This document discusses the security-related challenges facing Somalia as the country looks to rebuild in the aftermath of a twenty year civil war. Related information is available at www.cimicweb.org. Hyperlinks to source material are highlighted in blue and underlined in the text. All maps are hyperlinked to their source locations.

Over the past fifteen months, Somalia achieved significant recovering from two turbulent decades of conflict. In 1990, following the fall of the Siad Barre dictatorship, the country failed to form a viable government and devolved into a civil war which lasted over twenty years. The radical Islamist group al Shabaab emerged as a major security challenge when the militants gained control of large parts of southern and central Somalia in late 2009. However in mid-2012, Kenyan forces, Ethiopian forces and the United Nations (UN) mandated African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) succeeded in routing al Shabaab from Mogadishu and other key cities. The landmark battle of October 2012 drove al Shabaab from Kismayo, its last major stronghold, reports BBC. AMISOM’s success and Mogadishu’s security improvement paved the way for significant political achievements. Somalia installed a new parliament for the first time since the early 1990s when the Federal Government of Somalia was formed on 20 August 2012, upon termination of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) mandate, reports The Guardian. Somalis subsequently elected their first president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, marking another political milestone, according to BBC. In early 2013, the United States officially recognised the Somali government for the first time in twenty years, according to CNN.

The international community, including Western donors and regional governments, remain committed to defeating al Shabaab and rebuilding Somalia. In February 2012, Britain hosted the first London Conference on Somalia; a meeting which focused mainly on ending the country’s two decade long civil war, according to Sabahi. Fifteen months later, British Prime Minister David Cameron referred to Somalia’s progress as “remarkable” in terms of politics and security, reports Agence-France Presse (AFP). However, Cameron also described Somalia as “one of the most broken countries in the world”, one that continues to top the failed states index after five years. In an effort to support peace-building efforts and augment the legitimacy of the fledgling government, Cameron and President Mohamud co-hosted the second London conference on 07 May 2013. Attended by over fifty countries and organisations to include the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the conference secured well over USD 300 million to support security and reconstruction efforts in Somalia, informs The Washington Post.

The country is at a critical juncture. Sustained efforts are necessary to ensure the country does not fall back into chaos. Donor funds will likely go towards fighting al Shabaab and implementing security sector reform. Al Shabaab continues to be a major threat to security in southern and central Somalia, with attacks occurring regularly. The international community must remain committed to supporting Somalia’s transition to peace and stability.

1 Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was established in 2004 as an attempt to form the first central government in Somalia after war broke out in 1991. It represented main executive branch of government in Somalia from 2004 to 2012. Upon expiration of its mandate, it was replaced by the Federal Government of Somalia.
baab **remains** a significant security threat in Somalia, the Horn of Africa, for AMISOM and the relatively **weak and disorganised** Somali National Army (SNA), writes *Alarab Online*.

**Al Shabaab**

Al Shabaab is an Islamic militant group which emerged from the Islamic Court Union (ICU)\(^2\), a militant insurgency based in southern Somalia before it was ousted by Ethiopian forces in late 2006. Al Shabaab leadership served as a military wing of the ICU; however, the group refused to accept the peace treaty signed between the ICU, TFG and Ethiopian forces. According to the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), the group’s emerged as the **only military opposition** to the Ethiopian armed forces invasion that year, thereby increasing the insurgency’s popularity among Somalis. Al Shabaab initially employed guerrilla warfare but as their numbers grew so did the warfare methods. Once the Ethiopian army retreated from Somalia, al Shabaab rose to international prominence through **large territorial gains** against the TFG and AMISOM forces in 2009, according to *BBC*.

By 2010, al Shabaab controlled most of **southern Somalia** including the capital Mogadishu. The group aspired to spread its influence beyond Somalia. Al Shabaab waged war on all enemies of Islam including the US and the Somali government. **Soon the rhetoric** began to target Ethiopian forces and countries contributing troops to AMISOM such as Kenya. Al Shabaab undertook its first major international attack on 11 July 2010, in *Kampala, Uganda*, when twin bombings killed 76 World Cup spectators. Al Shabaab declared the attack a warning to countries sending troops into Somalia.

