

The Role of the African Union in Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa: A Case Study of Somalia, 2007-2022

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Abstract

This paper looks critically at how the African Union (AU) has intervened in African peacekeeping particularly focusing on Somalia as a case study that is of great importance. It explores the question of whether the shift between the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) is a change of strategy or a more effective way of responding to deeper structural issues that plague African-led peace operations. The Principal-Agency theory in conjunction with the concept of collective security is used to explain why the actions of the African Union (AU) have been affected not only by its own institutional objectives but by powerful external forces as well. The approach is a qualitative case study approach and process tracing approach that involves the compilation of official institutional documents and conflict data of UCDP and ACLED to trace the way in which the mission evolved over the years. Results reveal that despite the significant military successes by African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) such as the re-taking of key urban centres, the successes failed to translate into sustainable peace, as insurgent violence re-strategised and persisted. Two large issues are pointed out, which include a “Funding Trap” through over reliance on foreign dealers and an Exit Trap where the withdrawal demands are not in line with the realities on the ground. The shift to African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) can thus be viewed not as a mere strategic shift, but as a concession made due to financial constraints and operational pressure. The Somali case thus demonstrates that it is indeed true that peace operations that lack a solid linkage to actual governance reforms may go around and round rather than yielding any long-lasting conflict resolution.

Keywords: *African Union, AMISOM, ATMIS, Collective Security, Peacekeeping*

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Background to the Study

One of the most significant shifts in African international relations was evident in the transition of the Organisation of African Unity to the African Union in 2002, which brought to the fore a new mode of thinking on issues related to the way conflicts within the continent were to be dealt with. The previous Organisation of African Unity had a strict non-intervention rule that frequently served to keep the perpetration of state-led violence under the umbrella of national sovereignty, but the African Union took a different way with the concept of non-indifference. The Constitutive Act of the African Union under Article 4(h) provided the African Union with the legal authority to intervene in member states where there were serious crimes like war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity (African Union, 2000). The stark paradox arises when such a principle is translated into practice, whereby the African Union has the political will and the lawful power to do so, but is very much reliant on the outside to supply funding as well as logistical assistance which creates what can be termed as a Dependency-Security problem.

The Federal Republic of Somalia can be viewed as a good example of this issue because it has become the test case of the new intervention strategy. Since 2007, the African Union Mission in Somalia has been in one of the most complicated internal conflicts that have ever involved external actors over the course of modern history (UCDP, 2025). The initial mission involved securing strategic locations in Mogadishu and aiding the fragile Transitional Federal Government but was eventually extended to a broader counterinsurgency campaign involving Ugandan, Burundi, Kenyan, Ethiopian, and Djibouti forces (Williams, 2018).

It has been proven that the mission has recorded significant military gains, but insecurity persisted, which means that these do not translate into stability. The re-taking of Mogadishu in 2011 and the capture of valuable coastal regions like Kismayo proved that the operation could minimize the insurgents in control of important areas, but a new trend emerged in the amount of violence (UCDP, 2025). Based on the data provided in the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, the number of deaths associated with the conflict did not decrease; instead, it was rising up to 3,034 in 2022, the same year when the mission changed (UCDP, 2025). Another consistent trend of assaults on civilians indicates that the successes in territory did not bring about solid safeguards on the populace and this is indicative of a disconnect between governance endeavors and genuine achievements of governance (Eck and Hultman, 2007).

An even more profound explanation to this state of affairs lies in the financial framework of the mission where overdependence on foreign aid created constraints to the extent to which the African Union could take active measures on its own. The European Union and the United Nations funded a big portion of the mission, and this made the external priority affect the decision-making in the mission (ISS, 2018). The most obvious case is that in 2016, when the troop allowances were cut by 20% and it became apparent that the degree of autonomy that the African Union possesses was directly influenced by the funding provided by donors (Williams, 2018). These challenges have to be paid special attention to understand the 2022 change of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia as the change could not be regarded as a mere replacement of the name, but one of the most powerful indications that the previous model

reached its boundaries. The available literature gives a detailed presentation of the military operations of African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) but less focus has been made on how financial reliance and the evolving means of insurgents, particularly, the use of improvised explosives, and other forms of attacks influenced this shift.

