
Analysing Somalia Conflict: Involving Actors, Causes, Triggering and Possible Solutions

Mohamoud Abdirizak Abdi

Department of Planning and Policy, Ministry of Defence Somaliland, Hargeisa, Somaliland

Email address:

Oodakore010@gmail.com

To cite this article:

Mohamoud Abdirizak Abdi. Analysing Somalia Conflict: Involving Actors, Causes, Triggering and Possible Solutions. *Advances in Sciences and Humanities*. Vol. 9, No. 2, 2023, pp. 29-33. doi: 10.11648/j.ash.20230902.13

Received: September 26, 2022; **Accepted:** October 17, 2022; **Published:** May 25, 2023

Abstract: This study is analyst Somali conflict roots and investigate social effects of this long term conflicts. This paper is analyzing Somali conflict and it is backed up by analyzing and utilizing existing literature as well as reports. It also included include the comprehensive range of conflict dynamics identified, and the way in which factors that are identified as having greater importance are identified and discussed. This paper is Structuration approach of the framework provides a degree of sophistication in distinguishing conflict enablers, such as availability of arms, from sources of tension such as chronic resource shortages unemployment and the limitations of traditional legal frameworks. Furthermore, the essay also presented the possible solutions on Somalia conflict such as it presented to apply indigenous or grass root peace building approach which Somaliland managed its civil wars and conflict and also build democratic political authority which have the popularity as well as legitimacy of its own people. Also this essay identifying the role of actors or agencies of Somalia Conflict by declaring their positions and also underlying interests of the conflicting parties. Finding the causing and triggering factors of Somaliland conflict and long historical linked problems from traditional, and solutions to solve Somaliland Elders and clans are solve their conflict's in 1991.

Keywords: Somali Conflict Roots, Peace Building, Guurti, Traditional, Cold War, Reconciliation

1. Introduction

After the collapse of Somali government 1991, Somali people faced long lasting war, drought and insecurity. These challenged the normal life of the Somali endogenous social. The overthrow of the Siyad's Regime created new political competitions between the rebel groups. Ali Mahdi Mohamed has been appointed the interim president. Mahdi's selection was rejected by other factions notably the United Somali Congress (USC) headed by General Mohamed Farah Aideed. Warfare broke out and south-central Somalia fell into heavily armed, violent lawlessness, causing the destruction of much of the capital [17].

The eruption of war in the capital also coincided with the start of the Allied offensive against Iraq in the first Gulf War and therefore received little attention from the international diplomatic community. It was thus left to regional governments to initiate the first mediation efforts in Somalia.

This essay will critically analyze the conflict of Somalia. Generally, it present brief background on the conflict. It also

outline theoretical approaches towards Somalia conflict. The essay will also identify the role of actors or agencies of Somalia Conflict by declaring their positions and also underlying interests of the conflicting parties. It also explore the causes and triggering factors of the conflict, after concluding aforementioned points, it will present possible solutions on Somalia long bloody conflict.

2. Overview of Somalia Conflict

Conflict in Somalia played a major role in the return to peace, and that there is a subtlety in understanding the circumstances that have prompted factors to do either, or both. A systematic appraisal of the historic factors also is needed to understand to analyze and present all about Somalia conflict such as clannish: a politically manipulable, source of social division, readily mobilized militia, and, through its complexity, a barrier to national reconciliation. Yet most conflict mediation and settlement in Somalia occurs through the informal Xeer framework of traditional clan law

[12]. The emergence of war economies in some areas is similarly contrasted with the business--influenced return to stability in others.

The collapse of President Siyad Barré’s military regime in 1991 is accepted as the catalytic event that triggered major conflict in Somalia, however specific events during the regime’s rule contributed to the state’s collapse into anarchy. Breakdown of the state’s social contract is also another a leading factor of conflict.

