

Somalia: Bailing out the TFG

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Executive Summary

The Djibouti Agreement of August 2008 remains to be the country's best hope, though the parties to the agreement are not in a position to implement or have failed to implement; the exception being Ethiopia's honoring its commitment to withdraw its forces from Somalia. The TFG continues efforts to both consolidate its authority particularly with respect to the security sector and reach out politically to as many groups as possible as mandated in the Djibouti agreement. Presently, a nascent institutional apparatus is being built; however, it is very weak and there is very little coordination between this apparatus and its security and military counterparts. The TFG remains vulnerable to asymmetric attacks. However, its resilience in front of sustained military attacks shows the fact that it has the will and capacity to survive and strive. TFG II is not a spent force, retains hope and merits sustained external support. AMISOM is best placed and is willing to assist the TFG; however, its capacity is somewhat limited in that it requires additional assets to fulfill its many missions. Mean-

while, the insurgency has lost the military momentum and faces internal crisis, apparently undermining its cohesiveness and command authority. But it is no less destructive. It is very unlikely that a single, clan or ideological, military and political force will be able to impose complete control in Mogadishu and its surroundings. That will never happen anytime soon.

Despite the continued reconfiguration of political forces, evidence suggests that the overall political situation is unlikely to change dramatically in the short-term. The political and military conditions for a ceasefire and durable peace and the building of a robust process of state building have not existed and do not appear imminent. Somalia is unlikely to see the establishment of a functional national unity government in the next few months, if not years; state collapse and violent conflict is likely to continue to define Somali affairs.

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Introduction

The Political agreement between the TFG and the ARS led by Sheikh Sheriff and the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia in January 2009, the reinforcement of African Union troops (which was mainly made up of troops from Uganda) by new battalions from Burundi, and the support given by the international community, each of which held out hope for peace and stability in Somalia. Those hopes have been disappointed. The security situation in Somalia remains volatile and is characterized by frequent attacks from insurgent groups on the TFG and AMISOM, particularly in and around Mogadishu.

Somalia has been in perpetual turmoil and without a functioning state for nearly nineteen years. The Djibouti Agreement of August 2008 succeeded in bringing together opposing political groupings which led to the formation of a legitimate government of national unity, hereafter TFG II, and its subsequent relocation to Mogadishu in early 2009. Despite lingering questions about the shape and manner of the Djibouti process everything seemed good. Enthusiasm was high. Participation was up. Public opinion was very much in favour of the new deal and the international community was highly sympathetic. In fact, the 'new' TFG seems a credible partner for the international community to move the peace process forward and restore stability in Somalia. Since its reconfiguration and advent in Mogadishu the TFG has been propped up militarily by an African Union force and financially and diplomatically by Western donor powers and the United Nations.

After the Djibouti talks culminated in the election of the most charismatic leader of the opposition, there was significant optimism that the TFG would succeed given the support it was accorded by the Somali people. The insurgency against the new government

however continues despite an Ethiopian withdrawal and has spread beyond Mogadishu to other regions. Violence is on the rise again in Mogadishu and patience is wearing thin. The political opposition to the T.F.G. remains intransigent in its demand that African Union forces withdraw from Somalia before it will negotiate on power-sharing. At the time of writing Somalia hit the headlines again when a suicide bomber struck a medical graduation ceremony and killed at least 22 people, including three government ministers, several doctors, students and their relatives. Hardly a day goes by without news of violent clashes and some further attacks.

Nonetheless, everything is not the same in Somalia; much is new, and it would be grossly inaccurate to speak of the same TFG II or one Islamist insurgency and opposition to the TFG II, since there is no united front against the TFG II or any other major issue that matters to Somalia. A Coalition of disparate clerics, clan groups, Islamists, criminal and militia networks which formed the core of insurgency were themselves divided, and war erupted between the two wings of the hard line Islamist camp in late 2009. The sudden break-up of the hard-line Islamist block seem to have shocked many. It was only a matter of time before fallout between the two Islamist insurgent groups in Somalia. This division and conflict was precipitated by Ethiopian withdrawal and the formation of TFG II under Sheikh Sheriff Sheikh Ahmed, former leader of the Islamic Courts Union/ICU/ and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia/ARS/.

