

NOREF Report

The mercy of neighbours: security and governance in a new Somalia

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Executive summary

The Somali state has long been a byword for statelessness and extreme insecurity. However, eight years of transitional rule are set to end in 2012, and expectations are rising that continued military-led stabilisation, changing regional security dynamics and efforts to rebuild the Somalia state might soon enable the country to declare an end to two decades of civil war.

This report places the emerging characteristics of security and governance in Somalia in a regional context marked by secessionism, and by the aspirations to power and economic growth of Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya. While acknowledging that the worst of the country's internal conflict may shortly be over, particularly

in the form of the Islamist armed rebellion of Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahedin, the report warns that continued political schisms, uneven economic growth, extremely weak state capacity and repeated meddling by neighbours mean that Somalia will endure conditions of low-level insecurity over the next five years.

The report foresees that a federal state arrangement, which is supported by much of the international community, may be supplanted by a more centralised state that is able to secure clients across the Somali clan structure. It also warns of the stark risks to normalisation posed by the operations of security services trained in the conditions of war.

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Introduction: stumbling towards peace

It is perfectly conceivable that new developments will begin to reshape Somalia by the end of 2012. First and foremost, the country's current political transition, headed by the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), is set to end after eight years of chaotic efforts and the delivery via forceps of a new central government, even though this administration will still face the task of finalising a new constitution and organising genuine elections. This represents a daunting challenge, as the new political elites share many of the perceptions of preceding years, and debates are bitter and inconclusive.

Yet even if the political climate remains anything but peaceful over the coming years, the international community will be eager to promote the idea that peace in Somalia has finally been achieved in spite of ongoing insecurity. However, one notable achievement could rightly be claimed. It is quite possible that the jihadi insurrection fails to recover from major splits and the deaths of some of its historical leaders from 2012 onwards. The movement will in all likelihood continue to provide support to local conflicts, and benefit from the fierce divisions between would-be federal entities and the central government in Mogadishu. But as far as the international community is concerned, underground jihadi cells in other countries of the region may become a much more acute and alarming strategic threat than the low-level insecurity that has pervaded Somalia for over two decades.

To sum up, within the coming year, and continuing over the next five years, Somalia may no longer be seen as a cancer disseminating insecurity across the Horn of Africa and beyond, despite its real transnational connections.

Neighbourhood constraints

This report aims to shed light on a number of dynamics that are affecting the country's governance and security at present, and that are likely to shape Somalia in the years to 2017 and beyond. In so doing, it outlines one likely scenario

for the future. But it must be stressed from the outset that internal developments within Somalia are only one part of the picture. "A state only exists within a system of states", argues British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1985: 79), and this statement is very pertinent to Somalia in a number of different ways.

Throughout the duration of the Somali crisis, neighbouring states and other powerful actors have vetoed any settlement that emerges from a domestic political process, simply dismantling whatever has been built. Of course, every state has its own requirements and patterns of regional intervention, but blatant interventionism in the Somali case limits the possible routes for state-building and improved governance, and this has been a strategic hindrance to Somalia's recovery from the beginning.

As a consequence, Somalia's political development is repeatedly constrained by the contradictory demands made by its neighbours and loosely approved by a part of the international community. A federal government structure was promoted as the best solution for Somalia by Ethiopia (the "bottom-up approach" that pleased so many NGOs), even though Ethiopian federalism is hardly a shining example of devolved powers. Political Islam in Somalia encountered strong opposition from Addis Ababa, mild opposition from Uganda, and was irrelevant to Kenya insofar as it did not provoke any security glitch on the border or prevent the stabilisation of the country. By 2017 it appears likely that the regional security focus will still be on radical Islam and jihadi movements. What in the late 1990s was perceived as a "bizarre" trend in Somalia, blamed on the country's "statelessness", is set to become by the mid-2010s one political and social development among others.

