

# **SOMALIA: TO MOVE BEYOND THE FAILED STATE**

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## SOMALIA: TO MOVE BEYOND THE FAILED STATE

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since 1991 Somalia has been the archetypal failed state. Several attempts to create a transitional set-up have failed, and the current one is on the brink of collapse, overtaken yet again by an Islamist insurgency, despite the support of an Ethiopian military intervention since December 2006. Over the last two years the situation has deteriorated into one of the world's worst humanitarian and security crises. The international community is preoccupied with a symptom – the piracy phenomenon – instead of concentrating on the core of the crisis, the need for a political settlement. The announced Ethiopian withdrawal, if it occurs, will open up a new period of uncertainty and risk. It could also provide a window of opportunity to relaunch a credible political process, however, if additional parties can be persuaded to join the Djibouti reconciliation talks, and local and international actors – including the U.S. and Ethiopia – accept that room must be found for much of the Islamist insurgency in that process and ultimately in a new government dispensation.

The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) has failed in four years to create a broad-based government and now is non-functional, existing almost only in name. President Abdillahi Yusuf has marginalised large parts of the population and exacerbated divisions. The latest confrontation with parliament and the prime minister has underlined that Yusuf hampers any progress on peace, has become a liability for the country's survival and should be encouraged to resign.

Ethiopia's attitude has hardened over the last few months, and the mood in certain circles in Addis Ababa has become almost hostile to the TFG leaders, in particular Yusuf. The intention to withdraw reflects this frustration, as well as unwillingness to continue to accept considerable losses in a war against the insurgency that is going badly. Opposition to the Ethiopian occupation has been the single issue on which the many elements of the fractious Islamist insurgency could agree. When that glue is removed, it is likely that infighting will increase, making it difficult for the insurgency to obtain complete military victory, or at least sustain it, and creating opportunities for political progress.

For now, however, the Islamist fighters are gaining ever more ground. All major towns in south-central Somalia have been captured by one faction or another except for Mogadishu, where TFG control is ever more contested, and Baidoa. The Islamists already dominate nearly as much territory as they did before the Ethiopian invasion, and a takeover of the entire south seems almost inevitable.

While the Djibouti peace process did initiate new dialogue, it has accomplished little in its eight months, not least because the parts of the Islamist insurgency that have the most guns and territory are not participants. The key aim of its architects was to create a powerful political alliance, capable of stabilising the country, marginalising the radicals and stemming the tide of Islamist militancy. This was quickly made unachievable by splits within the insurgent Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) as well as the TFG, and the rapid advance by the parts of the opposition, in particular radical militias like Al-Shabaab, that reject the process. The ARS faction located in Asmara (ARS-A) and its controversial leader, Hassan Dahir Aweys, also have stayed away from Djibouti. Those around the table – the ARS faction based in Djibouti (ARS-D) and the TFG – control very little territory. In addition, Yusuf has continuously undermined the process, as he believes Djibouti is ultimately a strategy to oust him.

Despite the reluctance of the international community to engage with the Islamist opposition, there is no other practical course than to reach out to its leaders in an effort to stabilise the security situation with a ceasefire and then move on with a process that addresses the root causes of the conflict. Support for the process from countries with moral authority or influence on the militias, such as Eritrea, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, will need to be sought.

Timing is vital. The African Union peacekeeping mission (AMISOM) originally sent to Mogadishu to relieve the Ethiopians is far too small and weak and will be at increasing risk from insurgent attacks following the Ethiopian withdrawal. But it would be a bad idea

to try to send a UN peacekeeping mission in now, as the U.S. is urging the Security Council to do, when there is no viable peace process and sufficient troops cannot be found. The priority must be the political settlement, after which UN peacekeepers will have a vital, traditional monitoring role to play.

There is no guarantee that a political settlement is achievable. The militias that have carried the fight to the TFG and the Ethiopians and now control most of the territory will be reluctant to negotiate just when they have reason to believe that they have defeated their enemies and can take what they want with guns. But there is no good alternative to making the attempt. One way or the other, Somalia is likely to be dominated by Islamist forces. It makes sense for the international community to use the incentive of international recognition and extensive support for such a regime to ensure that it draws in a wide spectrum of militia elements, including not only ARS-A but also Al-Shabaab elements; respects the territorial integrity of its neighbours, including Ethiopia, and the internationally guaranteed rights of its people; and renounces any relationship with terrorists.

Consultations should be pursued with Muslim countries from outside the region (Morocco, Jordan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh) about troop pledges so that the UN could swiftly introduce a peacekeeping operation to support implementation of a serious ceasefire agreement, the first step toward a genuine political settlement. If hard-core elements reject negotiation and either press on to establish a more extreme regime or fall into conflict with each other, however, Somalia will become an even more chaotic and dangerous place. No conceivable peacekeeping force could reasonably be expected to bring order. Parallel to the urgent efforts needed to reform and re-energise the political process, therefore, contingency planning should be started so that AMISOM can be swiftly evacuated if the security situation deteriorates further, and it is repeatedly attacked. Planning will also be needed on how such a Somalia might be cordoned off in a way that minimises its ability to export instability and perhaps terror to the region and even beyond.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **To the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative (SRSG):**

1. Use intermediaries and back channels to reach out to the insurgent groups, including the Asmara-based ARS faction (ARS-A) led by Hassan Dahir Aweys and Al-Shabaab, and be prepared to take in to the

negotiations members of such groups even if their current leadership refuses.

2. Set negotiation of a comprehensive ceasefire as the first step for the expanded Djibouti peace talks toward a power-sharing arrangement.
3. Establish, once a ceasefire has been secured, a structure organised in commissions, each with no more than 30 participants, to open negotiations on the following issues:
  - (a) the drafting of a new constitution for Somalia within its current internationally recognised boundaries and including the clarification of its internal state boundaries, including addressing the implications of these changes for the regions of Somaliland and Puntland;
  - (b) the integration of all armed forces into a common army and regional police forces, devoted to the establishment of a secure environment for completion of the transition;
  - (c) a comprehensive plan for the adoption of the constitution by referendum, the holding of national elections and the progressive integration of the various territories into the constitutional framework; and
  - (d) transitional justice processes to address impunity and national reconciliation requirements.
4. Encourage Somali participants in the Djibouti process to use influential clan leaders, business community leaders, clerics and civil society to create momentum and grassroots support for that process.

### **To the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia:**

5. Negotiate humanitarian access separately from the Djibouti peace process, geographic area by geographic area, to speed up food supplies and alleviate the dire humanitarian situation.

### **To the United Nations Security Council:**

6. Implement sanctions against a list of individuals who are known spoilers of the peace process.
7. Authorise a UN peacekeeping operation only when a comprehensive ceasefire has been achieved and a viable political process is in progress.
8. Appoint an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity by all sides and provide recommendations for a judicial process to address them and a reconciliation process that should be incorporated in a negotiated settlement.

9. Enhance efforts to implement the Ethiopian-Eritrea border settlement, in part to reduce the “proxy war” impact of this dispute on Somalia.

**To the Transitional Federal President:**

10. Resign from office and participate in the political process in a privileged role as former TFG president.

**To the Transitional Federal Parliament:**

11. Proceed with an impeachment process in the absence of the TFG president’s voluntary resignation and appoint to the office after the president resigns a more conciliatory personality who has the capability to reach out to all parties.

**To the Insurgent Groups:**

12. Renounce violence and human rights abuses, state a commitment to the peace process, clarify positions on democracy and the role of Sharia (Islamic law) in organising Somali society and renounce any relationship with al-Qaeda or other terrorists.
13. Renounce irredentist claims over the Ogaden made in the past and reassure Ethiopia of commitment to the principles of good neighbourliness.

**To the Government of Ethiopia:**

14. Withdraw its troops swiftly and in accordance with the Djibouti accords.
15. Investigate allegations of human rights abuses by the Ethiopian army in Somalia and support the new Djibouti political process as outlined above.

**To the Government of Eritrea:**

16. End support for dissident Somali groups and support the Djibouti political process.

**To the U.S. Government:**

17. Rebalance its counter-terrorism strategy in Somalia to give greater weight to a political approach, support intra-Somali negotiations, including with the Islamist insurgency, and consider removing individuals and groups from its terrorism lists in exchange for a constructive role in the peace process.
18. Support the Djibouti process as described above, give support to Prime Minister Nur Adde and press for the resignation of Abdillahi Yusuf as TFG president.

**To the European Union and its Member States:**

19. Support politically and financially the political processes described above and Prime Minister Nur Adde, while ceasing all supportive contacts with President Abdillahi Yusuf so as to encourage his resignation.

**To the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the African Union Peace Support Operations Division:**

20. Start contingency planning to support swift evacuation of AMISOM if the mission is repeatedly attacked in Mogadishu, and lead consultations with troop-contributing countries for the deployment of a UN mission to support implementation of a cease-fire agreement if agreed in the Djibouti process and a viable political process is in progress.

**Nairobi/Brussels, 23 December 2008**

## SOMALIA: TO MOVE BEYOND THE FAILED STATE

### I. INTRODUCTION

Somalia, a failed state for a generation, is in a grave new security, political and humanitarian crisis. Thousands of civilians have died in the violence that has engulfed the country in the last two years. The UN says that over one million have been displaced and up to 3.2 million need humanitarian assistance. Living conditions have worsened, and millions are now on the brink of mass starvation as inflation pushes the price of food and other essential commodities beyond reach.

The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) has proved itself incapable to deal with this human catastrophe or to protect its citizens. Ethiopia's armed intervention in December 2006 led to the overthrow of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), a group Addis Ababa saw as an existential threat, but this military triumph has been undermined by a resilient insurgency and the TFG's failure to consolidate its authority. Far from shoring up the government's shaky legitimacy, it has deepened public disaffection, inflamed Somali nationalism and intensified the pace of religious extremism and radicalisation.

The appointment of the respected Nur Hassan Hussein (Nur Adde) as prime minister in late 2007 was widely welcomed but has done little to improve the feeble government's prospects or overcome the crisis of legitimacy, which has stymied its attempts to stamp its authority over the country. As currently constituted, the TFG is unlikely to survive unless it settles politically with the opposition.

The international response has been inadequate. Instead of engaging meaningfully and forcefully in the search for a political solution, including with such regional actors as Ethiopia, Eritrea and Saudi Arabia, major outside actors have hurt the process (the U.S.) or sought vainly to prop up the TFG (the Europeans) and are now willing to support its extension, despite its disastrous record, while concentrating on the piracy issue to protect their own commercial interests. The European naval mission, like its NATO precursor, will not help the suffering Somalis significantly, because it is meant to address a symptom, not the underlying problem: the lack of a comprehensive political solution to the Somalia conflict.

### II. ANOTHER FAILED TRANSITION

#### A. THE ETHIOPIAN GAMBIT

Ethiopian authorities were from the outset the most suspicious of the UIC and agreed only reluctantly and at U.S. insistence to give political dialogue a chance. Once the U.S. position on the courts shifted in late 2006, the Ethiopians were able to pursue a military solution to what they considered an unacceptable threat on their country's borders. The subsequent relationship with the Americans as they prepared and executed an offensive was more complex and contentious than has generally been acknowledged. The U.S. did not "sub-contract out" its war on terror to a regional ally, or "puppet", as some commentators subsequently claimed.<sup>1</sup> There were sharp differences in Washington over Somalia policy between the Departments of State and Defense, and the U.S. was initially reluctant to support the offensive. It did so only once it was clear that Ethiopia was committed to it, and then in order to ensure it succeeded and also served its own counter-terrorism purposes.<sup>2</sup>

Ethiopia's primary objective was to crush the UIC and the core interest groups on which it was based – the Islamists and the wider "Mogadishu Group" coalition centred on the Habar Gidir clans, which have challenged its interests in Somalia since the mid-1990s.<sup>3</sup> Its principal fear is the rise of a strong, centralist, nationalist or Islamist state there that would revive irredentist claims on Ethiopian territory and, like Eritrea,

<sup>1</sup> Mark Mazzetti, "Pentagon sees move in Somalia as blueprint", *The New York Times*, 13 January 2007. An attempt by a Defense Department source to present the "success" in Somalia as an example of the new U.S. policy of outsourcing counter-terrorism operations to regional allies provoked an angry response from Ethiopia.

<sup>2</sup> Crisis Group interviews, U.S. government officials, February 2007.

<sup>3</sup> The Mogadishu Group refers to a powerful alliance of businessmen, faction leaders and clan elders from the Habar Gidir sub-clans of the Hawiye. This is not a Western-style, exclusive members club, but rather a loose assembly of powerful men who share a common clan lineage and often see themselves as protectors of the clan interest.

sponsor armed insurgencies inside the country. A secondary but important policy priority was to ensure the survival of its client, the TFG. The U.S. preoccupation was narrower, focused almost entirely on fighting, with the help of Mogadishu-based militia leaders and the TFG, the few foreign al-Qaeda operatives believed to be enjoying safe haven in southern Somalia.<sup>4</sup> Both partners, however, lacked the required significant support among the powerful Habar Gidir clans, especially the Habar Gidir/Ayr sub-clan, which has emerged as a major source of top business and Islamist leaders.<sup>5</sup>

Analysts have warned for years that Ethiopia risked getting caught in a quagmire if it occupied Somalia militarily, recalling the 1993 debacle in Mogadishu, when the UN mission (UNOSOM) became involved in an unwinnable guerrilla war.<sup>6</sup> It was believed that UIC hardliners hoped to trigger exactly that kind of urban war – one which would bog Ethiopia down in the capital and spark both a popular uprising and extensive support from the Islamic world. Conventional wisdom, however, held that Ethiopia understood this trap and would seek to avoid it, either by redeploying after a quick strike or by surrounding rather than occupying Mogadishu.

The actual trajectory of the war that erupted in late December 2006, however, took virtually everyone by surprise and produced a “stunning reversal of fortune” for the Islamists.<sup>7</sup> First, the UIC inexplicably deployed large forces – including many poorly trained recruits and some foreign mujahidin fighters – in the open countryside, where they were routed by the technologically superior Ethiopian army. The fighters then fell back to Mogadishu, where it was expected they would at last conduct an urban guerrilla war. Instead, facing recriminations from clan elders, moderate Islamists and business supporters, the UIC dissolved its council and turned over most weapons and armed men to clan leaders in the capital. UIC leaders and residual members of the Al-Shabaab militia then fled south toward Kenya, where they took more losses in

another engagement. Some were arrested trying to cross the border; others regrouped in the remote bush of coastal southern Somalia.

The UIC’s sudden retreat toward the Kenyan border led to a third surprise, a U.S. decision to launch two AC-130 gunship attacks on convoys suspected of transporting three high-value foreign al-Qaeda suspects near the Kenyan border. Although these failed to kill their targets,<sup>8</sup> they had a lasting political impact in Somalia, as they reinforced a widespread conviction that the Ethiopian offensive was directed and orchestrated by Washington. For regional analysts, the air strikes – which were aimed at foreign al-Qaeda suspects, not Somali Islamists – confirmed that the U.S. and Ethiopia were waging two distinct wars in Somalia – one against Somali Islamists threatening Ethiopian interests, the other against an al-Qaeda cell threatening U.S. security.

The gambit briefly succeeded beyond Ethiopia’s wildest expectations and appeared to vindicate U.S. hawks, who had dismissed the quagmire fears. But U.S. and Ethiopian energies had been devoted almost entirely to the military operation, and whatever little planning had been done with regard to post-UIC Somalia was quickly overtaken by events. The result was a scramble to improvise policy in the face of a dramatically new Mogadishu situation.

## B. THE TFG’S FLAWS

The TFG was formed in October 2004 after two years of difficult negotiations in Kenya led by the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).<sup>9</sup> It has been weakened by continuous infighting between the presidency and the prime minister that led to the (welcome) ousting of Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Gedi in late 2007; President Abdillahi Yusuf’s repeated rebuffs of efforts to make it more inclusive; failure to meet any of its own targets for the transition; and the military prowess of the insurgency. It is now unpopular everywhere in Somalia, has lost territorial control as well as credibility and, unless urgent action is taken to broaden its composition, appears headed toward collapse.

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<sup>4</sup> Ken Menkhaus, “The Somali Crisis: Tragedy in Five Acts”, *African Affairs*, Summer 2007.

<sup>5</sup> The first clan-based Sharia (Islamic law) courts to form radical Al-Shabaab militia in Mogadishu were Ayr courts. Both UIC leader Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys and Al-Shabaab militia leader Aden Hashi Farah Ayro are from the Ayr sub-clan. See Crisis Group Africa Report N°100, *Somalia’s Islamists*, 12 December 2005.

<sup>6</sup> “Somalia Remains A Nation In Name Only – Four Years After U.N. Intervention, It’s Overrun By Gangs, Ruled By No One”, *The Seattle Times/The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 February 1998.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, “Somalia’s Islamists vow never to surrender,” *The New York Times*, 30 December 2006.

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<sup>8</sup> Confirmation that eight Al-Shabaab militia fighters but no al-Qaeda figures were killed in the air strike near Ras Kaambooni was provided by U.S. Assistant Secretary for Defense Teresa Whelan at a conference on Somalia held by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, 17 January 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Its members are Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.



## 1. Structural flaws

The structural problems that plague the TFG hinge on three main issues: the Transitional Federal Charter (TFC), the composition of parliament (TFP) and federalism. The Charter's system of governance is meant to be based on democratic and pluralist principles consistent with the profound attachment of the Somali people to their religion and culture.<sup>10</sup> But it is an awkward, ill-defined and overly elaborate document, replete with errors, inconsistencies and contradictions. Its failure to establish checks and balances, in particular a clear division of labour between the president and the prime minister, has facilitated Yusuf's efforts to undermine his chief minister.

Similarly, the vaguely defined process for replacing members of parliament has turned the TFP into a fractious body marked by a constant struggle between political and clan blocs. This has led to seat-swapping, mainly on grounds of political expedience, and has enabled the president to fill the institution with his own supporters. There have been allegations that members are regularly bribed or pressured to vote in a certain way, often in the interest of the president. Salaries are usually paid on time, and members also get non-statutory "allowances" not available to other public servants. However, with the worsened security situation, they come to Baidoa only for a major vote, if at all. The parliamentary calendar is not known beforehand, and bills are often introduced without having been scrutinised by a committee, as regulations stipulate. Months can elapse before a quorum is available.

Yet, in spite of these shortcomings, the competing power blocs often see parliament as a crucial institution in their struggles. President Yusuf long felt politically unassailable, with a loyal speaker and a majority of members on his side.<sup>11</sup> This began to change rapidly after Ethiopia and the international community foiled an attempt by his supporters to oust Prime Minister Nur Adde in August 2008. Since then, a majority of members have begun to side with the prime minister, who now enjoys extensive support in the body and for the time being, at least, appears more secure than Yusuf. The division between president and parliament became more dramatic yet in mid-December, when the legislators again rebuffed the president's effort to remove

Nur Adde, and Yusuf responded by insisting he would name a replacement unilaterally.<sup>12</sup>

The parliament is now believed to be gearing up for a crucial vote to extend the life of the TFG by two years, something the president is said to be pushing hard for. Crisis Group was told repeatedly that money was "being poured in" in to facilitate passage by early 2009.<sup>13</sup> The decision will be contentious, but it is unlikely opponents can muster enough votes to defeat such an extension.

