

Forum: Security Council

Issue: The Situation in Somalia and Eritrea

Student Officer: Jan Sedlacek

Position: Deputy President

Introduction

To this day, the Horn of Africa remains to be one of the most volatile regions on Earth. Comparably to North Africa and the Middle East, the vast majority of conflicts currently facing this region have arisen following the retreat of colonial powers. This event led the successor states to not only strive for the re-establishment of their international standing, but also to deal with their internal problems, originating usually from ethnic, religious, or political grounds by themselves. The Federal Republic of Somalia and the State of Eritrea are no exceptions to this. The recent history of both countries is marked by the struggle to not only re-establish national sovereignty, but also to emerge as a functioning state in a region notorious for a lack of governance and security. In spite of these shared struggles, Somalia and Eritrea have developed in greatly differing ways.

Following the overthrow of President Siad Barre's regime in 1991, Somalia has been in a state of conflict due to its civil war, Islamist insurgency, clan-warlord governance, as well as the 1991 declaration of independence in the region of Somaliland. In 1992, a United States army mission was established in Somalia to restore order in government controlled parts of the country to prepare grounds for the establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation. Nevertheless, having failed to achieve most of their goals, both the US army and UN peacekeepers retreated in 1995. In 1998, another Somali province, Puntland, declared autonomy. Following nearly 10 years of transitional government authority in Somalia, widely disregarded by many of the clans and breakaway governments of the country resulting in a state of anarchy, Islamist organizations began to take advantage of the situation to assert their political dominance. The Union of Islamic Courts was the primary force engaged in this conflict. Following Ethiopian military intervention in 2006, the capital city of Mogadishu once again became the seat of Somali government, though clashes between the military and Islamist insurgents continue to this day.

In 2009, a new Islamist organization, successor to the Union of Islamic Courts, emerged in the country. This organization, known as Al-Shabab (The Youth), has been battling not only the UN backed government in Somalia, but also committing acts of terror against Christian populations in neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia. Al-Shabab, an ally of Al-Qaeda, now holds many of the southern regions of

Somalia. Still in 2009, the State of Eritrea was accused of supporting Al-Shabab and other Islamist organizations in Somalia through arms and financial aid. Following this finding, the UN imposed sanctions upon Eritrea, spanning trade and arms embargos. In a country run by a single party authoritarian leader which was undergoing severe humanitarian problems, the sanctions only exacerbated the dire situation. In 2013, a mass exodus of refugees out of Eritrea prompted further UN investigations, revealing mass human rights violations. This was followed by the UN Human Rights Council's call to investigate Eritrean leaders for alleged crimes against humanity.

It is therefore evident that the situation in Somalia and Eritrea bears many complications and will be complex to resolve. It is certain that in order for the situation to reach a favorable outcome, Somalia, Eritrea and insurgent groups will all need to make concessions on their claims and their span of support. The UN Security Council's role in this issue is, and will continue to be, twofold – to continue attempting to facilitate a more peaceful environment in Somalia through sustained support to existing missions and to investigate Eritrean violations and take necessary actions, ensuring that the actions will be constructive. For Somalia's future, the priority is co-operation and peace between the factions making up the troubled state. For Eritrea, the priority is regaining its international credibility lost as a result of its human rights violations and resolving the humanitarian crisis that it is faced with.

Definition of Key Terms

Autonomy

The comprehensive self-government of a territory, group or organization; sovereign statehood.

Cession

In political terms, this is the formal proclamation of a region's independence from another sovereign state or body.

Exodus

A mass flight of a people group or people groups from one region to another.

Insurgent

Rebellious towards an established system of government.

Islamist

An individual or a group advocating for an extremist, fundamentalist interpretation of Islam.

Overthrow/Coup d'état

The act of removing a government or an individual from power, usually through military force.

Sanctions

Penalties, including embargos, economic restrictions and trade limitations, imposed upon states and organizations for not abiding by international legislation.

Background Information

Somalia pre-2009

Somalia became a country in 1960, when Italy and Great Britain gave up their rights to administer colonies in the Horn of Africa. The country was formed by the conjuncture of the former Italian Somaliland with British Somaliland. Following border disputes with neighboring countries, as well as a significant drought, President Siad Barre gained control of the country in 1969. Barre governed the country following the policy of scientific socialism, which provoked substantial disagreement amongst many of the country's clans. In 1991, Somaliland declared independence from Somalia and Siad Barre's regime was ousted, effectively sending Somalia into a state of anarchy with no real governance. National unity was further prevented by the declaration of autonomy in the Somali region of Puntland in 1998. The country was administered regionally by warlords and their followers until the imposition of a de-facto government in October 2000, though this was not widely supported. In 2004, a transitional government in exile was formed in Kenya, which began to relocate back to Somalia in late 2005. Nevertheless, the existence of the Union of Islamic Courts, and subsequently Al-Shabab, was a major barrier to establishing stable governance. As such, after a mixture of military action and peace talks, the capital city of Mogadishu once again became the seat of the Somali government in 2006. Until 2009, the Union of Islamic Courts was on retreat, though insurgent activities against the government continued.