This paper examines the African Union presence in Somalia, 2007-2022, and explicitly how structural constraints have shaped the shift towards a more politically oriented stabilisation policy to a military-based one. It looks at the role of dependency on external assistance and the evolving approaches of insurgent organizations in the transition between African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and African Union Transition Mission in Somalia. Official institutional documents along with conflict data, both provided by UCDP and ACLED, are used to evidence whether this transition can be considered a genuine strategic change or a reaction to the more fundamental institutional constraints. The case of Somalia is also useful to understand what this experience is capable of suggesting the future of the African Peace and Security Architecture at the time when the support of long-lasting military missions in the world is slowly decreasing.

Conceptual Review

Peacebuilding as a concept has gained momentum in conflict and post-conflict societies like Africa. Often what really is discussed as peacebuilding is indeed liberal peacebuilding which is anchored in the assumption that spreading of international rules and institutions can gradually lead to a stable political order. According to scholars in this field like Roland Paris (2004), such interventions are informed by the notion that reforms in institutions and systems of governance can be externalized and implanted into societies that are post-conflict. Similarly, Doyle (1986) demonstrates that liberal internationalism promotes the proliferation of ideas of cooperation, legitimacy, and collective security among states. But in this perspective the African Union Mission in Somalia can be understood not only as a security project, but also as a broader project to institutionalize these institutional structures and common conceptions into the Somali state.

Another group of researchers challenges this optimistic perception of the mission and rather emphasizes what they call its structural fragmentation, an issue that predetermined the functioning of the African Union Mission in Somalia in practice. Other authors like Albrecht and Haenlein (2016) believe that the mission had structural issues that could not allow it to be a fully unified African Union (AU) force. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) was, according to this perspective, an informal alliance of states as opposed to being a continental army. Ethiopia and Kenya, which were the troop-contributing states, tended to pursue their national interests, which undermined the solidarity of the mission in some cases. This criticism is supported by analysis by the Institute for Security Studies (2018) which indicates that the mission relied heavily on external Africa funding. It is reported that over 90 percent of the non-lethal expenditure of the mission was financed by the European Union and the United Nations a circumstance that restricted the true independence of the African Union (AU). Researchers thus refer to the African Union (AU) as a player which should be financially controlled by external principals. This sort of financial reliance was especially evident when

donor aid was cut in 2016, a move that resulted in severe operational challenges and exposed the boundaries of African Union (AU) independence.

An illustrative vision of this tendency of being dependent on external support can be clarified with the help of the simplest concept of the Principal-Agency theory that demonstrates that the actors who are provided with some power and resources provided by other people can hardly make absolutely independent choices. According to the theory, the desires and power of the resource providers, referred to as principals, are very strong in influencing the agents who are dependent on the resources. Applying this concept to the African Union Mission in Somalia reveals that reliance on donors (foreign) money was not merely a mere challenge, but a more underlying structural reality that shaped the decisions the mission took, and in the process, reinforced the boundaries already evident in the planning and execution of the mission.

A third school of thought is based on the disjuncture that emerged between the military victory and the political stability in the course of the African Union Mission operation in Somalia. Researchers in this school of thought clarify that African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) managed to drive insurgent fighters out of most of the urban centres, but the mission struggled to stabilize the political situation in the territories it had cleared. This scenario is explained in the work of Tadesse (2023) by the concept that the mission was able to clear land successfully and was unable to adequately hold or build robust systems of governance in its aftermath. Loss of insurgent control in cities such as Mogadishu and Kismayo forced Al-Shabaab to change its strategy and methods of operation. Direct defence of territory was no longer the key factor as the group changed to activities that were decentralised and involved hidden networks of taxation, and shields of shadow administration. Recording of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2025) indicates that, violence did not cease following these territorial acquisitions but rather shifted into another level characterized by improvised explosive devices, suicide bombings and targeted assassinations. Conventional military structures used by African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) were therefore not well prepared to deal with this type of asymmetric conflict.

