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European Union Training Mission in Somalia and the Limits of Liberal Peacebuilding: Can EUTM Contribute to Sustainable and Inclusive Peace?

*Kseniya Oksamytna*¹

After gaining sad notoriety as a pirate heaven in 2008, Somalia again made headlines in summer 2011 as the area worst affected by the East African drought. The areas under the control of Al Shabaab, a radical Islamist group that is fighting the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), are suffering from famine while the group is reluctant to grant access to humanitarian agencies. In this political climate, the EU took the decision on 28 July 2011 to extend its mission to contribute to the training of the Somali Security Forces for another 12 months.

The European Union Training Mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia), launched in April 2010, initially envisaged two consecutive 6-month training periods (now extended to four). The mission takes place at the Bihanga camp in Uganda due to the dire security conditions in Somalia itself. In Uganda, the Somali security forces had already been trained by the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) on behalf of the African Union Military Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). While the UPDF provides basic training for recruits, the first two cycles of EUTM complemented those efforts by offering specialised modules in communications, medical evacuation, countering improvised explosive devices (C-IED), fighting in built-up areas

Kseniya Oksamytna is pursuing Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorate "Globalisation, the EU and Multilateralism" at LUISS Guido Carli and University of Geneva. This article is partly based on the Istituto Affari Internazionali Working Paper 11/16 (June 2011) titled "The European Union Training Mission in Somalia: Lessons Learnt for EU Security Sector Reform". The author would like to express gratitude to two anonymous reviewers whose insightful comments have prompted her to make substantial revisions. Unfortunately, due to space limitations, not all of their recommendations could be implemented, e.g. concerning the role of individual member states in the deployment of the mission, the synergies (or lack thereof) between EUTM and EUNAVFOR Somalia; or the difference between the current and past peacebuilding initiatives in Somalia. However, all of them point to interesting avenues for future research. Email: koksamytna@luiss.it.

¹ An updated version of this paper has been published in *The International Spectator*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2011.628100>.

(FIBUA), and the humanitarian aspects of conflict management.² Following the extension, the focus of EUTM has shifted to developing the command and control structures and self-training capacities of the Somali forces³ with the overall aim of giving the Somali Security Forces (since recently referred to as the National Somalia Forces, NSF) “the capability to perform by themselves basic training in Mogadishu within a period of one year”.⁴

At this juncture, it is necessary to carefully examine whether the EUTM is on track in terms of fulfilling its mandate and what the prospects are for its long-term success. To what extent does the mission reproduce the shortcomings of the liberal peacebuilding project by trying to contain rather than resolve conflict and to reconstruct Somalia as a centralised, rational, bureaucratic state while ignoring viable indigenous structures and institutions? How should international donors proceed in Somalia? Is the Somali experience applicable to other conflict or post-conflict situations in Africa and elsewhere?

Security Sector Reform and the CSDP

Over the past few years, the EU has emerged as a worldwide leader in security sector reform (SSR). The European Security Strategy (ESS) places SSR at the core of institution building.⁵ This stems from the conviction that an efficient and transparent security sector – police, military and intelligence services – is a crucial element for ensuring peace, democracy and socio-economic development.⁶ Out of 28 civilian and military missions in the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP, formerly ESDP) since 2003, three have been SSR missions: EUSEC RD Congo (ongoing since 2005), EUSSR Guinea-Bissau (launched in 2008

² EU Council, “EUTM Somalia”, 19.

³ EU Council, “EUTM Somalia extended”.

⁴ Delegation of the European Union to Uganda, “Handover ceremony of EUTM command”, 8 August 2011, http://www.deluga.ec.europa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=301:handover-ceremony-of-eutm-command-between-col-elul-spain-and-the-col-beary-ireland-august-8-2011&catid=68:speeches&Itemid=267.

⁵ EU Council, *A secure Europe in a better world*, 12.

⁶ EU Council, “EU mission in Guinea-Bissau”, http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/missionPress/files/100930%20FACTSHEET%20EU%20SSR%20Guinea-Bissau%20-%20version%2012_EN.pdf.

and closed in September 2010) and EUTM Somalia (ongoing since April 2010). Additionally, the EU has deployed six police training missions with SSR-related tasks: EUPOL Proxima (launched in 2003, succeeded by EUPAT FYR Macedonia in 2005 and completed in 2006), EUPOL Kinshasa (initiated in 2005, succeeded by EUPOL RD Congo in 2007 and extended until 30 September 2011), EUPOL COPPS Palestine (launched in 2006 and extended until 31 December 2011) and EUPOL Afghanistan (ongoing since mid-June 2007).⁷

