

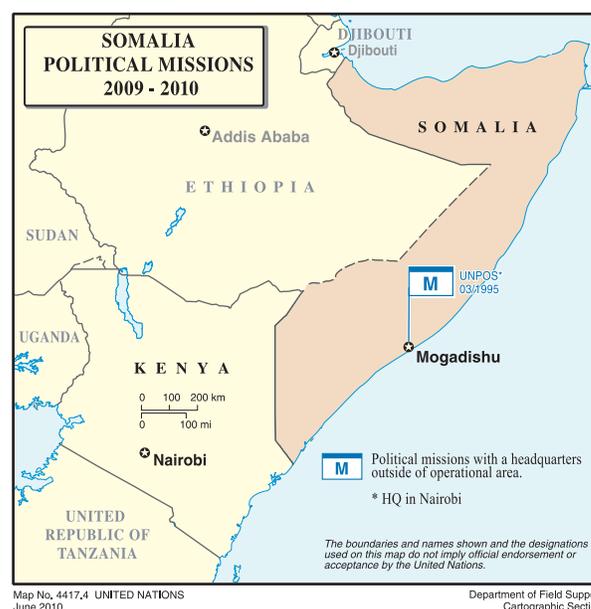
3.8 Mission Reviews

Somalia

Somalia is the world's prototypical failed state: fourteen successive internationally recognized governments have been unable to impart stability since the early 1990s. The country now presents the international community and the United Nations a complex set of challenges: piracy off its coastline threatening international commercial routes; a security vacuum filled by domestic jihadist groups with links to Al Qaida; an internal conflict that is fuelled in part by regional powers and finally one of the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The humanitarian situation has followed a downward trajectory along with political and security prospects. Nearly half the population relies on external assistance and more than 2 million are displaced within the country's borders or in neighboring states. Both the world's largest internally displaced settlement (roughly 500,000 people displaced right outside Mogadishu), and the world's largest refugee camp (in Dadaab, Kenya) are products of the Somali security crisis.

While political developments in early 2009 presented an opportunity for a reduction in the level of violence and greater stability, the past twelve months have been marred by frequent attacks with a high number of civilian casualties, as well as slow progress on the political front. The dimensions of the conflict are at once local – with the resurgence of clan-based politics and warlordism – and global, with the international community's rhetoric eager to associate Somali Islamists with Al Qaida. Government control remains confined to a few blocks in Mogadishu, and talks of reconciliation between various groups often does not translate into freedom



from harm for civilians. To a large extent, the political negotiations convened by the UN, which mostly take place in foreign capitals in the region, have been delinked from events inside Somalia.

BACKGROUND

The United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) was established in April 1995, immediately following the withdrawal of UNOSOM II – a UN peacekeeping operation that had benefited from ambitious international support but had largely failed in its aim to promote national reconciliation. As thousands of UN troops and staff withdrew,

UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS)

Authorization Date	28 March 1995 (UNSC Report S/1995/23)
Start Date	15 April 1995
SRSB	Augustine P. Mahiga (Tanzania)
Budget	\$17.0 million (1 January 2010- 31 December 2010)
Strength as of early 2010	International Civilian: 37 Local Civilian: 6

For detailed mission information see p. 211

the Secretary-General instructed his representative to relocate to Nairobi, establishing a small office designed to monitor political developments and maintain communication with relevant actors inside Somalia. Over the years UNPOS' role has expanded and the office was involved in the facilitation of a number of peace processes, including the formation of the Transitional National Government in 2000, and the 2002-2004 IGAD¹ led process that established the Transitional Federal Charter and the current Transitional Federal Government (TFG).

While the country has been marred by conflict for the past two decades, the last three years have been particularly brutal. Worried by the rise of a grass-roots movement called the Union of Islamic Courts, Ethiopia invaded southern Somalia in late 2006 to protect its interests and install the TFG in Mogadishu. The occupation, which was tacitly supported by the US and lasted until early 2009, fueled the current Islamic insurgency.

In February 2007 the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of an African Union peacekeeping mission to Somalia (AMISOM) – with a mandate to support political reconciliation, protect the Transitional Federal Institutions and, somewhat controversially, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The composition of AMISOM was to grow to a total of 8,000 troops, but its capacity increased slowly so that as of July 2010, it consists of just over 6,200 troops from Uganda and Burundi.