It is notable that, scholarly writing on the role of the African Union Mission in Somalia has slowly shifted out of initial descriptive arguments concerning the problem of peacemaking to more profound arguments concerning the rationality of the stabilisation policies. Previous research has primarily explained the operational issues that the mission experienced, but more recent research addresses the political and institutional sense of the intervention in general. A closer perusal of key scholarly literature and mission reports reveals that the discussion has now become focused on three key intellectual disagreements that inform the way scholars interpret African-led peace support operations. A shift in the focus of the studies of African Union reveals a broader shift in the literature on peacekeeping and peacebuilding in the world at large, old concepts have gradually been replaced by more intricate approaches to managing conflicts. Literature in this area elucidates that contemporary intervention is no longer in the straightforward mode of traditional peace keeping, but has evolved into a challenging stabilisation operation, which combines military operation with political efforts and

institution building. Here, Roland Paris (2004) states that most of contemporary peace operations have issues in that they attempt to establish new institutions too fast without robust local backing which he terms as institutionalisation before liberalisation. Similarly, Richmond (2011) points out that externally crafted peace plans seldom fit with local political realities and this may result to weak and unstable outcomes. Bellamy (2015) gives another perspective, saying that the current peace operations involve other tasks such as civilians protection and state-building, but they frequently do not have adequate coordination and resources to reach these objectives. Viewed in the broader context of the literature, it is possible to think of the African Union Mission in Somalia as a regional project, but also as an element of a very broad international trend in which big stabilisation objectives are enrolled in very fundamental structural and political problems.

A powerful body of researchers refers to African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) as the brightest instance of the concept commonly known as African Solutions to African Problems. According to a study by Williams (2018), the mission is a key indicator of institutional expansion in the African Union. This position focuses on the fact that the African Union (AU) demonstrated some odd boldness and initiative in deploying the troops into an active war zone when the United Nations was reluctant to assume control of the process. Those who support this argument think that the mission had a good normative agency since the African Union (AU) had resolved to intervene despite the lack of a formal peace agreement to defend. Lotze and Williams (2016) also mention evidence indicating that the mission contributed to preventing the complete breakdown of the Somali state, as well as to safeguarding three separate elections. Such achievements are widely touted as evidence that the African Union (AU) has started to build the institutional capacity required to cope with large and complex stabilisation missions.

This state of things becomes clearer when correlated with the initial conceptions of civil war and insurgency which states that the possession of land does not necessarily imply the possession of real political power or the termination of a conflict. In this region, as described by Kalyvas (2006), local domination and the backing of the people in such places usually determine violence in civil wars, as opposed to the victoriousness in the battlefield. Similarly, Kilcullen (2010) demonstrates that the insurgent groups tend to modify their approaches by abandoning direct confrontations and employing scattered and irregular operations in case of facing a stronger military. To put this concept into use in this paper, the survival of Al-Shabaab despite loss of territory must not merely indicate that military interventions are ineffective, but rather indicate how powerful and enduring insurgent networks are, which are found in regions where the rule of law is fragile.

Nevertheless, all three of these views offer valuable insights into the flaws and achievements of African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), but there is still a significant gap in the literature. The majority of the current literature characterizes the 2022 transfer to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia as a logistical restructuring or a mere institutional repackage of the same. This paper looks at this transition in a different way by viewing it as the outcome of more profound structural pressures on the very mission. This study provides an

analysis that the cumulative effect of the Funding Trap and the insurgency persisting slowly burned the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) paradigm. Such strains rendered the initial structure unsustainable and established the necessity of a new structure that will put more emphasis on governance by the Somali and limit the direct fighting role of the African Union (AU).

