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THE CHANGING SECURITY SITUATION IN SOMALIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

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PROJECT ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

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Panelists: **Walter Kälin**, Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of
                  Internally Displaced Persons and Co-director, Brookings-Bern Project on Internal
                  Displacement
                  Lauren Ploch, Africa Analyst, Congressional Research Service
                  Michael O'Hanlon, Director of Research and Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy, The
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Moderator: **Elizabeth Ferris**, Senior Fellow and Co-director, Brookings-Bern Project on Internal
                  Displacement

Summary Report

On January 12, the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement organized a roundtable discussion on the changing security context in Somalia and its implications for humanitarian action. Panelists were Michael O'Hanlon (Brookings Institution), Lauren Ploch (Congressional Research Service), and Walter Kälin (Representative of the United Nations Secretary General). Elizabeth Ferris (Brookings Institution) moderated the discussion.

During the panel presentation, some of the main themes that emerged included the growing "education" of extremist groups based on the lessons they have taken away from similar groups in Iraq and Afghanistan. Additionally, the lack of governance, security, and the rule of law have contributed to the increase in piracy and displacement in a climate of impunity. Finally, despite the deteriorating humanitarian situation on the ground, humanitarian assistance has been decreasing.

Extremist Groups and Lessons Learned

Though all extremist groups are not the same, they do learn from each other. It is highly likely that extremist groups in Somalia have been studying the experiences of extremist groups throughout the

CENTCOM region, notably Iraq and Afghanistan. One of the key lessons learned has been that directly targeting the local population or being seen as the direct cause of their suffering can turn the population against the group. This lesson can of course have implications for Somalia. As events unfolded in Iraq, extremist groups in Afghanistan learned this lesson and shifted their tactics. The main targets in Afghanistan have become international actors, including humanitarian actors. Afghan insurgents have learned that they had to avoid being seen as the enemy of the people and mass killers, forcing them to become much more discriminate in their use of violence against the civilian population.

What does this have to do with Somalia? Three trends were identified that might emerge in Somalia based on the lessons Al Shabab and other groups have learned from extremist groups operating in Iraq and Afghanistan.

1. Extremist groups will not want the civilian population to starve, especially if they will be seen as responsible for the starvation and other suffering. This damages their public image and their ability to recruit followers.
2. There are economics involved in decision making, especially in how each extremist group views each other and how the other group(s) might be benefiting from relief supplies. Therefore, if you are seen as helping a group's adversaries, then you become their enemy. Not because they are against aiding beleaguered populations, but because by doing so you are aiding their enemy and limiting their ability to succeed militarily.
3. Finally, extremist groups need a method and means of increasing recruits and sources of income. Therefore, they are engaging in more discreet and discriminate use of force. And, while it is unclear whether these groups want aid to get through to vulnerable populations, it is clear that they do not want to be directly blamed by fellow Somalis for the suffering of the civilian population.

Piracy, Security and Displacement

The growth of piracy in Somalia is directly related to the lack of law and order in the country and has become a symptom of the country's insecurity. Piracy in Somalia dates back to the early 1990s and the collapse of the central authority in Mogadishu. Today's pirates come from fishing villages like Eyl, Hobyo, and Harardeere, which are extremely poor areas. The increase in the number of pirates in recent years is related to the collapse of the Somali fishing industry, the increase in poverty, and the increase in corruption. According to recent estimates, there are over 3,000 Somalis participating in piracy.

Over the past two years (2007-2009), acts of piracy on an annual basis have nearly doubled, increasing from 111 incidents from 2007-08 to 214 from 2008-09. Of the attacks in 2009, 47 were successful hijackings, which are becoming increasingly violent. Furthermore, the statistics reported in 2009 represent a threefold increase in vessels fired upon from the previous year.

Because the Somali government is at best non-functional and regional security mechanisms remain weak, the international community has had to step in to fill the void in conducting anti-piracy operations. International naval forces are currently responsible for patrolling an area of over 1 million square miles. The international response has been authorized by the UN Security Council (UNSC) and is

being conducted in coordination with the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). This effort has included the United States, European Union, and NATO escorting vessels and conducting anti-piracy operations.

The US government has also appropriated money to be used toward providing logistical support, equipment, and pre-deployment training to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troop contributors. In October 2009, the UN authorized logistical support for AMISOM through Security Council Resolution 1863, though the US will continue to support training and deployment for additional troop contributors. It is important to note that the US does not directly fund AMISOM or the African Union. A second US policy has been support to the TFG's security forces under Security Council Resolutions 1772 (2007) and 1872 (2009). The EU will soon begin direct training activities as well.

