

Issue description

Committee: Security Council

Issue of: Tackling the issue of Somali conflicts

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Introduction:

The Somali people have suffered from prolonged oppression and violence at the hands of their fellow Somalis. They have lived in harsh and difficult conditions under both democratic and military regimes. During the democratic era (1960-1969), independence and newly established state institutions failed to meet people's expectations. Poverty increased and security deteriorated. Moreover, corruption, nepotism and cronyism characterised state institutions. The military regime took power in October 1969, but this act made the situation even worse. Siad Barre's government used indiscriminate killing, burning of villages and torture as instruments of control. Armed factions used the same tactics. As a result of the war and war-related causes, hundreds of thousands of Somalis lost their lives, and many more became displaced internally and externally.

Definition of key terms:

Mogadishu – Capital of Somalia

Al Qaeda - Al-Qaeda has conducted operations and recruited members in Africa. It has included a number of bombing attacks in North Africa and supporting parties in civil wars in Eritrea and Somalia. From 1991 to 1996, Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders were based in Sudan.

Al Shabaab – a jihadist fundamentalist group based in East Africa. In 2012, it pledged allegiance to the militant Islamist organization Al-Qaeda.

Puntland - a region in north-eastern Somalia, which declared itself an autonomous state in the late 1990s. It borders Khatumo to the west, Ethiopia to the southwest and the rest of Somalia to the south.

Somali National Movement (SNM) - a 1980s–1990s Somali rebel group. The Somali National Movement was organized in London, England, on April 6, 1981 by Hasan Adan Wadadi, a former Somali diplomat, who stated that the group's purpose was to overthrow the Siad Barre regime.

General overview:

A frail UN-backed government is fighting the al-Qaeda linked al-Shabab Islamist insurgency. The fight is hampered by the Government's inability to control its national security forces, who are largely recruited from clan militias and put through training by other nations.

There was no national government in Somalia for nearly two decades. Much of the country has been effectively governed by local authorities, in Somaliland and Puntland, but these entities were not recognized as states by the international community. There is a severe lack of capacity in every part of the country to adequately address problems. While parts of the north have been relatively peaceful, including much of the self-declared "Republic of Somaliland," inter-clan and inter-factional fighting have flared up with little warning, and kidnapping, murder and other threats to foreigners occur unpredictably in many regions. Since 1991, an estimated 350,000 to 1,000,000 Somalis had died because of the conflict.

The Somali Republic gained independence on 1 July 1960. Somalia was formed by the union of British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland, while French Somaliland became Djibouti. A socialist state was established following a coup led by Major General Muhammad Siad Barre. Rebel forces ousted the Barre regime in 1991, but turmoil, factional fighting, and anarchy ensued. The Somali National Movement (SNM) gained control of the north, while in the capital of Mogadishu and most of southern Somalia, the United Somali Congress achieved control. Somalia had been without a stable central government since dictator Mohamed Siad Barre fled the country in 1991.

Then followed the collapse of Somalia's international relations system, i.e. self-serving embassies that have no defined national external policy to support. Their remaining functions are renewal of Somalia passports and issuing new fake travel documents in addition to begging for scholarship to their own clan/sub-clan children, etc. The seat of Somali capital, i.e. Mogadishu, was in the hands of warlords and wrecked by clans claiming the city as a property of their own tribe. This kept making the restoration of Somalia all the more difficult because there was no capital equal to all Somalis. Somalia disintegrated into a number of poorly defined tribal territories, i.e. Puntland, Somaliland, Jubaland, Rahaweynland, Marihanland, etc., most of which had little capacity to provide bare minimum services to their own constituencies with the exception of ego-boosting clan identity. The intention of the formation of these territories were not based on ideology other than clan supremacy.

Somaliland and Puntland, two regions in the north, broke away from the country and set up regional, semi-autonomous governments. They were not internationally recognized. Unlike Somaliland, however, which has opted to reassert its independence, Puntland's constitution simultaneously supports the notion of a federal Somalia and asserts the region's right to negotiate the terms of union with any eventual national government. Other less developed political entities are also emerging out of processes currently at work elsewhere among the Somali. In the central regions of Galguduud and Mudug, for example, the local residents set up several years ago something they call the "Galmudug State," complete with its own website. In 2009, they elected a veteran of the old Somali military, Colonel Mohamed Ahmed Alin, to a three-year term as the second president of what described itself as "a secular, decentralized state." An analogous process was taking place in Jubaland along the frontier with Kenya. In April 2011, it was announced that a new autonomous authority, "Azania," had been inaugurated with the TFG's own resigned defense minister, Mohamed Abdi Mohamed ("Gandhi"), as its first president. Meanwhile, another self-declared administration, "Himan Iyo Heeb," originally established in 2008 by Habar Gidir clansmen in central Somalia, north of Mogadishu, had apparently become

active again. There were similar stirrings among the Hawiye in the Benadir region around Mogadishu and among the Digil/Rahanweyn clans farther south.

