CRISIS IN SOMALIA IN THE CONTEXT OF BRECHER'S DEFINITION INTERNATIONAL CRISIS

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Abstract

The crisis in Somalia is one of the worst crises that have ever happened on both local and international scene. It is characterised by violence, which keeps on escalating between Transitional Federal Government and the Islamic Courts union. This situation has made Somalia a dangerous country to the extent that since 1991 it has been without a central government. This persistent crisis in Somalia has caused Somalia into intractable conflicts both locally and internationally. In the light of this, there has been international intervention and withdrawal of external actors due to complexity of the crisis. In this context this crisis has been perceived differently. This paper attempts to explain the Somali crisis in the context of Michael Brecher's definition of international crisis. The focus is on the key drivers for the persistent breakdown of Somali society that have kept the crisis alive. The paper concludes that Somalia has been plunged into continuous spiralling violence resulting into persistent crisis and conflicts both internally and externally due to internal and external political dynamics of the country as portrayed in Brecher's ideas on the landscapes of international crisis.

Introduction

All interstate crises possess sufficient potential for the occurrence of violence. Those involving ethnic non-state actors are no different. This potential exists whether the issues states fight over are central or peripheral and whether they involve powerful or relatively weak contenders. That is to say that the behavioral dynamics of crises can contribute to conflict and violence even when both sides genuinely prefer non-violent alternatives (Brecher, 1997: 96). Instances of escalation and de-escalation exist both across and within interstate crises. The

crisis between Somalia and Ethiopia took high levels of violence with Ethiopian forces invading Somalia. This paper attempts to make an analysis of this crisis in the context of Michael Brecher's perception and definition of international crisis particularly focusing intractable conflict, namely the one between Somalia and Ethiopia, concentrating on the Somali society. Specifically, it demonstrates the reflection of the discussed societal beliefs in the Somalis.

Brecher (1993: 3), defines international crisis as a change in type and/or an increase in intensity of disruptive interactions between two or more states, with heightened probability of military hostilities, that in turn, destabilizes their relationship and challenges the structure of an international system. Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1997: 5) believe that international crisis begins with a disruptive act or event, which trigger off conflict and creates foreign policy crisis for one or more states. They also point out that "international crisis ends with an act or event that denotes a reduction in conflictual activity."This definition of international crisis put forward by Brecher so far encompasses international relations and domestic affairs. Nevertheless, the focus here is, the international crisis, although internal crisis within Somalia is prominent. Internationally, as the more general definition suggests, the term international crisis also refers to a turning point between peace and war. It should be noted that strategy and data in this paper, analysis is based on Brecher's definition of International crisis and the data analysed is mainly from Brecher's literature, United Nations reports and related literatures on crisis in Somalia.

An Overview of Somalia's indulgence in international crisis

The Somali Republic (1960–1991) constituted the former Italian colonies of South-central Somalia and Puntland and the former British Protectorate of Somaliland. Significant armed conflict was absent during Somalia's first 17 years of independence (1960–77). The first 10 years of independence were marked by vibrant but corrupt and eventually dysfunctional multiparty democracy. When the military came to power in a coup in 1969, it was initially greeted with broad popular support because of public disappointment with the clannishness and deadlock that had overwhelmed politics under civilian rule. In the context of the cold war, the regime, led by Siyad Barre, recast the coup as a socialist revolution and with funds from international partners built up one of the largest standing armies in sub-Saharan Africa.

There have been six international crises in Ethiopia and Somalia since its inception in 1960. These are Ethiopia-Somali (1960-61); Ogaden I in (1964); Ogaden II (1977-78); east African confrontation in 1980-81 (Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia); Ogaden III 1982; and 1987 Todghere incident, (Brecher and Wikenfeld. 1997: 96; Booth, 2008: 9). On 26th December 1960 7000 Somali tribesmen surrounded Ethiopian police garrison and launched a heavy attack. On the 29th Ethiopia responded forcing them to retreat, (Ibid). In pre-crisis period, economic conditions were severe in Somalia preceding the crisis escalation.