The limited capacity of the AMISOM mission, coupled with the sharp deterioration of security and humanitarian conditions, led to calls in 2008 for the deployment of a large UN peacekeeping mission to take over.

In late December 2008, isolated and unpopular, Somalia's President Abdullahi Youssuf resigned, paving the way for the election – by Parliamentarians convening in Djibouti – of Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed to the presidency. Sheikh Sharif, a moderate Islamist who had been head of the Union of Islamic Courts, brought some legitimacy to the position and was expected to bring members of the opposition into the political fold. The election in January 2009 coincided with the withdrawal of the last Ethiopian troops from Somalia.

The early optimism surrounding the arrival of the new Somali leadership faded away over the course of 2009 as political talks faltered. The main Islamist group, Al Shabaab, vowed to fight on. Attacks against the government and AMISOM troops – including suicide bombings which killed TFG ministers and the AMISOM deputy force commander – intensified. Furthermore, insurgent groups were not united and confronted each other as they jockeyed for greater territorial and economic control. In June 2009, the TFG declared a state of emergency. Fearing that the government would surrender its position and collapse, the US sent arms and ammunition to support TFG security forces.

In recent years the international profile of the Somali conflict has increased, but attention has mainly focused on the issue of piracy off Somalia's coast. Taking advantage of the prevailing lawlessness, Somali pirates have considerably increased the number of attacks and the size of their ransoms.

UNPOS' raison d'être remains the promotion of peace and stability in Somalia – an arduous task made even more difficult by the loaded history of the UN and foreign interventions in the country. In the summer of 2008, UNPOS achieved a breakthrough by convening a High Level Committee between TFG representatives and the leaders of the armed opposition – calling themselves the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS). The talks led to a temporary ceasefire and the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops. The resulting three-page agreement paved the way for a process of political reconciliation – the Djibouti Process – which is still ongoing today.

UNPOS views the Djibouti process as a structured mechanism to address political grievances

The AU Panel of Eminent African Personalities

In January 2008, the African Union mandated the Panel of Eminent African Personalities, chaired by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to mediate in the crisis following Kenya's contested 2007 elections. On 1 February 2008, the Kenyan government and the opposition Orange Democratic Movement embarked on a process of talks entitled "The Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation" (KNDR). In mid-February, they agreed to form a coalition government. In March, they agreed to set up a commission of inquiry into the post-electoral violence, a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, and an Independent Review Committee to look into the conduct of the elections themselves.

While the mediation phase of the KNDR was declared complete in July 2008, implementing the agreements remained a significant challenge. The Panel, and especially Kofi Annan, continued to engage in Kenyan politics. To support its work, a Coordination and Liaison Office (CLO) was mandated "to assist in the implementation of the agreements reached by the National Dialogue and to support the Coalition Government as it seeks to address the root causes of the 2007 post-election crisis." The CLO replaced a larger team of officials set up in Nairobi to serve the Panel in early 2008.

While the CLO provides support to the Coalition – running, for example, a government project to archive the KNDR's work – the Panel hired an independent firm, South Consulting, to report on progress on the peace accord. South, with a grant from the Open Society Institute, has published quarterly monitoring reports since January 2009.

CLO does not maintain a high profile – its head, an experienced diplomat, has the relatively functional title "Chief of Staff" – but Kofi Annan and other Panel members have kept up pressure on all parties to avoid a return to violence. On more than one occasion, Annan criticized Kenyan leaders for acting in ways that could unravel the peace deal. Nonetheless, Kenya passed an important milestone when voters approved a new constitution in an August 2010 referendum, limiting the president's powers.

The CLO is an unusual political mission, providing technical services to both the Panel and the government, while working under the overall aegis of the AU. As such, it provides an interesting model for field-based support to drawn-out mediation processes.

as well as security, human rights and humanitarian issues. However, Al Shabaab dismisses the process, while humanitarians are keen to distance themselves from the political initiative.

The Djibouti process can claim some successes, most notably the establishment in early 2009 of a national unity government; the enlargement of parliament from 275 to 550 members (200 including 75 seats for civil society groups and the Diaspora) as well as the indirect presidential elections in January 2009.

