

POST INDEPENDENCE CONFLICTS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA: ANALYSIS OF THE GEO-STRATEGIC INTERESTS OF ERITREA, ETHIOPIA AND KENYA IN THE SOMALI CONFLICT

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Abstract

It is inconceivable that the Horn of Africa, understood in its wider and protracted rather than the restricted sense is arguably Africa's most enduring conflict and security complexity thereby generating multitudes of threats to human and global threats. There is a tendency to conceptualise conflicts as absence of peace. Thus, very often, it is common to hear of conflicts and peaceful atmosphere being two sides of the same coin. In other-wards, conflict is defined as synonymous with war, and by logical extension, conflict is war or absence of peace. This way of conceptualizing conflict though, quite tempting to be ignored is inadequate for the understanding of Somalia conflict. This is because even common sense would suggest that peace does exist independence of war. This paper examines the geo strategic interests of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya as fundamental to understanding the protracted Somali conflicts. The paper critically reviewed the existing literature both conceptually, empirically and thematically and relied on secondary sources of data and examination of official documents as its methodology. The paper is structured into five interrelated compartments The paper concludes that contrary to the parochial analysis of the conflict, it is the strategic interests of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya are at the core and root of the Somali conflict.

Keywords: Conflict, National Interest, Geo-political, Nation building

Introduction

Conflicts in the Horn of Africa particularly Somali conflict is often erroneously conceived and profoundly linked to the country's historical development of colonialism and socio-cultural specificities. Some identified a mixture of factors such as the legacies of European colonialism, a schismatic kinship system, the contradictions between a centralized state and a pastoral culture, east-west cold war politics and militarization, underdevelopment and unseen development, ecological degradation, lack of power sharing, corruption and human right violations responsible for the conflict. The above exposition simply exposes the fact that both internal and external influences contributed in no small measure to the fragmentation of Somali social cum political conflicts.

In July 1960, the fusion of British Somali and Italian Somali gave birth to a single state: the Republic of Somalia (ROS). This political independence saw the dawn of the onerous task of nation building especially in Somalia, which since 1960 has been pre-occupied with how to unite what the Leadership called a “dismembered nation” (Danfulani, 2010:10). The willingness to unite every members of the family contributed to the conflict that formed the thrust that this paper attempt to interrogate.

In addition, contrary to the speculation and assertion by some African Scholars like Mandami (2011), that traced the origin and root of post-colonial conflicts in most African states to colonialism and its policies, this paper attempt to de-emphasize ethnicism, clanism and fanaticism, and situate the conflict in Somalia to its geopolitical location. This is because, as Danfulani (2010) argues, the entire land mass of the Horn of Africa (HOA) and particularly what is known today as Somalia is situated at the confluence of international waterways of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. This he added, is a vast zone, indispensable to international maritime, commercial, navigational and communication networks of global exchange, from where the world powers could monitor the flow of raw materials traffic between the North and South of the equator (Danfulani, 2010: 4). It therefore becomes expedient and right to refocus on some external influences which contributed to and thus prolongs the Somali conflict. For it is undeniably true that the strategic interests that arose due to the geo-political implications of the conflict went a long way in sustaining the Somali conflict. Hence, this paper is aimed at making an expository sojourn into the strategic interests of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya in the prolonged Somali conflict. The thrust of this paper therefore is to examine the extent to which the geo-strategic interests of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya have contributed to the Somali conflicts. As such, this paper shall attempt to achieve the following objectives

This paper therefore argues that the ambition to unite fragmented Somali entities into a one homogenous powerful nation ultimately resulted in its disintegration and destruction thereby making it a fragile entity. The objectives of this paper therefore is: i. to identify the various strategic interests of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya that constitute threats to the nation building of Somalia; ii. To describe how the geostrategic location of Somalia posed a threat to its nation building; and iii. To identify the interests of the international environment as they constitute challenges to the Somali nation building.

Operationalization of key concepts

Conflict

When two or more parties with unique interests interact, and their actions affect each other, conflict must surely erupt. But from the etymological sense, “*confligo*”, which is the root word for “conflict”, simply means “to clash together”. Hence, conflict is seen as an active disagreement between parties which tends to have incompatible interests and goals. Therefore, conflict is an existential possibility – one of those phenomenological experiences of man as a being-in-the-world. It is a normal aspect of human history and a common experience of every society.