Lastly, federalism remains controversial, seen by many as a shift towards Ethiopia's agenda and a major concession to Yusuf, who has long advocated a federal Somalia. Though the concept was written into the Charter, it has been impossible to implement.<sup>14</sup> The federal institutions, with few exceptions, are non-existent; a constitutional referendum is not imminent because the document has not been completed, and Somaliland's demands for self-determination have not been addressed.

## 2. Clan dynamics

The process that led to creation of the TFG was acrimonious and deeply divisive, with each clan staking claims to key cabinet posts. Although the 4.5 clan-quota system<sup>15</sup> for allocating cabinet posts was agreed, it was inevitable that some clans who failed to obtain such posts would feel aggrieved. Beneath the unity and reconciliation rhetoric, therefore, TFG infighting also reflects complex inter-clan rivalry. Darod-Hawiye mistrust and rivalry have disfigured politics since independence. These two major clans have cooperated or forged temporary alliances, but even at the best of

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<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, "Somali's president appoints premier", *The New York Times*, 17 December 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Nairobi, July 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Article 71 (9) provides that the constitution must be ratified by a referendum, making it possible to reject a federal set-up.

<sup>15</sup> The 4.5 formula was first adopted by the Transitional National Government in 2000. It allocates an equal number of seats in parliament to each of the four major clan-families – the Darood, Hawiye, Dir, and Digele-Mirifle – and half that number to remaining minority groups. The proposed formula for clan representation in parliament envisions 400 seats divided evenly between the four major clan groups, and minority groups collectively receiving half as many seats as a major clan (ie, 84 seats for each major clan, 42 seats for minorities and 22 additional seats to be allocated at the discretion of the Technical Committee). The appeal of the clan formula derives mainly from the principle that no major clan is inherently superior to any other, and that it distributes decision-making power more evenly among delegates but has now been largely rejected as non-functional by most actors.

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<sup>10</sup> For analysis of the Charter see Crisis Group Africa Report N°88, *Somalia: Continuation of War by Other Means?*, 21 December 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Baidoa, April 2008.

times their relationship is one of uneasy *détente*. With Yusuf representing Darod interests and the prime minister Hawiye interests, a balance should have been established. But the Hawiye view the president as the archetypal Darod warlord, bent on perpetuating his clan's supremacy,<sup>16</sup> an impression that has been reinforced by policies that have led to the destruction of the capital, displacement of hundreds of thousands and serious damage to the Bakaaraha market, the hub of Hawiye economic power.

It is thus no surprise that the strongest opposition to Yusuf has often come from the Hawiye, who have also been the backbone of the UIC and the ongoing Islamist insurgency and provide its top leaders, Hassan Dahir Aweys (Ayr sub-clan of the Habar Gidir) and Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmad (Abgal sub-clan). The bulk of UIC fighters and supporters were Hawiye, as is a majority of the Al-Shabaab militia. Despite its Hawiye roots, however, the UIC was determined to build itself as an Islamist ideological movement across all the major clans. It used deeply rooted anti-Ethiopia sentiments to project itself as a nationalist movement fighting the oppressor.

However, the cliché reduction of everything in the country to the clan dynamic is inadequate to explain power and societal trends. Power configurations are not necessarily determined by such factors. The new reality is murkier and sometimes paradoxical. The political landscape is witnessing the emergence of cross-clan power configurations, based sometimes on ideology as the UIC, but at times on political expediency as the TFG or even the opposition Alliance for Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS). The TFG has been founded on a clan-quota system; the ARS was equally representative of all the major clans. This cross-clan alliance building trend, however, is also contradicted by the re-emergence of clan enclaves, as large swathes of the country revert back to a style of clan governance that predates colonialism.

The rise of criminal gangs operating largely outside the clan system is another novel phenomenon. The new organised crime – piracy, people smuggling, counterfeit banknotes and kidnapping – is run by syndicates that have forged cross-clan networks. This is particularly discernible in the north-eastern autonomous region of Puntland, where sophisticated syndicates have emerged.

That clan elders are now targets in the violence sweeping the country is the best indicator that the

classical clan system is fraying.<sup>17</sup> Even during the worst of inter-clan feuds, elders had always been respected and played a recognised conflict mediation role, with access to the key players. The apparent erosion of their power does not mean, however, that they no longer wield influence. Part of the crisis in the south stems from the inability, perhaps the unwillingness, to bring them fully into the political decision-making process.<sup>18</sup> No headway can be made in any peace-making process in the south if clan elders do not have an effective part.

## C. THE POWER CENTRES AND THEIR INTERNAL STRUGGLES

### 1. The presidency

The election of Yusuf as president in 2004 inevitably divided Somalia into winners and losers.<sup>19</sup> From the beginning, he was a hard sell, a traditional warlord, whose military experience and political ambition have kept him in politics for four decades but widely perceived as too close to Ethiopia. Combined with his support for a federal government, this clearly places him in one camp. What was needed for the TFG to work was a president skilled in cross-clan alliance building, but Yusuf's polarising and authoritarian character quickly alienated even his closest allies. His health, the subject of much speculation, has visibly deteriorated in recent years and presumably has hampered his ability to govern effectively.<sup>20</sup>

Yusuf was unwilling to create a genuinely broad-based government, forming instead a factional coalition that exacerbated divisions and rendered the TFG non-functional, incapable of delivering the bare minimum of the transitional agenda. Instead of utilising the brief

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<sup>17</sup> Three clan elders were killed by gunmen while distributing relief food outside Mogadishu. "Somalis shot as they hand out aid", BBC News (online), 18 July 2008.

<sup>18</sup> In Somaliland the Golaha Gurtida (Council of Elders) has significantly aided conflict resolution and consolidation of consensual-style politics.

<sup>19</sup> Yusuf's opponents, of course, were quick to dismiss his victory, arguing that the whole process was deeply flawed and that Kenya and Ethiopia had influenced the vote. The mood across Somalia was largely apathetic. There was a general feeling of *déjà vu*, understandable considering that more than a dozen peace processes had led nowhere. The appointment of a largely unknown veterinary professor, Ali Mohammed Gedi (Hawiye), as prime minister did not persuade sceptics.

<sup>20</sup> While his resilience and longevity is remarkable, his health has visibly deteriorated since 2007. He is said to be suffering from an early onset of Parkinson's Disease.

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<sup>16</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mogadishu, Baidoa and Nairobi, March-April 2008.

supremacy provided by Ethiopia's military intervention to begin the hard task of national reconciliation, the TFG became complacent and arrogant. Worse, it entrenched hard-line elements in the belief the national crisis could be settled by force. A triumphant TFG, dominated by militarists and faction leaders used to wielding a big stick, had little or no incentive for meaningful dialogue with its adversaries. Yusuf has paid lip service to power sharing, while demonstrating an instinctive resistance to abandoning the notion of politics as a zero-sum game. Consequently, all his attempts to reach out to opponents and recalcitrant clans, especially the Hawiye, failed to engender the required trust.

A so-called national reconciliation conference, supported by the international community and hastily convened in mid-2007 in Mogadishu despite widespread mistrust of its aims and its narrow base,<sup>21</sup> made the highly polarised political climate worse. Inevitably, Somalis widely viewed such events as mere gestures to mollify internal and external TFG critics. As violence grew and positions hardened, even this tentative attempt at national healing was abandoned. The failure in this critical area threw the TFG into turmoil and sparked a full cabinet and parliamentary revolt, which eventually produced the unceremonious exit of Prime Minister Gedi.

Yusuf has built a largely subservient and loyal apparatus by putting his fellow Majerteen clansmen in strategic positions. The National Security Agency (NSA) under General Mohamed Warsame ("Darwish") and the so-called "Majerteen militia" units in the TFG army operate in parallel and often above other security agencies. Their exact number is hard to ascertain, but estimates suggest about 2,000.<sup>22</sup> They are well catered for, well armed and often carry out counter-insurgency operations with little or no coordination with other security agencies. In the short term, this strategy may appear effective for the president, who can unilaterally employ the force essentially as he pleases. However, it undermines morale in the security services and is a cause of their high desertion rates. These units are also blamed for some of the human rights abuses in Mogadishu and elsewhere, such as illegal detention and torture.<sup>23</sup> People interviewed by Crisis Group ac-

cused them of arrogance and operating as if above the law.<sup>24</sup>

## 2. The prime minister

There was little protest at Gedi's departure. By all accounts, his three-year record included few successes. A divisive figure, he lacked the political skills to build bridges to TFG opponents. Although a Hawiye, influential clan leaders considered him an unacceptable representative. His blunders often had deadly consequences. In early February 2007, for example, he ordered a disarmament campaign in Mogadishu without doing the necessary groundwork to win the inhabitants' trust, thus sparking unrest. The Hawiye clan militias refused to disarm and instead confronted the TFG/Ethiopian forces in what became the start of the insurgency. Gedi's reputation was further tainted by claims of underhanded dealings and graft.<sup>25</sup>

The appointment of Nur Hassan Hussein (Nur Adde) in November 2007 as new prime minister was well-received inside the country and abroad.<sup>26</sup> He was acknowledged to be credible and capable, and his conciliatory language towards the opposition was seen as confidence-building. The new fifteen-member cabinet, drawn largely from outside parliament, was equally well-received. The perception was that a cabinet of technocrats was needed to craft and implement policies more effectively.

Despite concerns about his political inexperience and skills in cross-clan alliance building, there was a mood of optimism and a perception the TFG had a chance to re-invent itself and regain trust. But a year later, it is hard to deny the chance has been missed. The new prime minister operates from a limited power base and has been increasingly outflanked by a powerful clique around the president. The so-called "Yusuf boys", most from the president's clan, are wary of his leadership style,<sup>27</sup> particularly his apparent determination to instil a culture of accountability and transparency in state finances and other government business. Having benefited from opaque governance that thrives on cronyism and nepotism, they see this and the ap-

<sup>21</sup> No attempt was made to accommodate armed opposition groups and, as expected, none took part, making the conference essentially a gathering between friends. The TFG obtained the \$8 million budget from both Western donors and Saudi Arabia and pocketed the surplus.

<sup>22</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mogadishu, Baidoa, April 2008.

<sup>23</sup> See "Shell-shocked – Civilians under Siege in Mogadishu", Human Rights Watch, August 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Baidoa and Mogadishu, April 2008.

<sup>25</sup> "Somali premier quits as colleagues cheer", *The New York Times*, 29 October 2007; and "Somali PM in Ethiopia amid debate on his fate", Reuters, 17 October 2007.

<sup>26</sup> See Rashid Abdi, "Profile: New Somali Premier Nur Hasan Husayn", BBC Monitoring, 25 November 2007.

<sup>27</sup> The term "Yusuf boys" was coined by Nairobi-based Somali watchers and refers to the small circle of trusted advisers and securocrats around the president.

pointment of a cabinet composed largely of independent figures, unused to or unwilling to play along with the corrupt style of politics in vogue since 2004, as a direct threat and are fighting to thwart it.

Nur Adde has shown good political instincts and a level of dexterity and sound judgement that has upset their plans. Alarmed by his increasing popularity and international profile, their immediate recourse has been to use the security forces to undermine his reconciliation initiatives, especially in Mogadishu. As the prime minister reached out to Hawiye clan elders, helping to free detained leaders like Chief Ahmed Diriye, the security forces were conducting so-called counter-insurgency raids into the Bakaaraha market and residential areas. These were often timed to coincide with the discreet negotiations the prime minister started with Hawiye clan leaders in February 2008 and were not only costly in human lives, but also politically damaging for Nur Adde. The elders eventually pulled out of the talks in frustration at what they saw as the TFG's contradictory policies.

Tension between president and prime minister came to a head in August 2008, sparked by Nur Adde's decision to dismiss the governor of Banaadir region and mayor of Mogadishu, Mohammed Dheere, on 30 July.<sup>28</sup> Yusuf reversed this as "unprocedural"<sup>29</sup> and was supported by a group of ministers, who announced their resignation at a press conference in Mogadishu. Attorney General Abdillahi Dahir Barre termed the dismissal "unconstitutional".<sup>30</sup>

Although it first appeared suicidal, the prime minister achieved three things with his controversial move. First, while the president mobilised his parliamentary allies to prepare the prime minister's removal,<sup>31</sup> firing Dheere was popular across the country.<sup>32</sup> The former warlord was operating a parallel militia, whose "counter-

insurgency" operations often involved reprisal raids into residential areas of Mogadishu and other abuses. It was also involved in illegal checkpoints and extorting money from traders and motorists.<sup>33</sup> Significantly, officials in Nur Adde's camp regard Dheere as the main obstacle to winning the trust of the Hawiye Leadership Council, whose members set his ouster from Mogadishu as a precondition for reconciliation with the government.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, the U.S. and EU governments exerted diplomatic pressure in favour of the prime minister. Many European capitals regard Dheere as a potential war criminal, who must be sidelined and possibly taken before a proper court.<sup>35</sup>

Thirdly, the Ethiopian political and military establishment<sup>36</sup> had become increasingly exasperated with the president and his cronies and came out in strong support of Nur Adde. It called the president and prime minister to Addis Ababa on 15 August, and for days senior Ethiopians, led by Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin, tried with growing frustration to reconcile them.<sup>37</sup> Finally, on 26 August, Yusuf and Nur Adde signed an accord stipulating targets such as an elected replacement for Dheere within fifteen days and reform of the TFG security services to end the parallel command and control structures that have led to personal fiefdoms.<sup>38</sup> The exercise was a clear sign to Yu-

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<sup>28</sup> "Somali Prime Minister sacks Mogadishu mayor", Reuters, 30 July 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Shabeelle Media Network, 12 August 2008.

<sup>30</sup> "Somali PM's decision to sack Mogadishu mayor unconstitutional", Xinhua, 7 August 2008.

<sup>31</sup> A powerful group of parliamentarians, headed by Ali Abdillahi Osoble, a former minister in the Gedi government, led a campaign against the prime minister. It brought a vote of no-confidence, accusing him of failing to draw up a budget and stem insecurity, financial mismanagement and responsibility for disintegration of the TFG administration.

<sup>32</sup> Huge crowds poured into the streets in Mogadishu and the surrounding areas when the announcement was made on local FM radio in Mogadishu on 30 July. IDP camps at the edge of the capital also witnessed large demonstrations, with crowds chanting "We do not want Dheere", BBC Somali Service, 30 July 2008.

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<sup>33</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mogadishu, June 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Crisis Group interview, Hawiye clan leader, Mogadishu, August 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Nairobi, April, May and June 2008.

<sup>36</sup> The military establishment is also believed to be at loggerheads with Dheere, mainly over "lone-ranger" security tactics that have alienated inhabitants of the Banaadir Region (Mogadishu and environs). Crisis Group interview, Mogadishu, August 2008. The Ethiopian army commander in Somalia, General Gebre, is said to be close to the prime minister, with whom he collaborated to restore a measure of normality to the Baakaraha market. Yusuf is said to have accused Gebre in August 2008 in Addis Ababa of profiteering, extorting money from Mogadishu traders and selling arms to insurgents. "Somali president accuses Ethiopian commander of ties to insurgents", Somaaljcel, 18 August 2008.

<sup>37</sup> In a rare departure from protocol, Mesfin voiced his government's frustration and criticised the two leaders publicly in an interview, calling their power struggle the "the biggest obstacle to peace" and a distraction from "focusing on the tasks they need to get done". See "Ethiopian FM blasts Somalia's leaders", *Financial Times*, 21 August 2008.

<sup>38</sup> Crisis Group interview, TFG official, August 2008. While Dheere's dismissal was at the top of the agenda, other issues included his alleged mismanagement of Mogadishu port revenues, the activities of his militia and his differences with the Ethiopian military commander in Somalia. On 23 November Nur Adde appointed a new administration for Banaadir region; Mohamed Osman Ali "Dhagahtur" was elected

suf that Ethiopia's support for his ever more controversial leadership has limitations.

In fact, the accord has not eased tensions between the two TFG leaders. Another row erupted in November 2008 over composition of a new cabinet and against the backdrop of growing Al-Shabaab influence in south-central Somalia, where it controls most towns and villages, except Mogadishu and Baidoa. The regime was shaken by the language IGAD leaders used to attack its record. On 28 October, they asked the TFG to form a new government in fifteen days to advance the peace process and tackle other crucial issues like constitution-making. Nur Adde submitted his proposed cabinet to Yusuf on 8 November, but the president dismissed the list outright, while his supporters leaked the names to parliament so as to mobilise opposition. The prime minister cannot go around the president in appointing a cabinet, but he is unlikely to be intimidated given his recent successes in rebuffing Yusuf's manoeuvres to remove him.

Ethiopian Foreign Minister Mesfin and Prime Minister Meles instigated talks between the two sides in another attempt to resolve the escalating row, but they collapsed within two days, on 14 November. It appears the Ethiopians were frank with Yusuf and may even have indicated it was time for him to "retire".<sup>39</sup> The mood in certain circles in Addis Ababa is now almost one of hostility to the TFG leaders, in particular to Yusuf, and an influential group of advisers is said to be calling for him to be forced out or the TFG to be abandoned.<sup>40</sup>

In recent days, anti-Yusuf parliamentarians have fired the first shots in what looks like the beginning of an impeachment process. Reading a petition before a parliamentary session attended by over 100 deputies, Ibrahim Isaq Yarow (a Baidoa resident and a respected "independent") said the president had become the biggest obstacle to peace and, owing to ill health and intransigence, was unfit to govern. He called on the parliamentarians to "shoulder their responsibility".<sup>41</sup> The speaker of parliament is said to be in the process of delivering the impeachment petition to the president. According to the Transitional Federal Charter, Yusuf is required to respond to such a petition within fourteen days, after which a two-third majority would

be needed in parliament to remove him.<sup>42</sup> Inconceivable only a few months ago, this has now become a real possibility due to Yusuf's rapidly diminishing support among his influential backers. On 15 December, President Abdillahi Yusuf attempted to appoint a close ally, Mohammed Mahmud aka Ga'madheere, as prime minister. The appointment was immediately rejected by Nur Adde and many members of parliament. Regional states and Western powers likewise dismissed Yusuf's appointment and said they continued to recognise Nur Adde as the legitimate prime minister. This was a major setback for Yusuf and a clear signal he had fallen out of favour.

#### **D. THE TFG'S RECORD**

Beyond the endemic internal power struggles, the TFG has faced far more serious problems in establishing its authority and rebuilding the structures of governance. Its writ has never extended much beyond Baidoa. Its control of Mogadishu is ever more contested,<sup>43</sup> and it is largely under siege in the rest of the country. There are no properly functioning government institutions. Even the few pockets once controlled by loyal local administrations, such as Kismaayo and Jowhar, have disintegrated into clan fiefdoms or are now controlled by the insurgency.

