



# Situation Report

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## Somalia: Have all the options run out?

### Introduction and overview

In the recent eruption of violence between Ethiopian forces and Somali insurgents, over 80 people have been killed and over 100,000 have been forced to flee the fighting in the Somali Capital, Mogadishu. Despite the lull in the fighting, the political and security situation in Somalia remains very volatile. These continuing incidences of violence are a clear indication that peaceful means to resolve the Somali crisis are not making headway. The Somali National Reconciliation Conference, convened by the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) under pressure from international actors (including the US, the UN, and the EU) to initiate an inclusive reconciliation process, ended on 30 August 2007 with little hope for political reconciliation and no tangible outcome for the restoration of peace. Some of the major players in the Somali conflict were excluded from the conference, and others, including the Asmara-based Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) leadership and a large part of the leadership of the *Hawiye* clan – the dominant clan in Mogadishu – boycotted the conference. Before it commenced, the conference was postponed three times amid threats of violence, and even when it finally got under way on 15 July 2007, it was disrupted by attacks targeted at the venue and only reopened on 19 July 2007.<sup>2</sup>

Even as the TFG's clan-based reconciliation talks continued, insecurity persisted in the country, particularly in the capital Mogadishu. Mogadishu remains plagued by almost daily violent clashes as the insurgency, perpetrated mainly by remnants of the UIC and its supporters, continues against the TFG and Ethiopian troops. The increasing attacks on TFG officials and installations and the use of car bomb attacks demonstrate that the insecurity is not only changing in its typology but also, increasing in intensity.

As the TFG wrapped up its conference in Mogadishu, the UIC and other key opposition held their own conference in Asmara, Eritrea, which started on 06 September 2007. The opposition's congress was to focus on demanding an end to the presence of Ethiopian troops in the country and on uniting the opposition against the TFG. The opposition is demanding that any genuine reconciliation process should start only after Ethiopian troops withdraw from Somalia.

### *The Road to transition*

The establishment of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in October 2004, following two years of IGAD-led peace talks in Kenya, heralded a new chapter in Somalia's history, after numerous previous attempts at peace talks had failed to

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bring about peace. The hopes that this development would finally restore peace and stability to Somalia have however not been realised.

The TFG has, since its establishment in 2004, struggled to consolidate itself in power, establish a legitimate authority and restore peace, stability and order in the country. The capture of political power by the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) in June 2006 opened a new chapter in this seemingly intractable conflict when they took control of the capital Mogadishu and most of the south of the country. As the UIC consolidated its power and expanded its influence across the country, fears were raised as to how far this expansion could reach. Many fears were expressed as to its Islamist ideology, links to Al-Qaeda and regional threats to peace and security. Ethiopia's military offensive against the UIC in late December 2006, in support of the TFG, and the subsequent ousting of the UIC, pushed Somalia further into instability and opened, yet another chapter in the country's troubled history of conflict and insecurity.

Somalia has been without an effective central government since president Mohamed Siad Barre was overthrown in January 1991. After Siad Barre's ouster, the country was thrown into a power struggle that led to anarchy and violence as clan-based militia competed for remnants of power. Somali life became characterised by armed conflict as different faction leaders and their militia vied for control of valuable, previously state-owned, assets and for valuable land. The situation quickly led to the development of fiefdoms with powerful warlords controlling different parts of the country. Ordinary Somalis, especially agricultural communities, suffered most as they were caught in the middle of the fighting and lost their assets and livelihoods. Many died in the fighting and hundreds of thousands were displaced as they fled the conflict. The situation was exacerbated by the famine that hit the country at the same time as the conflict escalated.

The United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) in the early 1990s was not successful in bringing about peace in Somalia. The UN operation was initially aimed at protecting food convoys to famine victims and had the mandate of assisting Somalis in promoting national reconciliation, rebuilding the central government, and reviving the economy.<sup>3</sup> The UN mandate of rebuilding the central government, however, threatened the interests of many faction leaders who were benefiting from the persisting state of anarchy. Leading warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed launched an attack on UN forces soon after the UN took over the operation and sparked a four-month conflict between Aideed's militia and UN forces. US forces withdrew in late 1993, after a disastrous loss of 18 soldiers in the fighting. UNOSOM withdrew in early 1995, taking Somalia back to the state of anarchy.

The period following UNOSOM was characterised by numerous failed attempts to restore peace in Somalia. Before the IGAD-led peace talks in Kenya in 2002, which brought about the establishment of the TFG, more than a dozen attempts had been made towards bringing peace to Somalia. Most notable of these attempts was the Arta Peace Conference, convened in 2000 in neighbouring Djibouti, which resulted in the formation of the Transitional National Government (TNG). This attempt, however, also failed to bring about peace as the TNG faced considerable opposition from both internal factions and neighbouring countries, and faction leaders, unhappy with the Arta process, once again took up arms.