This briefing is an assessment and inventory of the different actors, their interests and positions contextualized against the Post Djibouti Agreement political and security situation. It deals with each of the following: The political and military situation in Somalia since the withdrawal of Ethiopia troops, the

balance of military power on the ground, the alliances and counter-alliances of the different actors and the role of AMISOM and the international community at large to influence developments in Somalia.

Understanding the Post Djibouti Order/ Disorder

The Djibouti agreement of August 2008 set out to establish a national unity government and a strong security force in Somalia. The agreement which led to the forced resignation of President Abdullahi Yusuf followed by a deal and subsequent establishment of an enlarged and reconstituted TFG led by Sheikh Sheriff Ahmed (formerly leader of the opposition alliance-ARS) has changed the nature of alliances in Somali politics. Five interrelated things happened which will continue to influence the fate of the new government and political developments in Somalia. These are:

- The formation of TFG II
- The withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia
- The continued presence of AMISOM
- The regrouping of new local religious movement, *ablu Sunna wal-Jamai'a/ ASWJ/*
- Division and infighting among the Islamist insurgents

TFG II: Genesis and Course

The international community led by the UN¹ sought to forge a centrist coalition of TFG and opposition figures. The Djibouti Agreement which was signed on August 18 2008 calls for a cessation of hostilities and deployment of UN peacekeeping force, and the subsequent withdrawal of Ethiopian forces. However, only the last one was to be implemented. The TFG continues efforts to both consolidate its authority particularly with

respect to the security institutions and reach out politically to as many groups as possible as mandated in the Djibouti agreement.² First and foremost, the government led by Sheikh Sheriff Ahmed was intended to be a government of national unity tasked with facilitating national reconciliation and creating a robust security forces to achieve that. However, so far the results are less encouraging. Though, many *Hamiye* clan forces were neutralized TFG II didn't succeed to bring all its major opponents on board. Radical Islamists and other clan and militia forces continue to resist calls by the TFG to join an inclusive administration with the notable exception of the cooperation agreement signed between the Government and the ASWJ— which constitutes an encouraging departure from the recent past in Somalia.

The TFG continues to reach out to other armed elements and those who have accepted to join have been awarded cabinet posts. Notably, *Al-Shabaab* and certain elements of *Hiizu al Islam*, the two main extremist groups that include foreign combatants and in some ways connected to Al-Qaeda, continue to remain outside the peace process. In addition to the threat posed by radical insurgent groups, Somalia continues to be plagued by the activities of unscrupulous domestic and external spoilers who take advantage of the prevailing lawlessness by taking control of seaports and airstrips and the income they generate. The piracy phenomenon is a direct result of this unfortunate situation; though it has its own peculiar origin, nature and course.³ The clan dimension of political reconciliation doesn't look good either. Indeed, a major challenge to Sheikh Sheriff's government is the structure of the TFG itself and the clan interests articulated in that structure. Meanwhile, the *Darod* clan family,⁴ to which the previous President of the TFG belongs, currently feels alienated due to the Islamist insurgency and the Djibouti Agreement, since

both processes are to some degree dominated by the *Hawiye* clan family. By selecting Sharmarke, a member of the Northern *Darod* clan family, Sheikh Sheriff won the qualified support of the Puntland state, which said it would work with him as long as he followed a policy of "Federalism" that would insure Puntland's autonomy. In reaction, the Southern *Darod* has begun opposing the new government.

Due to or despite the fact that he selected a prominent personality from Northern Darod (from Puntland) to bring the region and its dominant clan on board, there are dissatisfactions voiced by Southern Darod, mainly the Merihan who have little leading role in the reconstituted TFG and lost Kismayo and Gedo to the *Shabaab*. Dissatisfied with the new government for not getting any strategic position in the new cabinet, there is always a danger they could rally behind the *Shabaab* and other hardline Islamists, as the *Hawiye* did for the last three years. The unity government was forced by circumstances to focus on very few clans in and around Mogadishu. Thus, apart from serious confrontation with the *Shabaab*, which could easily be thwarted with the support of the major *Hawiye* clan/traditional leadership and moderate Islamists, the main challenge for the new government remains to be balancing the different clan interests. Even support from different Somali clans-including those in the Diaspora- is highly influenced by the clan line, and the new government should work hard to gain support, mainly by delivering tangible results on the ground; in terms of security and reconciliation, before it secures the support of all Somalis. A major point of weakness has been the inability to reach out to other clans and regions to actively engage in the 'new' political reconstruction and security imperatives. If this has been achieved it would have improved the TFG's legitimacy and base of support and its ability to control potential spoilers and cultivate allies.