National Interest

National interest is the sum total of a nations interests that guide the foreign policy pursuit formulation and action towards her international environment.

Geo-political location

Somalia is a Republic in Eastern Africa, is bordered on the north by the Gulf of Eden, on the east and south by Indian Ocean, southwest by Kenya, west by Ethiopia and on the northwest by Djibouti. Somalia covers almost 640,000 square kilometers in the North-Eastern tip of the Horn of Africa sharing borders with Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya, extending along the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. Somalis form one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, dispersed throughout the Horn from the Awash valley, through the Ethiopian Ogaden, into the northern part of Kenya

as far as Tena river. As a homogenous people, they are distinguished by their shared common ancestry, a single language, and Islamic heritage (rightly referred to as the ‘**Sunni**’) and a way of live that is predominantly pastoral (Bradbury, 1994: 8). Considering the above, it becomes difficult to understand why an apparently homogenous society should be torn into pieces by so much conflict. At the pre-colonial era, Somalis did not form a single political unit. Attempts of political identity then were based on clan affiliation. The international colonial borders that separate Somali, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Northern Kenya make little reference to established territories of the pastoral clans. In 1954, the Haud grazing reserves ceded to Ethiopia. Consequently, one of the driving forces of Somali national politics, right from the dawn of the independence, has been to reunite the ‘lost’ Somali territories. The country has been in a state of civil war and anarchy since 1991, when the central government was overthrown.

Nation building

Nation Building refers to a process of constructing a nation out of a nation or nationalities in which people see themselves as a community of people who feel that they belong together by virtue of some common historical, political, emotionally attached and bound together by a common destiny for all despite their inherent differences. This definition implies that nation building is a process but in reality, only a few states in history can properly lay claim to sharing all, or a combination of these characteristics in any significant way.

An Exposition to the Somali Conflict

The Horn of Africa has been one of the regions of greatest international concern in the few decades (Marangio, 2012: 2). Mohammed (2007: 9) pinpointed that the Horn of Africa has a rough neighbourhood. It is one of the most complex and complicated regions of the world. The current crisis led to the collapse of the Somali state authority and the unresolved conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Before 1991, Somalia was governed under a constitution adopted in 1979 in which President Siad Barre held executive powers and the leadership of the only legal political party, the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party (SRSP). His government, which had been in power since 1969, was toppled in a ferocious and destructive power struggle by clan-based rebels leading to anarchy and ultimately to state collapse in 1991.

In 1974, after the coup that saw the dethronement of Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, Gen. Barre took advantage of the weakened Ethiopian State; and launched a war to reclaim the Ogaden for Somali. Though the war received a universal support among the Somali people and thus was the apex of Somali’s nationalism and Gen. Barre’s popularity, the defeat of Somali, by the Soviet-supported Ethiopian army under the new Ethiopian Marxist government, destroyed all sense of national unity among the people and therefore the real starting point for the present Somali Conflict (Bradbury, 1994: 9-10).

Somalia has an unenviable record of being a failed state. Its twenty-year-civil war resulted in extreme lawlessness and chaos at a massive human cost. One million Somalis are believed to have died in the process and another 650,000 Somalis are currently seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Last year alone, as the effects of drought, conflict and famine took hold across southern Somalia, it is estimated that 50,000 people died; half of that number were almost certainly children (Bradbury & Healy, 2006: 10).

The Somali conflict can be traced along the three categories of modern wars in Africa. The first type involves struggles to gain access to state power and resources which drove some warlords and other armed groups to attempt takeovers, while others fought for regional autonomy or even to create independent mini-states because the struggle for power between clans and sub-clans deteriorated into violent conflicts. The second type arose from competition for regional influence and sharing of resources between clans. For example, in mid 1977, the Somalis in the Ogaden

region of Ethiopia initiated open warfare aimed at ending Ethiopian control over the area. Meanwhile, non-African governments concerned with preserving political influence or access to valuable resources exacerbated internal and cross-border conflicts by supporting one side against the other. The third type concerns disputed international borders, most of which were drawn by European colonial powers with little regard to pre-existing community occupied areas.

