RECURRENT CLAN CONFLICTS OF CENTRAL REGIONS OF SOMALIA (GALGUDUD AND MUDUG REGIONS)

Causses, effects and Possible solutions

Contents:

1. Executive summary:

The central regions of Somalia, including Galgudug and Mudug, have historically been hotspots for clan conflicts. These conflicts are driven by several factors, including pastoralist competition over scarce resources such as land, water, and pastureland. The establishment of new settlements, a relatively new phenomenon in Somali areas, indicates that Somalis are moving to the cities instead of being a rural community. This transition exacerbates tensions as traditional grazing lands are converted into residential areas, leading to disputes over land ownership and usage rights.

Likewise, construction and harvesting of water catchments, such as berkets (water storage reservoirs), and boreholes in grazing lands are also sources of conflict and has results disputes between the clans which can finally turns into protracted conflicts.

Climate change is one root cause of clan conflicts in the central regions of Somalia, significantly exacerbating existing tensions, particularly in areas where resources are scarce and competition for them is intense. Climate change leads to the increased scarcity of vital resources such as water, pastureland, and arable land due to droughts, unpredictable rainfall, and other extreme weather events, heightening competition among clan's dependent on these resources for their livelihoods.

Additionally, the easy availability flow of small arms, proliferation of small weapons has made it easier for minor disputes to escalate into violent confrontation, The absence of robust peace infrastructures, such as effective governance systems and conflict resolution mechanisms, exacerbates the situation. The practice of revenge killings (blood feuds) is also deeply entrenched cultural norm that perpetuates cycles of violence.

This report examines the social basis, root causes, contributing factors, effects, traditional peace mechanisms, and potential mitigation strategies for these conflicts. By addressing these areas, the report seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of clan conflicts in the central regions of Somalia and offer insights into potential pathways for sustainable peace.

2. Research Methods:

This research focused on exploring the nature and dynamics of recurrent clan conflicts in the central regions of

Somalia. The study aimed to identify the main drivers, contributing factors, effects, and consequences of these conflicts, as well as proposed measures to address their underlying causes.

Qualitative research methods were employed, including literature reviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIIs). The study was conducted in two regions, Mudug and Galgudud, involving a total of 50 respondents. Participants included traditional elders, scholars, and government officials who provided valuable insights into the complexities of clan conflicts.

3. Limitations:

While this research generated significant primary data through surveys, in-depth interviews, and FGDs, several limitations affected the study's scope and findings. Firstly, the inability to conduct research in active conflict zones restricted the study's coverage. The research was confined to only three cities within the regions studied, omitting other important areas affected by conflict due to time, financial, and security constraints. Consequently, while the findings offer a comprehensive view of conflict trends in the studied regions, they may not be generalizable to all regions of Somalia.

Secondly, data collection via smartphones posed challenges. Despite thorough training on methodology, sampling, and mobile technology, some enumerators were unfamiliar with using smartphones for data collection. This led to incomplete responses to some survey questions, potentially affecting the completeness of the data gathered.

In summary, while the research provides valuable insights into clan conflicts in central Somalia, acknowledging these limitations is crucial for interpreting and applying the findings appropriately. Future studies should aim to broaden geographic coverage and enhance data collection methodologies to improve the comprehensiveness and reliability of research on this critical issue.

4. The Social Basis of the Conflict

The clan system is the most important constituent social factor among the nomadic-pastoralist Somalis. This segmentary lineage system can be differentiated into categories of clan-family, clan, sub-clan, primary lineage, and mag-paying group as divisions of varying size (Lewis 1961: 4). The segmentary lineage system underpins the social

structure, with each level of lineage having distinct roles and responsibilities within the community. Clans often compete for limited resources such as grazing land and water, especially in pastoralist communities. This competition is exacerbated by urbanization and the establishment of new settlements, which disrupt traditional clan territories. Strong clan identities and loyalties can lead to conflicts when one clan perceives an encroachment on its resources or territory by another

Lewis, I.M. (1961). "A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa." London: Oxford University Press

5. Outstanding conflict and the areas:

Clan conflicts in the Galgudug and Mudug regions of Somalia are complex and multifaceted dynamics with several ongoing disputes. Following are most 5outstanding and active conflicts between the following clans.