Al Shabaab’s control within Somalia began to slowly diminish in the latter part of 2011. The group lost its stronghold of **Mogadishu** during the summer of 2011. A renewed AMISOM offensive, the entrance of Kenyan forces into Somalia and the groups declining funding and popularity played a significant role in the loss. In early 2012, al Shabaab **announced its merger** with al Qaeda. This collaboration was a strategic effort to re-strengthen al Shabaab after the lost territory and influence throughout Somalia.

**After Kismayo**

After losing its territorial bases, al Shabaab resorted once again to guerrilla fighting and terror attacks. Al Shabaab now uprooted from its strongholds in the centre and south, expanded into **northern parts of Somalia** to include Somaliland, Puntland, and **along the southern border** with Kenya. In recent months, the group continues to engage in battles with AMISOM and SNA for control of smaller cities and rural areas.

The **loss of Kismayo** was a turning point in al Shabaab’s campaign. Kismayo, the insurgency’s last major stronghold, served as the main financial and operational centre for the militants. Its loss signified the end of its most lucrative sources of funding. Local sources suggested that senior leadership **fled** to Yemen while more junior fighters dispersed throughout Somalia and into the northern Kenya; however, an increase of terrorist activity in 2013 suggest that al Shabaab still remains a viable threat.

In January 2013, al Shabaab killed **two French soldiers** during a failed attempt by the French army to free its security agent from al Shabaab custody. The hostage held in captivity for three and a half years was killed by the militants. In February 2013, *In Depth Africa* reported the murder of a **Muslim cleric** by al Shabaab in Puntland’s capital Garowe. The attack provoked mass **anti-terrorism protests**. In March 2013, *Puntland* signed an agreement with the federal government requesting cooperation to combat al Shabaab, reports *Sabahi*.

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\(^2\) The Islamic Courts Union (ICU) was a militant Islamic insurgency, supported by **al Qaeda**, Iran and Hezbollah, which incorporated indigenous Islamist movements under the guise of restoring order to Somalia, confiscating the warlords’ weapons and integrating the militias. The ICU took Mogadishu, and then expanded throughout central and southern Somalia, with the exception of the town of Baidoa and some territory west, where the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was backed by the Ethiopian Army. In 2006, the ICU consolidated its power in central and southern Somalia, imposing a strict version of sharia, or Islamic law, and shut down movie theaters, viewing centers for soccer matches and co-ed events such as sports. Several battles ensued for territorial control with the TFG, supported by Ethiopian troops.
In Kenya, al Shabaab continues to perpetrate explosive attacks. In February 2013, gunmen from the group killed seven people in the north Kenyan city of Garissa. Nine people were killed in April in when al Shabaab attack a hotel in the same town. Furthermore, recent guerrilla strikes in northern Kenya and Somalia raised fears that al Shabaab has regained capability to hit high-level government and civilian targets. The Kenyan attacks compromised the security of the Somali diaspora positioned in Kenya. Somali refugees in Nairobi were ordered by the government to report to the overcrowded Dadaab refugee camp, informs BBC. Many of these refugees have reported maltreatment and brutality by Kenyan security forces, according to Al Jazeera.

Al Shabaab launched a new offensive in southern Somalia in March 2013, retaking the town of Hudur hours after Ethiopian forces pulled out, reports Daily Monitor. Somali militia allied with the Ethiopians, together with some 2,000 civilians, fled shortly after the Ethiopian drawdown. Upon taking Hudur, the militants beheaded 75-year-old imam Abdirrahman Warsame for cooperating with the Somali government. Warsame was a prominent local cleric whose murder sparked condemnation from the Somali government. On 25 March 2013, the Somali government announced it had taken Hudur from al Shabaab with the help of Ethiopian forces from neighbouring Gedo region. Troops initiated a battle with al Shabaab in Garbaharey, a town within the Gedo region, after which both sides claimed victory, informs Sabahi.

