Interrogating the Multifaceted Nature of the Somalian Conflict and the Challenges for the African Union's Peacekeeping Mandate

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Abstract

The Somalian conflict remains one of the most protracted and complex crises in Africa, characterized by intersecting factors such as terrorism, clan rivalries, political instability, and regional interference. This study examined how the multifaceted nature of the Somalian conflict has impeded the African Union's ability to fulfil its peacekeeping mandate, with particular focus on the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The fundamental objective of the study is to identify the specific challenges posed by the complex dynamics of the conflict and provide actionable recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the African Union's interventions. The study employed Conflict Transformation Theory, as it evaluates how deep-rooted, systemic issues have sustained the conflict and hindered peacebuilding efforts. The study adopted historical/descriptive research design harped on qualitative research method, by relying on document analysis of reports, policy briefs, and scholarly articles on Somalia's conflict and AMISOM's operations. Major findings revealed that the African Union faces significant obstacles, including Al-Shabaab's asymmetric warfare tactics, weak governance structures in Somalia, lack of coordination among regional and international actors, and insufficient resources for AMISOM. These challenges have prevented the African Union from achieving sustainable peace and stability in Somalia. The study recommended a multifaceted approach to peacekeeping, including stronger collaboration with the Somali government, enhanced funding and logistical support for AMISOM, and an inclusive peacebuilding strategy that addresses the root causes of the conflict, such as clan divisions and economic deprivation.

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1. Introduction

According to Dahre (2011), Britain had controlled northern Somalia since it established the British Somaliland Protectorate in 1884. From 1884 to 1896, the British colonial government concluded multiple treaties with local Somali clans living in modern Somaliland, Djibouti and Ethiopia gaining control over some of these territories (Jama, 2011). The most popular was the treaty with the Ogadeni people (currently living in Ethiopia) that ended in British colonial government promising Ogadeni people protection from Ethiopia (Dahre, 2011). However, as Dahre (2011) notes the British reneged on this promise and ceded control of the Haud and Ogadeni territory to Ethiopia in what has become known as the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreements of 1897 (Menkhaus, 2011; Jama, 2011). A similar situation also transpired in Kenya, where just before the country's independence, the British colonial government conducted a referendum in which they sought to determine whether Kenya's Somalis preferred to be part of an independent Kenya or Somalia (Menkhaus, 2011).

Bad governance practices that has led to inequalities among citizens in most African countries (Emegha and Oforbuike, 2024), is also same between members of various groups in terms of their access to political power and resources in the 1980s till date has led to the emergence of armed clan-based movements that forced the Siyad Barre regime in Somalia to flee the country following the collapse of the state in 1991. Since then, Somalia has been in a failed situation. Following this, various grouping of armed factions sought to control the national territory of Somalia; thus, the country entered decades of prolonged conflict and civil war (Elmi & Barise, 2006).

Furthermore, in the absence of authority, the clan-rebel groups that overthrew the Siyad Barre regime immediately fought one another to control Somalia. Other armed groups fought for controlling the capital city and government. Ali Mahdi was appointed as interim president by residents in Mogadishu to lead the civilian wing of the United Somali Council. However, General Aided who played a leading role in the fight against Siad Barre opposed the nomination of Ali Mahdi as a president. Nevertheless, Aided rejected Ali leadership and claimed he is the rightful person to lead Somalia. In 1991 several attempts aimed to reconcile these two rival groups were held in Djibouti; however, this attempt was a missed opportunity. Thus, a destructive fight broke out between General Aided and his rival Ali Mahdi which claimed the lives of as many as 25,000 innocent civilians and destruction of material resources (Clark, 1993). Moreover, this destructive battle divided the capital city of Mogadishu into two parts: an area controlled by Ali Mahdi, such as north of the city. At the same time, general Aided controlled other areas in the south, such as the airport and seaport (Abdi, 2012).

Amid this confusion, northern Somalia (currently known as Somaliland) declared political independence from the rest of Somalia under a government led by Somali National Movement (S.N.M.). Northern Somalia then became the self-declared Republic of Somaliland on 18th May 1991. Whereas southern Somalia descended into a state of anarchy and fighting involving multiplication of numbers of clan-based warlords and militias as well as extremist fighters, which

has to this date continued to hamper the re-establishment of the normal functioning of the nation-state structure (Elmi & Barise, 2006).

