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Somalia: The Rule of Anarchy

Somalia is a country unique from all others; its uniqueness comes from the fact that it has no official, central government. It is a country, as ironic as it sounds, literally ruled by anarchy. Most of the people who live in this “Horn of Africa” are mere subsistence farmers and nomads, living day-by-day on what little they can produce. People have to get by with whatever means they can; some even resort to piracy. The chaotic rule, or lack thereof, in Somalia has levied significant burdens on every single one of its people. Water sanitation, education, healthcare, violence, and food security are crises that can only be solved in this country through the creation of a strong government, driven by the goal of promoting conflict prevention, resolution, and reducing the number of vulnerable citizens through the implementation of democracy. Only once this government has validated its control of this lawless land can outside humanitarian aid for the average Somali be adequately accepted and distributed. But they cannot do this alone; aid must be given by outside organizations and governments to the newly forming Transitional Federal Government. Only then can violence and piracy be reduced. Only then can Somalia get back on its feet and begin to deal with the extensive list of burdens it has overwhelming it.

In order to even begin to understand the problems that plague Somalia, one must first know of the people who inhabit the country. Approximately 73% of the population lives in rural conditions. A Somali family is one that lives in poverty and fear. The average family has approximately six children (CIA). A family usually consists of these children, a mother, and a father, assuming militants, disease, or malnourishment hasn't killed one or both parents. A typical Somali family lives off of what they can grow and/or what little aid they can get from outside countries that actually make it through the various militant groups. A large portion of farmers are nomads or semi-pastoralists who depend on the animals they herd or food they grow for a living (CIA). The main foods grown are bananas, sorghum, corn, coconuts, rice, sugarcane, mangos, sesame seeds, and beans. Animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, and fish are also commonly raised (CIA). Milk and other dairy-based products collected from goats are especially important to the Somalis' survival. It is a staple in the average Somali's diet (Hurgin). Traditionally, land is considered shared by all people unless a water well is dug. Then the land is considered private (Hurgin). This creates water problems because the only way a family can get water is if they dig their own well since wells are not shared. Education, if one can even call it that, is very limited with most males having three years of education and most females having two years of education (CIA). Healthcare is also in a bad situation as there are only 3.5 physicians per 100,000 people (CIA). All Somalis suffer because of these major problems.

While the majority of Somalis are nomadic, there are still a large number of citizens living in urban centers. The largest cities are the ports of Mogadishu, Merca, Baraawe, Kismayu, and Berbera. Those who live in the cities often live in a one-story, flat-roofed house made of concrete. Most don't have running water or electricity. Urban Somalis have a diet similar to rural citizens, but restaurants are also present. Most of these restaurants serve either Arab or Italian food, yet women rarely eat out (Hurgin). Most of the urban population has similar problems as rural Somalis, such as lack of access to food, clean water, education, and healthcare.

There are a few key reasons why agricultural productivity and employment are failing. Somalia, and Africa in general, abandoned agriculture during the late 1960s for industry and oil in an attempt to keep up with the Western world (Ayittey). Imperialism, mass poverty, and already failing economies created this sense of urgency to develop industrial sectors. This idea insisted that, in order to catch up,

abandoning traditional agriculture would be necessary. Thus, these countries would try what Western countries had taught them during Imperial rule; to exploit their land for whatever resources they could get and use modern industry to manufacture it into something other countries would want, such as oil. But with limited experience in the industrial field and prices of oil rising and falling sporadically, Somali's economy collapsed (Ayittey). With this failing economy, there was no way the country could import the food that was needed by its people. This, combined with a now diminished agriculture sector and falling employment, led to mass poverty and starvation in Somalia. The suffering people were not happy with the government that had been put in place by Western powers; mass poverty, spurred by a failing economy, only helped create more unrest against those in power. The roots of all the conflict that was to come for Somalia had already taken hold.