In addition to rural al Shabaab offensives, insecurity in Mogadishu has been a concern in 2013. On 18 March, a car bomb exploded in the capital city killing at least seven people. The reported target was the district intelligence chief, Khalif Ereb, who was injured in the attack. Al Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack. On 14 April, Mogadishu experienced its bloodiest al Shabaab attack since the militants had been forced to give up control of the capital city in late 2011, informs The New York Times. Coordinated suicide bombs detonated and gunmen raided the Supreme Court, killing at least 29 people. A car bomb struck a Turkish aid convoy later in the day, resulting in five additional casualties. Al Shabaab also claimed responsibility for this attack, justifying the offensive against the court as an attack on an un-Islamic, Western-style state institution, reports AFP.

Assassinations in Somalia have also increased over the last year. The most poignant incident came on 21 April 2013, when Radio Mogadishu journalist Mohamed Ibrahim Raage was shot dead in front of his home. Although al Shabaab has not yet claimed responsibility, journalists are frequently targets of al Shabaab and the group is suspected of perpetrating this crime. Raage was the fourth journalist killed during the first four months of 2013. Furthermore, al Shabaab claims it beheaded 127 “government spies”, a status given to government journalists by the insurgency since the beginning of 2013. However, the Somali government dismissed the claim as propaganda. On 05 May, Mogadishu witnessed another al Shabaab attack, when ten people were killed by a car bomb targeting government officials and a Qatari delegation, reports Al Jazeera.

Funding and Recruitment

The Council on Foreign Relations reports that al Shabaab derived funds from various sources. The group augments support with donations from the Somali diaspora, terrorist organisations, kidnappings, imposed taxes and extortion of local businesses. While a direct link between al Shabaab’s funding and piracy has never been explicitly proved, evidence suggests al Shabaab applied taxes on ransom demands while in control of southern Somalia. Taxes on business activities, especially harbour fees in the port of Kismayo, became the main source of al Shabaab revenue after it gained control of the city in 2008. Al Shabaab utilised the port to trade various commodities such as Somalia’s primary export of coal with various Gulf States. The port also served as a financial centre for al Shabaab from which it distributed funds to smaller cells under its control throughout Somalia. The loss of Kismayo presented a significant financial setback for the group resulting in an exclusive dependence on international financing. Funds were transferred through the informal Islamic financial system of Hawala networks, which provided the main source of funding from the Somali diaspora in Kenya. In some cases, states such as Eritrea have provided direct support to al Shabaab. Eritrea was sanctioned by the UN over TFG accusations that the government funded al Shabaab. Yemen, Syria, Iran and Qatar are suspected of funding al Shabaab, reports BBC.
Al Shabaab’s initial recruiting efforts in Somalia benefited from the absence of a central government and the unpopularity of the Ethiopian occupation, according to CSIS. By asserting itself as the only opposition to the Ethiopian army and exploiting nationalist sentiments, al Shabaab managed to attract an impressive number of Somali recruits. Al Shabaab also defied traditional clan structure, thus appealing to minorities and less influential clans. Over time, al Shabaab’s control over much of Somalia, coupled with the imposition of high taxes, strict implementation of the Shari’a and poor handling of the 2011 famine, lessened the popularity of the insurgents among Somalis, according to The Atlantic. The development of these factors coincided with the rise of its international recruitment policy. Foreign fighters gave al Shabaab the image of a “global jihadi” organisation instead of an exclusive Somali movement which weakened al Shabaab’s appeal with the greater Somali population.

Since its territorial defeat in Somalia, al Shabaab has dedicated more attention to recruiting internationally, which has proven successful for the insurgency, according to a report from the US House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security. Initially, international recruitment was based on acquiring mujahedeen fighters from Arab countries such as Yemen and Saudi Arabia. As al Shabaab’s power grew, so did its appeal in the West, primarily among the Somali diaspora in countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada, reports Associated Press. The most infamous case is that of Alabama native Omar Hammami, a US citizen who changed his name to Abu Mansour al-Amriki, travelled to Somalia where he was radicalised, then became one of the main al Shabaab propagandists in the West, earning a slot on the FBI’s most wanted list. Hammami has since fallen out with al Shabaab and reportedly received death threats from his former comrades. The United Kingdom and Canada have also recorded cases of their citizens joining al Shabaab. The insurgency’s influence has spread to the global Somali diaspora, with reports of Somali recruitment on university campuses in Pakistan. Recruitment and attacks in Kenya have also grown since Kenyan involvement in Somalia. The Muslim Youth Center in Nairobi serves as the main propagandist base. The recruitment techniques involve the strategic use of internet and social media to appeal to potential members.