The Cold War dynamics also allowed the regime to access substantial funding for military and economic aid. The key conclusion drawn is that this became the regime’s primary source of revenue, prompting unsustainable level of expenditure and bureaucracy which collapsed once foreign aid was removed. It also enabled the regime to rapidly militarize Somalia and raise one of the largest armies of sub-Saharan Africa [7].

The availability of weapons does not necessarily lead to conflict, and also the extent to which respective international relationships between Somalia and the USA and USSR undermined public support [9, 11].

Hence, the political disintegration of the regime as primarily results from three major wars between 1977 and 1991. Irredentism from Somalia’s borders at independence is also important despite being a primary motivation for involvement in each war and a central aspect of all its immediate national relationships [13, 7]. Somalia’s invasion of Ethiopia and dramatic defeat in 1978 prompted the formation of Somali movement’s intent on removing the regime.

Inadequate government representation, military atrocities and massive population displacements then triggered a civil war with the northern Somali National Movement, culminating in the secession of Somaliland in 1991. The report concludes that these factors led more clan-based

liberation movement to start fighting to overthrow the government, with their subsequent struggle for power pushing the country into anarchy.

A war between 1991 and 1992 enabled a host of actors to seek power who stood to benefit from perpetuating instability. The primary example is the raise of warlords who depended on insecurity to legitimize activities such as protectionism, clans, that took advantage of conflict to appropriate assets or power similarly had little incentive to engage in negotiations. These process dynamics have permanently shaped societal structure in Somalia [15, 13, 12].

Another Factor is the range of profitable criminal opportunities provided by the conflict; for example the appropriation of Western food aid by warlords for on selling [7]. Demonstrates that informal economic networks mobilized in violent conflict develop corruption, violence and economic dependency. Sexsmith [12], challenges this pointing the development of a positive informal economic system in Somalia and arguing that transformation depends on the historic relationship of informal institution embedded in social society to the state.

3. Theoretical Approach Towards Somalia Conflict

Many things that occurs in Somalia are structural and all worst civil wars, intra-state conflicts, or ‘new wars’ have rooted in local rather than systemic factors and involve politically motivated violence primarily within the boundaries of single state and this war my spread and become sustainable like Somalia civil war [19]. There are different underlying and proximate causes of internal conflict in Somalia and many other African countries, particularly Sub-Saharan countries.

Table 1. The underlying and proximate causes of internal conflicts.

Underlying Causes	Proximate Causes
The structural characteristics of weak states.	The politics of weak states—elite strategies
*Institutional weakness	*Ethnic politics
*Economic crisis	*Exclusive politics and political centralisation
*Legitimacy and political crisis	*Authoritarianism and repression *Patronage politics
*Patrimonialism	*Democratic politics and manipulation
*External vulnerability and contagion.	*Warlord politics and war economies

Source. Jackson, R., 2002.

Many of the Situations that triggered Somalia social relations on wide scale are structural. For example, World Bank Report [12] identifies that the efforts to establish the Transitional Government (TNG) occurs, because of the failure of the state under Siyad Barre to uphold social contract as well as social truth. The other structural factor popularly fueled and caused the conflict of many African countries is “resource curse.” Somalia does have the capacity to extract its natural resource and that caused shortage of resource such as water and fertile land this created resource curse as the World Bank [12].

Therefore, Structural factors such as the volume of arms

available in socially diverse regions do not necessarily drive the social structure into conflict without key agencies to catalyze action [5, 6, 4]. This demonstrates that a primarily structural interpretation of the Somali conflict is limited.

4. Involving Actors in the Conflict

Clan identified impacts in almost all armed conflicts in modern Somalia, clan identities are malleable and manipulation by self-interested leaders often forms the basis for conflict. Conversely, a deep variety of cross clan relationships play an important part in countering the conflict,

evidenced by a growing number of civil society organizations and business partnerships. Conflict devolution has been a significant trend. The fragmentation of the state has provided clan leaders opportunities to seek more territorial, economic and political control. This downward spiral has culminated in the archaic feuding associated with Somalia today and specific conflicts in each region of Somalia. Most involve resource or infrastructure disputes: stronger clan fighting for control of plantations and real estate held by weaker, typically agricultural clan for example; or in more remote districts, proximity to roads with access to commerce and aid. Parochial leaders act in clan interests, often increasing willingness to provoke conflict [16].

