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RESEARCH REPORT

ADVISORY PANEL ON THE QUESTION OF THE
HORN OF AFRICA
(APQ)

ADVANCING SOLUTIONS FOR THE CIVIL UNREST
IN SOMALIA

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Basic Overview of the Issue

Situated in the Horn of Africa, Somalia features arid plains, plateaus, and a coastline along the Indian Ocean. Its strategic location has historically made it a center for trade and cultural exchange, contributing to its diverse geography. Somalia's history is characterized by pre-colonial empires, followed by colonial rule and eventual independence in 1960. The post-independence era saw political instability, the overthrow of the Siad Barre regime in 1991, and a prolonged period of civil unrest. The country continues to navigate challenges in reconstruction and stability, with international interventions playing a significant role in shaping its contemporary history. Furthermore, Somalia's economy relies on livestock, agriculture, and strategic trade due to its location along the Gulf of Aden.



Figure 1: Physical Map of Somalia

Prolonged conflict has hindered economic development, making remittances crucial. Rebuilding economic institutions and attracting foreign investment are ongoing priorities for reducing dependence on humanitarian aid. Somalia is a federal parliamentary republic with a president as the head of state and a prime minister as the head of government. The political system includes regional administrations, reflecting a federalist structure, but challenges persist in establishing a stable central government presence. Moreover, Somali society is traditionally organized around clan-based structures, with extended families or clans determining social identity. A complex interaction of political, social, economic, and historical factors has led to civil unrest in Somalia. The collapse of central governance structures was facilitated by the power vacuum created by decades of political unrest, which culminated in the overthrow of the Siad Barre regime in 1991. The proliferation of armed factions and extremist groups, like Al-Shabaab, has been made possible by the lack of a stable and effective government. Social unrest is



also fueled by underlying conflicts arising from economic inequality, resource competition, and clan affiliations. The humanitarian crisis has been exasperated by the effects of repeated droughts, famine, and community displacement. This has made state-building more difficult and contributed to the continuation of civil unrest in the area. There are still ongoing diplomatic initiatives, peacekeeping missions, and international interventions.

Explanation of Important Terms

Civil Unrest

Civil unrest is public dissatisfaction or discontent expressed through protests, demonstrations, or other collective actions, often stemming from political, social, or economic issues. It involves a disruption of societal order, reflecting the tension and grievances within a community.

Terrorism

Terrorism is the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence against individuals or property in an attempt to coerce or intimidate governments or societies to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives.

Clan violence

Clans are social units organized around extended family ties, tracing lineages through shared ancestry. Clashes between opposing clans can and do harm civilians.

Organized Crime

Organized crime is a set of criminal activities carried out by a hierarchical group of collaborators. These groups use violence, intimidation, and corruption to maintain their operation, financial gains, and territory. Forms of organized crime include drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, extortion, and racketeering.

Refugee

A refugee is an individual who has been forced to flee their home country due to well founded fears of persecution based on factors such as race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

Economic Freedom Index (EFI)

The EFI is a measure of economic freedom granted to individuals within a country, in terms of the legal system and socioeconomic status of the country. It determines the



ability of an individual to independently control their economic assets.

Human Rights

Human Rights refers to the collection of rights guaranteed by the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights to people of all races, gender, and age.

Human Capital Index (HCI)

The HCI is a measure of a citizen's economic productivity that entitles their education, health, and well-being. Opportunities such as access to transportation, health, or luxuries increase a citizen's productiveness (the value a citizen provides to the economy, like the GDP per capita), and, hence, the HCI.

Insurgency

Insurgency is an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict.

Detailed Background of the Issue

A nuanced understanding of Somalia's sociopolitical history is crucial for addressing historical grievances and formulating policies that target deeply embedded issues contributing to civil unrest. Simultaneously, insights into the socioeconomic factors such as poverty, inequality, and displacement are vital for designing precise interventions that alleviate specific challenges, fostering economic opportunities, and promoting social cohesion. Integrating these specific insights into policymaking is essential to develop comprehensive strategies that effectively curb civil unrest and contribute to sustained peace in Somalia.

Sociopolitical History of Somalia

Understanding the sociopolitical conditions in Somalia is vital to address the deep-rooted historical, cultural, and political factors contributing to civil unrest. Recognizing the nation's complex clan dynamics, historical grievances, and economic disparities is crucial for developing targeted interventions. Additionally, an awareness of external influences, such as terrorism, allows for more informed strategies. By grasping these intricacies, experts can work towards inclusive governance, economic development, and conflict resolution, fostering a more sustainable path to peace in Somalia.



