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Fighting for Peace in Somalia: AMISOM's Seven Strategic Challenges

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Abstract
This article analyzes seven strategic challenges which faced the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) between March 2007, when it first deployed to Mogadishu, and August 2012, when Somalis selected a new Federal Government to replace the existing transitional institutions. The seven strategic challenges were the initial international political context in which the mission deployed; problems of internal coordination between the mission's component parts; the lack of a reliable local partner with which to wage a counter-insurgency campaign; problems of strategic coordination among external partners; the nature of the enemy forces facing AMISOM, principally *al-Shabaab*; AMISOM's lack of relevant capabilities and resources to perform its mandated tasks; and the challenges of facilitating legitimate and effective governance structures, especially as AMISOM began to deploy outside Mogadishu from late 2011.

Keywords
Somalia; African Union; AMISOM; peacekeeping

Introduction

After more than four years of bloody fighting in the streets of Mogadishu, since August 2011 the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has

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increasingly been hailed as a success story: the mission pushed the *al-Shabaab* rebels onto the back foot; it facilitated the selection of a new federal government led by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud; and it attracted additional contributing countries, reaching a strength of nearly 18,000 personnel by late-2012.[1] But in spite of these important achievements, AMISOM continued to suffer from a number of significant problems. These problems are a legacy of several unresolved strategic challenges which have plagued the mission since it first deployed to Mogadishu in March 2007.

This article analyses what I consider to be the seven principal strategic challenges which hindered AMISOM's operations between March 2007 and September 2012 – when Somalis selected a new federal government to replace the existing transitional institutions. The article does not address events beyond that date although the mission continued. Nor does it analyse significant challenges at the more operational and tactical levels, although these were certainly important for AMISOM, especially during the campaign against *al-Shabaab* rebels which took place from late 2010. Rather, this article focuses on the politico-strategic context within which AMISOM operated and highlights some of the most serious problems which hindered the mission's operational effectiveness.

The seven strategic challenges discussed here are (1) the initial, widespread international pessimism about the mission's prospects for success; (2) problems of internal coordination between the mission's component parts; (3) the lack of a reliable local partner with which to wage a counter-insurgency campaign; (4) problems of strategic coordination among external partners; (5) the nature of the enemy forces facing AMISOM, principally *al-Shabaab*; (6) AMISOM's lack of relevant capabilities and resources to perform its mandated tasks; and (7) the challenges of facilitating legitimate and effective governance structures, especially as AMISOM began to deploy outside Mogadishu from late 2011.

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and other experts connected to the mission and Somali politics more generally. The author gratefully acknowledges financial assistance provided by the Elliott School of International Affairs at the George Washington University.

1) See, for example, Greg Mills, 'AMISOM – An African Success Story?', Brenthurst Foundation press release, 14 October 2012, http://www.thebrenthurstfoundation.org/a_sndmsg/news_view.asp?I=128773&PG=227; Matt Freear and Cedric de Coning, 'Lessons from the African Union Mission for Somalia (AMISOM) for Peace Operations in Mali', *Stability*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2013, pp. 1-11. On the basis of its successes, AMISOM was also initially mooted as the model for the UN's engagement with the African peace operations in Mali.

After providing a brief overview of AMISOM's progress between March 2007 and September 2012, the article then discusses each strategic challenge. I submit that while AMISOM was able to mitigate its strategic challenges to the extent necessary to protect Somalia's transitional institutions and facilitate the birth of a new sovereign government, the mission continued to suffer from several problems which its notable successes failed to erase. On the positive side, AMISOM was able to overcome challenge 1 and mitigate the worst effects of challenges 4 and 5, and make significant progress on challenge 6. Challenges 2, 3, 6 and 7, however, continued to pose major problems. Furthermore, the majority of the credit for AMISOM's successes should go to its troops, for their resilience and perseverance, rather than the political elites in Addis Ababa and New York whose job it was to craft a viable political strategy for managing Somalia's conflict.

AMISOM: A Short Overview[2]

AMISOM deployed to Somalia in March 2007 in the aftermath of the Ethiopian military campaign that had installed the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Mogadishu in December 2006. AMISOM was originally mandated by the African Union (AU) in January 2007 but was endorsed shortly afterwards by the United Nations (UN) Security Council.[3] It had an initial authorized strength of 8,000 and was mandated to protect transitional government personnel and institutions, conduct military enforcement operations against anti-government actors, principally *al-Shabaab*, and facilitate humanitarian assistance and civil-military operations. The mission's small police component was mandated to help train, mentor and advise the Somali Police Force, although very few of them deployed to Mogadishu before 2011 because of the dire security situation on the ground.

AMISOM's initial deployed strength consisted of approximately 1,600 Ugandan soldiers. They were joined from December 2007 by a battalion of Burundi troops. After that, the mission grew in size incrementally (see figure 1) and evolved, reflecting the changing context in Somalia

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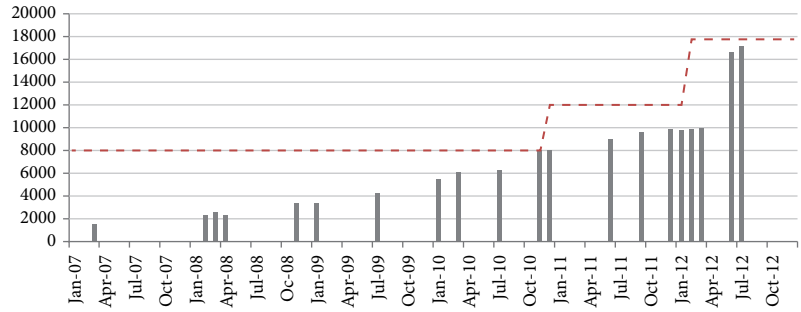
See the letter from the UN Secretary-General to the President of the UN Security Council (S/2013/37, 21 January 2013).

2) This section draws from Paul D. Williams, *AMISOM in Transition* (Nairobi: Rift Valley Institute, Briefing Paper, February 2013).

3) See AU doc. PSC/PR/Comm(LXIX), 19 January 2007 and UN Security Council Resolution 1744, 20 February 2007.

Figure 1. AMISOM authorized (dashed line) and deployed (in grey) strength, 2007-12.



Source: AMISOM has not provided a public monthly tally of its personnel. This figure therefore depicts multiple snapshots of the mission strength compiled by the author from official AU and UN sources.

and international responses to the country's many problems. Until the last Ethiopian troops withdrew from Mogadishu in early 2009, AMISOM protected key members of the TFG and a number of strategic locations in the city from armed opposition. These included the air and sea ports, the presidential palace at Villa Somalia, and the K4 junction linking them. The AU originally envisaged that after six months a UN peacekeeping operation would take over from AMISOM. This did not happen for a variety of reasons. Instead, AMISOM was supported by the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) and from 2009, the UN Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA), which provided a logistical support package to AMISOM forces in Mogadishu.