Since its ouster from Kismayo, al Shabaab has been subject to internal divisions. The group is much less organised than it was when in territorial control of southern and central Somalia. The ideological differences between Somalis and foreign fighters have grown since al Shabaab announced its ties to al Qaeda. Since then the group has recorded several instances of internal clashes, reports Sabahi. Most recently, al Shabaab’s second in command, Ibrahim al Afghani, sent a letter to al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri. Afghani warns of internal divisions, declining influence of the movement. He offered harsh criticism of Ahmed Godane’s leadership, a man who is considered the supreme al Shabaab leader. Godane’s view of al Shabaab as the only jihadi organisation in Somalia has already brought opposition from other prominent al Shabaab leaders. According to Mogadishu security analysts at the Centre for Moderation and Dialogue, the letter presents a serious threat of an al Shabaab fracture. Further, it should be noted that the courthouse attack in Mogadishu came only a few days after the letter was published. Somali government officials and security analysts have since branded the Mogadishu attack as an act of desperation determined to divert attention from al Shabaab’s declining power and internal divisions.

**African Union Mission in Somalia**

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) was established in 2007 by UN Security Council resolution 1744 with an initial mandate of six months. After repeated extensions, the mission currently expires in February 2014. The success of the mission has varied over the course of its implementation. In 2009, when Ethiopian forces departed Somalia, AMISOM was unable to contain al Shabaab, informs CSIS. The New York Times reports that the subsequent return of Ethiopian forces and the incorporation of Kenyan forces into AMISOM in 2011 improved its resiliency against al Shabaab thereby achieving significant success in fighting the insurgency in 2012.

AMISOM currently deploys 17,731 uniformed personnel and fields troops from Burundi, Djibouti, Uganda and Kenya. Troops are deployed in four sectors in central and southern Somalia. The largest national contingent comprises more than 6,000 Ugandan troops. Aside from its military role, AMISOM also maintains police and civilian components. AMISON is primarily tasked with training the Somali police and civilian officials. AMISOM also provides training and equipment to the SNA while also training Somali police, civil servants in civil military relations and on integration of clan militias into the SNA. Training is carried out both in Somalia and in AMISOM troop-lending countries.
The United States and the European Union (EU) provide most of the logistical and financial assistance to AMISOM forces. According to The Washington Post, the US made a significant contribution towards AMISOM training by financing the construction of its main camp in Uganda and providing the military instructors to lead the education. New training facilities and camps should provide the opportunity for a greater portion of training to be held in Somalia. The US also lent air and naval assets including drones to anti-terrorist efforts against al Shabaab, according to Al Jazeera. The EU has donated EUR 33 million, or approximately USD 42 million, to AMISOM upon extension of its mandate in order to achieve full troop strength and successfully fulfil its mandate.

**Ethiopian Forces**

Ethiopian forces are no stranger to Somalia, having entered the country for the first time in 2006 to battle the ICU. Ethiopian forces, together with the TFG, expelled ICU from Mogadishu in December of 2006. For the next two years, Ethiopian troops provided security for Somalia alongside TFG and newly formed AMISOM peacekeeping battalions. Two years of Ethiopian deployment in Somalia was unpopular among Somalis. The two countries had historically been at odds which contributed to the rise of al Shabaab. According to CSIS, “Al Shabaab was able to play on deep-seated Somali antipathy toward Ethiopia to recruit thousands of nationalist volunteers”. Ethiopian forces withdrew in 2009 but AMISOM and TFG proved incapable of containing al Shabaab after the departure. In late 2011, Ethiopian troops returned to Somalia to assist Kenyan operations against al Shabaab. The current Ethiopian contingent supports AMISOM efforts; it operates outside the constraints of the mandate and does not receive UN funding. Ethiopia continues to threaten withdrawal from Somalia. Many officials fear withdrawal would decrease the effectiveness of AMISOM. Ethiopian troops are estimated to be 8,000-strong, more than any single AMISOM contributor, informs Africa Review.