A further regional factor must also be taken into account. The independence of Eritrea and, more recently, South Sudan has led to conflicts and tensions that spilled into the Horn of Africa. Although considered with sympathy, the sovereign status of Somaliland, which declared its independence in 1991, has never come close to recognition despite waves of talks between Hargeysa, the capital of Somaliland, and Mogadishu. The region and the international

community at large believed that the creation of a new state in Somalia would generate a new web of conflicts and disrupt a regional order that is already difficult to maintain. An additional element of concern is the emergence of a deeply rooted radical Islamic movement based in eastern Somaliland, which could aspire to assume control over the state.

Lastly, the coming years are likely to witness a novel dynamic: the emergence of a regional oil and minerals economy. Somalia will have to adapt to this new regional configuration even though it cannot carry out much exploration because of security concerns and legal dilemmas over the exploitation of oilfields. This new resource does not help the stabilisation process: as in other countries it encourages corruption, deepens polarisation and weakens social safety nets. It also exacerbates the flaws in the federal system. Expectations of greater oil revenues could merely provide a further disturbance to the fragile and incomplete normalisation of the country, even if by 2017 Somalia still relies on diaspora remittances for its core revenue.

In short, Somalia's neighbourhood will continue to shape perceptions of internal political developments in the years to 2017, particularly with regard to those questions that are traditionally seen as the most divisive and destabilising for the country and region. These include the role of political Islam in reframing the Somali polity, the problems associated with federalism, the role of Mogadishu, and the actions of the jihadi movement at the edge of the civilian political arena.

This report will focus on three areas that are crucial to the changing face of Somali security and governance: the military presence and strategic outlook of neighbouring countries; trends in the national economy; and the prospects for state-building and an end to the armed resistance in the country. In each case, the fundamental trends are sketched, before a likely scenario over the coming years is mapped out.

Security, military involvement and regional politics

The Horn of Africa is the only region of the continent in which new states have emerged in the post-colonial period: Eritrea and South Sudan. In both cases, independence was followed by a military crisis involving neighbouring countries. In both cases, these tensions and conflicts had dire consequences for Somalia.

After the start of its war against Ethiopia in May 1998, Eritrea – at least up to the United Nations Security Council resolution of December 2009 – did everything possible to destabilise its opponent to the south, even promoting anti-Ethiopian armed groups in Somalia such as Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahedin. This policy was relatively successful because many Somalis opposed what often appeared as Ethiopian diktat over their country. Eventually, however, Eritrea had to stop this policy and turn its attention to internal affairs. Although not always victorious, Addis Ababa has since managed to frame much of the international roadmap on Somalia through its direct influence or numerous local proxies.

In the case of South Sudan, Uganda is playing a leading role in supporting northern Sudanese insurgent groups previously linked to the southern insurgency, such as the Sudan Revolutionary Front, with the military training, weapons and ammunitions that Juba could not supply without causing a row with its close allies. Uganda also played a major role in the establishment in 2007 of the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), an unusual peacekeeping force that is ready to fight and accept significant casualties without retreating.

Ethiopia and Uganda have been rewarded for their prominent regional roles with mute contemplation of their internal politics from Western donors, despite the indisputably authoritarian nature of their regimes. It is probable that by 2017 this behaviour will become increasingly costly as social and political contestation is violently repressed within these countries. This is especially the case in Ethiopia, where the transition to a post-Meles Zenawi era announced in 2010 appears much more chaotic than initially thought.

Kenya, the economic hub of the region, is in a more complicated situation because it is a more democratic regime than its neighbours, adept at the exercise of “soft power” due to its economic performance, and yet has to experience the full consequences of a poorly planned military intervention in Somalia in October 2011 that was aimed at combating al-Shabaab. Kenya has also played a major role in South Sudan’s economy, providing skilled workers and investment in basic services.

