

alternatively, the election could be seen as just another 'lull' in a country that has been characterised by complex political and social dynamics that determines how it is administered. However, in order to understand the challenge that awaits Somalia in the context of the two 'scenarios' mentioned, we need an idea of Somalia's specific historical background, such that the origins of the crisis in Somalia can be unearthed prior to 1991, when President Siad Barre was deposed.

Background of the Somali Crisis

Somalia, which came into existence after 'the merger' of two former colonies of British and Italian Somaliland, became independent in 1960, and Aden Abdullah Osman Daar was elected President of the new republic. Soon after that, in 1963, the new country got involved in border disputes with both Kenya and Ethiopia, the latter of which turned into full-fledged hostilities. In 1967, Abdi Ali Shermake defeated the incumbent president Daar in the presidential elections. However, Shermake did not rule long for in 1969 he was assassinated in a coup and a general in the Somali army, Siad Barre, assumed power. In 1977, Somalia, under Barre, invaded the Somali inhabited region of eastern Ethiopia called *Ogaden*. Although Ethiopia pushed the Somali forces out of *Ogaden* with the help of Cuban troops and Soviet advisers within a year, this event, as it turns out, would become a basis for instability that would emerge in the years to follow.

As early as 1981, pressure was mounted on Siad Barre by the international community, especially by its ally the US, to resolve the dispute with Ethiopia. As a consequence, Barre decided to offer an olive branch to Ethiopia and in 1988, a peace accord between Mogadishu and Addis Ababa was signed. This peace accord was not welcomed by the major clans in Somalia who lay claim to the *Ogaden* region as Somali territory.

The *Ogaden* issue, however, was not the only reproach the Barre government encountered. During the early and mid-80s serious opposition to Barre's regime emerged, especially after he deliberately excluded members of the larger *Mijertyn* and *Isaq* clans from government positions, which were subsequently filled by members of his *Marehan* clan. This situation caused major resentment within the state both politically and socially and in 1991, the Somali clans (led by the Somali Salvation Democratic Front of the southern *Darod* clan, the United Somali Congress of the *Hawiye* clan of central Somalia and the Somali Democratic Movement of the *Ogadenis*) united to oust Barre and his *Marehan* clan from power. Subsequently, Barre was forced to flee into exile. As the domestic state of affairs became untenable, the former British protectorate of Somaliland (northern territory of Somalia) broke away and declared its unilateral independence. Barre's overthrow coupled with Somaliland's secession led to an all-out civil war.

As the civil war broke out in Somalia, US Marines were sent ahead of a UN peacekeeping force to restore order and safeguard relief supplies. This, however, turned out to be a disastrous affair and by 1995 the UN and US peacekeeping troops withdrew from Somalia after humiliating incidences with rebels in Mogadishu that subsequently left the country in dire straits. Two years later, there was the first major attempt to reconstitute a government by the warring clans in Cairo but nothing came of this initiative. Meanwhile, in 1998 the Puntland region in northern Somalia also declared unilateral independence and 'seceded' from Somalia.⁵

⁵ The traditional elders in Puntland chose Abdullahi Yusuf as the region's first president for a three-year term. Another leader Jama Ali Jama was elected to replace him in 2001, but Yusuf refused to relinquish power, claiming he was fighting terrorism. He seized power in 2002, reportedly with the help of Ethiopian forces.

However, in 2000, there was a breakthrough in an attempt to reconvene and constitute a government by the different clans. In August of the same year, clan leaders met in Djibouti where they elected Abdulkassim Khalif Salat Hassan as the President of Somalia. In turn, Hassan appointed Ali Khalif Gelayadh as his Prime Minister who later formed a transitional government – the first in ten years. Nevertheless, this attempt at restoring peace was short-lived because the transitional government had little authority and legitimacy outside Mogadishu. Meanwhile, in February 2001, the French oil group, TotalFinaElf, signed an agreement with the transitional government to prospect for oil in the south. In signing this agreement, one of the main faction leaders, Mohamed Qanyareh Afrah, recognised the interim regime in return for ministerial positions.