A major political development in Somalia which contributed to the changes in the political deal signed and concluded in Djibouti was the dropping from the bandwagon of *al-Shabaab* two of the major support bases of the insurgency: moderate Islamists and the *Hawiye* clan leadership. Increased awareness and recognition by majority members of former Islamic Courts and *Hawiye* clan leadership that continued use of the *Shabaab* agenda will not further their long term interests in Somalia seems to have contributed to this change. However, such a change of position was greatly influenced by the ruthless and UnSomali way the *Shabaab* pursued its military and religious agenda. As such it could be argued that Ethiopian withdrawal has ultimately resulted in the dissociation of majority Somali actors from the *Shabaab*. Another, more critical, outcome of the Djibouti agreement was the creation of more robust security forces in Somalia. As much as it was a political agreement, the Djibouti Accord was very much a security arrangement. Indeed, the security pact was critical to the whole process. Two critical mechanisms were created to help this process: the Joint Security Committee/JSC/ and the High Level Committee/HLC/. While the former was mandated to lead the process of creating security institutions and coordinate security matters with international assistance programmes, the latter was established to provide overall policy guidance.⁵ Meanwhile, the security arrangement was critical in underpinning and reinforcing the other pillars of the process as well, including political cooperation, reconciliation and justice, and reconstruction and development. However, due to the internal weakness of the TFG and the lack of sustained and well organized support from the international community the two institutions so far have achieved very little.

Significantly, there also appears to be little or no effective linkage between the JSC and the High Level Committee (HLC) which was established to provide overall policy guidance. Cognizant of its own limited support, the international community was not in a position to hold the TFG accountable for its failures, including this one. Therefore, continued pressure is needed to encourage the TFG to advance the Djibouti Peace Process and implement key benchmarks jointly agreed by Somali political leaders and the international community. Clearly, the most formidable challenge to the TFG is how to navigate in the volatile security landscape. Under current conditions the TFG remains dependant on AMISOM to sustain itself and has very little capacity to sustain its armed forces. Moreover, organizational capacity and readiness to provide leadership and direction to other allied clan militia groups is absent. Though there are several militia groups which are inclined to give measured support to the TFG, lack of clarity and poor command and control on the part of the TFG remains a problem.⁶ Most of the TFG machinery is in a good shape, but a crucial component, the security apparatus is not working well.

It seems doubtful that, the TFG under Sheikh Sherif will be in a position to turn things around, for at least three reasons. First, as there is no indigenous logistics capacity within the TFG it must continue to rely on AMISOM and small bilateral donations. The poor logistics capacity of the TFG significantly hampers the operations of all TFG forces.⁷ Experience also shows that, whenever it is provided, external assistance will be small. Second, Collaboration and coordination between and within, TFG structures is poor. Third, it's not at all clear how much of the newly trained and equipped forces will join and stay in government forces.⁸ The insurgents are generally better equipped and paid better than many elements of the TFG military. The returning soldiers from disparate

training programmes, run by external allies of the TFG, become the recruiting pool for the insurgency and other groups that need fighters. There is no point in training TFG forces without providing the finance to keep them under the command and control of the nascent TFG structures.

The Military Balance of Power

Understandably, the TFG is weak and a good deal of the capacity to wage war and infrastructure needed for the operation of government institutions to govern is either missing, or rudimentary. This greatly reduces the capacity of the TFG to stabilize the capital and its environs. Meanwhile, many areas in southern Somalia are under the control of the insurgency; though many of them were overrun without firing any shot. TFG and AMISOM troops are continuously targeted through ambushes and coordinated attacks against strategic locations. The capital of Somalia, Mogadishu, is not completely secure and the protection of key revenue-generating facilities-Mogadishu air and sea ports – is not assured. An unstable balance of military power exists, a direct result of the two recent wars in the capital, May 7-15 and July 10-12 2009 respectively. The two wars defined what has to become an *ad hoc military status quo* in Somalia. On May 7 2009 Islamist insurgents conducted large scale and successive military operations controlling several strategic positions in Mogadishu which forced the TFG and AMISOM back into a few strategic locations in the capital. Hard-line Islamist factions of the *al-shabaab* and *Hisbul Islam* decidedly rushed to launch a military offensive, before the new government consolidated its position and becomes a harder nut to crack i.e. before the TFG secures international support to train and bolster its security forces. The role of external actors, particularly but not exclusively, Eritrea in the plan to preempt and gut TFG institutions was critical.⁹

