

Forum: Security Council

Issue: The Question of Somaliland

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Introduction:

The Somaliland issue is about an area in the northern part of Somalia that, in 1991, proclaimed itself as an independent state but has not been recognized internationally as such. Since then, Somaliland has been a self-governing state. It possesses a government, a constitution, armed forces, a police, and a system of elections. It exercises control over its area and has a degree of internal stability that is unlike much of southern Somalia. This notwithstanding, the United Nations and all its member states still acknowledge Somaliland to be a constituent part of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

The Security Council faces a direct challenge in this issue since it deals with two important principles which are in conflict at times. The first is the right of self-determination. This principle will enable individuals to choose their political status and create their own form of state in case they want to. The second is territorial integrity. This principle safeguards the boundaries of the existing states, and it tries to avoid fragmentation and war. Territorial integrity is encouraged by the international community in the majority of cases to ensure stability. But Somaliland claims that the case is not the same and they should be an exception.

Somaliland is basing its claim on several points. In the first place, it was a British protectorate prior to its independence in 1960. It then voluntarily united with Italian Somaliland to create Somalia. Second, political imbalance and violence, particularly during the rule of Siad Barre, caused the failure of that union. Third, the Somali state failed in 1991, something that Somaliland claims terminated the union and gave it the right to withdraw. Since that time, Somaliland has developed its own institutions and has been relatively peaceful.

Meanwhile, this statement is strongly denied by Somalia. The Somaliland government believes that it should be within the sovereign territory of Somalia. It claims that the Somaliland recognition would undermine the unity of Somalia and negatively affect its endeavors to restore a stable state. This stance is taken by many nations, as they are afraid that such recognition

would give hope to other separatist struggles, particularly in Africa, where boundaries were made during colonial times.

There are also broader impacts of the problem. There are numerous groups in Africa and other places that desire independence. Should Somaliland receive recognition, it will have an impact on these groups and pressure other governments more. This may bring about unstable situations in certain regions. Meanwhile, the disregard for the stability and governance of Somaliland casts doubt on the equity and uniformity of international politics.

Security issues are also factors. Somaliland is located close to the Gulf of Aden, which is a prime route in international commerce. The stability in this region influences shipping, piracy, and the security of the region. Somaliland has aided in the preservation of local order, but due to a lack of recognition, it cannot collaborate with international partners in their entirety.

A complex balance must thus be considered by the Security Council. Representatives have to balance between legal values and reality. They will have to choose between recognizing that Somaliland is a special case and that the territorial integrity of Somalia is safer, or whether Somaliland should be recognized. They should also look at what actions can be taken to bring about the tension, aid in stability, and result in a peaceful and sustainable solution.

Definition of key terms:

Somaliland: An independent region in the north of Somalia that has run its own government and institutions since 1991, and which has declared itself independent.

Sovereignty: The right of a state to self-government.

Territorial Integrity: The principle of the borders of a state should not be changed without mutual consent.

Self-determination: The freedom of people to determine their political status and form of government.

De facto state: A state that operates as a state but is not recognized internationally.

Recognition (international law): Recognition by other states of a state as a member of the international system.

Secession: The process of division of a region out of a given state to create a new state.

Background:

Colonial History and Union

In 1884, Somaliland became a British protectorate. At this time, it evolved independently of the southern part, which was under the control of Italy. The two regions possessed various administrative systems, legal systems, and development levels.

British Somaliland was an independent state in June 1960. Soon after, it opted to join Italian Somaliland to establish the Somali Republic. This was an attempt to establish a powerful and united Somalia, but the setup rapidly gave rise to tension. The South had concentrated political power, and most people in the North felt they were not involved in decision-making and development.

War and Breakdown of the Somali State

Siad Barre assumed power in 1969 by means of a military coup. His regime was repressive and oppressed dissent. This rule was opposed by Northern groups, particularly the Somali National Movement. Tension had reached its peak by the late 1980s. The north was subjected to heavy attacks by government forces, including the bombing of key cities like Hargeisa. This led to massive destruction and loss of lives.