In the months following the signing of the accords, Mogadishu experienced tremendous violence. Conflict between clans escalated as different clans in the south fought one another because of the prospect of the discovery of oil in the region. In Somaliland, a referendum took place that confirmed overwhelming support for independence, and Kismayu (in the south) came under the opposition Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council forces of General Hirsi Morgan (Barre's son-in-law). In the aftermath of September 11th, the UN and the EU evacuated their aid workers and the US froze the funds of the only remittance bank in Somalia (*Al Barakat*) because of its supposed links with Al Qaeda. This was against the advice of the UN humanitarian coordinator for Somalia who had anticipated that the move would cripple Somalia economically.

As a result of the above sanctions and the consequent economic turmoil faced by Somalia, warlords in six districts in the southwest unilaterally declared

autonomy and formed the 'South Western Regional Government' in April 2002. Meanwhile, in the Republic of Somaliland, the president at the time, Mohamed Egal, died in South Africa while undergoing a medical operation and he was succeeded by Dahi Riyale Kahin in May 2002. By October 2002, 21 warring factions and the transitional government signed a ceasefire in Somalia to enable the cessation of hostilities for the duration of the peace initiative talks. There was finally a breakthrough at the peace talks in Kenya in January 2004 where all the major Somali warlords and politicians agreed to sign a deal setting up a new parliament.⁶ In August 2004, a new transitional parliament was inaugurated in Kenya and charged with the task of appointing a new president.⁷

Challenges for the 'new Somalia'

The reconstruction of the Somali society and economy will be one of the major tests that President Yusuf Ahmed will have to face once he gets back to Somalia and begins to administer the government. The country lacks national systems of administration, education, healthcare, and justice - key requirements of a functional state. However, the new government will need to address the issue of security first and foremost, since numerous armed factions centred around the country's clans and militia have battled for control of the country, thus literally creating a state of anarchy.

⁶ General Mohammed Said Hirsi Morgan of the southern-based (Baidoa) Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), a former army commander and son-in-law of Siad Barre who has the support of Ethiopia was not a party to the peace talks.

⁷ The new parliament was elected after respective members were endorsed by the different Somali clans. The 275 members comprise 61 delegates from each of the four major clans (*Darod, Digil-Mirijle, Hawiye, and Isaaq*.) and 31 from a coalition of small clans. Each group decided how to elect its representatives with the endorsement of traditional leaders and some warlords.

Therefore, one of the chief hurdles the new government has to overcome is the culture of clan allegiance and how to 'deal' with it as a precursor to facilitating peace and stability in Somalia. As homogenous as Somalia may appear, that is not the case. The allegiance of Somalis to their respective clans has made the peace process in this country unsustainable. As regards clan allegiances, it needs to be pointed out that there are different versions of clan lineage in Somalia. In political terms, Somalia has five major clan groupings: *Darod*, *Digil-Mirifle*, *Dir*, *Hawiye*, and *Isaaq*. Each consists of numerous sub-clans and lineages, whose allegiance and political attachment are not static but are formed depending on leadership, competition for resources, and opportunities. A good example of inter-clan alliances is when the Somali government collapsed in 1991, four significant rebel factions, two from the *Darod*, and one each from the *Hawiye* and the *Isaaq* emerged to fill the vacuum. This complex culture of clan allegiance has been fortified over the past 13 years by the lack of a legitimate government in Somalia. Given the 14 unsuccessful attempts that have been made over the past decade to form a government, the rise of clan/rebel movements, and power-broking warlords dictating peace and stability, it can be concluded that clan allegiances and associated loyalties are a major factor in Somali society and politics. Consequently, any president who is to lead such a country needs to take this circumstance into consideration.

The question to be asked by the new Somali government then is whether to ignore or alternatively embrace the notion of uniting all the different clans? The future of Somalia and the success of the reconstruction process might depend on how the government responds to this question. If we look at the first option of ignoring the existing situation of clan loyalties and clan influence in Somali society, it is very likely that President Ahmed will have problems keeping the country together.

The new President is apparently facing difficult times dealing with this challenge already. For instance, the recent elections have raised questions about the inclusiveness and legitimacy of the whole process.