In 1977 and 1991, Somali endured three major conflicts. The first was the Ogaden war with Ethiopia in 1977 which sowed seeds of future internal conflicts, prompting the rise of several Somali liberation movements' intent on overthrowing the military regime of Gen. Barre whom they held responsible for their predicaments. The second was the war between the Somali military and the Somali National Movement (SNM) for control over northwest Somalia. The third was the conflict between government forces against the growing number of clan-based liberation movements in 1989 and 1990 (World Bank, 2005: 9-10). These are followed by many other conflicts in contemporary Somalia.

Theoretical Framework- National Interest theory

The national interest, often referred to by the French expression *raison d'État* ("reason of State"), is a country's goals and ambitions whether economic, military, or cultural. The concept is an important one in international relations where pursuit of the national interest is the foundation of the realist school. The interests of a nation as a whole held to be an independent entity separate from the interests of subordinate areas or groups and also of other nations. Theoretically, the concept of the national interest is used in both political analysis and political action. As an analytic tool, it is employed to describe, explain, or evaluate the sources or the adequacy of a nation's foreign policy. As an instrument of political action, it serves as a means of justifying, denouncing, or proposing policies. Both usages, in other words, refer to what is best for a national society, a nation or state. They also share a tendency to confine the intended meaning to what is best for a nation in foreign affairs.

The national interest has a much longer history as an instrument of action than as a tool of analysis. According to a historian who traced past uses of the term, political actors made claims on behalf of the national interest as early as the sixteenth century in Italy and the seventeenth century in England (Beard, 1934:22-24). National interests has played a vital role as a concept which could be used to describe, explain, and assess the foreign policies of nations. Beard (1934) was himself one of the first to develop the concept for this purpose and to distinguish it from the "public interest," which through convention has come to be used in reference to the domestic policies of nations. Even though national interest has lost some of its early appeal as an analytic tool, it enjoys considerable favor as a basis for action and has won a prominent place in the dialogue of public affairs.

Hans Morgenthau, whose works advance "a realist theory of international politics" is founded on the concept of national interest. "Interest is the perennial standard by which political action must be judged and directed," Morgenthau wrote (1954:9), emphasizing that, therefore, the "objectives of a foreign policy must be defined in terms of the national interest" (1954:528). And exactly what constitutes the interest of a nation? Morgenthau recognized that "the kind of interest determining political action in a particular period of history depends upon the political and cultural context within which foreign policy is formulated".

In international politics it has been proved in existing literature that nations continue to assert, act, protect and realize their national interests. It against this backdrop that states that are geopolitically close to Somalia have advanced policies that would promote their interest thereby compounding the protracted conflict in Somalia.

Geo-strategic interests of neighboring states

One of the assumption of this paper is that it is the geo-strategic interests of neighboring states that is at the root of Somali conflict. Hence, this section shall attempt to look at some of the interests of the neighboring states. The situation in Somali has become one of an increasing number of situations in the world described as a 'complex emergency' (Bradbury, 1994 :3). The massive human suffering in Somalia as a result of the conflict has had a profound long-term impact on the country's stability, security and development. The failure of warring factions from various clans to resolve this conflict has resulted in the continued loss of life, famine, displacement of persons and the resultant flow of refugees. It promoted insecurity in neighbouring countries of Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti, due to proliferation of small arms, massive influx of refugees, many of whom were ex-soldiers with criminal intents. This has increased banditry tremendously especially in North Eastern Kenya thereby reducing economic activities and the free movement of the people. Meanwhile, states in the region such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Egypt as well as International and regional organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) have intervened with the aim of creating peace in the war torn country.

For years, Somalia has earned a number of adjectives such as a 'failed state', 'war-torn country' and 'haven for terrorist'. The war that continues to rage has claimed the lives of thousands of people including women and children. The players in this arena include warlords, religious extremists, the unpopular and unelected Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and business opportunists out to cash in on the war. The heated interests of outside groups have also done much to sustain the conflict between these inside players. This category includes the regime of Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia, the misguided American policy of interventionism, the indifferent African Union and the helpless Arab League.