Theoretical Framework

The key concepts applied in this research are two popular fields in international relations and organisational theory in which each of them contributes to the understanding of how power and cooperation operate in various contexts. Among them is the Principal- Agency theory, initially formulated by Jensen and Meckling (1976) who argue that in the case where authority is delegated to another act and where such an act relies on external resources, some boundaries are established more so when the agent relies on the principal to provide funding and supervision. Simultaneously, the concept of collective security has evolved throughout history, beginning with its initial application in the League of Nations, and becoming more systematic under the United Nations, where it is premised on the notion that peace threats should be managed through the joint and collaborative efforts of a multitude of states. The African Union has made its own security system around this concept, but adapted collective security to a regional context where intervention is perceived to be necessary not only in situations of inter-state conflict, but also in situations of internal crisis and humanitarian issues.

These two main ideologies, the Principal-Agent theory and the Collective Security theory are a worthy combination that can be used to explain a clear explanation of how the African Union Mission in Somalia evolved over time and why it later shifted into the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia. A significant Principal-Agent relationship is present in the form of stabilisation in Somalia whereby the African Union serves as the “Agent” which conducts the peace support operations, and the European Union and the United Nations are the “Principals” which assist in funding and logistical preparations of the operation (ISS, 2018). This relationship is usually filled with tension since the long-term objectives of these actors do not necessarily match and due to unequal sharing of vital information. The African Union (AU) as the Agent would generally prioritize long-term African Solutions and the establishment of stable state institutions, but the Principals would tend to be constrained by financial constraints and plans to withdraw faster off the mission.

The collective security theory is another crucial explanation especially when applied to analyze regional power relations and sectorization of the mission. The African Peace and Security Architecture is constructed on the premise that African states are supposed to counter the security threat collectively on the continent. A cautious synthesis of Principal-Agency theory and these regional security politics can be used to clarify why the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) paradigm ultimately experienced institutional fatigue, necessitating the transition to a new paradigm that places more emphasis on Somali national ownership, and on political-based stabilisation rather than excessive military imposition (African Union Commission, 2021).

Methodology

A qualitative single-case research design, which considers the conflict in Somalia a critical case in investigating the functional boundaries of the African Peace and Security Architecture, is used to conduct a structural inquiry of the transformation of the African Union into the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia. The choice of design enables the fifteen-year span in time, 2007-2022, to be studied in a continuous and intensive fashion, enabling the research to look at the structural and financial strains present in partnership peacekeeping arrangements that cannot be viewed through wider comparative studies. The focus on Somalia as a less significant example of larger continental security issues thus moves the analysis off a mere description of a local conflict and into the broader institutionalization of African-led peace support operation. The logic of process tracing is the primary analytical framework of the study and it is a research methodology that determines the causal relations that can be drawn between institutional choices and practical tactical and strategic outcomes. Application of this methodology enables the study to not only address the “Funding Trap as a descriptive challenge but also as a primary cause of the strategic change that took place in 2022. This relationship can be better traced by carefully following the mission through a series of phases of the conflict, starting with the initial phase of the urban siege between 2007 and 2010, then the phase of the territorial expansion phase between 2011 and 2016, and finally the long phase of asymmetric stalemate that persisted until 2022.

The use of a triangulation strategy, where three streams of data are involved, helps in strengthening reliable evidence. The former stream entails a meticulous analysis of key institutional documents, such as official Communiqués by the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council as well as the major resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, such as Resolution 1744 (2007) and Resolution 2628 (2022). Data in these records is analyzed against internal strategic assessments delivered by the African Union in 2013 and 2021 in such a way that the analysis can follow the transformation of the official protective protection mission towards a more offensive enforcement approach. The second stream adds empirical records of conflicts gathered by Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project and Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP, 2025). The data on death-related battles and one-sided violence are merged, to give a thorough image of the security situation, and the comparison is made between the official statements, about the territorial liberation, and the quantifiable increase of the number of violent cases.