However, it is not only through CSDP that the EU engages in SSR activities. The European Commission has long been involved in aspects of SSR as part of its development and accession policies;⁸ it is particularly active in the area of justice reform which frequently takes place alongside a police training CSDP mission.⁹ As a consequence, one of the main challenges hampering EU SSR efforts stems from the lack of coherence and coordination among various EU instruments. The Council and the Commission have even developed separate SSR concepts, the EU Concept for ESDP Support to Security Sector Reform (2005)¹⁰ and a Concept for European Community Support for Security Sector Reform (2006),¹¹ which were brought under a common policy framework in 2006.¹² Unfortunately, this framework “embodies more political signals than practical steps forward since it does not replace the two concepts by one EU common approach and does not define SSR implementation guidelines reflecting the specificities of the EU.”¹³

As for the SSR missions in the CSDP framework, all of them – EUSEC RD Congo, EUSSR Guinea-Bissau and EUTM Somalia – have taken place in Africa. The EU endorses the principle of African ownership of solutions to the continent’s problems.¹⁴ Rather than expanding

⁷ For an overview and classification of CSDP missions, see CSDP Mission Analysis Partnership, “Mission Chart”, <http://www.csdpmap.eu/mission-chart>.

⁸ Gross, *Security sector reform in Afghanistan*, 10.

⁹ FYR Macedonia, Afghanistan and RD Congo are the countries where police training under the Council and justice reform under the Commission are taking place simultaneously.

¹⁰ EU Council, *EU concept for ESDP support*.

¹¹ European Commission, *A concept for European Community support*.

¹² EU Council, *Council conclusions on a policy framework*.

¹³ Weiler, *A Leader in theory, a laggard in reality?*, 14.

¹⁴ Pirozzi, *EU support to African security architecture*, 7.

its military presence there, the Union seeks to empower local and regional actors to cope with the challenges Africa faces. EUSEC RD Congo assists Congolese authorities in establishing a transparent chain of payments for the army, creating biometrical census of security personnel, reintegrating former insurgents into regular armed forces, and combating violence against women. EUSEC RD Congo works alongside another EU mission, EUPOL, aimed at fostering the reform of the civilian police. EUSSR Guinea-Bissau, terminated in September 2010 in the aftermath of a military coup, has been supporting local authorities in elaborating a national SSR strategy and legislating on matters related to the army, the police, and public prosecution.

Both EUSEC RD Congo and EUSSR Guinea-Bissau are civilian SSR missions. EUTM is the first EU military training mission. The size of the mission is approximately 150 EU personnel (compared with eight European staff seconded to EU SSR Guinea-Bissau and approximately 50 working for EUSEC RD Congo). Fifteen EU members participate in the mission; each training module is led by either one or two countries, reflecting national armies' differentiated expertise. In the first year, the mission was commanded by Colonel Ricardo Elul Gonzalez of Spain who handed over his duties to an Irish Colonel, Michael Beary, in August 2011.

In addition to UPDF and AMISOM, the EU also cooperates closely with the US in conducting the mission. The US renders financial and logistical assistance by participating in the selection of trainees, airlifting recruits, and providing supplies and equipment.¹⁵ This is the third time the US engages directly with a CSDP mission.¹⁶ In the case of EUTM, the EU relies on the US for the critical assets which it lacks, such as strategic airlift. This compares positively with the international response to the Darfur crisis when NATO and the EU were conducting two separate yet duplicate airlift operations in support of the AU, denounced by critics as a “beauty contest”.¹⁷ Yet the process of cooperation in the framework of EUTM has not been without difficulties. Given the variety of actors involved in the selection process, there has been a delay

¹⁵ International Crisis Group, “Transitional government on life support”, 15.

¹⁶ The other EU missions in which the US has participated are EULEX Kosovo and EUSEC DR Congo. For information on previous US engagements, see Bloching and Gya, “CSDP and EU mission update - July 2010”, 5.

¹⁷ Michel, *NATO-EU cooperation in operations*, 2.

in receiving trainees. Colonel Elul has attributed it to the difficult situation in Somalia and the novelty of the cooperative arrangement rather than deficiencies of the EU or any of its partners.¹⁸

International engagement and state-building in Somalia

Somalia has been without a functioning government since the collapse of Siad Barre's dictatorial regime in 1991. Interventions by the US and the UN in the early 1990s did not succeed in re-establishing order and came to an end amid numerous casualties among international troops. The country has fragmented into regional blocks that loosely reflect the territorial distribution of the major clans that dominate the country's social, political and economic life.¹⁹ Somaliland, a former British protectorate which merged with Italian Somaliland in 1960 to form the Republic of Somalia, declared independence in 1991 and created its own system of public administration; it is now the most well-governed area in the country.²⁰ The coastal province of Puntland announced its autonomous status in 1998 and is trying to negotiate an attractive power-sharing agreement with the central government.²¹

In 2004, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was formed, with a mandate to prepare grounds for a federal Somalia and draft a new constitution. Since then it has made little progress towards unifying or stabilising Somalia. In 2006, the more popular Islamic Courts Union (ICU) gained control of the Mogadishu area and restored a semblance of order. However, due to fears of the spread of militant Islamism, the ICU was ousted by US-backed Ethiopian forces. The AU deployed a peacekeeping mission to Somalia (AMISOM) in 2007. In 2008, the so-called Djibouti peace process was launched by the UN to reconcile moderate Islamists from the ICU with the TFG. However, the radical wing of the ICU, Al Shabaab, refused to cooperate and continued its struggle against the transitional government. The group, which boasts links

¹⁸ EU Council, "Interview with Colonel Ricardo Gonzalez Elul", 20.