However, the momentum of the insurgency came to a surprise halt. As much as the role of AMISOM was critical, the support given to the TFG president by closely allied clan militias has been pivotal. What was remarkable about this event was that the government seemed, at least for the time being, to have resisted the sustained attack and slowed the advance of the hard-line Islamists largely with the support of some clan militias descended from Middle Shebelle and Hiran. This particular situation also showed that AMISOM is best placed and is willing to assist the TFG to defend itself. Hence, an unstable balance of forces has emerged, in which the insurgents have made advances but couldn't finish the TFG 2 as was originally planned. In fact, beyond offering last time resistance, pro-TFG forces have, in the aftermath of the war, began to make military maneuvers and forays into insurgent-controlled areas. The insurgents didn't completely lose the will and capacity to continue fighting but they have come to face major structural challenges projecting sustained military power. Neither the TFG with AMISOM's support, nor insurgents in Mogadishu are able to consolidate control over contested territory. In this regard the July 12 military showdown in Mogadishu is critical, as the *Shabaab* suffered its worst military defeat to date. Since then the insurgency seems to have lost the capacity to mount organized military attacks and was forced to fully resort to asymmetric, mainly terrorist mode of warfare. Hence, the TFG is not threatened by a major military push that could affect its survival. Rather, it remains vulnerable to asymmetric attacks, as demonstrated by the attack against AMISOM on September 17 2009, when two vehicles carrying explosives drove into AMISOM-controlled area at the Mogadishu airport and detonated a deadly bomb.¹⁰ This asymmetric warfare is proving challenging for AMISOM and the TFG. Notwithstanding this fact, defeats of major insurgent attacks in Mogadishu especially in

July have been serious setbacks for the insurgency, apparently undermining its cohesiveness and command authority.

As noted earlier, neither TFG forces nor insurgents in Mogadishu are able to consolidate control over contested territory. Disparate militias still control most neighborhoods in Mogadishu and the adjoining Banadir district, and some level of fighting is reported almost daily. The T.F.G. which lacks strong mechanisms and institutions and exists only by virtue of external recognition, the meager financial contributions that it gets from Western donor powers and international organizations, and AMISOM, is otherwise still weak against the insurgency and the resistance of local power centers. Needless to say, the TFG led by Sheikh Sheriff is the only remaining possible organizational resource for creating a Somali state. And its resilience in front of sustained military attacks shows the fact that it has the will, and capacity to survive and strive. TFG II is not a spent force, not yet. The Djibouti Agreement remains the country's best hope, and merits sustained external support. This reinforces the sense of cautious optimism that the Djibouti Agreement might actually work – or at least produce some positive momentum. Meanwhile, AMISOM has demonstrated its overall ability to protect government installations and strategic positions against sustained attacks.

The African Union Mission in Somalia/ AMISOM/

AMISOM remains the key security support for the TFG in Mogadishu. In December 2006 the UN authorized a Peacekeeping Mission of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development/IGAD/ in Somalia (IGASOM). IGAD is weak, divided, and without a functional standby force. The African

Union/AU/ had to come in. On 19 January, 2007 the AU Peace and Security Council authorized deployment of an 8,000-strong African Union mission to Somalia with the “clear understanding that the mission will evolve to a UN operation.”¹¹ At the time of writing, only Ugandan and Burundian troops are on the ground. After more than two years the UN is still skeptical about Somalia. Nonetheless, AMISOM continues to provide limited force protection and security to key ports of entry and vital infrastructure. It also provides protection for VIPs and conducts limited civil-military assistance projects including the delivery of water, and medical services to the population. Indeed, AMISOM’s major achievement in Somalia is in the area of civil-military relations than actual military posture in peacekeeping operations. This is by accident than design. AMISOM is also the main logistics support element to the TFG military. On the top of limited international assistance and commitment, AMISOM faces several difficulties, some internal others external.