Between 1977 and 1991, Ahmad (1998: 137), argues that the country endured three major armed conflicts. The first was the Ogaden War with Ethiopia in 1977–78, in which Somali forces intervened in support of Somali rebel fighters in a bid to liberate the Somali-inhabited region of the Ogaden. Somalia lost the war and suffered around 25,000 casualties. Ahmad further stresses that those losses sowed the seeds of future internal conflict, prompting the rise of several Somali liberation movements' intent on overthrowing the military regime of Siyad Barre, whom they held accountable for the tragedy in Somalia. He also mentions that the first of these movements was the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), established in 1978 by Abdullahi Yusuf. This mainly Majerten clan movement engaged the regime in fighting in the northeast of the country and was met with harsh repression.

The second major armed conflict was the war between the Somali military and the Somali National Movement (SNM) for control over northwest Somalia. The SNM was formed in 1981 by some members of the Isaaq clan following the Ogaden War. Isaaq grievances deepened over the course of the 1980s, when the Barre regime placed the northwest under military control and used the military administration to crack down on the Isaaq and dispossess them of their businesses (Lewis, 1965). The civil war mounted by the SNM began in May 1988 and produced upheaval in the country. Government forces committed atrocities against civilians (an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 Somalis died, mostly members of the Isaaq clan, which was the core support for the SNM); aerial bombardments leveled the city of Hargeysa; and 400,000 Somalis were forced to flee across the Ethiopian border as refugees, while another 400,000 were internally displaced. In 1991 these atrocities fueled Isaaq demands for secession in what became the self-declared state of Somaliland, (Ahmad, 1998: 139).

The third armed conflict before 1991 pitted embattled government forces against a growing number of clan-based liberation movements in 1989 and 1990. The strongest of these movements included the United Somali Congress (USC), (Hawiye clan), the Somali Patriotic Movement (Ogadeni clan), and the Somali Salvation Democratic Movement (Majerten clan). This multi-front war presaged the predatory looting and banditry that characterized the warfare in 1991–92.

In addition to these wars, many other legacies of the Barre period fuel conflict in contemporary Somalia. First, the state was oppressive and exploitative, and was used by some political leaders to dominate others, monopolize state resources, and appropriate valuable land and other assets. As a result, reconciliation and power-sharing discussions in Somalia are complicated by high levels of distrust and a "zero-sum game" mentality toward political power and the state. Second, the leadership skillfully manipulated and politicized clan identity over two decades of divide-and-rule politics, leaving a legacy of deep clan divisions and grievances. Third, this period coincided with the height of Cold War competition in the Horn of Africa. That allowed the Barre regime to attract large quantities of military and economic aid. When the war ended, the level of expenditure, especially to maintain the bloated bureaucracy, was not sustainable and precipitated the fall of the regime.

As the Cold War waned in the late 1980s, Somalia's strategic importance to the West diminished, enabling donors to place human rights conditions on aid to Somalia. Western donors froze aid to Somalia in response to the war with the SNM in the north, stripped off its principal source of revenue, the Somali state shrank and eventually collapsed. An initiative by a group of eminent Somalis known as the "Manifesto Group" to broker reconciliation and establish a provisional post-Barre government was met with arrests by the Barre regime in April 1990.

Crisis in Somalia: Crisis Escalation and De-escalation at State level

At state level, Clan is considered the central inter-actor factor in Somali society that shapes and influences all aspects of Somali crisis. The Somali experience demonstrates that clan is a double-edged sword it unites Somalis and divides them. Thus, clans need to be constructively encouraged to serve as facilitators of cooperation and mutual assistance. In short, this factor has got a number variable that explain the persistent occurrence of crisis in Somalia:

- Manipulation of clan identities: Clan and sub-clan identities are used to underscore differences and sharpen cleavages for specific objectives. Such differentiation in identities may be based on real or constructed differences and may change depending on the goals being sought. This is because the legacy of the Barre regime is still alive, and clan groups continue to view the state as an institution that will enable them to acquire political and economic control and provide benefits to their clan kin. After the initial lawlessness that followed state collapse, the state divided along regional lines that is, south-central Somalia, northeast (Puntland), and northwest (Somaliland). The three regions have followed different routes and achieved varying levels of success in governance. However, FAST International, (2007) emphasizes that clan and political rivalries will remain and continue to play an important role as an ingredient of crisis in Somalia. Doornbos and Markakis (1994) too, echo similar view that kinship and clans are elements that lubricate the Somali political behaviour. In this context, Marten (2006: 42) puts it that clans or tribes are traditionally significant decision-makers. Therefore, it is perhaps correct to say that absence of central government in Somalia does not affect the Somali population so much. But continued existence of failed state in Somalia has made the rest of the world insecure. It is argued that Somalia poorly controls its borders. This has resulted into illegal trade and smuggling of weapons and the country is considered a breeding ground for al-Qaeda (Ibid: 44).

- Politicization of identities: In the name of clan protection, identities are politicized to mobilize clan members and wage war, thus seriously damaging inter- and intra- clan structures. This kind of crisis threatens the core or vital interests of values of the society. The survival of citizens and unity in the country is likely to be at stake. This is so, because a crisis may arise from a situation of intensifying tension between or among clans. In this kind of crisis the element of strategic or tactical surprise attack is eminent.

- Clans as forebearers of peace: Clans are a potential source for reconciliation because they possess ability to shape relations between warring groups. Instead of focusing on differences, the common bonds of language, religion, traditions, and inter-clan marriage, can be also pointed out to be potential values that can unite Somalis.

- ⸱Customary laws: Clan elders use traditional laws to settle disputes in non-confrontational ways. In fact, in the absence of state authority or when official channels of mediation do not work, clan elders use customary laws to bring about negotiated settlements and prevent conflict escalation.

- Cross-clan partnerships: In recent years, Civil Society Organisations, businesses, and local initiatives have formed on cross-clan lines to work toward development and peace, helping to build trust and overcome suspicions among clans. But at the same time they are drivers of conflicts in the country.

- Non-state actors provide governance: After a period of anarchy, traditional structures that cut across clans resurfaced to provide some semblance of law and order. Communities depend on Sharia courts and customary laws to address disputes and provide justice. Thus, they are a force of conflict de-escalation.

- Potential fiefdoms with uneven commitment to broker peace: In response to limited state authority, faction leaders have created their own narrow geographic areas of control. The boundaries over which they exert authority are constantly shifting and their authority challenged. Several armed faction leaders appear content with this situation, and there seems to be no real commitment to accepting a state structure that does not give them a prominent role. The success of a new government will in large measure depend on its ability to mediate conflicting interests between factions, and convince groups that the benefits from long-term stability outweigh the gains from short-term clan dominance.

Explanation of Ethiopia-Somalia's indulgence in crisis in the perspective of Brecher's conception of International crisis

The problem of international crisis can be explained by actors' violent behaviour and explicit motivation of the crisis

- Capability is one of the inter-actor variables that can explain the Somalia crisis. This is a multi dimension attribute that includes diplomatic, economic and military resources. It is believed that there is a link between/among these aspects and outbreak of international crisis. For example, the military power and crisis behaviour of states with nuclear capability. The argument is that a state with large amount of nuclear weapon is likely to

be very prudent about using violence to cope with crisis. In other words, it is likely to act with greater confidence in the pursuit of its interests.

- Another important inter-actor variable that influences Somalia to engage in crisis with her neighbours such as Ethiopia is geographic distance between them. The argument here is that proximity has been playing a significant role generating a perception of value threat among the two countries. Thus, Ethiopia's intervention in Somalia was very much determined by geographic proximity. And States were at liberty to utilize violence because of their territorial boundary. It is argued, that "state behaviour in crises will vary with geographic proximity. Thus, crisis actors are more likely to employ violence in crises close to home", (Brecher, 1993: 32). This has been the case with Ethiopia and Somalia crisis. Colonial and Cold War politics left Somalia in general and south-central Somalia in particular vulnerable to be used as a proxy for geostrategic purposes. Thus, because of its geographic position bordering Ethiopia, and its historical and cultural affinity with Egypt, the contest for influence in Somalia among regional states has remained intense.