¹⁹ European Commission, *Somalia: Joint Strategy Paper*, 9.

²⁰ Eggers, "When is a state a state?", *passim*.

²¹ Hemmer and Uzelac, *When the centre doesn't hold*, 1.

with Al-Qaeda and ambitions to create an Islamic caliphate not only in Somalia but globally,²² holds most of south-central Somalia. As of late August 2011, the TFG controls almost the entire capital and, with the help of affiliated militias, some areas along the Kenyan border.²³ The northern regions of Somaliland and Puntland are also outside the TFG's *de facto* rule.

Fragmentation and lawlessness have led to another development that has brought Somalia into the spotlight: maritime piracy. Groups of well-armed Somalis have kidnapped merchant ships passing through the Gulf of Aden, a narrow waterway that carries 20 percent of global trade, demanding enormous ransoms. Several multinational flotillas have been deployed to interdict pirate attacks, including the EU's first-ever maritime operation, EUNAVFOR Somalia. It is universally recognised that the roots of maritime piracy lie in the instability ashore. It is to assist the TFG in providing basic security to its citizens and thus discouraging piracy and other crimes that the EU has launched EUTM. The training mission is a part of the EU's much-emphasized 'comprehensive approach' to Somalia. The EU is Somalia's largest donor: its Special Support Programme for the years 2008-13 has a budget of €215.4 million (USD 312.2 million) and finances projects in the areas of good governance, education, food security, conflict prevention, gender equality, environment, and HIV/AIDS.²⁴ Assistance from the US is more modest, with a contribution of USD 16.7 million in the year 2010. This figure varies year on year, being as high as USD 51 million in 2008 and as low as USD 9 million in 2009.²⁵ Other major donors are the UK, Norway, Denmark, Japan, Belgium, Canada, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, as well as financial institutions like the World Bank, international organisations like the League of Arab States, and charities like the Zayed Foundation.²⁶

²² The Fund for Peace, "Al Shabaab and the Somalia food crisis", *CF-11-05-CA Briefing*, 2, http://issuu.com/fundforpeace/docs/cf-11-05-tc_-_al_shabaab_-_lawrence_and_janus__11-?mode=a_p.

²³ A. Abdi, "Government takes over Gedo villages: Al-Shabbab withdraws from Gariley", *Somalireport online*, 29 August 2011, http://www.somaliareport.com/index.php/post/1470/Government_Takes_Over_Gedo_Villages.

²⁴ European Commission Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid, "EC assistance to Somalia", January 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/regional-cooperation/peace/documents/dev_ec_assistance_somalia.pdf.

²⁵ For an overview of the US' historical assistance to Somalia, see USAID, "USAID/OFDA disaster assistance to Somalia", 19 July 2011, http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/countries/somalia/template/files/somalia_historical.pdf.

²⁶ UNDP Somalia, "Donors and expenditure" (n/d.), <http://www.so.undp.org/index.php/Donors-and-partners.html>.

In addition to humanitarian assistance to Somalia itself, donors finance AMISOM. The EU and its member states cover peacekeepers' salaries, medical costs, housing, fuel and communication equipment.²⁷ EUTM is sometimes characterised as the EU's attempt to "ease AMISOM's training burden and free resources for its counter-insurgency efforts".²⁸ AMISOM is ultimately responsible for reintroducing EUTM-trained soldiers into the NSF: after Bihanga, recruits undergo two to three months of reintegration training by AMISOM at the Jazira facility in Mogadishu.²⁹

In 2011, AMISOM, TFG-affiliated militias³⁰ and the TFG forces, some of them EUTM-trained, have made important tactical gains against Al Shabaab, although, as the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea points out, "at a considerable cost in both military and civilian casualties".³¹ After the insurgents abandoned the Bakara market, their stronghold in Mogadishu, the TFG established control over almost the entire capital for the first time in many years. Overall, EUTM has been referred to as "superior in quality and variety" with respect to previous training efforts by France, Uganda, Djibouti and Sudan.³² In addition, one of the biggest fears – that recruits will massively defect to join Al Shabaab – has not materialised: the defection rate "is around 10 percent according to AMISOM, which is a relatively low figure compared to other conflict areas such as Afghanistan."³³ These data should be taken with a grain of salt considering that it comes from AMISOM which is heavily involved in EUTM; yet even if it is 10-15 percent higher, it is a far cry from 80 percent newspapers have speculated about.³⁴ In the words of Maj.