On the other hand, religious fundamentalism has had significant impact within Somalia, including the dramatic rise and fall in 200 of the Islamic Courts Union and its military wing [14]. Radical Islam has yet to become a dominant force in Somalia, potentially because of the wide of islamits positions in the Somali political arena [13]. That is true of almost all the groups interviewed for this project except al-Shabab which retains a cross-clan—and even a non-Somali, international – base. All established and emerging regional administrations are associated with particular clans [2, 10].

The dichotomy amongst these groups' nationalistic and, at times, universal outlook and, on the other hand, the imperative of clan dynamics emerges as one of the key features of the struggle for political power in the new federal setup.

After over a decade of disengagement from Somalia, the United States resumed a robust diplomatic and military engagement as part of the war on terrorism. Especially since the emergence of al-Shabab as the main protagonist in the Somali conflict, the goal of countering and containing the threat of extremism and terrorism has shaped American and, to a large extent, European policies towards Somalia [2]. The so-called 'dual-track' approach to put Somalia back together as a state was first enunciated in 2010 as a policy for supporting the central government in Mogadishu in addition to Somaliland, Puntland, and other emerging entities in Somalia [19].

Both steps in the process bringing together different clans and factions under one regional authority and making the relationship between Mogadishu and regional authorities work have thus far proved to be a source of political tension and, in numerous cases, armed conflict.

This perennial clan dilemma has been further complicated by the peculiar religion-political and military context in which the federal project is being laid out in Somalia. In political terms, as the following discussion argues, religion and control of internal and external resources prevent the possibility of a wide-ranging and durable political settlement among the various political and armed factions. From a military perspective, the role of al-Shabab, most of its Somali armed rivals (that also have feuds among themselves) as well as the multi-nation African Union force (AMISOM) are the key actors whose actions directly impinge upon the processes of building a Somali federation [11].

5. Causes and Triggering Factors of Somalia Conflict

Arnold [8], in his book entitled 'The A to Z Civil Wars in Africa' he articulated that the African civil wars probably based on three different kinds including: ethnic or what is he called racial, sociopolitical and or political power, but this factors are spoils and overlapped. And also, the author argued that most of African conflict is caused ethnic conflict, since there are different balanced ethnic groups which usually antagonistic traditions and that it is very complicated to understand that the mostly conflicts in the continent are caused by ethnicity. But the surprise comes when the ideology factors are mix ethnic just like some forms of Marxism versus Western-oriented free enterprise during Cold War, for instance- after the immediate aftermath of independence when the rival groups wants to control and this results the violent results that it become difficult to understand [8].

According to Kusow, [1], pinpointed that the current civil war in Somalia is the result that was going on long time ago which basically depends on the cultural, ecological differences, families and how they use history. Also, he added that some of the clans in Somalia do not trust each other, because of the long hostility and mistrust among them and this leads that the county exist in prolonged civil war [1].

To sum up the genesis of Somalia conflict, there are three interrelated factors and these three factors are not only Somalia, but all resulted the internal wars in Sub-Sharan Africa countries. First, the social inequality resulted from both colonial and post-colonial states, because there is lack of resource distribution or indirectly through domination of the country's economic activities. The successive Somali governments created patrimonial paths to state benefits and became the creators and enforcers of social inequality within the society. The beneficiaries of this unequal distribution of state benefits in Somalia are advantage on the basis of clanism, tribalism and regionalism and this cause social grievances [3].

A second factor is the economic decline in the mid-1980s that resulted from among other things the reduction of the economic aid. The result was the disappearance of diminishing of the large and corrupt central government's ability to maintain its reciprocal relation with the various groups, usually the relatives of the ruler in the country [3].