#### *The TFG – A Government under Siege*

The TFG remains a weak administration, unable to establish itself as a legitimate government in Somalia and remains highly dependent on Ethiopian support for its survival. Its attempts at restoring security, particularly to the capital Mogadishu (including the institution of curfews, conducting weapons searches and media raids), have failed and have only increased resentment of the TFG amongst its opponents who view the TFG as an instrument of Ethiopian influence. The TFG has not managed to gain control of the country, controlling only a small area in Mogadishu secured by Ethiopian troops and some key government installations guarded by the Ugandan troops deployed as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

There are persistent divisions within the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs), including the TFG, which became evident soon after the institutions' establishment. The divisions were complicated further by the divisions within the TFG executive. President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and former Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Gedi were often at odds with each other on issues of TFG policy and general administration. The divisions between the two leaders culminated in the arrest of Somalia's Chief Supreme Court Justice, Yusuf Ali Harun, who was charged with corruption. President Yusuf threw his support behind the Attorney General, Abdullahi Dahir Barre, for issuing the arrest orders for Harun, while former Prime Minister Gedi supported the Chief Supreme Court Justice Harun. The issue also led to further divisions within the Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP), with one faction supporting the Yusuf and the other, supporting Gedi, who resigned from government in October. The president immediately appointed Gedi's deputy, Salim Aliyow Ibrow, as interim prime minister. Gedi's critics blame him for being behind the decision to invite Ethiopian forces into Somalia to help the struggling interim government in its battle against the Islamic Courts Union.<sup>4</sup>

Clan lineage continues to play a critical role in Somali society in general, and to complicate the TFG's position in Somalia. The TFG, from the time of its establishment, has been perceived, especially by the *Hawiye* clan (the dominant clan in Mogadishu), as a vehicle for interests of President Abdullahi Yusuf's clan, the Darod. President Yusuf's request for AU troops to protect his government soon after his election as TFG president led to further alienation of the TFG and reinforced the view that the TFG was a government imposed on the Somali people. The fact that former Prime Minister Gedi is from the *Hawiye* clan did not help in alleviating the alienation of the TFG, as the TFG had hoped. A qualified veterinarian, Gedi was relatively unknown in Somali politics at the time of his appointment. His appointment as Prime Minister was not received well among the *Hawiye* leadership. Many felt that Gedi was not a legitimate representative of *Hawiye* interests.

The TFG currently faces persistent attacks on its troops and the Ethiopian troops supporting it, perpetrated mainly by the remnants of the UIC and the military wing of the Courts, the *al-Shabaab*, who have claimed responsibility for some of the attacks on the TFG and Ethiopian troops.

The TFG views the UIC, its main opponent, as a group of Islamic extremists, and is unwilling to negotiate a political settlement that includes the UIC. The TFG remains intent on protecting its interests and maintaining its status as the internationally recognised government of Somalia. Political reconciliation with its political opponents, including the UIC, would have to involve a power-sharing agreement with its opponents. This poses a threat to the already weak TFG.

#### *Opposition to the TFG – the Alternative Voice*

The opposition to the TFG, both military and political, has coalesced around the issue of Ethiopian presence in Somalia, which the opposition groups view as an illegal occupation. Since the ouster of the UIC by Ethiopian troops in December 2006, the UIC leadership has been based in Asmara, Eritrea. The UIC leadership has vowed to continue fighting the TFG until the Ethiopian occupation comes to an end.

The UIC and its supporters continue to view the TFG and its institutions as an instrument of Ethiopian influence in Somalia's internal affairs. The TFG is currently facing opposition from the political wing of the UIC; the military wing of the UIC, the *al-Shabaab* which has claimed responsibility for many of the attacks on TFG and Ethiopian troops; the disgruntled members and former members of the TFP (led by former Speaker Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan); members of the Somali Diaspora and sections of the *Hawiye* clan.

The opposition groups' objectives and strategies towards the TFG vary, ranging from the commitment of the UIC, especially the hard-line members of its

leadership, to the establishment of an Islamic state in Somalia, to the members of the Diaspora's commitment to a reconciliation process. However, with the groups' recent congress in Asmara, the opposition groups have emerged as a united front against the TFG.

### *The UIC – Seeds of Insurgency*

The rise of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) in June 2006 opened a new chapter in Somalia's recent history as they took control of the capital Mogadishu and most of the south of the country. While the UIC's control of the capital Mogadishu and most of the south had brought about some semblance of law and order to the capital and other areas under its control, which was welcomed by a large part of the Somali public, there were also fears around the UIC's Islamist ideology and its alleged links to *Al Qaeda*.

The greatest criticism towards the UIC by the TFG and its supporters has been the UIC's alleged links to international terrorist groups, particularly to *Al Qaeda*. The presumed links have been counting against the UIC in terms of credibility. US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer has previously claimed that the UIC is controlled by Al-Qaeda, and that members of the UIC leadership are terrorists.

While the leadership and members of the UIC cannot be wholesomely labelled terrorists, some leaders within the UIC and its military wing have been linked to terrorist activities in the past. This continues to negatively impact on the UIC's credibility. Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, chairman of the UIC's Executive Committee, is perceived to be one of the moderate leaders of the UIC. However, he is also perceived to be less influential than Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, chairman of the Courts Assembly and a former leader of *al-Itihaad al-Islamia*, an early 1990s *jihadi* group. Although the UIC has consistently denied any links to *Al Qaeda*, some of the more hard-line leaders of the UIC, including Aweys, have been linked to previous terrorist activities in the region and are on the US and UN lists of terrorists.

The presence of former *al-Itihaad al-Islamia* leaders in the top leadership of the courts is particularly worrying, given the organisation's commitment to violent methods in the 1990s driven by its irredentist sentiments for a greater Somalia that includes Somali-inhabited regions of the Greater Horn. As the UIC came to prominence in June 2006, Sheikh Haasan Dahir Aweys made public his ambitions of establishing an Islamic state in Somalia governed on the tenets of *Sharia* law and to establishing a greater Somalia. This only reinforced fears of the possible rise and entrenchment of radical Islamism in Somalia through the UIC.

