, on 1 August 2012, the inauguration of a new Federal Parliament, on 20 August 2012, and the swearing in of Mr Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, on 10 September 2012. These political events can be considered milestones in the stabilisation of the country and have engendered hope that such events could be the inception of a broader political process embracing all Somalis.

Yet in spite of this significant progress, the domestic stakeholders, AMISOM and their regional and international supporters responsible for carrying out the post-transitional state-building strategy, need to defeat the well-rooted institutional legacy of corruption, to strengthen the weak and almost non-existent political institutional apparatus, as well as its capacity and effectiveness in liberated areas (those

controlled by the government with the military support of AMISOM). Additionally, they need to address the complex issue of the state's legitimacy. Over the last two decades, Somalia has had to deal with a civil war in the 1980's, state collapse after the fall of Siad Barré in the 1990's, clan factionalism and wardlordism under self-governed structures of power, and a globalized ideological conflict after the US started its "war on terror" in 2001.

As a result of these events, the political power in Somalia can be characterised as local, fragmented, violent in some cases, heterogenic and based on hybrid structures, of formal and informal institutions controlled by clans or militias, in which different social orders interact. AMISOM's success therefore partially depends on whether governmental structures will be seen as legitimate in the eyes of Somali citizens, delivering much-needed public goods and services in an efficient manner and providing stability and peace throughout the liberated areas.

The immediate and most challenging goal for AMISOM, with its limited scope and capacities, is to achieve and maintain effective stabilisation of the liberated areas. Somalia is still partially controlled by Al-Shabaab militias and war lords and/or clan-based militias that operate under different logics of power. Thus, the Somali government, which is receiving support of the Somali National Security Force (NSF) and AMISOM, is faced with a social reality in which its legitimacy needs to be strengthened throughout the country.

In addition to these challenges related the difficult political and security situation in Somalia, AMISOM is also facing several challenges related to the institutional deficiencies of the AU, which no doubt are also shared by other AU Peace Support Operations, as will become clear from the following section.

Analysis

Bearing in mind that AMISOM is playing a supportive role, leaving the ownership of the process to the Somali government, AMISOM's multidimensional peace-making strategy is based on two major approaches: 1) a security-oriented approach, the so-called peace-enforcement strategy, which is mandated to conduct peace support operations in Somalia and which seeks to stabilize the situation in the country; and 2) a politically-oriented approach, the so-called peacebuilding strategy, with as its primary role the assisting of the Federal Government of Somalia in re-establishing functioning state institutions and delivering services to the Somali people.

AMISOM exemplifies the recent trend of the division of responsibilities between the UN and regional

organisations in peace and security (see AMIS, 2004-2007, UNAMID, 2007-present, AFISMA, 2013). The reason behind this is that the AU, as a regional organisation, can respond quickly to conflicts through peace enforcement operations under chapter VII, which by virtue of the AU's concept of operation and rules of engagement may allow combat-related activities. Once the situation reaches a certain level of stabilisation, the UN is expected to deploy peacekeeping troops to undertake medium-term or long-term peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction missions. This trend underscores the fact that the UN does not have the mandate or the willingness to deploy troops in highly violent areas. In other words, the UN cannot keep peace where there is no peace to keep in the first place and therefore requires regional organisations to carry out the first and most demanding phase of peace operations.

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AMISOM is operating in a stabilization phase, in a social reality categorised by the UN as too dangerous for the deployment of UN troops. The UN has provided strategic, technical and financial support to AMISOM, however, helping it to carry out its mission. This partnership has entailed implications in AMISOM's decision-making process, which are beyond the ambit of this policy paper. Rather, this paper focuses on the particular challenges that AMISOM's Military, Police and Civilian Components are facing.

Challenges for AMISOM's three Components

The Military Component of AMISOM is mandated to defeat Al-Shabaab, to secure liberated areas, and to provide support to institutionalise Somalia's National Security and Stabilisation Plan (NSSP). It was not until early 2012, however, that AMISOM expanded its areas of operation for the first time, going beyond Mogadishu.

The first and main challenge for the Military Component is the insufficient amount of troops deployed to guarantee the stabilisation of AMISOM's

area of operations, even despite the adoption of the AU's new Strategic Concept for AMISOM, which authorised an enlargement from 12.000 to 17.731 personnel, as had been requested by Security Council Resolution 2036 (2012). This enlargement started with the re-hatting of the Kenyan forces contingent as part of the AMISOM force, the deployment of an additional 2.500 troops from Burundi and Uganda, and the deployment of forces from Djibouti and of Formed Police Units from Uganda and Nigeria in September 2012.

A second challenge is that AMISOM is actually creating a "culture of dependence" on the government, in the liberated areas and partially in Mogadishu, preventing both the government from taking over power and AMISOM from planning a strategy to pull out their troops in the operating areas. As a consequence, the government does not have the space to manoeuvre it needs for being the leading institution in the process.

A third major challenge is that international-led approaches to peacebuilding have so far neglected local Somali governing methods, traditions and experiences of controlling and managing security. This lack of understanding of local initiatives in dealing with security can undermine the building of a legitimate and effective security strategy.