The third factor is access to weapons among the civilians which occurred when civilians grievance encourage to take the weapon and turned it as a mode of survival and defense during the disparate economic and other social issues and the abundance of the weapons was the result of Somalia's hyper-militarization since independence, coupled with armed forces who were impoverished by the economic decline and social inequalities [3].

6. Possible Solutions

There have been plenty of peace efforts in Somalia like

1991 First Attempts at Reconciliation, 1993 Conference on National Reconciliation, 1997 National Salvation Council, 1997 Cairo Peace Conference, 2000 Somalia National Peace Conference, 2002 Somali Reconciliation Conference (Arta Conference), 2003 National Reconciliation Conference, 2004 Nairobi Conference and 2007 National Reconciliation Conference. None of these peace conferences and reconciliations bring sustainable political stability.

Aforementioned, the causes of the Somali conflict have their roots both in local factors, including social, cultural, economic and political traits of the Somalis, and external factors, including the geo-political and strategic desire of powers from inside and outside the region.

The 1991 failure and collapse of the state in Somalia ushered in what was to become a long-term and largely unsuccessful effort aimed at internationally driven post-conflict state reconstruction and state building. Since 1992 Somalia has been the subject of numerous peace conferences and a succession of attempts at re-establishing the state apparatus and a government. But, the situation is different, because Somaliland which re-took its independence from Somalia after 1991 succeeded to maintain peace and order through indigenous conflict resolution mechanism.

Somali traditional leaders "Guurti" plays vital role inter-clan conflict resolution. In Somaliland, the utilization of the clan elders for the establishment of peace and stability enabled the creation of a foundation upon which to create a state as well as creating a necessary link between 'old' Somali governance and the desired 'new democracy'. The utilization and inclusion of the clan in Somaliland's state-building process from the beginning has been vital not only for stability, but also for legitimacy.

In my argument, Somalia lack this indigenous conflict resolution approach, because external actors are pushing and administering all the different efforts of Somalia peace-building. This mechanism, which Somaliland people utilized, can be favor of Somalia political stability. My second argument is that It could be determined by the leaders in Somaliland that clan institution was a part of the process of state-building, but not the resulting state and path to democracy to Somalia was dependent upon the Somali clans.

On the other hand, if the Somali government in Mogadishu believes in Somali unity it should come up with innovative solutions for the creation of states that can enhance that unity and allay the fears and concerns of the people in these states. It should also refrain from entering into talks that can potentially undermine such unity. The recent Djibouti declaration may have been interpreted by some as being an agreement between equal and sovereign states. Such cloak and dagger negotiations that skirt around the core issue of resolving the obstacles facing Somali unity will only prolong the status quo.

The formation of states that cut across clan lines may help Somalia achieve the illusive unity that it has been seeking for more than two decades. With fine tuning, Somalia may finally end up with a solution to end its prolonged mistrust and clan bickering to the satisfaction of all sides.

Our worst nightmare is for the current situation to continue

with the country languishing under the mercy of foreign troops that may not have the best interest of Somalia at heart. Such an atmosphere will make it very difficult to get rid of the extremist elements among us and delay the withdrawal of foreign troops from Somalia. It is like being caught between a rock and a hard place.

The only way we can overcome this prolonged nightmare is to start talking to each other instead of talking over each other. Talks between the top leaders of the Federal Government and Somaliland should be transparent and should include all stakeholders. The fate of Somalia cannot be decided by Hassan Sheikh and Silanyo alone [11]. The traditional leaders of Somalia must have a say in these talks. The educated elite must have a say in these talks. The political leaders of the various Federal States must have a say in these talks. Short of that, Somalis will interpret these talks as a conspiracy to undermine Somali unity.

7. Conclusion

The essay analyzed conflict in Somali and it is backed up by analyzing and utilizing existing literature as well as reports. It also included include the comprehensive range of conflict dynamics identified, and the way in which factors that are identified as having greater importance are identified and discussed.