1. Sa'ad VS Lelkase in Maygaagle in Galdogob Districts
2. Saleban VS Marhan (Eli and Wagardhac Sub-clan) in Dalsan laba gale Abudwak District
3. Dir VS Marahen (Reer Dalal) in Laandheer/ Qalanqale in Abudwak Distict

4. Eyr (Ayanle) VS. Marahan (Reer Diini) Balanbale ditrict
5. Sa'ad Vs. Marehan (Wagardhac) in Gaxandhaale under Abudwak district.
6. Saleban Vs. Duduble – balal dheer , godan shilan area.

6. Erosion Somali Traditional Contracts

Somali traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, particularly Xeer (customary law), have been crucial in maintaining social order and resolving disputes within communities. These mechanisms rely heavily on the involvement of clan elders and community leaders who facilitate negotiations and agreements. Through their authority and wisdom, these leaders have historically helped prevent and resolve conflicts, thereby ensuring social harmony.

However, these traditional contracts and mechanisms are now facing

erosion due to various challenges. Urbanization and exposure to modern influences have weakened traditional structures. Younger generations may be less inclined to adhere to customary laws and more influenced by formal legal systems or external cultural norms. Additionally, prolonged conflicts and displacement have disrupted traditional social structures. When communities are displaced, the authority of clan elders and the applicability of Xeer may be compromised, leading to a breakdown in traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

Furthermore, governmental and legal interventions can sometimes undermine traditional systems. While modern institutions aim to provide a uniform legal framework, they may not always align with or respect customary laws and practices, causing friction and confusion in the resolution of disputes.

These challenges highlight the importance of recognizing and supporting Somali traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. Efforts to integrate traditional and modern systems, provide education and capacity building for clan elders, and foster community engagement are crucial to preserving these valuable mechanisms for maintaining social order and resolving conflicts.

7. Root Causes

Respondents in the study highlighted various root causes and contributing factors that underpin clan conflicts in central regions of Somalia. Historical grievances emerged prominently, stemming from longstanding competition over grazing land and water resources among pastoralist communities. The establishment of new settlements due to urban migration further complicates matters by transforming traditional grazing areas into residential zones, triggering disputes over land ownership and usage rights. Political marginalization following the collapse of Somalia's central government exacerbated clan rivalries, as power vacuums allowed local power brokers to rise while excluding certain clans from political processes, deepening feelings of exclusion and resentment.

Climate change emerged as another significant root cause, exacerbating resource scarcity through droughts and unpredictable rainfall, thereby intensifying economic hardship and competition among clans reliant on pastoralism and agriculture. Economic inequality compounded these challenges, exacerbating tensions by restricting equitable access to resources and economic opportunities, perpetuating cycles of conflict. Contributing factors like the proliferation of arms further escalated tensions, making it easier for minor disputes to escalate into violent confrontations. The absence of robust peace infrastructures,

coupled with deeply entrenched cultural norms of revenge killings and weak judicial systems that fail to ensure accountability, further undermine efforts to achieve lasting peace and stability in the region, reflecting the complex and multifaceted nature of the conflict dynamics in central Somalia.

Historical Grievances

One of the primary root causes of clan conflicts in the central regions of Somalia is historical grievances. Historically, competition over grazing land and water resources among pastoralist communities has been a significant cause of conflict. These disputes over essential resources have long been a source of tension and rivalry, laying a foundation of animosity that persists today.

Establishment of New Settlements

The establishment of new settlements, a relatively new phenomenon in Somali areas, indicates that Somalis are moving to cities instead of remaining a rural community. This urban migration and development of new residential areas significantly exacerbate tensions as traditional grazing lands are converted into residential zones. This transition leads to disputes over land ownership and usage rights, further intensifying conflicts between clans. The shift from a rural, pastoralist lifestyle to urban living disrupts traditional land use patterns, creating friction over territory and resources that have historically been shared or contested among pastoralist communities.

Political Marginalization

Political marginalization is another critical factor contributing to clan conflicts. The collapse of the central government in 1991 led to a power vacuum and weakened governance structures, exacerbating clan rivalries. This state weakness allowed for the rise of local power brokers and militia groups, further entrenching divisions. Additionally, the perceived or actual exclusion of certain clans from political power and decision-making processes has fuelled grievances. This lack of representation and inclusion has deepened the sense of marginalization and disenfranchisement among some clans, intensifying conflicts.