²⁷ European Commission Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid, "AMISOM", 30 July 2011, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/regional-cooperation/peace/peace-support-operations/amisom_en.htm.

²⁸ International Crisis Group, "Transitional government on life support", 15.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁰ Human Rights Watch reports that the forces that have participated in the offensive include Ethiopia-backed ASWJ and Ras Kamboni, Kenya-trained militias, as well as units of Ethiopian and Kenyan armed forces. Human Rights Watch, *War crimes in Somalia*, 1, 20.

³¹ UN, *Report of the Monitoring Group*, 11.

³² International Crisis Group, "Transitional government on life support", 15.

³³ Bloching, "CSDP and EU mission update – June/July 2011".

³⁴ M. Delany, "EU trains army to fight in Somalia", *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 June 2010, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2010/0618/EU-trains-army-to-fight-in-Somalia>.

Gen. Thierry Caspar-Fille-Lambie, the commander of French troops in Djibouti, the situation has improved “because of the now regular payment of the troops”.³⁵

With Al Shabaab weakened by the famine and its leadership split over whether or not to accept Western humanitarian assistance,³⁶ a new window of opportunity has opened for the TFG to bring more areas under its control. Is the TFG able to establish positive and inclusive peace in the regions from which Al Shabaab retreats? As the Human Rights Watch cautions, since “the TFG has been ineffectual in providing security and human rights protections in the limited areas under its control, broadening those areas is only likely to exacerbate existing problems.”³⁷ In light of this, is the continuous and virtually unconditional support for the TFG warranted?

EUTM: an exercise in liberal peacebuilding?

Like most other post-conflict peacebuilding endeavours, EUTM Somalia is an attempt to reconstruct Somalia as a centralised, rational, modern bureaucratic state. The provisional institutions set up (the TFG and the Transitional Federal Parliament, TFP) rely totally on international support for their existence, the EU paying parliamentarians’ salaries and AMISOM ensuring their security. The mandate of the TFG was set to expire in August 2011, yet it failed to complete any of the transitional tasks it set out for itself.³⁸ In February 2011, the TFP voted to extend its own term by an additional three years, a decision which came under heavy criticism from both the TFG and the international community. In April 2011, the TFG also postponed elections until 2012 citing insecurity as the reason. The decision was challenged as unconstitutional by the TFP, and a political deadlock ensued. The stalemate came to an end with the signing of a UN-sponsored Kampala Accord by the president and speaker of parliament

³⁵ Xinhua, “Somalia: French commander sees military progress in crisis”, *AllAfrica.com*, 22 July 2011, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201107220694.html?viewall=1>.

³⁶ The Fund for Peace, “Al Shabaab and the Somalia food crisis”, *CF-11-05-CA Briefing*, 3, http://issuu.com/fundforpeace/docs/cf-11-05-tc_-_al_shabaab_-_lawrence_and_janus__11-?mode=a_p.

³⁷ Human Rights Watch, *War crimes in Somalia*, 2.

³⁸ These tasks include reconciliation, building civilian and security institutions, and the completion of the constitution-making process. United Nations, “Security Council urges interim Somali authorities to complete remaining tasks”, *UN News Centre*, 30 November 2010, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?Cr=somali&Cr1=&NewsID=36913>.

which extended the mandates of both institutions for a year. One of the deal's conditions was the resignation of a popular prime minister, Abdullahi Mohamed, who managed to improve the situation in Mogadishu by appointing technocrats to his cabinet, restoring the provision of some public services, and ensuring the regular payment of civil servants' salaries.³⁹ However, he is perceived as unwanted competition by the president and the speaker of parliament. In addition, he comes from the Ogadeni clan, and the TFG had been under pressure from Puntland to replace him with an ethnic Darod.⁴⁰

This is the clearest example of the TFG's inefficiency and venality, which is the result of internal bickering, clan politics and logrolling. The International Crisis Group (ICG) ranks it as the most corrupt of all transitional governments in Somalia and argues that its officials "are not fit to hold public office and should be forced to resign, isolated and sanctioned".⁴¹ This is echoed by the UN Monitoring Group, which blames most of Somalia's woes on the TFG's "lack of vision or cohesion, its endemic corruption and its failure to advance the political process".⁴²

In stark contrast to the TFG stand sundry local and regional administrations which have managed to re-establish a semblance of normality. The UN Monitoring Group has concluded the following:

More than half of Somali territory is controlled by responsible, comparatively stable authorities that have demonstrated, to varying degrees, their capacity to provide relative peace and security to their populations. Without exception, the administrations of Somaliland, Puntland, Gaalmudug, and "Himan iyo Heeb" evolved independently of centralized State-building initiatives, from painstaking, organic local political processes.⁴³

³⁹ M. Onyiego, "Somali PM defies Kampala Accord, refuses to step down", *Voice of America*, 15 June 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/Somali-PM-Defies-Kampala-Accord-Refuses-to-Step-Down---123913229.html>.