Therefore, the current crisis in the Horn of Africa especially in Somali are cause by lots of external influences from the neighbouring states and beyond. External states continue to influence the evolution of the Somali state. They achieve this by taking sides in the Somali conflicts and by allying with clans who are sympathetic to their aspirations and strategic interest. But it must be established, now or never, that these opposing interests of these states impacts negatively in the agenda for peace and order in Somali (World Bank, 2005: 39). Thus, this unending war has affected all parts of Somalia and Somaliland (Bradbury, 1994 :16). The regional dimension of the Somali conflict is so critical. The crises entails the risk of exporting instability to the region. On the one hand, there is an outside-in dynamic, in that Somalia's neighbours are induced to step in to defend their interests (Marangio, 2012: 3). Countries such as Ethiopia, Eritrea and Kenya, which are the most proximate neighbours to Somali, because of their hidden interests and agendas, could be said to be the key players in Somali conflict.

The Strategic interests behind Ethiopia's involvement

Ethiopia has a long un-demarcated border with Somalia in the east (Hassan, 2014: 35). Historically, it has been the hub of either stability or instability in the north-east Africa (Mohammed, 2007: 1). Consequently, it could be regarded as one of the most influential external actors in the Somali conflict (Hassan, 2014: 35). A flashback into the past reveals the unstable and poor relations between Somali and Ethiopia. It must be noted that the very root of the Somalian-Ethiopian conflict dated back to the ill-fated events of 1977 – the Ogaden war aimed at reclaiming the 'lost' Somali territories (Afyare & Barise, 2006: 39).

It is interesting to note here that this hostile history between the two countries had geopolitical implications for it spilled over into nearby countries and affect them in different ways (Bradbury & Healy, 2006: 10). As brown explained, conflicts have important implications for regional stability in many aspects (Brown, 1996: 591). This is because conflicts spread quickly and create

instability in the neighbouring states in a variety of ways including transfer of weapons and cross-border attacks. In the case of Somalia, Al-Itihad, a popular and one of the foremost Islamist groups in Somalia declared war against Ethiopia and waged terrorist attacks in that country (Mulugeta, 2009: 12). Al-itihad had their military bases in Gedo region of southern Somalia, but had strong popularity and supporters throughout Somalia. The group, whose political motive was to establish an Islamic state in Somalia, also strived to spread Islamic radicalism in the horn of Africa country (Mulugeta, 2009: 12). Moreover, the conflict in Somalia created a platform for Ethiopia rebel groups that create instability in Ethiopia. The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), rebel groups that fights with Ethiopia in the Ogaden region has got sympathizers and hiding places in Somalia to wage wars against Ethiopia (Abink, 2006: 8). This kind of co-operations between different groups of interest in the region is in line with Kaldor's argument that most of the new era conflicts attract and provide haven for transitional groups that might have the same agendas as the local ones in the conflict or else exploit the conflict context to achieve their motives (Kaldor, 2012: 5). This scenario in the Somalia conflict created a serious concern to the neighbouring states, mainly to Ethiopia.

Although this has existed since the downfall of Somalia's state, it increased when the ICU captured territories close to the TFG's (Transitional Federal Government) bases in Baidoa and threatened its existence. The Islamists, whose motive is to impose their rule in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital city. This has aggravated the situation and Ethiopia consequently decided to intervene in Somalia militarily. The Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) invaded Somalia and ousted the ICU in SCS (Civins, 2009: 1). In accordance with Brown's (1996: 591) argument regarding the impact of internal conflict in neighbouring states, the Ethiopian government explained its military action as a result of the threats posed against it.

The ENDF successfully dislodged the Islamists and helped the TFG to embark on its rule in larger territories in SCS, including the capital city, Mogadishu, but as the case might be in many conflicts where external forces intervene in internal conflicts, the Islamists started an insurgency fighting against Ethiopia and the TFG, they started to regroup their forces in the far southern regions of Jubaland where they created training and recruiting camps for their fighters. While doing so, they also gained strong support within the local populations who perceived the Ethiopian forces as invaders. This created a new dimension in the conflict. Many other groups, including jihadists from other parts of the world and Ethiopian rebel groups have also joined the insurgency against Ethiopian forces in Somalia (Moller, 2009: 16).