President Yusuf Ahmed's election in Nairobi evinced mixed feelings at least with regards to his legitimacy and acceptance to the Somali people. This is a result of the fact that the election was not undertaken directly by every Somali in Somalia; hence the electoral process would appear somewhat flawed. Given the turbulent events and state of Somalia prior to the 'elections', the political climate did not allow for a properly constituted democratic process to be forged. In addition, there have been claims from some quarters that Ahmed's election was not inclusive; in other words, it did not involve all the major players in Somali politics and consequently, some of them felt shut out of the electoral process. The argument is that the 275 Somali MPs/delegates who elected the new President in Nairobi (and who constitute the Somali Parliament) were imposed on Somalis by Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia and as such did not have the will and the backing of all the Somali people and clans. What threatens to erode this newly found ceasefire in Somalia is the claim that the selection of the MPs was flawed by corruption and hatred. The selection did not follow the rules of procedure or the Charter of the Somali Republic since the selection process was supposed to have been conducted by warlords before being endorsed by Somali traditional leaders, which was not the case.

The current situation could lead one to believe that the new government would have a difficult task of uniting the different Somali clans. The situation is exacerbated by the influence fundamentalist groups have had in Somalia over the past decade, which has been steadily growing and commanding a large following. Some of these groups have attempted to create a

semblance of peace and security by incorporating religious values and teachings into running and influencing various regions. Their exclusion from the ceasefire and electoral process has already created tensions between them and the new government. As mentioned earlier, the process did not appear to be inclusive; hence it is problematic. The election should have been held within Somalia but given the unfavourable conditions, this could not be realised.

For example, after the overthrow of Barre, the ungoverned state of Somalia was fertile ground for groups such as the *Al Itthaad al Islamiya* to emerge and garner a huge following. This group, based in the southern Gedo region, has been held responsible by Ethiopia for bomb attacks in Addis Ababa and elsewhere in conjunction with Ethiopian opposition groups. This has ultimately forced Addis Ababa to make incursions into Somalia in recent years. Another group, *Al-Islah*, the largest and most influential of the southern Islamist organisations, provides leadership and support for several prominent professional associations and educational institutions in Mogadishu. Since these groups were left out of the electoral process, it would be interesting to know how they will receive and interpret the ascendancy of Yusuf Ahmed and his appointment to the position of the Head of State. Even though it might prove to be the basis for the failure of the Somali reconstruction process, the exclusion of these fundamentalist groups can also be attributed to the neighbouring states of Ethiopia and Kenya who were major players in the Somalia peace process. It does appear that these countries had strong reservations about the Somali government's dealings with Islamist groups.⁸ As a result, the new government invited ordinary Islamic groups, such as *Islah*, the missionary

organisation *Tabliq*, and the traditional Sufi orders of *Qaadiriyya* and *Ahmediyya*, to participate in the process by recognising their potential contribution to Somalia's reconstruction and development. The recent political developments in the Horn of Africa, which has been one of the most violent regions in the world over the past decade, provides some hope for a peaceful future for the Somali citizens, who have been rendered poorer as poverty has found refuge in this shattered state. The war has seen many people being displaced internally and externally; others have left the country to go into exile either overseas or across the borders into Kenya, Ethiopia or the Gulf States.

The new opportunity that Somalis have been given this time around will be forfeited if those in power do not deal with the social and political realities in Somalia. If the new government does not include all the relevant groups in the governing process, it is very likely that it will see these groups and their loyal supporters sabotaging the reconstruction process of the country. It is very likely that the culture of clan allegiance will persist in the future, thus playing a continuing destructive role in Somali politics. Another problem that might play a part in the success or failure of the peace process in Somalia is the relations between Somalia, on the one hand, and Ethiopia and Somaliland on the other. The latter have not had cordial relations with Somalia for long periods of time and as such pose threats to the new regime. Ethiopia has had troubled relations with Somalia ever since the two states went to war in 1977 when Mogadishu attempted to annex the Ethiopia's *Ogaden* region on historical grounds. In addition, Addis Ababa fears the possible spread of Islamic fundamentalism in the Horn. As a result, Ethiopia has often appeared to offer Puntland support over Somalia as it attempts to destabilise Somalia. It appears Addis Ababa would rather have an unstable Somalia to ward off any

⁸ These governments feared appeasing these Islamic groups that had a history of links with known terrorist groups and accommodating them would be seen to be giving credence to extremism.

likelihood of a recurrence of the *Ogaden* conflict.