The US believes that former members of *al-Itihaad al-Islamia*, including Aweys, have been receiving funding from al-Qaeda and have sheltered non-Somali al-Qaeda terrorists. This assertion was reinforced by the steady influx of *jihadi* volunteers from across the Muslim world in late 2006 into Somalia in support of the UIC.<sup>5</sup>

Signs of radical extremism can also be seen in the Courts' militant wing, the *al-Shabaab*, which has been accused of plotting to disrupt Somaliland's parliamentary elections in 2005 through terror attacks. The *al-Shabaab* led the UIC military campaign against the TFG in the UIC's takeover of control of Mogadishu and the south of Somalia in June 2006, and the movement has claimed responsibility for many of the current attacks on TFG and Ethiopian troops in the country.

### *Somaliland – Entrenching Self Determination*

The self-declared independent region of Somaliland is another quarter where there is strong opposition to the TFG. Somaliland has maintained its position that it is not part of south Somalia. The Somaliland administration sees the TFG as a threat to its autonomy. The TFG insists that Somaliland is part of the federal republic of Somalia and refuses to recognise it as an independent entity/state. The TFG's position on the significance of Somaliland being part of the federal republic is underpinned by the TFG's claim to being the only internationally

recognised government of Somalia. Somaliland's assertions to independence pose a challenge to the TFG's failing efforts at establishing legitimacy as a government with wide jurisdiction in the country. Opposition to the TFG from Somaliland also presents the risk, for the TFG, of support coming from Somaliland, especially from extremist elements in the region, to the UIC.

Somaliland has managed to remain stable even as the south of Somalia continues to be plagued by violence. Although it is still not internationally recognised as an independent state, Somaliland has managed to develop a working political system with its own political institutions. Somaliland, which declared its independence from the rest of Somalia in 1991, has been relentlessly lobbying the international community for international recognition of its self-determination right.

Somaliland has experienced tensions and sporadic clashes with the semi-autonomous region of Puntland, President Yusuf's current power base and of which he is a former president, over the disputed regions of *Sool* and *Sanaag*. Puntland lays claim on part of these regions on the basis of ethnicity, while Somaliland maintains that they are part of its territory under the colonial border left by Britain. Fresh military clashes have surfaced between the two regions over the *Sool* region. During the month of September 2007, the two regions clashed numerous times, forcing locals to flee their homes and resulting in many fatalities.

In previous clashes, the TFG executive has provided moral and military support (from its scant military capability) to Puntland forces. The current clashes are increasing fears of a full-scale war between Puntland and Somaliland, which would inevitably draw the TFG on the side of Puntland. This would further destabilise an already fragile Somalia.

#### *Eritrea – Lone Voice*

Eritrea continues to provide political, financial and military support to the opposition to the TFG, particularly to the UIC.<sup>6</sup> For Eritrea, Somalia remains a proxy for a military front with Ethiopia. Given the long-running hostility between Eritrea and Ethiopia and Ethiopia's unwavering support for the TFG, any opposition to the TFG provides Eritrea with an axis for the destabilisation of Ethiopia, and the prospect of a broader anti-Ethiopia alliance.

The Eritrean government is increasingly frustrated by the international community's unwillingness to pressure Ethiopia to accept the legally binding decision of the international Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission (EEBC) of April 2002 in The Hague, of locating the border between the two countries. Ethiopia has rejected elements of the EEBC ruling, such as the decision to place the symbolic town of Badme in Eritrea.<sup>7</sup> The town of Badme is where the Ethio/Eritrea war flared up in 1998.

In protest, Eritrea's President Isaias Afewerki has restricted the UN peacekeeping force, UNMEE's operations, charged with observing the cease-fire and expelled international aid organisations. Continually invoking the prospect of imminent war, his government has clamped down on all opposition while needling Ethiopia by supporting the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Ethiopia, meanwhile, backs the Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA), an umbrella organisation of groups opposed to the Eritrean government.<sup>8</sup>

The provision of a safe haven for the UIC leadership by Asmara has presented a direct challenge to the TFG. This further complicates the possibility of resolving the Somali conflict, as the support continues to be viewed as a perpetuation of the violence against the TFG.

#### *Ethiopia – The Military Option*

Ethiopia's continued support to the TFG and especially the presence of its troops in Somalia continues to be one of the main contentious issues in the conflict in Somalia and has led to increased resentment towards the TFG. Ethiopia has vowed to protect the TFG against the UIC, and as the UIC rose in prominence in Somalia in

June 2006 and advanced in taking control of Mogadishu and most of the country's south, Ethiopia sent its troops across the border into Somalia in December 2006 to support the TFG. Ethiopia's military offensive scattered the UIC militia and ended the UIC's control.

The rise of the UIC in Somalia had raised fears in Addis Ababa of the potential establishment of a radical Islamic state in Somalia, and concerns around the possible flow of radical Islamism into Ethiopia. The support of Ethiopia's opposition groups such as the ONLF and the OLF by the UIC has also presented a direct challenge to the Ethiopian government. Just as in the case of Eritrea, Ethiopia is using Somalia as a proxy frontline in its border dispute with the former. Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has adamantly refused to abide by the terms of 2000 Algiers peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea which stipulates that the rulings of the EEBC are final and binding.

#### *Uganda – Distant Neighbour, Rapid Response*

Uganda is the only country that has deployed troops as part of the AU peacekeeping mission for Somalia. Uganda, being one of only a few African countries to join the US 'coalition of the willing' against global terrorism, has continued to enjoy patronage from the US. This has, however, given leverage to the US to exert pressure on Uganda to deploy troops in Somalia, against the backdrop of the US's own involvement in Somalia.

