

Collective Action, and the Problems of Short-Term Government of Somalia

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Abstract

Since the end of the Said Barre era in Somalia, the country has been in constant political chaos. Among causes of the problems is a draft constitution with ambiguities in its clauses, power struggle between different political and clan leaders, lack of good leadership to steer the country forward and foreign intervention that at most times leads to problems within the government. Given these problems, the country has been operating in a short-term mode. Some of the problems the short-term government faces are high insecurity mainly because of terrorism, corruption fueled by non-accountability, lack of trust amongst the leaders and politicians and an economic recession. At the center of these problems are the President and the Prime Minister. The paper applies the game theory of collective action to solve the problem between “the President” and “the Prime Minister”.

Keywords

Short-Term, Collective Action, Prime Minister, President, Leadership

1. Introduction

The geo-strategic importance of Somalia, which is directly at the southern end of the Red Sea, across the Arabian Peninsula, and thus located close to major oil-lines (Schulz, 2011) placed Somalia not only at the center of the Horn of Africa with an area of 637,540 square kilometers, but also to a foreign struggle for a long period of time. It is located at the crossroad of one of the world’s busiest trade routes, and gateway of the modern Africa. The country shares borders with Djibouti to the North West, Kenya to the south, Gulf of Aden on the north, Indian Ocean to the east, and Ethiopia on the west, which has added to its geo-strategic significance.

The modern statehood of Somalia starts with the country’s independence from Britain and Italy in 1960. The first government led by the first elected Somalia President Adan Osman constituted civilian democratic government. Osman stepped down in 1967, becoming the first African president to hand over the power after being

defeated in the general elections. During the civilian administration that existed prior to the seizure of power by the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) in 1969, Somalia was touted in the West as a model of a successful democracy in Africa, as peaceful successful elections had been held (Ewusi & Akwanga, 2010: p. 81). However, the Siad Barre-led Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) suspended the constitution, and dissolved the parliament, the Supreme Court, and all the political parties (Ismail, 2010: p. 85). After 20 years of military rule and dictatorship, Barre's Supreme Revolutionary Council was eventually forced out in the early 1990s by a coalition of armed opposition groups. As a result of a devastating civil war following the state collapse in 1991, which triggers the ruin of state institutions, Somalia has lacked a fully functioning government for the last two decades. Several efforts to salvage the country have been made by the international community by working closely with the neighboring countries to restore peace and stability in the country.

Somalia has for decades been a failed state, with endless political disputes that have thrown the country into darkness. There have been standoffs between the Presidents and Prime Ministers since the government of Mohamed Said Barre, which have heightened political tensions in the country. The short-term government in the country has faced problems such as failure to defeat the Al Shabaab (terrorist group), widespread corruption that continues to affect the government and the nation at a large, lack of trust amongst the major state donors, poor long-term investment policies and poor job security for the civil servants. This paper critically analyzes the differences between the Prime Ministers and the Presidents after the civil war and the role of the international community and neighboring countries in the dispute. Additionally, the paper discusses how collective action between "the Prime Minister" and "the President" will help in solving the problems of the short-term government.

2. Differences between the President and Prime Minister

Before going down to the deep analysis of the current differences between the president and the prime minister it is necessary to elucidate and spell out the Somalia's political system and the origins of the president and prime ministers throughout the years. There have been several variations in Somalia's basic political structure since 1960. Soon after independence, Somalia adopted its first national constitution in a nationwide referendum for a democratic state with a parliamentary form of government. During that term, the president, who was elected by the national assembly through secret ballot had the right to appoint and dismiss the prime minister, according to article 78 of the 1960 Somali constitution. As the roles, powers and responsibilities of each have been clearly stated in the constitution, the likelihood of political infighting of the prime minister and the president had been minimal. In 1969, after a deedless military coup, the country entered a new face of political structure. Following the coup, executive and legislative power was vested in the 20-member Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC), headed by Barre as he dissolved the 1960 constitution. As Barre had been the leader of the SRC, the country entered a new form of like presidential system with absolute power on the hand of the leader. Therefore, there had been no political infighting in the ruling elite during this term.

