

The Somali TFG: An Administration on Life Support

Editor's Note: *Wardheernews has received the following scoop ("The Somali TFG: An Administration on Life Support"), which was leaked to different Somali stakeholder. It is a critical assessment of Somalia's contemporary Political crisis. International Crisis Group, a think-tank that specializes in crisis assessment, has been closely following the Somalia condition, and as such this report represents a rare in-depth assessment of the dynamic political conditions of that country.*

The Somali TFG: An Administration on Life Support

Africa Report N°TK – TK December 200TK

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THE SOMALI TFG: AN ADMINISTRATION ON LIFE SUPPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

[Need to make parallel with agreed-upon structure of briefing]

Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG), led by President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, has squandered the goodwill and huge domestic and foreign support it has received since early 2009 and has failed to achieve anything significant in the two years it has been in office. Worse, the regime appears dangerously adrift and rudderless and may not survive to the end of its mandate.

Thoroughly inept, increasingly corrupt and paralysed by Sharif's indecisive and weak leadership, exacerbated by a vicious internal power struggle, every effort to make the government modestly functional, has come unstuck.

Its military prospects look grim, despite modest gains in Mogadishu since the end of Ramadan in late September 2010. Hemmed in by extremist insurgent groups in a pocket of the capital; its army ineffectual and in complete disarray; its continued survival is entirely dependent on the presence and goodwill of a foreign force – over 7,000 African troops from Uganda and Burundi. That goodwill is now under severe strain, as frustrations mount within the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) at the TFG's ineptitude and what it sees as inadequate support from the international community.

Plans for a much-publicized offensive—announced more than a year ago—have been deferred, given the incompetence, corruption and systemic rot within its military. A key plank in the government's counterinsurgency strategy collapsed when the deputy defence minister, Yusuf Siyad Idha Adde, a skilled battlefield leader, resigned from the government and pulled out his fighters from key frontline positions in the capital.

The modest Western-led SSR initiative to train thousands of soldiers in Uganda and elsewhere, and to revamp the TFG military, while admittedly positive and vital, can only be ultimately meaningful and successful within the context of a political environment which fosters hope and a leadership that is able to imbue a sense of loyalty, patriotism and direction to its soldiery. The current TFG, and Sharif in particular, are not capable of providing that kind of leadership.

The TFG's domestic credibility and approval rating is at an all-time low. The significant public goodwill and optimism discernible in early 2009 have evaporated. The mood is now one of deep hostility. A disillusioned and cynical public now bitterly rails against a political class that has wasted the best chance to end decades of chronic instability.

In his speech on the early morning of 31 January 2009, when he was elected president at the end of the Djibouti peace process, Sharif gave a well-crafted speech which spelt out the key priorities of his administration: national reconciliation, articulating a moderate vision of Islam, rebuilding the national army and state institutions, tackling corruption and good governance. In all of these areas, Sharif has failed to achieve anything tangible.

On national reconciliation, his record has been disappointingly lack-lustre, considering the huge public expectations pinned on him. Many hoped his Islamist affiliations and credentials would enable him to reach out to his former comrades. Although extremist elements in the insurgency—supported by cadres of foreign fighters—saw him as a traitor and did not want to engage him, Sharif's biggest mistake was the failure to work on that resistance doggedly; draw up a reconciliation strategy that had incentives for those willing to agree to a political settlement; maintain the engagement momentum early on in his administration and the failure to effectively harness the

influence of clan leaders, religious scholars and peace activists, who actually offered to continue their role as intermediaries.

Comment [EJH1]: What about people in his cabinet obstructing these efforts?

The president has also failed to articulate his so-called moderate vision of Islam and a counter-narrative able to challenge Al-Shabaab's extremist ideas. His silence on Al-Shabaab's practices, especially the destruction of Sufi shrines, is feeding speculations he secretly sympathizes with the drive to impose Wahhabi Islam as the state creed. Without a powerful, coherent and galvanising message of moderation, consistently articulated by the top leadership, that credibility gap will remain and the ideological battle with the extremists cannot be effectively won.

A so-called moderate and "Sharia-compliant" constitution has been unveiled. It is a much more superior document than the Transitional Federal Charter (TFC), but Islamist hardliners within Sharif's inner circle – the so-called *Ala Sheikh* – are fighting rear-guard action to have it thrown out or significantly altered, on the grounds it is not Islamic enough. Not only has a good PR opportunity for the government been lost, but the issue is adding to the growing polarization within the TFG

Levels of corruption within the TFG have increased significantly in the last one year, and many local and foreign observers now regard the Sharif TFG as the most corrupt since the cycles of ineffectual transitions began in the early 90's. Sharif's long-time ally and confidante, Sharif Hasan Sheikh Aden (now Speaker of Parliament after a well-orchestrated campaign to unseat the old Speaker), and handful of cabinet ministers, now preside over a corruption syndicate that is massive and sophisticated and well beyond Somalia's borders. The impunity with which these elements operate and manipulate the system to serve their greed is mind-boggling. These individuals are not fit to hold any public office and they must be forced to resign, sanctioned and isolated.

However, to blame the TFG or Sharif for all the mess will be unfair. At the core of Somalia's governance crisis is a deeply-flawed centralizing state model which has been foisted on the country since 1991. Although since 2004 there have been more serious attempts to push Somalia's transitional governments to devolve power away from Mogadishu, the political class has remained instinctively wedded to the old centralizing model. The current TFG is even less "federalist" than that of the Abdullahi Yusuf TFG and this explains the recurrent tensions between the Sharif government and self-governing enclaves like Puntland, Gal Mudug, Xeeb and Ximan and local grassroots movements like ASWJ.

Despite its pro-federalism rhetoric, the government lacks the political will to act and is deeply divided on the matter. A significant number of leaders in parliament and in the cabinet – Islamists and non-Islamists - privately complain the whole concept of devolution is donor-driven. Frustrated by the TFG's ambivalence and

RECOMMENDATIONS [REC. HEADER 1]

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Place, and date[Ex. Sum. end]

THE SOMALI TFG: AN ADMINISTRATION ON LIFE SUPPORT

I. STRUCTURES OF INSTABILITY

The latest version of the Transitional Federal government was established in January 2009. Nearly two years later, it remains weak, confined to a small pocket of Mogadishu, and riven by political squabbles.¹ The tendency to always blame the leadership for these frequent political brawls invariably shifts the focus away from the structural and systemic problems with the government, which are the main catalysts, if not the main causes, of the perennial internal instability. No interim regime since 1996 has been immune from internal crisis. More troubling, the primary triggers, character and pattern of these wrangles tend to be uncannily similar. This fact alone should suggest the problem is probably systemic. Time has come for a comprehensive inquiry into the TFG's multiple ills, especially one that deliberately delves into the complex web of structural mechanics at the root of the recurrent disharmony within the regime's executive organs.²

[Discussion of TFC and new constitution]

A. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY: FIXATED ON THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

[Need a couple of paragraphs on why int'l community exclusive focus on TFG, role of Oud Abdallah, diplomats, Sh. Sharif as president]

¹ Cite previous ICG reports on Southern Somalia.

² It should be noted that Somalia's transitional governments were primarily designed to cater to the interests of the "hard men" - a supremely adept, elitist and resilient class, animated by a desire to protect and perpetuate its privilege, powers and influence. Its composition is loosely heterogeneous and cross-clan and includes warlords, unscrupulous businessmen and remnants of the Barre nomenclature. It has no definable political ideology and programme and its actions and political choices are primarily pragmatic and guided by the dictates of *real politik*. Profiling it is far from easy, not least because it does not always fit the classic pattern of traditional self-conscious political classes elsewhere. In 1996 [Is this Sodere, or do you mean the 2000 Arta Peace Process?], the Arta peace process that led to the creation of the TNG appeared to partially marginalize them. They mobilized and fought hard to bring down Abdiqasim Salat Hasan's feeble regime, because although he was one of their own, his flirtation with Islamism and pan-Somali nationalism threatened to upset their plans. In fact, they deliberately overplayed this ideological aspect and campaigned regionally and internationally to cast President Abdiqasim as an Islamist Trojan horse. Their real anxieties were however more prosaic and had a lot to do with the fear of political novelty and radical experiments with the potential of reshaping politics. The Mbagathi peace process in Kenya which culminated in the creation of the TFG under Abdullahi Yusuf in late 2004 was something of a strategic coup for them. It re-opened the door to them and helped them to reconstitute and consolidate their power. Their triumph was however short-lived, after an Ethiopian military intervention failed to defeat a powerful Islamist insurgency, which quickly gained control over much of the country's south-central regions. Their support for Djibouti was tactical and support for President Sharif disingenuous, as the experience of the last two years has shown. In their calculation, cohabitation with Sharif was not necessarily a permanent setback, or a fatal blow that curtails their ambition to use their superior expertise of the TFG machinery to discreetly work to re-shift the balance of power. It certainly makes them look good in the eyes of the public and projects them as the more accommodating side that made the greater painful political concessions that culminated in the creation of a coalition government. Sharif's inexperience and leadership weaknesses which quickly became apparent soon after his installation, made their job much easier than anticipated. A high-profile adversarial and frontal offensive was deemed unnecessary at that early stage, when other options appeared seemed more attractive. In the event, they settled for a low-intensity and subtle campaign to isolate Sharif from his support base, co-opt him and undermine his efforts at reconciliation and modest plans for reform. By the time he was forced by pressure from his own traditional allies to realize that he was in effect a captive president, it was too late. His feeble and inept attempts to fight back since early 2010 and to shore up his precarious position, have, so far, failed to pay any dividends. He has thoroughly been outflanked by the hard men and his prospects for staging a come back appear bleak.