**Kenyan Forces**

A decisive factor for the success of AMISOM was the incorporation of Kenyan forces into the peacekeeping operation. Kenyan forces entered Somalia unilaterally in late 2011 as a result of al Shabaab’s activities inside Kenya. The border between Kenya and Somalia became increasingly insecure as the area witnessed high profile kidnappings and the murder of several Westerners. The Kenyan incursion into Somalia came three days after al Shabaab took two Spanish aid workers from the Dadaab refugee camps. The intervention, named Operation Linda Nchi, started with two battalions from the Kenyan army, numbering 2,400 troops. That number was gradually increased during the next year as Kenyan forces made several decisive victories against al Shabaab. In the summer of 2012, Kenya officially joined AMISOM adding approximately 5,000 troops to the contingent. The Kenyan military receives financial assistance from the United States and is among the best-equipped armies in Africa. Its troops showed great success in countering al Shabaab and were the first to enter Kismayo in September 2012. Although al Shabaab attacks and tensions with ethnic Somalis in Kenya increased following the intervention, the actions of Kenyan forces and their involvement in AMISOM proved essential in weakening al Shabaab.

**Recent events**

AMISOM remains the chief provider of security in Somalia. For 2013, AMISOM plans to widen its area of deployment to regions of Bay and Bakool to make up for the drawdown of Ethiopian troops from that area and prevent al Shabaab from retaking territory, reports Shabelle News. On 01 April 2013, AMISOM claimed to have killed Mohamed Abu, the top commander of al Shabaab militias in Bay and Bakool regions. AMISOM also linked Mogadishu to those regions by clearing the roads, a move that enhanced AMISOM and SNA control over Bay and Bakool. The linkage will likely facilitate the transport of additional troops and humanitarian assistance if needed. Sierra Leone recently contributed to AMISOM in March 2013 when the country sent 850 soldiers to Somalia. Djibouti has also pledged to increase the number of its soldiers in AMISOM to supplement the possible withdrawal of Ethiopian support, informs Sabahi.

**Somali Security Forces**

As a result of Soviet weapons and support, the Somali army under the Siad Barre regime was one of the largest African armies. After the Cold War ended, the disintegration of the army into clan-based militias eventually gave way to a long civil war. A unified Somali army and a centralised Somali government were largely non-existent for twenty years. Beginning in 1992, a series of peacekeeping operations attempted to stabilise Somalia. The UN authorised operations UNOSOM I, UNITAF and UNOSOM II between 1992 and 1995 with little success. Attempts to restore the SNA began with the formation of the TFG in 2004 but the army remained weak and under-equipped,
serving mostly in support of Ethiopian forces. The EU introduced training for **two Somali battalions** comprising approximately 2,000 troops in 2011. Altogether, around **11,000 Somali troops** participated in training outside of Somalia.

The establishment of a new federal government under President Mohamud, bolstered by the subsequent success of AMISOM against al Shabaab, **initiated the process of security sector reform**, informs Somali Sky News. First, **amnesty was offered** to former al Shabaab members. According to **UN reports**, some militants have infiltrated Somali security forces. Second, the UN eased sanctions previously imposed on the country. More specifically, **UN Security Council Resolution 2093** partially lifted a decades-old arms embargo and endorsed the Somali National Security Sector Reform Plan. The Somali government asserted that the embargo created an obstacle to form an effective army. Third, the government successfully integrated **various local militias** into the SNA. After training by AMISOM, Somali security forces underwent a **three-week course** aimed at improving cohesion and embracing Somali national identity within the army in order to affect a shift in loyalty from clan leadership toward federal government. Fourth, **the leadership of the army** changed on 15 March 2013, with General Dahir Adan Elmi appointed as the commander-in-chief, a sign of increased civilian control of the military.

