

ABOUT THE PROJECT

African Politics, African Peace charts an agenda for peace in Africa, focusing on how the African Union can implement its norms and use its instruments to prevent and resolve armed conflicts. It is an independent report of the World Peace Foundation, supported by the African Union.

The Report is the most extensive review of the African Union's peace missions ever conducted. It is based on detailed case studies and cross-cutting research, and draws on consultations with leading experts, peacekeepers, and mediators.

This Paper is a summary of research undertaken in support of the Project.

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AMISOM: Charting a New Course for African Union Peace Missions

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Summary:

Lasting peace in Somalia remains elusive. Past interventions ended disastrously, casting a shadow on the design, implementation, and authorization of subsequent peacemaking efforts. The deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2007 offered a fresh start. AMISOM is the first African Union (AU) mission tasked with peace enforcement, and given an evolving and complex mandate that includes counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency as well as more traditional training and support to the Somalia National Security Forces (SNSF). Nonetheless, the mission has faced a number of serious challenges and setbacks.

As revealed by an extensive review of official documents and existing academic literature, and critically, through interviews with those most involved in executing the mission -- military commanders and senior political officials from AMISOM's Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) as well as UN personnel in Addis Ababa, Mogadishu, and Nairobi -- many of AMISOM's ongoing issues are connected to three core challenges:

1. AMISOM's mandating process;
2. AMISOM's mission support arrangements;
3. The frameworks and practical challenges that shape AMISOM's engagement with the SNSF.

These challenges are not unique to AMISOM, but contribute important insights to debates about how African Union peace support operations should be designed and executed in future.

Firstly, AMISOM's mandate was rushed and driven by the immediate political and security interests of its neighbors. In the resultant hurry to deploy, no realistic threat assessment of the situation on the ground took place. Planners envisioned the mission's role as protecting Somalia's transitional institutions. This "defensive" posture (and AMISOM's very low initial troop level of 8,000) was a poor fit for the fierce military resistance AMISOM troops encountered from al-Shabaab and other insurgent groups. The mandate would later need to be updated in light of the need for more troops and the transition to robust peace enforcement. To avoid similar problems in future, mandating processes must be thoroughly planned in advance and tailored to political and military conditions on the ground.

Further, while AMISOM depends on logistical support from the United Nations (as the AU lacks the necessary capacity to provide it), this support is tailored to the peacekeeping environments in which the UN usually operates, and is ill suited to the more violent and chaotic conditions a peace enforcement mission such as AMISOM faces. The UN does not provide ammunition or other "support of a lethal nature." The existing system of delivering logistical support at the battalion level means that individual TCCs must assume the burden of getting that support to soldier in the field. Their ensuing need to protect and secure supply routes by deploying troops along the way diverts much needed manpower from the overriding task of conducting military operations. Given this disconnect, the limitations of the existing logistic arrangement clearly demonstrate that the AU needs to develop its own logistical concept and support institutions to match the demands of its evolving peace enforcement missions. The growing demand for peace enforcement missions in Africa amplifies the urgency of

this need.

Some of AMISOM's failures stem from the approach to supporting and training the SNSF. Currently, each TCC and several other bilateral donors trains and operates with a different part of the SNSF, some much more effectively than others. These multiple training providers have failed to coordinate their efforts and the content of the instruction they provide to the SNSF. They also pay the SNSF forces they work with directly, rather than centrally and/or through the Somali government, further eroding their loyalty to any nation institution. These policies create major roadblocks to creating viable, unified national security institutions in Somalia that have some sense of a common military doctrine and policing approach.

These problems with the SNSF are in many ways a reflection of the larger problems inherent in having Somalia's neighbors, who have their (potentially conflicting) own national interests in the country to pursue, provide the bulk of AMISOM's troops. The troops that these states provide each control their own sector of Somalia, with little interaction or integration. They take orders largely from their own headquarters, rather than AMISOM's commanders. In such a context, coordination during military operations has proven difficult; even more challenging is the goal of fashioning a harmonized, mission-wide approach to joint planning and training.

All of these issues illustrate a clear need for the AU to develop a peace missions' doctrine that is appropriate for existing contexts into which PSOs are deployed. The AMISOM experience underlines that this doctrine should be based on an integrated, holistic and mutually reinforcing relationship among operations, institutional building, logistical support, and recognition of the primacy of politics at both the local and regional level.

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