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Security Situation in Somalia

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Security Situation in Somalia

1. Political Situation

Somalia, a failed state since 1991 is facing a further deterioration of security and humanitarian situation. According to many Somalia has just entered the worst period since 1991. People are fleeing in large numbers not only due to intense fighting but often due to lack of food and water. 120 000 people were displaced in last month alone.

The Djibouti Process (signed June 9, 2008) to which international community put much hope does not seem to be delivering. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) is not any stronger then it was a year ago. The creation of a wider coalition was supposed to generate momentum for successful conquest of the Somali territory.

Due to willingness of the moderates from the Alliance for Reliberation of Somalia (ARS) around Sheikh Sharif to join the TFG, the ARS split in may 2008. The radical Asmara faction led by Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys rejected any negotiations with the TFG and joined the radicals under a new name Hizbul Islam.

December 29 2008 former president Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed had been forced out by the international community. Yusuf has been previously recognized as an obstacle to a successful continuation of the Djibouti Process. On January 31 Parliament elected the leader of the ARS Djibouti and a member of the Union of Islamic Courts (no longer active) Sheikh Ahmed as his successor.

Although Sheikh Sharif is a person with a greater moral authority and with a potential to be a uniter, he has so far failed to bring the necessary stimulation to the TFG on the inside as well as any success in terms of territorial gains. Expectations that Sheikh Sharif's belonging to Hawiye clan which has been the backbone of the UIC and has the largest share of the Al-Shabaab fighters will substantially weaken the rebels turned also wrong.

Sadly TFG's poorly trained, underpaid (if paid at all), and barely loyal security forces control just about a third of the capital city Mogadishu. Out of the original 17 000 just 3000 to 4000 soldiers are still serving the TFG. This would suggest a desertion rate of up to 80% and about 14 000 weapons entering the black market.

2. Recent development

Recent offensive of the insurgents which started on May 7 and peaked on June 19 brought the TFG on the edge of collapse. Somali Cabinet (June 20) and later the President (June 22) declared the state of emergency. Somalia asked foreign allies to



intervene within 24 hours. It was stated that if such intervention was not to come TFG collapses.

This slightly premature request did not materialize. Neighbouring Ethiopia and Kenya who were the only countries with the capability to bring military support within the requested timeframe refused to undertake any military action without international mandate.

At the meeting of the AU in Libya attended by the president Sheikh Sharif (July 1 – 3) Somalia was high on the agenda. The possibility of extension of mandate of AMISOM so that the neighbouring countries could be involved in the AU peacekeeping force as well as possibility of changing the AMISOM mandate to peacemaking were discussed with no result. Further debates are however expected on the level of IGAD, AU as well as UN. Somalia is also expected to be high on the agenda of the UN Security Council as Uganda, a major force in AMISOM, is currently holding its presidency.

On July 12 after a series of offensives and counteroffensives insurgents got close to the residence of the President - Villa Somalia. According to the most recent information AMISOM took part in fighting although probably not proactively. TFG forces with support of AMISOM pushed the rebels back from the surroundings of Villa Somalia

Although it seems unlikely that the rebels would be able to topple the government by military means due to presence of AMISOM, there is a real danger of implosion if the rebels were to kill President Sheikh Sharif, several key figures or if several minister filed their resignation as some recently indicated. After a series of successful assassinations of key figures such as the chief of Mogadishu police Ali Said and the minister of security Omar Hashi Aden in mid-June, worries of implosion of the TFG were not far from coming true.

Fast growing feature of the conflict are international jihadists. Their presence is estimated on few hundreds to 2000. They already formed their own armed group but some of them are involved with Al-Shabaab as field commanders. Their presence is worrying for several reasons. Firstly they bring manpower, expertise and experience. Secondly some of them are experienced ideologists and can therefore make a difference in terms of recruitment and morale. Thirdly they may slowly shift focus from Somalia to other parts of the world with significant Somali Diaspora. Fourthly they may provide important links to Al-Qaeda and foreign donors. And lastly they do not respect “gentlemen’s agreement” between Al-Shabaab local commanders and humanitarians.

Death of Omar Hashi Aden was detrimental to the plan to open a second front beside of Mogadishu. Omar Hashi was forming an alliance in the north-west of Mogadishu



in order to regain control of the areas but also to scatter the Al-Shabaab forces so that they can no longer focus one front at a time. Because this strategy was dependent on Omar Bashi's personality and so it is not possible to go ahead with the plan at the moment.

The only positive development in past months is a declaration signed between the government and Ahlun Sunnah wal Jamaa (ASWJ). The group which is operating in central Somalia has about 4000 armed men. Although it was fighting against Al-Shabaab for some time the formalization of the alliance with the TFG is a positive development. Concessions made by the TFG as a part of the deal to ASWJ are unknown. ASWJ currently lacks equipment of all sorts to launch an offensive or to move its fighters. There is therefore an urgent need to make sure the fighting capacities of ASWJ are strengthened. There was so far no follow up on the declaration from the government's side. ASWJ also met with other subjects that are taking active part in the peace process actively and passively. There is however no known deal regarding material support to ASWJ so far.

3. Security Sector

The internal incoherence makes the government forces deeply unstable and uncoordinated. As long as the security forces remain more loyal to their clan than the TFG we can hardly expect an improvement in the fighting capability. The lack of coordination puts them to a weaker position in comparison to relatively well coordinated Al-Shabaabs.

There are attempts to change the situation by re-establishing the Joint Security Committee. The establishment itself does not seem to be problematic. The question is who can make such committee work. There are also programs to develop unified curriculum for training of security personnel. This would make it easier to coordinate forces trained by different subjects. The National Security Strategy is also being developed. All these are done in close cooperation with UNPOS and the US government.

Security situation in Mogadishu does not allow for usage of 2 police academies that were designated for training of police officers by the UNDP. Unless alternative training facilities are found the commitment of 10 000 officers by July 2010 will not be met. 2200 police officers we paid for last 6 months of service agreed salary \$100/month by the EU. They hope that their morale will be improved turned mute after the EC got informed that \$100/month is not enough because Al-Shabaab pays \$300/month

The TFG has repeatedly asked for immediate bilateral financial and material support. The lack of arms and ammunition on the side of the TFG was currently addressed by



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a supply of 40 tons of hardware by the US. The EU informed that it will not provide arms but will focus of training of the security forces.

About Author

Tomáš Maule is a research fellow at the Association for International Affairs. His primary interests are the peace process in Somalia and the security situation in the Great Lakes Region. He is currently studying at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.

Tomáš Maule působí jako analytik Výzkumného centra Asociace se zaměřením na Afriku. Zabývá se především mírovým procesem v Somálsku a bezpečnostní situací v regionu Velkých jezer. V současnosti studuje na School of Oriental and African Studies v Londýně.