Following the Ethiopian withdrawal, the Ugandan and Burundian troops who made up the AU force became the principal barrier preventing the TFG from being overrun by *al-Shabaab* fighters – and AMISOM itself came under increased attack. During 2009 and 2010, bloody battles raged across the city but they resulted only in stalemate: neither AMISOM nor *al-Shabaab* could decisively defeat the other. Probably in an attempt to weaken Uganda's resolve, *al-Shabaab* carried out two suicide bombings in Kampala in July 2010. These did not have the desired effect: instead of pulling out, Uganda responded by deploying additional troops to Mogadishu. Faced with a growing enemy, *al-Shabaab* launched a major offensive against the TFG and AMISOM during Ramadan of 2010 but the insurgents were repelled and sustained heavy losses.

AMISOM then went on the offensive and engaged in many months of bloody street fighting across Mogadishu in order to expand its areas of

control. The result was the withdrawal of *al-Shabaab*'s core fighters from the centre of the city in early August 2011, although fighting continued in the suburbs and outskirts for another nine months.

In October 2011, Kenyan forces launched a unilateral military intervention into southern Somalia, ostensibly in retaliation for *al-Shabaab* attacks on Kenyan territory (and the group's alleged involvement in the kidnapping of foreigners), but also reflecting parochial Kenyan politics and interests. Shortly thereafter, Ethiopian forces once again entered Somalia and advanced on *al-Shabaab* positions across Bay, Bakool, and Hiraan regions. In December 2011, the AU, the UN, and their various partners developed new strategic and military concepts of operations for AMISOM to take account of these major developments.

The new concept of operations outlined a larger AMISOM force of nearly 18,000 uniformed personnel and hugely expanded its theatre of operations across four land sectors covering south-central Somalia.[4] It also included a maritime sector, although AMISOM lacked significant maritime assets. This new posture was endorsed by the AU's Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council in January and February 2012 respectively.[5] In the first half of 2012, Kenya, Djibouti, and Sierra Leone all signed a memorandum of understanding pledging to join AMISOM.

During this period, AMISOM also conducted operations to capture from *al-Shabaab* the remaining suburbs and outskirts of Mogadishu, most notably along the 'Afgooye corridor', a critical roadway linking the capital to the agricultural town of Afgooye on the Shabelle river. This was where hundreds of thousands of people displaced by fighting in Mogadishu since 2006 were located (and where *al-Shabaab* was said to have influence).

AMISOM also successfully supported the conclusion, albeit somewhat behind the official schedule, of the so-called 'roadmap' to end the transitional institutions of government, which had been agreed in September 2011.[6] With the selection of the new Somali federal government

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4) Sector One was centred on Mogadishu and staffed primarily by personnel from Uganda and Burundi. In southwest Somalia, Sector Two was run by Kenyan forces. Sector Three was focused on Baidoa, where Ugandan and Burundian forces were supported by Ethiopian troops. To the north was Sector Four where the Djiboutian battalion eventually deployed and worked with Ethiopian forces to stabilize the area around Belet Weyne.

5) AU doc. PSC/PR/COMM.(CCCVI), 5 January 2012 and UN Security Council resolution 2036, 22 February 2012.

6) The 'Somalia End of Transition Roadmap' was a detailed list of tasks aimed at directing Somalia towards the creation of permanent political institutions, as well as greater national

in August-September 2012, both the UN and AU conducted strategic reviews of their engagement with the country and after several months of discussions agreed upon a new way forward for AMISOM until early 2014 as set out in UN Security Council resolution 2093 (6 March 2013).

Challenge 1: Initial International Pessimism

The first major challenge AMISOM faced was the widespread pessimism about embarking on the mission in the first place. This pessimism was evident across many member states of the African Union and beyond. It was partly rooted in the legacy of the UN peace operations in Somalia in the 1990s but was dramatically amplified by views that AMISOM simply would not work and was an ill thought out mission.[7]

Several elements combined to generate this pessimism. First, there were arguments between the AU and UN over whether a military peace operation was an appropriate response to the conditions in Mogadishu in early 2007. Initially, the AU's Commissioner for Peace and Security had assumed the UN Security Council would take over the AU mission after six months but had failed to secure agreement for this course of action with the Security Council members in New York. This generated considerable resentment in New York where it was widely felt that the UN was not there simply to take over an AU operation hatched in Addis Ababa.[8]

Second, the AU mission was widely seen as providing cover for the imminent withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from Mogadishu.[9] Having installed the TFG in Mogadishu, the continued presence of Ethiopian troops stirred up a considerable local backlash and violence intensified dramatically throughout 2007 and the casualty levels and numbers of displaced people

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security and stability. It was initialled by the Somali prime minister, the UN envoy to Somalia, representatives of the Arab League, the AU, and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), as well as the leaders of regional entities (including Puntland) and pro-government militias (including Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamaa). Available at http://unpos.unmissions.org/Portals/UNPOS/Repository%20UNPOS/110906%20-%20Initialled%20Roadmap.pdf.

7) Author's interview, AMISOM official, Mogadishu, January 2013.

8) Author's interview, UN official, New York, October 2012.

9) See Paul D. Williams, 'Into the Mogadishu Maelstrom: The African Union Mission in Somalia', *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2009, pp. 515-18.

rose significantly.[10] Ethiopian authorities were thus well aware that the presence of their troops in Mogadishu was undermining the legitimacy of the TFG they had installed but they were unwilling to withdraw without an alternative force to fill the subsequent security vacuum. AMISOM was conceived as the solution to that problem and Ethiopia pushed the mission through the AU Peace and Security Council without respect for the internal procedures which are supposed to govern the deployment of AU peace operations.[11]

The third issue was that this assessment of the mission and the fact that Mogadishu was an active warzone at the time meant that very few countries were willing to come forward and champion the mission despite its authorization by the AU and endorsement by the UN Security Council. Indeed, only Uganda stepped forward until December 2007 when Burundi also committed troops. But these two states were left as the only troop-contributing countries (TCCs) for nearly four years. Some African states, including Nigeria, conducted their own technical assessments of the situation in Mogadishu and concluded the circumstances were not right for them to deploy forces. This negative perception was further reinforced by the fact that AMISOM forces came under fire from the outset from some of the warlord factions which were vying for control of the airport. The combination of these factors created a widespread aura of pessimism around the mission and its prospects for success and contributed significantly to leaving Uganda and Burundi as the only TCCs for the first four years of the operation.

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10) See *Somalia: Shell-Shocked—Civilians under Siege in Mogadishu* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 19:12(a), August 2007).