The international response to piracy has also involved diplomacy, with the issue being discussed in many regional and international fora. A multi-donor trust fund was established in September 2009 in order to support the incarceration and prosecution of pirates. The UN Security Council has also encouraged regional law enforcement officials to serve aboard anti-piracy vessels to facilitate the investigation, detention, and prosecution of pirates. However, other than Kenya, few regional countries have agreed to participate in these efforts or to open their courts to Somali pirates.

Over 500 pirates have been apprehended by the US, roughly half of which were turned over to regional law enforcement authorities. The US State Department indicates that 150 pirates have been tried in Kenya, which is the only nation that the US has a memorandum of understanding with on the issue. Some pirates have been tried in Yemeni courts, but the number is not known. A significant issue to resolve in prosecuting pirates is that they have to be transported to the country where they will face trial. Because this must be done with military aircraft, it is an expensive means of prosecuting those who engage in piracy. Despite discussions for the creation of an international piracy court, not much progress has been made.

Insecurity in Somalia is also a serious issue. The lack of security has impeded humanitarian access, increased displacement of the population, and contributed to the rise in criminal activity. Consequently, many donors are decreasing their humanitarian assistance.

The current humanitarian situation in Somalia is deteriorating. Displacement has been on the rise in 2009 following new fighting in Mogadishu. Somalis have fled their homes and communities both because of the indirect dangers of conflict but also because they had become direct targets of violence. Those working with the TFG have also received death threats from extremist groups.

Displacement and criminal activities are all carried out in an environment of impunity due to the lack of the rule of law in Somalia. While in Somalia, Kälin met with IDPs who were newly displaced as well as with those who had been displaced since the early 1990s. Both groups face similar problems, the most common being malnourishment and lack of livelihoods. Another challenge facing IDPs is the threat of eviction for those living in settlements where they pay the land owners to occupy the land. Sexual exploitation and abuse and gender-based violence are also major concerns.

In addition to contributing to increased displacement in Somalia, the lack of security has also led to a decrease in humanitarian assistance. This decrease stems from two reasons. The first is access, which has become increasingly difficult. In some areas, the civilian population is completely cut off from aid agencies. Al Shabab has declared the UN (including the humanitarian agencies) to be a "legitimate" military target because the UN is training the TFG's police forces. This was interesting in light of the hypothesis that extremist groups would not want to be seen as the direct cause for the suffering of the Somali people. But if agencies like the UN are seen as aiding their enemies, extremist groups see these agencies as their enemies, too. Access is also made difficult by the general nature of armed conflict. Due to attacks on its agencies, including the bombing of the UNDP headquarters in Somaliland, the UN has reduced the number of staff it has in the country. Without humanitarian actors on the ground, assistance to IDPs decreases.

However, getting humanitarian actors on the ground has proven quite difficult, especially since the security situation in Somalia is fluid and changes rapidly. According to an NGO representative who had just returned from Somalia, access in the north has been fairly open. In the south, the amount of access depends on relationships with the leaders of local tribes. For organizations new to Somalia, though, it is very difficult to gain access since they do not have the requisite web of relationships with the community.

The second reason behind the decrease in assistance has been decreased donor contributions. The 2009 humanitarian appeal for Somalia was only 54% funded. Because some of these funds were carried over from the previous year, new funds going into Somalia are even lower. The main reason for the decrease is that donors do not see guarantees that their funds will be used for the purposes for which they are intended.

Therefore, the situation of the displaced in Somalia is becoming increasingly neglected, a point that not only stems from the security issue but creates potential security threats to the extent that Somalis feel neglected by the international community and therefore may be open to propaganda by extremist groups.

Moving Forward in Somalia

The question then becomes: how do we move forward in Somalia?

To effectively counter the threat of piracy, a major overhaul and reform of the security sector in Somalia will be necessary. The commitment of the international community to funding these efforts remains unclear. Currently the Somali security forces suffer from a lack of pay and cronyism, both of which have lowered morale. This has created other problems, such as defections and the sale or transfer of military equipment to insurgents. Additionally, the rehabilitation of illegal militias caused by a large amount of weapons and a lack of security is a real concern.