While lack of resources and international apathy have contributed to this disastrous performance, much of the blame rests squarely on the TFG's political leadership. Time and again, it has proved unequal to rebuilding and pacifying the country. "The whole country", the

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the governor of that region and mayor of Mogadishu with 50 votes out of the 64 members of the regional council present.

<sup>39</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, TFG official, 14 November 2008.

<sup>40</sup> Crisis Group interview, Addis Ababa, 21 November 2008.

<sup>41</sup> BBC Somali service, 17 December 2008.

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<sup>42</sup> See article 43(c) of the Transitional Federal Charter: "Where a motion for impeachment of the President is laid before Parliament - (i). The charge shall be preferred in a resolution moved after at least fourteen (14) days notice in writing and signed by not less than one third of the total number of members of Parliament of their intention to move such a resolution; (ii). An investigation shall be conducted of the charge preferred or the cause of the charge and the President shall have the right to appear and to be represented at such investigation; (iii). As a result of the outcome of the investigation, such resolution shall be passed and voted by at least two-third majority of the members of Parliament; (iv) Such resolution shall have the effect of removing the President from his/her office as from the date on which the resolution is so passed".

<sup>43</sup> The TFG has never had full control over Mogadishu – just parts of it, and these have been shrinking. However, the Nur Adde wing of the TFG has demonstrated that it is capable of functioning in the city with relative ease, while the Yusuf wing is under siege.

special representative of the UN Secretary-General to Somalia (SRSG) said, “is held hostage by its elite”.<sup>44</sup>

## 1. Reconciliation

The TFG’s most costly failing has been insufficient investment in national reconciliation. From its inception, it has been consumed by its own infighting and failed to formulate a strategy for this key priority. It quickly became clear that the conference organised in Mogadishu in August 2007 would be futile. Chaired by a discredited former warlord and the man who led the country’s first failed transition, Ali Mahdi Muhammad,<sup>45</sup> its participants were limited to hand-picked clan delegates.<sup>46</sup> Its confused agenda revolved around clan feuds without addressing the multiple issues that have divided Somalis over the years. After several weeks of speeches, dinners and per diem, it ended inconclusively, but not before the delegates were flown to Saudi Arabia, to sign a pact that was bound to fail.<sup>47</sup> Many Somalis were shocked at the cynicism of the exercise.<sup>48</sup>

On-and-off talks followed with clan leaders of the Hawiye in Mogadishu in August-September 2007. They collapsed because of deep mutual mistrust. Without a clearer strategy for engaging with the opposition, the TFG has little prospect of making progress, though to his credit, the prime minister drew up a six-point reconciliation plan that envisaged opening inclusive talks with the Islamist opposition and subsequently a power-sharing formula. It was endorsed by the parliament and prepared the ground for the Djibouti talks.<sup>49</sup>

## 2. Establishing security

Instead of producing the improved security environment Somalis desire after so much war, it is routine for TFG troops to fire indiscriminately at crowds

when attacked and shell residential areas in what many critics say is tantamount to collective punishment. These tactics alienate the public and are a principal reason why the TFG has failed to establish credibility in Mogadishu. In the meantime, the insurgency is capitalising on its diminishing capacity to defend itself militarily.

Hundreds of police have been trained with UN Development Programme (UNDP) and Kenyan assistance. Key partners like the EU also provide funds and expertise to sustain the small force, which initially showed some promising signs. But the overall impact has been marginal, and the police are now beset by serious problems, beginning with non-payment of salaries.<sup>50</sup>

Ethiopia is training an “elite TFG force”, thought to be in the thousands. Ethiopian officials argued that the insurgency is “not unmanageable” and progress would be seen once these troops were deployed.<sup>51</sup> Media reports suggest, however, that a vanguard may have been put into the south, especially near Afgooye, as early as July 2008 and caused serious friction with other TFG security forces.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, the TFG lacks a unified command and control structure, and factional militias – such as the one loyal to the ex-warlord and governor Dheere – work alongside the regular troops, while often pursuing their own local agendas. There is little or no accountability for operational mishaps and no oversight mechanism, despite the atrocities that have been committed in Mogadishu.

Morale within the 6,000-strong army is low. The many deserters sell their weapons, including RPGs, hand grenades, land mines and mortars, to local arms markets, and they eventually end up in the hands of the Islamist insurgents.<sup>53</sup> The UN Monitoring Group on Somalia’s detailed April 2008 report said that the brisk weapons trade may also include some elements of the AU contingent in Mogadishu (AMISOM).<sup>54</sup> Yusuf has several times shuffled the army command in a fruitless effort to reverse the trend, most recently

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<sup>44</sup> BBC radio, 7 June 2008.

<sup>45</sup> From the start, there was much opposition to the appointment of Ali Mahdi as chair of the reconciliation conference. He was largely seen as partisan and incapable of building the required trust to make the conference a success.

<sup>46</sup> The NRC’s selection process was widely dismissed as biased. Only TFG supporters became delegates.

<sup>47</sup> “Somali government signs peace deal”, Agence France-Presse, 10 June 2007.

<sup>48</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mogadishu, March 2008.

<sup>49</sup> Crisis Group interview, Baidoa, April 2008. The plan was overwhelmingly endorsed, with 230 of 275 deputies voting for it. In addition to all-inclusive talks without preconditions, it envisaged the disengagement of Ethiopian troops, cessation of hostilities and a ceasefire, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of militias (DDR), a power-sharing arrangement and a peacekeeping formula.

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<sup>50</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Baidoa, April 2008. According to one source, UNDP has suspended payments to the Somali police, citing lack of funds.

<sup>51</sup> Crisis Group interviews, senior Ethiopian officials, Addis Ababa, May 2008.

<sup>52</sup> Crisis Group interview, Somali reporter, Mogadishu, July 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Baidoa and Mogadishu, April 2008.

<sup>54</sup> UN Monitoring Group, Security Council Report, S/2008/274, April 2008; and “Peacekeepers sell arms to Somalis”, BBC News (online), 23 May 2008.

replacing General Salah Lif with General Sa'id Mohammed Hersi (Sa'id Dheere) in June 2008.<sup>55</sup>

It is doubtful such steps can salvage the situation, given that the problem is essentially structural. The TFG army is not professional, but rather a mix of militias drawn from Puntland and allied factional groups.<sup>56</sup> The officer corps is professional, formerly part of the Somali National Army, but a significant number have deserted. Ill-trained, under-equipped, paid irregularly and constantly under strain from inter-clan animosities, favouritism and nepotism, the army has now shrunk to its basic constituent – the Majerteen-dominated units from Puntland – and badly needs a radical overhaul.<sup>57</sup>

### **3. Failure to build functioning state institutions and prepare for elections**

Four years into the transition, the reform agenda is completely paralysed. The attempt to rebuild key state institutions has largely failed. Ministries hardly function, and institutions like the Somali Central Bank, built in Baidoa by UK aid, exist only in name. The rebuilding program has been poorly funded, highly politicised and, most importantly, undermined by the TFG's own crisis of legitimacy and the volatile political and security situation. From the beginning, the exercise to stamp its authority over the country was misconceived, ignoring local clan and political dynamics. Where the TFG tried to take over local administrations, the reaction was usually hostile. The root cause of the mistrust was a perception the government was arrogant, out-of-touch and trying to parachute in its officials without consulting clan elders and other influential community members.

TFG officials seemed to assume their constitutional mandate would be sufficient to bring all territories under their control. Yet, since Somalia's descent into anarchy in 1991, clans have re-asserted control of areas they deem theirs, and they are unlikely to cede this back to any government easily. In a typical incident, in May 2008, four officials named as administrators in the central region of Hiiraan declined to take up their posts, hinting they had no interest in serving a government that was not trusted.<sup>58</sup> In another example, a UK national of Somali origin was plucked from ob-

scurity in London and told to take charge of Beledweyne, a key strategic town in the west. The reaction was a near revolt, as angry clan elders accused the government of disdain for the customary protocol.

The TFG has completely ignored service delivery, the one critical area that would have improved its public standing significantly. There were high expectations it would make a difference in people's lives, given its strong support from rich Western nations, and rapidly begin providing health care, education and the like. Officials had originally encouraged these expectations in their quest to project the TFG as qualitatively different from the ill-fated transitions of Ali Mahdi Mohammed and Abdikasim Salat Hasan.

Likewise, the TFG has made no effort to prepare elections, and there has been virtually no debate on this crucial issue. The media has more and more borne the brunt of repression and intolerance. Prominent radio stations are raided and shut whenever they broadcast "national security-related material" that "gives succour to the terrorists".<sup>59</sup> The number of journalists killed in the last two years under dubious circumstances is said to be unprecedented by Reporters Without Borders.<sup>60</sup> Dozens have left the country, many to relocate to Nairobi. A prominent journalist now there said, "things have not been as bad as this even under the dark days of the warlords".<sup>61</sup>

Led by Kenya and Ethiopia, IGAD convened a summit in Nairobi in October 2008 to discuss the crisis. In an unprecedented move, over 200 Somali parliamentarians were invited to attend, as well as members of the Djibouti-based Somali opposition led by Sheikh Sharif. The TFG was strongly criticised for failing to live up to expectations and warned it risked losing international support if it did not end internal wrangling and use the remainder of its term to draft a new constitution and strengthen the institutions of government. This was followed by an IGAD ministerial in Addis Ababa on 18 November, primarily designed to pressure the TFG. The participants threatened explicitly to convene an early regional summit to withdraw support, and their final communiqué concluded: "Once again the Somali leadership has failed its people, [and] the regional and international community at large".

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<sup>55</sup> *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, no. 1240, 14 June 2008.

<sup>56</sup> In addition to Mohammed Dheere's, these include the militias of Barre Hirale, General Sa'id Hirsi Morgan and Abdi Qeybid.

<sup>57</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Baidoa, April 2008.

<sup>58</sup> Crisis Group interview, TFG official, Baidoa, April 2008; also broadcast on BBC Somali Service.

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<sup>59</sup> Crisis Group interview, Somali journalist, Mogadishu, April 2008.

<sup>60</sup> "Annual Report 2007", Reporters Without Borders.

<sup>61</sup> Crisis Group interview, Nairobi, April 2008.

### III. THE ISLAMIST OPPOSITION AND THE INSURGENCY

The insurgency has gained ground throughout 2008. While the TFG's writ has never extended much beyond Baidoa, and its control of Mogadishu is ever more contested, an Islamist takeover of the south now seems almost unavoidable. What appeared early in the year as a campaign of probes has become an all-out offensive. Ethiopia's announced withdrawal from Somalia is a reflection of this new situation and the considerable losses its army has taken. The departure of the one enemy and the one issue – Ethiopian occupation – everyone could agree on, however, will likely generate more infighting and make an outright military victory for the insurgency difficult to achieve.

#### A. THE ISLAMIST OPPOSITION

Following the ouster of the Islamic Courts (UIC) from Mogadishu and other areas in south-central Somalia, a majority of the disbanded UIC members relocated to Asmara. Led by Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, they concluded a marriage of convenience with Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden, the former parliament speaker, and the Free Parliamentarians, who trickled into Asmara after Yusuf expelled Sharif Hassan from Mogadishu in January 2007.<sup>62</sup> Eritrea offered political support, arms and training of fighters.<sup>63</sup>

While the UIC's top political leadership moved to Asmara, the military commanders were left behind to wage a guerrilla campaign. A rift became inevitable when the former decided to disband its militia. Hundreds of clan fighters handed over their weapons to the Hawiye sub-clans who formed the backbone of the Courts movement, but some of the more militant UIC members – prominent among them Aden Hashi Ayro, Hassan Turki<sup>64</sup> and Mukhtar Robow – disagreed and

moved to southern Somalia with hundreds of their fighters, seeking a guerrilla-style campaign. They deeply distrusted the Sharif group and sought to distance themselves from the UIC mainstream. The three commanders divided the south into three operational sectors – Ayro leading campaigns in central Somalia and Mogadishu; Turki leading operations in the Juba Valley; and Robow taking charge of the Bay and Bakool regions. They chose areas dominated by their clans, so they could blend in and draw on local support.

Sheikh Sharif's decision to surrender to Kenyan authorities and negotiate a safe passage to Yemen widened the rift within the Islamist movement.<sup>65</sup> Al-Shabaab decided it was on its own and cut all links to those it called "cowards" who had opted to "surrender to the enemy" and "people having a good time in foreign lands".<sup>66</sup> The relations between the two UIC factions continued to deteriorate throughout 2007. Discreet attempts to resolve the differences, with the help of Gulf-based Somali and Arab intermediaries, failed. On 14 September 2007, a week after the conclusion of the TFG's National Reconciliation Conference in Mogadishu, the Asmara group formed an opposition coalition, the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS), and vowed to fight Ethiopian and TFG forces. It was a broad coalition of Islamists, disaffected TFG parliamentarians and diaspora Somali nationalists, including former UIC Executive Committee Chairman Aweys, the former speaker Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden, and former TFG Deputy Prime Minister Hussein Mohamed Farrah.

Islamist radicals felt betrayed by the ARS, which they believed sought to dilute the purity of their Islamic vision. The broad outline of the ideological split taking shape between moderate Islamists, who favoured political engagement with other anti-Ethiopian groups, and militant Islamists, who detested such a compromise, were already visible when the UIC was in power in Mogadishu. Then, however, efforts were made to paper over the cracks and steer clear of divisive issues, because the movement's credibility was partly based

<sup>62</sup> Crisis Group interview, Asmara, July 2007; and "Somali speaker tied to Islamists ousted", Associated Press, 17 January 2007.

<sup>63</sup> UN Monitoring Group reports, S/2007/436, July 2007 and S/2008/274, op. cit.

<sup>64</sup> Thought to be in his sixties, Turki is a native of the ethnic Somali-dominated Ogaden region of Ethiopia. He fought alongside Somali troops in the 1977 Ogaden War. Afterwards, he was among many Ogadeni combatants settled by the late Somali dictator Siyaad Barre in present-day Somaliland. Turki allegedly worked with Barre's security apparatus during the period and is accused of involvement in killings of political dissidents in Somaliland in the 1980s. He began his Islamist activism late that decade and in the mid-1990s

joined his close friend, Hassan Dahir Aweys, to form al-Ittihad al-Islami, an armed Islamist movement that fought bloody battles with Ethiopian troops in the late 1990s. The U.S. lists him as a terrorist, and there have been several U.S. air strikes on his suspected hideouts in southern Somalia in recent months.

<sup>65</sup> Top Islamist surrenders to Kenyan authorities – sources", Reuters, 22 January 2007.

<sup>66</sup> Hiiraan website, 4 April 2008. The propaganda campaign against Sharif's leadership was often led by an Al-Shabaab militant, Ma'lin Hashi Muhammad Farah. Sharif was portrayed as a "coward" who betrayed the Islamist movement and chose the comforts of exile instead of jihad and martyrdom.



on an image of cohesiveness that distinguished it from the fractious TFG. Despite their clear ambition to take power, the Islamists avoided crafting the sort of policy manifesto that would normally be expected from a political movement, lest a policy dispute cause the movement to splinter.

In early 2008, however, once it became clear the Sheikh Sharif faction wanted to engage in a peace process led by the UN Special Representative, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, signs emerged that even the ARS was beginning to divide along ideological lines.<sup>67</sup> Hassan Dahir Aweys, who until then had kept a low profile, began manoeuvring for influence among those who rejected negotiations in favour of armed liberation.

Two things caused this realignment. The first was the killing of Aden Hashi Ayro on 1 May 2008, the man Aweys was grooming to take his mantle as the de facto leader of the Islamist movement in Somalia.<sup>68</sup> Without a close confidant to continue the struggle for the creation of a pan-Somali, pan-Islamic nation, Aweys felt compelled to step in. The second was Sheikh Sharif's decision to end his ideological wavering and clearly assume the leadership of the moderate faction of the Islamist movement.<sup>69</sup> Aweys called a conference of his ARS faction in late July 2008 and installed himself as executive chairman, thus formalising the divisions into what are now known as ARS-Asmara (Aweys) and ARS-Djibouti (Sheikh Sharif).

## B. THE INSURGENCY

### 1. Insurgent groups

The Somalia insurgency is, broadly speaking, a coalition of three distinct groups. The first includes clan militia, predominantly from the major Hawiye sub-clans, the bulk of whose fighters in Mogadishu now come from the Habar Gidir clans. The second is a small and ever-shrinking multi-clan group of former UIC combatants, nominally loyal to the executive leadership under Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and with an appeal to nationalist groups who dislike Ethiopia's intervention and are wary of Al-Shabaab's more militant tendencies. Members refer to them-

selves as "Al-Muqawamah" (The Resistance).<sup>70</sup> An early attempt was made to call this broad coalition the Popular Resistance Movement in the Land of the Two Migrations, but the name did not stick, mainly because the unwieldy alliance was incapable of coalescing into a united front.

The third is the UIC splinter faction Al-Shabaab, the most militant, well-organised, well-financed and active of the three. It is energetically conducting an extensive military, political and propaganda campaign aimed at recapturing the south of the country.<sup>71</sup> It is made up in turn roughly of three units – one operating in Mogadishu and the central regions of Galguduud and Hiiraan; a second operating in the Bay and Bakool and Shabeelle regions; and a third operating in the Juba Valley. Originally non-hierarchical and multi-clan, it quickly adjusted to clan dynamics.

Al-Shabaab sees the struggle with its adversaries as essentially ideological. Various Somali jihadi websites have sprung up in the last two years, mainly hosted in Europe and North America. These promote a new militant ideology, which sees "pure" Muslims as being in a permanent state of war with "infidels". Ethiopia is portrayed as the arch-infidel and a bridgehead for Christianity in the Horn of Africa. The Ethiopian "occupation" of Somalia is cast as part of an age-old imperial quest to annex the country and gain an outlet to the Indian Ocean.

The insurgents use two methods to recruit: money and indoctrination. Many unemployed youths are attracted by the pay offered to new recruits (approximately \$200 per month).<sup>72</sup> Many join the movement after spending time at *halqah* (mosque study circles), where they are converted to the radical vision of Al-Shabaab.

Al-Shabaab in particular has been using aggressive media techniques to popularise the "culture of martyrdom". CDs and video tapes are distributed showing young men reading out their last testaments and conducting suicide operations, or of clerics extolling the

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<sup>67</sup> Sheikh Sharif on BBC Somali Service, 13 June 2008. He called the developing split merely "a difference of ideas".

<sup>68</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Baidoa, Mogadishu and Nairobi, June-July 2008.

<sup>69</sup> Crisis Group interview, European diplomat, Nairobi, June 2008.

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<sup>70</sup> The Arabic term *Muqawamah* has symbolic significance that resonates deeply in the Islamic world, especially the Middle East and North Africa.