Ancient History

The Somali Peninsula, strategically positioned at the crossroads of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, fostered dynamic trade and cultural exchanges. Notably, the port city of Zeila emerged as a thriving maritime hub, engaging in commerce with regions across the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Arabian Peninsula. The city's prosperity, driven by trade in spices and precious stones, contributed to a cosmopolitan atmosphere influenced by Arabian, Persian, and African cultures. The Somali people, organized along clan-based structures rooted in pastoralist traditions, developed a distinct social fabric that, coupled with oral traditions, preserved their rich history and cultural heritage.

Colonial History

The colonial history of Somalia unfolded in the late 19th century when European powers, chiefly Britain and Italy, carved out territories in the Horn of Africa. In 1884, the British established control over the northern regions, creating British Somaliland. Meanwhile, in the south-central areas, Italy declared authority and formed Italian Somaliland in 1889. These geopolitical divisions, arbitrary and devoid of consideration for ethnic or cultural affiliations, set the stage for post-independence challenges in nation-building.

Under Italian rule, attempts to transform the region into a settler colony significantly impacted the traditional pastoralist lifestyle. The Italians introduced cash crops, disrupting the age-old patterns of nomadic herding. In the British protectorate, a policy of indirect rule aimed to preserve local governance structures, but both colonial administrations left enduring imprints on the socio-cultural fabric.

After World War II, in 1960, Somalia gained independence through the unification of British and Italian Somaliland. The promise of self-determination, however, was soon overshadowed by challenges in integrating disparate regions and managing political and economic instability. The colonial legacy left a lasting impact on the independent Somali state, influencing its early years and contributing to the complexities of forging a cohesive national identity.

Modern History

The latter half of the 20th century and beyond has been a tumultuous period in



Somalia's modern history. Following independence in 1960, the Somali Republic faced internal challenges rooted in regional disparities and a fragile post-colonial state structure. While the initial years held promise, by the late 1960s, political tensions escalated. In 1969, a military coup led by General Mohamed Siad Barre resulted in an era of authoritarian rule that endured until 1991. Siad Barre's regime exacerbated clan divisions, leading to internal opposition and ultimately culminating in a devastating civil war.

The collapse of Siad Barre's government in 1991 unleashed a complex civil conflict. Central authority disintegrated, giving rise to clan-based militias and contributing to widespread humanitarian crises. International intervention, including the deployment of peacekeeping forces, aimed to restore stability, but faced formidable challenges. The absence of a stable government created a vacuum, allowing extremist groups such as Al-Shabaab to gain influence, further complicating efforts to achieve lasting peace and security.

In recent years, Somalia has made strides in political reconstruction and stability. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG), formed in 2004, sought to guide Somalia toward stability and lay the groundwork for a permanent government. Despite facing internal divisions and external pressures, the TFG played a crucial role in the establishment of the Federal Government of Somalia in 2012. Ongoing conflict, humanitarian crises, and the threat of extremism continue to pose significant challenges.

Socioeconomics of Civil Unrest in Somalia

The socioeconomics of civil unrest in Somalia, marked by poverty, economic inequality, and limited opportunities, are central to understanding and mitigating the ongoing challenges. Widespread displacement, a humanitarian crisis, and disruptions to education and healthcare further compound social tensions and increase vulnerability to recruitment by militant groups. A comprehensive approach that addresses economic disparities, fosters development, and rebuilds essential services is crucial for tackling the root causes of instability and building a foundation for lasting peace in the region.

Clan Structure

The clan structure in Somalia is intricately woven into the social, cultural, and



political fabric of the nation. One prominent example is the Hawiye clan. The Hawiye have historically played a significant role in Somali politics, and their influence extends to key regions, including the capital, Mogadishu. Another noteworthy clan is the Darod, who have traditionally influenced the northeastern parts of Somalia.

The social significance of clans is exemplified in marriage practices. For instance, the Isaaq clan in the northern region of Somaliland exhibits a preference for endogamous marriages, strengthening social ties and preserving a sense of communal identity. In conflict resolution, traditional elders from clans, such as the Rahanweyn, often serve as mediators, utilizing customary law to settle disputes within their communities.