Three significant gaps in AMISOM are the absence of intelligence and analysis, non-existent or poor coordination, and the lack of strategic focus and planning. AMISOM went to Somalia with its heart not with its head. It is more of hardware engineering than a software engineering. In this regard, the building up of a strong information gathering and analysis Cell in Mogadishu would have helped. Every aspect of its role, itself an extension of the nature and approach of the international community, seems to be driven by operational imperatives than solid strategic considerations. Problems of Planning and coordination between and among the AU Headquarters, AMISOM Nairobi, the UN, Troop Contributing Countries and the major global powers have, at times, made the support to AMISOM difficult. AMISOM is best placed and is willing to assist the TFG in

enhancing its capacity to defend itself, however, is somewhat limited in carrying the task as it requires additional assets to fulfill its many missions. Be this as it may, AMISOM remains a critical factor in the changing security environment in Somalia. Evidently, another variable in the changing balance of power in Somalia is the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops earlier in the year.

Ethiopian Withdrawal

Ethiopia militarily intervened in Somalia between 2006 and 2008 with predictable results. It pulled out its forces from Somalia as per the understanding reached in the Djibouti agreement. Arguably, the only side which actually committed to the so called Djibouti agreement is Ethiopia. Infact, it appears to have done more than its part by putting heavy pressure on its close allies to step down for the sake of national reconciliation and peace in Somalia. The speed with which it quickly grasped the reality of Somalia's power configuration and has begun to quickly adapt it to its quest to advance its own security interest is remarkable. Apart from securing its border, occasionally supporting its allies and helping to create a buffer zone along the common border, Ethiopia doesn’t seem ready to repeat the military intervention.

Resorting to more sensible and realistic but also multi-dimensional strategy, Ethiopia had managed to reposition its army to its border but still reserving the right for itself to strategically intervene to protect its security and if at all possible shift the balance of power against the *Shabaab* and in favor of its allies inside Somalia. It is reasonable to conclude that Addis Ababa has determined that the West lacks the will to take any serious security initiatives and that it has to pursue its own interest in securing its borders against Islamists while hoping, and smartly working, the *Shabaab* can be held in check by countervailing factions.

This involves making constant military maneuvers' along the common border which creates a degree of pressure on the Shabaab, making it difficult for the insurgent group to mobilize all its combatant forces and deploy them for the fighting in Mogadishu. So far this seems to be working and seen from Addis the situation in Somalia could be considered as a manageable crisis. In this regard, the current balance of power in Somalia, particularly Mogadishu, is not totally unrelated to Ethiopia's adoptive strategy.

Inside the Insurgency

Though the opponents to the TFG are many, the two most radical and major insurgent groups are the *Haraakkat al-Shabaab* and the *Hizbul Islam*. A major development in Somalia since the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops is the splintering within the insurgency and increasing rivalry among the radical Islamists. In fact, another remarkable development which precipitated the new reconfiguration of Somalia's political and military landscape and helped Ethiopia to withdraw and support the formation of a new government led by its former enemy figure is the emergence and unleashing of a locally rooted religious movement, the *Ahlu al-Sunna Wal-Jamma'ia/ASWJ*/. Its clan base (mainly *Habergedir*) and geographic focus (central Somalia) aside the ASWJ will remain a major tool keeping the *Shabaab* distracted until the new government consolidates its power and position. Nonetheless, even the radical Islamists have differing agendas and disagreement on the nature and boundary of the Islamic state that they want to establish. In some respect, the division within the insurgency is ideological.

Somali Islamists have a three-fold heritage. The first is the *Al-Ittibad al Islamia/AI*/ shaped by *Wahabist* teachings and anchored in a sub-regional agenda tried to control Somalia by military means and threaten

neighbors.¹² The second is the Union of Sharia Courts and later the ARS. The third is the *Shabaab*. Though there is cross-over among the three strands it is clear that some only have a Somali agenda, others have a regional agenda, while very few but resourceful carry a global jihadist agenda.¹³ This is a major factor in the progressive fragmentation of the Islamist camp in Somalia. Besides, lately the revolutionary impulse of the Courts movement or the Islamists has been obliterated, if not spent, and they are facing governance problems. They proved to be more capable as an armed force than as a political movement. The *Shabaab* succeeded in controlling towns with minimum fighting but lacks the capacity to administer them being forced, in some cases, to hand over liberated towns to local clan authorities. The radical elements in Somalia were designed to fight an insurgency, and not to govern. They have run out of political cards. Once the anti-Ethiopian battle cry and card run amok, the Islamists drifted to the predictable call on the withdrawal of all foreign forces.