11) Under Article 8.9 of the *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union* (9 July 2002), Ethiopia's representative should have withdrawn from the deliberations after the briefing session. Article 8.9 states: 'Any Member of the Peace and Security Council which is party to a conflict under consideration by the Peace and Security Council shall not participate either in the discussion or the decision making process relating to that conflict or situation. Such Member shall be invited to present its case to the Peace and Security Council as appropriate, and shall, thereafter, withdraw from proceedings.' Instead, the Ethiopian representative continued to participate and played a significant role in authorizing the mission. Author's confidential interviews: AU official, Addis Ababa, May 2007, and former Ethiopian official, Washington, DC, March 2008.

Challenge 2: Internal Coordination

A second strategic challenge emerged from the multifaceted nature of the AMISOM mission. Indeed, in some senses the mission was so fragmented that it is more accurate to think of it as separate AMISOMs (in the plural) than one single, coherent operation. The challenge of internal coordination and coherence also had several dimensions. The first was the geographical separation of some of the key mission components. AMISOM's strategic planning and political work was based out of Addis Ababa, its head of mission and mission analysis unit was headquartered in Nairobi, while the military units and operational command were in Mogadishu. The fact that the various international training mechanisms for the TFG's security forces were also spread around Uganda, Ethiopia and Djibouti, among other places, did not ease this problem. Such a disparate mission set up was hardly conducive to internal coherence and effective coordination, especially for operational and tactical issues.

A second aspect of the problem related to the relatively disengaged stance of AMISOM's political leadership. As already noted, the fact that AMISOM's head of mission was based in Nairobi until the end of 2012 not only sent an unhelpful political signal to both locals in Somalia and the outside world, but it left several AMISOM force commanders in the difficult position of having to act as the principal political representative of the mission in Mogadishu. While this task was handled more astutely by some AMISOM force commanders than others, this was not a position they should have been placed in and badly undermined international attempts to kick-start a peacemaking process and reconciliation. It was a task made even more difficult because of the lack of a dedicated and appropriately-sized force headquarters in Mogadishu until 2012. While this geographical problem could have been overcome by a major commitment to regularly travel to Mogadishu on the part of AMISOM's heads of mission, they did not all oblige.

A third dimension of the problem was coordination between AMISOM's military, police and civilian components. This was not a major issue in the early years of the mission because the dire security situation on the ground in Mogadishu meant that it was inappropriate to deploy significant numbers of police officers and other civilian personnel. The latter were a scarce commodity within AU circles at any rate while the former carried out various training initiatives mostly outside Somalia and did not start deploying into Mogadishu in large numbers until mid-2012 when the first Formed

Police Units arrived from Uganda and Nigeria. The majority of the civilian component of the mission also arrived only late in the day from 2012 but the exact nature of the tasks civilian peacekeepers would perform and how they would relate to the military efforts became the subject of considerable debate within AMISOM as it moved beyond Mogadishu and started to become embroiled in governance and stabilization issues (see below). (From late 2012, this also become a contentious issue with the new Federal Government in Somalia as well.)

Finally, especially after the new military and strategic concepts of operations were developed for AMISOM in late 2011 and early 2012, AMISOM had to contend with more problems of internal coordination with the arrival of new TCCs and the mission's deployment across the four land sectors which covered most of south-central Somalia. During 2012, Djibouti, Sierra Leone, and Kenya each signed a memorandum of understanding with the AU to join the mission. However, all of them experienced protracted debates over details of their deployment, either logistical or financial. From this point on, AMISOM faced the additional challenge of coordinating activities across the four sectors and the respective contingent commands. This proved easier in some cases than others: the Djiboutian battalion slated for deployment to sector four arrived approximately one year late, while the Kenyan forces in sector two were particularly concerned with operational security and hence not always forthcoming about their activities even with the AMISOM force headquarters.[12] This was especially true in the run up to the assault on Kismayo in September 2012.

Challenge 3: Problematic Local Partners

As well as its own internal communications, AMISOM's mandate made it crucial that the mission work closely and effectively with the authorities in Somalia. It is an established element of counterinsurgency doctrine that the efforts of external forces are highly unlikely to succeed without a legitimate and effective local partner. Between March 2007 and September 2012, AMISOM's local partner in its campaign against *al-Shabaab* was the TFG, which came in two versions. Both versions were far from being effective local partners for AMISOM to work with.

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12) Author's interviews with UN and AMISOM officials, Nairobi and Mogadishu, December 2012 and January 2013.

The first TFG, led by President Abdullahi Yusuf from Puntland, was created in Kenya in 2004 but installed in Mogadishu by Ethiopian forces in December 2006. It remained in place until the end of 2008 when Yusuf resigned and the Ethiopian troops withdrew. It was perceived by many Somalis as both illegitimate – being foisted upon them by Ethiopia and other external powers – and ineffective inasmuch as it provided neither any form of public services to its citizens nor undertook any major attempts at reconciliation between the conflicting factions. The TFG's security forces also proved to be largely ineffective against *al-Shabaab* and regularly committed abuses against the local population.[13] The combination of local hostility towards Ethiopian troops and the TFG's weaknesses provided ample fodder for *al-Shabaab* to successfully recruit considerable numbers of fighters to its cause, both in Mogadishu and beyond. AMISOM was caught in the middle inasmuch as its mandate called for it to work with and support the TFG. As Ethiopian forces drew down, AMISOM became more and more central to the TFG's continued survival and this, in turn, encouraged *al-Shabaab* to intensify its attacks on the AU force. The fact that the Ethiopian troops did not fully coordinate the details of their departure with AMISOM also meant that in early 2009, *al-Shabaab* forces were quickly able to occupy most of the former ENDF positions in the city, many of which were very close to AMISOM positions. In sum, despite AMISOM's best efforts, in the eyes of many locals, the mission's association with the TFG and Ethiopian forces meant that its first local partner was something of a liability rather than a help.

The situation did not fundamentally improve with the second iteration of the TFG, which formed in early 2009 after Yusuf's resignation. This was led by Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, one of the former leaders of the Union of Islamic Courts which had taken control of Mogadishu in mid-2006 and leader of the Djibouti faction of the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) which eventually decided to work within the TFG structure (unlike the Eritrean-based faction of ARS led by Hassan Dahir Aweys which refused). This configuration of the TFG was initially welcomed by some Somalis as an improvement on the previous authorities, but it still suffered from criticisms that it was too close to Ethiopia and too heavily influenced by diaspora elites and one particular clan, the Hawiye. It was also widely seen as corrupt, ineffective and largely uninterested in pursuing a strategy

13) Human Rights Watch, *Harsh War, Harsh Peace: Abuses by al-Shabaab, the Transitional Federal Government, and AMISOM in Somalia*, 2010.