- Closely related to the above is the regime type and duration. It is argued that democratic regimes are likely to respond to crises more cautiously, while leaders of military regimes are more likely to rely on violence in the escalation of crisis, (Ibid: 147). Somalia has been under authoritarian regimes. The authoritarian regime both military and civilian in Somalia, have been much freer in choosing and posing value threat to not only within its territory but even outside utilizing violence directly. Struggle for control of the state, which brings political and economic power, has been a continuing source of conflict. Smith argues that Transitional Federal government (TFG) since it assumed the political power has been engaging rebel group (Al-Shabaab) with relentless mortar fire. Absence of good governance, and experience with a repressive state have made Somalis' suspicious of government. Many Somalis see the state as "an instrument of accumulation and domination, enriching and empowering those who control it and exploiting and harassing the rest of the population", (Ken, 2003). This view grows from their experience with Barre's government, which made them inherently distrustful of a strong central state. The military regime of Siyad Barre was primarily dominated by small elite of the

Marehaan sub-clan of the Darood, who used their sub-clan identity to control the state and exploit valuable resources. Therefore, perhaps it is correct to argue that politics in Somalia reflects a life and death struggle over private access to scarce public resources. The zero-sum nature of the struggle forces political leaders to seek for material gain in order to wield influence.

- Barre's authoritarian government also systematically manipulated clan identities and politicized clan cleavages by favoring clans that would enable it to maintain authority. These policies have had far reaching effects and have produced sharp split and deep suspicion among the clans and sub-clans that define Somalia today. Barre's government also followed a policy of oppression of the Issaq in the northwest section of the country, which sowed the seeds of Issaq secessionism and led to the unilateral declaration of independence by Somaliland after the state collapsed, (Conflict Analysis Regional Report-Somaliland, 2004). Ken (2003b) emphasizes that the regime collapsed in 1991, yet the legacy of deep clan divisions, poor governance, and myopic political leadership continues to haunt the country and prevent the formation of a government of national unity. Instead, subaltern entities have gained prominence, with some faring better than others. The three regions of the former Republic of Somalia have followed different trajectories since 1991. Somaliland has made impressive efforts in consolidating peace and creating a stable regional administration.

- Both Ethiopia and Somalia as new states have been accentuated by domestic instability because of their age. It is pointed out that old states are expected to behave more prudently than new states in all crises. That is, more established states are likely to have superior capability of exhibiting behaviour that permits non violence tendencies. Thus, an international crisis can also be initiated by an internal challenge to a regime, See also (Brecher 1993: 33).

- Internal instability, Somalia has constantly been buffeted by external forces, and has itself been a continuing source of instability for its neighbours. Somalia has unsuccessfully challenged the borders it inherited at independence, thus making it a major contagion for regional instability. Furthermore, its location along the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden shipping lanes ensure that the contest for influence has not been limited to the immediate

region, but have made Somalia a chessboard for larger strategic jockeying throughout the last century. This strategic position location of Somalia puts it in fragile situation. In 2003, when the US invaded Iraq, utilized Djibouti a tiny strategically located country next to Somalia to train Ethiopian forces in the lead up of the invasion of Somalia, (Wengraf, 2009).

- Major power activity is one of the attribute in the context of Brecher's definition of international crisis, (Brecher, 1993; Wengraf, 2009). There are two arguments here one is economic and the other is political. The economic, factor according to Wengraf (2009), Somalia's continental position adjacent to the Red sea, Suez Canal and its key commercial waterways has made it including her neighbor Sudan a target for oil exploration by the US companies. From the political point of view, Wengraf emphasizes that the Somali crisis is a direct result of the US and the former USSR actions of arming different sides with billions of dollars and arms. Added to this, the Ethiopia-Somalia crisis, Ethiopia's agenda is driven by self-defined security concerns. These have been brought into much sharper relief since September 11th, as Addis (2003) has defined this threat in terms of international terrorism. It has focused its attention, and that of its Western supporters such as the United States of America and Britain, on the links between local groups like Al-Itihad al-Islamiya, which has a presence on both sides of the Ethio-Somali border, and international groups such as Al-Qaeda. Wengraf (2009) argues that Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2006 was backed by the US. This focus allowed Ethiopia to have an internationally sanctioned rationale for its strong opposition to the Transition National Government, which it accused of having Islamist influences. This self-defined security concerns of Ethiopia, although contested by many Somalis, is safeguarded within the Somali border.