Climate change

Climate change is one root cause of clan conflicts in the central regions of Somalia, significantly exacerbating existing tensions, particularly in areas where resources are scarce and competition for them is intense. Climate change leads to the increased scarcity of vital resources such as water, pastureland, and arable land due to droughts, unpredictable rainfall, and other extreme weather events, heightening competition among clan's dependent on these resources for their livelihoods. Many clans rely on pastoralism and agriculture, and climate change disrupts these

traditional livelihoods by making it harder to maintain livestock or grow crops, leading to economic hardship and intensified competition for the remaining resources, which fuels conflicts. Forced migration due to areas becoming uninhabitable, such as through desertification or repeated flooding, can lead to clashes with existing populations over land and resources, exacerbating existing tensions and creating new conflicts.

Economic Inequality

Economic inequality also plays a significant role in driving conflicts in the central regions. Competition over scarce resources such as land, water, and pastureland is intense, leading to frequent clashes. The scarcity of these vital resources has made their control highly contested. Moreover, economic disparities, including inequitable access to economic opportunities and development resources, have heightened tensions. The unequal distribution of wealth and opportunities has created a sense of injustice and resentment, exacerbating existing conflicts and contributing to the cycle of violence

8. Contributing Factors

Proliferation of Arms

The easy availability and flow of small arms and light weapons further fuel clan conflicts in the central regions of Somalia. The proliferation of weapons has made it easier for minor disputes to escalate into violent confrontations. The absence of effective regulation and control, the widespread availability of arms perpetuated a cycle of violence and instability, making peaceful resolutions more difficult to achieve.

Lack of *Peace* Infrastructures

The absenteeism of robust peace infrastructures, such as effective governance systems (including effective law enforcement instructions) and conflict resolution mechanisms, exacerbated the situation. Traditional authorities and modern state institutions often lack the capacity to manage and resolve conflicts effectively. This vacuum allowed disputes to fester and escalate, as there are no reliable systems in place to mediate and resolve tensions before they turn violent.

Cultural Norms and Revenge Killings

Deeply entrenched cultural practices, such as revenge killings or (blood feuds), also play a critical role in perpetuating violence. These practices dictated that families and clans must avenge the deaths of their members, leading to cycles of retaliatory violence that can persist for generations. The cultural imperative for revenge created an environment where peace is difficult to achieve and maintain, as each act of violence prompts another in response.

Weak Judicial Systems

The weak judicial systems in the central regions contributed significantly to the persistence of clan conflicts. Impunity is a major issue, as perpetrators of violence often go unpunished due to the inefficacy of the judicial system. This lack of accountability encouraged cycles of revenge and retaliation, as affected parties seek justice through their own means. Additionally, inadequate enforcement of the rule of law exacerbated insecurity and instability, further undermining efforts to achieve lasting peace.

Cultural and Social Dynamics

Cultural and social dynamics are also crucial contributing factors to clan conflicts in these regions. Strong clan identities can lead to loyalty to clan over state, perpetuating conflicts. This deep-rooted allegiance and commitment often mean that clan interests take precedence over national stability, making it challenging to achieve lasting peace. The practice of revenge killings, or blood feuds, is a deeply rooted cultural norm that sustains cycles of violence. This revenge culture dictates that families and clans must avenge the deaths of their members, creating ongoing cycles of retaliatory violence that are difficult to break.

9. Effects

Humanitarian Impact

The conflicts in the central regions of Somalia have led to severe humanitarian impacts. Large-scale displacement of people is one of the most significant outcomes, creating humanitarian crises that strain resources and support systems. Additionally, there have been significant casualties, including loss of lives and injuries, among both combatants and civilians. The continuous violence disrupted daily life, making it difficult for individuals and communities to access essential services and support.

Economic Consequences

he economic consequences of clan clashes in Somalia are severe, creating a vicious cycle of poverty and instability. The destruction of property and infrastructure disrupts local economies, making it difficult for communities to recover. This disruption not only hinders livelihoods but also deters investment and development projects, further exacerbating poverty and underdevelopment.

As poverty deepens, competition for scarce resources intensifies, fueling further conflict and perpetuating the cycle of instability. This ongoing insecurity makes it challenging for Somalia to achieve sustained economic growth and development, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies that

address both the conflicts and the underlying economic vulnerabilities.