of conflict resolution and political reconciliation across Somalia. Instead, its politicians spent much of their time engaged in a variety of acrimonious feuds. In addition, many of the TFG's members continued to reside outside Somalia and some of them were widely suspected to be *al-Shabaab* sympathizers if not outright supporters. Within Mogadishu, the TFG still lacked an effective fighting force beyond a core group of militia that was little more than Sheikh Sharif's private army. Indeed, TFG troops and police quickly became associated with illegal roadblocks and looting. They were also accused by AMISOM of selling their weapons and ammunition on the black market and sometimes of selling information about AMISOM's activities to *al-Shabaab*.[14] A particularly embarrassing incident along these lines involved Sheikh Sharif's elite personal guard, three of whom publically defected to *al-Shabaab* in July 2010. The TFG was therefore largely dependent upon AMISOM troops for its immediate physical survival and on external actors, primarily the UN and Western states, for its finances and the training and arming of its security forces.[15] Once again, this fed local impressions that the TFG was 'more accountable to… the international community for its survival, than on the Somali people, a perception that continu[ed] to undermine trust in the TFG.'[16]

At the operational level, AMISOM experienced its own lack of trust with the TFG's security forces, which were disorganized, poorly equipped, poorly motivated, and often unruly. Instead of being a reliable local partner in the fight against *al-Shabaab*, members of the TFG's security forces engaged in a variety of unhelpful activities including leading AMISOM troops into ambushes, selling their ammunition and weapons on the local market, and passing operational information to AMISOM's opponents.[17] There were regular defections and an unwillingness to engage in risky operations, which was understandable given the lack of salaries, equipment, and medical support provided to them.All these things led to a major deficit of trust between AMISOM and TFG forces, which took considerable time and effort to close. This was eventually achieved from late 2010

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14) Author's interviews with AMISOM officials, Nairobi, August 2012 and Mogadishu, January 2013.

15) For an overview, see International Crisis Group, *Somalia: The Transitional Government on Life Support* (Washington, DC: Africa Report No. 170, 21 February 2011).

16) Solomon Dersso, *Somalia Dilemmas: Changing security dynamics, but limited policy choices* (Pretoria: ISS Paper No. 218, October 2010), p. 10.

17) Author's interviews with AMISOM officials, Mogadishu, January 2013.

onwards as AMISOM and TFG forces started to participate in more successful joint operations; first repelling *al-Shabaab*'s Ramadan offensive and then working together to conduct joint offensive operations themselves. But trust took time to earn and build in the field and it had to endure several serious breaches by TFG forces along the way.

Even by 2012, however, the Somali security forces were in a dire state. Among the long list of challenges facing the Somali army, perhaps the most severe and urgent were problems of unresolved clan loyalties and more operational issues of command and control.[18] These problems were particularly acute at the level of senior officers, between clan leaders, warlords, and the official military commanders; they also involved an absence of collaboration between the existing brigades of the Somali National Army. An additional problem was that different components of the army had received different types of training, mostly abroad, and there were poor levels of training for non-commissioned officers. Salaries were also unreliable: most having been provided in the form of US$ 100 per month stipends paid by the United States and Italy to some but not all Somali soldiers. The forces also lacked modern weaponry – with many ostensibly Somali National Army weapons belonging to warlords, clans, and individuals – and effective logistical and medical support capacity. Finally, there remained major problems with recruitment, created by this long list of issues.[19]

In sum, AMISOM did not have the luxury of working alongside a popular and effective local partner in the pursuit of its mandate. Instead, its initial local partner was seen as a major part of the problem by large numbers of Somalis and AMISOM's central role in protecting the TFG brought more negative attention on the AU force.

Challenge 4: Strategic Coordination among External Partners

AMISOM also suffered from several challenges related to strategic coordination between its external partners, which came in a variety of forms. These problems were not unique to Somalia but are rather common

18) For a good discussion of the problems of shifting clan loyalties and their impact on external efforts to conduct counter-insurgency see William Reno, 'Rethinking Counterinsurgency in Somalia', *CTC Sentinel*, vol.6, issue 4, April 2013, pp. 16-19.

19) Author's interviews with Somali National Army officers, Mogadishu, January 2013.

features of the messy attempts to conduct what one recent analysis called 'collective conflict management' – where informal coalitions of networks of state, intergovernmental and non-state actors that display diffuse, improvised, ad hoc and pragmatic patterns of cooperation temporarily converge to address a particularly complex conflict.[20]

Arguably AMISOM's most important external partners were the United States, which provided considerable amounts of equipment, training and logistical support to the contingents from Uganda and Burundi; the UK and France, which also provided various bilateral support packages to the TCCs; the United Nations, which from 2009 established an unprecedented mechanism (UNSOA) to provide AMISOM with logistical support via its base in Mombasa (see below);[21] and the European Union (EU), which from 2011 began to pay the allowances for AMISOM's uniformed personnel and conducted a training programme based out of Uganda through its African Peace Facility. Diplomatically, the most prominent coordination mechanism was the International Contact Group.[22] But since the Contact Group was so large and incoherent the practical decisions and supporting roles for AMISOM tended to be developed, from 2012, within the Joint Coordinating Mechanism, which worked at the ministerial level, and the Military Operations Coordination Committee at the chief-of-staff level.

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20) Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall, 'Collective conflict management: a new formula for global peace and security cooperation?', *International Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 1, 2011, pp. 39-58.

21) In resolution 1890 (16 January 2009), the UN Security Council authorized its Department of Field Support to establish UNSOA in order to deliver a logistics capacity support package to keep AMISOM afloat. This covered the delivery of rations, fuel, general stores and medical supplies; engineering and construction of important facilities; health and sanitation; medical evacuation and treatment services and medical equipment for AMISOM medical facilities; communications and information technology; information support services; aviation services for evacuations and troop rotations; vehicles and other equipment; and capacity-building. UN support did not extend to the provision of ammunition which remained a bilateral partner arrangement For details, see Report of the UN Secretary-General, *Support to African Union peacekeeping operations authorized by the United Nations* (A/65/510-S/2010/514, 14 October 2010), para. 30.

22) Its participants included Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, African Development Bank, AU, EU, Islamic Development Bank, IGAD, League of Arab States, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, NATO, UN, and the World Bank.