Like many other African nations, problems began with European colonization. The Portuguese were the first to land in Somalia in the 15th century. They held control of many port cities. Then in the late 19th century, the British East India Company began to obtain large portions of Somalia's northern territories to secure their trade routes. At the same time, Italy had been plotting out land and obtaining different treaties for the acquisition of other parts of Somalia. Eventually, the two sides came together and marked out the borders for British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland. This colonization, however, was not a peaceful one. Many rebel groups led strikes against both the Italians and British. One of the more prominent leaders, Mohamed Abdullah, caused some major problems for British control of Somalia. Yet he ultimately failed; in part from British retaliation, but also from competition by rival rebel groups (US Department of State). Like many other African nations, colonization was the beginning of conflict and unrest in Somalia.

Freedom from colonial rule began at the advent of World War II. When Italy declared war on Britain in 1940, Italy began overrunning British strongholds in Somalia and other African nations. Once Britain and the Allies had regained some composure from the initial strikes, they launched counter offensives across Eastern Africa. Much of Somalia was brought back under British control. At the end of World War II, Italy renounced all of its rights to Italian Somaliland. Then, Britain gave the United Nations General Assembly the ability to decide what to do with Italian Somaliland. The UN decided to give control of it back to Italy for 10 years before it would be given formal freedom. British Somaliland, at this time, was also taking steps towards freedom. A legislative assembly was formed and the representatives elected requested that the British grant them freedom so they could join with Italian Somaliland once it was freed. The request was granted, and British Somaliland became free on June 26, 1960. Five days later, former British Somaliland joined with the now freed Italian Somaliland to create the Somali Republic (US Department of State). However, this glimmer of hope did not last.

Current conflict in Somalia began after the country's freedom from colonial rule was granted. Their first form of government was a democratic parliament. Power was balanced between former Italian Somaliland and former British Somaliland for a few years before power became concentrated in the southern parts of Somalia. The north voiced its discontent but remained calm. It was then that Mohammed Ibrahim Egal, the country's leader at the time, tried to make peace with neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia. This upset many Somalis because of the longstanding hatred of Ethiopia and, in 1969, there was a bloodless coup. The country turned to a Soviet supported dictatorship under the rule of Mohamed Barre, a military leader at the time. Barre first aligned himself with the Soviets; a treaty of friendship was signed and conflict with Ethiopia was escalating. Shortly thereafter, Ethiopia switched from supporting the West to supporting the Soviet Union. The Soviets then sent troops and supplies to Ethiopia, causing Somalia to lose its power in the region. Barre then decided to switch Somalia's alliance from the Soviet Union to the West. He asked for military and economic aid, which the US tried to supply (US Department of State). This aid, however, was too little, too late.

Crippling economic woes stemming from failed industrial ventures led to the oppression of the country's citizens. The floundering economy was further hurt by stagnate growth. Aid did little to help as the economy was already in complete shambles, giving Somalia the nickname "The Graveyard of Aid" (Ayittey). All of this led to an all-out civil war with groups forming such as the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), Somali National Movement (SNM), the United Somali Congress (USC), and Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM). As these groups arose, Barre took violent countermeasures. At one point he ordered the bombing of the Somali city Hargeisa, killing over 10,000 citizens. At the same time these very expensive anti-insurgency campaigns were going on, Barre was looting the national treasury, even further compounding Somalia's vast economic woes. Barre was finally ousted from power in 1991. The country then fell into complete chaos, and the rebel groups waged small scale wars against each other (US Department of State). During this warfare, countries continued to give aid, yet very little of it got dispersed to the people as much of it was stolen by bandits and warring rebel groups. Approximately three-hundred thousand people died in a two year span following Barre's ousting (Hurgin). The United States and the United Nations began Operation Restore Hope, an initiative for creating an environment for outside aid to make it to those suffering. But after 18 US servicemen were killed in what is popularly known as "Black Hawk Down," major US aid pulled out of Somalia at the people's expense (US Department of State). Somalia has since been in a state of anarchy, "ruled" by small militant groups, causing most of the problems the country faces today.