Thus, Somalis see the Ethiopia as one of the colonial mongers that partitioned Somali into five parts (Afyare & Abdullahi, 2005: 39). On the contrary, Mr Zenawi saw Somalia as a country that should permanently depend on Ethiopia and for this to happen, Somalia had to be militarily weak, politically disorganized, and geographically dismembered into smallest states like Somali and Puntland. For Zenawi to fulfill his expansionist ambitions in the Horn of Africa, the plan was to ensure that every Somali transitional government failed. He therefore ensured that all warring factions acquired enough military hardware in-order to sustain the conflict even as Ethiopia armed the TFG.

While the hostility between the two countries is unresolved officially in an interstate process, this created a new security concern for Ethiopia (Abink, 2006: 8). Although poor, Ethiopia has a long history of statecraft, a sense of national identity and a strong military tradition. The two combined made it capable of acting in pursuit of any clearly conceived national interest (Mohammed, 2007: 2).

Therefore, the fact whether Ethiopia is actively involved in Somali conflict is undeniably clear. The subject of inquiry here is the motive of its involvement. There are however diverse views on the motives of Ethiopia involvement in Somali conflict (Anonymous: 2008: 1).

The Ethiopian military intervention in Somalia was in pursuit of what Ethiopia perceived as its legitimate national security interest – namely to ensure that the transitional Federal Government defeated its adversary, the Union of Islamic Courts. Some analysts portray the war in Somalia as the latest in a long round of national and religious wars between highland Christian Abyssinians and lowland Somali Muslims. Others portray this as Ethiopian aggression in pursuit of territorial aggrandizement and its centuries-old search for secure access to the Red sea. Yet others portray the conflict as a preemptive invasion against the establishment of a Taliban-style State in Somalia that would provide a home base for Al-Qaida, (An International militant group). Some insist that it is a proxy war between Ethiopia and its arch enemy Eritrea.

The reality is however more complicated and lies in the peace and security dilemmas of the Horn of Africa. The current military incursion into Somalia is only one instance of Ethiopia's strategy for dealing with immediate threats to its national security and regional stability using a combination of diplomacy and force in pursuit of consistent goals. Indeed, a fundamental point that recurs is one of political and ideological consistency. The Ethiopian government has always acted consistently in pursuit of what it identifies as its national interest and in accordance with its political analyses of the region.

Since the Second World War, Ethiopian foreign policy has been primarily focused on maintaining the nation's independence and territorial integrity. Throughout the many abrupt changes of regime and reversals of political ideology, successive governments have pursued foreign policies of remarkable consistency. Ethiopian governments have often supported rebel groups fighting against governments in Somalia and Sudan, but in all cases they occurred in response to similar actions is unified and disciplined, with a clear political agenda.

Therefore, Ethiopians portray their involvement in Somali as both altruistic and mutual in nature. They see Somali's instability as a risk to their stability and security. Thus, they describe their numerous interventions as purely a matter of sacrifice and selfless services. But for Somalis, Ethiopia involvement is driven by ulterior motives (Ibid; 1). The Somali nationalists alleged that Ethiopians are obsessed and thought that a strong Somali state is perceived as a threat to Ethiopia. Thus, Ethiopia has a hidden agenda to further weaken their arch-enemy through conflict. For them, by keeping the Somalis divided and weak, Ethiopia believe they can eliminate any threat from Somali and retain for many years the territories and gain unlimited access to Somali ports by signing agreements with clan chiefs on unequal terms. Hence, Ethiopia sees it as a matter of important interest to maintain a weak and divided Somali. The only way to achieve this is to ensure a vicious cycle of conflict in Somali and to remain active in the sustenance of violence in the Somalia State (Afyare & Barise, 2005: 42).

According to Bjorn Moller (2009: 20) wrote that Ethiopia has several reasons for their interventions. These reason are not completely detrimental for Somalis. Yet he admitted that all portrays a serious strategic interest for Ethiopia. Just like Afyare and Barise, he asserted that the very first reason for the Ethiopian intervention is because the two countries have been at war since 1977. Thus, a united and strong Somali is a threat to Ethiopia. Secondly, but on the contrary, to avoid risk of upsetting ethnic balances that might arise due to influx of refugees from Somali, the need to ensure a moderate conflict level in Somali becomes a priority as well. Thirdly, since both countries share long border, the fear that extreme lawlessness of Somali is a major challenge to the law enforcement institutions of Ethiopia, prompts serious interventions from Ethiopia. To guarantee this moderation and extreme violence, Ethiopia must remain an active actor in the conflict.