One challenge was that these external actors did not always speak with one voice on how to engage with Somalia. This was hardly surprising given that strategic coordination between different actors is always a deeply political process. In this case, differences quickly emerged over several issues. The most prominent early on was whether to deploy a UN peacekeeping operation to take over from AMISOM. While in 2007 the Security Council was broadly in agreement that the time was not right to re-hat AMISOM into a blue helmet force, by late 2008 the George W. Bush administration in the United States led a political campaign to deploy a multinational stabilization force to Mogadishu which would pave the way for transitioning AMISOM into a blue helmet mission. As it turned out, this course of action was rejected by most UN members who proved unwilling to supply the necessary troops for the proposed stabilization force or the UN peacekeeping operation proposed by the Americans.[23] Nevertheless, the subsequent Security Council resolution 1890 passed on 16 January 2009 left open the prospect of a UN takeover of the mission at a later date when the circumstances became appropriate. It also authorized the UN Department of Field Support to establish UNSOA in order to deliver a logistics capacity support package to keep AMISOM afloat. This was seen as critical for boosting the operational effectiveness for AMISOM but also as a necessary preparatory step in case a UN operation was required.[24]

Other issues that divided AMISOM's external partners included the amount of resources which should be devoted to anti-piracy activities in the Gulf of Aden and whether to engage *al-Shabaab* in peace talks. In relation to the former, in December 2008, the EU, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and a variety of other countries embarked on a major set of maritime security operations off the coast of Somalia to stem the rise in piracy. In Somalia, this unprecedented commitment of resources generated considerable bewilderment as it did almost nothing to tackle the causes of piracy which stemmed from the conflict dynamics on the mainland. Even the UN Secretary-General publicly noted that his efforts to generate forces to tackle Somalia's problems on land stood 'in such sharp

23) In mid-November 2008, UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon recommended that an International Stabilization Force (ISF) of 'approximately two brigades' be deployed to Mogadishu. Subsequent UN–AU planning cohered around an ISF of approximately 6,000 troops. Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia, UN doc. S/2008/709, 17 November 2008, paragraphs 31–43.

24) Author's interview with UNSOA official, Nairobi, August 2012.

contrast to the exceptional political will and commitment of military assets which Member States have shown in respect of the fight against piracy.'[25] AMISOM also became increasingly frustrated with these maritime operations because although they helped protect the logistics and supply ships which arrived into Mogadishu, they did little to coordinate with AMISOM on how best to deploy these maritime assets to stem *al-Shabaab*'s war economy, particularly its continued export of various illicit commodities, most notably charcoal traded out of the southern port of Kismayo.[26]

When it came to the issue of talking to *al-Shabaab*, the picture was also mixed. At one end of the spectrum, the United States was firmly against the idea, having designated *al-Shabaab* a Foreign Terrorist Organization in March 2008 and actively conducting air strikes and special forces raids in Somalia to eliminate other *al-Shabaab* and *al-Qa'ida* targets.[27] At the other end of the spectrum actors including the League of Arab States, Finland, Kenya and even Ethiopia instructed their officials to talk to members of *al-Shabaab* in the hope of finding a political route beyond the impasse or marginalizing the movement's most extreme elements.

A second challenge was raised by Kenya's unilateral intervention into southern Somalia in October 2011, and the renewed Ethiopian military campaign which followed shortly thereafter. While these operations obviously helped AMISOM's struggle against *al-Shabaab* by opening up two new fronts, it also complicated things politically and logistically because it kick-started the process of AMISOM's expansion beyond Mogadishu and raised questions about coordination between the Kenyan, Ethiopian, AMISOM and TFG forces. Ethiopia quickly made it clear that its forces would not be integrated into AMISOM, although it did deploy a number of officers to the mission's new force headquarters in Mogadishu in 2012. Its troops also played the crucial stabilizing role in AMISOM's new sectors three and four throughout 2012 as the Djiboutian contingent slated to

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25) UN doc. S/2008/804, 19 December 2008.

26) Author's interviews with AU officials, Addis Ababa, July 2012; AMISOM officials, Nairobi, August 2012, and Mogadishu, January 2013.

27) In May 2008, one of *al-Shabaab*'s senior leaders and *al-Qa'ida* associate, Aden Hashi Ayrow, was killed during a US strike. These airstrikes were apparently ordered by the US Department of Defense without input from the State Department regarding the likely diplomatic repercussions, and without assessing the consequences for humanitarian activities. Refugees International, *Somalia: Policy Overhaul Required* (Refugees International Field Bulletin, Washington DC, 19 November 2008), p. 2.

deploy to Belet Weyne failed to arrive until December, and the relatively small contingent of Ugandan and Burundian troops deployed to Baidoa operated largely in the Ethiopian's shadow.

Kenya's relationship with AMISOM was more sensitive because it was slated to run sector two in the south of the country. However, several issues arose. First, Kenya was initially reluctant to reveal the extent of its military forces in southern Somalia, including its air and maritime assets. Second, an argument occurred between Kenya and the EU over the start date for the payment of allowances to Kenya's contingent in AMISOM given that Kenya did not sign the memorandum of understanding with the African Union until 2 June 2012 but wrote into the document that its forces would be paid allowances backdated to February 2012 (the date of UN Security Council resolution 2036).[28] A third problem was suspicions about Kenya's motives in pushing its so-called Jubaland initiative.[29] These became particularly acute after September 2012 when the new Federal Government voiced its suspicions about Kenya's agenda in Jubaland and its approach to administering Kismayo.

Challenge 5: A Challenging Enemy

Another set of challenges flowed from the nature of AMISOM's principal opponent: *Harakat Al-Shabaab*('The Youth'). Formally established in the early 2000s, the name *al-Shabaab* was not widely used until 2007 and came to refer to a populist and militaristic movement which gained popularity after the defeat of the Supreme Council of Islamic Courts in 2006. In the space of a couple of years, *al-Shabaab* went from obscurity to being the principal anti-TFG and hence anti-AMISOM force. During December 2006 and January 2007, Ethiopian troops nearly destroyed *al-Shabaab*'s relatively small forces and it was not until November 2007 that *al-Shabaab* was able to launch a serious counter-offensive.[30] After that, however, growing

28) Author's interview with EU official, Addis Ababa, July 2012.

29) Since at least 2009, Kenya provided military assistance, finance, weapons and training to armed factions in southern Somalia. The strategic objective appears to have been an attempt to create a Jubaland political entity which could control the Gedo, Middle Jubba and Lower Jubba regions thereby acting as a buffer zone between Kenya and the worst spillover effects of Somalia's conflict.

30) Roland Marchal, 'A tentative assessment of the Somali *Harakat Al-Shabaab*', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2009, pp. 393-4.

resentment at the Ethiopian presence and brutality and all sorts of rumours linking Ethiopia's activities to Washington's nefarious counter-terrorism policies in the region presented *al-Shabaab* with a huge propaganda victory and its ranks swelled accordingly.