Al Shabaab now follows a hit and run strategy and, since mid July, usually avoids military formations and decisive set piece battles. Very often it captures towns and villages without a single shot being fired. Meanwhile, it is losing the support of the public because of acts of extreme brutality and radical religious views and it is starting to face significant logistic and operational shortfalls. As a result, the *Shabaab* is shooting in every direction. This is reflected in the deteriorating relations with *Hizbul Islam*. The Islamist insurgents are neither legitimate or credible nor popular as it was claimed by some. As developments after Ethiopian withdrawal will show there is nothing revolutionary about the Islamist insurgency. Eight months of Islamist rule has not made south Somalia safer than the reign of the ruthless warlords.

They are neither inspirational, nor 'transformational'. Mainly, the *Shabaab* is increasingly becoming weak and unpopular. But they are no less devastating. Faced with governance and financial issues the group is increasingly depending on rough governance mechanisms, brute force and a degree of external support. Its major source of power and survival are what could be described as the three **F's: Fear, Foreign Money and Foreign Fighters**. This in turn is complicating its relations with the Somali people and other insurgent forces. There is no plausible scenario that does not lead to the further fragmentation and infighting among the Islamists in Somalia. The worrying side of the insurgency is however the training camps in the Lower Juba areas linked with people with close relations with international Jihadists. This has become a source of strength for the *al-Shabaab* -in terms of recruitment and finance and a source of worry for neighbors and Western powers, particularly the US.

Nonetheless, the cracks within the fractured Somali Islamist camp are not only influenced by ideology. The recent rivalry and clashes have business and clan interests at their core. The business aspect of the conflict has become clear in the events surrounding the two French security advisors and the recent military clashes in the port of Kismayo.¹⁴ Individual clan and personal interests often clash and coexist with regional jihadist cells and agendas. The clan and financial dimensions of the conflict are highly intertwined so much so that Kismayo has become the biggest prize to fight for and the biggest theatre of conflict between the two Islamist groups. Though they will continue to be active players in the political life of Somalia, the progressive fragmentation within the Islamists, along clan and ideological lines, will continue. The fallout from this is still not fully grasped. Hence a new addition to Somalia's complex insurgency phenomenon is the war

between the two leading Islamist factions. Things are getting interesting and dangerous again.

International Community

If Sudan presented the most complex, combined peacekeeping challenges to the international community to date, Somalia presents the most difficult choice. Faced with a weak government wanting to consolidate power and an opposition desperately trying to prove the situation remains volatile, the United Nations Security Council is yet to come up with a definite and plausible resolution and a workable plan of action. Nobody doubts the need for some kind of UN peace support operations in Somalia. However, the expectation that the UN will provide high levels of assistance to AMISOM as well as the assumption that African missions will eventually transition to UN operations is still, to say the least, uncertain. There are times that the UN failed to show up at a time it was most needed. The lack of confidence on the UN, though unhelpful, is not a surprise. The international community failed to take the opportunity presented to it back in 2004. In the aftermath of the Nairobi peace talks and long before the emergence of the UIC as a military force the UN lost a rare opportunity to help a Somali government establish itself in the capital. Now it is struggling to deal with an adversary, in a disjointed and erratic way, an adversary that was created and blossomed after the UN failed to provide the necessary-promised-support.

The international community is slow, may be unwilling, to seriously take up its role in Somalia. The reasons are many, some of them reasonable but not compelling. The rhetoric to support Somalia is betrayed by a series of arguments against it. The most favorite excuse is that there is no peace to keep.¹⁵ Many in the UN, quite correctly, say that the UN can't enforce peace; it can only involve in keeping some kind of peace agreement.¹⁶ This sounds

reasonable but not enough to escape total responsibility. Neither the expected assistance to AMISOM nor a UN peace keeping force is in sight. Nevertheless, the deployment of the African Mission to Sudan /AMIS/ and African Mission to Somalia/AMISON/ is a clear illustration of the determination of the African Union to assume responsibilities under toughest circumstances. Many saw the Djibouti Agreement as a breakthrough and expected a robust international support for its implementation, especially UN peacekeeping. Nonetheless, as the year 2009 nears to a close, the AU is faltering and questions remained about the will and ability of the international community, specifically the UN to make good of its commitment to foster peace and stability in Somalia.¹⁷ True, the international community has either pledged or is providing support (financial, training, equip or in kind) to the security Transitional federal institutions/TFIs/. However, the support remains inadequate, delivery problematic and sometimes insufficiently coordinated. There is no lead nation to coordinate and facilitate support to the TFG or AMISOM.