While Uganda's deployment of troops in Somalia became a source of discontent in Uganda's parliament, the deployment nevertheless went ahead. The parliamentary vote on the issue of Ugandan troops' deployment in Somalia was characterised by a walkout by opposition lawmakers.<sup>9</sup> Uganda has deployed a contingent of approximately 1 600 troops in Somalia as part of the planned 8 000 strong AMISOM.<sup>10</sup> The troops are currently guarding Mogadishu's airport and seaport, and some key government facilities.

Although the Uganda contingent is generally viewed as a neutral force by the Somali society, and may not particularly be a direct target for the insurgency, Ugandan troops have not escaped attacks in the capital Mogadishu, as the insurgency against the TFG and Ethiopian troops intensifies. The Ugandan troops have suffered some fatalities since their deployment in March 2007.

#### *Kenya – Securing the Transition*

At the onset of the fighting between the UIC and the TFG and allied forces in Somalia in 2006, the Kenya Government closed its border with Somalia. This was largely perceived as a security measure in an attempt to stem the possible influx of militants and known terrorists into Kenya. This security measure eventually turned out to be a real concern. On 22 January 2007, Sheikh Sharif Ahmed, a leading figure of the UIC, surrendered himself to Kenyan authorities at the Hulugo border post in Kenya.<sup>11</sup> In February 2007, Kenyan authorities arrested four Britons of Somali descent, suspected of having possible terrorist links, attempting to enter the country.<sup>12</sup>

Beyond the security agenda, Kenya has the diplomatic burden of maintaining good neighbourliness with the people of Somalia and would not want to be drawn into the conflict in Somalia. This is the main reason that Kenya has not contributed troops to the AU peacekeeping mission in Somalia.

Having hosted the drawn out reconciliation process that ushered in the TFG, Kenya is keen to legitimise this political dispensation. The failure of the TFG would be a diplomatic indictment on Kenya's mediation efforts in Somalia. On the other hand, however, Kenya also realises that the IGAD-led Somali Reconciliation Conference that Kenya hosted is not the best possible solution to the Somali conflict. Given the drawn-out nature of the Mbagathi talks, Kenya was becoming fatigued by the process and was keen to see the TFIs relocate to Somalia and the TFG establish itself in its home country.

### *South Africa – Peace Diplomacy*

South Africa currently occupies a unique space in the leadership of the peace and security agenda on the continent, particularly given its position as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The government of South Africa has expressed the need to have an all-inclusive reconciliation process to resolve the crisis in Somalia. South Africa has also stated its intention to continue its support for the efforts of the UN, the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in bringing about peace in Somalia.<sup>13</sup>

### *Egypt – Politics of the Nile*

The Nile waters continue to be Egypt's preoccupation with Somalia and Egyptian strategists see Somalia as a crucial pressure card which Cairo can use in its tussle with Ethiopia over the use of the Nile waters. Cairo has for long regarded a strong and united Somalia as a stabilising factor in its national security strategy, largely driven by that country's geographical proximity to Ethiopia, one of the principle sources of the Nile waters. The relationship between Egypt and Ethiopia has deteriorated recently due to the dispute over how the Nile waters should be utilised equitably among the Nile Basin states.

Ethiopian officials have been reported to claim that the Egyptian armed forces are being trained in jungle warfare in preparation for a possible future military intervention in the Nile Basin.<sup>14</sup> Egypt, on the other hand, claims that Ethiopia is driving a campaign to have the colonial treaty on the usage of the Nile Waters drawn up in 1929, renegotiated. The purported campaign by Ethiopia attracted wide support in the Great Lakes region and in East Africa, and Cairo felt increasingly isolated and had to eventually abandon its hard-line stance.

Egypt, in an attempt to rally Arab support, has also sought to portray Ethiopia as a threat to Arab national security and a regional bully bent on undermining any peace effort in Somalia by encouraging regionalism and arming the warlords.<sup>15</sup>

In supporting the UIC, Cairo has secured an anti-Ethiopia ally for itself in Somalia. Egypt has consistently denied reports that it has been providing military and financial support to the UIC. In November 2006, the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia reported that Egypt had been providing military training and financial support to the UIC, which Egypt was quick to deny.

### *USA – War on Terror and the Terror of War*

The US approach to the insecurity in the Horn of Africa has been underpinned by the overwhelming focus on counterterrorism. The US, as part of a UN humanitarian response, intervened in Somalia 1992 but hurriedly withdrew all its troops in 1994 after the killing of 18 US soldiers in Mogadishu.

In 2006, Washington funded Somali warlords to pursue terrorists and the then emerging UIC on its behalf. The Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counterterrorism (ARPC), as the warlords called themselves, received large amounts of money from Washington, but were defeated on all fronts by the UIC.

In contrast, the US contributed only \$250 000 to the \$10 million IGAD-led peace process that led to the formation of the TFG, and the US gives far less humanitarian assistance to Somalia than to other countries in the region. Other international actors, such as Italy, contributed substantially more to the IGAD-led peace talks in Kenya.<sup>16</sup> Italy contributed €430,000 for the organisation of the Conference (€130,000 to the Government of Kenya and €300,000 to the IGAD Secretariat) and contributed a further €1,1 million for the for the peace process in Somalia (€100,000 to IGAD, €500,000 to the European Commission and €500,000 to the UN trust-fund for peace building in Somalia).<sup>17</sup>

The US has stationed over 1 500 troops in Djibouti as part of the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) to carry out civil-affairs programmes and to assist

in gathering intelligence on suspected terrorists, and has earmarked \$100 million a year to support counterterrorism efforts through the East Africa Counter-Terrorism Initiative (EACTI).<sup>18</sup> Established in June 2003 as a programme of the US Department of State, the EACTI provides key states in the Horn of Africa with military training to strengthen coastal, border, customs, airport, and seaport security. In addition, the initiative plans to train law enforcement officials in East Africa. The programme also includes assistance for regional efforts against terrorist financing and police training, as well as an education programme to counter extremist influence.