Al-Shabaab's military wing was organized in three main layers: the top leadership (*qiyadah*), the foreign fighters (*muhajirin*), and local Somali fighters (*ansar*). The *qiyadah* was thought to be comprised of a small group of Afghanistan veterans, former members of *al-Ittihad al-Islami*, and Somali diaspora ideologues. The dominant ideologue was probably Sheikh Fuad Muhammad Qalaf and by 2012 Ahmed Abdi Godane (aka Sheikh Abu Zubeyr) was in command of the organization. *Al-Shabaab* also employed a range of media outlets and websites such as Hegaan, Kata'ib, Al Hesba and Al Qimmah. The movement proved particularly adept at producing anti-Ethiopian and anti-AMISOM propaganda using videos, websites, and later a Twitter account.[31]

Part of the challenge in combating *al-Shabaab* was that its fighters came from several different feeder routes, making it difficult to identify and target a single centre of gravity. In brief, it comprised of a core of locally-focused fighters, particularly from the subclans associated with its leading figures; a larger number of what David Kilcullen called 'accidental guerrillas' – those fighting because they felt aggrieved at Ethiopia's presence in Mogadishu not because they wanted to invade Ethiopia or had strong ideological commitments to the messages disseminated by *al-Shabaab*'s leadership[32] – and an unknown number of foreign, often *takfiri*, fighters associated with *al-Qa'ida* who had arrived in Somalia to fight the Ethiopians and other non-believers. Estimates for the number of foreign fighters (*muhajirin*) in *al-Shabaab*'s ranks varied widely from 200 to over 1,500, with most said to hail from Kenya's Swahili coast, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Yemen, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Saudi Arabia.[33] Similarly, estimates of *al-Shabaab*'s local strength varied considerably, in part because of the shifting allegiances of many rank and file fighters. While *al-Qa'ida*'s ideas about the

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31) Indeed, *al-Shabaab* was so successful and AMISOM's media machine so weak in comparison that in 2009 a UN-AU Information Support Team was established in part to enhance AMISOM's own public diplomacy but also to explicitly counteract *al-Shabaab*'s.

32) See David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

33) David H. Shinn, 'Al Shabaab's Foreign Threat to Somalia', *Orbis*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2011, pp. 209-11; *Report of the 2nd AMISOM-TFG Information Sharing Meeting, 22nd to 24th November 2011, Bujumbura Burundi* (AU internal document, no date), p. 10.

global struggle between Islam and the West were thought to influence some of *al-Shabaab*'s leaders, most of its foot soldiers were initially motivated primarily by the desire to expel the Ethiopians and facilitate the operation of sharia courts in Somalia.[34] Later, *al-Shabaab* entered into the longstanding issue of clan conflicts where it often sided with smaller subclans in local disputes. It was also widely believed that a significant part of *al-Shabaab*'s attraction was that its leaders would pay new recruits and also compensation to the families of militiamen who died in action. In early 2009, for example, AMISOM's Force Commander told the UN that *al-Shabaab* was offering TFG troops $50 a month to swap sides.[35] Community dynamics were also important with the organization offering youth a means of empowerment and financial security for them and their families which was either too attractive to ignore or group pressures were too intense to resist.[36] This meant that AMISOM often had a very difficult task of deciding who exactly was an *al-Shabaab* fighter as well as designing strategies to combat them.

Yet while in one sense *al-Shabaab*'s multiple sources of support was a strength, it also suffered from a prolonged power struggle between its so-called 'nationalist' and 'transnational' factions, particularly after the Ethiopian forces withdrew from Mogadishu in early 2009.[37] As part of this internal struggle, some elements of *al-Shabaab* gradually increased their extremist rhetoric and trumpeted ties to *al-Qa'ida*. In mid-March 2009, for example, Osama bin Laden had described TFG President Sheikh Sharif as a 'surrogate of our enemies', declared his authority 'null and void', and said 'he must be dethroned and fought'.[38] In June 2009 the *al-Shabaab* group in Kismayo apparently responded to this call by releasing a video pledging allegiance to Osama Bin Laden.[39] *Al-Shabaab* made a formal declaration of allegiance to *al-Qa'ida* on 2 February 2010. Although it seemed

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34) Ken Menkhaus, 'Violent Islamic Extremism: Al-Shabaab Recruitment in America' (Washington, DC, US Senate Committee on Homeland Security hearing, 11 March 2009), at http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/_files/031109Menkhaus031109.pdf.

35) Wikileak Cable 09ADDISABABA110, 16 January 2009, para. 9.

36) Marchal, 'A tentative assessment', p. 395.

37) For background and details see International Crisis Group, *Somalia's Divided Islamists* (ICG Africa Briefing No. 74, 18 May 2010).

38) Cited in Haggai Erlich, *Islam and Christianity in the Horn of Africa* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner 2010), p. 182.

39) Fred Ngoga Gateretse, Adviser to the AU Special Representative for Somalia, Amb. Nicholas Bwakira, Statement before the House Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, Washington, DC, 25 June 2009, p. 3.

clear that *al-Shabaab* was not under the operational control of *al-Qa'ida*, the exact nature of the practical relationship between the two organizations remained hazy.

Since mid-2009, *al-Shabaab* tended to adopt a hit-and-run strategy and avoid set piece battles after it suffered a major defeat in Mogadishu on 12 July.[40] (The major exception was the ultimately disastrous Ramadan offensive in September 2010.[41]) Given that many *al-Shabaab* positions in Mogadishu had been occupied immediately following the Ethiopian withdrawal, a major question mark remains over how strong a conventional fighting force *al-Shabaab* actually was. It certainly does not appear to have mastered what one eminent scholar has described as the 'the modern system' of tactics, i.e. the ability to use 'cover, concealment, dispersion, small-unit independent maneuver, suppression and combined arms integration' on offence and the integrated use of ground, deep positions, reserves and counterattack in defence.[42] Nevertheless, it utilized tactics from insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan to good effect and regularly caused casualties among the TFG and AMISOM troops through the use of IEDs, suicide bombings, snipers, and the occasional ambush. It also effectively utilized a system of tunnels in central Mogadishu and had the odd success with tank-traps designed to immobilize AMISOM's large armoured vehicles and tanks. In this sense, *al-Shabaab* was able to benefit from the difficult urban terrain in which AMISOM was forced to fight and in which its troops were not initially well-versed (see below).

However, after AMISOM's deployed strength was increased following the suicide bombings in Kampala in July 2010 and the Ugandan and Burundian contingents received additional training in various techniques of urban warfare, *al-Shabaab* forces suffered a series of sustained assaults from AMISOM (in Mogadishu) and later Kenyan forces (in southern Somalia) and Ethiopian troops (across central Somalia) during 2011. These assaults were so significant that in December 2011 *al-Shabaab* reportedly established a 500-strong *Amniat* (internal security) force to stem an increasing number of defections from its approximately 9,500 fighters.[43] By February

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40) *Somalia Security Sector Assessment* (AU, US, EU, TFG, World Bank and UN: 1 January 2010), para. 15c.

41) For details, see StigJarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 100-102.

42) Stephen Biddle, *Military Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

43) *Report of the 2nd AMISOM-TFG Information Sharing Meeting*, p. 9.