⁴⁰ "Somali PM quits under Kampala accord", *AFP*, 19 June 2001, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hQc6VcYgVbP4dBeANJgQnWes68CA?docId=CNG.105975a399e42bed5c5d964daff21f4a.381>.

⁴¹ International Crisis Group, "Transitional government on life support", i.

⁴² UN, *Report of the Monitoring Group*, 12.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11.

Another important actor – and perhaps the most powerful in military terms – is Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ), which brings together traditional Sufi leaders who defy the radical version of Islam propagated by Al Shabaab. While it is deeply fragmented and used as a proxy by neighbouring Ethiopia, its effectiveness in holding territory against Al Shabaab clearly demonstrates what the TFG army lacks in order to be effective. ASWJ forces are “ill-trained and poorly-equipped [yet] their morale and fighting skills appear much superior to those of the TFG forces”.⁴⁴ Therefore, training is not the key to the creation of a strong national army; such training “can only be meaningful and ultimately successful within a larger political plan and in concert with a TFG leadership that is able to imbue its soldiery with a sense of loyalty, patriotism and direction”.⁴⁵

As yet another illustration of its impotency, the TFG has failed to establish a meaningful partnership with ASWJ, its natural ally in central Somalia, despite several political declarations made and a handful of cabinet positions doled out.⁴⁶ It is indeed unsettling that the TFG is unwilling to share power with other political factions, civil society groups or regional administrations. This is inopportune at a time when ordinary Somalis have grown increasingly distrustful of any central government, given the latter's record of oppression and predation.

The desire to reconstruct ‘failed states’ in accordance with the Western model of a centralised, rational, bureaucratic state founded on human rights, democracy, secularism and the free market has characterised the broader post-Cold war endeavour to create a so-called ‘liberal peace’ within and among well-governed polities. Moncef Kartas observes that “notwithstanding the complexity and deep social roots of civil/communal conflicts, peace-building projects a model of the modern state as a universal solution”.⁴⁷ The international community “imagines building modern states out of disorderly ones by making institutions work in a comprehensive, regulated, disciplinary, and disciplined manner”.⁴⁸ Establishment of a state is followed by rapid liberalisation and deregulation of “both the economy and political system”, despite the dearth of

⁴⁴ International Crisis Group, “Somalia’s divided Islamists”, 14.

⁴⁵ International Crisis Group, “Transitional government on life support”, ii.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁷ Kartas, “Post-conflict peace-building”, 4.

⁴⁸ Zanotti, *Governing disorder*, 23.

“substantive empirical evidence of success”.⁴⁹ In their defence, proponents of liberal peacebuilding claim that there is nothing wrong with the goal of transforming post-conflict environments into market-based democracies *per se*; however, instead of the “shock therapy” employed in the past, the pacing and sequencing of reforms is necessary. As Ronald Paris contends,

By constructing the foundations of effective political and economic institutions prior to implementing extensive liberalizing reforms, peacebuilders should be able to bolster the “conflict dampening” qualities of societies that host these missions, and in so doing, increase the likelihood of a successful, gradual, and peaceful transition to stable market democracy over the longer term.⁵⁰

However, the validity of this claim rests on the premise that “conflict dampening” qualities are equally present in all societies. This is not the case, especially in countries with a history of colonial rule. For instance, the differences between peaceful Somaliland and chaotic south-central Somalia can in part be attributed to the fact that the former experienced a relatively benign British colonial administration which relied on the acquiescence of local strongmen, while the latter, under Italy, was subjected to direct rule and intrusive economic intervention aimed at destroying lineage control over potential workers.⁵¹ The strength of indigenous conflict mediation traditions, together with its pastoral economy’s dependence on cooperative management of land and water resources, have aided Somaliland in establishing a stable administration after the fall of the Barre’s regime.⁵²

Given that conflict mediation structures might not be present to a sufficient degree in all societies, the peace-as-governance⁵³ approach inherent in the liberal agenda deproblematizes the relationship between peacebuilding and state-building and treats them as synonymous. As a result, the latter receives all the attention, while the former is virtually neglected. Indeed, state-building appears to be a more straightforward task for the international community: here, it is clear what the endpoint – a well-functioning, liberal state – should look like. During the two

⁴⁹ Heathershaw, “Unpacking the liberal peace”, 612.

⁵⁰ Paris, *At war’s end*, 235.

⁵¹ Reno, *Somalia and survival*, 12.