The US counterterrorism policy in the Horn of Africa currently depends on three strategies – almost unconditional support for the Ethiopian government; extremely close cooperation on counterterrorism with Khartoum and occasional but spectacular air strikes into Somalia in the hope of eliminating or capturing *Al Qaeda* suspects.

Ethiopia has been the United States' closest ally in the Horn for the last decade, partly because the fight against Islamic extremism resonates powerfully with the Ethiopian government. Although the country is half Muslim and half Christian, its political and intellectual elites have historically been Christian. Ethiopia has also suffered firsthand from Islamist terrorism – radicals based in Sudan plotted an assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, in June 1995, and the Somalia-based *al-Itihaad al-Islamia* has previously staged numerous attacks throughout Ethiopia.

The focus on stemming the spread of terrorism and extremist ideologies has become such an overwhelming strategic objective for Washington that it has overshadowed U.S. efforts to resolve conflicts and promote good governance<sup>19</sup>. Washington has appointed a special envoy for Somalia, John Yates. A career diplomat with experience in Africa, Yates heads the Somalia unit from the US embassy in Kenya.

The newly formed US Africa Command, AFRICOM, which is yet to find a willing host for its head quarters in Africa, is also expected to keep close tabs on the situation in Somalia and provide or possibly initiate further anti-terror operations in Somalia.

#### *EU – Multilateral Humanitarianism*

The EU regards Somalia as a strategic priority country: On 20 October 2006, the European Commission adopted a Communication to the Council and the European Parliament on an EU partnership for peace, security and development in the Horn of Africa.<sup>20</sup> Achieving stability and peace in Somalia has been a priority for the EC, and the EU has been supportive of efforts to restore peace in Somalia, providing substantial financial support to peace initiatives, most notably to the Somali Reconciliation Conference in Kenya. Commissioner for Humanitarian and Development Aid, Louis Michel, has been personally committed to driving the process of achieving peace in Somalia forward. He visited Baidoa and Mogadishu in December 2006 and urged the UIC and the TFG to resume dialogue and avoid conflict. In March 2006, the EC and the TFG signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which consolidates their partnership and contains mutually agreed goals: promoting peace, democracy, security and the eradication of poverty. The EC Special Envoy for Somalia, Georges-Marc André, is charged with ensuring the Commission's constant engagement with Somalia.

This EU/Somalia partnership has been frustrating to the TFG as the TFG is not able to access any EU funds directly. All funds are channelled through European NGOs and the UN country team for Somalia. The EU's rationale for this is that Somalia does not have a National Authorising Officer (NAO) which is one of the requirements to draw down on these funds.

#### *China – Business as Usual*

The engagement of China in Somalia has not been any different from its engagement in other African countries. The insatiable hunger for natural resources that China is experiencing has defined its tactics on the continent. The Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) has signed a deal with Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf



to explore the northern Puntland region for oil<sup>21</sup>. The initial agreement was signed in May 2006, and it was endorsed at the China-Africa summit held in Beijing in November 2006. The terms of the agreement indicate that the Somali government would retain 51 percent of the oil revenues under a production sharing arrangement. The oil deal is, however, vulnerable to political infighting within the TFG because it was concluded and signed by the President, while the former Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi claimed he was not aware of the contract.

The footprint of the Chinese government in Somalia is evidenced by the numerous infrastructure projects built in Somalia by the Chinese government before conflict broke out. These include the Grand National Theatre, Capital Gymnasium, Capital Hospital and highways leading to the west and north parts of the country. This historical linkage with Somalia has made China an accepted partner with a demonstrated track record of support for Somali growth.

By investing in Somalia, CNOOC demonstrates the willingness to take on considerable risk in an environment that most western companies would not find acceptable. This characterises the resolve of the Chinese government to secure and lock in exclusive exploitation rights of Somalia's oil reserves. The TFG are currently working on a national oil law and even though this work is not complete, the Chinese contract has been finalised and signed.

In terms of oil deposits, Somalia has no proven oil reserves, and only 200 billion cubic feet of proven natural gas reserves. In the 1980s and 1990s, several western companies including Agip, Shell (Pecten), Conoco and Phillips (now merged) and Amoco (now part of BP) conducted onshore exploration but no oil reserves were discovered. However, analysis from previous exploration conducted by Still Range Resources, a small Australian-based oil firm with close contacts to the government in Puntland, estimates that the region holds 5 to 10 billion barrels of oil.<sup>22</sup>

#### *Saudi Arabia – Aiding the Brotherhood*

Historically, Saudi Arabia's influence in the Horn began in the 1970s with the dispatching of Saudi teachers to the region and specifically to Somalia. This was followed by Saudi-funded religious schools being established in Somalia and Somali students being offered scholarships in Saudi universities.<sup>23</sup>

The proliferation of Saudi NGOs in Somalia in a period of ten years saw extended social programmes driven by NGOs that had managed to expand their coverage and activities to the remotest parts of the country. This consolidated Saudi Arabia's position in Somalia as the largest Arab donor ahead of Kuwait, Libya and Egypt.