Social *Fragmentation*

The Continuous conflicts of these regions (Mugud and Galgudud) eroded trust between communities, leading to significant social fragmentation. The breakdown of social cohesion exacerbated vulnerability to further conflicts and undermined community resilience. Efforts to reconcile and rebuild social ties are often thwarted by the deep-seated mistrust and animosity that result from prolonged violence. This erosion of trust made it challenging to achieve lasting peace and stability.

Political Instability

The Ongoing conflicts undermined efforts to establish effective and inclusive governance structures, contributing to political instability. The presence of conflict hampered peacebuilding and state-building initiatives, creating a cycle of instability that is difficult to break. Governance challenges are compounded by the lack of security and the continuous threat of violence, which prevented the development of robust institutions capable of managing and resolving conflicts.

10. Possible Mitigation of Recurrent Clan Conflicts

Based on the findings of the research on recurrent clan conflicts in Galgudug and Mudug regions of Somalia, researchers from the Centre for Peace Governance (CENPEG) summarized a range of effective mitigation strategies proposed by respondents and stakeholders:

Cooperation between State Governments and the Central Government:

Respondents emphasized the need for collaboration among the Central Government, Galmudug, and Puntland states to effectively address clan conflicts. This cooperative effort should leverage combined resources and authority to implement comprehensive peacebuilding strategies. Initiatives include joint peacebuilding initiatives aimed at coordinating strategies to address underlying grievances, enhance conflict resolution mechanisms, and promote reconciliation among clans.

Establishment of Early Warning Systems:

To prevent conflicts from escalating, Galmudug and Puntland states should implement early warning systems. These systems integrate local knowledge and indicators to detect potential conflicts early, enabling timely interventions and mitigating tensions before they lead to violence.

Developing Policies and Rules for Resource Management:

Respondents highlighted the importance of developing robust policies and regulations to safeguard pasturelands and manage urbanization effectively. Urbanization policies and mechanisms to protect grazing lands and avoiding establishing new settlements are crucial to mitigating disputes arising from the conversion of traditional pastoral lands into urban areas, which often exacerbates tensions over resource access and ownership.

Strengthening Governance and Rule of Law:

Enhancing local governance structures is essential to addressing governance deficits contributing to clan conflicts. This involves ensuring inclusivity and representation of all clans in decision-making processes, thereby fostering a more equitable and participatory governance framework. Strengthening judicial systems to improve accountability and reduce impunity for perpetrators of violence is also critical in creating a secure environment conducive to sustainable peace.

Promoting Economic Development and Resource Management:

Efforts to develop sustainable economic opportunities were emphasized to alleviate competition over scarce resources like land, water, and pasturelands. Implementing projects for equitable resource distribution and supporting livelihood diversification programs are essential steps to reduce dependency on pastoralism and mitigate resource-based conflicts, thereby promoting economic stability and reducing conflict drivers.

Supporting Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:

Recognizing the importance of Somali traditional conflict resolution mechanisms (Xeer), respondents recommended revitalizing and supporting these systems through capacity-building for elders and community leaders through providing conflict management and peace building trainings. Promoting dialogue and reconciliation initiatives facilitated by respected elders helps resolve existing disputes and prevent future conflicts. Integrating traditional mechanisms with formal legal systems ensures hybrid approaches that are culturally accepted and effective in achieving sustainable peace.

Fostering Social Cohesion and Community Engagement: Efforts to promote inter-clan dialogue and reconciliation at the grassroots level were highlighted as crucial for

building trust and fostering social cohesion among communities. Investing in education and awareness campaigns to promote tolerance, understanding, and respect for diversity is essential in cultivating a culture of peaceful coexistence. Encouraging youth involvement in peacebuilding activities plays a significant role in nurturing a generation committed to non-violent conflict resolution and community harmony.

International Support and Collaboration:

Respondents underscored the importance of mobilizing international support for peacebuilding initiatives and conflict resolution efforts in the region. Providing technical and financial assistance to strengthen local capacities in governance, peacebuilding, and development is essential for implementing effective mitigation strategies. Fostered regional cooperation and dialogue are also critical in addressing cross-border issues and regional dimensions of conflicts, ensuring comprehensive and coordinated responses.

Youth Involvement in Peacebuilding:

Engaging youth in peacebuilding activities harnesses their energy, creativity, and potential as agents of change. This involves including them in dialogue forums, community service projects, and peace education initiatives. Creating youth-led peace clubs and organizations that focus on promoting dialogue, reconciliation, and community development is crucial. These groups can serve as platforms for young people to voice their concerns, propose solutions, and actively participate in building a peaceful future. Additionally, providing vocational training and economic opportunities for youth helps reduce their susceptibility to joining militant groups or engaging in violent activities. Economic stability and job prospects significantly contribute to diminishing youth involvement in conflicts

Establishment of Peace Committees at District level.