<sup>71</sup> Al-Shabaab means "the youth" in Arabic. There are conflicting views on when the group was formed. One is that it was created in 1998 by Islamist leader Hassan Dahir Aweys as a crack military unit of the Islamic Courts. The other is that it was created in mid-2006 by an Aweys protégé – Aden Hashi Ayro – as part of a special unit of the Courts militia to carry out "dirty war" and later spearhead the insurgency against the Ethiopian and Somali government forces. The core group is believed to be 300 to 400 fighters.

<sup>72</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mogadishu, Baidoa, April 2008.

virtues of jihad and martyrdom. The Al-Shabaab website, Kataaib.net, is adorned with pictures of the young “martyrs” who have died in suicide operations.

## 2. The military campaign

Aware of the technical and tactical capacities of its enemy and having seen how ill-prepared they were for the Ethiopian offensive in late December 2006, insurgent groups made the strategic choice of waging a guerrilla campaign. Though fairly small in numbers, the Islamist fighters knew the terrain well and operated largely in communities where they enjoyed considerable support. The aim was to draw the TFG and their Ethiopian allies into a war of attrition. The first theatre of operation was Mogadishu, which by February 2007 had a sizeable Ethiopian military presence. Between February and June 2007, the Habar Gidir clan militia and Islamists launched their guerilla campaign there, under the joint command of Mukhtar Robow and Aden Hashi Ayro. They suffered heavy casualties, but a brief lull organised by Hawiye clan leaders for talks with the TFG gave them time to regroup. Robow and Turki left for the south, leaving the Mogadishu campaign largely to the Habar Gidir clan militia. Clan leaders told Ayro to leave Mogadishu also, as his presence was attracting U.S. interest.

In July 2007 the insurgency spread to the greater Banaadir region, Middle and Lower Shabeelle and parts of the Juba Valley; between October and December 2007, Ayro led operations in the Hiiraan and Galguduud regions. A unit led by Ibrahim Haji Jama (“al-Afghani”) started operations further north near Galkacyo and other districts bordering Somaliland. At the same time Al-Shabaab elements attacked Ethiopian convoys and threatened to cut off their main supply line through the south-western town of Beledweyne.

During late 2007 and early 2008, pressure mounted on the Ethiopian and Somali government troops in the south-central region, especially Shabeelle, the Juba Valley and Bay and Bakool. Already in March 2007, Ethiopian and TFG troops were under daily attacks, and their casualties were mounting. Mortar and artillery rounds were being fired at them from residential areas, which soon became targets of retaliatory attacks. The latter were often indiscriminate and caused heavy loss of civilian lives.<sup>73</sup> Violence escalated sharply in August 2007, when Ethiopia deployed tanks and heavy artillery to pound insurgent strongholds in Mogadishu. This led to mass exodus, the worst in the city’s history, and precipitated a serious humanitarian crisis. Over 400,000 people are crammed into some 200 camps a

short ride south of the capital, making what aid workers call “the most congested IDP [internally displaced person] nexus in the world”.<sup>74</sup>

Islamist fighters moved in and out of villages and towns almost at will, often meeting little or no resistance. One of the boldest takeovers was of Jowhar, a key town close to Mogadishu, on 26 April 2008.<sup>75</sup> Government troops backed by a small Ethiopian contingent pulled out shortly before Al-Shabaab fighters marched in. Government-appointed officials in charge of the town fled to Mogadishu. The insurgents held the town for two days, then abandoned it. Such audacious military forays have been replicated widely across the south, designed primarily to send a message about who held the initiative. The killing of Ayro in the central town of Dhuusa Mareb on 1 May 2008 by a U.S. missile was a big blow but did not degrade the Islamist militants’ campaign.<sup>76</sup>

The Islamist fighters used these town “visits”, as they called them, to canvass public support and win greater legitimacy and credibility.<sup>77</sup> The political and public outreach strategy was remarkably sophisticated. A “visit” was normally well choreographed, with clerics addressing public rallies and holding talks with local clan elders. Food and money was distributed to the poor. Attempts were made to settle local inter-clan disputes and tensions. Petty criminals and bandits were apprehended. Every Islamist insurgent unit travels with a “mobile Sharia [Islamic law] court” so that criminals can be given quick trials, thus filling a void left by the TFG.

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<sup>74</sup> Crisis Group interviews, aid workers operating in Somalia, Mogadishu and Nairobi, April 2008.

<sup>75</sup> Mogadishu-based Somali radio station HornAfrik, 28 April 2008.

<sup>76</sup> Ayro, in his late thirties and a protégé and relative of the Islamist leader Hassan Dahir Aweys, led a shadowy existence after the U.S. put him on its terrorist list. He trained in Afghanistan with the Taliban and al-Qaeda and gained a reputation among Somalis as a brilliant military strategist and fearsome commander. His admirers called him “Ma’alin” (teacher). In the last two years, Ayro was rarely seen in public and journalists were often warned not to take his photographs. He feared assassination and rarely stayed in one place. When he appeared in public, it was usually with three body doubles in combat fatigues. An abortive attempt was made to snatch him from a house in Mogadishu some years ago. Commenting on his death, the Al-Shabaab spokesman Sheikh Mukhtar Robow said, “The teacher imparted his skills to many other teachers”, BBC Somali Service, 1 May 2008.

<sup>77</sup> The pro-Al-Shabaab Somali-language website Kataaib often uses the Somali word *koormeer* (visit, tour) to describe such action.

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<sup>73</sup> See “Shell-shocked”, op. cit.

Al-Shabaab's military strategy evolved in early 2008, from hit-and-run tactics to longer occupation of towns. The campaigns were also political in that Al-Shabaab emissaries held intensive talks to convince clan chiefs of the benign nature of their mission. The capture of Beledweyne – albeit temporarily – on 28 June was significant: it was the first town to fall when the Ethiopians invaded in December 2006, and so a message that the tide was turning. Fighting has also been intensifying since the beginning of July 2008, especially in the central regions. In a rare statement, the Ethiopian defence ministry admitted heavy combat was taking place in central Somalia but said dozens of insurgents had been killed, including a top commander, a Canadian-Somali.<sup>78</sup> The strategic port city of Kismaayo was taken in August by the Al-Shabaab faction allied to Hassan Turki and led by hard-line cleric Sheikh Abubakar "Zayli'i", who was put on Nairobi's terrorism list after his threats to attack Kenya.<sup>79</sup>

In November 2008, the Al-Shabaab unit led by Sheikh Fuad Mohammad ("Shongole") took over another southern port, Marka, through which much humanitarian aid is channelled. At the same time as towns and villages were falling to the insurgents, however, cracks in their movement were appearing. The factions in charge of Beledweyne and Jalalaqsi, for example, distanced themselves from Al-Shabaab and the Djibouti-based ARS leaders alike (see more below).

In recent months, the insurgents have used indiscriminate methods, such as suicide bombs, land mines and roadside bombs. Civilians are often the main victims, and mutilated bodies of Ethiopian and Somali soldiers have been dragged through the streets in disregard for the Islamic code of war. The insurgents have also waged a campaign of targeted assassination against TFG administrators and security officials. Informed sources within the TFG say over 30 officials, mainly National Security Agency (NSA) agents and informants, have been killed in the last year.<sup>80</sup> In Baidoa alone, over a dozen NSA agents have reportedly been assassinated. The aim is to disrupt the TFG's intelligence network, which was said to have been good throughout 2007. The fear of assassination, coupled with difficulties in recruitment, however, is now severely hampering TFG ability to gather information on the insurgency. Mogadishu airport has come under heavy mortar bombardment twice, in May and June

2008, just as President Yusuf's plane was readying for take-off.<sup>81</sup>

Insurgent attacks are increasingly more sophisticated and deadly. Hardly a week goes by without a roadside bomb killing scores of Ethiopian and TFG soldiers. While suicide attacks are still rare, one targeted the Burundian peacekeeping contingent's Mogadishu camp in April.<sup>82</sup> A suicide bomber rammed the gates of the base at high speed in a car packed with explosives, injuring many civilians and Burundian soldiers. In October, the insurgents stepped up attacks on AMISOM positions in Mogadishu.<sup>83</sup> Dozens of civilians were killed, as AMISOM troops responded with heavy weapons. In the same vein, five bombing attacks targeting government and UN institutions and an Ethiopian consulate and causing up to 31 deaths took place in Hargeisa and Bossaso on 29 October.<sup>84</sup> At year's end, Islamist factions control nearly as much territory as they did before the Ethiopian invasion in December 2006.

### 3. Internal fights

The schisms within the Islamist movement have now also led to military tension between the various armed insurgent groups in central and southern Somalia. Several clashes have taken place, the most serious being between Al-Shabaab and combatants identified as loyal to the UIC in Bal'ad, some 40km north of Mogadishu in October.<sup>85</sup> Ethiopia and the TFG have tried to encourage such skirmishes in the hope of provoking an all-out military confrontation. This new factionalism is a setback for the Islamists, but it is unlikely a TFG that is enfeebled and has lost all credibility can capitalise on it substantially.

Further fragmentation is also reflected in the emergence of new splinter groups. One such faction, the Jalalaqsi, has emerged in central Somalia. Formed after a five-day meeting in the town of that name in Hiiraan region in August 2008, it claims to be opposed to the Djibouti talks as well as Al-Shabaab's violent tactics.<sup>86</sup> Its composition and influence are not yet clear. However, some Somali insiders believe it is a significant development, the start of a backlash

<sup>78</sup> BBC radio, 2 July 2008.

<sup>79</sup> Crisis Group interview, Nairobi, November 2008.

<sup>80</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Baidoa, April 2008.

<sup>81</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Nairobi, June 2008.

<sup>82</sup> HornAfrik radio, 8 April 2008.

<sup>83</sup> "Protection Cluster Update", UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Activities (OCHA), 17 October 2008.

<sup>84</sup> "Car bombs kill dozens in northern Somalia", *The Guardian*, 30 October 2008.

<sup>85</sup> Mareeg.com, 21 October 2008.

<sup>86</sup> Hiiraan.com, 18 August 2008.

against Al-Shabaab.<sup>87</sup> The leader, Sheikh Abdulqadir Ali Omar, was a member of the former UIC Executive Council.<sup>88</sup> He regards himself as a peacemaker and is keen to resolve the differences between the Asmara and Djibouti groups. The Jalalaqsi has now formed an *ulama*<sup>89</sup> to conduct talks with all the splinter factions of the former UIC. It continues to run the town of Jalalaqsi and is believed to be militarily active in the Hiiraan region.

Another emerging splinter group is known as Khalid Ibn Walid, an Al-Shabaab “brigade” formed in late 2007 and active in the Juba Valley. It is believed to be closely affiliated to Hassan Turki and commanded by Sheikh Mustafa Ali Anood. It was instrumental in the capture of Kismaayo in September 2008. Reports have emerged, however, of differences within its top command and that Anood was replaced after threatening to attack Kenya.<sup>90</sup> Infighting among the groups is likely to increase if the Ethiopians make good their promise to leave Somalia.

#### 4. Popularity

The perception that Al-Shabaab and other Islamist insurgent groups are a rag-tag army of crude fanatics whose first instinct is to use force and terror to impose their radical vision is a caricature. Their tactics have been well-adapted and more effective than those of their adversaries. They have largely succeeded in casting themselves as true Somali patriots opposed to the Ethiopian-allied TFG. As a result, they have been gaining popularity in central and southern Somalia, just as they did before the Ethiopian invasion in December 2006.

At the same time, their Islamist zeal to “cleanse” Somali society of “moral pollution” – a source of some disquiet within moderate sections of society – appears undiminished. During a brief takeover of the south-central town of Waajid on 20 April 2008, for example, Islamist gunmen closed cinemas that usually show Indian films, set fire to the local market for the narcotic leaf, qat, and shaved the heads of young men with “inappropriate” hairstyles.<sup>91</sup>

The insurgent groups are also keen to project themselves as champions of law and order. It is common to hear of Al-Shabaab fighters dismantling the illegal

checkpoints that are a great public nuisance and the source of much anger against the TFG and the Ethiopians. Clashes between the highway bandits who erect these checkpoints and the insurgents have become frequent. Some insurgent leaders are increasingly viewed as heroes. The prominent commander Mukhtar Robow (Abu Mansur) is arguably the most respected Al-Shabaab figure in the south, especially in the areas dominated by his Rahanweyn clan – Bay and Bakool regions. During a brief takeover of the central town of Dinsoor in late March 2007, he addressed a large and enthusiastic crowd for two hours. A reporter described the scene as “remarkable”, like “an inauguration of a president”.<sup>92</sup>

#### 5. Arms, foreign jihadists and al-Qaeda

The insurgent groups have managed to procure arms and keep their supply lines open. Many weapons, including guns, ammunition, RPGs, land mines and hand grenades, are bought directly from disaffected/deserting TFG soldiers or from local arms markets. There are also claims of explosives being delivered to the groups.<sup>93</sup> As noted, the intense weapons trade is alleged to include AMISOM troops based in Mogadishu.<sup>94</sup> Foreign parties sympathetic to the insurgent cause are also known to be sending weapons by air, sea and land. While Eritrea is often mentioned as the prime supplier, there is suspicion that some Arab parties may be using Eritrean and Djiboutian channels to supply the insurgents, principally Al-Shabaab.

Foreign involvement is not limited to arms. There is credible evidence foreign jihadists are fighting alongside the insurgents and training them in tactics, explosives and propaganda and providing “moral guidance”.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Crisis Group interview, Nairobi, September 2008.

<sup>88</sup> Hiiraan.com, 18 August 2008.

<sup>89</sup> An *ulama* is a council of Islamic scholars and legal authorities.

<sup>90</sup> Crisis Group interview, Kismaayo, October 2008.

<sup>91</sup> Shabeelle Media Network, 21 April 2008.

<sup>92</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Baidoa, April 2008. Robow was born in the south-central town of Xuddur in 1969. He completed his primary and secondary education there and devoted much of his youth to the study of Islam, attending various religious schools and mosque study groups. Between 1996 and 1998, he ran a camp, Al-Hudaa, for Somali Islamist fighters in Xuddur and took part in the al-Ittihad al-Islami battles against Ethiopian troops in Gedo, south-western Somalia. He left Somalia in 2000 and trained for a year with the Taliban in Afghanistan. He was a top military commander in the fighting between the Islamists and the coalition of warlords called the Anti-Terrorism Alliance in mid-2006 and now serves as spokesman for Al-Shabaab and rarely appears in public without his trademark Taliban-style black turban; see [www.kataaib.net/Aba%20Mansuur.htm](http://www.kataaib.net/Aba%20Mansuur.htm).

<sup>93</sup> Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Addis Ababa, April 2008.

<sup>94</sup> UN Monitoring Group, S/2008/274, op. cit.

<sup>95</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mogadishu and Baidoa, March-April 2008.

Robow admitted in late July 2008 that foreign jihadists were in the field.<sup>96</sup> Somalia is now a magnet for such fighters. Some of these – Sudanese, Comorians and Zanzibari – come from the region, suggesting the conflict is planting the seed of further destabilisation in the area.

How to assess the extent to which al-Qaeda is a potential or actual threat in Somalia in various conceivable scenarios is highly controversial. Judgements run from the more alarmist that find reflection in U.S. actions through the relatively reassuring offered by many Somalis. What most agree is that the key is related to an assessment of the character of and strands within the most radical of the Islamist militias, Al-Shabaab. Though al-Qaeda never adopted Somalia as a major base for operations,<sup>97</sup> Al-Shabaab militants do not hide their admiration. They revere bin Laden, identify with his dream of a Pax-Islamica,<sup>98</sup> and there have been claims, mainly by Western governments and especially the U.S., of an al-Qaeda link.<sup>99</sup> It is difficult, nevertheless, to prove more than ideological sympathy or that either the militia, or the wider Islamist movement in Somalia, is under the tutelage of that organisation. It is a self-radicalising movement, whose aims are local and national.<sup>100</sup>

The conventional wisdom is that Sheikh Sharif and his group (ARS-D) would wish to impose a moderate form of Sharia and do so in a manner that would not alienate their secularist allies if they assume power. On the other hand, Al-Shabaab would seek to impose a harsher version of Sharia. This is already happening in Al-Shabaab-controlled areas. If Al-Shabaab consolidates its control and imposes the puritanical brand of Islam it espouses (salafi/Wahhabism), however, it would quickly alienate many Somalis. The ambition of some Al-Shabaab militants to create a Taliban-style

government in Somalia is probably unachievable, at least in the long run. Al-Shabaab itself is mutating ideologically, as the appearance of the Jalalaqsi faction demonstrates. Nobody can predict confidently what it may develop into over the next several years.

Even more significantly, Al-Shabaab would find governing much harder than waging a guerilla struggle. To navigate the treacherous waters of clan politics in Somalia, it would need pragmatism more than Islam. Indeed, its rise has been in large measure due to its pragmatic style of political networking and cross-clan alliance building, not its radicalism much less any possible ties to an outside group like al-Qaeda. However, if the dream of the Islamist movement – widely shared among both those engaged in Djibouti and those fighting in the field – is thwarted again, Somalia could well become the mother of terrorist safe havens in the Horn, destabilising for the entire region.

The U.S. government's designation of Al-Shabaab as a terrorist entity will, in theory, curtail its ability to raise funds abroad. However, the informal money transfer system, popularly called *hawala*, makes this questionable.<sup>101</sup> The Islamists have built sophisticated and secretive methods of fundraising and transfer which are difficult for outsiders to penetrate. It is clear that they have plenty of cash, which they use to buy arms and recruit.<sup>102</sup> Ethiopian and TFG officials suspect some of the money comes from wealthy Arab states that view the insurgency as an effective way to thwart what they see as Ethiopia's ambitions to become a regional hegemon.<sup>103</sup> The insurgents have also been able to raise funds with remarkable ease among the large Somali communities scattered across the world. In fact, the diaspora is now their main source of funding.<sup>104</sup>

However, the terrorist group designation and the killing of Ayro have raised the stakes. Al-Shabaab has

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<sup>96</sup> BBC Swahili Service, 25 July 2008.

<sup>97</sup> See Crisis Group Africa Report N°95, *Counter-Terrorism in Somalia: Losing Hearts and Minds?*, 11 July 2005.

<sup>98</sup> Radio Banaadir, 1 April 2008, quoted Al-Shabaab militant Ma'lin Hashi Muhammad Farah as saying the organisation supported the "al-Qaeda ideology and was inviting jihadists from all corners of the world to Somalia.

<sup>99</sup> Long before the U.S. listed Al-Shabaab as a terrorist organisation, European security organisations held similar sentiments. Jorn Holme, the head of the Norwegian Security Police Service, PST, described it as a terrorist organisation, Aftenposten website Oslo, 9 March 2008. This followed a court case in which three Somalis in Norway were accused of transferring over 200,000 kroners (\$29,000) to Al-Shabaab, *Verdens Gang*, 1 March 2008. Holme's views are shared widely by European security services.