With the departure of the Barre regime in 1991 and the outbreak of the civil war, the country's political culture and structure have transformed utterly. Following decades of civil war, the political representation of the country has mainly subjected to clannism and clan based representation. Many reconciliation conferences were held for the Somalis outside of the country. Therefore, The internationally-sponsored national reconciliation conferences in Arta, Djibouti (2000), and Mbagathi, Kenya (2002-04), followed the same way of clans based political representation (Hoehne, 2010). The most interesting in this political system is that all powers are shared between the major clans in a mechanism of 4.5 formula, where the four major clans have equal shares and the minority groups will have 50% less than one major clan's share. As the clannism become the political culture in this era, the Prime Minister is elected by the president for a full term of 4 years and can only be dismissed by parliament electing a successor in a vote of no confidence. The constitution does not give a clear separation of the powers between the prime minister and the president, where the president can nominate the prime minister but could not fire him from the job. This has led to continuous political infighting, weak performance and weak government institutions.

The paper uses the attached research results to evaluate the disputes between the President and the Prime Minister. The leading factors in these disputes are the power struggle between them, controversy of the draft constitution that is currently being used, lack of/unwillingness leadership skills and foreign intervention (international and regional intervention).

The first problem that is faced by the short-term government, according to the research material, is corruption and unaccountability in the short-term sector. This is because almost every official that was nominated believed that they would stay in the office for a limited period, given that there was no one to monitor their actions while in office. In Somalia, there is no accountability institution to monitor the actions of civil servants, which promotes lawlessness (Kapteijns, 2012). The research also found that power struggle between the high officials was one of the problems between the President and the Prime Minister. The two are expected to take sides whenever there are disputes amongst the leading civil servants, and favoring even if they have poor performance of their duties. Additionally, lack of clarity in the Constitution is a major cause of the short-term controversy between the President and the Prime Minister.

The research found out that the short-term government's disputes led to a number of problems that affect the country. One of the problems is corruption and unaccountability in the public sector. Somalia has no anti-corruption or integrity checking bodies, which aggravates the situation (Kapteijns, 2012; Farah, 2011). The country's poor security situation is also associated with the problems faced by the short-term government. Al-Shabaab, one of Al-Qaeda's affiliate cells, has continued to unleash terror, both within the boundaries and in the neighboring countries, especially Kenya and Uganda (Hansen, 2013). Additionally, it was noted that the security of the countries is worst during power transitions. There are also high chances for change of the military whenever there is a formation of the new government.

Differences between the two also lead to increased mistrust of the international community, who are the key funders of the State. For instance, the short-term government disputes led to the resignation of the chairperson of the Somali Central Bank due to lack of accountability and weak financial procedures (Charbonneau, 2014). This was coupled with the lack of willingness from the high officials to reorganize the public sector and eliminate all structural problems that were because of lack of cooperation. Given that the short-term government has caused disappointment of the local and foreign investors, the problem of public accountability continues to affect the country.

Majority of the respondents believe that the President is the cause of collective action problems in the government. The Somali constitution gives the administrative powers to the President (Farah, 2011; Albin-Lackey, 2009; Grote & Roder, 2012). Given this, the President dictates most of the administrative orders and is not willing to allow the Prime Minister to implement his plans. On the other hand, small proportion of the respondents believed that the Prime Minister was the cause of the problem. Given the powers handed to him by the Somali draft constitution, the respondents believed that the Prime Minister was not doing what he was expected to do, and its to form a strong government. The Prime Minister is accused of over-engaging in destructive politics, especially in appointments, non-cooperation with the President and lack of incentive to deliver pleasant and cooperative policy.

2.1. Role of the Parliament

In the 20th century, parliament has been considered as one of the strongest tools for solving conflicts. The same applies to Somalia. Ihalainen (2010) asserts that parliaments have extensive records for speaking and decision-making, which have however not been exploited in most countries facing political crises. For the case of the Somali conflict between the President and the Prime Minister, Parliamentary sources can be used to manage the standoffs and cool the political tensions between the two. This is because the Somali draft constitution gives parliament to make a number of important administrative decisions, such as swearing in officials. Additionally, the parliamentary means can be used in internal conflict resolution, through either dialogue or collaboration with external mediators. Of all other means, the Somali parliament stands the best chance of creating a mediation platform between the President and Prime Minister, given that their strongest political supporters and advisors make up the assembly.

