

Fighting for Peace in Somalia:

History and Analysis of the African Union Mission (AMISOM), 2007–2017

by Paul D. Williams

A Review by *Jacqueline Schultz*

Dedication, diligence, and a data-driven process are three qualities to describe Dr. Paul Williams' book, *Fighting for Peace in Somalia*. The African Union's Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) was approved on January 19, 2007 and implemented in March 2007 by an initial group of Ugandan soldiers that has become the longest ongoing peacekeeping operation to date. Its mission was mandated by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2372 to assist in establishing a peaceful political process from AMISOM to Somali security forces at all levels, reduce the threat posed by al-Shabaab and other armed opposition groups, and provide security to enable the political process, stabilization, reconciliation, and peacebuilding in Somalia. The AMISOM model was complex in its origin as the African Union provided the troops, the European Union supplied financial support, and the United Nations provided AMISOM its logistical support and bilateral partners. Williams, however, does not explore the complexities of international cooperation and coordination, but rather keeps his focus on the successes and failures implemented at an operational level.

In addition to being the largest and longest peacekeeping operation in history, AMISOM is also the deadliest. The number of civilian and peacekeeper deaths, although not openly publicized, is significant. Threats, such as the ones posed by al-Shabaab's regular use of terror technology and tactics has been a significant roadblock to AMISOM's organizational effectiveness. While al-Shabaab has lost much of its political influence and territorial control since 2010, it still remains a deadly force that consumes time, troops, and resources from AMISOM's primary mission.

Williams divides his book into two major sections. The first section covers AMISOM's history and how its mission has developed over time. The second half of the book addresses the operational challenges faced by AMISOM and

its key partners. Specifically, Williams assesses the effectiveness of AMISOM's implementation of logistics, security sector reform, civilian protection, strategic communications, stabilization, and its exit strategy. Even though AMISOM faced many challenges, particularly in its earlier implementation stages, the mission sets a precedent for future international peacekeeping missions. In Williams' book, the case study of AMISOM is highlighted to inform academics and the broader policy community of the successes and failures of the operation to guide future peacekeeping efforts.

In an interview with Williams on October 24, 2019, he discussed his motive and methodology for writing *Fighting for Peace in Somalia*. Williams' interest in peacekeeping operations in Somalia stems from his prior research background on Africa and international security. Equally remarkable to the amount of detail contained in his book is the lengthy process by which Williams conducted his research. This massive qualitative study required field research in Mogadishu, sifting through thousands of documents, and conducting numerous supplemental interviews to build a comprehensive analysis of the organizational history of AMISOM over a decade.

Williams faced several key challenges while conducting his research. The first was time. As AMISOM is still an ongoing operation, evaluating its overall merits is a premature judgment. To circumvent this issue, Williams decided to conclude his analysis after the first decade of AMISOM's implementation. The second challenge was tied to security, because his field research was located in a war zone. Williams' work was restricted to Mogadishu as he was prohibited from traveling outside of the capital due to security issues. Furthermore, AMISOM's peacekeepers are actively fighting against *al-Shabaab* and hesitated to provide him with information. The final challenge was psychological. This project required vast amounts of research with little assistance and would make anyone question whether they could complete the work or not.

After a decade of research, Williams is currently writing reports that pull out the key lessons learned in the Somalia peacekeeping mission and looking into key emerging security threats like artificial technology and biotechnology. Williams translates his vast knowledge of international security into the classroom with his "Emerging Threats" and "International Peacekeeping" courses. As such, Williams has valuable advice for students who are just starting their career. When conducting research, he acknowledges that there is the ideal world of study and the practical world. For students, better research is the result of access to information. Williams' access to documents and the fact that there was a lack of substantive research on the AMISOM mission already in existence led to his decision to write this book. Effective research and useful policy recommendations is tied to identifying gaps and analyzing potential solutions.