⁵² Eubank, “Taxation, political accountability, and foreign aid”, 14.

⁵³ Richmond, “The dilemmas of peacebuilding consensus”, 92.

post-Cold war decades, international organisations have accumulated significant experience with post-conflict reconstruction in the form of ‘lessons learnt’,⁵⁴ which they deem transferable across contexts. On the contrary, in the case of peacebuilding, the process of establishing peace is far more convoluted and contingent. Since achieving positive peace implies the absence of indirect, structural violence,⁵⁵ it involves uncovering the sources of such violence, understanding its drivers, and transforming social structures that support or allow its occurrence. This is a challenging task where a ‘one-size-fit-all’ approach is clearly deficient. Faced with the challenge, internationals often opt for “build[ing] an institutional governance structure from a clean slate in order to bypass the perceived social, economic and political bias and psychoses that may have lain hidden in existing frameworks”.⁵⁶ However, the persistence of clans and local warlords in Somali politics speaks to the inappropriateness of this method as well.

In addition, peacebuilding has been criticised for diverging significantly from its declared goals and focusing on preventing violence from spilling over to other countries and regions: while presented as “aimed at resolving the underlying sources of conflict, in reality it tends to be aimed at containing or repressing conflict in the interests of international stability in general or particular hegemonic strategic interests”.⁵⁷ As David Chandler puts it, the focus of liberal peacebuilding has been on “how to keep the lid on or to manage the ‘complexity’ of non-Western societies, usually perceived in terms of fixed ethnic and regional divisions”.⁵⁸ This is clearly evident in the effort to deal with state failure in Somalia. Rather than helping to investigate and alleviate local grievances and supporting organic, indigenous structures, the West is ready to prop up any institution that resembles a centralised government, does not have links with terrorists, and promises to contain instability within the territory of Somalia. The donor community wants “a government that they can deal and make deals with as fast as possible” while “Somali interests are not involved at all in their calculations”.⁵⁹ In Somalia, the appetite for

⁵⁴ Kartas, “Post-conflict peace-building”, 3.

⁵⁵ Galtung, “Violence, peace, and peace research”, *passim*.

⁵⁶ Franks and Richmond, “Coopting liberal peace-building”, 93-4.

⁵⁷ Newman, Paris and Richmond, “Introduction”, 15.

⁵⁸ Chandler, “The uncritical critique of ‘liberal peace’”, 12.

⁵⁹ M.A. Weinstein, “Somalia: The possibility of balkanization”, *Garowe Online*, 21 July 2011, http://www.garoweonline.com/artman2/publish/Somalia_27/Somalia_The_Possibility_of_Balkanization.shtml.

quick fixes has resulted in more than fourteen separate international peace processes over the last two decades,⁶⁰ which have earned it “the dubious distinction of being the world’s foremost graveyard of externally sponsored state-building initiatives”.⁶¹ Despite the rhetoric of concern for Somali people, the reason behind the current surge in international attention to Somalia is that, in the words of Roberto Ridolfi, head of the EU delegation to Uganda, “violence and insecurity in Somalia has spread beyond its borders through piracy, arms deals, human trafficking, and terrorism”.⁶²

However, it is perhaps not the constant fighting *per se* that demonstrates the fragility of the TFG and the dangers of placing all bets on it. Recalling the familiar mantra that there can be “no development without security and no security without development”,⁶³ the TFG is doing a deplorable job establishing conditions for the functioning and growth of private enterprises. The UN Monitoring Group argues that the TFG is so corrupt and predatory that the Somali business community finds “Al-Shabaab to be better for business, and from a purely commercial perspective ha[s] little interest in seeing the group displaced by the government.”⁶⁴ The situation in the TFG-controlled territories is far from the ideal of a well-regulated, rapidly liberalising economy generating wealth that will trickle down to the entire population and cement the gains of peacebuilding. In light of these criticisms, it is not unwise to ask whether liberal peacebuilding has a future in Somalia. If it does, how can it be modified to become meaningful for the local population as well as the donor community?

⁶⁰ International Crisis Group, “Transitional government on life support”, 2.

⁶¹ Menkhaus, “Governance without government in Somalia”, 74.

⁶² Delegation of the European Union to Uganda, “Handover ceremony of EUTM command”, 8 August 2011, http://www.deluga.ec.europa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=301:handover-ceremony-of-eutm-command-between-col-elul-spain-and-the-col-beary-ireland-august-8-2011&catid=68:speeches&Itemid=267.

⁶³ Report of the Secretary-General, *In larger freedom*, 6.

⁶⁴ UN, *Report of the Monitoring Group*, 12. For a similar argument, see Menkhaus, “Governance without government in Somalia”, 76.