The problem of international engagement in Somalia is deeply political and strategic in nature. The remarkable feature of international strategy on Somalia is its absence. The donor powers are caught between persisting in supporting the TFG; devising new operational tactics; or pulling back. The level and quality of external support falls short of the often ridiculous expectation that the world demands of the TFG. Donors are markedly incompetent; hopelessly optimistic and endlessly disappointed. There is a need for a clearly articulated end state and a strategy that could address the tension between immediate security challenges and state building. Relaying money, supplies or dumping arms is inherently operational. This only reveals the presence of an operational focus; it doesn't show the existence of a strategy. Because

international players don't want to confront complex and unresolved issues, the focus often becomes on the technical issues with predictable results.

The position of the international community is emotional than practical. The view is simply that "TFG is the only thing we have and we need to support it."¹⁸ Yet the International Community's support to the TFG is often both erratic and insufficient to address the magnitude of the requirements. As such it could become a liability than an asset to the TFG. It is also negatively impacting on the support given to the TFG by AMISOM. As mentioned above, the biggest problem is lack of policy coordination both between and within key international actors to the extent that security policies tend to undermine each other. Devoid of operational persistence and strategic depth, external (mainly Western) support to the TFG only hurts the legitimacy of the government, playing into the hands of insurgent propaganda along both nationalist and religious lines.

Conclusion

The Djibouti Agreement of August 2008 succeeded in bringing together opposing political groupings which led to the formation of a legitimate government of national unity, and its subsequent relocation to Mogadishu in early 2009. The Transitional Government of Somalia that came out of the Djibouti process was intended to be a government of national unity tasked with bringing political reconciliation and establishment of governance structures and security on the ground. The result is less encouraging. The security situation in Somalia remains volatile and dangerous, peace and reconciliation is ever more elusive, the TFG remains weak; the insurgency is divided, but remains intransigent, AMISOM is understaffed and under resourced while the interna-

tional community is confused and indecisive. There is an unstable military balance of power in Somalia. Neither the TFG with AMISOM's support, nor insurgents in Mogadishu are able to consolidate control over contested territory. Beyond Mogadishu, the security situation in southern and central Somalia has become more volatile and hostilities are likely to continue at the present level with Government and allied militia challenging insurgent forces for control over strategically important towns. In terms of active military campaigns while the TFG is not ready to run, the insurgency is not getting the momentum either. Though they will continue to play active role in the political life of Somalia, the progressive fragmentation within the Islamists, along clan and ideological lines, will continue. Under these circumstances, The TFG still remains to be the best hope for Somalia and its success would depend on a strategic, well coordinated international military support and substantial reconstruction aid.

Endnotes

¹ A major role was played in this by the Special Representative for the Secretary General of the UN, Ould Abdullah

² The current TFG is a transformed one, made up of an opposition group which comes to an existing parliament with half members, had to win coming as a new voting block giving Sheikh Sheriff the upper hand. A process dictated by the UN and the United States it was not balanced at all and the deal favored the Islamic Courts group. As such the current TFG is practically an ARS government. The dominant partner is the group led by Sheriff. The new president has to operate within the TFG formula while appointing his officials and taking decisions, a system favored by Ethiopia as its most important allies in Somalia operate under the clan allegiance context. In some respects, Sheikh Sheriff is unlikely to be able to break out of the T.F.G.'s mechanism to make significant progress and gains.

³ Pirate attacks along the Somali coastal areas of the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden have tripled over the last one and half year, and for several reasons. Two factors stand out clearly. The economic and political crisis in the autonomous region of Puntland, and the political economy of an Islamist-led insurgency in south Somalia, apparently both factors are interrelated to each other. The economic, political and security crisis have worsened over the last two years in Puntland, mainly because of the financial and military burdens of the war in Mogadishu, as well as corruption and nepotism in Garowe. With the deterioration of the economic situation in Puntland and decline in security, former militias, fishermen and youth began to forcefully involve in piracy, which became an attractive and lucrative business not only to them but also to many Puntland government officials. The need for finance and armaments for the conflict in south Somalia would also create the linkage with the Islamist-led insurgency. The link between organized crime and multi-faceted insurgency is also not ruled out.