Eritrea pre-2009

After the defeat of the axis powers in the Second World War, Eritrea, a former Italian colony, was administered by Britain until it was declared a federal province of Ethiopia by the UN General Assembly in 1952. In 1958, the Eritrean Liberation Front was formed. When in 1963 Ethiopia fully annexed Eritrea, the Eritrean War of Independence ensued, concluding in 1993 when Eritrea overwhelmingly voted to become independent of Ethiopia and joined the United Nations. Nevertheless, struggle between Ethiopia and Eritrea continued between 1998 and 2000 during the Border War, which killed some 70,000 civilians and military personnel. In 2000, Eritrea and Ethiopia formally signed a peace accord, putting an end to official hostilities. Since then, Eritrea has been developing as a single party state with the state's highest legislative body banning the establishment of other political parties in 2002.

Following these actions, tensions between Eritrea and the UN grew, which when combined with a drought, produced a critical situation in Eritrea. In 2007, the Border War between Eritrea and Ethiopia once again broke out. Between 2008 and 2009, UN reports found disturbing evidence of government atrocities in Eritrea, citing, amongst others, crimes against humanity. It was this event, combined with a suspected support of Al-Shabab militants in Somalia, that triggered the UN Security Council decision to impose sanctions on Eritrea.

Al-Shabab insurgency in Somalia

A successor to the retreating Union of Islamic Courts, Al-Shabab began to assert its political position in Somalia in 2009. This insurgent group, cited as following the Wahhabi teachings of Islam, pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda in 2010. After a series of key clashes between government forces and Al-Shabab militias, the organization has managed to gain control of most of the southern provinces of Somalia. This included the capital city, though in 2011 after significant military actions and a drought, it has partially retreated, allowing UN aid presence in not only the capital, but also a number of southern provinces. Until 2013, Al-Shabab activity was restricted to Somalia only, but after 2013 it began to target Christian settlements, as well as public areas in neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia, as a form of reprisals for the support these countries have been providing to Somali efforts against Al-Shabab. To this date, the group controls much of Southern Somalia and reports have suggested that the Eritrean government was providing arms and financial support to the group. This, in part, triggered the sanctions imposed upon Eritrea in 2009, though the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG) has found no evidence that this is the case.

Eritrean sanctions

The UN Security Council imposed sanctions upon Eritrea in 2009 following reports of military support to Al-Shabab. The sanctions were also put in place to push for positive change in the Eritrean government, who has been controlling the country authoritatively, committing crimes violating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Following further reports of Eritrean aims to destabilize the region, by means of, amongst others, plotting to commit acts of terrorism on an African Union meeting in 2013, together with ongoing reports of human rights abuses, the UN appointed a special rapporteur to investigate the situation, though the delegation was not permitted to enter the country. To this day, Eritrea continues to be sanctioned, though the effectiveness of these sanctions is questioned. The sanctions did not lead to the removal of authoritarian leadership in the country; instead they exacerbated a humanitarian crisis in an agriculturally reliant country struck by drought. Therefore, the sanctions are subject to controversy and are highly criticized by Eritrean representatives.

Eritrean exodus

Economic problems, droughts, ongoing political oppression and breaches of human rights have led to a mass exodus of the inhabitants of Eritrea. A report published in May 2013, and claims by the UN

Human Rights rapporteur have suggested that a mass migration of people has ensued out of the country, and that up to 30,000 Eritreans have been abducted to the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt to be tortured. Eritrea has denied any such claims as being politically motivated. To this date, the government refuses to take responsibility for the exodus. This, in part, led to the call by the UN that the African Union shall investigate Eritrean leadership for crimes against humanity.