2012 the Somali National Security Agency was receiving on average 3-4 defectors per day.[44]

In economic terms, *al-Shabaab* was estimated to have generated about $70-100 million per year in revenue from taxation and extortion in areas under its control, especially the export of charcoal and contraband into Kenya.[45] After its withdrawal from Mogadishu in August 2011, Kismayo was identified as the movement's 'single largest revenue-generator and a strategic military fortress.'[46] This was estimated to generate around $35-50 million per year from the port revenues.[47] This revenue stream was only halted in October 2012 when AMISOM and Somali government forces occupied Kismayo, driving *al-Shabaab* forces further north. By mid-2012, the estimated number of *al-Shabaab* fighters in northern Golis mountains was 300-400.[48] This posed another major headache for AMISOM inasmuch as *al-Shabaab*'s displaced forces gravitated north towards sector four; however this sector had only one battalion of AMISOM troops because at the time the force configuration was developed in late 2011 *al-Shabaab* forces were not concentrated in this area.

Challenge 6: Lack of Resources

A sixth strategic challenge facing AMISOM was its major lack of resources and capability gaps relevant to its mandated tasks. These resource limitations assumed a variety of forms.

On the planning side, the mission lacked the necessary support, planning and management capabilities. When AMISOM deployed, the AU was simply not at a stage in its development where it could effectively manage the day-to-day running of such a large and complex operation.[49] As a result, AMISOM's planning began with a small core planning team made up of

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44) *Concept Note: Draft AMISOM Stabilization Plan for the Liberated Areas* (AU doc., February 2012).

45) *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 1916(2010)* (UN doc. S/2011/433, 18 July 2011), p. 12.

46) *Report of the 2nd AMISOM-TFG Information Sharing Meeting*, p. 13.

47) *Report of the Monitoring Group* (18 July 2011), para. 64.

48) *Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the implementation of the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia pursuant to paragraph 21 of the Security Council resolution 2036 (2012)* (UN doc. S/2012/468, 1 June 2012), para. 14.

49) Author's email communication with AMISOM planner, December 2012.

some AU members of the Darfur Integrated Task Force (DITF) and UN planners from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Then a new ad hoc planning team was formed led by a Ugandan general: it was known as the Strategic Planning and Management Unit (SPMU), had about 30 vacancies, and achieved initial operating capacity (of 19 planners) in September 2007. It drew in planners from the UN, the EU, NATO, a US liaison officer as well as the AU and the TCCs. It remains unclear whether any of the non-AU planners had been to Mogadishu before taking on the position and there was a distinct lack of expertise in counter-IED techniques. From November 2007 to mid-2009 the SPMU was funded by €6.4m from the EU's Emergency Fund and a support package from the US Government gave $250,000 per year for logistics and office equipment. From late 2009 it received funds from the EU's African Peace Facility.[50] Planning capabilities increased slowly overtime with a major breakthrough coming in 2012 with the establishment of AMISOM's force headquarters in Mogadishu.

A second challenge was the gap between AMISOM's authorized strength and its actual deployed strength on the ground (see figure 1). The fact that AMISOM took over three and a half years to reach its initial authorized strength of 8,000 troops placed an enormous strain on the Ugandan and Burundian soldiers who were deployed. AMISOM's depleted numbers had several negative consequences. First, for the peacekeepers themselves, it could hardly have been good for morale being deployed as a peacekeeper by an organization that could not muster the required strength in the field. Second, it signalled to *al-Shabaab* and other Somalis that the AU and its partners were not prepared to invest the necessary resources to comprehensively address Somalia's conflict. Third, in operational terms, it meant the AMISOM force was unable to do much more than adopt a defensive posture and shuttle between the few sections of the city it occupied. The result was that during 2009 and 2010 bloody battles raged across the city but they produced only a strategic stalemate with neither AMISOM nor *al-Shabaab* able to decisively defeat or dislodge the other. Ironically the impasse was broken after *al-Shabaab* carried out two suicide bombings in Kampala in July 2010 which resulted in the mission receiving considerable numbers of reinforcements with which it then repelled *al-Shabaab*'s subsequent Ramandan offensive in September. This helped to overcome this particular challenge as AMISOM went on the offensive shortly thereafter.

50) Author's interview with EU official, Addis Ababa, 2 May 2012.

A third challenge related to AMISOM's specialist capabilities. Here gaps were apparent in several areas. Perhaps the most fundamental given the Mogadishu terrain was AMISOM's initial lack of training and equipment for conducting offensive urban operations. It is widely acknowledged that urban theatres are a particularly complex environment for conducting warfare comprising of manmade features superimposed on natural terrain and usually with a significant population size and density and complex infrastructure. They tend to constrain movement, conceal opponents, limit observation distances and engagement ranges as well as weapons effectiveness not least because lines of sight are often interrupted. All these elements tend to reduce technological advantages and put a premium on logistical as well as engineering capabilities.[51] Moreover, academic studies of urban warfare campaigns have concluded that 'short-term tactical advantage usually lies with the side having least regard for casualties' and appropriate training and experience are of greater significance than doctrine and technology.[52]

For AMISOM, Mogadishu's urban environment brought to the fore its lack of several key capabilities, particularly in the first few years of operations. Perhaps most notable were a lack of military engineering units, air assets (including UAVs), and comprehensive training in counter-IED, sniper and other techniques of urban warfare. Upon realizing its limitations, AMISOM tried to rectify these deficiencies as soon as possible. Its need for training in urban warfare techniques was largely provided through a private contractor firm called Bancroft Global Development and some bilateral support packages from the US, UK and France. As one Ugandan colonel put it, his troops had been used to bush warfare not in an urban environment but after several years of operations and training in Mogadishu, 'We can now deal with enemies hiding in buildings.'[53]

The lack of air assets also significantly constrained the mission. AMISOM's strategic concept of operations finalized in early 2012 had recommended fourteen rotary and fixed-wing aircraft to support the operation. However, UN Security Council resolution 2036 (February 2012) authorized an aviation component of up to twelve helicopters (nine utility

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51) See, for example, Alice Hills, *Future War in Cities* (London: Frank Cass, 2004).

52) Hills, *Future War in Cities*, pp. 12, 29.

53) Sam Ntale, 'AMISOM ventures deep into Mogadishu after 5 year [sic.]', *Dispatch* (Kampala), 19 March 2012, http://www.dispatch.ug/amisom-ventures-deep-into-mogadishu-after-5-year/3757/.

and three attack). The helicopters would provide air cover for troops, escort convoys, rescue/evacuation missions, and airdrop forces. Although AMISOM eventually had access to two civilian utility helicopters provided by UNSOA, its attempts to rectify its lack of military air assets met with disaster when in August 2012 three Ugandan military helicopters crashed on the slopes of Mount Kenya while flying at night to join AMISOM. The fact that by 2012 AMISOM had begun operating a small number of Ravens, hand-held surveillance drones, did not completely offset this loss.

