



SECURITY COUNCIL

THE SITUATION IN SOMALIA

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|---------|
| I. Introduction | 3 |
| II. Definition of Key Terms | 3 – 4 |
| III. General Overview | 4 – 7 |
| IV. Major Parties Involved and their Views | 7 – 9 |
| V. Relevant United Nations Documents | 10 |
| VI. Questions to Consider | 10 |
| VII. Conclusion | 10 – 11 |
| VIII. Bibliography | 11 – 12 |

I. Introduction

The Somali conflict is one of Africa's oldest wars. It's deeply rooted in Somalian history and continues to shape this country's future. For two decades the civilians have been caught in the middle of this civil war's instability and insecurity. Currently, the conflict is raging between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces and their supporters on the one hand and al Shabaab and other fundamentalist groups on the other, and is not a sudden or inexplicable eruption. It's imperative to understand that it is a result of the interplay of multiple historical, social and political processes that has shaped the political and socio-economic structure of Somalia, and therefore exploring these aspects as sources of the conflict is fundamental in addressing the issue.

This conflict has had numerous implications on Somalia's population such as famine, higher vulnerability to diseases, migration and many more. In addition, the extreme weather conditions, most notably the Sima drought, have put an even greater strain on the civilians and displaced 300,000 people. Another notable development is also the extension of the conflict from inland areas to the sea off the coast of Somalia. The coastal water of Somalia is now the most pirate-infested sea, posing a serious threat to maritime security and trade.

II. Definition of Key Terms

a) Fragile setting:

Fragile settings are defined by the overlapping, interconnected challenges people living there face. Fragility cannot be narrowed down to a single number due to how interconnected and overlapping many of the challenges causing fragility are.

Nevertheless, a common issue that fragile states face is the lack of easy access to basic necessities that the population needs to survive.

b) Conflict area:

High-risk areas may include areas of political instability or repression, institutional weakness, insecurity, collapse of civil infrastructure and widespread violence. Such areas are often characterized by widespread human rights abuses and violations of national or international law.

c) Non-state armed group:

Individuals and groups that are wholly or partly independent of state governments and which threaten or use violence to achieve their goals.

d) Patrimonialism:

A form of political organization in which authority is based primarily on the personal power exercised by a ruler.

III. General Overview

- a) Historical roots - colonialism:** Somalia is no exception to the influence of past colonialism. In fact, the division of present-day Somalia into five colonial units creates a historical precedent to the conflict. It resulted in the division of the people of Somalia into various sovereign territories. This has continued to affect not only the domestic politics of Somalia but also its relations with its neighbors. The structures introduced by colonialists became a source of tension between territories, as they also resulted in an uneven distribution of goods and power.

- b) A social precedent for the conflict- the clan structure:** The clan is the most important social structure in Somali society, being the source of structured law and order as well as social activities. An imposed centralized state led to the struggle for control over political and economic resources. The issues with administration which followed colonialism in the form of the reign of General Siad Barre further worsened inter-clan relations.
- c) A political precedent for the conflict - a patrimonial rule:** Siad Barre, the former head of state in Somalia, enforced multiple policies that characterized his reign as a corrupt and patrimonial system of governance. Through manipulating clan politics and representation in the government, Barre created mistrust and antagonism within the country. Rebuilding trust within strained relations between members of various groups and the established view that the state was a tool for accumulating political and economic power for one's clan will be crucial in order for the Somalis to peacefully coexist.
- d) Overview of the conflict**
- i) Brief historical background:** Siad Barre's regime (1969-1991) resulted in the escalation of not only inter-clan conflict, but also influenced relations with Somalia's neighbors, most notably Ethiopia. Both countries supported each other's opposition until 1988, when a mutual agreement changed the course of the conflict. That is because this agreement prompted the Somali National Movement (SNM) to launch an offensive against Barre's government from Ethiopia, which later resulted in a brutal response, which included a bombing of Isaaq-inhabited territories. By the end of 1990, various parts of Somalia had thus fallen into the hands of different clan-based rebel movements. Further on, amid the chaos of the

struggle for control of the capital, Mogadishu, Somaliland declared itself to be an independent state under an SNM government. Somalia has therefore descended into a state of uncessant violence, which presently includes Islamic fighters in addition to the clan-based warlords and militias.

- ii) **Current state of the conflict:** Following the intervention of Ethiopia, the military wing of the UIC named al Shaabab started the most violent insurgency Somalia has seen since the 1990s. Until present day, the TFG, which faced internal fighting that resulted in a struggle for legitimacy, and the opposing forces fight for control of the country while seeking support from various parties, such as AMISOM, the UN, or Ethiopia.
- iii) **Fall of the Somalian state:** The fall of Siad Barre's reign in 1991 resulted in a political vacuum that precipitated the breakdown of law and order as relations between various people groups in Somalia. As the state could no longer offer any kind of support, civilians resorted to their clan membership.
- iv) **Militarization:** The fall of the state and retreat of individuals to their clans or sub-clans resulted in the militarization of civil society. This also resulted in the degradation of human rights, rule of law and institutional culture in general. It also created the conditions for a weapons market due to the absence of border controls through the collapse of the state.
- v) **Religious aspect of the conflict:** the involvement of religious beliefs gave the conflict a different dimension and needs to be taken into account. That is largely due to the ICU's involvement in Somalian politics as well as Al Shaabab's military dominance in various regions.