The scenario in 2017: the perspectives of Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia

Looking forward to 2017, the political and military balance in the region can be expected to evolve in divergent ways. One first notable feature is likely to be a continued military presence of some sort in Somalia, despite a series of slight improvements in the security situation from 2011 onwards. Following its withdrawal from Mogadishu in July 2011, al-Shabaab has tried to reconfigure itself by acting more decisively in Puntland and Somaliland and waging a more asymmetrical war in the countryside, while undertaking more terrorist attacks in urban centres. The results of this new strategy are likely to be mixed over the coming years. First and foremost, al-Shabaab will not solve its leadership problems, and splits will weaken the organisation. Several important leaders will be killed, some by foreign strikes, others by factional infighting. Yet the resilience of the movement, thanks to the support of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, is such that security will not improve dramatically in all parts of the country and many small-scale skirmishes will continue to take place especially in the border areas, making AMISOM a continuing necessity.

AMISOM in 2017 will be distinct from what it was when it nearly defeated al-Shabaab in 2011 in Mogadishu. After the Kenyan intervention in October 2011, the UN Security Council decided to nearly double the mission’s size, allowing Kenya to re-hat its troops involved in the operation and to be reimbursed for its military adventure. While Uganda, Burundi and Kenya will be adamant about retaining their influence over the operation, most of the new troop-contributing countries will

not have committed their best soldiers and sooner or later will have called them back or cut back on military activities. Looking back from 2017, the AMISOM surge that was decided in February 2012 will appear to have been disappointing in military terms. It will also have created new problems with the lay population, since the behaviour of new troops will have been much poorer than that of older ones. However, these shortcomings have to be understood in the light of a Somali government that regards dealing with insurgents as the duty of foreign troops.

In 2017 Kenya will need its military presence in Somalia for two main reasons. Firstly, Kenyan Somali politicians are an asset in national political life, and therefore greater attention must be paid to their interests in north-eastern Kenya and the important cross-border trade with Somalia. The second reason is securing the border area with Somalia. Kenya may unwittingly benefit from the tensions between Sudan and South Sudan to secure funds for the Lamu Corridor, a transport and infrastructure project that was once seen as a “white elephant” project. By building an alternative pipeline transporting oil from South Sudan, Uganda, and north-western Kenya to Lamu, Kenya will have become essential for regional stability.

But this new era of bilateral harmony will have limits for Kenyans as well as for Somalis. In Kenya, construction of the pipeline and new highways will have created a web of conflicts due to the acquisition of land used to build the necessary infrastructure. As far as Somalia is concerned, the Lamu Corridor will have downgraded the economic significance of the port city of Kismaayo, since Lamu will be attracting most of the deep-sea ships. This will create new grievances among Somalis because of the traditional propensity to conflict in Kismaayo, where al-Shabaab has long been influential. These resentments are likely to be aggravated by the fact that Somalis are excluded from the most profitable activities in the Lamu Corridor, either because of security concerns or their alleged lack of skills. A last concern is linked to the inability of the Somali political elites to negotiate the demarcation of a maritime border with Kenya. Expectations over finding oil in the border area have been high for years, but Somali politicians have been handicapped in their

approach by incompetence, greed and the fear of jingoistic backfire. Relations between Nairobi and Mogadishu will be very unsettled on this issue.

As for Uganda, President Yoweri Museveni may, after some hesitation, persuade himself to seek a new term in 2016 because of continuing regional uncertainties and booming riches from oil exploitation. Museveni would also be keen to keep troops in AMISOM and is sure to want Uganda to take economic advantage of Somalia's fragile improvements. But by 2017 Uganda's involvement in Somalia will not always bring great reward. The image of the Ugandan army is unlikely to improve. More importantly, radical Islamic militant activity, possibly including attacks against Christian churches, might provoke, as in Kenya, anti-Muslim riots in the capital city that convince the government to close Uganda's doors to new Somali migrants by 2017. Such a decision would have a very damaging effect on the livelihood of many Somalis based in Uganda or South Sudan.