The other major capability gaps were in the area of logistics. Until early 2009, AMISOM's logistics was basically carried out by the two TCCs (Uganda and Burundi) with bilateral assistance packages from several Western states. This did not work well with the Burundian contingent in particular suffering major logistical problems, including an inability to get reasonable supplies of rations to its soldiers.[54] In January 2009, however, the UN established an unprecedented mechanism to provide logistical support to AMISOM. Specifically, as noted above, UN Security Council resolution 1863 created the UN Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA) to provide logistical support to AMISOM across a range of areas, excluding ammunition. This was the first time the UN funded a regional peace operation through UN assessed peacekeeping contributions. UNSOA had been recommended by the Prodi Panel on AU-UN peacekeeping collaboration (2008) and was consistent with the UN's ten-year plan to strengthen the AU's capacity in peacekeeping.[55] In August 2009 UNSOA established its logistical support base at Mombasa, from where stocks would be sent to AMISOM in Mogadishu, and an administrative base in Nairobi. The Mombasa-based team shipped consumable and non-consumable items such as rations, engineering materials, supply and communications and information technology items, direct to Mogadishu every two weeks without fail.

UNSOA dramatically improved AMISOM's logistics, turning it into a much more effective operation. However, it was not without its problems and limitations. The main problem from AMISOM's perspective was that UNSOA was authorized to provide logistical support to AMISOM as if it were an 'ordinary' UN peacekeeping operation, which it was not. The key

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54) In early 2009 about a dozen AMISOM soldiers died from a mystery disease which was suspected to be linked to the lack of proper nutrition intake and standards of culinary hygiene.

55) *Report of the African Union-United Nations Panel on Modalities for Support to African Union Peacekeeping Operations* (UN doc. A/63/666-S/2008/813, 31 December 2008).

here was that AMISOM's war-fighting activities were degrading vehicles and supplies at a much faster rate than a UN blue helmet operation. The subsequent disconnect between demand and supply generated considerable problems for AMISOM. In addition, the UNSOA package focused on the mission's military component, which caused problems as AMISOM became more multidimensional. Specifically, in September 2011 the AU voiced its concerns that UNSOA 'is essentially directed at the military component of AMISOM, thus excluding the police and civilian components. This approach negates the very essence of the multi-dimensional nature of AMISOM and affects the effectiveness of the Mission in delivering support to the Somali people.'[56] Even so, it is difficult to imagine that AMISOM would have been able to conduct the offensive operations it did during 2010-11 without UNSOA. In that sense, UNSOA was far from a perfect solution but it represented a huge advance on what was previously available.

Challenge 7: Governance without Government[57]

A seventh strategic challenge facing AMISOM was its role in the provision of governance structures. Although this was not a formal part of its initial mandate, as the primary source of protection for the TFG from early 2009, and as AMISOM expanded beyond the city of Mogadishu in 2012, the mission became implicated in questions about the provision of governance in Mogadishu and beyond.

As AMISOM started to deploy outside Mogadishu, it became increasingly entangled in governance issues in what were initially called the 'liberated areas' – those where *al-Shabaab* forces had been removed but the Somali authorities had yet to gain full control. For the AU, stabilization in Somalia referred to the multidimensional process of extending the administrative authority of the federal government, delivering services – including food and water, healthcare, shelter, policing,and de-mining – to local populations, and conducting a programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration for *al-Shabaab* and other militias that wished to lay

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56) *Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Situation in Somalia* (AU doc. PSC/PR/2(CCXCIII), 13 September 2011), para. 49.

57) This is a longstanding challenge in Somali politics. See Ken Menkhaus, 'Governance without Government in Somalia', *International Security*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2006/07, pp. 74-106.

down their arms.[58] To win the support of the people in these areas, AMISOM had to help deliver some form of peace dividend to them.

One dimension of this challenge was that even the newly strengthened AMISOM (with just under 18,000 personnel) was nowhere near large enough to effectively stabilize its huge area of operations across south-central Somalia. Whether one uses popular ratios of soldiers to locals; soldiers to territory; or soldiers to armed foes, AMISOM lacked the necessary numbers. The problem was that it also lacked an effective and sizable partner in the form of the Somali National Army and Police Force. Indeed, when AMISOM's new concept of operations was developed in late 2011, the assessment had concluded that approximately 35,000 uniformed personnel would be required to do the job but since the UN Security Council was only willing to authorize half that number, the other half would come from the Somali security forces themselves.[59] The problem, of course, was that such Somali forces simply did not exist and there were no sufficiently resourced train and equip programmes to generate them in the near future. In the interim period, AMISOM was left without an explicit mandate to engage in governance issues, without an agreed plan to deliver such a peace dividend, without the necessary civilian personnel to carry out such tasks, and until late 2012 without a set of federal authorities to support it in the enterprise.

Conclusion

The Ugandan and Burundian personnel deployed to Mogadishu as part of AMISOM had to endure one of the most difficult theatres in the history of modern peace operations. They were sent to an active warzone to try and make peace when none of the multiple armed factions were particularly interested in doing so themselves. The force deployed incrementally in an international political context where the mission was widely condemned as inappropriate and too challenging; the peacekeepers were tasked with supporting a local party which was deeply unpopular and widely perceived as corrupt and ineffective; their external partners could not always agree on the appropriate course of action; they faced a fluid, complex and determined enemy; and they arrived in the theatre without the necessary capabilities to carry out their mandated tasks. And yet AMISOM displayed

58) Author's interview with AMISOM official, Nairobi, July 2012.

59) Author's interview with UN official, Addis Ababa, August 2012.

remarkable resilience and perseverance in the face of these challenges. The AU force managed to ensure the TFG's survival by fending off a much larger *al-Shabaab* force and helped shepherd the formation of the Federal Government of Somalia in September 2012. It is therefore fair to conclude that AMISOM does deserve credit for a number of successes: it largely overcame the initial context of international pessimism about the mission (challenge 1); over time, it also managed to mitigate some of the major strategic coordination issues among its principal external backers (challenge 4); and by late 2012 had significantly degraded both the conventional military and economic dimensions of *al-Shabaab*'s strength (challenge 5). With the establishment of UNSOA, the mission also saw a major improvement in its logistical capabilities (challenge 6).

On the other hand, AMISOM was far from a complete success story and even after September 2012 it continued to face several major problems. The mission was still unable to overcome its internal coordination issues, as demonstrated most starkly by the behaviour of the Kenyan contingent in sector 2 (challenge 2). Moreover, although the new Federal Government of Somalia adopted a number of sensible policies on paper, it was unable to instantly erase the local agendas, clan dynamics, and criminal practices that had plagued its predecessors. In this sense it remained a problematic partner for AMISOM (challenge 3). AMISOM also continued to do without some key capabilities including sufficient numbers of troops, aircraft, and armoured vehicles. Finally, by late 2012, AMISOM still found itself with the hugely difficult task of facilitating legitimate and effective governance structures across south central Somalia (challenge 7). In many respects, this was the mission's most fundamental challenge because degrading *al-Shabaab*'s forces was actually considerably easier than resolving Somali's many political disputes. Finding a way to play a constructive role in Somalia's governance structures will be AMISOM's central strategic challenge moving forward.