⁴ This doesn't change the fact that many leaders of the *Shabaab* hail from Somaliland and Puntland mainly inhabited by *Darod* and *Isaq* clan families.

⁵ Participants at the August Djibouti Conference agreed that the Joint Security Committee (JSC) is the mechanism for both the coordination of the Security Sector within the TFG and the coordination of International Support to that sector.

⁶ Local opportunities such as operations of thousands of TFG-aligned militias in Mogadishu are not fully exploited by the TFG. This may be from a lack of political commitment by leaders within the TFG or because of poor common command and control procedures. Worse, the government does not have an overall strategic framework. The previous TFG had a National Security and Stabilization Plan (NSSP - 2006) but it has become outdated and does not reflect the current situation facing the TFG.

⁷ Currently, the military is perceived negatively by the public as it does not deliver security and stability for them, nor is it engaged in protecting the sovereignty of the nation from external enemies.

⁸ The TFG's weakness is not only the resurgence of the insurgency but also corruption and lack of commitment but most importantly unstable power relations and possibly emerging rivalry between the president and the deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister.

⁹ Reportedly, a similar decision was taken by opposition leaders gathered in Afgoye town on the 5th of May 2009, in which they vowed to finish off the TFG 2 by a coordinated a sustained military offensive within ten days. That seems to have floundered but the offensive did make some progress. Not surprisingly the attack happened on May 7, less than two weeks after Sheikh Aweys's was parachuted from Asmara to Mogadishu. This was the preemptive plan agreed between Eritrea and Sheikh Dahir Aweys where he was told to depart through Sudan and Egypt, where he had similar consultations and rushed with money and armaments to Mogadishu.

¹⁰ The TFG military, as well as AMISOM, face an atypical military threat characterized by Vehicle Born Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIED), suicide bombers, indirect (mainly mortar) and direct (sniper) fire as well as Close Quarter Assassination attacks (CQAs).

¹¹ Security Council Report, February 2007; See also S/RES/1725 (6 December 2006) authorized IGASOM.

¹² For detailed analysis of Somali Islamists see a book by the same author, *Al-ittihad: Political Islam and Black Economy in Somalia. Religion, Clan and Money and the Struggle for Supremacy over Somalia*, 2003. The first is the *Al-Ittihad al-Islamia/AI/* which came to be represented in the highest echelons of the currently active Islamist movements and makes up the old guard of the Islamist movement. Though they may have global

connections and jihadist inclinations, their agenda is regional and the goal is the creation of an Islamist emirate in the Horn of Africa. These are mainly represented in the Hizb-al-Islam, which in itself is a coalition of disparate clan-Islamist groups. The second group is made up of international jihadists, whose origin is obscure except its founders trace their activism back to the early 1990s when they received military training in Afghanistan. Most of the leaders of this group had developed closer links with the Al-Qaida cell in the Horn of Africa and played a major role in pushing the Islamic Courts Union/ICU/in 2006 into a more aggressive and belligerent stance. Unlike, the majority ICU

Members, this group is led by people with a global agenda whose formative years were linked with a training in Afghanistan and passed through the ICU which emerged in late 2005 and developed represented by the Shabab. The third group is the bulk of the Islamic Courts Union/ICU/ leadership and militia which is concerned with issues about Somalia, the provision of security and justice, and lately chose to return to normal politics.

¹³ Medhane Tadesse, Sharia Courts and Military Politics in Somalia. In Hot Spots Horn of Africa Revisited: Approachs to Make Sense of Conflict, 2008, Berlin.

¹⁴ Kismayo remains the main entry point for weapons and logistics to many parts of Somalia. Efforts to unite the two groups have failed and communication between the two seems to have broken down. The call for merger between the two, which came mainly from the Hizbul Islam leader, Sheikh Dahir Aweys, was rebuffed by Abu Zubeyr. The over the two French hostages came at the time when the two sides were in talks about talks to look at the possibility of joint partnership. Clan and business interests have also complicated Mukhtar Robow position vis-à-vis the al-Shababa leader.

¹⁵ Medhane Tadesse. The Case for Somalia: The UN on trial. A memo written to the DPKO, June 2008.

¹⁶ Discussions at UN headquarters, June 2007.

¹⁷ Discussions with AU officials; The AU in Sudan: Lessons for the African Standby Force. International Peace Academy. March 2007.

¹⁸ As they say the TFG is the only game in town, and need to be engaged however ridiculous and detrimental the level of support may be.

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