The consequences of this Saudi financial and educational aid, was the rapid growth of the puritanical *Wahhabi* sect, especially the *Salafi* strand of *Wahhabism*. Saudi authorities actually encouraged this development and had no problem until the emergence of *Al Qaeda* – itself an extremist *Salafi* movement – as a global threat following the 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and later 9/11. Suddenly, there were fears in Riyadh, and indeed, elsewhere, that lawless Somalia could become a haven for *Al Qaeda* militants escaping manhunts elsewhere<sup>24</sup>.

It is also in the interest of the Saudi government to counter the growing influence of Iran, its traditional Gulf foe. In the Horn and the Red Sea regions, Riyadh has been concerned with the recruitment of Sudan by Iran into its camp. Riyadh has continued to maintain close ties with the leadership of the UIC. Sheikh Hasan Dahir Aweys is a regular visitor to Saudi Arabia and recent Somali media reports say Aweys received treatment at a hospital there. This has created the space for the Saudi government to emerge as the only interest with connectivity on both sides of the Somalia divide.

#### *The International Contact Group on Somalia – Western Diplomatic Corridor*

The International Contact Group on Somalia, established in June 2006 with the aim of supporting peace and reconciliation in Somalia, is made up of the US, the

EU, the UK, Norway, Italy, Sweden, and Tanzania. Invited observers to this group include the AU, IGAD, the League of Arab States and the UN.

The Contact Group has been calling for the expansion of the peacekeeping mission in Somalia and also lends its support to the TFG as the legitimate government of Somalia.<sup>25</sup> Although this group is independent, it is perceived to follow the lead of US opinion on the situation in Somalia. In a recent September 2007 meeting of the Contact Group in Rome, where security in the Horn was deliberated on, US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Jendayi Frazer, called on the international community to cut off all funding to Eritrea for its role in the continued supply of arms to militants in Somalia. Frazer added that the United States is considering putting Eritrea on the list of terrorism-sponsoring countries.

The recent history of Somalia, following the fall of Siad Barre, has been marked by numerous reconciliation conferences aimed at restoring peace. Most notable of the initiatives are the Arta Peace Conference of 2000 and the Somali National Reconciliation Conference of 2002, convened in Kenya.

#### *The Arta Peace Conference*

The Arta Peace Conference, convened in neighbouring Djibouti, resulted in the establishment of the Transitional National Government (TNG). Although it began with some hope, the Arta conference was not successful in bringing about peace in Somalia. The conference was not an inclusive process. Some of the key actors in the conflict at the time, including some militia leaders; the semi-autonomous region of Puntland; and the self-declared Somaliland region, were not part of the talks. This resulted in the risk that the TNG would be rejected by some key sectors of Somali society right from the start.

The TNG, headed by Abdiqasim Salaad Hassan, focused its attention on securing foreign aid and international recognition, neglecting its key responsibility of rebuilding the government in Somalia. The TNG came to be seen by many in Somali society as representing *Hawiye* interests, and it did not manage to extend its control and legitimacy beyond the capital Mogadishu. In 2001, with the help of Ethiopia, the Somali Restoration and Reconciliation Council (SRRC), a coalition of faction leaders, was formed, intensifying the opposition to the TNG. Prominent members of the SRRC included Abdillahi Yusuf (now TFG president), Hussein Aideed (now TFG deputy prime minister) and Abdillahi Sheikh Ismail (former TFG foreign minister).<sup>26</sup>

#### *The Somali National Reconciliation Conference – Kenya*

The latest attempt at bringing about peace in Somalia, which resulted in the formation of the TFG, was the IGAD-led Somali National Reconciliation Conference convened in Kenya in October 2002. The conference lasted two years and culminated in the establishment of the Transitional Federal Institutions in October 2004. The Kenyan conference received wide international support, including support from the AU, the UN and the EU, and was viewed as the most inclusive process compared to previous attempts at restoring peace to Somalia. However, the process encountered numerous obstacles and lengthy delays, with disagreements amongst delegates over a number of issues such as representation in the conference and over the allocation of seats in the TFP causing walkouts and boycotts at different stages of the talks.<sup>27</sup> The Kenya process tried to take into account clan considerations by introducing the 4.5-formula, aimed at balancing the distribution of power and representation amongst Somalia's clans. According to the 4.5-formula, the four major clans of Somalia (the *Dir*, *Darod*, *Hawiye* and the *Rahanweyn*) would each select 60 MPs to the TFP, while an alliance of minority clans would select the remaining 35 MPs of the then 250-member parliament.<sup>28</sup>

Although the peace process had received wide international support and the TFG was internationally recognised as the government of Somalia, the process, and especially the TFG came to be seen in some quarters, especially by the *Hawiye*, as a vehicle for *Darod* clan's interest. Many within Somali society came to view

the TFG as an imposed government not elected by the people of Somalia, as they viewed the process as having been hijacked and driven by Addis Ababa.<sup>29</sup>

#### *Current Initiatives to Resolve the Conflict*

Current initiatives to resolve the conflict have not been successful. Deep-seated rivalry, suspicion, and polarisation of the TFG and its opponents have resulted in deeply entrenched positions held by these opposing sides.

#### **TFG Initiative**

The latest initiative, the TFG's National Reconciliation Conference (NRC) was flawed from the start. The international actors had attempted to pressurise the TFG into initiating an inclusive reconciliation process, at least with the political wing of the opposition. This was not successful however, as the TFG refused to negotiate with the UIC and opted instead to convene a clan-based process of social reconciliation, which did not address the critical political issues. The six-week NRC, held in July to August 2007 in Mogadishu, excluded the main internal actors in the conflict and has not resulted in any tangible results towards political reconciliation. The TFG's insistence on excluding the UIC from any process of reconciliation continues to further alienate the opposition groups.