B. A LARGE AND UNWIELDY GOVERNMENT

[Intro para about bringing everyone in TFG parliament + 275 ARS and why large cabinet]

1. Cabinet

[Initial size 39 [check]/ Nos constituency/same faces Sharif Hassan, Ibbi, etc]

controversy over role of the ARS “inner core”

[Impact of new cabinet]

2. Parliament

Discuss size, absence of many MPs, controversy over speaker’s mandate

1.1. *The speakership of Sharif Hassan*

Much of the recent upheaval and tumult within the TFG, especially since the beginning of 2009, stems from the escalating power struggle between President Sharif and his erstwhile confidant and political fixer, and now Speaker of the TFP, Sharif Hassan. Opinion is divided on exactly when the once cosy personal relationship between the two men began souring and the sequence of events and factors that precipitated the rupture. What is not in contention is that it is irretrievably broken. The two men are now propelled by diametrically opposed political calculations and ambitions. The shock of the deep chasm that has opened within the TFG is profoundly changing the internal political dynamics. There is growing factionalism, re-positioning and everything is in a state of dangerous flux.

Sharif Hassan, for his part, is known to be harbouring presidential ambitions. He has been discreetly campaigning since early 2009 to emerge as a credible candidate, gingerly outflanking potential rivals. He is a skilful operator and a supremely persuasive politician, adept at mobilizing support, often using his immense wealth and superior knowledge of the political terrain. His dextrous manoeuvre to secure the powerful post of Speaker, was, to many, a political masterstroke. Ethiopia and other regional and international actors are said to favour him. He has cleverly exploited the widespread suspicion of Sharif and his *Aala Sheikh* supporters, to project himself as a secularist and the only man capable of stopping “closet Shabaabists” from completely taking over the TFG. It is important to highlight this because arguments in support of Sharif Hassan are gaining traction with certain segments of the international community. The notion that Sharif Hassan is a secularist is without any merit and those propagating this ludicrous myth, certainly, do not know the man. Allowing Sharif Hassan to achieve his ambition, primarily on the vague and uncritical assumption he is a “secularist” and likely to be much more decisive and competent leader than Sheikh Sharif, is to completely misread his character and his brand of politics and to ignore his negative and destructive influence within the TFG and on the wider body politic. To argue that the choice is between these two leaders – one who is inept and one who is corrupt, but nonetheless effective and competent – is cynical. This is a false choice to which Somalis must not be condemned.

1.2. *Calls for reform*

President Sharif is under pressure from the international community to deliver on the reform promise. He is also sensitive to the calls for reform within the regime. A significant number of reform-minded figures associated with the *Kutla* (Arabic word for caucus or bloc) – an informal group that is beginning to emerge as a key player in parliament – wants change. The president is aware that in his struggle with Sharif Hassan, this is a group he needs to cultivate as allies. But it is unclear whether he can achieve that, considering the fact he is increasingly viewed by some *Kutla* members as part of the problem.³

The *Kutla* is itself an interesting phenomenon. It is cross-clan, issue-oriented and carving a centrist place for itself in the new polarized political climate. It is led by Abdi Hashi (a northerner and an Isaq), a man widely respected,

³ Crisis Group interview with *Kutla* members, Nairobi, Mogadishu, August 2010.

who despite ill health and advanced age, has managed to mobilize reformists and articulate a reform agenda that has struck a cord with a large segment of well-educated MPs of different ideological persuasion.⁴ So far, attempts by the two Sharif's to bribe and co-opt its members have not succeeded, but the strain on its cohesion is bound to grow in the coming months, because the stakes are high.

C. REFUSING TO SHARE POWER OR FEDERALISE

The TFG in its present reincarnation has demonstrated neither the will nor desire to devolve power, as it is constitutionally bound and mandated to do. In fact, under President Sharif, a subtle shift away from the whole idea of a federal Somalia has occurred, which the official pro-federalism rhetoric cannot mask.

[Para on schedule I of TFC--ej]

1. Failure to reach out

The TFG made modest attempts in the first four months of 2009 to reach out to a select few within the leadership of the hardline Islamist insurgency.⁵ President Sharif wanted to quickly demonstrate to a largely sceptical public he was serious on national reconciliation. That momentum was not however sustained for long. By late April 2009, the new regime had lost the impetus and the will to continue the discreet exploratory talks it had begun with a few insurgent leaders. An insurgency that had become more extreme, controlled large parts of south-central Somalia and buoyed by Ethiopia's military pullout, was certainly in no mood to entertain Sharif's overtures, much less incentivized to reach a settlement. In fact, it was spoiling for a decisive fight to dislodge Sharif, as the events in May 2009 were soon to show. The few who appeared amenable to cutting a deal with Sharif, like Mukhtar Robow, were often hamstrung with more urgent and weightier political considerations and calculations.

Sharif's outreach dilemma is a familiar one. A leader of a feeble government, with little territorial control and no effective army, is certainly in no position to dictate the terms of a peace settlement and little to offer to an insurgency that felt it had the upper hand. Sharif's outreach strategy was exclusively based on moral arguments – the appeal to nobler sentiments and values of Islamic brotherhood, peace, forgiveness and *Somalinimo* (Somaliness).⁶ Moral exhortations alone cannot be enough and the legitimate question to ask is whether Sharif – lacking the military means to shift the balance of power and thus force some concessions – should not have done more to create a broad national reconciliation strategy that was attractive and had the right mix of incentives. His decision to quickly give up on the whole reconciliation project and failure to doggedly work on the resistance of the many disillusioned Al-Shabaabs, was a great a strategic blunder.

It may be too late for Sharif to begin rectifying that mistake, but any future government must prioritize national reconciliation over everything else. The first step is to reactivate the moribund reconciliation commission, reconstitute its membership, broaden its mandate and give it the resources and means to draw up a comprehensive national reconciliation plan.

[2Paras on ASWJ deal details and why failed. How it split movement]

[Para on Madhobe and Raas Kamboni]

[Para on Al-Shabaab “moderates”, Para on Robow?]

⁴ For example, new prominent members of the Kutla include Abdirahman Abdishakur, a moderate Islamist leader who was the chief negotiator of the ARS-D faction during the Djibouti talks. He broke ranks with the Sharif camp and resigned from the cabinet earlier this year.

⁵ See Crisis Group report (REF Somalia's Divided Islamists).

⁶ *Somalinimo* is a vaguely defined term still current in the political lexicon and widely used by politicians to whip up a sense of patriotism and cross-clan solidarity. It is not Pan-Somali nationalism. It is probably best defined as a term that evokes a sense of shared history, linguistic, religious, and cultural affinity – a mystical bond that restores the fractured homogeneity of Somali race.

2. Refusing to federalise

Historically, there has been a strong undercurrent of hostility to devolution within Somali Islamism, whether classified as moderate, conservative or hardline. Most Islamists tend to favour a strong central state. Significant segments within Sharif's own Islamist camp remain privately hostile to the idea, but reluctant to voice it publicly, because that could make things awkward for their leader. As far as they are concerned, federalism was a secularist agenda, which they were they were compelled to buy into or acquiesce to, at the Djibouti talks.⁷ The president's ambivalence and official fig-leaf support for federalism is therefore a function of this unresolved tension and need to appease the two camps in the TFG.

[Para on why his relations with Puntland are at an all time low.⁸]

[Former Defence Minister Prof Gandhi's problem was to have taken the TFG's federalism promise "too literally". When he began reaching out to Ogadeni elders in the Jubba regions of southern Somalia with a view to obtaining their support for the establishment of a federal state called "Jubbaland" and with the help of Kenya put together a small force of 2,500 fighters to form the nucleus of what would one day become a legitimate Jubbaland regional force, he was swiftly marginalized and forced out.]

3. Local administrations going their own way

Because the current TFG has failed to lead the devolution process and is too hamstrung to make any move in that direction anytime soon, impatient communities in the periphery have begun organizing and are creating their own local administrations. In effect what we are now witnessing all over Somalia is a huge revolt against the centre – a chaotic, unilateral, clan-driven process. While many would welcome the revolt and laud the attempt by communities, especially in central Somalia, to create their own administrations, the arbitrary nature of the whole process, and the unhealthy trajectory it is taking, is troubling. A unilateral inter-clan and intra-clan race to carve out fiefdoms – unmediated by any neutral agency – that ultimately leads to a *fait accompli*, difficult to reverse in future, is certainly not the picture of federalism most had in mind.

Two enclaves in north-central Somalia, Gal Mudug and Ximan-Xeeb, [Footnote] have made great strides in restoring stability, rebuilding the rudimentary structures of local governance and providing a modicum of essential services to their inhabitants. This should be encouraged, but internal political wrangles, infighting and factionalism abound in both regions and attempts to create quasi-democratic or consensual systems of governance remain shaky. There are territorial disputes between them and Gal Mudug has had tense relations with Puntland, which have, on occasions spilled over into armed confrontation. Crime syndicates involved in piracy and kidnap-for-ransom are active in the region; Al-Shabaab and other hardline insurgent groups pose a serious threat; and as the recent fighting in the town of Adaado, the seat of the Ximan-Xeeb government, demonstrates the new-found stability in these regions is tenuous.