The establishment of inclusive and integrated peace committees at the district level, comprising various segments of the community, is essential for effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding, particularly in remote or rural areas. These committees operate by bringing together representatives from different sections of the community, ensuring diverse and inclusive participation. To enhance their effectiveness, these

committees are provided with training on conflict management and peacebuilding, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to address local disputes and foster harmony.

For these peace committees to be effective and trusted by the communities they serve, inclusivity is paramount. Ensuring representation from all community factions fosters trust and legitimacy, making it more likely that disputes will be resolved fairly and peacefully. By incorporating diverse perspectives and maintaining a balanced approach, these committees can play a crucial role in mitigating conflicts and promoting lasting peace at the local level.

Conclusion

The central regions of Somalia, particularly the Galgudug and Mudug regions, continue to experience recurrent clan conflicts due to a combination of historical, social, and environmental factors. The findings of this study highlight the complexity of these conflicts, which are driven by a deep-rooted clan system, competition over scarce resources, political marginalization, and the impact of climate change. The erosion of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, proliferation of arms, and weak governance structures have exacerbated these conflicts, leading to significant humanitarian, economic, and social consequences.

The research underscores the urgent need for a multi-faceted approach to address these conflicts. This includes strengthening traditional and modern conflict resolution mechanisms, enhancing governance and rule of law, promoting economic development, and fostering social cohesion. The involvement of international support and collaboration is also critical in implementing effective mitigation strategies and ensuring sustainable peace in the region.

Annex 1: Interview & Focus Group Questionnaires

1. What are the root causes of the recurrent clan conflicts in Galgudug and Mudug regions?
2. What are the factors that trigger the recurrent clan conflicts?
3. What are the effects and consequences of these conflicts?
4. Are there peace dividends or projects that can contribute to addressing these conflicts?
5. What do you think are possible mitigations of recurrent clan conflicts?

Bibliography:

- **Heritage Institute for Policy Studies. (2024)**. "Transitional Justice in Clan-Based Societies: A Case Study in Somalia."
- **Sheikh, A.K., Galvanek, J.B., & Grimm, P. (2019)**. "Conflict Assessment, Galmudug State and Analysis of Local Perspectives."
- **Lewis, I.M. (1961)**. "A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa." London: Oxford University Press.
- **Menkhaus, K. (2009)**. "The Somalia Conflict: Implications for Peace-making and Peacekeeping Efforts."

About the Research:

This research was facilitated by the Centre for Peace and Governance (CENPEG), a premier research and consulting firm dedicated to advancing peacebuilding and governance initiatives worldwide. CENPEG focuses on evidence-based solutions and strategic guidance. This report examined the social basis, root causes, contributing factors, effects, traditional peace mechanisms, and potential mitigation strategies for clan conflicts in the central regions of Somalia. By addressing these areas, the report seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of these conflicts and offer insights into potential pathways for sustainable peace.

CENPEG works towards a stable and peaceful Somalia characterized by sustainable development, human rights, the rule of law, democracy, collaborative security, and gender mainstreaming. CENPEG realizes this vision by:

- Undertaking applied research, training, and capacity building

- Conducting rigorous research and analysis on peace and governance issues, providing valuable insights and evidence-based recommendations to inform policy and practice

- Facilitating policy development and legal services

- Monitoring and evaluating peacebuilding and governance interventions, ensuring accountability, learning, and continuous improvement

- Offering comprehensive communications services, including strategy design, training, media monitoring, and advocacy planning

- Implementing conflict management initiatives, encompassing conflict and peace mapping, baseline assessments, and peacebuilding programs

- Collecting, interpreting, and disseminating information

- Networking on national, regional, and international levels

About the Author:

Abdisamad Ali (Garoon) holds an MA in Peace, Governance, and Development. With nearly seven years of experience as a senior stabilization advisor in Somalia, he has developed extensive expertise in the field. As the founder of the Centre for Peace and Governance (CENPEG), he is committed to fostering stability and governance in Somalia.

Centre for Peace and Governance (CENPEG)
E-mail: info@cenpeg.com   or infocenpeg@gmail.com