The above exposition reveals that though the continuing conflicts in Somali has negative impact on Somalis, it as well have geopolitical implications, which are partly positive and partly negative, on neighbouring countries especially on Ethiopia. To avert this negative geopolitical impact,

Ethiopia must remain at the centre of their game. Geopolitical implications arising from Ethiopia's strategic interests on Somali conflict, one could see that whereas the first is negative for Somali, the rest are positive. Therefore, it is assumed that the continuous sustenance of these interests though will guarantee a lasting conflict plagued Somali, but will as well ensure that these conflicts remain moderate since its extreme smells doom for Ethiopia.

The Strategic interests behind Eritrea's involvement

Though Ethiopia's principal rival for control over the Horn has been Egypt (Mohammed, 2007: 2), yet Ethiopia and Eritrea are enemies as well. Eritrea is a smaller territory in the Horn, usually referred to as the 'State of Eritrea' because of the uncertainty of its independence. According to Mohammed, the single major change has been the recognition of Eritrea as an independent state. But the readiness to fight a costly war over the disputed boundary with Eritrea in 1998 to 2000 indicates that the new northern border of Ethiopia is regarded with just as much seriousness as previous borders.

For Eritreans, Ethiopia is an artificial construct of different nationalities forced together during the imperial scrambles for Africa, thus can simply collapse if given a sharp, well directed military shock. Hence, they identified the south-east Ethiopia, inhabited by Ethiopians of Somali origins, as the weakest point of Ethiopia. Consequently, they sponsored Somali militants in the hope of destabilizing Ethiopia (Ibid; 6). The UN monitoring groups reported in 2010 that Eritrea has provided significantly, financial and material support, including arms, ammunitions and training, to armed opposition groups in Somali at least since 2007 (Wezeman, 2010: 3). From Eritrea's point of view, its political, financial, and military support for armed opposition groups in Somalia is a legitimate counterbalance to its archenemy, Ethiopia which invaded Somalia in late 2006 with the consent and active assistance of the U.S, thereby shifting the balance of power in the region. The interest of Eritrea is survival. Survival is itself a strategic goal for Eritrea (Mohammed, 2007: 7).

As a way of self justification, Eritrea may also consider its actions as expedient and right since it came at a time when an increasing number of regional and western experts are saying that the war on terror in Somalia was a self-fulfilling prophecy and the current exclusive assistance to and backing of the TFG might not be the winning formula to solve or even contain the civil war.

Eritrea's involvement in Somali conflict could be described as an attempt to counter Ethiopia's influence in the region. Eritrea came into picture in Somali conflict because of Ethiopia's presence (Wezeman, 2010: 21). Both countries have a history of supporting different factions of warlords in order to outflank each other (Anonymous, 2001: 2). Since, there is absolutely no record of conflict between Somali and Eritrea, then it is practically difficult to conclude that Eritrea's involvement in Somali conflict is directed purely to for some direct detrimental impacts (Moller, 2010: 21). Yet one must not deny the fact that Eritrea's involvement has some strategic interests attached to it.

Though the above exposition revealed the single interest of Eritrea for its involvement in Somali conflict as not direct, it does not negate the fact that that single ulterior motive geared towards the enemy, Ethiopia, has an indirect effect on Somali; for it threatens all efforts for peace in Somali. Furthermore, this interest could be justified if Eritrea withdraws its involvement when Ethiopia does as well.

The Strategic interests behind Kenya's involvement

Just like Ethiopia, Kenya shares historical factors with Somali in regards to ethnic and geographical aspects. The north-eastern province of Kenya is predominantly Somali ethnic population. But differently from Ethiopia, Kenya had no interstate conflicts with Somali. After the independence of Somali and its declared intention to unify the Somali inhabited regions in the Horn of Africa, though this proposal sounds as a threat to Kenya which harbours the largest number

of Somalis in one of her provinces, yet the relations remained mutual. Though the direction of this relationship changed after Kenya has suffered various attacks from Al-Shaba and Al-Qaeda. These attacks were seen as insecurity arising from the open border policies it initiated for the Somalis refugees (Hassan, 2014: 42-43).