Moreover, the civil war, which started between 1991 and 1992 in the south of the country destroyed the state institutions, structures, and trust in governance and consequently the agricultural production of the country which resulted in nationwide famine. An estimated 300.000 Somalis died from starvation. To control the problem, the international community adopted a resolution called 733; in 1992, this resolution was the first attempt to restore peace and stability and to reach people who are in need in Somalia. However, the Warlords disregarded the ceasefire and engaged in extensive fighting as well as looted international aid materials. Thus, this effort has not reached the desired result. Furthermore, Somalia tested ten years without government from (1991-2000), during this period many innocent civilians lost their lives because of the power and resource control struggle between the armed groups and the warlords. Whereas many other civilians lost their lives due to starvation and hunger. The literature has shown that, Mogadishu battle as one of the most controversial conflicts in half of the twentieth century. During this war, a Blackhawk helicopter was shot down by the rebel militia groups (New York Times, 1993). Likewise, this conflict marked the first time that two U.S. helicopters were shut down over Somali airspace, which finally led the U.S. to end its mission to Somalia in 1995 formally.

In the year 2000, the Transitional national government was established as Somalia's central government with Abdiqasim S. Hassan elected as the president after nine years of chaos. During his time into the office, his administration was able to control just parts of the Mogadishu, with the rest of the country, under Somalia in heavy crises. It borders, Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia, the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Eden, to the West, South, the North-West, the East and the North respectively were also in crises. The country has not known peace since the collapse of the despotic regime of General Siad Barre in 1991 (Dahre, 2011). A systematic analysis of literature on the political history of Somalia would reveal the major events and issues that have mutually reinforced the current explosive state of things in Somalia and such an analysis predates the Barre regime and focus in the epoch from 1884 during the colonial rule.

However, despite popular preference by Somalis to be part of Somalia, the British included the former Northern Frontier District (NFD) as a province of independent Kenya (Harper, 2012). These developments are important because they have affected both the conduct and agenda of domestic politics in Somalia as well as how Somalia relates with its neighbours. According to Dahre (2011) the pre-independent machinations of the British and the Italians (who controlled southern Somalia from 1883) resulted in the division of the Somali people (a single nation) into five administrative regions paved the way for post-independent political agenda depicted by the adoption of the five-pointed star in the Somalia flag. According to Jama (2011), between 1969 and 1991, A precedence for conflictual Somalia was established despite having undergone a peaceful power transfer from President Adan Abduller Osman to Dr. Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke in June of 1967.

In just two years after the power transfer, President Sharmarke was assassinated in Las Anod on 15th of October, 1969 and was succeeded by General Mohamed Siad Barre through a bloodless coup d'état (Menkhaus, 2011). Upon taking power, Barre established an authoritarian regime in which political deviance was not tolerated and could land one in jail or detention without trial (as he did the former President, two former Prime Misters and the police commander (Jama, 2011). At the same time, Barre suspended the constitution, banned all political parties, trade unions and

the Supreme Court and went ahead to replace the National Assembly with Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) (Menkhaus, 2011; Jama, 2011). At the same time, Barre explored and exploited clan differences and successfully created mistrust among clans. Clannism and nepotism replaced meritocracy in public appointment and the public property became Barre's own, to be deployed at Barre's command to advance a political agenda (Jama, 2011).

These developments therefore crystalized in the minds of Somali's that constitutionalism could be abrogated at will. Descent to Barre's despotic regime led to his own disposal in 1991 by the Ethiopia-backed United Somali Council (USC) (Jama, 2011). Jama (2011) and Menkhaus (2011) contend that the clan tensions that Barre had successfully created persisted as a dominant element for political mobilization in the post-Barre epoch. Ethiopia is said to have also exacerbated the clan animosities in its bid to stir up instability in Somalia and to derail Somalia's irredentist claims over its Ogaden territory (Dahre, 2011). The anarchy and violence that emerged with the overthrow of Barre made Somalia virtually ungovernable as warlordism emerged with each warlord (often linked to a clan) seeking to ascend to power (Dahre, 2011).

It also opened the country to Islamic fundamentalism as international terrorists such as the Al-Shabaab gained a foothold in the country as base for planning clandestine regional and global terror operations (Aganda, 2008). Thus, chaos and anarchy fuelled by clan-based warlordism and supported by regional actors such as Ethiopia and Eritrea defined much of the events in Somalia throughout the 1990s. From the early mid 1990s onwards, Somalia started to dominate regional and international debates on peace. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) comprising of regional countries and as part of the African solutions to African problems conceptualized with the AU agenda-initiated attempts to negotiate peace between the warring factions in Somalia (Knezevic & Smith, 2015).