The last aspect of the methodology puts the gathered evidence within the context of a larger academic interpretation through the utilization of existing articles by authors such as Paul D. Williams (2018) and Tadesse (2023). This scholarly material is useful to gain a greater context of the rift that emerged between gains in security and the emergence of stable governmental systems. Linkages are thus drawn between the institutional reports of troop surges and the sectorization of operations and the rise of asymmetric attacks documented by UCDP (2025). This mixed evidence is interpreted to indicate that the transition to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia framework was an empirical requirement made by the incompatibility between standard military organisation and the durability of the decentralised insurgency.

Results and Discussion

The abrupt security vacuum created by the withdrawal of Ethiopian National Defence Force and the fall of Islamic Courts Union were factors that influenced the operational beginnings of the African Union Mission in Somalia. The Islamic Courts Union had previously established a form of central authority, although that also was a controversial matter, but its fragmentation eventually gave rise to Al Shabaab, a radical group, which applied nationalist concepts to portray the increasing presence of the African Union as an act of foreign occupation (Williams 2018). The mission was authorized by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1744 (2007) which set a limited mandate to focus on point-protection, including the defence of key installations like the Aden Adde International Airport, the Mogadishu Port and the presidential compound, Villa Somalia. Such a narrow mandate was indicative of a cautious stabilisation policy as opposed to a general state-building initiative and the outcome was that the Transitional Federal Government had very little to no authority beyond such heavily secured areas.

The initial phase of the deployment is usually referred to as the literature as peacekeeping under siege as the term is applied to explain the challenging environment the early Ugandan and Burundian forces had to endure when they entered Somalia with minimal institutional assistance (Elfverson, Bromley, and Williams, 2019). The situation in the city was characterized by intense urban fighting, and troops involved in the operation were frequently left alone and exposed to constant mortar fire and premature use of improvised explosive devices (Elfverson, Bromley, and Williams, 2019). The events of this phase demonstrated that there was an evident flaw within the African Peace and Security Architecture, as the African Union (AU) was highly politically eager to send its armies to the region but did not have the most fundamental logistical equipment to operate in such a hostile setting. Armoured transport vehicles and efficient medical evacuation systems were mostly not available initially during the mission. Reliance on external partners thus became inevitable and the process took the form of a so-called partnership peacekeeping where the United Nations and the European Union provided most of the technical assistance needed to keep the deployed forces alive (Institute for Security Studies, 2018).

By 2010, developments revealed that the mission was no longer the initially anticipated short six-month intervention but a long-term presence in the Somalia security environment as Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP, 2025) data shows the deaths related to the battle remained high during these years as Al Shabaab changed its strategy to defend its position on the battlefield to insurgency tactics. One trend formed at this point would be subsequently referred to as the so-called Funding Trap, as timely troop allowances and equipment reimbursements were already starting to strain the morale of troop-contributing nations (ISS, 2018). The strength of the Ugandan and Burundian forces that safeguarded the secured “Green Zone in this challenging period was central to the survival of the mission, although an adequate exit strategy and robust political reconciliation programme still did not exist (Lotze & Williams, 2016).

Interestingly, the transition between defensive consolidation in Mogadishu and more general expansion in the region is a significant challenge to the Collective Security framework. African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) demonstrated the power of joint action in seizing about 60% of the capital during the Mogadishu Offensive of 2011 (African Union Commission, 2011). Subsequently, a certain decentralisation of the mission was brought in by the adoption of the so-called Sector Approach. The South-Central Somalia was broken down into six zones, with each zone being allocated to certain Troop Contributing Countries, creating a paradigm, in which states like Kenya and Ethiopia tended to pursue their security agenda (Menkhaus, 2014). This disintegration contradicted the principle of Collective Security, which was supposed to be put into practice because TCCs often focused more on defending their borders and not on joint actions against Al-Shabaab (Williams, 2018).