The Somali parliament is one of the strongest political institutions in the country. The Federal Parliament of Somalia was formed in August 2012 and was sworn in the same year (Berge & Taddia, 2013). The newly elected Somalia Prime Minister, Mr. Omar Abdiradhid Ali Sharmarke, was approved by the parliament in 2014 (Faruk, 2014). Mr. Sharmake was sworn in after two previous Prime Ministers had fallen out with the President over the cabinet make-up. According to political analysts, the Somali politicians have been working for a long time with outside nations to come up with long lasting political solutions for the country. The move to inaugurate a new Prime Minister was considered largely as a show of cooperation and motive to end the disputes between the President and the Prime Ministers. Approval by the Somali parliament showed that the country was

moving beyond the long and difficult processes of executive appointments, which evoked the violence and political tensions in the country.

2.2. Role of Neighboring Countries

According to the research, one of the results of the disputes in the short-term government is insecurity. Somalia is still where is Al-Shabaab terror issue has led to an armed military conflict in the country, further worsening the relationship between the President and Prime Minister, when it comes to finding solutions for the same. Going back to 1991, the downfall of Said Barre resulted in an ugly power struggle and clan clashes. Two factions were formed, one backing the pro President and the other backing the Chairperson the Somali Congress (United Nations, 2015). Since then, the tradition of taking sides between the President, and other executive members led to rising hostilities, leading to loss of lives and growth of the Al-Shabaab terror group.

In solving the security problem, the neighboring countries, specifically Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda stepped in (Kumssa, William, & Jones, 2011). The first steps of action were mediating between the political leaders of the country rather than supporting special group or the President and the Prime Minister. Such kind of mediation of Somali leaders can help solve short-term government problems in the country. Additionally, through agreements with the neighboring countries and the Somali government, armed troops were brought in 2011 to deal with the rising threat to security posed by the terror outfit Al-Shabaab (Lewis, 2014).

2.3. Role of the International Community

One of the biggest steps by the international community in ending the short-term government disputes in Somalia is accepting the incoming Presidents. By acknowledging and internationally accepting him as a representative of the Somali government, the international community lays ground for dialogue amongst the Somali political leaders, including the Prime Minister himself. In a number of occasions, the President has accused the Prime Minister of poor performance, and a number of ministers take orders from the President instead of the Prime Minister (Hussein & Sheikh, 2014).

Therefore, it is clear that the problems are because of the constitution's ambiguity. In this light, participation in the constitution-making process by the international community is one of the steps in solving the short-term government problems (Dautrich & Yalof, 2015; Miller & Auon, 2010). The international community has over time provided platform for negotiation amongst the Somali political leaders and gave support in terms of logistics and advice. The Presidents and the Prime Ministers have over time since the post-war period been engaged in active negotiations, which are aimed at providing lasting solutions to the conflict. According to popular opinion by political analysts and other stakeholders, a strategic move, which encompasses collaboration between the two, is an alternative to solving the differences.

3. Research Results

According to primary data results, 55% of the respondents believe that, the president is the one who causes the lack of collective actions in solving short-term government in Somalia while 33% blame the Prime Ministers are responsible for the short term government due to their defect strategy of collective action , while the remaining 12% of the respondents believe that a third party mediators (Somali parliaments, international community and neighboring counties) are responsible for the short-term government.

Collective action exists mainly during the nominations of the civil servants, and lack of collective action arises during reshuffles of the cabinets, firing of government officials from their offices and signing government contracts.

Collective action can be achieved in a number of ways: it may come mutual understanding between the two parties achieving equity payoffs, clarification of the ambiguities of Somalia constitution in terms of hierarchies/responsibilities and coexistence of third loyal independent mediator either national or international.