In 1991, the government of Somalia collapsed. This left a vacuum of power in the country. As southern Somalia descended into a long-term conflict and instability, Somaliland leaders proclaimed the independence of the country.

State Formation and Governance

Somaliland has, since 1991, worked on developing its own political system. In 2001, it took on a constitution by popular vote. It has conducted various elections, among them, presidential and

parliamentary elections. These have been elections that have been conducted partially under international supervision.

The system employed in Somaliland is a hybrid system that incorporates modern democratic institutions with the traditional clan-based leadership. This has been used to ensure internal stability. It has its police, military, and judicial system. It also has its own currency and control of its borders.

Current Situation and Challenges

Although Somaliland is stable, there are significant constraints caused by a lack of recognition. It is not able to have international access to financial institutions as recognized states. It also lacks diplomatic relations and is unable to participate in international organizations. Somalia still regards Somaliland as its territory. This stance is backed up by the international community. Nevertheless, there are informal relations between some countries and Somaliland because of its stability and strategic position.

The African Union has pointed out that Somaliland is a unique case, but has not made any steps toward recognition. This is an indication of worry regarding the precedent that may be set, which may have impacts on other regions. Strategic Importance Somaliland is situated in the Gulf of Aden, which is close to the major shipping routes. The Berbera port has emerged as a significant trade and regional access point. This has caught the eye of the neighboring countries and other international partners. This area is crucial to both international trade and the security of the area. This challenges the significance of the matter to the Security Council.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event
1884	British Somaliland protectorate established
1960	Independence and union with Italian Somaliland
1969	Military coup led by Siad Barre
1988	Destruction of Hargeisa during conflict

1991	Collapse of Somali government; Somaliland declares independence
2001	Constitutional referendum in Somaliland
2005	African Union fact-finding mission
2017	Presidential elections held
Present	Continued lack of international recognition

Major parties involved:

Somalia:

Somalia seeks to preserve its territorial integrity. It opposes Somaliland’s independence and aims to maintain national unity. Its ability to enforce this claim is limited, but it has strong international support.

Somaliland:

Somaliland seeks recognition as an independent state. It highlights its stability, governance, and historical arguments. It acts at a national level within its claimed territory.

United Nations (UN):

The UN supports Somalia’s sovereignty. It works to maintain peace and provide aid in the region. It also plays a role in mediation and conflict prevention.

African Union (AU):

The AU supports territorial integrity but has acknowledged Somaliland’s unique situation. It acts at a regional level and influences political decisions across Africa.

Ethiopia:

Ethiopia has economic and strategic interests in Somaliland, including access to ports. It maintains informal ties and plays a role at a regional level.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD):

IGAD works on regional stability and conflict resolution. It can support dialogue and mediation efforts.

Relevant UN treaties, resolutions, and reports:

- United Nations Charter (1945)
- UN Security Council Resolution 751 (1992)
- UN Security Council Resolution 2036 (2012)
- Reports of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM)

Previous attempts to solve the issue:

Somalia–Somaliland Talks:

A number of negotiations have been held through mediation by the international community. These were meant to enhance collaboration and deal with political status.

Why they failed:

The interests of the two parties conflict. Somaliland wants to be independent, but Somalia demands unity. Trust has been very low, and there has been no tough implementation of agreements.

African Union Mission (2005):

The case of Somaliland was reviewed by the AU, and it was observed that it was stable.

Why it failed:

There was no definite follow-up action. Wary of precedent, the member states remained wary.

Possible solutions:

Potential Solution 1: Conditional and Progressive Recognition Framework

One of them is to design a gradual process whereby the development of Somaliland is tied to the growing amount of international acceptance. This will not take a unilateral move, and yet it will deal with reality on the ground. The African Union, along with the United Nations, might

establish clear conditions. These may involve frequent elections, the upholding of human rights, and further stability. They might also demand that Somaliland have a formal discussion with Somalia.