Asymmetric Conflict Dynamics: Examining the Security-Governance Gap: Results in this stage depict the constraints of an essentially military-based stabilisation process. As African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) was able to clear urban centres, the fact that Al-Shabaab remained remains strong evidence that territorial gains were not the solution to the conflict. This is supported by empirical evidence that indicated lethality was high even when the territory was recovering at large rates.

Table 1: Conflict Milestones and Lethality (2007–2022)

Year	Key Strategic Milestone	Battle-Related Deaths (UCDP)
2007	AMISOM Initial Deployment	694
2011	Mogadishu Offensive / Al-Shabaab Withdrawal	1,932
2012	Capture of Kismayo / Federal Govt Formation	2,611
2016	EU Funding Cuts (20%) / Al-Shabaab Resurgence	2,108
2022	Transition from AMISOM to ATMIS	3,034

Source: Compiled from UCDP (2025) and African Union PSC Communiqués.

The Principal-Agent Relationship between the African Union (AU) and its donors: The Principal-Agent relationship limited strategic autonomy of the mission. Since the EU and UN contributed around 90% in non-lethal costs, the “Principal” had significantly more influence over the African Union (AU) as the Agent. A good example of this dynamic in action is the 2016 decision to cut the troop allowances by 20%. This financial shock led to a quantifiable decrease in offensive operations, because the African Union (AU) had to adapt to the changing priorities of the donors, regardless of the situation on the ground (ISS, 2018).

Table 2: Institutional Stress Indicators (Principal-Agent Friction)

Indicator	Impact on AMISOM Role	Resulting Constraint
90% External Funding	Reliance on EU/UN	Limited Strategic Autonomy
20% Allowance Cut	Reduced Troop Morale	Transition to Defensive Posture
Logistical Dependency	Lack of AU Heavy Airlift	Delayed Rapid Response

Source: Synthesised from ISS (2018) and Williams (2018).

The Governance Pillar: The participation of the African Union in the elections of 2012, 2017, and 2022 indicates the absence of the governance aspect of the Collective Security concept (International Crisis Group, 2018). Even though the mission had the effect of protecting elite-level political transitions successfully, it did not help in more profound state-building. As a result, African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) was in effect a security "Agent" to a Somali "Principal" that was still incapable of going further than the fortified "Green Zones" to extend authority. This ongoing disconnect between security and governance was part of the justification of the transition to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia in 2022.

Collective Security: Regional enforcement to Somali-led Defence

The establishment of African Union Transition Mission in Somalia can be regarded as the clear shift in the practice of collective security within the African Peace and Security Architecture: this shift can be viewed as the new mode of how the intervention in the region is implemented. The early years of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) were instructed by the principle of non-indifference which enabled robust regional intervention and troop-contributing nations significantly engage in direct fighting on the ground. This was no longer the case in 2022, as this strategy could no longer operate within obvious limits politically and operationally.

A shift to Somali-led security in the Transition Mission of the African Union in Somalia is a process of adaptation and not merely continuation of the previous practices although it is usually introduced as a method of enhancing national control. The diminishing degree of regional responsibility can also be observed in this change, with the African Union changing its functions since it is no longer the primary force that ensures security but a facilitator of it (Tadesse, 2023). There is now an emphasis on training, mentoring, and capacity building of the Somali Security Forces; this is indicative of a new direction in the operation of the mission. This change is related to the previous split of African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) into sections, in which countries supplying soldiers started to pay more attention to their national interests in the territories they occupied (Williams, 2018). This development was followed by a weakening of unified command structures and this revealed the limitations of a collective security system which relies on other national actors which have other objectives. Under African Union Transition Mission in Somalia, there is an expected lighter and more flexible structure, but this decreased presence is also increasing the risk of security gaps in those regions where control is still disputed. A hybrid model of security organization has thus been adopted with more responsibility being bestowed on local actors but the low capacity of the Somali state renders this responsibility to be adequately undertaken and this is still indicative of the discrepancy between the control as a state and the actual capacity to manage the security situation in a post-conflict environment.