- In addition, Ken (2003) points out that United States of America's policy in Somalia has kept the candle of crisis and conflict in the country lighting. He notes that terrorism policies implemented by the US are quite problematic, in such a way that there has been no critical analysis of the situation in Somalia as in most cases policy makers are mainly based in Nairobi, Kenya. Added to this, US's effort to apprehend the so called Al-Qaeda

operating in Somalia, has resulted increasingly into the Somali population becoming anti-US.

- Furthermore, Mire (2007), writes that in addition to sponsoring Ethiopian forces, the US military carried out bombardments resulting into killing of so many Somalis, rape, looting, lawlessness and general insecurity escalated. Baxter (2008) concurs with Ken (2003); and Mire (2007) and posits that internal politics in Somalia and the regional power struggle shape and drive the crisis in Somalia. He states that Somalia's situation of state of collapse became a national security concern of the United States of America after the bombing of its embassy in Nairobi, Kenya in 1998.

The territorial explanation of war argues that how states handle the sensitive issue of territorial control with their neighbors greatly affects the probability of war between those states. States that pursue alliances, military build-ups, and other power politics measures in response to territorial issues tend to increase their chances of going to war. However, if states are capable of resolving or removing these territorial issues from their agenda, it is argued that they will be capable of avoiding war for prolonged periods of time, even if other contentious issues arise. Territorial issues are the most dangerous issues because they are the issues that are most likely to generate a power politics response. Territorial disputes lead political actors to resort to a series of realist practices intended to force the other side to back down; these practices include military buildups, the making of alliances, and the use of realpolitik tactics and demonstrations of resolve in crisis bargaining. In the modern global system, realist folklore (which is learned from socialization in the system and derived from the realist social construction of history) tells leaders that, when faced with threats to their security, they should increase their power by either making alliances and/or building up their military. Both practices are intended to increase a state's security, although most recognize that it typically produces a security dilemma. Each step produces a situation that encourages the adoption of foreign policy practices that sets the stage for actors to take another step toward war.

In the great power activity, much blame for the 1977 conflict in horn of Africa can be placed on the British maneuvers to establish a territorial state in the region. Bahru (2002: 179) argues that:

> "this fact was given legal embodiment in the agreements that Ethiopia was forced to sign with Britain in 1942 and 1944. On the basis of these agreements and under the convenient excuse that the continuation of World War II required making adequate provisions for Allied defense, the British came to assume extensive control over Ethiopia's finance, administration and territorial integrity."

Taking Ethiopia and Somalia quickly during World War II, the British sought to settle the border question in the region unilaterally.

Last but not the least, when we reflect on crisis control mechanisms, it is inevitably the obligation of the government to protect its citizens. In a crisis situation, as it is in Somalia, the causalities of civilians exceed the military losses. Civilians are the principal target and suffer most as many state institutions are weakened in the process. It is within this reasoning that the interest of the regional actors, particularly the neighbouring countries, intensified with the collapse of the state institutions. The factors that contribute to the escalation of international crisis between Ethiopia and Somalia conflict are: major power activity; that is regional actors who have been a force for instability and destabilization in the region; international influences that support armed factions, which are undermining possible progress brokered during various reconciliation processes. It is believed that the unpopular Ethiopian force continues to be the main source of internal and regional instability in Somalia, (FAST International, 2007).

Conclusion

In the final analysis, we live in crisis setting but the nature of Somali International crisis will remain tricky in finding solution to it. There is much that we do not and cannot know and we can be certain that Somalia will continue to indulge in more internal and international crises given the nature of actors at play in the crisis. When you look back at the crises in Somalia, it has been a part of the personal, domestic and international landscape. But most importantly the internal crisis in Somalia is rooted in the dynamics of the Somali clans, and gains international recognition and attention due to struggle for power and dominance to achieve national interests

by the actors in the Somali crisis. It has to be noted that the struggle for the control of the state in Somalia is a major source of crisis.

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