The AMISOM Police Component has the mandate to guarantee the rule of law in the city of Mogadishu and to improve the capacity building of the Somali Police Force with the aim of transforming it into a credible body that can provide security for the population. As AMISOM soldiers have moved from Mogadishu to other liberated areas, the first 140-strong Formed Police Units arrived from Uganda and Nigeria to support the Somali Police Force in providing security in the capital in August and September 2012.

Similar to the Military and Police Components, the Civilian Component is understaffed and therefore facing difficulties in achieving the objectives envisaged.

However, AMISOM still needs more staff and equipment for the Formed Police Units to be able to provide more successful responses to public disorder and to effectively assist the Somali Police Force in

increasing the number of operational police officers in the country.

The Civilian Component is mandated to assist in the rebuilding of Somalia's legitimate and effective political institutions. It is committed to encouraging the launch of civil reconciliation initiatives with a view to seeking political inclusiveness and representativeness. Reconciliation processes are perceived as essential mechanisms for promoting loyalty to the Somali state rather than to clan or warlord factions. The Civilian Component's role is fundamental throughout the statebuilding process, since it is unlikely that AMISOM's Military-oriented strategy will succeed without an effective and strong Civilian Component. However, similar to the Military and Police Components, the Civilian Component is understaffed and therefore facing difficulties in achieving the objectives envisaged.

The AMISOM mandate has a humanitarian aspect as well, which in practice is limited to a facilitation role due to human and material constraints. Initially, the AMISOM operational mandate did not include specific human rights components, in line with international standards for peacekeeping. The international community prioritized strengthening the fledging Transitional Federal Government and reducing Al-Shabaab capacities and control, leading to a situation in which the protection of the Somali civilian population was neglected. Moreover, the conflict severely exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, which was compounded by reported obstruction of humanitarian assistance by officials of the Transitional Federal Government.

In 2010 a shift in focus by the AU and the UN resulted in increased attention to civilian protection concerns, leading to a significant drop in the number of civilian casualties, yet despite such progress notable gaps remain, which should be addressed by AMISOM if it is to be viewed as legitimate and credible by the Somali population. Additionally, it should be noted that AMISOM has been accused of not abiding by international humanitarian law, pointing to heavy-handed military operations in response to Al-Shabaab attacks which have caused civilian deaths.

Structural challenges

As far as the structural challenges of AMISOM are concerned, most of them originate from the AU and are shared by other AU Peace Support Operations.

The governance of AMISOM is complex due to the high number of actors and levels involved. Any assessment of its policy-making process needs to take into account that decisions result from a process of complex patterns of interdependence, negotiation, exchanges and influence between different types of

levels (domestic, regional, and international) and actors.

The lack of sustainable funding, which has supposed a high dependence on non-African resources, has had enormous implications for AMISOM's multiple levels of governance and has entailed challenges regarding its ownership. Several co-existing support models (the UN's Trust Fund, the EU's African Peace Facility, direct donor support and UNSOA, which is the UN Support Office for AMISOM) have taxed the energy of the AU's limited support staff. UNSOA has made a big difference, going to unprecedented lengths in providing support in a flexible manner, but is still far from meeting the real needs of the mission.

One of the implications of AMISOM's dependence on external factors has been the difficulties the mission has been facing in deploying more troops in places where they are really needed and to keep these troops supplied. As mentioned before, there has been an expansion of AMISOM personnel, however a force of 35.000 is reportedly required to fully undertake the responsibilities of this multidimensional peace support mission, particularly to control and expand the area of operations. Nonetheless, the African Union Commission (AUC) has been unable to convince its Member States to deploy such numbers of troops for a variety of reasons, including limited available forces and financial resources or other emerging African threats or conflicts that need to be addressed. Due to the immediate deployment of troops in Mali, the most recent African-led military intervention, it is possible that funds allocated to AMISOM will be reduced.

An enhanced National Security Force could play a key role in supplementing AMISOM forces, but has not yet been effectively established. In addition, because clan loyalties tend to override loyalty to the national government, the recruitment of potential Somali troops presents problems that make the development of a credible National Security Force an unlikely eventuality, at least in the short term.

AMISOM is also facing a number of challenges related to the coordination of troops. The intricacy of the integration of different national troops, which entails the harmonization of a variety of different institutional cultures, capacities and methods, has been complicated and time-consuming. Tensions related to strategies and priorities amongst different troop contingents (for example amongst AMISOM, Ethiopian troops or Kenyan troops that have recently been integrated into AMISOM) are quite common and remain unresolved. In addressing these types of problems, the AU established a Joint Coordinating Mechanism to work at ministerial level and a Military Operations Coordination Committee at chief-of-staff level. These coordination mechanisms help to

balance national interests and to foster consensus, but problems remain.

The training of AU Peace Support Operations troops remains a significant challenge because of low levels of experience and language problems. Particularly since its latest expansion, AMISOM is hampered by a lack of Somali speakers, who could play a crucial role in the understanding of the local population and the National Security Force.

Furthermore, AMISOM needs to deal with security initiatives of other actors, such as the many maritime security and counterpiracy operations off the coast of Somalia. It is essential that the AU manifests its predominant and leading role as the legitimate institution identified by the international community to carry out the main peace operation in Somalia, albeit in collaboration with other actors.