The TFG followed up its NRC with a reconciliation meeting in Jeddah' Saudi Arabia in September 2007, with other delegates who had attended the NRC, to sign an agreement on the resolutions of the NRC. The top leadership of the TFG, including President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, then Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Gedi and parliament speaker Sheikh Aden Mohamed Nur were all in attendance at the Jeddah meeting. Delegates in Saudi Arabia included clan leaders and civil society groups. As with the actual NRC, the UIC and other groups opposed to the TFG were not invited to the Jeddah meeting. Under the aegis of Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah, a reconciliation accord was signed, which contained the resolutions of the NRC.<sup>30</sup>

#### **Opposition Initiative**

With the TFG engaged in its own initiative of a National Reconciliation Conference, the political opposition groups organised an alternative congress in Asmara in September 2007, attended by the UIC leadership based in Asmara, political opposition leaders, religious scholars, civil society groups and Diaspora representatives. The conference, according to the UIC leadership, was aimed at creating a viable alternative leadership and a coherent wide-based opposition to the TFG. The opposition groups maintain that real reconciliation can only take place once Ethiopian troops withdraw from Somalia.

With the two opposing sides in the Somali conflict further polarised, the only tangible result of this congress has been a stronger and more organised and united opposition to the TFG. Following the congress, the opposition groups have formed an alliance, headed by UIC leader, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmad, as chairman. They have rejected the agreement signed by the TFG in Jeddah and reinforced their opposition to the TFG, arguing that the TFG is not a legitimate government and renewed their vow to fight Ethiopian troops out of Somalia.<sup>31</sup>

#### *IGAD*

There is currently a lack of strong leadership from regional and continental organisations. The tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea, both IGAD members, and the two countries' active involvement in the conflict in Somalia have further bogged down the prospects for consensus in IGAD on the Somalia question.

#### *AU*

The AU's current focus on the Somalia question has been on efforts towards the deployment of a peacekeeping mission to Somalia (AMISOM), and not on the political aspects of restoring peace to Somalia. Despite the AU's lobbying for

troop contributions from member countries, the contribution of forces by African countries has not been forthcoming. On 18 July 2007, the AU Peace and Security Council adopted a communiqué on Somalia renewing AMISOM for six months and appealing for transition to a UN peacekeeping operation. It also called for a UN assistance package for AMISOM.<sup>32</sup> With the exception of Uganda, which has deployed a force of about 1 600 soldiers towards the planned 8000 strong AU force, African countries appear to be adopting a wait-and-see approach to Somalia.

### *UN*

The United Nations Security Council recently passed resolution 1772, supporting the extension of the AU mission to Somalia for a further six months. The resolution also called on UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to continue planning a UN mission in Somalia to replace the AU troops, and called on African states to pledge more troops to the AU mission.<sup>33</sup> The UN Security Council has, however, maintained that current conditions in Somalia are not conducive for UN peacekeeping, with member states stressing the need for progress on political reconciliation for peacekeeping conditions to exist.<sup>34</sup>

#### *1. Progression of the Status Quo*

If the current situation continues as it is, with the TFG determined to protect its political interests to the exclusion of all opposing voices within Somali society, and the opposition determined in its opposition of the TFG as an instrument of Ethiopian influence and to Ethiopian presence, Somalia is likely to continue to devolve into a drawn-out conflict situation. In this scenario, the insurgency against the Ethiopia-supported TFG would increase and in response, the TFG would continue to institute harsh measures as it has previously attempted to quash the opposition. This situation would lead to increased tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea, who continue to use Somalia as a proxy for their inter-state conflict, further increasing the possibility of a destabilised region. The continuing recognition of the TFG by the international community and some regional actors as the legitimate government of Somalia at all costs and the resultant lack of political will to pressurise the TFG into an inclusive political process, coupled with the lack of vigorous engagement of opposition groups, is likely to lead to increased polarisation of the opposing sides in Somalia, leaving the international community in a weakened position to negotiate with the opposition groups. This scenario would see the sustained conflict that currently characterises the situation in Somalia today with the likelihood of an increased intensity in the insurgency.

#### *2. Ethiopian withdrawal (Counting on External Pressure)*

The second scenario involves the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia. For this to happen, there would have to be increased and active pressure from regional and continental bodies and the broader international community on Ethiopia to withdraw from Somalia, and at the same time, on Eritrea to discontinue its financial and military support to the UIC. The withdrawal of Ethiopia from Somalia would be the first step towards opening up the necessary space for national political dialogue and reconciliation. The likelihood of this scenario depends largely on the presence of a committed political will on the part of the continent and the broader international community to see the Somali conflict resolved. The withdrawal of Ethiopia would likely take away some of the leverage that the UIC and other opponents of the TFG have over the TFG and their justification for their refusal to engage in dialogue with the TFG. Without active Ethiopian military support and presence in the country, the TFG would be more likely to succumb to international pressure for an inclusive political reconciliation process. This scenario, however, would create a vacuum of power in Somalia that could tip the conflict into intensity with the re-emergence of powerful warlords and the previous configuration of combatants. The deployment of a robust AU peacekeeping mission to avert this vacuum is critical to securing stability in Somalia in the event that this scenario plays out.