<sup>100</sup> See Crisis Group Africa Report N°100, *Somalia's Islamists*, 12 December 2005.

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<sup>101</sup> *Hawala* is an informal money transfer system based on trust with little or no paperwork common in the Horn of Africa, the Middle East and Asia. It is the system of choice for diaspora Somalis to send money to their relatives back home. It came under suspicion after the 11 September 2001 attacks and Somalia's then largest *hawala* agency, Al-Barakaat, was shut down and its assets frozen in the U.S. and elsewhere. The system is now more open and transparent, largely as a result of efforts by industry insiders, the UNDP and other aid agencies. Millions of Somalis in the country depend on it for receiving remittances from relatives abroad.

<sup>102</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Baidoa, April 2008.

<sup>103</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Mogadishu, April-June 2008.

<sup>104</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mogadishu, March 2008.

vowed revenge,<sup>105</sup> and the fear of more terrorist attacks in the Horn is now more real than ever, especially in Ethiopia and Kenya, two close U.S. allies. A recent bomb blast at a hotel in the eastern Ethiopian town of Nagele that killed three people was claimed by a hitherto unknown pan-Somali Islamist group, based in the Ogaden, the Somali Islamic Front (SIF).<sup>106</sup> The bombings of Hargeysa and Bosasao cited above seem to be further episodes in a looming series of killings. There are reports in recent months of explosives, weapons and militants on suicide missions being smuggled into Ethiopia and Kenya.<sup>107</sup> Since the beginning of 2008, Addis Ababa has experienced a spate of mystery bomb blasts, some of them causing fatalities.

### C. COUNTER-INSURGENCY

Since the Ethiopian invasion, both sides have broken international humanitarian law, with devastating consequences.<sup>108</sup> Indiscriminate area bombardments in populated areas, summary executions and apparently deliberate attacks on civilians, particularly on hospitals, by Ethiopian forces have been especially grave violations.<sup>109</sup> At the end of March 2007, the first major fighting included at least four days of constant mortar shelling and rocket barrages that inflicted major civilian casualties.<sup>110</sup> In the second round of fighting, the insurgents routinely deployed in densely populated areas, deliberately putting civilians at risk.<sup>111</sup> Ethiopian forces bombarded Mogadishu with constant rocket fire for at least seven days, killing hundreds of civilians, wounding several thousand and causing at least a third of the population to flee.<sup>112</sup>

In the highly centralised Ethiopian command and control structure, few actions are taken by field commanders without clearance from high up, even from Addis Ababa. But this heavy-handed approach has largely been counter-productive, further radicalising the Hawiye clans and undermining efforts to pacify Mogadishu. The tactics eventually forced Hawiye elders to suspend all contact with Ethiopian commanders and TFG officials. The widespread perception was that the Hawiye were being punished collectively for supporting the insurgency.<sup>113</sup> Some TFG officials made matters worse by inflammatory statements. The then deputy defence minister, Salad Ali Jelle, told a public gathering in the capital in March 2007 the government planned to “cleanse” the city. Hawiye leaders accused him of hate speech and the TFG of harbouring a “secret plan” for ethnic cleansing Mogadishu. By April 2007, the clan leaders had decided to support the insurgency, though without letting them control the city.

The Ethiopian response was swift and brutal: whole neighbourhoods were flattened by artillery, and the city was turned into a virtual ghost town. Some elders were arrested and held incommunicado for months, released only after the new prime minister intervened in January 2008. There are no accurate figures, but most estimates by Somali sources put the number of civilian deaths in the tit-for-tat shelling between the two sides at over 2,000 between March and December 2007.<sup>114</sup>

This counter-insurgency style continued well into 2008. Segments of the TFG army loyal to the president were particularly notorious for looting and vandalising Hawiye property. Prime Minister Nur Adde, who reached out to Hawiye clan elders and business leaders in early 2008, was particularly angry at the attacks, which he considered an attempt by hard-line TFG elements to scuttle his reconciliation efforts.<sup>115</sup> Ethiopian officers with similar misgivings told TFG officials to halt the looting and other acts of indiscipline.<sup>116</sup> Hawiye clan elders saw recurrent attacks on the Bakaaraha market, the city’s biggest shopping district, as meant to punish them economically.

Both sides gradually adapted their tactics. The insurgents began, as noted, a low-level but effective cam-

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<sup>105</sup> BBC Somali Service, 2 May 2008, Al-Shabaab spokesman Mukhtar Robow hinted the group will now target U.S. interests in the region to avenge Ayro’s killing.

<sup>106</sup> Sweden-based Somali website Somaliweyn, 28 May 2008. According to the report, which quoted the group’s spokesman, Haji Abukar Hasan, the SIF will continue the jihad until “all Somali territories” are “liberated” from Ethiopia.

<sup>107</sup> Crisis Group interviews, diplomats in Ethiopia, May 2008. In late October 2008, Kenyan police in Nairobi seized 600 units of bomb detonators in transit to Mandera town. See “Police seize 600 bomb detonators”, *The Standard*, 31 October 2008.

<sup>108</sup> “So Much to Fear”, Human Rights Watch, 8 December 2008.

<sup>109</sup> See “Shell-Shocked”, *op. cit.*

<sup>110</sup> “381 die in 4 days of Somali war: human rights group”, CBC News, 2 April 2007; and “Mogadishu buries its dead after week of fierce fighting”, *The Independent*, 5 April 2007.

<sup>111</sup> “Shell-Shocked”, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>112</sup> “Situation Report: Somalia”, OCHA, 27 April 2007.

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<sup>113</sup> Hawiye clan leader Husayn Siyad Qorgab speaking to BBC Somali Service, 13 April 2007.

<sup>114</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Somali hospital and aid workers, Mogadishu, April 2008. Hawiye leaders, however, claimed up to 4,000 civilians were killed and one million people displaced.

<sup>115</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mogadishu, April 2008.

<sup>116</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Addis Ababa and Mogadishu, April 2008.

paign including suicide bombings, hit-and-run and mortar attacks and the targeting of officials. The Ethiopians abandoned the most extensive forms of area bombardments but continued to use heavy artillery and mortars.<sup>117</sup> Their extrajudicial killings of civilians increased in November and December 2007, following fighting in early November after which the bodies of several soldiers were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu in scenes reminiscent of the failed intervention in 1993.

January and February 2008 saw an upsurge in attacks by Ethiopian and government troops on the Bakaaraha market. The claim was that the insurgents used it to stash weapons and attack TFG/Ethiopian positions. Bakaaraha is a maze of open stalls, the size of three football fields. Even on a slow day, it draws thousands of shoppers, and the insurgents see it as good cover. The biggest headache for the Ethiopian commanders has been to dislodge the fighters and destroy their infrastructure without causing mass civilian deaths. Every time troops went in or shelled the area, the civilian casualties were by far the highest.<sup>118</sup> Their attacks were also routinely followed by massive looting, mainly by TFG troops. The market is sometimes cordoned off for weeks, causing great hardship for consumers and traders.

Another operation which seriously damaged TFG attempts to win public support was the attack on Al-Hidaya mosque in Mogadishu on 20 April 2008.<sup>119</sup> Ten people were killed, including religious scholars of the Tabligh wing of Sunni Islam, such as Sheikh Sa'id Yahya, Sheikh Ali Muawiya and Adan Taishe, who were widely regarded as uninvolved in the insurgency.<sup>120</sup> This occurred on a weekend when some 80 people

were killed in intense fighting around the city.<sup>121</sup> Amnesty International accused the Ethiopian military of holding 41 children after the raid, some as young as nine.<sup>122</sup> The Ethiopian government denied any involvement, but several students were also rounded up from the mosque. Though the TFG/Ethiopian troops justified the assault on the mosque on grounds it was a hideout for insurgents, many Somalis saw it as a blatant violation of the sanctity of a place of worship.

The increasingly severe Ethiopian approach came against a background of growing discontent in the ranks. The Ethiopian military woke up to the idea of a "softer" approach when perhaps it was too late. In May 2008, Ethiopian soldiers distributed some relief food to residents of the district of Dayniile, close to Mogadishu. The remarkable thing is that the food was bought with money deducted from the salaries of the soldiers, who wanted to send a message they cared for the people of Somalia. But this message failed to get through to the Somalis, who saw the whole exercise as a publicity stunt. Hawiye clan elders even issued a public call urging Somalis not accept any food or gifts from the Ethiopian "enemies".<sup>123</sup> The army, which has been experiencing desertions,<sup>124</sup> began to reduce its numbers in Mogadishu and towns across south-central Somalia, such as Beledweyne. There was considerable international uproar at the heavy-handed tactics, and Ethiopian and Somali troops were accused of committing war crimes.<sup>125</sup> All this was a great propaganda victory for the insurgents.

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<sup>117</sup> "Somalia: Mogadishu – East Africa's Baghdad", Soma-  
linet, 6 June 2007; and "Somalia: 81 killed in Mogadishu  
clashes", Al Jazeera, 21 April 2008.

<sup>118</sup> In a March 2008 incident, an artillery shell fired by  
TFG/Ethiopian troops in response to a mortar attack on the  
presidency struck four market vendors, killing three. See  
"Eight Killed in Mogadishu Clashes", Agence France-Presse,  
29 March 2008.

<sup>119</sup> HornAfrik radio, 21 April 2008.

<sup>120</sup> The al-Tabligh Muslim movement (sometimes referred to  
as a sect) originated on the Indian sub-continent. It is essen-  
tially a missionary movement whose primary aim is to revive  
the "Sunnah" – Prophet Muhammad's way of life. Members  
are found all over the cities and small villages of Africa and  
Asia, teaching frugality and a life of devotion to Allah. They  
are largely considered apolitical. However, in Somalia, some  
members have been supporters of the Islamic Courts move-  
ment.

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<sup>121</sup> "Ethiopia soldiers blamed for mosque massacre", AllAf-  
rica.com, 21 April 2008.

<sup>122</sup> "Somalia/Ethiopia: Release children held in raid on Al  
Hidaya mosque", Amnesty International, 23 April 2008.

<sup>123</sup> "Somali elders sneer at Ethiopian troops for doling out  
relief", Agence France-Presse, 15 May 2008.

<sup>124</sup> "Sana'a – Scores of Ethiopian army troops have arrived  
off the coast of Yemen onboard two boats belonging to  
smugglers after they fled fighting with Islamic insurgents in  
Somalia, a press report said on Tuesday", Deutsche Presse-  
Agentur, 18 April 2007.

<sup>125</sup> As early as April 2007, there was warning war crimes were  
being committed by both sides in Somalia. An EU security  
official reportedly warned the EU delegation head to Soma-  
lia the EU could be "complicit" in war crimes if it did noth-  
ing to stop the violence in Mogadishu. "EU 'complicit in  
Somali war crimes'", *The Independent*, 7 April 2007. In a 27  
August 2007 press release, U.S. Congressman Donald Payne  
said, "[t]he atrocities being committed against innocent civil-  
ians in Mogadishu are war crimes and crimes against human-  
ity. It is shameful and criminal to use tanks and heavy  
artillery against civilians".

#### IV. THE HUMANITARIAN AND ECONOMIC CRISIS

According to the UN humanitarian coordinator for the country, Somalia's is the "world's second largest humanitarian crisis [and] one of its most politically complex", and it is "now a make or break year".<sup>126</sup> Due to a confluence of factors, including three years of drought, escalating violence and fuel and food price rises, 3.2 million Somalis are dependent on food aid and over one million are displaced. Aid agencies cannot mount effective operations because of the violence, in which their workers are now being targeted.<sup>127</sup> The displacement of civilians from hotspots like Mogadishu, Beledweyne, Kismaayo and other areas in central and southern Somalia continues unabated.<sup>128</sup> Mogadishu is the worst hit, with tens of thousands of civilians leaving each month.<sup>129</sup> Some 400,000 IDPs are packed into over 200 settlements along a 15-km stretch of the Afgooye road south of the capital.<sup>130</sup>

##### A. FOOD CRISIS, COUNTERFEIT BANKNOTES, HYPERINFLATION

Since the beginning of 2008, the country has seen a steep rise – between 110 and 375 per cent – in the price of essential food commodities, principally rice, a staple for most Somalis. While this phenomenon is worldwide, the local impact has been severe. Somali traders face serious difficulties buying rice and other foodstuffs from traditional suppliers such as India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Vietnam.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>126</sup> "Press Conference by United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia", UN Department of Public Information, 3 December 2008.

<sup>127</sup> Some nineteen aid workers – mostly local – have been killed in the last year, according to the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Mark Bowden. "Somalia: Attacks on Aid Workers 'Intolerable' – Top UN official", IRIN, 15 July 2008.

<sup>128</sup> "More than a million now displaced in Somalia: OCHA", UN Radio, 23 October 2008.

<sup>129</sup> OCHA estimated that close to 20,000 people left Mogadishu each month in early 2008. Over 110,000 IDPs have been displaced due to insecurity there since 1 September 2008, "Protection Cluster Update", United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Somalia, 5 December 2008.

<sup>130</sup> Crisis Group interviews, aid workers operating in Somalia, Mogadishu and Nairobi, April 2008.

<sup>131</sup> Crisis Group interviews, OCHA officials, Nairobi, April 2008, Al-Ma'ruf Trading Company officials, August 2008.

The value of the Somali shilling has eroded dramatically, compounding the poverty of those already in dire need and sparking unrest in major urban centres. The U.S. dollar is currently exchanging for approximately 30,000 shillings.<sup>132</sup> Billions of counterfeit Somali banknotes printed in the autonomous Puntland region have created hyperinflation.<sup>133</sup> Most traders are unwilling to accept the shilling, and the dollar is now the currency of choice for most major transactions. Those able to survive are urban Somalis with access to dollars and remittances from relatives abroad. Pastoralists in remote corners of the country whose livestock have been decimated by the drought are flocking to cities with little prospect of obtaining food and other help.<sup>134</sup>

The drought has been severe across the country, but especially in the central regions of Hiiraan, Galguduud and Shabeelle.<sup>135</sup> The agricultural belts in the Juba Valley have been less affected. Transporters have been hit by the sharp increase in fuel prices and the growing insecurity and proliferation of checkpoints manned by freelance militias and TFG soldiers.<sup>136</sup> This means food that reaches remote towns and villages is usually priced above the means of the poor. The consequence is a dramatic increase in malnutrition across the country.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>132</sup> "Mogadishu riots over food prices", Al Jazeera (online), 6 May 2008.

<sup>133</sup> Criminal syndicates operate in Puntland in collusion with shady Far Eastern companies, which have been increasing the printing of counterfeit Somali banknotes since mid-2007. The damage to the Somali economy is not known, but analysts interviewed by Crisis Group in March 2008 indicated it has compounded inflation, especially in Mogadishu. There are suspicions by Hawiye traders in Mogadishu that the "Puntland banknotes" are meant to damage their economic interests.

<sup>134</sup> Crisis Group interview, Somali local leader with knowledge of the humanitarian situation in the drought-ravaged Hiiraan region, August 2008.

<sup>135</sup> "Somalia Food Security Outlook April to July 2008", Food and Agriculture Organisation/Food Security Analysis Unit.

<sup>136</sup> Checkpoints are now a source of livelihood for many freelance gunmen in southern Somalia. Motorists have to pay a "fee", usually thousands of Somali shillings, before they can proceed. On some roads, there can be ten checkpoints.

<sup>137</sup> Some aid workers interviewed by Crisis Group in August 2008 said the Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) level, around 23 per cent in 2006, is now around 30 per cent – almost double the 15 per cent level usually regarded as an emergency. See "Somalia: Food Crisis Threatens Millions of Lives, UN Agency Warns", AllAfrica.com, 22 August 2008.



## **B. SHRINKING HUMANITARIAN SPACE**

The impact of growing insecurity on the humanitarian situation is severe. The delivery of aid to the 3.2 million Somalis in need has been seriously reduced, as NGO workers, national and international, have become targets. This violence is principally from local groups with grudges against some relief agencies but also increasingly comes from deliberate action by some insurgent groups.<sup>138</sup> Two months after Médecins sans Frontières lost three staff for the first time in a bomb attack in January 2008, Al-Shabaab leaders threatened that NGOs might be attacked.<sup>139</sup> Care and International Medical Corps were obliged to withdraw entirely because of such threats.<sup>140</sup> This was thought to be a response to the belief some agencies cooperate with the U.S. war on terrorism by identifying insurgent locations. Kidnappings, assassinations and other attacks on NGO and UN humanitarian agency staff have increased further since August, as more areas of the country are sucked into the violence.

The TFG also puts obstacles in the way of humanitarian operations, both roadblocks and time consuming and financially draining bureaucracy. Sheer ill will is also involved on occasion. Officials often accuse NGOs of operating without respect for national sovereignty and bypassing the government.<sup>141</sup> They also tend to resent the channelling of aid to IDPs, whom they believe support the insurgency.<sup>142</sup> At the same time, donors put pressure on the agencies not to cooperate with insurgent factions even to gain access to the suffering population.<sup>143</sup>

In areas the insurgents control, however, aid agencies must cooperate with them to secure safe passage and access. This makes bringing the insurgents into any ceasefire a pre-requisite for improving the humanitarian situation, but the access issue also needs to be negotiated distinct from the Djibouti peace process. The UN humanitarian coordinator should develop a separate strategy involving representatives of the humanitarian community and the insurgent groups in control of territory. Each town and access road would have to be negotiated regionally, with emphasis on the major supply axes. A separate track is important not only in view of the extreme suffering in south-central Somalia but also to protect the humanitarian community from the ripple effects of a failing peace process. Furthermore, due to the less than inclusive nature of the Djibouti process, many humanitarians shun it for fear of jeopardising their mission and putting staff at risk, as well as out of the general principle of neutrality.

The piracy menace off the Somali coast has become a further complication. World Food Programme (WFP) charters have been targeted and have required naval escorts to safely deliver cargo since November 2007.<sup>144</sup> Land routes are expensive, and there is little alternative to the sea for the needed scale of emergency relief.<sup>145</sup> After the Dutch navy in June 2008 ended escort for WFP ships, the organisation warned it might have to stop deliveries altogether (a contingency that the strengthening of anti-piracy patrols has avoided).<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Local grievances against some NGOs usually revolve around “unfair” recruitment policies, insensitive to clan balance, poor salaries and perceived bias in the awarding of contracts. Increasingly, criminal gangs now target NGOs for their assets. It is also becoming lucrative to kidnap NGO workers for ransom.

<sup>139</sup> “Somali insurgents threaten NGOs, accuse them of spy activities”, Canada-based Somali website Waagacusub.com, 17 March 2008.

<sup>140</sup> “International Medical Corps Offices in Somalia's Central Region Looted; Activities Suspended”, International Medical Corps, 27 September 2008; and “CARE Suspends Operations in Galgadud Region of Somalia”, Care, 20 June 2008, [www.care.org/newsroom/articles/2008/06/20080620\\_somalia.asp](http://www.care.org/newsroom/articles/2008/06/20080620_somalia.asp).