At present the intensity and breadth of the UN's engagement in Somalia is at its highest since the mid 1990s. UNPOS' mandate has considerably evolved to encompass a much broader range of tasks, as reflected in the latest Security Council Resolutions. UNPOS' current responsibilities

include the implementation of the Djibouti peace process and coordinating international efforts to support the process; assisting the re-establishment, training and retention of Somali security forces, including military, police and judiciary, and to solicit contributions and establish a trust fund in support to these activities; coordinating all activities of the UN in Somalia, providing good offices and political support for the efforts to establish lasting peace and stability, and mobilizing resources and support from the international community for recovery and long-term economic development of the country; coordinating counter-piracy initiatives in the region, including facilitating information sharing and coordination between the TFG, Puntland and "Somaliland" authorities; and working with the TFG to develop

its capacity to address human rights issues and to support the Justice and Reconciliation working group created through the Djibouti process to counter impunity.

These expanded responsibilities, however, have not been matched by a commensurate increase in staff, either in New York or in Nairobi, restricting the mission's ability to effectively engage in the implementation of its mandate. Moreover, despite the presence of military advisors and human rights officers, the ability of UNPOS to monitor security and human rights developments has been extremely marginal due to lack of physical presence inside Somalia.

UNPOS constitutes a minimally integrated field presence. While the SRSG heads the mission, the eighteen UN agencies, funds and programs are under the leadership of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), who is placed outside the mission structure. The main benefit of this arrangement is that humanitarian agencies, such as the World Food Program and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, can claim to operate independently from political imperatives. One UNHCR official mentioned that he "would never ride in a UNDP convoy" for fear of being associated with the political process. However, in practice, the SRSG has been promoting greater integration and coordination between the various UN bodies.

UN SOMALIA SANCTIONS COMMITTEE AND MONITORING GROUP

The Somalia Sanctions Committee was first established in 1992 to oversee the complete arms embargo that the Security Council imposed on the country. A Monitoring Group that succeeded a Panel of Experts first established in 2002 supports the work of the Committee by generating information on violations of the arms embargo. In November of 2008 Security Council Resolution 1844 expanded the Somalia sanctions regime to include a travel ban and assets freeze on violators of the arms embargo, individuals who threaten the peace, security and stability of Somalia or impede the delivery of or access to humanitarian assistance. An exemption to this resolution was granted in May 2009 in order to allow the US to fund and deliver weapons and ammunition to the TFG.

The Committee is composed of representatives from all Security Council member states. It is responsible for making recommendations for Security Council action to be taken in response to violations of the sanctions regime. In doing so, the Committee takes both technical and political considerations into account when formulating recommendations. As such, the Committee receives briefings from both the Monitoring Group on Somalia and UNPOS.

The relationship between UNPOS and the Monitoring Group has room for improvement, as the information exchange between UNPOS and members of the Group has been negligible. Overall, there has been very little cooperation or collaboration between these two bodies. That said, UNPOS may send representatives to attend the Group's technical level briefings before the Sanctions Committee.

In March 2010, the Monitoring Group issued a report detailing violations of the arms embargo, and more controversially asserting that business and insurgent groups in collusion with World Food Program subcontractors diverted up to 50 percent of food aid away from its intended beneficiaries.

CONCLUSION

UNPOS faces challenges from both the external operating environment and the internal UN dynamics between the mission, UN headquarters and other UN bodies and agencies. While the TFG remains (somewhat tenuously) based in Mogadishu, UNPOS offices for now continue to be located in neighboring Kenya. However, some fifteen years after the "temporary" office was established in Nairobi, the UN in early August 2010 considered re-establishing a light presence of UNPOS personnel first in Puntland, then in Somaliland and finally in Mogadishu in the near future. The UN announced its plans after African Union leaders in late July pledged to boost AMISOM to its mandated strength of 8,000 troops. Thus far, the security situation has been too volatile, and threats against foreign institutions too acute to allow UNPOS to relocate to Somalia's capital, presenting more than just a logistical obstacle. Many UNPOS staff rarely, if ever, set foot inside Somali territory, which renders communications and dialogue more remote, and hampers the political mediation efforts. Only a few senior UNPOS staff travel on a regular and frequent basis for daily

visits into Mogadishu. Whether the enhanced troop strength will enable AMISOM to stabilize the country and allow the UN to effectively increase its staff in Somalia remains to be seen.