### 3. *Increased Opposition Momentum – and staring into the abyss of war*

A third scenario is one where the opposition gains renewed and increased political and military momentum. The congress organised by the TFG's opponents in Asmara was aimed mainly at unifying the opposition groups against the TFG. If the opposition groups manage to build a strong and united front through the congress, it is likely that they would then increase their efforts at mobilising support from their external backers, as one political bloc. This would likely lead to increased financial and military backing from external actors, particularly Eritrea. This situation would lead to a further escalation of tensions between Eritrea and Ethiopia, which could lead to another round of inter-state hostilities between the two countries. The existing tensions and hostility between these two countries may trigger another full-scale regional conflict and minimise chances for peace in Somalia. As we have seen in the past, the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea has the propensity to draw in the Somali and Sudan conflict systems, further complicating chances for peace in the region.

#### 1. *Political Reconciliation and Stability*

The situation in Somalia requires urgent and active commitment from both internal parties to the conflict, the TFG and the opposition groups. Political reconciliation needs to be given the highest priority if any progress is to be made towards peace and stability. The TFG has to be persuaded to initiate a genuine, inclusive process of political reconciliation, and the opponents of the TFG, at least the political opposition groups, need to be actively engaged to ensure their participation. The option preferred by the TFG of applying a selective social reconciliation mechanism to mitigate the current tensions and conflict in Somalia is not a viable option. Inclusive citizens' participation, the prospect of political tolerance and power-sharing with the new opposition currently based in Asmara must be on the table for any meaningful political reconciliation to take root in Somalia.

#### 2. *Peace and Security*

International pressure needs to be intensified on external regional actors to disengage their vested interests that continue to exacerbate the conflict in Somalia. This would create the necessary space for the Somali people to express their aspirations through inclusive political dialogue. The withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia has to be viewed as a priority, and the enforcement of the UN arms embargo on Somalia has to be intensified to put an end to illicit arms flows that feed the conflict system in Somalia.

Immediate measures should be taken to stabilise the current situation in Somalia and secure the cessation of hostilities and the enforcement of peace in the country. The AU peacekeeping mission to Somalia has to be strengthened through the deployment of sufficient troops to fulfil its mandate. The peacekeeping mission in Somalia requires urgent international support and this could be in the form of a robust hybrid peacekeeping mission that would create the enabling environment necessary for political dialogue and reconciliation. This can only be achieved through a commitment of the requisite logistical and financial resources from the larger international community.

The proposed peacekeeping mission must have within its mandate the ability to enforce peace and conduct comprehensive security sector reform in Somalia as a means to ensuring structured capacity of the Somali people to keep and maintain peace in their country.

#### 3. *Regional Security*

The situation in Somalia continues to negatively impact on stability in the region. The conflict situation has drawn in external regional actors actively involved in the conflict, most notably, Ethiopia and Eritrea, who continue to use Somalia as a proxy for their simmering border dispute. There has to be greater international pressure on the two countries to disengage from the Somalia conflict. In addition,

greater efforts have to be put into the resolution of the Ethiopia/Eritrea border dispute, if the two countries are to be successfully disengaged from Somalia. The TFG will negotiate only if pressured by Ethiopia, and the United States has more leverage on Ethiopia than any other external actor. By contrast, Washington lacks direct leverage with the new Somali opposition and has excluded clan elders. Therefore, diplomacy targeting this group should focus on getting governments in the region and in the Arab League to persuade them to accept a comprehensive reconciliation and power-sharing arrangement. The current conflict in Somalia, which is a major concern for all neighbouring states in the region, continues to have a negatively re-enforcing impact on regional peace, security and stability in the greater Horn region.

#### *4. Regional and International Actors' Involvement*

There should be stronger and more determined political will, both on the continent and internationally, to commit to the resolution of the conflict in Somalia, if peace and stability are to be restored in Somalia. The AU should demonstrate proactive leadership on the Somalia conflict, particularly on initiatives towards political reconciliation. The broader international community should commit and mobilise resources towards the restoration of peace, and there has to be sustained engagement on its part on the Somali question.

The external actors involved in initiatives towards resolving the conflict situation in Somalia need to engage in continuous in-depth analysis of the situation. Any meaningful responses to bring about sustainable peace, security and stability in Somalia must be underpinned by continuous in-depth analysis of the context in Somalia. Current initiatives are driven largely by macro-level situational analysis, mainly when there is a flare up in violence in the country. This kind of analysis not only presents a snapshot frame of the larger context at a particular moment, but also does not capture the key drivers and dividers feeding the conflict and more often than not, the connectors and opportunities that exist for peace. The risk, therefore, is that, any responses modelled on macro-situational analysis may not be effective, appropriate or timely.

The restoration of peace and security in Somalia is critical to the establishment and maintenance of stability in the region. Unless there is genuine political will and sustained engagement from the region, the continent and the broader international community on the conflict in Somalia and its resolution, Somalia is likely to continue to devolve into a vicious cycle of conflict. All actions to resolve the conflict in Somalia should bear an international stamp that secures collective responsibility to secure peace and stability in Somalia and the Horn of Africa. With the ongoing parallel reconciliation processes (TFG and the opposition), the likelihood of the international/donor community taking a step back from the crisis in Somalia is a real prospect. Clanism in Somalia, even though viewed as a driver of the conflict, could be transformed to become a critical connector for peace in the country. The risk of heightened regional insecurity and the possibility of another Ethiopia/Eritrea war could be triggered by the events playing out in Somalia. The Horn of Africa is once again at the brink of a protracted period of conflict and all efforts to avert this must be deployed as a matter of urgency.

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