It is difficult to hold up these two regions as exemplary models. Despite attempts to reach out to other clans and broaden the composition of their administrations, they still remain single clan enclaves. They are starved of resources and mostly depend on the goodwill of their kinsfolk in the diaspora and the remarkable volunteerism and civic spirit of their populations to function.

Fighting between clans of two local administrations, Galmuduug (Sa'ad) and Xeeb and Ximan(Saleeban, also know as Suleiman) broke out in early November over pasture and water for their livestock following a prolonged drought.⁹

The predicaments and setbacks faced by these two regions and the highly unstable and reversible experiment at self-governance amply demonstrate the confusion and flaws inherent in any unplanned and uncontrolled devolution process. Viable and sustainable local administrations, which are constituent parts of a healthy federation, as most Somalis desire, can be created, but it can only be done through a well-crafted policy managed by a credible central

⁷ Needs cite. Your interviews in Djibouti?

⁸ [Cite reports Farole threatens to withdraw from TFG. Garrowe Online?](#)

⁹ "The two groups have fought over grazing land in the past. Both sides used "technicals", machine guns and anti-aircraft cannons in an area with very little cover. Somalia: Fight over water, pasture send hundreds fleeing," IRIN, 9 November 2010.

authority. The TFG has certainly failed to be that kind of an authority. But this should not be an excuse for giving up entirely on a workable federal model that is acceptable and viable. To let the periphery take charge of the devolution process, as has happened, is a recipe for further chaos and instability.

Comment [EJH2]: Do you want to take this argument this far? If so, you need to convince me.

D. A DIVIDED EXECUTIVE: THE BATTLE BETWEEN THE PRESIDENCY AND THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

One such key structural problem is beginning to be openly acknowledged: the failure by the Transitional Federal Charter (TFC) to properly define, demarcate and de-conflict the whole range of executive powers, shared between the president and the prime minister.¹⁰ These powers are often bitterly contested over by these two power centres, which, in theory were meant to be complimentary, but have in practice tended to be adversarial. Interpretation and understanding vary wildly and the ensuing polarization undermines internal cohesion, feeds a poisonous factionalism and contributes to the wider debilitating paralysis that has struck every regime since 1996.

[Para on how this has been a problem for long time, e.g. fight between President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Gedi, etc.¹¹]

The endemic leadership wrangles within the TFG, especially the periodic triangular power struggle between the Presidency, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the TFP, are, to a large extent, driven by the dynamic of failure, which constantly stalls progress on all fronts. Whenever pent-up frustrations boil over, the TFG descends into a bout of frenzied self-flagellation. Old alliances break down, factions proliferate, and the blame game intensifies, as politicians turn on each other.

Ongoing debates and attempts at reforming the TFG have been conspicuous in avoiding the issue altogether. It is rarely acknowledged as a problem central to the whole debate of making the government functional. It is either seen as marginal or something to be deferred.¹²

Shifting these tectonic plates of instability structurally built into the TFG power distribution architecture requires a level of boldness and political ingenuity and leadership, which it is doubtful President Sharif can muster. The incentive to find a permanent solution does not currently exist. Powerful vested interests within are served by and benefit from this shaky status quo, not to mention an impatient international community dead set against wider reforms.¹³

¹⁰ Crisis Group interviews with Somali intellectuals, politicians, Nairobi, May, June, 2010. This power structure was purposely built into the so-called “hybrid” model of government (a half-way house between a parliamentary and a presidential system), which Somalis adopted in the early 90’s. The proponent of the hybrid model says it is the best means to create a democratic and accountable government, has great merits and contains a set of good checks and balances designed to prevent executive excess and authoritarianism. Some of them suggest the problem is flawed implementation and not some “perceived” inherent “design fault”. As far as they are concerned, the blame lies mainly with Somalia’s “archaic” dominant political culture and the “authoritarian streak” of a political class still wedded to Africa’s “Big Man Syndrome”. Others believe there is room for “minor adjustments” and amendments of the TFC to remove ambiguities and improve the clarity and precision of the language pertaining to executive powers. A prominent advocate of the latter view is Ali Khalif Galayd, a US-based academic who served as prime minister in the “Arta government” or the TNG (Transitional National Government) of President Abdiqasim Salat Hassan, formed in Djibouti in 1996.

¹¹ Gedi was appointed by President Yusuf in November 2004.

¹² A constant refrain from officialdom is that security is the overriding priority and the fight against insurgency takes precedence over every other matter, however pressing. This is a false dichotomy the transitional regimes have often used as the convenient excuse to scuttle genuine reform of the system. It is also a reflection of the inability or aversion to formulate a comprehensive reform strategy able to move the change process on multiple tracks. A deadening short-termism and myopic political calculations thwarts every attempt to address the tough issues. To always defer the trickier problems to some future date when all will be calm is simply to substitute pious hope for strategy, and ultimately self-defeating.

¹³ One is the TFP, whose members have benefitted materially from the constant power struggles between the two power centres. They are routinely bribed by the contending sides. The second is the international community, which is reluctant to open this complex dossier, fearful it could further destabilize and polarize an already deeply troubled transition. Privately, many admit they are concerned about these structural problems that fuel the perennial infighting within the TFG, but they are, on the whole, opposed to any moves that could potentially trigger calls for the re-opening/restructuring of the Djibouti process. “Re-opening Djibouti is a red line and is not an option,” a senior French official told Crisis Group in Paris in July. The third are the occupants of these offices – the president and the prime minister – whose frustrations at the power disequilibrium of the

One option is to set up a committee of independent local and international experts to undertake a comprehensive review of the hybrid system with a view to coming up with practical solutions. In fact, the timing is ideal. This exercise can be marginally tied to and made to proceed in tandem with the whole constitutional review process now under way.¹⁴

There are no easy or ideal solutions and reform carries its own set of unforeseen complexities and uncertainties. A modest reform package that offers a practical formula for rationalising and harmonising constitutional powers stands a better chance of being accepted. A radical change proposal will most likely create controversy and few will be willing to sign up to it. To be sure, compelling reasons exist for creating one power centre vested with the full constitutional powers – albeit temporarily – if only for the purposes of improving decision-making and putting the long-derailed transition agenda back on track. Reasonable as this proposal may sound, the reality is that the TFG and its supporters in the international community have no desire to consider this an attractive option, not least because time is running out for the transition, with barely 10 months left before its official expiry.

E. THE 4.5 CLAN QUOTA SYSTEM

At the core of much of Somalia's recent leadership crisis is a decrepit system of selecting leaders that is intrinsically anti-democratic, anti-meritocratic and unfair. Adopted during the Mbagathi process in 2004 that led to the creation of the previous TFG, and optimistically hailed as the best means to ensure greater clan balance and representation,¹⁵ its practical implementation since then clearly shows the falsity of those assumptions. This system locks out many credible and competent people from the contest for leadership; perpetuates clan chauvinism and prevents the emergence of issue-based politics.¹⁶ As long as this system is in place, the prospects for democratization and political pluralism will remain a pipe dream.¹⁷

The argument made by the proponents of the system that it is a stop-gap measure designed for the transitional phase is not convincing. It fails to answer the question why a system that is demonstrably flawed and keeps churning out crop after crop of inept leaders should be touted as a temporary remedy for the ills of the transition. The debate over a fairer system of clan representation is valid and will for long remain an emotive issue in Somalia. However, the notion that this can only be achieved through a clan quota system – which in reality is tokenistic and ends up not changing the general circumstances of all clans – is in many ways misleading. The sooner Somalia shifts away from this retrogressive formula and adopts a policy-based style of politics, and leaders are freely chosen on merit and not on their clan affiliation, the sooner we will see progress on all fronts.

Comment [EJH3]: Is this realistic at this point and time?

II. SHEIKH SHARIF'S FAILURE TO LEAD AND MANAGE

President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed was elected on the early morning of 31 January 2009 in Djibouti, after a hotly-contested, overnight polling by members of the expanded Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP).¹⁸ In many

status quo is trumped by the greater fear of a new dispensation that may whittle down their individual constitutional powers, especially one that renders one of these offices ceremonial.

¹⁴ One way of improving the committee's chances of success and the prospects of its recommendations becoming widely acceptable, is to disentangle that process consciously from the distorting influence of the political transition. A flexible timetable and a less time-bound review process, sufficiently independent of the constraining dictates and negative political influence of the TFG's mandate, is feasible. It is also plausible a review process professionally managed, deliberately structured in a such a way as to minimize the risks of further destabilization to the TFG, may assuage IC concerns and therefore obtain the required resources and technical expertise that is crucial, if it is to succeed.

¹⁵ See CG report *Beyond the Failed State*.

¹⁶ It is clear this was a system designed to serve the interests of the "hard men" for whom politics is the continuation of clan wars by other means. If politics is driven by an undemocratic clan quota calculus and the arbiters tend to be a faceless cabal of clan elders, why should we be surprised with the fact that Somalia's political culture still remains archaic and reactionary?