Politically, the impact of the clan system is evident in the power dynamics of the Somali government. The 4.5 power-sharing formula allocates political positions among the four major clans (Darod, Dir, Hawiye, and Isaaq) and a coalition of minority clans. This formula, established in the early 2000s, aims to ensure representation but has also been a source of contention, highlighting the delicate balance between recognizing clan identities and fostering a unified national governance structure in Somalia.

Economic Development

Somalia's economic development has been shaped by a combination of internal challenges and external factors. The prolonged civil conflict, which started in the early 1990s, significantly hampered economic progress, leading to the collapse of institutions and infrastructure. However, in recent years, there have been signs of recovery. The Human Capital Index (HCI) provides insights into the country's efforts to invest in its people. Despite challenges, Somalia has made strides in areas such as education and health. The HCI reflects this progress, measuring the skills and health outcomes of the population. With continued focus on human capital development, Somalia aims to build a more skilled and resilient workforce, essential for sustainable economic growth.

Moreover, Somalia's performance in the Economic Freedom Index is indicative of its economic policy environment. The index evaluates factors such as property rights, government integrity, and trade freedom. Somalia has shown improvement



in certain areas, fostering an environment conducive to economic activities. The gradual restoration of security, efforts to strengthen governance structures, and initiatives to attract foreign investment contribute to a more favorable economic climate. However, challenges persist, and a comprehensive approach that addresses institutional weaknesses and promotes economic freedom will be vital for Somalia's continued economic development. The nation's trajectory demonstrates the intricate relationship between human capital investment and economic policy reforms in shaping a more resilient and prosperous future.

Major Parties Involved

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Ethiopia has played a key role in the dynamics of civil unrest in Somalia, stemming from historical tensions, geopolitical considerations, and shared security concerns. The Ogaden War in the late 1970s, a conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia over the Ogaden region, contributed to strained relations. Whereas, in recent years, Ethiopia has been actively involved in regional peacekeeping efforts, contributing troops to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Ethiopian forces have engaged in counter-terrorism operations against extremist groups, particularly al-Shabaab, aiming to stabilize the region and prevent the spread of terrorism. Ethiopia's involvement in Somalia is also influenced by its strategic interests in maintaining regional stability, managing refugee flows, and countering transnational threats.

United States of America

A major highlight of the United States' involvement in Somalia is the Battle of Mogadishu, vividly depicted in the "Black Hawk Down" incident in 1993. During a mission to capture a Somali warlord, two U.S. Black Hawk helicopters were shot down, leading to an intense urban battle. More recently, the U.S. has focused on counterterrorism operations against groups like al-Shabaab. Notable instances include targeted airstrikes to eliminate high profile al-Shabaab leaders, such as the operation that killed the group's founder, Ahmed Abdi Godane, in 2014. Additionally, the U.S. has supported the Somali National Army through training programs to enhance its capability in counterterrorism



efforts.

Egypt

Egypt, with its strategic interest in maintaining stability along the Red Sea and safeguarding international trade routes, has a shared concern with the international community in addressing the challenges faced by Somalia. Collaborative efforts, including diplomatic initiatives and peacekeeping missions, aim to ensure a secure environment that fosters economic activities and sustains international trade passing through the Red Sea.

Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab is an Islamist extremist group active primarily in East Africa, particularly Somalia. Established in the mid-2000s, the group initially sought to establish a strict form of Islamic law in Somalia. Al-Shabaab has been responsible for numerous attacks within Somalia and neighboring countries, targeting civilians, government officials, Figure 2: Image of Al Shabaab insurgents and peacekeeping forces.



Figure 2: Image of Al Shabaab insurgents

The group has also been involved in transnational activities, including recruitment, fundraising, and collaborating with other terrorist organizations, like Al Qaeda.

The State of Eritrea

Eritrea has faced allegations of supporting armed groups and factions that oppose the Somali government, contributing to the country's civil unrest. These allegations involve accusations of providing military assistance, training, and financial support to elements such as Al-Shabaab. The involvement of Eritrea in Somalia's internal affairs has been a source of regional tension and has prompted concerns among international actors working towards stability in the Horn of Africa.

The Republic of Djibouti



Djibouti has been a key contributor to regional stability amid Somali civil unrest through its active involvement in AMISOM. Djibouti's military forces have played a vital role in peacekeeping operations within Somalia. Additionally, Djibouti's geopolitical significance is evident in its hosting of military bases for major international powers, such as the United States, France, and China, underscoring its role as a strategic partner in addressing security challenges in the region. Djibouti's commitment extends to maritime security, as it actively participates in anti-piracy efforts off the coast of Somalia, contributing to the safeguarding of vital sea routes.