So far, the level of insecurity is of such magnitude that security sector reform has been near-impossible to implement on the scale necessary to have a meaningful impact. The weakness of security institutions such as the police or the army, as well as the overall lack of TFG legitimacy and control within the country, has led to real concerns that donor money might end up falling in the hands of the powerful militias that control large parts of south-central Somalia, including much of the capital.

Moreover, the international community, and in particular the US, has tended to view Somalia through the prism of the global war on terror. The decision to add Al Shabaab and some of its leaders to the State Department's terrorist list has made it more politically difficult for the UN to engage relevant actors in constructive dialogue. The focus of donor countries on the issue of terrorism has also resulted in the support of certain warlords over others – which has, in effect, destabilized the peace process. Similarly, the focus on piracy – with little appetite from donors to address its root causes – has shifted attention and resources away from the situation inside the country.

From September 2007 to June 2010, UNPOS was under the leadership of SRSG Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah. A retired Mauritanian diplomat nearing the end of his career, he had some success in bringing greater international attention to Somalia and engaged the vocal Somali Diaspora. However, critics charge that in the process he systematically isolated himself and his office from other UN agencies, organizations and funds, and even his colleagues at UN headquarters in New York. Despite the precarious security situation in Somalia, Ould-Abdallah made the relocation of UNPOS to Mogadishu a cornerstone of his strategy, arguing that the international community, and by extension aid organizations, could best serve Somalis through proximity. His successor Augustine Mahiga, the former Tanzanian Ambassador to the UN, partly shares this notion. Mr. Mahiga is well-liked in New York circles and his experience on both political and humanitarian issues – he served UNHCR in various capacities – is seen as an asset.

In addition to ensuring a secure and gradual increase of UN staff in Somalia, one of Mr. Mahiga's first tasks will be to mend the difficult relationship in Nairobi between UNPOS, the UN Country Team and the humanitarian organizations both within and outside of the UN system. These problems can be largely traced to a lack of information exchange between UNPOS and various UN actors and that UNPOS initiatives and decisions often take other UN stakeholders by surprise and vice versa. Most controversially, the humanitarian community has voiced concerns that their assistance is perceived as being co-opted by UNPOS for political gains.

The relationship between UNPOS and the UN headquarters staff in New York – both in the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations – is strained. It is felt that DPKO's cautious stance on the deployment of a UN force, a requirement for the success of UN operations in Somalia in the eyes of the previous SRSG, has impeded the relationship between the two entities. Between UNPOS and the Department of Political Affairs, poor information and analysis sharing has made it difficult for staff at UNHQ to advocate on behalf of UNPOS for new funding and human resources. In addition, the previous SRSG's assertive leadership approach frequently led to a disconnect between policy decisions made at headquarters and the field level.

Going forward, it is difficult to imagine an optimistic scenario. The weakness of the TFG derives in large part from the perception that it is an entity imposed on the country by foreign interests, and as such, increased international support – including UNPOS support – to the institution is very much a double edged sword. The TFG has also failed to enhance its legitimacy through the delivery of basic services to Somalis. In fact, quite the opposite, TFG forces have been repeatedly accused of being predatory and harassing the civilian population, a fact which has implications for the acceptance, legitimacy, and therefore effectiveness, of institutions like UNPOS, whose sole focus has been on the TFG.

Political discussions have too often fallen into zero-sum negotiations for individual or clan gains. The power of UNPOS – with or without the international community's support – to impose or even cajole political players into a political outcome is severely limited. The lessons learned of the past two decades suggest that even an external force

– be it a peacekeeping mission or an internationally sanctioned military intervention – is unlikely to change this dynamic. In fact, experience has shown that this sort of intervention is likely to exacerbate violence and further complicate the already intractable political tensions. Calls for a “Somali owned”

political solution may have become a cliché in policy circles, but the perceived illegitimacy of foreign entities in the Somali context dictate that UNPOS’ most useful role is not as a policy leader or chief moderator, but as the facilitator of a Somali-led process, if such a process is ever to emerge.

NOTES

- 1 The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is a regional development organization in East Africa devoted to the promotion and maintenance of peace, security and humanitarian affairs.