Ethiopia, meanwhile, is likely to be in a paradoxical situation in 2017. The stabilisation of south-central Somalia would be, to a great extent, the fruit of its military interventions. As a reward, Addis Ababa would be given the right to guide the establishment of local administrations in the buffer zone on its border. Even so, the situation in 2017 might not be especially rosy. While cities in the buffer zone would be more or less stable, the countryside may still be unsafe, sometimes even hostile: popular support for al-Shabaab and discontented militias could be strong enough for them to carry out ambushes against Ethiopian and Somali troops. This war of attrition might not be limited to the border area. The Ethiopian regime could have to cope with different sources of Muslim dissatisfaction because of its heavy-handed approach toward Islam. The growing discontent of young Ethiopian Muslims against the regime would in turn offer fresh opportunities to radical Islam.

Sometimes, success generates more trouble than first thought. The whole region in 2017 will have to adapt to continued tensions linked to the creation of two new states and the ongoing crisis in Somalia – even if this is not at its peak. Somalia's neighbours are set to benefit from

military investment outside their borders, thanks to the emergence of a new regional oil economy and the diplomatic support provided by Western donors to those assisting in South Sudan and Somalia. However, even if the security situation in both countries is brought under control, it will not be settled. In Somalia, insecurity will still hamper economic recovery and make the Somali elites unable or unwilling to take important decisions on the way their country could benefit from the region's growth.

The new economy: from war to a difficult peace

Over two decades of civil war beginning in 1991, Somalia's economy has developed in a few sectors, particularly livestock export and the re-export of commodities to Kenya and Ethiopia. It is notable that agriculture does not account for much of gross domestic product (GDP), despite efforts by Somaliland to cultivate *qaat*, which is one of the main (useless) drains on hard currency. Fisheries are also a very profitable business, but there is absolutely no transparency in the sector. The international community bears a responsibility for this since it has consistently refused (for its own reasons) to connect the emergence of piracy in offshore Somalia with the state of the fisheries sector. However, over the years, Somalia's main resource has become the remittances sent by its diaspora, which provide the economy with the lion's share of its hard currency.¹

Changes to this economic pattern will not be significant by 2017. Livestock export will still be a leading sector, especially in the north of the country. Agreements signed in 2008 by Somaliland and Puntland authorities allowed livestock exports to restart in an organised way, with support from the Saudi authorities (as a sign of normalisation, livestock nowadays reaches Jeddah and not Jazan). Even at the hardest moments of the fight against al-Shabaab, veterinary services were available in south-central Somalia, as well as Puntland and Somaliland. At the same time, the weaknesses in this economic sector remain. It is always subject to sanitary stress. An outbreak

¹ Remittances are estimated to represent nearly 40% of GDP in recent years (Keating, 2011).

of fever can have devastating effects because of a lack of permanent surveillance and care. Moreover, the business is more profitable for Saudi middlemen than Somali livestock herders, or even traders. Somalis have little leverage over the value chain, despite plans to sell chilled meat or more capital-intensive products. The competition between ports (Berbera, Boosaaso, and nowadays even Mogadishu) is unregulated and impacts negatively on trade flows.

By 2017 the re-export of commodities (mostly foodstuff) to Ethiopia and Kenya will not provide the same benefits as it did in the 1990s. For a start, Ethiopia has slowly but efficiently reduced the possibilities for informal trade on its border, and will continue to do so. This clampdown came as a side effect of the fight against jihadi movements and other armed insurgencies, but is also linked to the development of Lamu port (set to be finished before 2017), which will supply a large part of southern Ethiopia. Ethiopia has consistently worked to diversify its indirect access to the sea and will enjoy great success over the coming five years: it will be using Djibouti, Berbera (thanks to the Berbera Corridor, partly paid for by the European Union), Boosaaso, Mogadishu, and, more marginally, Kismaayo. As a consequence, importers will have to play by the book.