Chronology of Important Events

Date	Description of Event
January, 1991	The overthrow of Siad Barre in 1991 plunged Somalia into chaos. Clan-based militias and warlords vie for control – prompting peacekeeping efforts.
October, 2004	The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was formed to bring sociopolitical stability to Somalia.
2006	Al-Shabaab emerges and gains control of significant territories within southern and central Somalia.
January, 2007	The Ethiopian military withdraws from Somalia, creating a security vacuum.
March, 2007	The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) was established with the goal of stabilizing Somalia by supporting the TFG.
August, 2012	The Federal Government of Somalia is formed, bringing a period of relative political stability to Somalia.



November, 2023	Somalia joins the East African Trade bloc, enabling free trade.
December, 2023	UN Security Council votes to remove weapons embargo on Somalia.
January, 2024	Somali president Mohamud warns Ethiopia not to sign a port deal with the Somaliland break-away region

Relevant International Documents

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Resolution adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly), 20 December 2006 (N/217/A/III):
 - <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/udhr.pdf>
 - Guarantees fundamental rights to all humans, such as but not limited to the right to safe housing, adequate nutrition, clothing, access to healthcare, sanitation, decent education, and clean water.
- The Geneva Convention (Convention ratified by all General Assembly member states, 12 August 1949)
 - <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-0173.pdf>
 - States that refugees cannot be returned to a country where they will be in danger and must be guaranteed fundamental rights (education, work, housing, etc.) by the host country.
- The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 10 December 1982, (2467/A/XXIII)):
 - https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf
 - Delineates the rights and responsibilities of nations with respect to the use of the world's seas, including the delimitation of maritime boundaries and EEZs, the management of fish stocks, and the protection of the marine environment. Bans piracy and maritime trafficking.



Past Attempts to Resolve the Issue

One notable attempt to address civil unrest in Somalia was the international intervention in the early 1990s, particularly the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM). Prompted by the humanitarian crisis resulting from the civil war and famine, the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of peacekeeping forces in 1992. The mission aimed to restore stability, facilitate humanitarian aid delivery, and promote political reconciliation. However, the operation faced numerous challenges, including escalating violence, resistance from local factions, and the tragic "Black Hawk Down" incident in 1993, which led to a reassessment of international involvement. Ultimately, the intervention did not fully achieve its objectives, and Somalia continued to experience political instability and conflict in the subsequent years.

Another significant attempt to address civil unrest in Somalia was the establishment of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2004. This initiative sought to bring together various Somali factions and create a transitional authority that could pave the way for a more stable and representative government. However, the TFG faced internal divisions, external pressures, and challenges in extending its authority beyond the capital, Mogadishu. The lack of widespread support and ongoing conflicts hindered the effectiveness of the transitional government, highlighting the complexity and difficulty of finding a sustainable solution to the civil unrest in Somalia.

Solution Alternatives

Effectively addressing civil unrest in Somalia necessitates fostering an inclusive political environment through sustained dialogue involving clan leaders and marginalized groups. Concurrently, strengthening state institutions, particularly at the regional level, and implementing targeted economic development programs can contribute to stability.

Meanwhile, humanitarian aid must be coupled with long-term development initiatives to rebuild infrastructure and improve essential services. Supporting community-based peacebuilding efforts and investing in education programs that promote tolerance can enhance social unity. Moreover, regional collaboration is crucial for addressing security



challenges and curbing the influence of armed groups. Counterterrorism efforts should be strategic, complemented by comprehensive security sector reforms to ensure professionalism and respect for human rights. Additionally, diplomatic engagement at both regional and international levels is essential to raise support for peacebuilding initiatives in Somalia. By tailoring these specific strategies to the unique context of Somalia and making use of international organizations and non governmental organizations like Amnesty International, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, a more targeted approach can be taken to address the root causes of civil unrest in Somalia.

Useful Links

- A documentary on Al Shabaab by Channel 4 News: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVSwoE9Y1RI>
- The war in Somalia from the U.S. perspective by VICE News: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DD9-W9z62o>
- For socioeconomic data on Somalia: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/somalia>
- For geographic and sociopolitical information on Somalia: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/somalia/>

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Figure 1: <https://www.worldometers.info/maps/somalia-map/>

Figure 2: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54690561>