Diplomatic efforts for conflict resolution, promoting democracy, and aid are needed now more than ever in Somalia. The lack of a government has created unprecedented economic instability. The nearly complete lack of an economy has resulted in the Somali population's inability to get adequate food in two ways. First, the weak economy has led to a weak agricultural sector. Considering what little economy there is in Somalia now is almost solely agricultural, this weak economy means there is very little commercial production of food. Second, the weak economy does not allow the country the means by which it can import food for its people. It literally doesn't have the money to buy food from other countries in order to import. These problems, coupled with significant problems in infrastructure for delivering foreign aid, have been disastrous. Oftentimes, foreign aid will be taken by pirates or militant groups before it reaches those who need it. These attacks have forced outside relief agencies to airdrop supplies into the country, an extremely costly method of transportation (Tran). Somalia is facing a multi-front economic affliction, and the people are paying the cost through starvation.

Surprisingly, the situation in Somalia is showing steady improvement and has seen some positive results as of late. It has largely avoided the AIDS epidemic that has devastated much of Africa. Also, international aid from the UN has brought some stability to the country's economy and political situation (BBC). Somalia has also escaped many problems other countries are facing worldwide. Population growth is low at a meager 1.6%. Urbanization growth is also low at 4.1% (CIA). This low growth means that both energy demand and pollution are essentially non-existent issues at this point. Certainly, electricity is something that is going to be needed, but, at this point, there is no energy demand. In these regards, Somalia is doing all right. Still, there is much work to do in solving Somalia's government woes. A Transitional Federal Government (TFG) has been formed but has little influence over much of Somalia. The government is not widely accepted throughout the country as of today and has faced much opposition. The US-designated terrorist group, al-Shabaab has been particularly burdensome for the TFG. They have launched many attacks and have kept aid and public services from making it into Somalia. Recently, al-Shabaab has lost much of its footing in Mogadishu, but they still maintain control over much of Somalia (US Department of State). Thus, little change has been felt by much of Somalia, especially by the rural farmers and nomads of Somalia. The only way that this government can become fully recognized is if it regains a grip over its entire nation. International backing of Somalia's Transitional Federal Government and pushes for internal government reform could greatly help the entire nation. An infrastructure for sending aid should be formed and oppressive militant groups, like al-

Shabaab and pirates who plague the country, need to be suppressed. Economic stability and growth would then also result, allowing for more food production and import.

The next major problem beyond food for Somalia is access to a clean water supply for its citizens. A total of 70% of the water sources (91% in rural areas) are unimproved and not sanitary (CIA). This is another issue that could possibly be resolved through a stabilized government. Much like what is undertaken in other countries, such as the United States, the government could begin to provide clean water sources for its people. Looking to other countries as an example, this can be seen as the most effective method of water sanitation and distribution. Even if the government didn't provide as much water sanitation as would be liked, a strengthened government would at the very least provide an avenue for relief workers to set up clean water sources. National law is also necessary in changing the widely-held belief that if a water well is built, the water well and the land on which it is built, belongs to the builder and the builder alone, as mentioned earlier. This creates major problems in getting clean water distributed. Again, a strengthened national government is essential to solving the major water sanitation and distribution problems Somalia faces.

There are also many other benefits to having a strong, centralized government. The first major benefit is education. As mentioned earlier, most male citizens only receive three years of education, and females receive two. This means the educational standards are far below the Millennium Development Goal of making sure everybody receives a full primary education. Supporting and strengthening the central government could mean that everyone could receive a free, or at least cheaper, education, much like what has been done in neighboring Ethiopia by the UN (United Nations). This increased level of education would lead to more professionals in a variety of areas. Thus, better farming techniques could be formed, more water supplies could be developed, and more healthcare professionals could be trained, another major need of the population, as medical care is practically non-existent. With an increased education in the area of food production, Somali citizens could grow their traditional crops more effectively, along with learning how to grow new, nontraditional crops, creating more food for the people and more money for the country. An increased number of professionals in a variety of fields would also mean more job opportunities and, thus, a strengthened and diversified economy. Practically all major problems facing Somalia can be solved, or at least improved, through a strengthened central government.