By September 2011, more than 20 separate regional governing authorities had developed across Somalia in addition to Puntland and the self-declared Republic of Somaliland (which maintains a separate regional governing authority) - including South-western Somalia, Ayn, Somalia, Maakhir, Northland State, Madar, and Somal. Some of the authorities engaged in armed conflict with each other.

After the attacks of 11 September 2001, the United States gradually began to take a more active role in Somalia's affairs, fearing that the country had become a haven for terrorists. The United States will strengthen engagement with the governments of Puntland and Somaliland in Somalia as part of a two-track policy aimed at curbing the growth of terrorist extremism, but also to support the Transitional Federal Government, according to Assistant Secretary of State Johnnie Carson. At a briefing 24 September 2010 in New York, Carson said the two-track policy supports the Djibouti peace process, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the government of Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, president of Somalia. Carson, who is the assistant secretary for African affairs, told reporters that engagement with Puntland and Somaliland is part of the second track.

The United Nations Security Council voted on 06 March 2013 to lift a 21-year ban on the sale of arms to Somalia, a move that had some of Somalia's autonomous regions like Somaliland, Puntland, and others worried. The British-led UN resolution put an end to an arms embargo that had been imposed on the country since 1992 in the aftermath of the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991. The ban was originally intended to quell violence in a country that had little semblance of central governance.

However, with tangible gains made in security and development, the international community was now in broad agreement that the arms ban should be lifted to allow weapons in to help the Somali army improve its monitoring capabilities and a drawdown of international peacekeepers. The UN resolution would allow sales of such weapons as automatic assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades, but leaves in place a ban on surface-to-air missiles, large-caliber guns, howitzers, cannons and mortars as well as anti-tank guided weapons, mines and night vision weapon sights.

While the end of the arms embargo may be good news for Mogadishu, Somalia's autonomous breakaway regions – Puntland, Somaliland, Baioda, and Jubaland – worried that the new development will threaten their hard-won security. Although these regions had their own armies, however nascent, they worried that a weak Mogadishu will be unable to effectively monitor and control the spread of newfound weapons. These regions are not alone: so too have rights groups like Amnesty International called the weapons ban removal "premature."

The resolution also extended for one year the African Union Mission in Somalia, known as AMISOM, which had been helping government forces stabilize the country and fight al-Qaida-linked militants.

After Siyad Barre was overthrown in 1991, most of the country's institutions, as well as law and order, were destroyed. Anarchy spread in the country. While successful in overthrowing the regime, opposition factions failed to fill the power vacuum because no faction (including the United Somali Congress that expelled Siyad Barre from Mogadishu) had the power to dominate the other groups militarily. They also failed to reach a negotiated settlement. As a

result, the factions kept fighting against each other for different motives. Most of the major factions have been fighting for domination, while smaller ones have been fighting for survival.¹

Major Parties Involved:

- Somalia
- United States of America
- Ethiopia
- al-Qaeda
- Kenya
- al-Shabaab

The timeline of events provides proper background information about the involvement of the aforementioned parties. (see below)



Timeline of events:

1991

The dictator Mohammed Siad Barre, who ruled the Somali Democratic Republic since 1969, is forced to flee when the capital of Mogadishu is captured by rival clan militias.

A power struggle ensues between two warring clan lords, Mohamed Farah Aideed and Ali Mahdi Mohamed. As a result of this struggle, thousands of Somali civilians are killed or wounded. Ali Mahdi Mohamed declares himself President of the Republic.

1992

An estimated 350,000 Somalis die of disease, starvation, or civil war. Images of famine and war are shown on American news networks. Feeling public pressure, U.S. President George H.W. Bush orders emergency airlifts of food and supplies to Somalia.

The UN Security Council approves a military mission, “Operation Restore Hope,” led by the United States to try to help the starving country by protecting food shipments from the warlords.

¹ <https://www.twn.my/title2/resurgence/2011/251-252/cover04.htm>

**1993**

Somali rebels shoot down two U.S. helicopters, resulting in the death of 18 U.S. Army Rangers and one Malaysian man. A heated battle ensues and hundreds of Somali civilians are killed.

1994

The U.S. formally ends the mission to Somalia, which has cost \$1.7 billion dollars and left 43 U.S. soldiers dead and another 153 wounded.

1996

Somalis suffer heavily under Mohamed Farah Aideed's reign and from subsequent fighting among warlords. Hussein Farah Aideed takes over after his father's assassination.

1999

Ethiopian forces invade and capture the regional capital of Garba Harre, which lies 250 miles northwest of Mogadishu, in order to try to suppress fighting among rebel groups.

2000

A cholera outbreak due to unsanitary water kills hundreds of Somalis.

2001

The United Nations declares that it will be pulling its international staff and aid workers from Somalia because of the dangerous fighting conditions and attempts at kidnapping.