The move by regional and international actors including the IGAD and the UN was necessitated by the recognition of the growing strain the anarchy in Somalia was placing in regional stability and international security (owing to presence of international terror organizations in the country) (Menkaus, 2011). In the year 2000, several Somalia political groups agreed at a conference held in Arta in Djibouti to establish a Transitional National Government (TNG). Being Somali-driven, the Arta Agreement presented an aura of legitimacy for the TNG and reasonable acceptance among the Somali warring factions. However, the agreements main misgiving and one which had dire repercussions for its legitimacy and effectiveness was its exclusion of the warlords and some other significant actors in the Somalia conflict such as the youth and women (Dahre, 2011). By 2004, the weaknesses of the TNG and with it the Arta agreement had become apparent necessitating another round of new negotiations (Menkaus, 2011). In 2004, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was established.

The agreement was mediated by the UN-backed IGAD and resulted in the Mbagathi agreement (having been conducted at Mbagathi in Nairobi, Kenya). The Mbagathi conferences created a more accepted and relatively legitimate TFG. Considered as the 'conference of the warlords' the conference brought the warlords to the negotiation table and was effective in bringing a ceasefire in Somalia especially as far as the warlord's overt participation in violence was concerned (Dahre, 2011). Nonetheless, the Mbagathi conference concentrated so much on the war lords, and Menkaus (2011) argues it lacked the crucial participation of the civil society and the clan leaders thereby becoming intrinsically directed towards failure. The failure of the TFG to address the interests of

all the major players in Somalia resulted in the emergence of even more powerful and violent groups, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU).

The ICU quickly gained control of Somalia especially in the South and were responsible for orchestrating insurgent attacks in Mogadishu. In response, as Menkhaus (2011) and LeSage (2005) posit, the TFG sought the assistance of international actors especially the African Union and Ethiopian forces. At a conference in Djibouti in 2008, dubbed the Djibouti Peace Talks that was conducted between the top representatives of the TFG and moderate Islamists, the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS), it was agreed that the Ethiopian troops should withdraw from Somalia. According to Dahre (2011), the term of tenure of the TFG was to end in 2011. In the following year in 2012, the newly composed Federal Parliament of Somalia elected Hassan Sheikh Mahamoud as the country's first President in 40 years (Knezevic & Smith, 2015).

2. Conceptual Delineations

Conflict

Conflicts are experienced at most levels of human activity and are complex processes which have certain elements. One way of conceptualizing the relationship between these elements is a Conflict Triangle with structures, attitudes and behaviours at the points. Galtung first proposed this model for understanding conflict. He was of the opinion that structures refer to political mechanisms, processes and institutions that influence the satisfaction of security, welfare, recognition and identity needs. Attitudes include the parties' perceptions and misperceptions of each other and of themselves. These may be positive or negative, but in violent conflicts, parties tend to develop increasingly negative stereotypes of opposing parties and increasingly positive self-group identity (Tom & Tamara, 2000). Attitudes are often influenced by emotions such as fear, anger, bitterness and hatred. Galtung sees behaviours as actions undertaken by one party in conflict aimed at the opposing party with the intention of making that party abandon or change its goals. Violent conflict behaviour is characterized by threats, coercion and destructive attacks (Emegha, 2023; Iwuozor & Offor, 2024).

Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs)

Peacekeeping operations (PKOs) involve the coordinated presence of military, police and civilian personnel responsible for a wider range of task such as humanitarian assistance, policing, human rights and electoral monitoring, social and economic rehabilitation and reconstruction. There is the traditional and multidimensional PKOs. The traditional UN peacekeeping was developed during the Cold War era as a means to resolve conflicts between states. This is by deploying unarmed or lightly armed military personnel from a number of countries, under UN command, between the armed forces of the former warring parties. Peacekeepers could be called in when the United Nations Security Council passes a resolution aimed at bringing closure to conflicts threatening regional stability and international peace and security. Peacekeepers are deployed when a ceasefire was in place and the parties to the conflict had given their consent. This is to give time and breathing space for diplomatic efforts to address the underlying causes of a conflict. An example of this was the United Nations Emergency Force UNEF operation in response to invasion of Egypt by Israel, France and UK in 1956.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is a regional peacekeeping mission established by the African Union (AU) in 2007 to support the Somali government in its efforts to stabilize the country and combat the insurgency led by the militant group Al-Shabaab. AMISOM's mandate includes protecting key government installations, facilitating humanitarian assistance, and supporting the African Union's broader peace and reconciliation efforts in Somalia (African Union, 2013). The mission has involved troops from several African nations, including Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti, and has played a crucial role in providing security and enabling the establishment of a federal government in Somalia (Menkhaus, 2014).

Despite its achievements, AMISOM faces significant challenges, including resource constraints, complex political dynamics, and ongoing violence from insurgent groups, which complicate its peacekeeping efforts and the overall stabilization of Somalia (International Crisis Group, 2017). AMISOM's operations are guided by the principles of collective security and regional cooperation, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates military, political, and developmental strategies to achieve lasting peace in Somalia (African Union, 2013).

3. Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Conflict Transformation Theory. The theory was developed by John Paul Lederach, a leading scholar and practitioner in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Lederach introduced the concept in his seminal work, Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures (1995), where he argued that conflict should not merely be resolved but transformed to address its root causes and systemic issues. The theory emerged as a response to the limitations of traditional conflict resolution approaches, particularly in addressing protracted and intractable conflicts.

Proponents of the theory include scholars, such as Johan Galtung and Adam Curle, who have contributed to its development. Galtung emphasized the importance of addressing structural violence and systemic inequalities, while Curle focused on the role of education and empowerment in transforming conflicts. These proponents collectively argue that sustainable peace requires addressing the underlying social, political, and economic structures that perpetuate conflict.

By and large, Conflict Transformation Theory offers a robust framework for understanding and addressing the challenges posed by the Somalian conflict. By focusing on systemic change, relationship-building, and long-term peacebuilding, the AU can enhance the effectiveness of its peacekeeping mandate and contribute to sustainable peace in Somalia.

Analytical Discourse of the Somalia Conflict

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has been a crucial component of regional and international efforts to stabilize Somalia since 2007. This treatise examines the challenges faced by AMISOM from 2012 to 2022, a period marked by significant political, security, and humanitarian developments in Somalia. According to Williams (2013); Williams (2022), the following are the major challenges impeding on the AU mission in Somalia.

a. 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 (Williams, 2013; Amadi, 2014).

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 (Davis, 2015).

Second, the AU mission was widely seen as providing cover for the imminent withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from Mogadishu (Davis, 2015). 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. rose significantly (Williams, 2013). 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 (Williams, 2013).

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 (Williams, 2013). 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 (Williams, 2013).

b. Internal Coordination

According to Williams (2022), 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 (Idris, 2019).

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 (Williams, 2022). 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 (Idris, 2019).

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. 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. (From late 2012, this also become a contentious issue with the new Federal Government in Somalia as well) (Williams, 2013; Williams, 2022).

Finally, 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 (Williams, 2022). 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. This was especially true in the run up to the assault on Kismayo (Williams, 2022).

c. Problematic Local Partners

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 (Bewketu, 2020).

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 (Williams, 2013; Bewketu, 2020).

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 (Idris, 2019).

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. 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 (Kamais, Okoh, Kimokoti, 2024).

d. 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 (Bewuketu, 2020). After that, however, growing resentment at the Ethiopian presence and brutality and all sorts of rumors 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 (Bewuketu, 2020).

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 (Bewuketu, 2020).

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 – 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 (Bewuketu, 2020; Williams, 2022). 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 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 ((Bewuketu, 2020).

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 (Bewuketu, 2020).

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. 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 (Bewuketu, 2020).

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 (Bewuketu, 2020). 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' (Williams, 2013). In June 2009 the al-Shabaab group in Kismayo apparently responded to this call by releasing a video pledging allegiance to Osama Bin Laden. Al-Shabaab made a formal declaration of allegiance to al-Qa'ida on 2 February 2010. Although it seemed 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 (Bewuketu, 2020).

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. (The major exception was the ultimately disastrous Ramadan offensive in September 2010. 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 (Davis, 2015).

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 2012 the Somali National Security Agency was receiving on average 3-4 defectors per day (Williams, 2022).

e. Governance without Government

Another 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 (Williams, 2013). 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, de-mining – to local populations, and conducting a programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration for al-Shabaab and other militias that wished to lay down their arms (Davis, 2015).

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 southcentral 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 (Davis, 2015; Williams, 2022).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusively, it is instructive to observe that AMISOM/ATMIS have recovered more than 70 percent of the al Shabaab territories. AMISOM/ATMIS has also midwifed three successful transition programmes between 2012 and 2022 and created dialogues between the FGS and the federal member states. The slow development of the capacity in Somalia's national security forces is a major impediment to implementing the transition plan. It is was revealed that the African Union faces significant obstacles, including Al-Shabaab's asymmetric warfare tactics, weak governance structures in Somalia, lack of coordination among regional and international actors, and insufficient resources for AMISOM. These challenges have prevented the African Union from achieving sustainable peace and stability in Somalia.

The study therefore recommended a multifaceted approach to peacekeeping in Somalia, including:

1. Stronger collaboration with the Somali government, enhanced funding and logistical support for AMISOM,
2. Inclusive peacebuilding strategy that addresses the root causes of the conflict, such as clan divisions and economic deprivation.
3. The African Union must strengthen its partnerships with international actors to ensure a more coordinated and comprehensive intervention.

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