

BULLETIN

No. 98 (431) • October 16, 2012 • © PISM

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Transformation of Somalia: Lessons Learnt for the European Union

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The election of Somalia's new president and the peaceful transfer of power concluded yet another chapter in that country's transformation. It does not mean, however, that Somalia is free of its numerous problems. Their consequences are felt in sub-Saharan and East Africa and the Indian Ocean region. Consequently, the international community, and especially the EU, Somalia's biggest donor, is forced to continue its involvement in the country and to re-adapt its focus and scope to the changing local conditions.

After the fall of Mohammed Siad Barre's dictatorial government in 1991, Somalia was declared a failed state as during the next 13 years all efforts to rebuild a central state were not successful. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia, formed in 2004 and supported by the international community, constituted the latest attempt to re-create a Somali state. The TFG terminated its existence eight years later, in August 2012, as Somali politicians, under pressure from the UN, decided to terminate the temporary nature of the country's political process and disbanded the government. The next month, the newly constituted Somali parliament elected Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, an academic, as the new president of Somalia. The election was Somalia's first peaceful transfer of power in 40 years. This undoubted success does not mean, however, that the country's transformation is over because in the coming years Somalia will continue to struggle with problems connected with internal security and instable political, constitutional and humanitarian situations.

Internal Security Issues. President Mohamud's government controls up to 20% of the country's territory. Any territorial gains are dependent on military successes with by the Ethiopian military and units of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which support Mohamud's government. Their presence is mostly aimed at the Islamist militia that has been linked with Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab (AS, or "Youth"), which controls wide swaths of central and southern Somalia. AS is also active in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, where in September 2012 it attempted a suicide attack on the newly elected president. During the last year, however, the organisation suffered a series of defeats culminating with the loss of the actual Somali Islamist capital, the port city of Kismayo, to Kenyan troops. This does not mean the end of AS as its members will now attempt to launch guerrilla attacks from remote bases.

Political Issues. The Somali political process is not free of controversy as its newly constituted parliament was not chosen in free elections by popular vote but through nomination by Somali clan elders. The nominations proved controversial as some questioned the biographies of some of the potential MPs or were concerned with the level of corruption accompanying the exercise. Moreover, the parliament's line-up was also rumoured not to have accurately reflected the clan divisions of Somali society. Despite such concerns, Somalia's parliament is mostly composed of political debutantes who are not connected with the unpopular rule of the previous president—Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. The consequence of this was the rather surprising choice of Mohamud (most commentators predicted Ahmed would easily win another term) as Somalia's new president.

The new president's first task will be to ensure that the country's few central administrative organs are in a position to develop further, as this would strengthen their legitimacy. To improve Somalia's governance and enhance its government standing, the authorities will have to energetically oppose and limit corruption, which according to UN data is responsible for the loss of up to 70% of financial assistance to Somalia. Nonetheless, any attempt at reform will be met with ferocious resistance from

politicians, clan, local and regional leaders or the proponents of the TFG who benefited from the seemingly transitional and temporary nature of the arrangements under which the caretaker government functioned for eight years.

Constitutional Issues. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Somalia—which was approved in August 2012 by the National Constitutional Assembly, a group nominated by Somali clan elders, but not submitted to a popular vote in a referendum because of the gravity of the internal security situation—assumes that the country will have a federal structure. However, it is imprecise as to the borders and competences of the Somali regions, and these will have to be worked out by President Mohamud's administration. In practice, Somalia suffers from the presence of at least a few centres of power, independent of the government in Mogadishu, which will have to develop a far-reaching compromise if the country is to become unified and return to its pre-1991 borders. Somaliland, which has always been only under illusory control by Mogadishu and practically independent from 1991, and Puntland, Galmaduug or Jubaland (a southern Somali-Kenyan protectorate) might remain unfavourably attuned towards functioning within the same, federal state.

Humanitarian Issues. Somalia is in the midst of one of the gravest humanitarian crises. After the 2011 drought and its reluctance to accept assistance from abroad, up to 2.5 million Somalis (more than 25% of the population) now needs humanitarian assistance. More than 1.3 million inhabitants of Somalia are internally displaced persons who were forced to leave their homes but remained in the country, and another million have been forced to seek shelter in one of the neighbouring countries. Their situation could improve (especially in light of the UN revelations of corruption in assistance to Somalia) with more effective involvement by countries and organisations already present in Somalia. This will be possible, however, only if there is improvement in Somalia's internal security situation and its political and constitutional issues are solved.

EU Involvement and Perspectives. The international community has been involved in the reconstruction of Somalia since 1991, e.g., the activities of 17 EU agencies, funds and programmes. Although others are involved, the EU is the biggest aid donor to Somalia. In 2011, it spent €280 million on infrastructure, health services and education development and democratisation projects. Similar priorities for Somalia are present in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme 2012–2015. Poland's most prominent, visible and effective assistance to Somalia comes in the form of Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) activity, which includes the EUNAVFOR-Atalanta mission, tasked with combating piracy off the coast of Somalia and in the Indian Ocean, the EUTM mission in Uganda, which is responsible for training Somali troops, the EUCAP Nestor mission, aimed at supporting regional maritime capacity-building in the Horn of Africa and Western Indian Ocean states, and in EU funding for AMISOM.

In light of the recent success by EUNAVFOR-Atalanta in fighting pirates (ships taken per year dropped from 47 to five in just two years) and the progress by Somali, Ethiopian and AMISOM troops in central and southern Somalia, a cautiously optimistic assessment of EU CSDP involvement in Somalia is warranted. Nonetheless, this is one of an ongoing character, and these gains must be utilised by the Somali government. Thus, a further intensification of CSDP activities should not be the only EU assistance priority for Somalia (despite the Kenyan proposal to broaden the EUNAVFOR-Atalanta mandate with the task of combating AS). It should also concentrate on aiding Somalis in their attempts to solve their political and constitutional crises—efforts which could prove successful if the country's internal security is assured. It is worth utilising in this process European experience with other states of sub-Saharan Africa where the EU is involved in strengthening democratic institutions, often successfully given the particular regional difficulties (nepotism and corruption), such as in Nigeria or Ghana. The EU should also promote the democratisation achievements in countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy and assist in strengthening local governance in Somalia, of which elements have survived the 20 years of state failure. Simultaneously, the EU should not insist on Somalia's endorsement of a federal structure, which may not be acceptable to practically independent Somaliland. The Somalis should be allowed to single-handedly configure the territorial structure of their country based on the principles of the country returning to its 1991 borders and the inclusion of the *de facto* "former" Somali regions in the re-established state.