Overcoming the weaknesses of liberal peacebuilding

Despite the donors' enduring focus on the TFG, some positive developments have taken place recently. Somalia has been designated as one of the pilot countries for the implementation of the 2007 OECD principles for good international engagement in fragile states, which recommend that the political context be taken as the starting point and that the international community work towards strengthening existing local structures rather than creating new parallel systems.⁶⁵ Designating Somalia as a pilot country is indeed appropriate since “it is at the forefront of a poorly understood trend – the rise of informal systems of adaptation, security, and governance in response to the prolonged absence of a central government”.⁶⁶

In fact, some donors have already started working directly not only with Somaliland and Puntland but also with local administrations in south-central Somalia, regardless of whether they are affiliated with the TFG or not.⁶⁷ The EU is also looking into this option: the EU Council of Ministers has stated that it is “actively considering increasing its financial assistance to support central, regional and local level administrations”.⁶⁸ Engaging sub-state entities can be a viable way of overcoming the main weakness embedded in the liberal peacebuilding project, that of idealising the state as a necessary and sufficient condition for peace and integration into the global economy.

Yet while the decision to channel aid through local rather than central authorities is relatively uncontroversial (and indeed should be applauded), the dilemma is whether to carry on with the efforts to create a national army through the TFG. The ICG reports that there is “resistance to creation of an effective chain of command, rational military formations and even a credible troop roster”.⁶⁹ In a situation where almost every local administration in Somalia has its

⁶⁵ OECD, “Principles for good international engagement in fragile states and situations”, April 2007, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/45/38368714.pdf>. The organization has even questioned self-referentially elsewhere if “the concept of the modern nation-state – mirroring those of the OECD – [is] helping us to see or disturbing our vision”. See Note resulting from the OECD Informal Group on Capacity Development event: “Capacity building in fragile situations”, 28 April 2009, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/2/16/43332509.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Menkhaus, “Governance without government in Somalia”, 74.

⁶⁷ Hemmer and Uzelac, *When the centre doesn't hold*, 3.

⁶⁸ EU Council, *Council conclusions on Somalia*, 3.

⁶⁹ International Crisis Group, “Transitional government on life support”, 16.

own paramilitary formations, the question is whether and – if the answer is yes – how to bring all of them under the TFG umbrella. Given the widespread inter-clan rivalry and distrust, the ICG describes the prospects of it in the following way:

There is concern it [a unified army] would be dominated by a single clan and used to enforce its rule. Thus, many clans and local administrations are reluctant to send their troops to serve a notional national government far from their home territory. Although the EUTM offered to train their troops, Somaliland, Puntland, ASWJ and local administrations declined, because some of the pre- and post-Bihanga training was to be in Mogadishu, and they feared their forces would be kept there under TFG command.⁷⁰

In this situation, Morten Bøås and Narve Rotwitt of the Norwegian Peacebuilding Centre recommend that the provision of local security be left to regional administrations and that a lean central government perform only a limited number of specific core tasks.⁷¹ If donors continue to persist in trying to create a national army, the ICG suggests organising it along rather than across clan or regional lines, as in the UK, where Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own regiments, or the US, where national guard units are recruited from and commanded by a specific state. This option might be feasible, especially in light of the difficulties EUTM has experienced in training recruits from different clans. The mission has paid special attention to the issue of fair representation; still, the ICG estimates that the selection process has been skewed in favour of certain clans.⁷²

If the option of organising the army along clan/regional lines is not adopted, the TFG will need to find another way to integrate affiliated militias into its forces. While being a valuable asset in fighting Al Shabaab, TFG-affiliated militias have been implicated in serious violations of international humanitarian law, including indiscriminate attacks on civilians, recruitment of child soldiers, extortion and rape.⁷³ The fact that these militias are not subject to proper military

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷¹ Bøås and Rotwitt, “A renewed building-block approach”, 2.

⁷² International Crisis Group, “Transitional government on life support”, 16. Shortly after the mission began, quarrels erupted amongst trainees of diverging clan affiliations, which led to a short interruption of the EUTM’s activities, and some of the trainees involved had to be sent back to Somalia. Bloching and Gya, “CSDP and EU mission update - July 2010”, 4.

⁷³ Human Rights Watch, *War crimes in Somalia, passim*.

discipline, let alone civilian oversight, has created a serious accountability vacuum. While both AMISOM and the TFG forces have also committed such wrongdoings, they have launched several investigations of military misconduct under pressure from the donor community and human rights organisations.⁷⁴ There have been no such investigations among TFG-affiliated militias, absent appropriate structures and procedures. If the decision is taken to leave the provision of security to local or regional bodies, donors should assist TFG-affiliated militias in establishing mechanism of community control and accountability.