A protracted social conflict interpretation can be clearly drawn although the essay also avoids trying the causes of conflict to a single theory-bes shown in the presentation of clan identity as an often manipulated source of tension rather a simplistic primary causal factor. The Structuration approach of the framework provides a degree of sophistication in distinguishing conflict enablers, such as availability of arms, from sources of tension such as chronic resource shortages unemployment and the limitations of traditional legal frameworks.

The essay also presented the possible solutions on Somalia conflict such as it presented to apply indigenous or grass root peace building approach which Somaliland managed its civil wars and conflict and also build democratic political authority which have the popularity as well as legitimacy of its own people.

References

- [1] Kusow, A. M. (1994). Peace and Stability in Somalia: Problems and Prospects. *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 22 (1-2).
- [2] Hussein, A. H. (2008). The future constitutional structure of the Somali Republic: Federal or decentralized Unitary State. *Hiiraan Online*.
- [3] Osman, A. A. (2007). Cultural diversity and the Somali conflict: Myth or reality?. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 7 (2), 93-133. Brown, M. E. (2001). Ethnic and internal conflicts: Causes and implications. *Turbulent peace: The challenges of managing international conflict*, 209-226.

- [4] Collier, P., & Sambanis, N. (Eds.). (2005). *Understanding Civil War: Africa* (Vol. 1). World Bank Publications.
- [5] Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2004). Greed and grievance in civil war. *Oxford economic papers*, 56 (4), 563-595.
- [6] Wam, P. (2005). *Conflict in Somalia: drivers and dynamics* (No. 36032, pp. 1-61). The World Bank.
- [7] Dersso, S. A. (2009). The Somalia Conflict implications for peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts. *Institute for Security Studies Papers*, 2009 (198), 24.
- [8] Herbst, J. (2014). *States and power in Africa: Comparative lessons in authority and control* (Vol. 149). Princeton University Press.
- [9] Ismail, A. A. (2007). Lawlessness and economic governance: the case of hawala system in Somalia. *International Journal of Development Issues*.
- [10] Tawane, A. A. (2017). *Federalism in Africa: The case of Somalia*. Pambazuka News, 6.
- [11] Sexsmith, K., 2009. Violent conflict and social transformation: An institutionalist approach to the role of informal economic networks. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 21 (1), pp. 81-94.
- [12] Menkhaus, K. (2011). *Somalia and the Horn of Africa*.
- [13] Menkhaus, K. (2003). State collapse in Somalia: Second thoughts. *Review of African political economy*, 30 (97), 405-422.
- [14] Kimenyi, M. S., Mbaku, J. M., & Moyo, N. (2010). Reconstituting Africa's failed states: The case of Somalia. *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 77 (4), 1339-1366.
- [15] Reno, W. (2003). *Somalia and Survival in the Shadow of the Global Economy. Somaliland Cyberspace*.
- [16] Menkhaus, K. (2006). Governance without government in Somalia: Spoilers, state building, and the politics of coping. *International security*, 31 (3), 74-106.
- [17] Menkhaus, K., Sheikh, H., Joqombe, A., & Johnson, P. (2009). *A History of Mediation in Somalia since 1988. Nairobi, Kenya: Interpeace*.
- [18] Spears, I. S. (2003). Reflections on Somaliland & Africa's territorial order. *Review of African Political Economy*, 30 (95), 89-98.
- [19] Jackson, Richard. "Violent internal conflict and the African state: Towards a framework of analysis." *Journal of contemporary African studies* 20, no. 1 (2002): 29-52.

Biography



Mohamoud Abdirizak is a post-graduate diploma in planning and policy at join program Universities of CSI University, Hargeisa, Somaliland and GIMPA Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration. He earned in 2021 Executive masters in Managing peace and Security in Africa at Addis Ababa University (IPSS). He earned also in 2020 Master of Arts in Governance and Leadership from Hargeisa University, Somaliland. He holds certificate of Excellence in human resource management. He is the current Director of planning and policy at Ministry of Defense Somaliland.