Exit Trap and Structural Dependency

The combined impact of two important structural conditions, which are labeled as the Funding Trap and the Exit Trap, can assist in gaining a clearer understanding of the transition of African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to African Union Transition Mission in Somalia and the effects of these conditions can explain the timing and the nature of the

changes that took place in 2022. It evolved into a pattern of financial dependence in the course of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) mission as the African Union (AU) turned into over ninety percent of its non-lethal expenses borne by the outside partners (ISS, 2018). This dependence put restrictions on strategic decision-making as it is now much harder to make the mission direction dependent on donor priorities. There was a gradual decline in readiness to persist in financing the mission by these partners, particularly in the European Union, and this put pressure on the need to change towards a less expensive model of operation. A further contradiction is summarized by the concept of the Exit Trap in that the concept of withdrawal was facilitated by the external actors, but the prerequisites to safe and responsible withdrawal had not been reached in full. The development of a strong and cohesive Somali security system was yet to be developed and this left the African Union in a scenario where it could not stay forever but also a great danger in case it pulled out too soon.

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of AMISOM vs. ATMIS Roles (2022 Transition)

Feature	AMISOM Role (2007–2022)	ATMIS Role (2022–Present)	Implications
Primary Objective	Peace Enforcement and Stabilisation	Phased Drawdown and Handover	Donor-driven exit strategy
Command Structure	AU-Led Sector Command	Joint Somali-AU Coordination	Shift from collective security to national responsibility
Force Strength	About 22,000 troops at peak	About 14,000 during drawdown	Downsizing linked to funding limits
Strategic Focus	Territorial Expansion	Capacity Building for Somali Forces	Risk of early withdrawal

Source: Compiled from UNSC Resolution 2628 (2022) and African Union PSC 1068th Communiqué.

A better examination of these changes reveals that the shift was not only influenced by new strategies but also structural pressures which were inevitable. A decrease in troop strength is an indicator of financial constraint just as much as it is an indicator of shift in strategy and the emphasis on capacity building demonstrates that external military presence in the long term alone is not sufficient to generate stable governance. An insurgent violence during the period of transition indicates that the disjuncture between security and governance remained unaddressed despite the fact that territory had been reclaimed under African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). African Union Transition Mission in Somalia now faces a significant challenge, since it inherits this situation but with less resources and direct control, thus putting the risk associated with early withdrawal at a higher risk.

Re-strategizing the African Unions (AU) Strategic Autonomy

The limits encountered in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) mission can be responded to by the push in 2023 with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2719, which can be viewed as an attempt of the African Union to alter the way in which its peace

operations are financed. It has also been suggested that the United Nations assessed contributions can be used to fund African-led missions, and it is expected to decrease reliance on temporary donor assistance (UNSC Res. 2719, 2023).

This development proposes a shift in position, as the African Union tries to shift as a participant in the global security arrangements, rather than being reliant on external actors. There is still a limitation though, and financial reform can never resolve the underlying issues that are apparent in Somalia. There is still a requirement of more effective governance structures, political consensus and stronger institutions, without which better funding can only sustain their activities without addressing the underlying causes of instability. The transition between African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and African Union Transition Mission in Somalia can be generalized into a broader lesson because it demonstrates that military might or funding is not the only solution to the success in African-led interventions but also the possibility to unite security operations with effective governance. Obviously, when the balance is not reached, interventions may be caught in the trap of remaining too long and departing too soon, and such a scenario is manifested by the current dilemma identified as the Exit Trap.