By itself, this does not mean that imports and exports to and from Somalia will significantly diminish. Smuggling is still an activity Somalis carry out conspicuously. Above all, the number of customers for goods inside Somalia will grow. After al-Shabaab's withdrawal from Mogadishu, and conceivably from major cities in south-central Somalia by late 2012, many Somalis from the diaspora are likely to consider possible resettlement. While many will decide not to because of persistent insecurity, a substantial number may decide to take the plunge. Some of them will do so in order to become politicians known as "mortgage MPs" (or ministers), enabling them to make easy money and escape the country as soon as the situation deteriorates. Many others will get involved in the business realm and restart a small but growing industrial sector.

In 2017 these resettled Somalis will be used to a certain level of consumption, and importers will supply them. Furthermore, a section of the

urban population will have access to a decent amount of money through remittances. Roughly representing a little over one-fifth of the urban population, these households will be able to spend more than \$600 a month and will want to consume better products.

As a consequence, Somali society will face a dual challenge in 2017. Rural people will be on average less privileged than the urban population and subject to different risks: the fight against al-Shabaab will not be over, protection money will still have to be paid to rogue militias (often government soldiers) on the way to local markets, and access to remittances will be less frequent than in towns. This is unsurprising, especially at the end of a conflict, but the gap between these two groups is likely to increase after 2012. A second problem is shared by many countries where remittances are a leading factor in the economy: the market will be segmented, with high-value products accessible only to a narrow social stratum because importers expect high and quick profits. Much less attention will be paid to the needs of the masses because the rotation of capital will be slower in this sector and risks higher due to continuing low-level insecurity. Inflation created by this divide will also be a problem for the lay population, but not for those who have access to hard currency.

Somalia is a rich country, beyond its alleged oil and minerals (including precious stones). Agriculture should be a pillar for reconstruction, since it is a sector that can create employment, help feed the population without mobilising hard currency and generate exports. Yet, despite some superficial improvements, little is set to change in this sector.

Huge investments are required, and there are no decent regulations to protect foreign investors outside the usual aid business. Despite suggestions made by donors over recent years, it is unlikely that by 2017 the Somali government will show any inclination to work out a decent compromise on this issue. Officials will still be looking for quick fixes and easy bribes, but the covert presence of al-Shabaab in agricultural areas (farmers are one of its most important constituencies), the sensitivity of challenging customary land tenure and the conditions imposed by foreign investors (starting with Asians

and Italians) make any moves liable to criticism from one sector or another. In a nutshell, there will be a trend towards normalisation, but much more will be needed to keep young people in the countryside and rebuild a vibrant agricultural sector.

Fishing is also likely to be a very sensitive issue with Somali officials in 2017. Fighting piracy has been one of the priorities of Western states over recent years. The campaign waged by the international maritime force may eventually succeed in reducing piracy, but largely because of actions undertaken on land by militias trained by private security companies. Pirates could either disband, or transform into criminal gangs with less control from their clans and with a focus on kidnapping. Yet in spite of these advances and constant international backing, the new Somali government has been unwilling or unable to set up and enforce new regulations for the fisheries sector that would provide a minimum of transparency, in terms of contracting foreign companies and accounting fees (Marchal, 2011a).

Peace may be officially celebrated within the coming five years, but that does not mean business will thrive. Protection is still a need, and state-run law enforcement agencies will continue to work in favour of private or group interests, reminiscent of the way they operated in the 1980s. If a businessman is a front for an influential politician or has good connections within the police, security forces and the army, he can enjoy preferential status at customs and disrespect most of the rules. If not, he has to pay. This system will still be accepted in all ports. Standstill and informal compromises will be the norms, not the exceptions.

The Sisyphean attempt to rebuild a state: progress, limits and failure

Through sheer exhaustion, the Somalis have made several important arguments against the *doxa* on state-building cultivated by the international community (Cramer, 2006). The first of these is that state-building is not a series of events, but the enforcement day after day of rules

that are loosely understood in the same way by state officials. When the international community and many Somali operators were betting on huge meetings to reach a lasting resolution of conflicts, the real process was much more entwined with the slow return to normalcy that pushed civil servants, police and military officers to show up every working day before 10 a.m. at their offices and not do so merely for their private interests.