4. Logic of Collective Action and Strategic Model

The constructing logic of collective action is sharing of collective goods in a manner that all the participants benefit equally from (Olson, 1971). According to the creator of the logic, Olson Mancur, all parties may strongly show desire and benefit from a collective group. However, under normal circumstances, they may not be in a

position to take individual action to achieve that collective good. This implies that they find it appropriate to act against the collective interest. Olson's logic of collective action would help in the modeling of the decision-making process of the two main actors, the President, and the Prime Minister. Despite the fact that his analysis is not explicitly strategic, the idea of collective action in Somalia would work very well in strategic settings. Just as Thomas Schelling asserts, a strategic move would help both sides to achieve desirable outcomes (Schelling, 2007). Whenever there is an entry of third party intervention, the President, and the Prime Minister's men ends up losing their positions, both in the government and as negotiation players, worsening the situation.

Many analysts have agreed that the logic of collective action applies very well to political interventions, even if each one pursuing his own best interest in society (Hardin, 1968). But self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interest (Olson, 1965). The study backs the opinion that it is better to conceive political interventions spearheaded by the two in terms of private goods and strategic action. This would greatly benefit the players and other stakeholders to solve the short-term government crisis that Somalia currently faces. In particular, the benefit each party gets is a function of the outcome of the collective action, of which a number of other factors such as regional and international intervention are included. In Somalia, the regional and international third party players (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009) have spearheaded the most successful negotiations. However, it is time that the local leaders, especially the President and the Prime Minister, took control of the collective action to yield results best suited to the local situation.

According to the research results, collective action problems arise during the nomination of civil servants. As the process starts, the President picks his men, and the Prime Minister follows suit. In the end, political temperatures are aggravated, and the administration is thrown into chaos. According to Olson, group size, and group behavior are some of the considerations of collective action (Olson, 2009). Olson asserts that social pressure is a negative incentive and that large groups can work better only if they are federal. In the case of Somali politics, there are a number of clans that want to be represented in the government. This is the reason the President endorses different individuals other than those endorsed by the Prime Minister. However, by considering that the parliament is a federal one, the collective action by the President, and the Prime Minister can be structured to come up with a long-lasting solution to the problem of selection.

The draft constitution, power struggle, lack of leadership and foreign intervention are some of the causes of short-term government in Somalia, which lead to problems such as security, corruption, lack of trust and economic recession. These are the main causes of instability in the region. According to IGAD, both the President and the Prime Minister are in a position, through collective action, to provide substantial solutions to these problems (IGAD, 2010). The only way to do this is by putting aside their differences, which aggravate the causes and effects, and focus on finding a long lasting solution. Through consultations and active participation of all the stakeholders, the nation can begin with implementing a working constitution, which resolves all the administrative ambiguities currently experienced. Just as Olson asserts, collective action is possible when it is made compulsory and when it is for the people's interest (Olson, 2009). Sometimes, the two sides may simply have no capacity to communicate with one another due to prevailing differences, no way to develop trust, and no sense that they share common interest, in this case, a powerful group is necessarily to intervene, such as, parliament, elders, civil society, ministers and so on. Such groups may need some form of external assistance to break out of the perverse logic of their situation (Ostrom, 1990). Without fixation of these differences can be a barrier to the construction of local community groups who are able to act effectively in their collective self-interest (Harley, 1996). In the case of Somalia, it is time that, third local mediators engage policies that may overcome the differences between both the President and the Prime Minister to eliminate the collective action problem in Somalia.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper has discussed the short-term problems that are faced by Somalia. The President and the Prime Minister are at the center of the political power struggles that continue to throw the country into turmoil. Additionally, the draft constitution's ambiguity does little to help the situation. It has been with the intervention of the regional and international communities that the country has been able to figure out temporary solutions. However, for long-lasting solutions to be implemented there needs collective action by the President and the Prime Minister. Situations leading to political conflicts between the President and the Prime Minister have been discussed and analyzed. In the light of this, bargaining and mutual understanding between the two sides have been found to be the only substantial solution to end the short-term government problems.

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