Conclusion

This study investigates the role played by the African Union in Somalia from the first deployment of African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2007 to the shift to African Union Transition Mission in Somalia in 2022. As far as evidence collected by meticulous tracking of events indicate that African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has reached its primary "Peace Enforcement" objectives, that is, it recovered Mogadishu in 2011 and weakened the normal fighting capabilities of Al-Shabaab but it failed to offer a lasting solution to the conflict. The actual role of African Union during these fifteen years period was dictated by a consistent absence of linkage between security and governance with the success in the Clear and Hold phases not succeeded by appropriate Build measures by the Somali Federal Government. This is evident in the figures presented in Table 1 where battle-related deaths were highest in 2022, the same year that the mission changed, and this indicates that the model (the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)) was at its peak. The function of the African Union thus shifted to being an active peacemaker to a high degree of sustained conflict as it offered the required security assistance to political frameworks that remained largely within secured urban "Green Zones."

The primary theoretical usefulness of the paper is the application of Principal-Agent Theory on how the African Union was financed and how it was functioning. Findings show that the freedom of the African Union to make its own decisions was reduced because it depended heavily on outside "Principals," mainly the European Union and the United Nations, who covered over 90 percent of the costs that were not directly related to fighting. This high reliance formed what is termed as a Funding Trap wherein key decisions, like the reduction in troop allowances in 2016, were influenced by the fluctuations in the donor budgets but not the actual need of the African Union on the ground. This financial situation helps to explain the period of slow progress between 2016 and 2021, when the African Union did not have enough

financial strength to carry out continuous, wide operations needed to weaken the hidden control of the insurgents in rural areas.

The research also describes the internal issues that exist in the African Peace and Security Architecture Collective Security system. The uniting of over 20,000 soldiers by five neighbouring states is a significant success, but it was the Sector Approach that demonstrated how ineffective such a collaboration could be. Troop Contributing Countries started to place additional emphasis on their national security rather than pursuing one African Union plan and this demonstrates that a powerful regional interest can weaken Collective Security. The African Union in Somalia was thus not so much an integrated continental entity but rather a facilitator of various regional actors and this rendered the mission less and less neutral and more pan-African.

The transformation of African Union Transition Mission in Somalia in April 2022 is a clear indication of the "Exit Trap" as discussed in this research. The African Union found itself in a challenging position because they could not declare the mission successful since Al-Shabaab was still operational but could not go indefinitely since donors were getting weary and budget constraints were still there. The African Union Transition Mission in Somalia plan thus represents a compromise in the sense that it is a planned reduction that seeks to transfer the responsibility to the Somali Security Forces despite the fact that security situation remains weak. The history of the African Union in Somalia has altered the perception of the last phase of peace missions as now the shift is not on maintaining a peace where there is already peace but to hand over control in a current conflict. This change poses a serious risk, as any premature withdrawal pressured by donors before the country is prepared would leave new security gaps such as that experienced following the withdrawal of Ethiopia in 2006, and this would strip away much of the gains achieved over fifteen years.

Recommendations

Considering the structural constraints as presented in this paper, the following policy actions can be proposed to enhance the part of African Union in future missions:

- i. **Operationalising Financial Sovereignty (Resolution 2719):** The African Union must cease to be reliant on the shaky donor system through the application of UNSC Resolution 2719 in obtaining a stable United Nations funding. Long term and consistent funding would assist the African Union to stop being a dependent partner and become a stronger ally, and this would enable proper long-term planning without having to rely on annual donor decisions.
- ii. **Centralisation of Command-and-Control:** There should be a more powerful command system such that future operations accord complete power to the Head of Mission and the Force Commander over all the troop units which will help to mitigate the issue of individual country acting independently. Military interventions will then be in line with the broader objectives of the African Union rather than the selfish interests of certain states.
- iii. **Synchronisation with Governance Benchmarks:** Future missions must relate the presence of troops with visible improvements in the host country in such areas as peace

- building, justice and combat against corruption. This will curb the issue in Somalia where the government relied on foreign security and failed to make significant reforms.
- iv. **Implementation of the “Agile-Support” Model:** The number of heavy troops in the area of protection must be decreased and more emphasis should be put on smaller and faster formations that can provide local forces with information, transport and air support. The initial experience of African Union Transition Mission in Somalia indicates that such assistance to local forces is more effective than the presence of a large external force over the long run.

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