- vi) **The rise and prevalence of piracy:** this is a major source of concern for maritime security when it comes to any vessel passing through Somalian waters. It's a clear threat to international peace and security as it doesn't only impede on global trade, but also feeds the civil war.

IV. Major Parties Involved and their Views

- a) **The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM):**

A peacekeeping operation supporting the Somali government. Its military component is a party to the armed conflict.

- b) **Al-Shabaab:**

A non-state militant group that describes itself as waging jihad against "enemies of Islam", and is engaged in combat against the Federal Government of Somalia and the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM).

- c) **Transitional Federal Government (TFG):**

The TFG is the fourteenth attempt to create a functioning government in Somalia since the end of Muhammad Siad Barre's dictatorial rule in 1991 which was formed in late 2004.

- d) **Islamic Courts Union (ICU):**

The Islamic Courts Union (ICU) originated as a loose association of Islamic courts in Somalia, which provided security and managed crime after the fall of Siad Barre's authoritarian regime in 1991. Around 2000, the courts first united to form what would be called the ICU. It later evolved from a judicial system to a

governing apparatus, eventually providing social services and implementing Sharia law in the territories under its control. The ICU maintained a powerful militia, which included the group that would later become known as Al Shabaab, and conquered Mogadishu and much of Somalia in June 2006. After ruling for several months, the ICU was defeated in December 2006 by troops from Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Ethiopia, and the group was disbanded.

e) **Somali National Movement (SNM):**

The SNM was established by Hassan Adan Wadadi and other members of the Isaaq clan in London on April 6, 1981. It consisted primarily of members of the Isaaq clan and began a rebellion against the Somali government in northern Somalia on January 2, 1982. SNM moved its headquarters from London to Dire-Dawa, Ethiopia in 1982.

f) **The United States of America:**

President George H.W. Bush ordered 28,000 U.S. troops to Somalia, saying that America must act to save more than a million Somali lives, but reassuring that American forces will not stay one day longer than is absolutely necessary.

Unfortunately, America's humanitarian troops became embroiled in Somalia's political conflict, and the controversial mission stretched on for 15 months before being abruptly called off by President Bill Clinton in 1993.

g) **Kenya:**

Kenya invaded Somalia in October 2011. The official reason for launching the invasion was that Kenya's national security was threatened by the Somalia-based

Islamist militant group, al-Shabaab, that had carried out a number of cross-border raids into Kenya during the months ahead of the operation.

h) Ethiopia:

Ethiopia and Somalia have a longstanding history of conflict, among other things, over the Ogaden territory of Ethiopia. Ethiopia sent its troops into Somalia and drove the ICU forces from all the territories they were controlling. The military success of the Ethiopian forces however did not lead to the expected stabilisation of the TFG nor did it totally incapacitate all elements of the ICU and, by implication, it did not fully address the threat this posed to Ethiopia. Failing to contain the attacks by al Shaabab on its forces, and the anti-Ethiopian sentiments it galvanized among Somalis, and frustrated by the infightings within the TFG and the failure of the international community to support it, Ethiopia decided to withdraw from Somalia within the framework of the Djibouti process.

i) Djibouti:

In December 2011, Djibouti became the third country to contribute to AMISOM. Furthermore, the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) (successor to the ICU) was an Islamist organization that had its headquarters in Djibouti. It was created in September 2007, when members of the Islamic Courts Union and Somali opposition leaders met in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, and united to oppose Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the latter's Ethiopian allies. The group was active until January 2009, when ARS members were formally incorporated into the TFG parliament following a peace agreement.

V. Relevant United Nations Documents

- a) [Resolution 2540 \(2020\)](#)
- b) [Resolution 2551 \(2020\)](#)
- c) [Resolution 2554 \(2020\)](#)

VI. Questions to Consider

- Should international action be limited to containing piracy?
- Should the US government reconsider its general listing of al Shaabab as a terrorist organization?
- Is there a way to negotiate for al Shaabab to renounce human rights violations and hostilities towards the government as well as abandon extremism?
- In addition to dealing with the crisis in central Somalia, how should the situation with self-declared autonomous states be handled?
- How should the long years of mistrust and inequality among the Somalis be compensated for?
- How does Somalia guarantee the support of neighbouring countries?
- Should peace efforts be directed toward establishing a national government?
- Does the conflict require a more robust peacekeeping force?

VII. Conclusion

In conclusion, the ongoing armed conflict, insecurity, lack of state protection, and recurring humanitarian crises exposed Somali civilians to serious abuse. There are an estimated 2.6 million internally displaced people, many living unassisted and vulnerable to abuse. In order

to meet the goal of ending the conflict, it's imperative that the delegations have an understanding of not only the current situation, but also all of the political, historical and social backgrounds fueling the situation. The UNSC should continue to be actively seized of the issue and strive towards an effective peace process.

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