¹⁷ The newly-appointed prime minister, Mohamed Farmajo, recently got an early test of how sensitive the issue is. A naïve and unguarded comment about his liberal political views and dislike for the 4.5 system – at a meeting with a group of leading women political activists in Mogadishu – caused a political firestorm that almost threatened his chances of becoming confirmed by parliament. Farmajo was forced to beat a hasty retreat and a statement from his office suggested he comments were misconstrued. It is clear powerful vested interests within and outside the TFG want to

¹⁸ Ref. ICG report *Somalia's Divided Islamists*.

ways, this episode would have passed off unremarked or dismissed as inconsequential, had it not been for the unique circumstances and dynamics that catalysed it and the rare confluence of auspicious political factors, at the top of which was a refreshingly new international mood of pragmatism.¹⁹

[Para on the different leadership styles between him, Abdikassim Salad Hassan, and A. Yusuf. Sh. Sharif as politician. Salad as technocrat, Yusuf as strong mi. leader (do you agree with this generalisation?)]

[Para on Sharif's role and success in ICU. Expectations he would be able to repeat a similar feat, summon that remarkable idealism, energy, and political talent that had catapulted him to the leadership of the UIC in the first place – in his new role as the transition's chief manager – appear, in hindsight, to have been largely misplaced.]

No-one doubted the tough challenge before the new TFG once it relocated to Mogadishu. Hemmed in all sides by insurgent groups on a tiny pocket of the battered capital; saddled with an unwieldy and incoherent cabinet and parliament; lacking an effective army and heavily under-resourced, Sharif had his work cut out, yet the majority of Somalis, deeply disillusioned with the inept secular political elite, appeared cautiously supportive of his ambitions to make a radical break with the past and inaugurate – in Sharif's own words – a new era of *siyaasad nadiif ah* (“clean politics”).²⁰ The public euphoria was unmistakable and hopes high that with Sharif at the helm, Somalia now had the best chance in a decade to create a viable transition able to restore peace.

In hindsight and in the light of the TFG's dismal record in office, the verdict of many is unflattering, even harsh. Former key allies and senior cabinet members, regional and international partners, diplomats and ordinary Somalis are all unequivocal in holding Sharif personally responsible for the failure to make any headway since coming to office in late January 2009. To understand the full impact of this failure and its corrosive ramifications on the body politic and the damage on public morale, it is important to recall the sad history of past transitional governments and the genuine hopes raised by Sharif's rise to the top job. That an avowedly Islamist government – the first in Somalia's history – could so quickly prove inept, and worse, become embroiled in debilitating infighting and corruption, not only deepened public despair, but fed an acute sense of disillusionment with the whole politics of transition. A seminal moment in public perception may have been reached. The discontent against the whole transitional governance model is at an all-time high.

To understand Sharif's inability to lead and manage a transition – widely viewed as one with great potential and a realistic chance of success – it is important to understand how and why a combination of factors and dynamics combined to create that crisis.

A. NO VISION TO ARTICULATE

President Sharif has missed an opportunity to articulate a broad and coherent vision founded on his so-called moderate Islamist values and principles. He could have capitalized on the good political momentum that had built up in the first three months of 2009, to craft a message, able to galvanize a public that was for the first time eager and receptive. That chance was missed, and with it, the opportunity to regain the political initiative from an

¹⁹ Djibouti TV, 31 January 2009. The mere fact an avowedly Islamist leader – albeit a moderate one – could be so swiftly legitimised and internationally recognized, was, in itself, remarkable. The residual general feeling of mistrust of Islamists, was quickly brushed aside, and the new leader showered with praise and promised full support. Leading the enthusiastic campaign to win Sharif greater international acceptance and legitimacy was Washington and other Western powers. More significant, Ethiopia, a state historically wary of and averse to all forms of Islamism, now appeared supportive of Sharif. This apparent *volte face* had a lot to do with the change of administration in Washington, and the new emphasis on dialogue and engagement to resolve conflicts. It was also an admission of the strategic blunder made in late 2006, when the West tacitly allowed Ethiopia to send its troops to Somalia to dislodge the Union of Islamic Courts – an Islamist movement that might have been steered towards moderation. In a way, the Djibouti peace process itself, supported by the West, was an attempt to correct that mistake and to rehabilitate the Sharif wing of the UIC. Even those Western envoys who had reservations about Sharif and campaigned discreetly for their favoured candidates, appeared willing to live with his victory and to accept it, not least because they were keen to show the West was pragmatic and was not necessarily opposed to Islamist political ambitions. In fact, many privately acknowledged that rewarding and empowering Islamist moderates was a good strategic option in the struggle against extremism. Crisis Group interviews, Djibouti, Nairobi, September to December, 2008.

²⁰ Millions of Somalis watched the elections broadcast live on Djibouti TV on the evening of 30 January and cheered as Sharif gave a victory speech that struck a deep cord, and spelt out his key priorities.

insurgency that was fragmented and whose extremist and dubious political agenda was beginning to alienate large segments of society.

The failure to articulate a consistent, coherent, clear and believable message was a huge political mistake that compounded the regime's crisis of legitimacy. The prospects for winning the battle of hearts and minds were thus dealt a fatal blow. Public unease mounted, faith in the regime waned, and the mood of optimism quickly gave way to cynicism.²¹

Without a powerful, inspiring and galvanising message, the regime's feeble attempt to appear policy-oriented and "qualitatively different" from past governments appeared, on the whole, disingenuous, or vacuous. This lent a distinct ambiguity to the TFG's political nature and character, undermined its "moderate" credentials and fuelled policy ambivalence.

Sharif's carefully cultivated public personae and image as a reformist and moderate Islamist leader is now under assault, as a direct consequence of that failure. Secularists and liberal-minded Muslims, who have in the past supported him, now view him with growing suspicion.²² Followers of Sufi Islam, an important political constituency, initially sympathetic to and broadly supportive of the TFG, and keen to make common cause in the struggle to defeat Al-Shabaab, are now implacably hostile to him as an individual.²³

Sharif's failure to articulate a moderate vision reflects the acute intellectual weakness of the modern Islamist movement in Somalia. There is no culture of original thinking or systematic theorisation on the big socio-political and economic themes, as ambitious Islamist groups have done elsewhere. Beyond the populist catch phrases, "Islam is the solution", "the Holy Koran is our constitution", there is hardly anything else on offer for the critical and discerning mind. No great intellectual figure has emerged within the movement able to "indigenize" Islamism. Consequently, Islamism in Somalia – whether hardline or moderate – lacks that fundamental anchor. It is largely based on imitation. Understood from this perspective, the blame is not Sharif's alone. The other related problem is that no-one has invested in explaining what a "moderate" Islamist vision is and the practical policy implications. Sharif is ambivalent on democracy, civil liberties and devolution. The only clue we have on his political ideas and "moderate" Islamism are a set of phrases which recur in his speeches and public pronouncements such as *adalat*, *sinaan*, *talawadaag* (justice, equality and consultation). One cannot of course infer democracy from such pronouncements. The principle of *shura* (consultative) governance in Islamist thinking is distinct from democracy. It means consensus-based governance. Islamist modernizers say the *shura* principle is consistent with modern democratic values and there is no contradiction between Islam and democracy. Conservative Islamists like Sharif are distrustful of the whole concept and that probably explains why he avoids using the word democracy.

Because there was no overarching policy framework or a coherent action plan, the regime quickly descended into a debilitating policy drift and muddle. For senior cabinet members and military officers there was little to guide policy or strategy. They improvised and decided policy on the hoof in a process that was highly arbitrary. In some

²¹ Many sources interviewed for this report suggest that Sharif is primarily responsible for the TFG's failure. Former cabinet minister and confidante, Abdirahman Abdishakur Warsame, said: "If Sharif had made a serious attempt to improve things, do good things, and failed, many would have been forgiving. Those who want to portray him as a 'heroic failure' are mistaken. The truth is: this is a man who never made any serious attempt to succeed." Crisis Group interview, Nairobi September 2010.

²² Former Sharif allies, observers and diplomats, all paint a disturbing portrait of an enigmatic leader, aloof and unperturbed by the mounting public unease and speculations swirling around his true beliefs. Sharif's ambivalence on key issues facing the government was politically damaging for the TFG, fed unhealthy rumours, engendered intra-cabinet mistrust and undermined cohesion. Crisis Group interviews, Mogadishu, Nairobi, May 2010.

²³ Crisis Group interviews, Nairobi, Mogadishu, July 2010. In particular, Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah (ASWJ) officials now openly call Sharif a Wahhabi, secretly sympathetic to Al-Shabaab's violent campaign to homogenise Islam in Somalia and build an

exclusivist Wahhabi state. Defenders of Sharif, say the president is a nationalist who is keen to avoid divisive and sectarian issues. Even if one accepted this argument, it is hard to see what national political interest or expediency his current ambivalence serves. If, indeed, he is a Wahhabi, that, in itself, does not automatically make him a supporter of Al-Shabaab. There are many peace-loving, sane and rational Wahhabis who are as outraged as most Somalis are with Al-Shabaab's extremism and glorification of gratuitous violence in the name of jihad. It may sound a contradiction in terms, but there is such a thing as moderate Wahhabism. It was possible for Sharif to have come out openly and admit to being a moderate Wahhabi who is opposed to the corrupt and dehumanizing Wahhabist theology of Al-Shabaab, and its violent homegenisation campaign. This would have been a brave act that would have won him more friends than enemies, even within the huge skeptical Sufi belt in central Somalia.

instances, officials pursued their own selfish interests, often framed as national interest.²⁴ When a few others, frustrated by the inaction and claiming loyalty to what they believed to have been the TFG's original mandate, ideals and agenda, acted, they quickly run afoul of the president and his allies.²⁵

Nowhere was this policy and strategy void more damaging than in the national security sector. Commanders lacked clear instructions and signals from Villa Somalia on the so-called "big offensive" to take control of Mogadishu appeared contradictory or ambiguous.²⁶ Young recruits were sent to the fronts without adequate psychological, mental and political preparation. Without a powerful, inspiring and galvanising message, articulating theirs was a cause worth dying for, morale quickly collapsed and the task of imbuing a sense of loyalty, patriotism in the soldiery became that much harder.²⁷ The high rates of desertion in the military continue unchanged. Soldiers switch sides with ease; cooperate with the enemy; routinely sell weapons, uniforms and equipment; pilfer food rations and siphon off fuel from vehicles.