<sup>141</sup> Crisis Group interviews, government official, Baidoa, April 2008.

<sup>142</sup> “Aid Workers in Somalia Fear Government Attack on Camps Near Mogadishu”, Voice of America, 24 August 2007.

<sup>143</sup> Crisis Group interview, NGO and UN officials, Nairobi, April and November 2008.

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<sup>144</sup> Peter Goossens of the WFP is quoted as saying that without naval escorts “our whole maritime supply routes will be threatened”, WFP press release, 12 June 2008.

<sup>145</sup> According to the WFP, 80 per cent of its food deliveries to Somalia arrive by sea, *ibid*.

<sup>146</sup> “WFP seeks urgent navy escorts for Somalia food aid”, Reuters, 18 July 2008.

## V. THE PEACEKEEPING RESPONSE

### A. AMISOM

In 2007 an international consensus crystallised around three mutually reinforcing policies focused on security, reconciliation and governance. The security policy centred on deployment of 8,000 African Union (AU) peacekeepers to Somalia (AMISOM). They were seen as essential in order to allow Ethiopia to redeploy its forces, which Prime Minister Meles Zenawi declared he hoped could be done in a matter of weeks.<sup>147</sup> Getting Ethiopian forces out of Mogadishu was viewed as imperative, since their presence in the capital was a lightning rod for armed resistance. The AU peacekeepers, it was reasoned, could prevent anarchy there while the TFG built up its police. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer apparently gave personal assurances to Ethiopian leaders that the U.S. would “deliver” the AU.<sup>148</sup> Whether she pledged this or not, the U.S. led lobbying and gave incentives to African countries to contribute to AMISOM.

The strategy met obstacles and was not fully implemented, however. Only 1,500 troops, all from Uganda and paid for by Washington, were belatedly deployed to Somalia in March 2007. In October 2007, Burundi deployed a second battalion (courtesy of France), bringing the AMISOM total to 3,400 in Mogadishu.<sup>149</sup> Nigeria, Malawi and Ghana eventually pledged troops but for a variety of reasons delayed delivery,<sup>150</sup> most importantly reluctance to get involved in a situation where some insurgency leaders were calling on their fighters to target the peacekeepers. The unwillingness of African governments to commit troops developed into a source of tension between Ethiopia and the U.S. AMISOM has also faced logistical and financial constraints.<sup>151</sup>

Without either a functioning TFG or a credible peace process, the force has been at a loss for a strategy of

its own. Its identification with the TFG, and by extension the Ethiopians, has made it an increasing target of attacks. A Burundian was killed by a suicide car bomb in April 2008 and a Ugandan by a roadside bomb in August. Two further peacekeepers were killed in the last third of the year.<sup>152</sup>

There is clear need for a more robust force. But it must come in support, not in advance, of a credible peace process, a status the Djibouti talks have not attained. The international priority should be to identify a comprehensive political solution to the long crisis and resist the temptation to again send peacekeepers to solve a political problem.

### B. THE UNITED NATIONS

After a series of re-authorisations<sup>153</sup> of the AU mission, pressure mounted on the UN Security Council to deliver both a security alternative and a renewed political process. The Council looked in turn to the Secretariat to develop options, and fundamental disagreements emerged in both Council and Secretariat. The Secretary-General sent assessment missions in January 2008,<sup>154</sup> and in his subsequent report endorsed “the three track strategic approach, defined by the SAM [strategic assessment mission] as the basis for UN engagement in Somalia”.<sup>155</sup> The SAM introduced benchmarks for distinct phases leading at the end to deployment of a peacekeeping mission. These were 60-70 per cent of the opposition backing political dialogue (political track); the return of the UN Political Office in Somalia (UNPOS) found to be viable (security track); and Somalia’s Transitional Federal Institutions, including the government, able to perform basic functions in Mogadishu (programmatic track).

With a strengthened AMISOM not in sight, many countries and also the TFG pushed deployment of a UN force. Security Council Resolution 1814 (15 May 2008) recommended a peacekeeping operation subject to progress on political reconciliation and security conditions on the ground, but Council members debated the merits of each scenario, and a divide emerged. Italy (a former Somalia colonial power), South Africa

<sup>147</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, “Ethiopian Premier says his troops won’t stay in Somalia,” *The New York Times*, 3 January 2007.

<sup>148</sup> Crisis Group interview, U.S. government source, December 2007.

<sup>149</sup> “Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia”, S/2008/709, 17 November 2008, paras. 59-60.

<sup>150</sup> In June, Nigeria again pledged to send 800 peacekeepers to Somalia as part of AMISOM. “Nigeria to send around 800 peacekeepers to Somalia”, Reuters, 25 June 2008.

<sup>151</sup> “Report of the Secretary-General” S/2008/709, op. cit., para. 60. “AMISOM estimates that it will require approximately \$200 million for the period from January to December 2009, excluding bilateral support to troops”.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> UN Security Council Resolutions 1744 (20 February 2007); 1744 (20 February 2007); 1772 (20 August 2007); 1801 (20 February 2008); and 1831 (19 August 2008).

<sup>154</sup> The strategic assessment was led by the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the technical by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

<sup>155</sup> “Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia”, S/2008/178, 14 March 2008.

and, most forcefully, the U.S. favoured a prompt deployment to take over from AMISOM. South African Ambassador Kumalo was particularly vocal, repeatedly criticising inaction. The U.S. pressured DPKO and Council members to move on a UN force, especially after Ethiopia announced it would withdraw. Many others, particularly the Europeans, approached a peacekeeping operation hesitantly, influenced by DPKO's warnings about the risks in the current security environment.<sup>156</sup>

Despite Resolution 1814, little has changed in terms of a possible UN force. Deployment is still conditioned on a stable security situation and political progress.<sup>157</sup> Even the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement signed in Djibouti on 9 June 2008 between the TFG and the ARS-D, which called for Ethiopian withdrawal within 120 days, did not advance the concept. Ethiopia's unilateral decision to pull out by the end of 2008 reflected its frustration with a dysfunctional TFG and a UN system incapable either to spearhead an inclusive peace process or deploy a sizeable stabilising force.

The 120-day timeline in the Djibouti agreement was considered unrealistic for a UN peacekeeping force to replace the Ethiopians, so consideration was given to a rapid deployment stabilisation force led and equipped by a single country but to operate under a UN mandate. But with the deteriorating situation in-country, little progress in the Djibouti talks and the increase in piracy, there were no volunteers. Preparations for a UN force of some 20,000 to stabilise Mogadishu have continued, however, though with equally little success in identifying troop contributors.<sup>158</sup> Despite the Secretary-General's initial enthusiasm, the Secretariat has been divided. DPKO has remained hesitant in the absence of a viable peace process. DPA, which leads the Djibouti talks, is somewhat more optimistic.<sup>159</sup>

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice used a 16 December ministerial-level meeting of the Security Council on the piracy issue as well as a session of the International Contact Group the same day to emphasise Washington's desire for a resolution authorising a UN peacekeeping force by the end of the year. The U.S. exerted considerable pressure on other Council members, particularly the UK,<sup>160</sup> leading up to and following those meetings. In his briefing to the Security Council, also on 16 December, the Secretary-General was explicit in his opposition: "Our objective is to stabilise Somalia and find a durable solution to the crisis in that country. I recognize that some members of the Council have other suggestions for dealing with the security crisis in Somalia, including putting the AMISOM forces under a UN peacekeeping operation now. That is not our preferred option".<sup>161</sup> The preferred Secretariat option to which the Secretary-General referred is now the UN's reinforced support for AMISOM, in terms of training, support at mission level (logistics, medical, engineering) and mission planning as well as an expansion of UNPOS's mandate to include police and military training expertise to enhance Somali capacities.<sup>162</sup>

### C. FIGHTING PIRACY

The piracy problem, which began to develop in the late 1990s, dramatically increased in 2008. The waters off the Somali coast are now ranked "the number one piracy hotspot" in the world.<sup>163</sup> The 63 reported attacks on ships in the third quarter of 2008 accounted for nearly a third of all such attacks worldwide. As of October 2008, 26 ships and more than 250 crew were being held by Somali pirates for large ransoms.<sup>164</sup> An official of the Maritime Bureau interviewed in December said the figure could now be fourteen ships, meaning the rest have been freed most probably after paying ransom.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> DPKO first estimated that a Somalia operation would require roughly 27,000 troops and 1,500 police – the largest UN mission in the world. Assistant Secretary-General Edmond Mulet, briefing to the Security Council, 20 March 2008. Given the difficulties the UN has encountered in trying to deploy a force in Darfur, this magnitude gave Council members pause.

<sup>157</sup> Resolution 1814 speaks of "an increased presence of United Nations personnel and, subject to broad-based political and security agreements and conditions on the ground, the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation to succeed the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM)".

<sup>158</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, November 2008.

<sup>159</sup> DPKO, based on its early 2008 field assessments, has consistently maintained that peacekeeper deployment where there is "no peace to keep" is not advisable. It argues rightly that without a viable ceasefire and an inclusive po-

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litical agreement, such an operation would have little chance to succeed and would be in real danger. Its views have frustrated Council activists.

<sup>160</sup> The United Kingdom is the Council "lead" on Somalia.

<sup>161</sup> "Secretary-General's briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in Somalia", New York, 16 December 2008, at [www.un.org/apps/sg/sgstats.asp?nid=3620](http://www.un.org/apps/sg/sgstats.asp?nid=3620).

<sup>162</sup> Crisis Group interview, UN official, December 2008.

<sup>163</sup> This is the view of the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), which monitors global safety. Barney Jopson, "Somali Pirates in flurry of attacks", *Financial Times*, 11 September 2008.

<sup>164</sup> "Unprecedented rise in piracy attacks", IMB, Piracy Reporting Centre, 24 November 2008.

<sup>165</sup> Crisis Group interview, Maritime Bureau official, 22 December 2008.

Bristling with weapons and utilising fast motorboats operating from mother ships, the pirates threaten to choke off the Gulf of Aden, one of the world's busiest and most vital waterways. The audacity and sophistication of the pirates, as well as their ambition to extend operations well beyond Somalia's territorial waters, have deeply alarmed the world. Major naval powers scrambled to craft a response amid an unprecedented media outcry,<sup>166</sup> particularly after a Ukrainian ship with 21 crew members and a cargo of heavy weaponry officially headed for Kenya was hijacked.<sup>167</sup> A flurry of Security Council resolutions was issued, authorising deployments off the coast and use of "all necessary means" to fight piracy.<sup>168</sup>

On 16 December, the Council went farther, adopting a resolution introduced by the U.S. that provides: "States and regional organisations cooperating in the fight against piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia for which advance notification has been provided by the TFG to the Secretary-General may undertake all necessary measures that are appropriate in Somalia, for the purpose of suppressing acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea, pursuant to the request of the TFG".<sup>169</sup>

Strong action against the pirates is necessary and appropriate. Diligence must be exercised to ensure that anti-piracy operations are conducted with sensitivity for the feelings of many Somalis that their country has become an "open arena" for foreign forces.<sup>170</sup> By providing legal cover for any Western military operation in Somalia, the new resolution risks fanning Somali nationalism, pushing northerners into the arms of Al-Shabaab and quickening the disintegration of Puntland. The deployment of an EU, NATO naval task force may usefully reduce piracy, but it is unlikely to eradicate the problem.<sup>171</sup> Worse, the gangs – under

pressure at sea and along the coast – may relocate deeper inland and so pose a new challenge for the feeble regional government in Puntland. In fact, the military measures currently favoured by the EU and NATO may be giving birth to a new problem. A regional naval task force, modelled closely along the anti-piracy patrols by Asian navies in the Malaccan Straits, would probably be more acceptable.

The concern over piracy should, moreover, be tempered by the fact Somalia faces far more intractable political and security problems, of which piracy is merely a manifestation. The international pre-occupation with piracy may even appear hypocritical to many in view of the longstanding and rarely challenged practice of foreign entities to fish illegally and dump toxic waste on Somalia's coast.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> In late 2008 piracy dominated stories from Somalia. With a few exceptions, most reports made little or no attempt to describe the pirates and analyse the factors their motivations.

<sup>167</sup> The Ukrainian-operated MV *Faina* is owned by Waterlux AG and based in Panama City, Panama, but flies the flag of Belize. When seized, it was carrying 33 Soviet-manufactured T-72 tanks, rocket-propelled grenades, anti-aircraft guns, and other weapons and ammunition. It was widely believed the actual destination was South Sudan.

<sup>168</sup> See Security Council Resolution 1846 (2008) issued under Chapter VII.

<sup>169</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1851, S/RES/1851 (2008), 16 December 2008.

<sup>170</sup> Crisis Group interview, Somali politician, Nairobi, July 2008.

<sup>171</sup> After being launched on 8 December, the EU's Operation *Atalanta* reached initial operational capability on 13 December. The year-long EU mission will include warships from

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Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the non-EU member Norway. See "Summary of Rear Admiral Jones's opening remarks at the Press Conference in Brussels on 9 December 2008 to launch EU NAVFOR Somalia - Operation *ATALANTA*", at [http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/081212-Summary\\_of\\_remarks\\_RAAdmiral\\_Jones.pdf](http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/081212-Summary_of_remarks_RAAdmiral_Jones.pdf); "EU NAVFOR starts activities", Council of the European Union, at [http://consilium.europa.eu/cms3\\_fo/showPage.asp?id=1518&lang=en](http://consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=1518&lang=en); and "German parliament approves anti-pirate mission", AFP, 20 December 2008.

<sup>172</sup> Crisis Group interview, Puntland leaders, July 2008. Many Somalis privately rationalise piracy as no more criminal than what they perceive as "the silent plunder" of their marine resources and the "poisoning" of their coast by unscrupulous foreign companies that have allegedly been dumping toxic industrial waste since the late 1980s.

## VI. THE DJIBOUTI NEGOTIATIONS

The UN-sponsored peace initiative got under way in Djibouti on 9 May 2008, the outcome of a shift in the international community's thinking about the crisis since the beginning of the year. Ethiopia's military woes, the escalating insurgency, the worsening humanitarian crisis and the TFG's inability to consolidate its authority had the cumulative effect of bringing the major Western powers, principally the U.S., to support UN efforts to relaunch talks between the TFG and the Islamist opposition. For the first time, there was a genuine consensus that the only way forward was a peace process involving the Islamists and eventually leading to a power-sharing accord.

The key aim of the Djibouti architects was to create a powerful alliance capable of stabilising Somalia, marginalising the radicals, and stemming the tide of Islamist militancy. But this was quickly undermined by the splits within the ARS and TFG and the rapid takeover of most of southern and central Somalia by insurgency elements that reject the process. Consequently, Djibouti became a dialogue between weak parties with little weight on the ground.

The key question whether a critical mass of the rejectionists, not just ARS-A but also some of the powerful militias that have been seizing territory from the demoralised TFG and Ethiopians, can be persuaded to negotiate when they are riding high militarily. Without their participation in the talks and support for an eventual agreement, even a balanced accord could be dead on arrival.

### A. THE GENESIS OF THE DJIBOUTI TALKS

The first round lasted a week. The atmosphere was highly charged, with delegates refusing to meet face to face. Procedural wrangling and ARS-D<sup>173</sup> fears that its participation would be portrayed as tacit acceptance of the TFG's legitimacy<sup>174</sup> almost derailed the

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<sup>173</sup> The ARS-D's key positions included: an Ethiopian pullout with a "clear timetable" and an international guarantee; accountability for war crimes/justice/compensation/reparation; a multinational peacekeeping force with "predominantly" Muslim troops; and, a power-sharing deal, which should be discussed after Ethiopian pullout. The ARS-D now appears keener for an early power-sharing deal, perhaps due to its weak position vis-à-vis the rest of the Islamist insurgency.

<sup>174</sup> The TFG has had three key positions. First, it asserts that it is the legitimate, internationally recognised government, though it has toned down this rhetoric. Secondly, it holds that

talks. The ARS constantly argued it controlled 95 per cent of south-central Somalia and also was more legitimate than the TFG.<sup>175</sup> To work around this problem, it was agreed to drop the titles of TFG and ARS functionaries from all official documents until they were ready for signing. Thus the names of the two chief negotiators – the TFG's deputy prime minister, Ahmed Abdisalam, and the ARS-D central committee member, Abdirahman Abdishakur – appeared on conference documents without titles. The TFG was made to tone down its constitutional legitimacy rhetoric and to abandon its effort to obtain veto powers over the process. EU diplomats were instrumental in persuading the ARS-D to be flexible on the more contentious Ethiopian pullout.

The second round began on 1 June and was much less acrimonious. The key sticking point again was the ARS-D demand for a timetable on an Ethiopian pullout. After eight days, an eleven-point accord was signed, in which the parties agreed to stop all "acts of armed confrontation" in 30 days. The accord also stipulated that a multinational peacekeeping force should be deployed within 120 days of signature. This appeared to be a compromise to meet the ARS-D insistence on a pullout timetable. The vague wording made an Ethiopia pullout contingent on deployment of a UN force and became the subject of much debate among Somali critics, who argued it was designed to give Ethiopia "enough room to wiggle out" of its withdrawal commitment.<sup>176</sup>

Until the last moment, there was much scepticism an accord was possible. The sides stuck to their positions, despite pressure from the UN envoy, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, and other diplomats. Just hours before the deal was signed, Ould-Abdallah voiced frustration at a news conference, accusing the Somali leaders of intransigence and missing a historic chance. Even after signature, the accord was received sceptically. The ARS-D had no capacity to deliver on the ceasefire, given its diminished military role. Equally, there was no prospect of a multinational stabilisation force deploying in Somalia within 120 days.

Round three lasted two days (25-26 October), at the end of which technocrats signed a document on modalities for ceasefire implementation and a declaration

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an Ethiopian pullout is contingent on a political settlement and deployment of a multinational force; thirdly, the opposition must lay down its arms and renounce all forms of violence.

<sup>175</sup> Crisis Group interview, ARS official, Djibouti, August 2008.

<sup>176</sup> Crisis Group interview, opposition Somali politicians, Nairobi, June 2008.

on political aims.<sup>177</sup> The interesting element was the “paced security arrangements”, providing for the ceasefire to begin on 5 November, followed by deployment of a joint ARS-D/TFG force in Mogadishu and other sectors by 10 November and a phased Ethiopian pullout from Mogadishu and other sectors by 21 November. To complement these arrangements, the accord envisaged a 10,000-strong joint ARS-D/TFG force to be trained and equipped by the international community. On paper this looked hopeful, but the discrepancy between the balance of forces on the ground and the political talks between two protagonists that control very little made implementation problematic. Ethiopia’s announced pullback from Mogadishu started on schedule,<sup>178</sup> but there is deep suspicion among Somalis that the troops will not leave completely.<sup>179</sup>

The fourth round, opening on 22 November, led to the signing of an ambitious power-sharing deal between ARS-D and TFG that is widely dismissed as “unworkable”.<sup>180</sup> It envisages a government of national unity drawn from the two parties, with parliament doubling to 550 members. 200 seats are expected to be for the ARS-D and 75 for civil society groups and the diaspora. This clause is controversial. Apart from the heavy logistical and financial burden such a number would entail for an impoverished nation, there would be serious political implications, especially for President Yusuf. He and his supporters – always lukewarm about the Djibouti talks – view the deal as a major concession that could erode presidential control and make the threat of impeachment more real.<sup>181</sup> Yusuf now believes the Djibouti process is a strategy to oust him. His trip to Libya in late November may have been an attempt to shore up his shaky position by seeking Libyan support. In particular, he is believed to be interested in relocating the peace talks away from Djibouti.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> ARS-D brought Omar Hashi and Siyad Qorgab as representatives of its military commanders “in the field”; the TFG was represented by intelligence chief Darwish and top army officials.