Therefore, Kenya's Security greatly suffered the misrule of Barre's regime; from the shift of war fought in the northern frontier to incursions by fleeing soldiers after the collapse of Somali. The internalization of the conflict by Barre had immediate security impact on the Kenyan borders. This increased banditry, the proliferation of small arms and continuous hit and run battles affecting the whole of the northern region. Similarly, the flooding of the region with small arms led to their proliferation in all parts of Kenya. This has also made Kenya a major transit point of weapons in the region. Refugees have also become a major source of insecurity as noted by a senior firearm-licensing official who was quoted as saying that fleeing fighters bring in all manner of arms. The increasing availability of weapons led to the rising insecurity, especially in Nairobi, where the guns were then used for violent robberies.

Hence, Kenya clearly had to act to secure its borders. Though the critical question whether that should be done without crossing the frontier or at least without going deep into Somalia's web of war perturbs the mind. Kenya's main strategic interest in Somalia is primarily based on its national interest, territorial integrity, national security and economic wellbeing. The status quo in Somalia did not augur well for these interests as it perpetuated a huge refugee influx, increased small arms crossing into Kenya's urban areas and placed more pressure on its own resources.

The above notwithstanding, one other theory has it that "Norway oil interests push Kenya into Somalia proxy war". Sources in Kenya and Somali governments confirmed that Kenya has been pushed by Norway, which had for a long time had its eyes on the war-torn country's oil resources. A Kenya official who declined to be named told WagoshaNews that Nairobi authorities received millions of dollars from the Norwegian government to attack southern Somalia in the pretext of fighting against Al-Shabab. "The Norwegian was angry with Somali parliament's recent decision of rejecting a plan aimed at changing Somalia's sea boundaries that could allow Norway to drill free of charge oil from the region", added the official.

Since 2006 Norway has been making efforts to find an opportunity of drilling Somalia oil, but according to Somali politicians, Norwegians have been looking for dodgy deals that will give them rights to benefit from Somalia resources. In 2007, Norwegian officials were playing tricky diplomatic games with the Somalia crisis. Diplomats used to issue comments on how best the country's crisis could be resolved, sometimes using words of sympathy to Islamic Courts leaders in Eritrea. Norway also attempted to talk to some Somali cabinet members to ensure that it is given the rights to Somalia's oil reserves. During this time Norway had also been working on how to change Somalia's sea boundaries after some negative signs emerged from its efforts to plunder Horn of African oil reserves. Norway had even made contact with the UN regarding the Somalia sea boundaries in order to make some changes that will enable her to achieve its hidden agenda.

Thus for Kenya the immediate and essential goal is the establishment of a more friendly Somali political order in the remote pastoral areas along Kenyan-Somali border (Mehkaus, 2012: 3). The exposition above notwithstanding, we do not lose sight of the fact that Kenya has a triple strategic interest in Somali conflict. Unlike Ethiopia, Kenya employed a diplomatic means. Rather than engaging itself militarily in Somali, Kenya has made use of the instability itself as a political pivotal state and an economic hub. A critical look at Kenya's external intervention in Somali provides a number of hidden strategic interests for their engagement in Somalia. First, Kenya wanted to end, or at least minimize, the Al-Shabab's influence in Somali. Second, contrary to Ethiopia and Eritrea's strategic interests, Kenya wants to support African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)

and thus restore peace in Somalia. Finally, ultimately, Kenya desire to play a more active regional role and not to be least within the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to examine the geostrategic interest that posed considerable challenge to the Somali nation building. The paper therefore concludes that Somali conflict, to a larger extent, is externally influenced due to lots of strategic interests especially from neighbouring countries like Ethiopia, Eritrea and Kenya, each acting to avert some geopolitical implications arising from the Somali conflict. Hence divergent interests of regional states and of the international community makes it more difficult for Somalis to resolve their longstanding conflicts and permit the emergence of a fully functional country. The security and strategic interests of regional states particularly of Ethiopia, Eritrea and Kenya often promote covert and sometime overt policies and activities that continue to destabilize Somalia. Because of these external interests in the conflict, peace in Somalia has remained an illusion. Yet peace can return to Somali if the various strategic interests of these neighbouring countries are mitigated and if Somalis will accommodate, forgive and embrace one another as brothers and sisters.

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