B. WEAK LEADERSHIP

There is a growing realization the TFG's current political and military crises are, in large measure, the outcome of weak leadership at the top. Its record in office since February 2009 has been hugely disappointing to those who had hoped Somalia now had a credible, youthful and dynamic leader, who in 2006 managed to restore stability to Mogadishu, and for six months, achieved a degree of administrative success, unparalleled since the collapse of the Somali nation-state in 1991.

²⁴ Former deputy prime minister Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden, who also doubled as finance minister, was one such figure. He negotiated a currency printing deal in Sudan in late April 2009, largely without consultations with his cabinet colleagues. Even the Central Bank governor Bashir Isse claimed he was not consulted and challenged the rationale and the merits of printing new banknotes when the government clearly lacked the ability to mop up the old currently and had no fiscal and monetary mechanisms to enforce changes. Under the deal, Sudan was to print 17m-dollars worth of banknotes for Somalia. Sudanese News Agency (SUNA) report 29 April, 2009. The deal met stiff resistance from Western donors. Cabinet was divided, and only ratified it in late January 2010 after pressure from Sharif Hasan and President Sharif. Puntland government also voiced opposition. Only the first batch of the notes were printed in Sudan and introduced to a few districts of the capital in Mogadishu in late 2010 [Wasn't some of it burned in Puntland?]. Sudanese government is now said to have pulled out of the deal after an internal review revealed it was not "entirely above board". Crisis Group interview, Somali politician, EU official, Nairobi, August 2010.

²⁵ Former Defence Minister Prof Gandhi and his junior colleague Yusuf Indha Adde fall into this category. Gandhi's problem was to have taken the TFG's federalism promise "too literally". When he began reaching out to Ogadeni elders in the Jubba regions of southern Somalia with a view to obtaining their support for the establishment of a federal state called "Jubbaland" and with the help of Kenya put together a small force of 2,500 fighters to form the nucleus of what would one day become a legitimate Jubbaland regional force, he was swiftly marginalized and forced out. Yusuf Indha Adde, on his part, took the counter-insurgency campaign and the TFG's promise of a "major offensive" "too seriously". His fighters took up frontline positions in central and north Mogadishu and he personally took charge and commanded some of the engagements with Al-Shabaab fighters. In the event, he soon run out of patience with the TFG after his repeated requests to the Prime Minister's Office for reinforcement, ammunitions and other logistical help were either flatly turned down, or delayed. He resigned in late June 2010. See Somali news website Mareeg <http://www.mareeg.com/fidsan.php?sid=16317&tirsan=3>. Crisis Group met an aggrieved Indha Adde in July in Nairobi. He was categorical the TFG had neither the political will nor capacity to fight the insurgency. AMISOM commanders have been well disposed towards Indha Adde, arguing he had demonstrated more resolve and stamina to prosecute the fight against Al-Shabaab than his colleagues in Villa Somalia. Crisis Group interview at AMISOM HQ, Mogadishu, May 2010.

²⁶ From late 2009 to mid 2010, both the prime minister, Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke, and President Sharif, have been making public statements about a so-called "major offensive", which never materialized. Sharif often made the pronouncements dressed in military fatigue. Irrespective of whether this was some form of psychological warfare, deemed necessary, the failure to conduct it only reinforced the public's growing negative perception of the TFG, sowed confusion in the ranks and undermined morale. It is almost certain no big offensive was planned and that no military strategy or blueprint existed – at least not one that was credible or around which a consensus had been reached.

²⁷ Contrast this with Al-Shabaab, which has a very sophisticated mentoring system for young recruits. Every unit has a preacher sent from the "moral guidance department" (*firqat tawjih al-ma'navi*) – a concept borrowed from Sudan's Islamist militia, the Popular Defence Forces (PDF). The role of these individuals is to work on the recruits constantly through regular "muhaarah" (spiritual edification gatherings), usually before or after an operation, focusing on the big themes and contextualizing victory or defeat. Cynics may dismiss this as mental conditioning or a form of brainwashing, but former combatants admit it is a powerful tool for boosting morale. Crisis Group telephone interview, ex-Al-Shabaab combatant, Mogadishu, June 2010.

Sharif's performance in office and his leadership qualities and style clearly vindicates the view of those who had questioned the uncritical faith in his ability and competence to lead the transition. President Sharif's desire to prevent an early discord within the coalition made him very vulnerable to the machinations of a powerful faction of the old order, led by Sharif Hasan Sheikh Aden, that wanted to take him captive, capitalizing on his inexperience. In effect, Sharif became a rubber-stamp president, simply fronting for the interest of his new allies. That friendship and alliance with Sharif Hasan deeply alienated his old friends, especially the more conservative elements now being referred to as *Aala Sheikh* (see elsewhere). Much of his time was spent in non-essential foreign travels and lengthy palavers with an assortment of minor local clan potentates, politicians and influence peddlers, often seeking one favour or another.²⁸ Sharif Hasan, then deputy prime minister and minister of finance, soon accumulated more powers and gradually usurped the president's role. In many ways, he was the de facto head of government or prime minister. Many officials and ordinary people seeking government favours rarely went to see Sharif first. They had to initially seek the approval of Sharif Hasan. The widespread public perception he is not his own man, has deeply damaged President Sharif. Recent attempts - instigated by his *Aala Sheikh* allies - to force the president to claw back some powers and influence from Sharif Hasan, who has since cleverly maneuvered to further shore up his position by becoming Speaker — have not helped to shift the balance of power within the TFG. **Sharif Hasan is still the man who calls the shots.**

Comment [EJH4]: Is this still true with new cabinet?

His reputation as a moderate Islamist and the urgent strategic imperative to empower the moderates in Somalia and isolate the extremists – a powerful dynamic that underpinned the UN-sponsored Djibouti peace process – helped to shield him from critical scrutiny. Even if one accepted his was a case of great potential thwarted by the deadening hand of a moribund transition permanently set on a downward trajectory, his dismal personal record in office, certainly inspires no confidence.²⁹ More crucial, one would be hard pressed to find anything objectively redeeming about his leadership. The notion that he is still the man best-suited to lead the transition, often advanced by a diminishing circle of die-hard loyalists, is now unpalatable to many Somalis, and a section of the international community.³⁰

The performance of his first prime minister, Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke, was hardly better. Regular cabinet meetings he chaired were often dominated by marginal and non-controversial issues – cooperation protocols with foreign governments, treaties, and minor procedural and bureaucratic reforms. The crucial budgetary planning and formulation process – which technically he was in charge of - remained in limbo throughout his tenure. From May 2010, the situation got worse as pressure began to mount on him to quit. Cabinet meetings grew rarer and the premier became more reclusive.³¹

C. CORRUPTION

President Sharif's pledge in early 2009 to inaugurate a new era of ethical and clean politics (*siyaasad nadhif ah*) and create an administration that would advance the agenda of good governance and tackle the endemic corruption that had blighted past regimes, remains unfulfilled. The widespread expectations and hope he would move to clean up the government, as part of the effort to cement his Islamist credentials and demonstrate the force of his moral convictions, were quickly dashed. The rhetoric of a moral crusade against corruption was soon abandoned as a beleaguered Sharif, desperate to maintain his new alliance with a powerful clique led by Sharif Hassan, decided –

²⁸ Villa Somalia under Sharif resembles a medieval court and the waiting hall adjacent to his office is on any given day filled with all sorts of people seeking an appointment with him. Either the gate keepers are not doing their job or the president simply relishes the spectacle of playing court to the never-ending queue that forms every day at the presidency, from sunrise to sunset.

²⁹ The question regarding whether Sharif had the competence, resources and the wherewithal to make a difference in managing a transition so oversized, deeply flawed and broken, is, by no means, a frivolous one. It goes to the very core of the huge dilemma that confronted him on assuming office. Whatever the pros and cons of Djibouti and without even getting into the rights and wrongs of the political *modus vivendi* hammered out between the ARS faction headed by Sharif and the former TFG, the practical formula agreed to share power was hugely fraught and deeply disconcerting. A politician with limited leadership experience was now expected to whip a hugely bloated and amorphous coalition government, made up of a 36-member cabinet and a 555-member transitional parliament, into a cohesive and functional shape.

³⁰ Crisis Group interviews with diplomats, officials of multilateral organizations in Nairobi, October 2010. According to one official, views are hardening against Sharif and it is likely a significant number of the TFG's key supporters within the international community will block any attempt by Sharif to have his mandate extended.