Moreover, the Peace Support Operation Division at the AU's headquarters in Addis Ababa, which is the responsible body for implementing the decisions taken by the Peace and Security Council, has less than twenty staff members to manage all AU's peacekeeping operations deployed across Africa. By way of comparison, the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations, responsible for peacekeeping operations worldwide, has approximately 630 employees. Due to insufficient numbers of personnel, the Peace Support Operation Division faces institutional and operational obstacles in supporting AMISOM.

Recommendations

Six years after its deployment, and in an improved contextual scenario, AMISOM needs a new mandate. Many discussions are taking place within the AU, in consultation with others stakeholders. It is recommended that, when deciding upon this new mandate, the following factors are taken into account:

1. Ensuring continuation of AMISOM

It is important to improve the sustainability of the Mission in order to ensure the continuation, and possibly even an expansion, of AMISOM.

The AU should encourage its Member States to increase their contributions to the mission, as well as their voluntary contributions to the AU Peace Fund.

The UN should enhance financially and technically the support to AMISOM through the UN New Mission that will be settled in a couple of months.

Moreover, the UN Security Council should consider the establishment of an enhanced coordination and division of labour between the UN and the AU, which

would result in a more balanced representation of the aspirations of both organizations.

2. Effectively controlling all areas

The Military Component should continue to secure areas already controlled by the government, like Kismayo or Baidoa, and capture those areas which are currently under the control of Al-Shabaab or other militias. When doing so, it should try to:

- 1) Strengthen support for the empowerment of the National Security Force with a view to transforming it into an effective partner. The donors' training programmes for the National Security Forces should be enhanced and better coordinated, and the UN support package should allocate funds to the National Security Force.
- 2) Further encourage defections from Al-Shabaab and other militia fighters.
- 3) Coordinate more effectively, amongst the different AMISOM's components; amongst AMISOM, the Ethiopian forces and National Security Forces; amongst AMISOM headquarters and AUPSOD; amongst AUPSOD and AUPSOD; and amongst the AU and other organizations, donors, and collaborating institutions. When doing so, the AU's leading role as the principal peacekeeping mission in Somalia should be emphasised.
- 4) Ensure proper training of AMISOM's troops.
- 5) Improve communication between AMISOM and the local population, which is of key importance to the successful undertaking of operations and to the understanding and adoption of efficient local security strategies.
- 6) Consider a de-escalation of military action in favour of an increased deployment of the Civilian Component in the stabilised areas.

3. Capacity building of the Police

In line with the Strategic Concept, the Police Component should continue to enlarge its Formed Police Units up to 360 police, in order to be more effective at public order management.

Additionally, AMISOM should continue supporting the Somali Police Force, transforming it into a credible law enforcement component through capacity building.

4. Enhancing the legitimacy and representativeness of the Somali government

The Civilian Component should focus on enhancing the legitimacy and representativeness of the Somali government, particularly in the liberated areas, by:

- 1) Continuing to support political reconstruction through national and local reconciliation processes;
- 2) Fostering greater autonomy for Somali regions in undertaking such initiatives, which would help to preserve the local dynamics of the process; and
- 3) Continuing to reintegrate ex combatants into

civilian livelihoods.

The civilian component will be complemented by the peacebuilding program that the new UN Mission to Somalia will establish in the upcoming months. In this sense, an enhanced coordination and a clear and well-defined division of labour between these institutions, taking into account the capacities of each of the organizations, could avoid the duplication of tasks which could lead to competing approaches.

5. Effective engagement with the Somali government

AMISOM should, with its Military, Police and Civilian Components, actively engage with the Somali government. The government should play a leading role in the peacekeeping and state building process, establishing measures to resist its dependence on the international peace support mission. AMISOM, and the UN as a whole, should therefore adopt a comprehensive support strategy with regard to nationally owned peacebuilding.

6. Increasing the protection of civilians

The mission should address perceptions that AMISOM personnel are immune from responsibility and accountability when its personnel have caused harm to civilians by:

- 1) Creating and implementing both a conduct and discipline policy, in line with humanitarian standards.
- 2) Effectively investigating allegations of serious misconduct of AMISOM personnel, and adopting disciplinary measures when necessary.
- 3) Adopting practical and preventive measures in relation with the protection of civilians, including through training and awareness-raising programmes.
- 4) Enhance the Civilian Conduct Court, as a way to protect the civilian population and increase the court's legitimacy.

7. Reformulate the scope of the mandate

It is recommended to reformulate the scope of AMISOM's mandate in such a way that the military approach would gradually be reduced within 5-10 years, in favour of an enhanced political developmental approach, which should be based on a post-conflict reconstruction strategy that could forcefully and effectively promote peace and stability.

Both the AU and the UN should consider an enhanced partnership in order to develop an exit solution for AMISOM's Military Component.

The transformation of AMISOM could take place in a context in which a stronger, independent and more legitimate government becomes operational, with the support of a credible Somali National Security Force and a Somali Police Force capable of delivering sustainable security and stability throughout the country.

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