A second lesson was that state-building is not defined by the thoughts or wishes of the generations that were sacrificed because of civil war. While most foreigners, including academics, have cultivated for two decades a vision of a rebuilt Somali state as federal or highly decentralised, Somali politicians have invoked a different model that draws more on the Somali state built at a time when pan-Somalism was vibrant and centralisation perceived as a synonym for national sovereignty. Regional leaders certainly claim federalism is the best way to develop their home bases, while clan politics also push in the same direction. But these dynamics are contradicted by other powerful trends.

In an echo of the cold war, one of the country's main assets is its ability to negotiate with the international community, play foreign allies and partners off against one another, and claim the role of client to defend its own sovereignty – the smart game exemplified by Somalia's former leader, Mahamed Siyaad Barre. In endorsing this approach once again in 2017, Somali politicians will be confirming the lessons drawn from federal experiences in neighbouring countries, such as Sudan, Ethiopia, and, with some qualifications, Kenya after the 2010 constitution was enforced: the central state is still the most powerful political and economic actor, and federal states are mostly a way to get co-opted at the centre.

This Somali refusal to endorse (and enforce) federalism, despite its mention in the constitution and in political rhetoric, is also linked to more ideological dynamics. In 2017 national unity will still have a strong appeal to most Somalis, as was the case from the 1940s up to the late 1970s at the very least. The perception of Ethiopia as a hostile Christian neighbouring state has not changed much and alliances with Addis Ababa have always been conceived as tactical moves

rooted in the acknowledgement that opposing Ethiopia head on could be counterproductive.

Furthermore, the growing influence of political Islam from the late 1990s is not a superficial phenomenon linked to the vacuum created by clan-based militias and their poor management of the population. It corresponds instead to the reassertion of a political trend that was coerced under Mahamed Siyaad Barre, before fragmenting and then scattering through the process of exile. It is also the outcome of more global and regional dynamics: the growth of Salafism in Ethiopia is not a mere effect of Sudanese proselytism; the grievances of coastal people in Kenya after 2006 are not the simple outcome of blunders provoked by a debatable counter-terrorist policy. In Somalia, especially after 2006, political Islam has become another way to express a Somali national identity against intrusive neighbours. This reality does not imply that a majority of people are supportive of Islamist groups, but rather that the latter provide a sense of relief when people think their national sovereignty is under attack.

With a new provisional constitution currently in the pipeline, the rule of the TFG is set to end shortly (the formal end of its mandate is August 2012). Many people believe that the new Somalia will be made up of many federal states, but in all likelihood there will be a backlash against this decentralising trend. Puntland and Somaliland may enter into a new conflict about borders while also engaging on different levels in talks with Mogadishu. The fissiparousness of clan politics will create a new state of affairs in which potential federal states fragment from within in order to contradict their leadership and negotiate better positions in the central government. In that sense, although formally federal, the practice of the Somali state may well be to use positions in the federal states to get promoted at the centre: this is similar to the political behaviour of France rather than Switzerland, if a comparison is required.

As witnessed in Somaliland, there is a very long journey from a basic peace settlement to state-building, and there is always a risk that the process by which peace is maintained will be confused with that of building a state. It is quite possible that progress in rebuilding some kind of state apparatus and the economy will be

made by 2017, thanks to the involvement of the international community. Civil servants may be more or less present for part of the day. Ministers will not fight on the tarmac of airports and will not always be overseas. People will go to the beach on Thursday and Friday afternoons, proving they are busy on the other days of the week.