Somalia faces a vast array of problems, but the most urgent need of this nation, beyond all else, is a strong, central government. Somalia's lack of government is most certainly the root cause of nearly all major problems the country, and its people, face. Efforts have already been made with the creation of the Transitional Federal Government and the disbursement of aid. This has been a significant jump forward, but much more aid in strengthening this newly-created government is needed. As the government expands and strengthens, it can take ideas and adopt some of the policies of other local governments in Somalia and incorporate them into a federalist system. In strengthening the TFG of Somalia, food security, water sanitation, education, healthcare, and other major issues already outlined would be greatly aided. The government's ability to channel and utilize aid more efficiently, create institutions for water sanitation, and stabilize the national economy would be of great benefit to all Somali citizens. The Millennium Development Goals of food security, primary education, medical care, and targeted development assistance could all be met through the strengthening of Somalia's government. The Transitional Federal Government is far and away the most important project in need of assistance in Somalia. The UN must be urged to increase the amount of targeted aid they send to the TFG, much like it has successfully done for other African nations such as Ethiopia. Their support, along with the support of other independent nations, is key in the effort to legitimize this newly-born government. These foreign institutions will also be critical in continuing to send food aid through whatever means possible, to Somali until the government has regained its ability to provide for its people. Make no mistake, Somalia needs aid from outside nations and institutions and it needs it now. This, combined with aid of other basic essentials like food, water, education, and healthcare is the only way these problems can legitimately be

examined and not just given the generic foreign-aid Band-Aid such has been done in the past. By providing aid to fulfill the needs of the people via outside nations for a short transitional period, the central government would be able to strengthen and then begin addressing the many issues the country faces on its own through government-funded education, water supplies, and agricultural diversification. This agricultural diversification would then, in turn, lead to economic diversification because, if one of the major crops failed, the entire country's economy wouldn't collapse.

Another need of the country is anti-insurgency operations against the many factions in Somalia, particularly al-Shabaab. These operations could be either forceful or strategic strikes against their economic supplies, and are key to making sure aid makes it to the people who need it and thus giving the TFG legitimacy. Currently, troops from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) are having quite a bit of success in weakening al-Shabaab, liberating large areas and diminishing their influence and recruiting abilities, but now it is more important than ever to send aid to this organization to deliver the knockout punch to this terrorist group and grant Somalia's TFG more operating power (International Crisis Group). With this blend of aid and support, Somalia could create a government that would succeed in bringing prosperity for the country and its people.

Immediate action is more urgent than ever. Somalia's issues have resurged into the international spectrum, with the London Somalia Conference having been held in February. The Transitional Federal Government's mandate also expires in August of 2012. It is of abundant importance that the international community makes a commitment to this effort and extends the mandate (International Crisis Group). With this commitment, as mentioned earlier, needs to come support for AMISOM. This support could be monetary or actual manpower through EU peacekeeping forces. Joint Somali-AMISOM forces have already seen much success in driving out terrorist groups from major cities in Somalia. In particular, they have been able to defeat the groups that had been extorting local populations and causing food shortages. These victories have led directly to a lessening of famine in the affected regions (AMISOM). Not only does supporting AMISOM have the practical benefit of eliminating terrorist sects, but it also has been instrumental in building regional relationships and sustainable peace with neighboring countries. The African Union has proven that they are committed to helping Somalia out in their crisis with the creation of AMISOM. Kenya and Ethiopia, once bitter rivals of Somalia, have provided a significant amount of manpower towards the cause. This has helped to create a friendlier atmosphere amongst the neighboring countries, thus making it a huge success (AMISOM). In order to ensure that these successes continue, it is extremely important that the international community show its commitment to helping Somalia now, with the extension of the TFG's mandate.

Somalia is one of the most plagued nations in the entire world. These problems are derived from the fact that it can be argued whether Somalia is even a nation. Even to this day, most of the country has no government rule, which has led to many economic problems that have not only damaged the country, but, more importantly, devastated the people. Almost all of Somalia's recent history has been plagued with conflict, and it continues to this day. This lawlessness and conflict has created utter poverty. Many of the people of Somalia have very limited food supplies, limited education, lack of healthcare, and no clean water supply. Yet, through all of these problems, there is hope. With the creation of the Transitional Federal Government, some stability has been realized in limited areas of Somalia, like Mogadishu. In order for the nation to succeed, the government must be strengthened. With the building up of the government, almost all of these problems could be greatly reduced. It is a prerequisite to solving all of the other problems. Only when the government has been solidified can the Somali people live a life of dignity that fulfills their basic needs. Only then can the rule of anarchy be broken.

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