The difficulties Somalia's donors face in engaging local, informal structures have already been encountered by peacebuilding missions elsewhere. Since the Western legal-rational mindset and tradition "are not receptive of the validity claims of the local, they effectively alienate the local from the political process of peace-building and reconstruction".⁷⁵ The question of how to work with ASWJ bewilders the international community. Not only does the movement have so many splinter factions that it is unclear who represents it, but the very nature of ASWJ as a political actor remains ambiguous: it is not a political party, a local administration, or an armed group in a conventional sense. Furthermore, while modern, bureaucratic governance systems are based on a strict public/private and state/society separation, "a distinction between personal authority and official authority, between formal power and informal power, and between the economic sphere and the political sphere may not make practical sense to inhabitants [of fragile states]".⁷⁶ Somalia's donors should develop an understanding of indigenous governance arrangements in the country and engage clan elders and moderate religious leaders alongside elected politicians, and not only during reconciliation conferences but on an ongoing basis.

Nevertheless, when the international community does awkwardly engage with local actors in Somalia, it often brings about unintended consequences. For example, when the US unveiled its 'dual track' policy, that is, the resolve to work with the TFG as well as sub-state units, this was immediately interpreted as if the US were willing to deal only with clans which

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Kartas, "Post-conflict peace-building", 15.

⁷⁶ Note resulting from the OECD Informal Group on Capacity Development event: "Capacity building in fragile situations", 28 April 2009, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/2/16/43332509.pdf>.

had regional administrations of their own. Afyare Elmi of Qatar University describes the effects of the policy in the following manner:

The rush to establish clan-owned regions has exacerbated the divisions among Somalis. For example, even members of the same sub-clan could not agree on one regional administration. The sub-clan based region idea reinforces the concept that a given clan exclusively owns part of the country.⁷⁷

The hope is that the Somali case will help the international community accumulate experience of working with sub-state entities.

Conclusions and recommendations

Given the TFG's failure to provide security, establish conditions propitious for development and honour human rights, the donor community should switch to supporting local administrations capable of providing a measure of order and some public services. Any future assistance to the TFG should be contingent upon tangible progress towards completing the transitional tasks. Some steps in this direction have already been taken: the EU has threatened to withdraw support if the TFG and the transitional parliament continue to stall reform,⁷⁸ while the Pentagon did not authorise additional funding for the TFG army on the grounds that it does not "exercise control of its territory".⁷⁹ The High-Level Consultative Meeting on Ending the Transition, which took place from 4-6 September 2011, included, besides the TFG and the TFP, the governments of Puntland and Galmudug as well as ASWJ representatives.⁸⁰

On the other hand, while "the international coalition is showing signs of impatience with the 'transition' and wants to engineer its end...it is not very particular about what that end might

⁷⁷ A.A. Elmi, "Dual track policy in Somalia misses the point", *Al Jazeera*, 9 June 2011, <http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/opinion/2011/06/2011688620396244.html>.

⁷⁸ EU Council, *Council conclusions on Somalia*, 1.

⁷⁹ J. Scahill, "The CIA's secret sites in Somalia", *The Nation*, 12 July 2011, http://www.nationinstitute.org/featuredwork/fellows/2283/the_cia%27s_secret_sites_in_somalia/?page=1.

⁸⁰ UN Political Office for Somalia, "Preparatory Committee announces the organization of an inclusive Consultative Meeting on ending the Transition", 20 June 2011, <http://reliefweb.int/node/421189>.

be”.⁸¹ This is characteristic of EU missions in general, since often “only the end-date of an operation is defined rather than the desired end-state, or only a tactical but not the political end-state is defined”.⁸² In Somalia, the donor community needs not only a comprehensive strategy for engagement with local actors but also a clear vision of the post-transition end-state. How much autonomy should regional administrations exercise? What if decentralisation emboldens Somaliland’s bid for international recognition? Is there a possibility of “balkanisation” if the TFG is forced to share power? Without a clear vision, international efforts in support of peacebuilding in Somalia are likely to remain misplaced.

Overall, given not only EUTM’s uncertain future but also “the limited impact of the EU’s missions in Guinea-Bissau and Congo”,⁸³ there is a need for the Union to reconsider its approach to SSR. Should the EU or another international party intervene in a failed or fragile state in the future, the questions that must be asked are “What are the emerging strategies of accommodation? What kinds of alternative political organisation are emerging?”⁸⁴ With this approach in mind, international donors can avoid falling into the familiar trap of creating parallel institutions while ignoring organic, indigenous structures meaningful to the local population.

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⁸¹ M.A. Weinstein, “Somalia: The possibility of balkanization”, *Garowe Online*, 21 July 2011, http://www.garoweonline.com/artman2/publish/Somalia_27/Somalia_The_Possibility_of_Balkanization.shtml.

⁸² Biscop and Coelmont, *A strategy for CSDP*, 8.

⁸³ Korski and Gowan, *Can the EU rebuild failing states?*, 63.

⁸⁴ Kartas, “Post-conflict peace-building”, 13.

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