<sup>178</sup> Hawiye clan leader Ahmed Diriye accused the Ethiopian troops of conducting “revenge raids” in Mogadishu on the very day they were to begin relocating. BBC Somali Service, 21 November 2008.

<sup>179</sup> “A leopard does not change its spots”, a prominent Somali actor told Crisis Group in Nairobi, November 2008.

<sup>180</sup> “Somalia: power-sharing deal reached in Djibouti as TFG split widens”, IRIN, 26 November 2008.

<sup>181</sup> “Somalia: PM accuses President Yusuf of opposing reconciliation”, GaroweOnline, 20 November 2008.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

## B. THE EFFORTS OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

When Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah was appointed in September 2007 as Ban Ki-moon’s special representative (SRSG) to Somalia, the reaction was largely positive among Somalis and the key Western powers alike.<sup>183</sup> The general perception was that the veteran Mauritanian diplomat brought considerable conflict mediation expertise and the required cultural sensitivity to the job.<sup>184</sup> Somalis, in particular, saw his Muslim heritage and domestic leadership experience in a nation bedevilled by poverty, under-development and ethnic cleavages as a tremendous asset.<sup>185</sup> His predecessor, François Lonseny Fall, was widely criticised for an alleged poor grasp of the country’s complex politics and for “mishandling” peace talks in Khar-toum in late 2006.<sup>186</sup>

Having brokered the Djibouti accord, many were hopeful the SRSG could deliver a viable wider process. From the beginning, he was determined to seek new ways for pushing the peace process forward. He consulted widely with key Somalis and non-Somalis alike whose support is critical, reaching out in particular, unlike his predecessor, to the Gulf States, including Saudi Arabia especially on funding and peacekeeping. Perhaps most importantly, he engaged the influential Somali business community in meetings in Sharjah in January 2008 and Nairobi in March. On 30 April he assumed leadership from the U.S. of the International Contact Group, which had been considered increasingly irrelevant. It remains to be seen, however, whether he can make it an effective body that steers the international response to the Somalia crisis.

As much as his efforts were laudable in the first months, however, the SRSG increasingly departed from a more inclusive approach. He neglected clan elders and clan leadership councils, the most influential segments of Somali society. The important relationship with Ethiopia became frosty, which does not bode well for the future of the Djibouti talks.<sup>187</sup> At the root of Ethiopian mistrust is a perception Ould-Abdallah is letting the

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<sup>183</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Somali politicians, Baidoa and Western diplomats, Nairobi, October 2007.

<sup>184</sup> Ould-Abdallah served as UN envoy to West Africa in 2002 and before that in Burundi, where in that capacity he was involved in the mediation to end the civil conflict. UN press release, SG/A/810/AFR/440/Bio/3435.

<sup>185</sup> Crisis Group interviews, senior TFG officials, Nairobi, April 2008.

<sup>186</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Somali leaders, Baidoa; and diplomats, Nairobi, April 2008.

<sup>187</sup> Crisis Group interview, diplomats, Nairobi, July 2008.

Arabs – especially Saudi Arabia – play an increasingly dominant role in the negotiations.<sup>188</sup>

Most importantly, the SRSG has not reached out adequately to insurgent groups in the field, especially Al-Shabaab, which retains the potential to jeopardise any Djibouti deal. UN sources claim that he has taken steps to engage with militant leaders like Hassan Dahir Aweys and that he approached the Security Council to urge the U.S. to remove Aweys's name from the list of individuals subject to U.S. sanctions for links with terrorism.<sup>189</sup> But a more direct engagement with key figures on the ground may be needed.

From the start, Ould-Abdallah was opposed to the old set-piece Somali peace conferences, characterised by lengthy talks, which often perpetuated the vice of “per diem culture”. He wanted two short rounds, not exceeding a month, and a small team of negotiators from the two sides, ideally around ten and no more than twenty. This was a high-risk strategy, and it was remarkable how effective it proved in the first set of negotiations. That an accord was signed in a month, as planned, was somewhat unsettling, for supporters and critics alike.<sup>190</sup> But this strategy has quickly lost its utility, as the Djibouti talks stagnate and, despite pledges and signatures, there is no improvement on the ground.

## C. OUTSIDE PARTIES

Competing agendas and at times competing peace initiatives – as in February 2008 when Egypt launched an initiative parallel to Prime Minister Nur Adde's – allow the Somalis to exploit the lack of international cohesion. As the peace process drags on without major results, back room manoeuvring and splits are likely to deepen.

### 1. Ethiopia

No other external actor is as integral to events as Ethiopia. Its prolonged occupation of Mogadishu has been costly to it on multiple levels – financially, diplomatically and in terms of casualties. Its leaders have been surprised at the persistence and strength of the armed insurgency and deeply frustrated at the TFG's inability to become functional. There is no question

that Ethiopia miscalculated when it occupied Mogadishu, misreading Somali politics, the willingness of other Africans to supply peacekeepers to AMISOM and the ability of its U.S. ally to deliver AU support. The Meles regime acknowledged all this implicitly when it began a serious disengagement from the battlefield. With barely three battalions left on the ground, and disagreements with the TFG, especially Yusuf, the Ethiopians have decided to save their necks politically, end a military impasse and force the international community to seriously consider the security situation in Somalia.

Resolution of the Somali crisis will, at some point, require Ethiopia and the Islamist opposition to reach a *modus vivendi*. That a decade of diplomacy has not focused on bringing these two main protagonists together for direct talks underscores the weakness of its conflict analysis. The Somali opposition must address its legitimate security concerns if it wants Ethiopia to accept a negotiated settlement. If a Somali government or political movement pursues irredentist policies against Ethiopia, gives support to armed insurgencies directed against the Ethiopian government, allows itself to be used as a platform for radical Islamists or pursues close relations with Eritrea, it can expect Addis Ababa to work against it. Recognition of Ethiopian security imperatives is a concession Somali political movements of all types must make if Ethiopia is to support a revived Somali central government.

An additional dimension is Eritrea's support for the insurgency. Their deep animosity has led both countries to support opposition groups in the other and look for additional places to make trouble. Ethnic Somalis in the Ogaden region bordering Somalia are perceived to pose a particular threat to the Ethiopian regime. It accuses the armed movement there, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), of supporting the UIC in Somalia and vice versa and also accuses Eritrea of supporting the ONLF. The Somalia war has caught Ethiopia in a quagmire that Eritrea is happy to see perpetuated.

However, Eritrea has played its hand badly with the international community.<sup>191</sup> Due to its acrimonious

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<sup>188</sup> Crisis Group interview, diplomats, Nairobi, July 2008.

<sup>189</sup> “Ambassador Ahmadou Ould-Abdallah: A genuine peace architect”, Hiiraan Online editorial, 29 July 2008; and Crisis Group telephone interview, UN official, August 2008.

<sup>190</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Somali politicians, Nairobi, Baidoa, April, May and June 2008.

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<sup>191</sup> When the U.S. designated Al-Shabaab a terrorist organisation in March/April 2008, many believed it was a prelude to designation of Eritrea as a state sponsor of terrorism, in the belief that it hosts Al-Shabaab members with links to al-Qaeda. That would likely have increased the prospect of Eritrea seeking to play the spoiler in Somalia. There is an ongoing dispute in Washington, in particular between the State and Defense Departments, over whether to put Eritrea on the list. For the moment, the U.S. has decided only to designate Eritrea as “not cooperating fully” with U.S. counter-terrorism

behaviour, the resolution of the border dispute between the two countries has been largely abandoned by the international community in favour of Ethiopia. Nevertheless, the consequences of that unresolved dispute are felt throughout the region.<sup>192</sup> The calculations of both regimes are tied to political survival and this is nowhere more acute than over the border issue. Ethiopia has conflicts on three fronts: in Somalia, in its own Ogaden region, and at the border with Eritrea. The latter holds the key to a long-term resolution of the Somalia conflict, as well as to movement on the Ogaden issue.<sup>193</sup>

## 2. The U.S. and the war on terror

The U.S. support for the Ethiopian invasion and pursuit of terrorist targets in Somalia in the name of the war on terrorism have further weakened Washington's credibility in the Horn of Africa and galvanised anti-American feeling among insurgents and the general populace, as well as undermined the international effort to mediate a peace process for Somalia.

Washington's reactive rather than proactive response on Somalia evolved through 2007 and the first half of 2008 to a point where, at least outwardly, it was aligned with the rest of the international community in support of the political process. There were divisions between the State Department and the Pentagon over whether to engage with individuals perceived to be a threat to national security, but broadly speaking the administration supported talks with all but a few figures. However, at the same time the U.S. pursued its war on terrorism agenda by striking targets inside Somalia.<sup>194</sup>

Following the Ethiopian invasion, which it tacitly approved, the U.S. carried out air strikes at the beginning of January 2007 near Ras Kaambooni in southern Somalia, close to the Kenya border. These missed their targets, including Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, wanted for involvement in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassy and other attacks in Kenya, but killed

some 30 civilians. Following the gains made by Islamist fighters in southern Somalia in the first months of 2008, the U.S. launched another air strike, this time on Doble, four miles from the Kenyan border; six civilians were reportedly killed but not the intended target.<sup>195</sup> A further strike on 1 May did kill a high-level target, Aden Hashi Ayro, an Al-Shabaab leader and protégé of Hassan Dahir Aweys. The attack on Dhuusamareeb town also killed at least fifteen others. Further air strikes are likely after the successful targeting of Ayro, perhaps directed at Mukhtar Robow, Ahmed Godane and Ibrahim Jama for alleged links to al-Qaeda, and Hassan Turki for alleged involvement in the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.

The U.S. advised the Somalia Arms Embargo Monitoring Group that it considers such actions legitimate measures by a nation at war: "strikes in self-defence against al-Qaeda terrorist targets in Somalia in response to ongoing threats to the United States posed by al-Qaeda and its affiliate[s]".<sup>196</sup> The Monitoring Group has documented intensive military training of Somaliland officers by U.S. military instructors in Ethiopia without exemption from the Security Council committee supervising the Somalia arms embargo. It considers such training, as well as the air strikes, a violation of that embargo. The Monitoring Group has apparently not received a response to its request for further information on these activities.<sup>197</sup>

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer has often been at the forefront of decisions to take a harder, often military line in Somalia, including the 29 February 2008 designation by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice of Al-Shabaab and its aliases as a "foreign terrorist organisation". Other voices within the administration had argued against this, citing the risk of alienating the moderate opposition and harming the peace process. Al-Shabaab replied that it was happy to be on the terrorism list, because it would help recruiting and further internationalise its cause.<sup>198</sup>

The U.S. has consistently supported the Ethiopian intervention, blamed the armed opposition for the chaos in Mogadishu, categorised the Islamist opposition as extremist and insisted that it renounce violence as a

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efforts. See Crisis Group Africa Report N°141, *Beyond the Fragile Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea: Averting New War*, 17 June 2008.

<sup>192</sup> "Ethiopia-Eritrea Conflict Fueling Somalia Crisis", Council on Foreign Relations, 22 August 2007; Daniel Auma, "Ethiopia, Eritrea tread a thin line", ISN Security Watch, 28 November 2007.

<sup>193</sup> Crisis Group Report, *Beyond the Fragile Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea*, op. cit.; and Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°47, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Stopping the Slide to War*, 5 November 2007.

<sup>194</sup> See for example Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°45, *Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead*, 26 January 2007.

<sup>195</sup> Ken Menkhaus, "The Somali Crisis", op. cit.

<sup>196</sup> Monitoring Group on Somalia report, S/2007/436, op. cit. The U.S. statement was contained in a letter to the Monitoring Group responding to a request for information on air strikes in southern Somalia and Puntland.

<sup>197</sup> Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia, S/2008/274, op. cit.

<sup>198</sup> "Somalia: militants glad to be on U.S. list", Associated Press, 20 March 2008.



precondition for political dialogue. It considers that some “political” Islamists can be brought in to a political process or otherwise marginalised, but that there are also those whom “you can’t negotiate with” and so must be dealt with militarily.

Much may depend on whether the incoming administration in Washington concludes that the boundaries between those two camps are not necessarily rigid, that in the right circumstances and with the right inducements a fair number even of the hard-core fighters might be interested in a reasonable political settlement that legitimises their share of power. Meanwhile, the simultaneous U.S. military pursuit of the war on terror in the Horn of Africa and support for the peace process have been contradictory, harmful and self-defeating. If the peace talks fail, U.S. officials have suggested they may pursue a “containment” policy to stop extremism from spreading beyond Somalia while dropping food relief into the country from a plane.<sup>199</sup> The elements of that “Plan B” warrant serious consideration in view of the long odds Djibouti faces.

### 3. The European Union

European Union (EU) engagement with Somalia has increased significantly since the TFG was created in late 2004 but has largely remained focused on humanitarian issues and budgetary and other financial support for the TFG.<sup>200</sup> It has also been instrumental in supporting TFG plans to rebuild government institutions and undertake security sector reforms. EU political interventions and interactions with Somali political actors have, however, remained “decidedly minimalist”.<sup>201</sup> European states have been mostly content to let the AU and the UN lead in the peace process.<sup>202</sup> Some change appears underway, however. The EU has rallied behind the SRSG’s initiative and been increasingly keen to give support in Djibouti, allocating €254 million for “political reconciliation”.

The kind of peace process the EU is willing to back fully, nevertheless, is still a subject of conjecture, not clarified by the oft-repeated phrase “all-inclusive”.

<sup>199</sup> Crisis Group interview, February 2008.

<sup>200</sup> European Commission (EC) aid to Somalia now is approximately €50 million a year. The EC is also funding the Djibouti peace talks. Europa press release memo/08/549, 22 August 2008.

<sup>201</sup> Crisis Group interview, Somali, EU officials, April, May 2008.

<sup>202</sup> In an interview with Crisis Group in May 2008 an EU diplomat said, “it is time for Somalis to get on with it. We can certainly act as facilitators and provide the required help, but little beyond that”.

There remains at least some ambivalence over the usefulness of extending Djibouti to take in Al-Shabaab elements and the “rejectionist” camp leader, Hassan Dahir Aweys.<sup>203</sup> This gives ammunition to Somali critics of the EU and the West in general, who argue that the outside powers want a “controlled peace process” which marginalises Islamists, locks them out of power and so helps perpetuate the conflict.<sup>204</sup>

Critics also fault the EU’s “unconditional” embrace of the TFG and generous financial support, which, they charge, has made the regime intransigent, unwilling to reach out to opponents. While the European Commission Nairobi delegation has tried to engage constructively and critically with the TFG, failure to use Brussels’ leverage to nudge TFG officials to move more seriously on the peace and reconciliation process lends credence to these charges.

Europe is now home to a growing Somali diaspora. Some of these European-Somalis are key political actors, with senior positions in the TFG or the opposition Islamist movement.<sup>205</sup> There is potential – if the will exists – to use some of them as go-betweens with the polarised political factions.<sup>206</sup>

The EU is now said to be pushing “discreetly” for President Yusuf’s “exit”<sup>207</sup> and his replacement by Sheikh Sharif. Prime Minister Nur Adde and Sharif could probably work more amicably together, and their partnership might be widely popular. But Darod leaders would react angrily to two Hawiye leaders. Reports from Somalia already suggest that angry Darod leaders are trying to paint Djibouti as a strategy to “Hawiyeise” the TFG, with international collusion. Equally, problematic is the EU perception that Sharif as president might soften Al-Shabaab’s attitude and increase the chance of a deal with the Islamists. However, Sharif is widely seen as a traitor to the Islamist

<sup>203</sup> The UK in particular shares the U.S. aversion to engaging Aweys and other radical elements. Crisis Group interview, UK government official, London, August 2008.

<sup>204</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Islamist politicians, Nairobi, Djibouti and Mogadishu, April, May and June 2008.

<sup>205</sup> For example, Zakariya Haji Mohammed, sometimes called “Awey’s right-hand man”, and a senior figure in the ARS faction opposed to the Djibouti peace process, is a UK national.

<sup>206</sup> “Peace emissaries” – *nabadoon* in Somali – are a growing class in the country, mainly drawn from the intelligentsia and civil society and including religious leaders and traditional elders.

<sup>207</sup> Crisis Group interview, EU diplomats, Nairobi, December 2008. Yusuf is quickly becoming the *bête noir* of Somali politics, and there is mounting international pressure to find a way of “easing him out”.

cause and is unlikely to be rehabilitated anytime soon. Two years ago he would have had credibility to unite and pacify the country. Today he is much diminished.

#### **4. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf**

Riyadh's new-found enthusiasm for Somalia is certainly good, especially if it has truly set aside \$1 billion for reconstruction.<sup>208</sup> Saudi Arabia's influence over the radical elements in the Somali Islamist movement, such as Hassan Dahir Aweys, should also not be underestimated.<sup>209</sup> Moreover, it is the home of the Wahhabi version of Islam currently fashionable with the Somali Islamist radicals, of whose efforts to control Somalia powerful elements within the Saudi establishment have been supportive.<sup>210</sup> The Saudis could use their influence to persuade the radicals to join the peace process. Following his visit there in June 2008, Secretary-General Ban said, "Saudi Arabia has been playing a very important role on this [Somalia] issue",<sup>211</sup> giving credence to the idea they might be willing to finance a multinational force to help pave the way for a true UN peacekeeping mission later.

Ethiopia is generally suspicious of any Arab involvement in Somalia and may be concerned at Saudi Arabia's apparent enthusiasm to take a lead role, so the Saudis should tread cautiously, resisting any temptation to create unnecessary antagonism. Similar rivalries have come to the fore with other Gulf states. Thus, in April 2008, Ethiopia accused Qatar of supporting Eritrea and through it the armed opposition in Somalia, called it "a major source of instability in the Horn of Africa" and broke relations.<sup>212</sup>

Inter-Arab/Muslim tensions compound the Ethiopian and Arab/Muslim divisions. Qatar and Saudi Arabia, for example, are keen to present themselves as regional peacemakers, while Egypt's interest is to keep the countries with access to the Nile in flux. Gulf states – principally Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – periodically give aid and so are courted by Somali factions and transitional governments. They have standing with the opposition and have at times allowed it – both Islamist

and non-Islamist – to operate freely on their territory. At the same time, they seek to maintain working relations with the TFG and Ethiopia and have been called on by the U.S. for diplomatic support on Somalia.