³¹ To cope with the stress, he played video games on a widescreen plasma TV in his living quarters, often to the wee hours. Crisis Group interview, former official, Nairobi, August 2010.

to the detriment of the war against graft - to sacrifice principle at the altar of expediency. As a consequence of this political vulnerability and fear to take on the corrupt within his administration, the vice has been allowed to continue unchecked and is now, by most accounts, far more pernicious and serious, than at any time.³²

Corruption within the TFG is now massive, sophisticated, permeates every tier of government, and lurks in the most unlikely of places.³³ Powerful individuals within the establishment now preside over a massive corruption syndicate. A nepotistic employment culture, poor book-keeping, weak and unclear internal procedures and regulations and the total absence of credible and reliable records, adds to the problem and makes even the best forensic audit attempt that much difficult.³⁴

Much of the official corruption centres on the port of Mogadishu and the old airport renamed Aden Adde International Airport. The two facilities, guarded around the clock by heavily-armed AMISOM troop detachments, are a major source of income for the government, raking in millions of dollars every month.³⁵

Despite numerous attempts by former Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke, since late 2009, to clean up the two institutions, and despite numerous administrative, managerial and staffing changes, they remain veritable bastions of grand corruption, stubbornly inimical to reform.

Another traditional source of mega corruption is aid and financial grants from multilateral and bilateral sources. Admittedly, the situation is nowhere as bad as it used to be, especially under Presidents Abdiqasim Salat Hasan and Abdullahi Yusuf, when millions of dollars would routinely disappear from state coffers without a trace.³⁶

The way in which aid and grants are disbursed to the TFG has changed and some mechanisms are now in place – inadequate and weak as they are – which offer a measure of deterrence. An international accounting and audit firm, PriceWaterhouseCoppers (PWC) was contracted in (DATE) to facilitate and monitor funds from Western sources meant for the TFG. Initially billed as a mechanism for creating greater transparency and accountability, the reality is that PWC is simply an efficient conduit for channelling funds and keeping track of who paid what. It has no oversight powers on how money is spent, no presence on the ground, starts from a low knowledge and experience base and its ability to conduct a robust audit of TFG books is highly circumscribed. Assuming it is able to uncover incidents of official graft, it cannot act as a public whistle-blower, because of the commercial confidentiality clause

³² Crisis Group interviews with diplomats, financial experts, politicians, Nairobi, Mogadishu, July, August 2010. Critics of Sharif say the idea that the president is a helpless victim - a morally upright individual, forced by difficult political circumstances to tolerate the vice, is patently false. They suggest he has been co-opted and inducted in all the discreet methods of skimming off aid money by his old friends. His growing insecurity and desire to build his own war chest and slash fund to rival those of his adversaries, they say, has developed in him an appetite for corruption. To prove their point, they point to a claim voiced by several credible sources that Sharif picked millions of dollars from certain benefactors during a trip to Dubai sometime in 2010. The precise amount is disputed, but most say it is 3m dollars. Sharif allegedly handed over 1.2m dollars to the treasury and failed to account for the rest of the money. The incident, it is further alleged, temporarily soured the president's relations with a number of key donors, and that some of them have since been making discreet demands on him to come clean on the issue.

³³ A Transparency International Report now ranks Somalia number 178 – at the bottom of the corruption perception index. http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/results

³⁴ The widely respected new finance minister Hussein Halane, has been making serious attempts in recent months to try and inject the much needed professionalism, probity and transparency in the revenue collection and management system, as well as in strengthening internal mechanisms governing the way government money is disbursed and spent. So far he appears to be enjoying a free [what does this mean?] in his energetic attempt to revamp the ministry and create a more open and accountable fiscal and monetary system. Halane is so far moving gingerly and cautiously, aware a more radical reform will be resisted by powerful vested interests within. There already murmurs about the minister's attempts to streamline the accounting system and plug all the potential loopholes unscrupulous officials have often exploited to defraud the government. There are unconfirmed reports Halane – at the instigation of donors - intends to conduct a thorough audit of TFG finances going as far back as early 2009. If this is true, it would certainly bring him into a direct collision course with the graft barons, already jittery at the not-so-subtle threats of sanctions emanating key Western capitals, especially Washington.

³⁵ Estimates of the precise amount generated by the two facilities vary widely. Government sources say 1.5m dollars is collected from the port and around 500,000 from the airport. Some experts and independent sources put the figures much higher, especially those relating to the port. One credible source believes the port generates 3m dollars. **Expand official revenues (customs) does not include port fees [EJ].**

³⁶ In one such well-documented and infamous case, a prime minister pocketed millions of dollars – estimated by some sources to have been 8m dollars – donated by a major Gulf state. He used the loot to buy a string of properties in Nairobi and Dubai and is now reportedly plotting a political comeback.

built into the contract. It also unclear whether it is even mandated to pass on sensitive and relevant graft-related information to the prosecuting authorities in Somalia, much less cooperate with any party investigating corruption in Somalia. It is therefore clear the PWC mechanism, as it now stands, cannot be an effective tool to tackle corruption. The contract between the TFG and PWC needs to be reviewed and amended to strengthen the audit firm's hand in monitoring transactions and carrying out regular and thorough audit of the government's books, as PWC officials suggest. But such a move will be strongly resisted by those in the government opposed to the whole arrangement from the beginning, on the grounds it violated Somalia's sovereignty and is a form of neo-colonialism.

³⁷

The chaotic and unregulated *laissez faire* market system that came into being after the collapse of Siyad Barre's "scientific socialism" economic model – widely credited for unleashing the entrepreneurial energy of Somalis and spawning a dynamic business model that has transformed much of the Somali-speaking Horn – is also partly to blame for fuelling corruption. Most major business enterprises in the aviation, financial (*hawala*) and telecom sectors pay no taxes to the state, but routinely pay non-statutory fees to senior TFG officials, often to obtain official signatures on legal documents of international nature, support for a foreign venture bid, or simply as incentive and insurance policy to keep the government on their side.³⁸

Petty corruption, especially in the security services, immigration department, diplomatic missions abroad, continues unabated. More worrying and, arguably, more serious than low-level corruption, is the whole culture of profligacy, wanton misuse of state resources and disregard for ethical conduct, on the part of those holding public office. Ridiculous sums of money are spent on unnecessary foreign travel and creature comforts and the line between what is personal and governmental has become blurred.³⁹

The TFG's response has been disappointing and inexcusable. The old official culture of tolerating the vice, downplaying its magnitude, and shrugging it off as a fact of life, remains intact. President Sharif appears laid-back and in no hurry to address the problem, despite his pro-reform rhetoric.⁴⁰ Anti-corruption is unlikely to feature high in his reinvigorated drive to reform the TFG after the resignation of former Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke. In fact, the motives and timing of the whole reform push, is questionable, when viewed in wider context. All the indications suggest, the president is now in survival mode, animated by a desire to outflank his rivals and seek an extension to his mandate.

³⁷ Cite interview with PWC or some other source.

³⁸ Corrupt officials see the TFG's international legitimacy and connections as a powerful tool for extracting cash and favours from businesses, especially those keen on expanding beyond Somalia or already operating in the Greater Horn and beyond and ambitious to be seen as serious and legitimate players. For import/export companies, airlines, telecom operators and hawala money transfer agencies, engaged in cross-border transactions and expected to bring their operation into line with a raft of bilateral and international legal obligations and protocols, obtaining official endorsement invariably means paying hefty bribes to relevant officials. In particular, because competition is often stiff in the crowded aviation sector, major airline operators frequently use a variety of means – ranging from complimentary tickets to reserved business class seats for ministers and top officials – to obtain "favoured" carrier status, albeit unofficially. This is in part because the TFG's globe-trotting and travel-mad officialdom is, in itself, a highly-prized niche market, but also because the annual hajj pilgrimage season is a lucrative money-spinner and those operators organizing packaged hajj tours need the seal of approval from the TFG's Ministry of *Awqaf* (religious endowments) and Religious Affairs. For the hawala services, long-accused of funneling money to Al-Shabaab and increasingly under the scrutiny of regional and international security, keeping the TFG on side is critical in potentially avoiding being black-listed. This growing symbiotic relationship between the TFG and business, adds another troubling dimension to the corruption crisis. Crisis Group interview, former official, Nairobi, July 2010.

³⁹ TFG overheads account for nearly 100 per cent of the meager budget funded by donors, and a large chunk caters for the TFG elite's frequent foreign trips. Informed sources recently revealed that a high-level official state delegation spent a whopping 400,000 USD during a one-week whistle-stop tour of major Western capitals. Another top official is well known for making frequent trips to Dubai – once or twice every month – to look after his own personal business interests, sometimes using chartered planes. A former cabinet minister, who has since been dismissed after complaints from some Western governments, led an extravagant lifestyle, globe-trotting with his mistress (disguised as an official) and enjoying a bit of *la dolce vita*, paid for by Western taxpayers. Crisis Group interviews with Somali politicians, ex officials, Nairobi, Mogadishu, August 2010.

⁴⁰ His rhetoric and language of discourse has throughout been moralistic, framed on corruption as a moral vice, rather than a crime, or a governance problem. During repeated visits to the port of Mogadishu and meetings with staff, he rarely articulated anything remotely suggestive of a remedial policy intervention or strategy. In fact, what he did was to preach and sermonize about the evils of corruption and urge the workers at the port to fear Allah, be conscientious and patriotic. This is all fine, but it cannot be a substitute for policy, or obviate the need for wider institutional reforms.