Maritime piracy

The issue of piracy is inevitably tied to the crisis in Somalia. Most common near the autonomous region of Puntland, piracy has posed great danger to international maritime trade sailing around the Horn of Africa to the Suez Canal and the Indian Ocean in general. Following the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, many fishing communities residing on the Somali coast have been destroyed. In the aftermath of this crisis, local warlords in Puntland began to employ fishermen in coastal villages for piracy, seeking hefty ransom from shipping companies (Though this was also the case before the Tsunami). In May 2008, the UN Security Council authorized the use of military force against pirates. In spite of this, pirate activities around Somalia remain common. According to the BBC, 49 out of 52 ships captured in 2010 were seized by Somali pirates.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Federal Republic of Somalia

As the primary setting of the conflict, Somalia has undergone many periods of no governance and relative anarchy since it became an independent state. The nation currently consists of government controlled areas along the coast, the Al-Shabab controlled southern provinces, the autonomous region of Puntland and a disputed independent state of Somaliland in the north. Since 2009, the primary concern for Somalia has been the Al-Shabab insurgency, as well as a civil war ongoing since the late 1980's caused primarily by clan opposition to the Somali government. Periods of famine and drought between 2010 and 2012 further exacerbated the situation. The country's armed forces battling Al-Shabab have been backed by the armed forces of Ethiopia and Kenya, as Al-Shabab has committed acts of terror on their soil operating from bases in Somalia. Following the installment of a US backed government in 2012, marked by the election of President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, there is potential for a negotiation between the government forces and Al-Shabab militants, though the conflict is ongoing.

State of Eritrea

The State of Eritrea is a single party state that shares a border with Sudan, Ethiopia and Djibouti. In 2009, it was accused by the UN of supplying arms and financial aid to Al-Shabab, sparking the institution of sanctions and trade embargos upon Eritrea. Already experiencing internal economic

problems, the Eritrean government has been increasingly more active in breaches of human rights and suppressing dissent. This has sparked a mass exodus from the country in 2013, as citizens of this primarily agricultural country have been struck not only by governmental repression, but also drought. Whilst the SEMG has found no further evidence that Eritrea is supportive of Al-Shabab, sanctions are still to be lifted as the UN has called for investigations of the government and its representatives for crimes against humanity. To this day, Eritrea remains to be one of the world's poorest and most secretive nations, further damaged by the ongoing clashes with Ethiopia and Djibouti over border disputes and territorial claims.

Al-Shabab and Al-Qaeda

Al-Shabab is the successor of the now defunct Union of Islamic Courts that formed in 2009; it is an ally of Al-Qaeda and is being supported by them. It advocates for the Wahhabi teachings of Islam, a view contrary to the Sufi Somalis, and imposes strict Sharia practices in occupied territories. Al-Shabab controls most of the southern regions of Somalia, and has engaged in terrorist activities in surrounding countries, namely Kenya and Ethiopia. The organization received support from the government of Eritrea who supplied arms, however, following the imposition of sanctions upon Eritrea it is unclear whether Al-Shabab has received any more, as SEMG has found no conclusive evidence proving Eritrean support of Al-Shabab. Following debates over whether allegiance should be switched to the Islamic State, an idea which has failed to pass in Al-Shabab's leadership, a small faction broke away from the organization, though in general, the group remains relatively free of internal conflict. Al-Shabab recruits most of their members from the predominantly Muslim Northern Kenya.

Republic of Kenya

As Kenya borders the southern regions of Somalia, this country has experienced the effects of Al-Shabab insurgency on its own soil in the form of reprisals for Kenya's involvement in Somalia. In September 2013, Al-Shabab seized a shopping center in Nairobi and killed 60 people. In late 2014, an attack was carried out at a convoy carrying quarry workers in North-Eastern Kenya. In April 2015, 148 Christians at the Garissa University College were killed by Al-Shabab. As a result of these actions, combined with several lone wolf attacks by Al-Shabab militants, Kenya continues to maintain its military presence in Somalia, supporting the legally elected government of President Mohamed in activities against Al-Shabab. Kenya has also served as a mediator between Somalia and the rest of the world, housing its transitional government until 2005. To this date, Kenyan intervention remains to be one of the more decisive factors that maintain the current state in Somalia, which may however need to be altered to align with revised Somali policies, first indicated in early 2017 when President Mohamed outlined a desire to negotiate with Al-Shabab.

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Ethiopia has had conflicts with both Somalia and Eritrea in the past. Somalia has engaged in a brief war with Ethiopia in the late 1980's, whereas Eritrea waged a 30-year War of Independence and a Border War between 1998 and 2000, killing 70,000. To this day, relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea are generally negative. In spite of this, Ethiopia has supported the transitional Somali government, as well as the new US backed government, providing military aid against the Union of Islamic Courts in 2006. Ethiopian military intervention concluded when it withdrew its troops from Somalia in 2009 and now, it continues to support the cause of the Somali government by housing a US Army base from which drone strikes against Al-Shabab are carried out.