Despite the improvements, the SNA, police and security personnel remain a priority for the government but most are underfunded, under-equipped and under-educated. Aside from AMISOM trained soldiers, the majority of the SNA is primarily a coalition of clan militias unified only by their opposition to al Shabaab. There have even been reports of some infighting between the government forces. **Der Spiegel** notes that widespread **corruption and a lack of salaries** present additional problems causing soldiers to desert or sell their equipment. The same issues affect **police forces** confined to Mogadishu which number 6,000, informs **The New Vision**.

Further, Somali security forces face accusations of rape, gender-based violence and a host of other human rights violations. According to Al Jazeera, a recent case involved a woman **accusing Somali soldiers** of rape. An AP wire reported that the Somali government initially **charged** the woman and the reporter who published her story rather than investigating the alleged crime. Al Jazeera also reported that the case sparked **international condemnation** of the Somali government by human rights organisations. In a sign that governance and the judicial process continue to improve in the country, the charges were **dropped** and the journalist was freed. The Somali government recently **acknowledged** instances of rape involving SNA members, according to **Shabelle News**. President Mohamud, in his visit to the nation’s largest army barracks **urged the army** to set an example, end the impunity of sexual violence and adhere to international human rights standards.

**UN Arms Embargo**

Somalia has been subject to a **UN arms embargo** since 1992 – the **oldest international weapons blockade** in the world. Designed to stop the civil war in southern Somalia, weapons remain readily available to militants throughout the country. The **Christian Science Monitor** reports that previous attempts at disarmament failed due largely in part to the resistance of clan militia leaders. The UN documented **445 arms transfers and seizures** between 2004 and 2011 in Somalia. While militants managed to obtain weapons from countries like Eritrea, Iran, and Yemen, the arms embargo mainly prevented the SNA from equipping its troops, according to **BBC**. The US provided the **TFG with weapons** on several occasions, despite the ban, to aid the Somali forces fighting against al Shabaab. Reports surfaced that **those weapons** ended up in hands of militants, informs **The Globe and Mail**.

When the Security Council announced its plans to lift the embargo, world opinions were divided. Amnesty International called the move “**premature**” and stated that it should be lifted only when an effective arms control mechanism was in place. The **Somali government** asked that the embargo be lifted in order to resupply and rebuild its military and combat al Shabaab more effectively, reports **Garowe Online**. The primary risks relate to high levels of corruption in the SNA and a lack of internal **weapons control and storage** mechanisms. An even greater increase in illegal weapons trade in the region is probable. Some experts and journalists argue that Somalia needed a **major disarmament programme** before sanctions were lifted. According to reports, the country is awash in weapons, with the majority in public hands and controlled by clans, says Garowe.

On 06 March 2013, the UN Security Council agreed to **partially** lift the arms embargo on Somalia for an initial period of one year, reports Reuters. The partial lift allows the Somali government to purchase small arms, assault
rifles and rocket-propelled grenades, although restrictions remain on heavier arms like large calibre guns, mortars, anti-tank missiles, howitzers, and mines. In addition, weapons cannot be sold to any individual outside the Somali security forces. This agreement represents a compromise between the US, which supported the lifting of the embargo, and other Security Council Members who were more cautious. Within weeks after the embargo was partially lifted, Shabelle News reported the theft of systematic weapons from the president’s office.

Conclusion
The formation of the country’s first government in decades and a territorial withdrawal of al Shabaab suggest a more optimistic Somali security outlook than seen in the past twenty years. However, the country remains dependent on foreign aid and support, particularly on regional troops incorporated into AMISOM. In order to properly assume responsibilities from AMISOM, the SNA requires rebuilding. The partial lifting of the weapons embargo by the UN Security Council presents a significant boost for the SNA but also carries risks. The SNA could fail to provide adequate weapons control mechanisms or give into to intra-clan fighting as it has in the past. Additionally, allegations of corruption and sexual misconduct amongst security forces are a serious blight on credibility. Although it lost much of its territorial control inside Somalia, al Shabaab remains the biggest security threat within the country. The group has expanded regionally into Kenya and the semiautonomous Somali states of Somaliland and Puntland. The success and effectiveness of the Federal Government of Somalia will depend heavily on the security of Somalia. Only time will tell if the country will remain among the world’s most failed states.