The international community is increasingly concerned about the corruption problem. A number of influential supporters of the TFG, led by the US and the EU, have privately been voicing their frustrations, discreetly conveying their growing exasperation and displeasure to the key leaders of the regime, and demanding action.⁴¹ However, beyond applying subtle pressure on the TFG and hoping for action, there is little the donors can do. There is no appetite for an escalation and a public spat with the TFG that could potentially trigger a full-blown internal crisis and worsen the regime's tattered public image - a prospect that would no doubt hand the hardline insurgents a propaganda victory and give them immense succour. This dilemma is also made much more acute by Western sensitivities a harsher and prescriptive language opens them to charges of tutelage. This perceived weakness and limits to donor reaction plays right into the hands of the corrupt, and are, in themselves, a powerful disincentive to action. The TFG's international partners need to change tack and end the endless prevarication and unwillingness to countenance and adopt a tougher approach. This has to include nudging Sharif to put the fight against graft firmly on the reform agenda, supporting institutional reform, and capacity building and not least, clearly marking out the key spoiler figures involved in grand corruption for punitive sanctions.

D. THE PUSH FOR A MANDATE EXTENSION

It is unrealistic to expect President Sharif to achieve anything in this unhealthy political climate. In many ways, he is a president fighting for his political life. He is under pressure from a resurgent faction of his core support base, the so-called *Aala Sheikh*, a conservative grouping made of his old allies in the UIC. They want him to decisively claw back power and influence from his "secularists" allies, who in their eyes have thwarted the president's "true Islamization" agenda. They blame the president for empowering Sharif Hasan and argue it was a strategic blunder to have chosen him as an ally.

Sharif is keen on seeking a mandate extension, his supporters say he is in contention and the impending reforms will shore up his position as the front-runner. He has built a formidable war chest with millions of dollars collected from various Arab benefactors.

However, the evidence suggests morale is flagging in his camp. The president is alleged to be making contingency plans. His three wives and children are now in Turkey and Yemen. There is growing opposition to his ambitions. Rumours are rife the search for a replacement is already in top gear. His choice of a new PM - Mohammed Abdullahi Farmajo - and the 18-member cabinet recently named has been cautiously welcomed internationally, but has caused a huge controversy within. The president and the PM are accused of partisanship and sidestepping the 4.5 formula. Sharif Hassan and his supporters will undoubtedly milk the discontent to maximum political advantage.

III. CONFUSED, UN-COORDINATED AND CORRUPTED SSR

Western-led initiatives in the last two years to revamp and modernize the TFG's ramshackle army appear to have made some modest headway, even though the risks of major setbacks have not receded. Lessons appear to have been learnt from past uncoordinated, haphazard and parallel training initiatives that ended in failure. [EJ pull language from Islamist report.] There is now more concerted action and on the whole recruits are getting good and systematic training provided by AMISOM in Mogadishu and EUTM in Bihanga, southwestern Uganda. [FOOTNOTE on EUTM, numbers, etc]

Parallel efforts to provide TFG forces with better equipment have been sluggish and dogged by controversies and allegations some of it was being sold by corrupt officers.

Attempts led by AMISOM to lend a semblance of effective and coherent structure to the amorphous assemblage of disparate militia outfits, estimated at 8,000 and conveniently called "TFG forces", and to whip them into fighting form, have been more problematic. [FOOTNOTE] The quests to create an effective chain of command, rationalize military formations, and draw up a credible register, faces stiff resistance and is constantly undermined. Powerful vested interests and corrupt commanders actively seek to perpetuate the disarray and remain the biggest obstacle to reform. The former army chief, Gen Gelle, an officer widely respected, tried to improve things but was quickly

⁴¹ Crisis Group interviews with US, EU diplomats, Nairobi, August 2010.

marginalized and eventually dismissed. Owing to this systemic rot, the TFG army is no shape to take over the twin roles of defending the government and prosecuting the counter-insurgency campaign.

[Need 2-3 paras on problems with EUTM recruitment. How is first tranche working out in Mogadishu?]

IV. AMISOM: WINNING THE BATTLE, BUT FOR WHAT?

The Ugandan-led AMISOM peacekeeping operation in Somalia remains a troubled and complicated mission. It is now a much bigger, better resourced and equipped mission, even though the projected original maximum troop strength of 8,000 – now almost attained - is widely believed to have been an underestimation of the numbers needed to get the job done.⁴² Funding gaps continue to be a challenge and the need for more specialized tactical and combat kits are acute. It is unlikely these and other problems will be resolved quickly, at least in the short-term, but, on the whole, the international community would be amenable to stepping support, not least because there is now widespread recognition it is the last line of containment and defence against a more deadly and extreme Al-Shabaab. Despite criticisms of its indiscriminate and heavy retaliatory attacks, there is grudging appreciation for AMISOM's impressive job of robustly fending off a series of repeated insurgent attempts to overthrow the weak TFG, a prospect many in the international community deem a "red-line issue" that must be avoided at all costs.⁴³

AMISOM's fundamental problem is an acutely familiar one, which many similar missions have grappled with: it is one of how to reorient strategy and clarify its mission and mandate in the face of complexity. What does it want to achieve in Somalia, how does it achieve it, what is the timeline and what is the exit plan?

Part of the problem stems from the fact that in the initial mission planning stages, there was inadequate appreciation of the complex nature of the task on hand. The euphoria and excess optimism surrounding the Djibouti process is partly to blame and to a large extent influenced many political and diplomatic decisions and planning. Optimistic assumptions, calculations, projections and scenarios inadvertently and insidiously wormed their way into the simplified templates for much of the proliferating Somalia strategies. Uganda's inexperience in peace missions also compounded the problem. In the event, the outcome was a simplistic mission model and objective, conceived and framed in traditional UN-style peacekeeping format. It became inadequate almost immediately after

⁴² AMISOM as well as the East African regional grouping IGAD have revised the figures upwards, and say 20,000 additional troops are now needed. MORE ON OFFERS, POTENTIAL TCCs.

⁴³ Since 2009, AMISOM's strong and decisive military action has been instrumental in saving the TFG from certain defeat and collapse at the hands of an alliance of hardline insurgent groups – Al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam. The last one, the so-called "Ramadan offensive" in September 2010, was quickly foiled and appeared on the whole less ambitious and dogged by internal rifts within the insurgents. The first major assault occurred in May 2009, when a combined Al-Shabaab-Hizbul Islam force – estimated at 5,000 – launched a ferocious surprise offensive on TFG positions that saw the rebels quickly advance on areas close to the hill-top residence of the president, Villa Somalia. Apparently, AMISOM and the TFG had intelligence about the impending, but the scale and speed caught many by surprise. Response was slow in coming as the AMISOM command – stung by repeated criticisms of disproportionate use of force – agonized and mulled over how to act. But once it became clear this wasn't the usual and periodic insurgent probing attacks to test defenses, but a far more serious and ambitious campaign, AMISOM swiftly swung into action, throwing thousands of men, battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicle, long-range artillery and mortars into the counteroffensive. Hundreds of insurgent fighters were killed in a week of the most intense fighting in Mogadishu in a decade. The insurgents were quickly beaten back. Hundreds of thousands of civilians fled the city. The defeat quickly reopened the deep fissures between Hasan Dahir Aweys and his old friends in Al-Shabaab and marked the start of the collapse of the Hizbul Islam-Al-Shabaab alliance, a rupture that is now permanent. The gravity of the humanitarian crisis that unfolded and the realization of how precarious the TFG's position was and how close it got to certain collapse, shook the international community out of complacency. The events galvanized international response, with weapons and resources pouring in to shore up the TFG, especially from the US and the EU. The events also helped to strengthen AMISOM, lending a much-needed *gravitas* to its status as the indispensable and preeminent agency keeping the TFG alive and the only effective bulwark against an Al-Shabaab takeover of the symbolically important city of Mogadishu. AMISOM's parlous and deplorable resource and equipment circumstances began changing gradually, as funds and other assistance started to arrive. The UN set up a special mechanism – UNSOA – to mobilize, coordinate and fast-track the supply of vital logistical support for AMISOM, especially good quality food, generators, vehicles and air-conditioned pre-fabs.

deployment. Attempts to have it redesigned to allow AMISOM to respond to the new realities and challenges, in particular greater combat flexibility, has turned into a protracted battle within the UN and the AU.⁴⁴

A more rigorous planning process would have helped AMISOM planners – from early on - to anticipate some of the major post-deployment complications, shed more clarity and better define the nature of its mission, negotiate a flexible mandate and at least avoid some of the rancorous and time-consuming debate over these issues. [Discuss political aspects]

The diplomatic tug-of-war over the AMISOM mandate is far from a simple struggle between the principled defenders of a traditional peacekeeping model and its archaic canons, on one side, and realists desirous of a newer, more agile and robust regime to respond to the unconventional conflicts of a post-modern world. In fact, many – even in the Security Council - are ambivalent, torn between a growing desire to see AMISOM launch a large-scale offensive to push out Al-Shabaab, and the trepidation of the wider fall-out.