United Nations and the Security Council

The United Nations plays a significant role in both Eritrea and Somalia. Mandated in 2012, the United Nations Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG) was established to report on the general situation and to investigate Eritrean support to Al-Shabab. Nevertheless, in four instances, the SEMG has found no evidence linking Eritrea to Al-Shabab arms supply. In 2013, the United Nations established the United Nations Assistance Mission to Somalia (UNSOM), which strives to maintain peace and order in government controlled regions. UN also supports the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) which serves similar purpose as UNSOM, but is administered primarily by the African Union. The UN Security Council currently serves the role of overseeing ongoing operations in Somalia, and it continues to impose sanctions upon Eritrea for supporting Al-Shabab militants and violating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It has also ordered a partial arms embargo upon Somalia, but President Mohamed is currently in talks with UN to lift the embargo in order to permit growth of the Somali military.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
1960	Federal Republic of Somalia becomes a country.
1991	Siad Barre's government is removed from power in Somalia.
1991	Somaliland declares independence.
1992	US troops establish an order restoring mission in Somalia.
1993	Eritrea becomes independent of Ethiopia following 30 years of war.
1994	US troops retreat from Somalia.
1995	First set of UN peacekeepers retreats from Somalia.
1998	Puntland declares autonomy.
1998-2000	Eritrea and Ethiopia once again engage in war, killing 70,000 civilians and armed personnel.

2005-2007	Eritrea-UN relations deteriorate.
2006	Union of Islamic Courts begins to assert political power in Somalia, efforts to counter its progress are launched by the Somali government with Ethiopian military support.
2006	Peace talks begin between the Somali transitional government and Islamist insurgents.
2008	UN authorizes anti-piracy efforts in waters around Somalia through the use of member states' navies.
2009	Al-Shabab emerges.
2009	UN imposes sanctions on Eritrea for alleged support of Islamist insurgents in Somalia and human rights violations.
2010-2011	Major famine strikes Somalia.
2011-2012	Kenya and Ethiopia begin to intervene in Somalia following Al-Shabab attacks on their soil.
Summer 2013	Major spike in Al-Shabab attacks on governmental positions in Somalia.
2013-2014	Major spike in Al-Shabab attacks on Kenyan civilians.
June 2014	UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) sets up inquiry into human rights abuses in Eritrea.
2015	UNHRC publishes reports of mass human rights abuses in Eritrea.
February 2017	Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed becomes president of Somalia.
May 2017	President Mohamed calls for lifting of arms embargos on Somalia in order to improve Somalia's military position.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Reauthorization of the mandate of the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group, 24 July 2014 **(S/RES/2111)**
- Renewal of the SEMG mandate, partial lifting of the Somali arms embargo, 23 October 2015 **(S/RES/2244)**
- Establishment and continuation of the Somali and Eritrean sanctions, 10 November 2016 **(S/RES/2317)**
- Renewal of the UNSOM mandate until 31 March 2018, 14 June 2017 **(S/RES/2358)**
- Authorization of the AMISOM mandate until 31 May 2018, 30 August 2017 **(S/RES/2372)**

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

There have been a number of steps taken by the United Nations to resolve the situation. First and foremost, UNSOM has been present in government controlled areas supporting development, and according to the World Health Organization (WHO), providing services such as medical aid and food distribution. With its mandate now extended until March 2018, the mission continues to be a key factor contributing to at least some positive change. At this point in time, whilst the UNSOM has not contributed majorly to the resolution of the fragile situation in Somalia, it has at least managed to maintain a degree of order in areas controlled by the Somali government.

The institution of the African Union Assistance Mission to Somalia has achieved similar degree of success as the UNSOM. Nevertheless, AMISOM also strives to reduce the threat posed by Al-Shabab and other insurgent groups by means of military activity, alongside conducting joint operations with Somali security forces. Ongoing activities against piracy have also been instituted by the UN Security Council, with the authorization of member state military actions against pirate vessels mandated in 2008. At this point in time, the shipping lanes around Somalia are under protection of a counter-piracy task force ready to respond to distress calls from merchant vessels sailing in the region. Nevertheless, very little has been done to counter the underlying cause of piracy, which is the supremacy of warlord government in many of the pirate hotspots in Somalia. Whilst the Somali government attempted to engage in anti-piracy efforts, the fragility of the regions and regional supremacy of warlords has made this task very difficult, leading to a continued presence of piracy around Somalia, most notably by the coast of Puntland.