The UAE is Somalia's main commercial and financial hub, Saudi Arabia its main market and Yemen its chief source of small arms and a primary transit stop for Somali migrants seeking work in the Gulf. All the Gulf countries, including Oman, pursue special agendas in Somalia. Qatar and Saudi Arabia are particularly keen to promote themselves as regional peacemakers and have the cheque books to support that aspiration. Each also tries to keep good relations with all sides; thus, Qatar hosts the U.S. military's Central Command while also enjoying the trust of such movements as Lebanese Hizbollah and Palestinian Hamas.

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<sup>208</sup> Crisis Group interview, Arab diplomat, Nairobi, June 2008.

<sup>209</sup> Aweys is a frequent visitor to Saudi Arabia, where he lived in the 1980s and 1990s. He is reputed to have powerful friends in the Saudi establishment.

<sup>210</sup> See Rashid Abdi, "The Arabs and the great game in Somalia", BBC Monitoring, Global Security Agenda website.

<sup>211</sup> "UN-Saudis say Somalia truce a 'breakthrough'", Agence France-Presse, 15 June 2008.

<sup>212</sup> "Ethiopia breaks off diplomatic ties with Qatar", Associated Press, 21 April 2008.

## VII. SALVAGING DJIBOUTI

With the TFG embroiled in internal power struggles and the ARS-D controlling little on the ground, the Djibouti process has become a hollow forum. To salvage it and relaunch a credible political process, the scope of the talks must be widened to include the actors who control territory, prominently including the ARS-A and the Al-Shabaab militias. The starting point should be a comprehensive and measurable ceasefire agreement, monitored and verified by AMI-SOM. A tighter meeting schedule and more comprehensive negotiation structure are needed. The SRSG was undoubtedly right to start the talks under a short, result-oriented format, with a strict limitation on delegation numbers. But the format has outlived its value, and without returning to hundreds of participants and months of negotiations, a broader consultation focused on fundamental issues will be necessary.

The Ethiopian presence has fed the insurgency and inflamed Somali nationalism. The announced withdrawal, whether realised in whole or only in part, provides a window of opportunity for the political process. It will at least loosen the glue that has held the factions together, so that infighting is likely to increase and an outright military victory to become more difficult. While Ethiopia has lost the will to continue its military occupation of Somalia due to the insurgency's strength, it is unlikely to alter its primary strategic objective there. Without deploying massive numbers of additional troops, armour and warplanes, it cannot hope to reverse the insurgents' gains; Such a commitment of military resources would risk degrading its capacity to protect its northern flanks against Eritrea and could engender much opposition among war-weary Ethiopians. However, it could try to make Somalia ungovernable for the Islamists by retaining some form of troop presence in strategic areas, conducting limited strikes at selected opportunities, actively seeking to divide its enemies and possibly re-arming the warlords.

Nevertheless, a ceasefire seems more negotiable now that the Ethiopians are pulling back and becoming disenchanted with the insurgency's arch enemy, Yusuf.<sup>213</sup> The SRSG should concentrate on harnessing the influence of influential clan leaders and Arab states with links to the insurgency in order to begin this dialogue. In addition, talks need to be held between the Ethiopians and all parties in the enlarged Djibouti set-up to address security concerns. Ethiopia

<sup>213</sup> This has been suggested by some Al-Shabaab leaders, such as Mukhtar Robow; see Hiiran website, 4 April 2008.

should also look into allegations of human rights abuses committed by its army in Somalia. Simultaneously, atrocity crime claims concerning all sides should be investigated by a Security Council-appointed commission of inquiry that would make recommendations for a judicial process to address them and for a reconciliation mechanism. All this should be included in a negotiated settlement.

Efforts to negotiate and implement up front a power-sharing agreement to restore a central government risk being time-consuming and counter-productive. Once a credible ceasefire agreement has been reached, each faction should be left to administer its respective territory temporarily and be invited to participate in talks intended to lead to the restoration of a legitimate government. The only conditions for such participation would be respect of the ceasefire monitored and verified by AMISOM; improved humanitarian security and access; and improved law and order.

The agenda of the talks might be dealt with in four commissions each with no more than 30 participants:

- the drafting of a new constitution for Somalia;<sup>214</sup>
- integration of all armed forces into a common army and regional police forces, devoted to the establishment of a secure environment for completion of the transition;
- a comprehensive plan for adoption of the new constitution by referendum, the holding of national elections and the progressive integration of the various territories into the constitutional framework; and
- transitional justice processes to address impunity and national reconciliation requirements.

Again, whether Djibouti can get that far depends on drawing a critical mass of the insurgents into it at a time when those insurgents have good reason to believe they are winning on the battlefield and are likely to continue doing so. The outside powers that have sought to construct a peace process have great reservations about many of those groups and personalities. However, the Islamist insurgents are waging a violent but not nihilistic struggle. They have political ambitions that were thwarted by the Ethiopian military intervention. With the exception of some hardline elements,

<sup>214</sup> The Djibouti process will have to address the implications of any agreement reached on the independence/autonomy bids of Somaliland and Puntland and reflect its conclusions in the constitution. See Crisis Group Africa Report N°110, *Somaliland: Time for African Union Leadership*, 23 May 2006.

most want a stake in any future peace process and political dispensation. A credible peace process will have to accommodate those aspirations, but if its sponsors make it clear they are willing for this to happen, at least a portion of the militias are likely to be interested enough to consider the proposition.

To attempt to de-legitimise Islamist ambitions, even when moderate, as a few elements within the TFG and perhaps some in the international community want, would be a recipe for continued instability. The international community needs to support this initiative, knowing that, if successful, it will most probably lead to establishment of a non-secular state with important Islamist elements. If such a regime respects its international obligations, including respect for the territorial integrity of its neighbours and the internationally guaranteed rights of its own people, and represents what the majority of Somalis want as an alternative to continuing violence and humanitarian disaster, it should be accepted as legitimate and supported.

Most Western governments balk at engaging with such groups in the belief that doing so might lend legitimacy to terrorism. But in a situation where a seemingly intractable conflict is raging, causing extreme suffering, and these groups appear to have gained public credibility and legitimacy, it would not be pragmatic to refuse engagement.<sup>215</sup> The critical question is whether Aweys and such others as might be drawn into the Djibouti process can be credible interlocutors for peace. The UN envoy, Ould-Abdallah, and Western diplomats are frosty at any suggestion of direct talks. But in view of their potential to be spoilers, engaging the ARS-A and other insurgent groups in some kind of a process to rehabilitate them should be undertaken with a view to bringing them to the negotiating table. In exchange for sizeable and verifiable concessions from Aweys, for example, the U.S. should consider removing him from its terrorist list.

There are undeniably hardline insurgents whose ultimate aim is not to cohabit with the secularists in a government of national unity but to overthrow the secular order and create a strict Islamic state. Their resurgence has been due to many factors. It is too simplistic to attribute it wholly to the flagging morale of the Ethiopians and their TFG allies or superior military tactics. A major factor has been a uniquely Somali form of grassroots political networking, for which they have demonstrated remarkable aptitude.

But while many of the radical Islamists running the military campaign in south and central Somalia are confident of a military victory and apparently see little or no reason to compromise, the insurgency as a whole is deeply divided over negotiations. Removal of the common Ethiopian enemy might marginalise some of the hardline Islamist insurgents. The ARS-D should take advantage of that moment to encourage the centrist bloc of clan elders and business and civil society leaders to reach out to the militant Al-Shabaab movement. The SRSB is already using trusted partners and back channels to talk to certain groups. Those efforts should be reinforced and supported by his international partners. Simultaneously international actors, such as Eritrea, Egypt, the Saudis and to a lesser extent other Gulf states like Qatar, should be brought in to use their moral and financial leverage to convince as many of the insurgents to join the peace process.

A reconstituted and enlarged ARS will have to show that it can be a credible alternative to the TFG. It must issue a clear policy statement if it hopes to play the role of official opposition. It must also explicitly renounce violence and state its commitment to democratic principles, civil liberties and human rights. Likewise, it will need to address contentious issues like the role of Sharia and what kind of Islamic state it proposes to create. The ARS must also formally renounce the irredentist claims over the Ogaden made in the past by its leaders and reassure Ethiopia of its commitment to the principles of good neighbourliness.

On the TFG side, President Yusuf has become a spoiler. While Nur Adde tried to negotiate with the insurgents, including Al-Shabaab, as early as February 2008,<sup>216</sup> Yusuf has always insisted he will not talk with “terrorists”.<sup>217</sup> As the rift has widened between the two men, Yusuf’s position has increasingly hardened. If peace talks are to succeed, he will have to be replaced by a more conciliatory personality. To persuade him to step down, the TFG’s international interlocutors will need to inform him that they will no longer support him, financially or politically. To make his departure easier, he might be guaranteed a seat in the talks as a former TFG president, and his supporters should be reassured that they also would have appropriate representation at the talks.

The Ethiopian withdrawal will pose a serious problem for AMISOM troops. Seen as biased towards the TFG, the understaffed and under-equipped force has increasingly been under attack and will become an eas-

<sup>215</sup> See Paul Staniland, “When Talking to Terrorists Makes Sense”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 May 2008.

<sup>216</sup> “Somalia reconciliation open to everyone, even Al-Shabaab: PM”, GaroweOnline, 29 February 2008.

<sup>217</sup> BBC Somali Service, 18 March 2008.

ier target. There is thus a need for a more robust peacekeeping force, but it needs to come in support, not in advance of a credible peace process – a status the Djibouti talks have not yet attained. International efforts should, therefore, be concentrated on achieving a comprehensive political solution rather than on repeating the mistake of deploying peacekeepers to solve a political problem. African and other countries might contribute troops, but only in connection with a viable process, not in the current violent climate.

Contingency planning should begin for the swift evacuation of AMISOM, by air or sea, if the security situation deteriorates further and the mission becomes the target of repeated attacks. But simultaneously, consultations should also be started with Muslim countries from outside the region (Morocco, Jordan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh) so that the UN can be prepared to take on a true peacekeeping operation in support of the implementation of a ceasefire agreement if an enlarged Djibouti process takes off.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Somalia's seventeen-year-old crisis has become one of the world's worst humanitarian catastrophes. Since the December 2006 Ethiopian intervention, international policy has been stuck on supporting transitional federal institutions, which have become more and more irrelevant on the ground, and acquiescing to a military-driven U.S. anti-terrorism policy, which has reinforced the most extremist elements of the Islamist movement. The announced Ethiopian withdrawal should be seen as providing the occasion for a radical policy shift.

The Djibouti peace process faces long odds, especially now that the insurgency is doing well enough that many of its militants believe they can gain what they want without putting down their guns. But it is the only game in town. It must be re-energised by re-defining what would be an acceptable political settlement involving which participants, so that it has a chance to capitalise on the reopening of Somali political space that may follow an Ethiopian withdrawal. It needs to bring as many of the conflict's main actors as possible into dialogue on options for a credible end-game. Simultaneously, the humanitarian relief effort needs to be sustained and access independently negotiated with those groups and leaders that effectively control territory. There will be no quick fix to end Somalia's disastrous conflict, but the world must not miss this opportunity.

**Nairobi/Brussels, 23 December 2008**

**APPENDIX A**  
**MAP OF SOMALIA**



## APPENDIX B

### PRELUDE TO THE CRISIS

Ethiopia's decision in late December 2006 to invade and occupy Mogadishu and portions of southern Somalia was the catalyst for a series of tumultuous developments in 2007 and 2008. In the latter half of 2006, Mogadishu and most of south central Somalia had come under the control of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), a broad umbrella group including hard-line Islamists, moderate Islamists, traditional sufi adherents, nationalists and, unsurprisingly, political opportunists.<sup>218</sup> The UIC's sudden ascent to power was unexpected – its leaders themselves were surprised and unprepared to administer the territory under their control.

The UIC was vaulted into power following impressive military victories against a coalition of U.S.-backed clan militias in the capital from March to June. During its six-month reign, public security in Mogadishu underwent a dramatic transformation. For the first time in sixteen years, the city was united under a common administration and safe from militias, violent crime and communal clashes. The seaport and international airport were reopened, commerce flourished, and the diaspora returned in large numbers to visit a city some had not seen for a generation.

The UIC's convincing victory over the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism offered the prospect of an end to warlordism in the capital. Its imposition of public order and basic government services promised an end to long years of state collapse and earned it "performance legitimacy" among Somalis. Its ideology – a cocktail of Islamist rhetoric, Somali nationalism and strident anti-Ethiopianism – was attractive for many who were eager to rally around any movement that promised to revive a broken nation and end years of clanism and factionalism. The UIC was, in short, viewed by most Somalis as the embodiment of a long-awaited renaissance. As a result it won support from many who did not consider themselves Islamists and, though uneasy with the draconian social policies, were willing to tolerate those policies for the sake of the larger nationalist political project. Their support was based on the hope that the day-to-day political compromises that come with administering a territory would reward pragmatism and moderation and steer power away from radicals.

Diplomacy in the latter half of 2006 focused on bringing the TFG and the UIC into political dialogue to forge a unity government. Those Khartoum-based talks failed,<sup>219</sup> in part because most of the main actors found the power-sharing proposal too risky or threatening. Top TFG members – especially Prime Minister Mohammed Gedi – were unwilling to consider arrangements that would likely cost them their positions. The TFG's patron, Ethiopia, was suspicious of proposals to bring Islamists into power.<sup>220</sup> UIC hardliners saw power sharing as threatening, since it would likely mean a coalition of moderate Islamists and TFG leaders at the expense of the radicals. Those hardliners actively undermined the talks and intentionally inflamed already tense relations with Ethiopia. Part of this was due to continued reliance on Ethiopia's rival, Eritrea, as a major source of arms and military training.<sup>221</sup>

The UIC's reckless policy toward Ethiopia was what triggered Addis Ababa's intervention and occupation of Mogadishu. Other UIC policies also alarmed external actors, notably the U.S., especially the harsh Islamic laws unevenly imposed in parts of Mogadishu and the repeated violation of a ceasefire it had pledged to respect. For the U.S., a major concern was also the stonewalling by UIC leaders when asked about members of the East African al-Qaeda cell, which it claimed were

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<sup>219</sup> The Khartoum peace talks collapsed mainly because the TFG and UIC negotiated in bad faith. Even as the leaders on both sides were giving lip service to dialogue and peaceful resolution, their strategists were plotting military campaigns. The TFG was working to enlist Ethiopia's military help, while the UIC was moving forces closer to Baidoa, the seat of the TFG. With both convinced military victory was achievable and the route to consolidating power, Khartoum had little chance to succeed.

<sup>220</sup> In interviews with Crisis Group, Ethiopian officials stressed they were willing to live with a Somali Islamist government, citing the *modus vivendi* with the Islamist-dominated government in Khartoum in previous years. But the conditions Ethiopia sought from the UIC – guarantees Somalia would not serve as a base for anti-Ethiopian insurgencies, renunciation of irredentist claims on Somali-inhabited territory in eastern Ethiopia and an end to UIC collusion with Eritrea – were not acceptable to UIC hardliners.

<sup>221</sup> Eritrea has consistently denied this allegation (which would, if true, involve a violation of the UN arms embargo on Somalia). The allegations have been documented by the UN Monitoring Group; see "Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1676", S/2006/913, 2006.

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<sup>218</sup> Crisis Group Briefing, *Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead*, op. cit.

in Mogadishu under the protection of the Al-Shabaab militia.<sup>222</sup> The net effect was to convince some external actors, especially Ethiopia and the U.S., that hardliners had marginalised the moderates in the UIC and were steering it down a path of extremism and confrontation.

The UIC made a monumental miscalculation. Had its moderate elements and those in the TFG been more assertive, and both not been obsessed with pursuing a victor's peace rather than a negotiated power-sharing arrangement, the UIC's impressive administrative accomplishments in Mogadishu could have been folded into a revived and legitimated TFG that Ethiopia and others could have lived with. Instead, 2006 was the prelude for a political and humanitarian worst-case scenario.

By late in that year, it was increasingly clear that war between Ethiopia and the UIC was coming. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer surprised observers in December 2006 when she stated in the media that the UIC was "controlled by al-Qaeda cell individuals", and "the top layer of the courts is extremist to the core, they are terrorists". This position both exaggerated the radicalism of the UIC and, more ominously, globalised what had been an essentially regional conflict.<sup>223</sup> Frazer was also instrumental in pushing through the controversial UN Security Council Resolution 1725 in early December, authorising a Chapter VII regional peace enforcement mission in Somalia.<sup>224</sup> The resolution exempted regional peacekeepers from the terms of the UN arms embargo on Somalia because the stated mandate of the proposed mission included protecting and training members of the TFG and providing weapons to its security forces.<sup>225</sup> Somali opposition groups saw the

resolution as a move by the UN, led by the U.S., to take sides against the UIC.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> In interviews with Crisis Group, U.S. officials stressed that they sought only three to five "high value targets" from the East Africa al-Qaeda cell, all suspected of involvement in the August 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.

<sup>223</sup> Quoted in David Gollust, "US Says al-Qa'ida Elements Running Somali Islamic Movement", Voice of America, 14 December 2006.

<sup>224</sup> United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1725, S/RES/1725, 6 December 2006.

<sup>225</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1725 refers to the authorised peace operation as IGASOM, on the presumption that the forces would be drawn from among the seven member states of the Horn of Africa regional organisation IGAD. But early on it was evident that IGAD would not be able to contribute enough troops, so the mission was expanded to the African Union (AMISOM). See <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/646/11/PDF/N0664611.pdf?OpenElement>.

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<sup>226</sup> Crisis Group, "Somalia Conflict Risk Alert", 27 November 2006.



## APPENDIX C

### ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

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The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 130 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and printed copy to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made available simultaneously on the website, [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org). Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. Crisis Group is co-chaired by the former European Commissioner for External Relations Christopher Patten and former U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering. Its President and Chief Executive since January 2000 has been former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.

Crisis Group's international headquarters are in Brussels, with major advocacy offices in Washington DC (where it is based as a legal entity) and New York, a smaller one in London and liaison presences in Moscow and Beijing. The organisation currently operates eleven regional offices (in Bishkek, Bogotá, Cairo, Dakar, Islamabad, Istanbul, Jakarta, Nairobi, Pristina, Seoul and Tbilisi) and has local field representation in seventeen additional locations (Abuja, Baku, Bangkok, Beirut, Colombo, Damascus, Dili, Dushanbe, Jerusalem, Kabul, Kathmandu, Kinshasa, Ouagadougou, Port-au-Prince, Pretoria, Sarajevo and Tehran). Crisis Group currently covers some 60 areas of actual or potential conflict across four continents. In Africa, this includes Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo,

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**December 2008**

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