This ambivalence, coupled with the fact the original mandate itself is sufficiently broad enough and elastic has been modestly exploited in recent months by AMISOM. Ugandan and Burundian troops have in recent months increased their military toeholds in Mogadishu, beyond their traditional strongholds in south Mogadishu. There are now over a dozen of these forward operating bases, officially “defensive” positions, deep in insurgent territory in north Mogadishu. Loosening the insurgency’s grip on Mogadishu, may, arguably, fall within the broader mandate of defending the government. It is equally plausible the new outposts afford AMISOM troops certain tactical advantage over the enemy and therefore an operational necessity designed to better execute their mandate. However, there is speculation the move is an indication of a “pre-offensive” posture that signals an impending major military campaign is being planned to retake Mogadishu, and one that would see AMISOM troops fan out to areas in the south and central Somalia.

Comment [EJH5]: Use Fred's list

Taking a clear offensive role carries many risks for AMISOM and the move will certainly create legal, diplomatic and political headaches, in the absence of a prior move by the AU to formally amend the mandate and an authorization from the Security Council.

If, as some allege, the move is part of a wider IGAD battle plan, tacitly approved by certain powerful actors within the international community, and that AMISOM may have obtained special assurances of political and diplomatic cover, that, in itself, is no defence for its actions, neither does it make the whole plan any less questionable. If the plan fails, AMISOM, stands to lose more than the other actors.

Relevant officials remain coy about the details of the so-called IGAD military plan. Kenya and Ethiopia are expected to take the lead, using their respective armies as combat support and reserve in a simultaneous multi-pronged offensive, led by ethnic Somali units trained in both countries to launch.

The risks of an exclusively military strategy are obvious, but worth reiterating. Defeating Al-Shabaab and other groups, is achievable, but it is unlikely that would mean an end to the insurgency. The remnants will most likely regroup and use the invasion – principally the involvement of Kenya and Ethiopia - to radicalise, whip up ultra-nationalism, further globalise the jihad and recruit more youth from inside and outside. It is inevitable, extremist jihadis that feel cornered will maximise their “asymmetric advantage”, stepping terror attacks across the Horn region and beyond.

[para on AS Crusader propoganda. How effective with Somalis?]

⁴⁴ One aspect of the polarizing debate that continues to generate a lot of heat revolves around the vexed issue of changing AMISOM’s original mandate of defending the TFIs to include greater offensive role. In July 2010, Uganda and the rest of IGAD made a spirited attempt at an AU Summit in Kampala to obtain the support of African leaders, a development that would have set in motion the process of formally changing the mandate. The pitch was well-timed, coming shortly after a deadly Al-Shabaab suicide attack that claimed over 80 lives in the Ugandan capital. Although there was genuine outpouring of sympathy for Uganda and President Yoweri Museveni’s angry remarks and threats to go after Al-Shabaaba resonated deeply at the summit, the call was gently rebuffed, mainly to avoid a diplomatic row with the UN, which had been opposed to the bid. While it is true many in the international community would have relished a blitz to punish Al-Shabaab, this desire was outweighed by the anxiety over the ramifications and the well-founded fears it could strengthen the insurgency.

It is not also clear how much planning or preparation has made for the political strategy to hold and create credible and popular local administrations in the so-called “liberated” areas. It is true that some clan elders may be secretly supportive of and privy to the planning, especially in the southern regions of Jubba, Gedo and in the central regions of Mudug, Galgudud and Hiraan. However, assumptions of a groundswell of support for the invasion in the south may turn out to be overly optimistic, notwithstanding the fact that Al-Shabaab is increasingly unpopular. In fact, as history clearly demonstrates, Somalis tend to universally reject foreign military interventions, even those that may, potentially, be objectively best for their long-term interest.

V. THE COLLECTIVE ACTION PROBLEM IN SOMALIA

[Let’s discuss, EJ will write] By most accounts Al Shabaab’s core military strength is in the range of 5-10,000 fighters. Yet at the same time, the estimate total number of armed clan militia members in south and central Somalia is in the range of 50,000. The problem is that these militia members are loyal to their individual clans and the clans do not act collectively. Thus Al Shabaab can dominate and coerce each individual clan, because they are much larger than any individual clan militia. Were the clans to act together—much like the clans that comprise Ahlu Sunna Wah Jama’a—then they could stand up to Al Shabaab and prevent them from entering their territory. Normally a government can solve this collective action problem by coordinating individual groups, but as we know the TFG has been unable, or unwilling to do this. Rather than try to supply all the troops necessary to defeat Al Shabaab by itself, the AU or UN should try to get help clans solve this collective action problem to defend against Al Shabaab incursions, and as important pin local Shabaab units down and prevent them from reinforcing other Shabaab positions at will throughout south and central Somalia.

VI. A WAY FORWARD

A. SUPPORTING LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS

One of the lessons that the international community has not learned is that the recreation of the European-style central state, based in Mogadishu, is almost certain to fail. The problem is that historically one clan has always captured that government and used its control of the central government to obtain most of the government’s resources and deny them to rival clans. Thus whenever a new transitional government is created the other clans give it only limited, or no, support, fearing it will only be used to dominate and marginalize them.

The logical alternative is a much more decentralized system, where most of the power, and resources are devolved to local administrations (preferably multi-clan) while the federal government only performs minimal functions and acts more to coordinate the activities of the different local administrations. There would be numerous ways to structure such a state. One example is the United Arab Emirates, where the emirates have most of the power, and the federal government (made up of the heads of the emirate) is relatively “thin” and only has limited powers.

I should add that Somalis will invariably have mixed feelings about this. While they may appreciate this may be the only way to deal with clan fears that they will lose power relative to another clan, most Somalis also want to have a strong state that can stand up to Ethiopia, which many feel wants to keep them weak and divided. The counter to this is that any decentralized government can, over time, become more centralized and stronger (much like the United States), but that their primary goal should be to establish an environment of peace and relative stability, where clans feel relatively secure, and in which Somalia is given a chance to develop and prosper.

[Discuss how this should be done—Jo Morrison’s project. EJ will write first draft]

B. LOCALLY RECRUITED AND ORGANIZED UNITS

[EJ expand] The same problem with recreating a central government exists with recreating an integrated national army. Many clans, and local administrations, are reluctant to send their troops to serve and fight for a notional national government in a place far away from their home territory (on reason the Ogadenis were unwilling to send their Kenyan-trained forces to Mogadishu).

[EJ Rationale Get language from Accidental Guerilla]

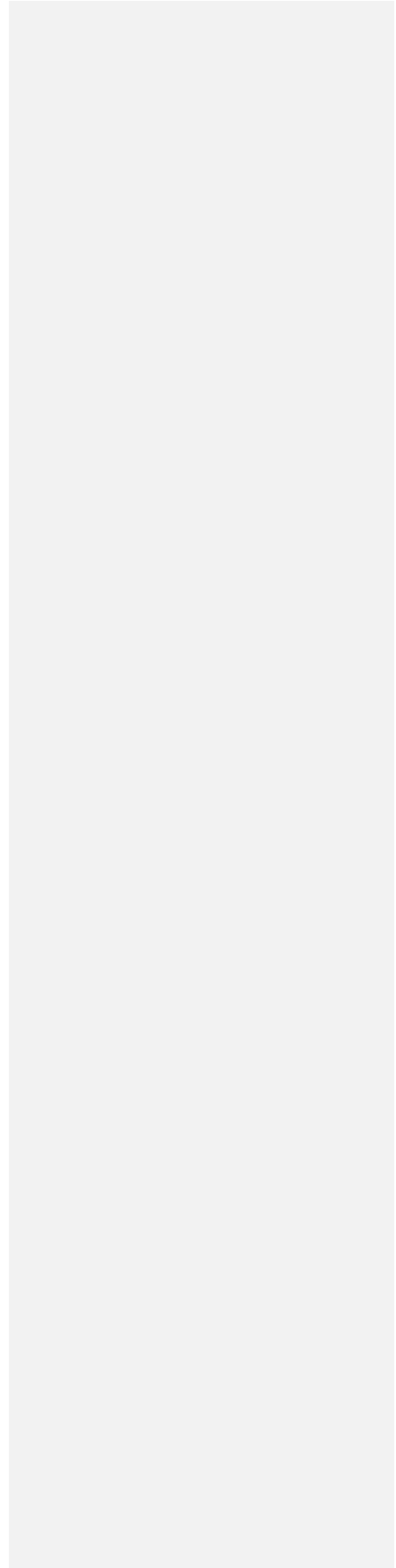
It has also been difficult to build unit cohesion in cross-clan forces—even for Al Shabaab! One possible alternative would be to adopt a British model of recruitment and organization, where units are recruited and organized along regional/local lines, e.g. Scotland, Wales, and Ireland each have a single infantry regiment. It would then be the role of the Ministry of Defence and the general staff to coordinate these units in campaigns of mutual interest, e.g. defeating Al-Shabaab or defending joint areas.

[Do we want to talk about a strategy for defeating Shabaab?]

VII. CONCLUSION

Attempts to reform the TFG must start from an awareness of how the absence of a clear and coherent vision has stalled progress. The real test of leadership and the only true measure of Sharif's seriousness and intent, lies in the speed with which he is able to formulate and unveil a political strategy and a coherent national vision.

Place, and date[Ex. Sum. end]



APPENDIX A

MAP OF TK

Appendices of abbreviations and acronyms, background explanations on rebel groups or charts etc., should be attached in the order in which they should appear in the published report.

Other appendices are maintained and added by the Publication unit.