The Eritrean situation has been the source of controversy surrounding existing efforts. The establishment of the SEMG has led to an increase in monitoring activities, though this has not facilitated the reduction in government atrocities. Sanctions imposed as a result of suspected support to Al-Shabab, also intended to force change upon the Eritrean government, have been largely ineffective in their aims, as the SEMG has not found any evidence linking the Eritrean government to Al-Shabab support, and the sanctions merely worsened the situation in a country struck not only by a repressive ideology, but also drought leading to a humanitarian disaster.

In May 2017, with no further developments as of yet, Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed has expressed a desire to engage in peace talks and negotiations with Al-Shabab. The desire has been welcome by the UN Secretary General, though a realistic implementation of this idea is yet to be seen in Somalia.

Possible Solutions

The first possible solution is to support the efforts of President Mohamed in the resolution of the conflict through engaging in peace talks with Al-Shabab. Whilst the environment for this may not be ideal, the provision of support for and encouragement of the idea – together with providing a secure environment for such talks to take place - may be one of the ways to resolve the conflict. This could be done by extending the mandate of the UNSOM to facilitate an environment in which peace talks between government representatives and Islamist insurgents could take place.

Countering underlying problems resulting in the continuous exercise of piracy in Somalia is another possible solution, though it caters to just one part of the problem. Further UN investigations of these causes, alongside intelligence gathering, could be the first step to devising possible solutions. Then, action could be taken to first counter the supremacy of warlords and then provide resources for fishing villages to be able to develop without the need to resort to piracy. However, the implementation of this would only be possible with strong security support to UN observers and operatives, as the regions in question remain largely volatile.

Due to the fact that many Al-Shabab militants come from Muslim majority regions in neighboring Kenya, another possible solution would be to prevent recruitment of Muslim youth in cities such as Mombasa, where relative poverty has led to the radicalization of many. This would be possible through UN efforts to not only provide more opportunities for this youth, but also to facilitate more development and order in the port city of Mombasa and its surroundings. Co-operation with Kenyan forces to counter radicalization could also be possible, though the UN would have to make its stance on Kenyan Death Squads very clear, ensuring that no violations of human rights or unlawful conduct takes place during this co-operation. One way would be to lawfully counter radical hotspots using the information gathered by the Kenyan Death Squads. Further reading or viewing on the Kenyan Death Squads is recommended to evaluate the legal and political feasibility of this option (See appendix III).

Lastly, the dire situation within Eritrea could be resolved by adopting a more constructive approach to the situation. Perhaps most important would be to the prevention of escalation of ongoing disputes with neighboring states, preventing hostilities with economically stronger countries such as Ethiopia. Multilateral treaties promoted and overseen by the United Nations would be a feasible method of realizing this. As a last resort, a peacekeeping mission could be established in Eritrea or the border regions of Ethiopia, though the financial considerations of this venture would be very high. Whilst environmental factors which contributed to the worsening of the situation cannot be controlled, the damaging effects that they bring about can be lessened. The World Health Organization could, amongst others, provide nutritional aid to the citizens of Eritrea. This could even reduce the rate of emigration from the country. However, seeing as the attitude of the Eritrean government towards UN agencies has not been very positive in the past, this would require engaging in a more open dialogue with the government after providing a partial lifting of sanction. Eight years of embargos can be devastating to a

regime, but in Eritrea this has not been the case. As such, adopting a constructive stance to aiding the Eritrean agricultural and humanitarian crises, as well as attempting to negotiate a shift of the government's policies may also work, helping to boost the economy of one of Africa's poorest nations. If further diplomatic means will not work, pressure could be exerted upon Eritrea's allies, such as Sudan and Israel, to limit their support of the government, providing an incentive for the Eritrean leadership to embrace change. After this, the possibility of leverage in the Eritrean government would be more likely, though Eritrea's notorious record of human rights abuses may be a barrier to this solution.

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Appendices

I. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hA4ZV72wnpl> (Geography Now – Eritrea)

Albeit informal, this YouTube video provides excellent background information on Eritrea's geographic situation, international relations and problems that it is currently faced with.

II. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrYDO970QE0> (Geography Time – Somalia)

This video provides generalized information about Somalia, though it does not consider international relations in depth.

III. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUjOdidH8Uk> (Inside Kenya's Death Squads)

This 'Al Jazeera Investigates' documentary outlines the most important factors surrounding Kenya's Death Squads and their role in suppressing Islamist radicalization in the country.

IV. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NllxuFfZhl8> (UN Peacekeeping Initiatives in Somalia)

This short documentary is very useful to understanding the role of the United Nations in aiming to resolve the historic and current situation in Somalia.

V. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50FsGI5EjCo> (Inside Eritrea)

This BBC documentary outlines the situation in Eritrea, providing useful information on the internal humanitarian crises and governmental human rights abuses.