2002

The U.S. government suspects that Al-Qaeda fighters may be seeking refuge in Somalia, and announces increased military operations in region.

2003

An interim government is inaugurated in Kenya, in hopes of putting together a central government. This is the 14th attempt since the 1991 coup. Col. Abdullahi Yusuf is elected interim president by the new governing body. The government functions in exile in neighbouring Kenya.

2004

Tsunami waves from Indonesia's earthquake kill 300 and displace tens of thousands along the Somali coast.

2005

The transitional government begins to return to Somalia, but there are still bitter divisions among members. Violence ensues upon their return. An assassination attempt is made on interim Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Ghedi.

Food shipments begin being hijacked off the coast of Somalia by rebel forces. Food aid programs, including the UN's World Food Program (WFP), are suspended.

2006

The transitional government meets for the first time since 2004 in the town of Baidoa. Deadly fighting breaks out in Mogadishu between warring militias, killing and wounding hundreds of civilians.



A militia-backed rival government to the Transitional Federal Government, called the Islamic Courts Union, seizes control of most of southern Somalia and captures Mogadishu from the U.S.-backed warlords.

Ethiopian troops re-enter Somalia.

Hard-liners within the Islamic Government declare holy war against Ethiopia. Fighting begins.

Thousands of Somalis flee to Kenya to escape drought, famine, and fighting. Many flock to the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya which has since become the largest refugee camp in the world.

2007

The transitional government regains control. President Abdullahi enters Mogadishu for the first time since 2004.

A U.S. air strike kills Aden Hashi Ayro, the leader of the Al-Shabaab insurgent group.

After negotiations with the Somali government, the U.S. begins strikes in southern Somalia where Al-Qaeda suspects are allegedly hiding.

A state of emergency is declared.

The UN Security Council approves a six-month African Union peacekeeping mission that will include 8,000 troops from neighbouring countries.

The number of Somali refugees hits one million.

2008

The UN Security Council approves the sending of other countries' warships to Somalia's territorial waters in order to combat the threat of Somali pirates, who have begun hijacking ships regularly.

The head of the UN Development Program in Somalia is killed by gunmen in Mogadishu.

Fighting continues, including coordinated suicide bomb attempts in the semiautonomous peaceful regions of the country.

3.5 million Somalis suffer from war and famine.

Previous attempts to solve the issue:

There were five major conferences that the international community supported. However, at least 12 additional conferences were held, all outside of Somalia and all of which also failed. Djibouti sponsored the first peace conference in August 1991 and the Arta peace process in 2000. It also hosted two rounds of conferences in May and June 2008 for the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia. Kenya hosted a conference for the Somali groups in April 1994 and October 1996. Moreover, in 2001 Kenya hosted two more conferences, in Nairobi and Nakuru. Some Somali groups met in Cairo in November 1993. Yemen held talks for the Somali groups in April 1997. This conference was useful as it destroyed the green line in Mogadishu between the United Somali Congress (USC) groups. Moreover, Yemen mediated the two factions of the TFG in 2005. Ethiopia organised two conferences: Sodere in 1996 and Awase in 2001. Sudan hosted three rounds of conferences between the TFG and the Union of Islamic Courts.

While the first two conferences were unsuccessful due to the lack of will on the part of Somali faction leaders, the Cairo and the Arta conferences failed due to foreign meddling too. When Somalis signed the Cairo Peace Accord, Ethiopia convinced Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf and General Aden Abdullahi Nur (Gabyow) to quit the conference. These leaders left Cairo and rejected the outcome. Moreover, Hussein Aideed, Ali Mahdi and others were also not interested in implementing the agreement. Hussein Aideed refused to leave Baidoa which his forces controlled. In addition, Ali Mahdi and Hussein Aideed failed to pacify Mogadishu. Many Somalis believe they had neither the will nor the capacity to do so.

Possible solutions and approaches:

- Many Western countries did not clearly state how they would deal with the new regime after it was established - although this changed in 2006 when the Union of Islamic Courts emerged. The US and Great Britain cautiously welcomed the development, but their recognition and support were conditional on how the new government functioned in the country - in fact, Washington ignored the government and decided to work with the Mogadishu warlords in undermining the government. These countries' past policies toward Somalia did not change. When former president Abdiqassim Salad Hassan and his prime minister, Dr Ali Khalif Galaidh, asked for assistance in 2000, the US and other Western countries told the transitional national government they would receive assistance when their government was fully functional in the country. Had the Western political and economic support come right after the conclusion of the conference, the survival chances of the Transitional Federal Government would have been much better.
- In short, the causes of the Somali conflict are multiple. I have argued here that the main causes are competition for power and resources, colonial legacy and state repression. Moreover, I discussed the roles of clan identity and the clan pride that comes with it. Regarding the reasons that led to failure of the efforts to end the Somali conflict, a combination of factors including lack of will and capacity on the part of Somalis and foreign meddling are behind the collapse of the five major peace conferences.



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