The precise condition in 2017 of the main armed threat to the Somali state, al-Shabaab, is the most difficult development to predict (Marchal, 2011b). While U.S. analysts consistently hope the movement will collapse from its internal contradictions, a somewhat different set of events is more likely to unfold. One scenario runs as follows. After the death of key leaders caused by U.S. strikes early 2013, a group of al-Shabaab cadres and fighters will split from the main grouping under the assumption that they would not join the government, but would be acknowledged as controllers of a territory and rule it as a de facto authority. The deal, however, will be short-lived. Many commanders will be killed, allegedly by al-Shabaab, and in a matter of weeks a number of militias will disband, with some of them joining the official Somali army. The few surviving leaders will go into exile in Saudi Arabia or Qatar, waiting for better times. Other splits will be linked to the reassertion of clan politics in al-Shabaab's internal management. Many foreign fighters, meanwhile, will leave for Yemen, where the war will still be ongoing, or to other African countries in an attempt to repeat what al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb has done so successfully.

By 2017 the remaining core group of al-Shabaab will face challenges. The first will be to withstand the divisions it has endured for the sake of survival. A fraction of this core group will decide to leave Somalia and wage jihad in other countries of the region, as mentioned above. But in Somalia itself, al-Shabaab will be more intent on keeping control of remote territories and cultivating the friendship of sub-clans through a more flexible ideology, the security it provides, and the hostility the lay population feels towards their "legal" authorities. These sanctuaries will allow al-Shabaab to continue an extremely asymmetric war against the central government and its foreign allies. The lack of leadership and the usual weaknesses of the Somali government will also provide the group with good arguments to convince people to join the fray.

Al-Shabaab's credibility may also be buttressed by the emergence of other movements in the Sahel, while the continuing instability situation in Yemen – still unresolved – will underline that using drones against a jihadi movement may be counterproductive.

Conclusion: the resilience of authoritarianism

Looking forward to 2017, a leading concern for Somali governance will be the possible inclination towards authoritarianism based on clan affiliation, which will be justified by the low-level war against al-Shabaab. From the early 2010s Western and regional security services helped build new police and security services in Somalia. Since the strategic aim was to weaken the insurgency at all costs, the methods were brutal and primitive: people were arrested, often tortured, rarely put in front of a court, and, most often, kept in jail for weeks or months without even a formal indictment.

While this was widely accepted by the population in the early years, it is likely that by 2017 the Somali security services will have won autonomy from their foreign patrons and be protecting their own interests as much as those of the state. Few in the political elites remember how the misbehaviour of the security services and the army under Siad Barre was a leading cause of the popular revolt in Somaliland first, and later that in Mogadishu in the 1980s.

However, foreign criticism of recurrent violations of human rights may be limited. Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda are authoritarian regimes (in diverse ways). Initially, Kenya would react, but its censure might be short-lived if a spate of major terror attacks were to target the country. International donors would also pay lip service to the issue: there is too much oil in the region and there are too many economic stakes to be disturbed by human rights issues. Somalia may thus believe that it is reaching the end of its conflict against al-Shabaab only to find itself confronting new fronts that open in response to the abuses carried out by its state security services.

This scenario may sound gloomy, but most of these dynamics are already present in the political landscape. It is always possible, of course, that the international community will show a strength and commitment that are underestimated in this report. The way it has coped with the end of the transitional government arrangements, however, makes this appear quite unlikely.

Instead, this report points to the component parts of a better donor strategy. Firstly, the strategy must address the differences between foreign powers engaged in Somalia, including the current polarisation between Islamic and Western states. It is also essential that a united international community plays collectively for the same solution in Somalia. Secondly, the strategy must be realistic and knowledgeable about Somalia, i.e. answers to difficult questions have to be expressed in realistic terms. What would be the best end to the conflict with al-Shabaab? Should we say for years that al-Shabaab will be eradicated, only to change our tune as soon as other priorities emerge? Why push Somalis to make important decisions on the role of Islam in their polity at a time of great stress? Why not first secure their livelihood and allow them the time to think twice about important issues? Why should people decide on federalism without having a concrete sense of it? Why, in short, should the international community be so ideological instead of pragmatic?

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