In this model, Somaliland would initially have restricted access to international institutions. This could involve observer functions or more developmental assistance. Provided it fulfills the agreed terms in the long run, states might proceed to formal recognition in a harmonized manner. This minimizes risk and gives the Security Council an opportunity to closely follow up. It also puts pressure on the cooperation between the two parties.

Political resistance is the major issue. Somalia is not going to accept a process that will bring about independence. Other states might also be apprehensive because of fears of other regions following suit. Nonetheless, the strategy provides a moderate stance that connects recognition to transparent criteria and minimizes abrupt turbulence.

Potential Solution 2: Political Compromise

The other strategy is to facilitate face-to-face talks between Somalia and Somaliland through powerful international mediation. The aim would be to arrive at an unequivocal and agreed solution on the status of Somaliland. This might result in complete independence, a federal system, or some sort of more liberalized autonomy.

The process could be facilitated by the appointment of a special envoy by the United Nations. The talks could be aided by the regional organizations to sustain pressure in order to progress. A systematic plan and a timetable would prevent procrastination. Trust could be enhanced by confidence-building policies, e.g., collaboration in trade or security.

The positive thing about this approach is that it is legitimate. A negotiated agreement would be stronger, and the chances of future conflict would be minimized. It honors both parties and is in line with international law. Nevertheless, the experience of the past has indicated that it is not easy to agree. The distance between independence and unity is big. A powerful mediation and compromise would be the key to success.

Possible Solution 3: UN-supervised Referendum.

The third alternative is to hold a referendum in Somaliland, which is supervised by the United Nations. This would enable the population to determine its political future by voting. In case the outcome is in favor of independence, it might fortify the argument of recognition.

It would involve having set regulations on voter eligibility, security, and monitoring. It would also require the consent of Somalia to make it legitimate. Otherwise, the outcome might be met with serious resistance. The United Nations would have to control the process in order to prevent tension.

This solution endorses the concept of self-determination and provides an immediate voice to the people. It, however, is risky. The independence vote may only fuel more conflict in the event that Somalia does not accept the results. Prudent planning and prior consultation would be crucial.

Potential Solution 4: More Involvement but Unsatisfied.

Another, less risky alternative is to increase international contact with Somaliland, but without recognition. This may involve development assistance, trade relations, and collaboration in security matters like piracy.

This will enhance the ground conditions and promote stability. It does not impose significant changes in the law and lessens political risk. It also enables the international community to collaborate with Somaliland in a practical manner.

But it fails to address the main problem of status. Somaliland can take this as a lack. The recognition would still remain a limiting force to its access to the global systems. This is a good solution that should be applied in the short term, but not in the long term.

Summary:

The Somaliland issue revolves around its desire to be independent of Somalia since 1991 and its non-recognition by the international community. Somaliland has established a stable political structure that has its own government, elections, and security forces. It dominates its land and has escaped most of the war that has been witnessed in the southern part of Somalia. This

notwithstanding, the international community, the United Nations included, still regards it as a constituent of Somalia.

The problem is based on the clash between two important principles. Self-determination is the right of Somaliland to choose independence. Territorial integrity helps Somalia to uphold its borders. Somaliland claims that it deserves recognition because of its independent colonial history and failed political union with Somalia, as well as centuries of stability. Somalia opposes this and claims that recognition would undermine its sovereignty and pose a threat to stability in the region.

There are broader implications of the situation. The recognition would have an impact on other separatist movements, particularly in Africa. Meanwhile, the stability of Somaliland poses the question of whether the international policy is consistent at present. The area is also significant in terms of trade and security due to its proximity to the major shipping routes.

The previous attempts to fix the problem, such as the negotiations between Somalia and Somaliland and the review by the African Union, have not had a definite result. The biggest obstacle is still the disconnect between the interests of Somaliland to be independent and the interests of Somalia to be united.

There are a number of potential solutions. These are a slow way to recognition under definite conditions, new bargaining between the two sides, a referendum under the control of the UN, or even more international involvement without recognition. The solutions have their own advantages and disadvantages. The Security Council has to reconcile law, politics, and stability in the region to decide on the next steps.

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