President Yusuf Ahmed will also have to tread very carefully when it comes to dealing with Somaliland and his own Puntland over greater Somalia's interests. Both these states (Somaliland and Puntland) have laid claim to Somalia's border regions of *Sool* and *Sanaag* that have witnessed an increase of clashes. In relation to this, Feisal Ali Warabe, the Chairman of Somaliland's opposition Justice and Welfare Party, said he expected Ahmed's selection to unlock a new period of disagreement in Somalia as regards the two regions of *Sool* and *Sanaag*. Moreover, Puntland (now a separate state led by Yusuf Ahmed) has been seen as a major threat to the regime in Somaliland. Immediately after Ahmed's inauguration, the Somaliland government warned the new president against any aggression and stated that it was on the alert to thwart any move to reunite Somaliland with the rest of Somalia.

Conclusion

President Yusuf Ahmed's election has come at a very opportune moment in Somalia's history. His ascension to power will determine whether Somalia can once again realise the peace it has so much craved for as he faces the challenges of setting up a government and administering the country. This will be a daunting task given Somalia's record of attempting to set up a central government since the fall of Siad Barre in 1991. There, however, appears to be an air of optimism and positive indicators⁹ in post-conflict Somalia as was seen in Yusuf Ahmed extending an olive branch to his rivals and other warlords in his acceptance speech. The

⁹ Immediately following Yusuf Ahmed's instalment, it is ironic that the price of an AK-47 went down to as much as \$350 from its usual price of over \$ 700. In addition, business has begun to boom with a relative degree of peace surfacing in the major towns, for example, the mushrooming of soft drinks factories, internet cafes and so on.

key test of Ahmed's government, however, will be when he lands in Somalia, begins the reconstruction process in earnest and endeavours to cultivate a democratic culture to include all relevant groups/clans in the governing and reconstruction process.

Policy Considerations

- a) The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU) and the UN will have to seek ways of volunteering troops to ensure peace and security prevails in Somalia. These troops should disarm and demobilise the militia who should, in turn, be given 'new tasks' and should be reintegrated into society. Peacekeepers will need to be deployed in Somalia before the new regime enters Somalia. This would create some semblance of legitimacy for the new government from the international community and enable it to function. The inclusion of factional and non-factional Somali leaders and Islamist groups in the post-conflict reconstruction process is paramount since their inclusion would guarantee Somali ownership of the process, such as a steering committee or presidium (*shir guddoon*) of eminent figures. This would also ensure that the government carries out its mandate effectively and enhances its legitimacy.
- b) The UN and the AU will have to provide the necessary funding for the reconstruction of Somalia given that the country has no sound infrastructure, especially in the crucial sectors of administration, education, health and justice. This would include the training of a new Somali force to keep the peace once the peacekeepers depart. Somalia, with the help of its neighbours, the AU and IGAD, must curb the supply of illegal weapons to and from Somalia to ensure security in the country and region. An AU peacekeeping force would be most

appropriate for this duty noting that there are about 500,000 small arms in Somalia which have a negative effect on the society and contribute to lawlessness.

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- c) The issue of Somaliland and its 'reintegration' has to be solved via diplomatic channels to avoid any escalation of hostilities and erosion of the current 'peace'. IGAD and the AU as well as the UN will have a strong role to play in ensuring compliance with decisions taken over Somaliland's "reintegration".
- d) The 'new' Somalia will have to curb its claims to the *Ogaden* region. This should be an effort monitored by IGAD, the AU and the UN. The states of Ethiopia and Somaliland will have to be restrained by IGAD, the AU and the UN from interfering in Somalia's internal affairs. Likewise, monitoring by IGAD, the AU and the UN would ensure adherence.

Suggested Reading:

1. BBC News Website on Somalia [online]
2. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1072592.stm
3. CIA World Fact Book (2004) [online] <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/so.html>
4. Darren Taylor, (2004) Hope without a Home. Mail and Guardian (October 22-28 2004).
5. International Crisis Group Website (2004), Biting the Somali Bullet – Africa Report No.79(4thMay,2004).
6. Library of Congress (2004) Federal Research Division: Somalia Country Study [online] <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/sotoc.html>