Security sector reform will also need to ensure that arms are not flowing from government troops to militia groups, which can happen in situations where the government forces are not paid their salaries. When looking at the broader region over the past few decades, the international community has a poor

track record in assisting local security forces, especially as it relates to controlling the illegal sale of weapons. One option for preventing transfers of weapons between government forces and militias is for a donor government to directly pay the salaries of soldiers, but not necessarily arm them. This way, the donor can ensure that the funds are reaching the forces, but making them provide their own arms. Such a policy can also be a way to attempt to decrease the amount of arms in circulation. This is one lesson learned from the US military's experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan that might be applicable in Somalia.

Security sector reform should also address impunity by addressing the root causes of displacement. The conflict is not over and will not end soon. Still, the general dangers of armed conflict and targeted violence have led to displacement. Addressing impunity will be a difficult challenge, but one that must be undertaken.

The international community should also look at humanitarian action from the perspective of limiting the influence of extremist groups. There is a danger that these groups are able to successfully recruit displaced persons from IDP settlements and camps because of a lack of livelihoods and education in the camps, where there are large numbers of people with nothing to do and without perspective on the issues. Al Shabab translates as "the youth," which creates an appeal for the young people in the camps with nothing to do. This perspective of despair makes fighting with Al Shabab a sensible choice.

Furthermore, humanitarian organizations who have left should return to Somalia in order to be closer to those they are assisting. Nairobi is too far away and many Somalis believe that humanitarian workers there are living the good life while they are suffering in Somalia. However, agencies should not use Mogadishu as a base because it would be seen as a political issue and could lead to the creation of another "green zone," unsuitable for humanitarian action.

Finally, in order to better assist those affected by the violence in Somalia and who are not accessible for humanitarian assistance, stronger development interventions are needed. These interventions would not have to be very sophisticated but need to be ones that directly improve the lives of people. Communities hosting IDPs are overstretched in many different regards, with IDPs putting an enormous strain on resources (drinking water, infrastructure, sanitation, and health and education services), which are already insufficient. Therefore these areas should be targeted by development interventions. Building these systems up would strengthen the resilience of communities and lessen the burden of displacement on host communities. Such activities would also decrease the success of the extremist groups in infiltrating the communities, which is a concern among the local authorities in communities hosting IDP populations.

Regarding a question about the structures existing at a local level to address the needs of Somalis, one panelist responded that while it is true that the TFG has not really been able to extend its control outside of Mogadishu and is under siege, there are still see *de facto* governmental structures on the ground. So Somalia is not necessarily in a state of anarchy, especially when looking at areas like Puntland and Somaliland. And there are opportunities for working with local authorities. It was noted that the UN has worked with such authorities and would like to continue doing so; they just lack the funds. So, a

possible next step in Somalia is for donors to provide aid to work at the local levels, especially since roughly half of the country can be considered relatively stable.

Inaction by the international community despite the possibilities for action further harms the reputation of the international community. Many of the displaced in Somalia felt that the international community could stop the violence and provide assistance if it wanted to. One panelist further commented on how the international community is held accountable for the lack of action because the international community is assumed by the local population to be omnipotent.

During the discussion, the challenge of bringing peace to Somalia was raised. In order to do so, grassroots efforts for reconciliation will be necessary. This is how peace came to Somaliland and can be an example of how to bring peace to the rest of the country. With peace will come security. Peace will also require limiting the influence of extremist groups and their use of violence. Participants discussed how finding a credible way to point out that militants and extremist groups like Al Shabab are directly responsible for the lack of aid in Somalia might assist in improving humanitarian access in certain areas.

It will also be important to focus on those areas in the country where there is some semblance of security. With Somaliland, the international community has taken a "wait and see" approach to the postponed elections, which has cost Somaliland authorities credibility with donors. A move toward timely, free, and fair elections on their part would increase their chances of getting more assistance. This might also encourage the Puntland authorities to improve their behavior.

Furthermore, the idea of changing the international viewpoint on secession and unity of the country was raised. Perhaps it is necessary to stop seeing Somalia as Somalia. There are some parts of the country that can be worked with. As one participant pointed out, Somalia has been divided for a long time, a fact that should be acknowledged. Another lesson from Afghanistan is that development aid can be directly injected into local communities. So perhaps, recognizing the informal divisions within Somalia and working with local authorities may be a way forward.

In conclusion, to move forward in Somalia and to better assist the population, the international community will need to use a variety of tools. The problems facing Somalia are complex and require complex and refined responses. By looking at the problems in Somalia from a different perspective, perhaps innovative and new solutions can be found to the situation confronting the country and its population.

Prepared by Erin Williams