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Reforming the Heart of Somalia's Security Sector

Abstract: *Somali security has gone through different stages and it has become a place where certain people use it to oppress their opponents. In this article, we are investigating the possibility to make reforming the heart of the Somalis Security sector. This article presents an example that if used it is possible that something can be changed for the Somali security sector .*

The article argues Somali Security should get fully trust the society of Somalia, if the people of Somalia feel that the security belongs to them and the people believing that they are working in the interest of the nation but not the interest-specific person, once people realize that the Security are working to defeand and to protect their country as well their interest, it will be easier to make reform and implement the whole country

Keywords: *Security Sector, Security reform, Security reorganizing, Security arrangement, Security promote*

Introduction

Reforming the Heart of Somalia's Security Sector

Somalia has been marred by three decades of insecurity following the ouster of President Siad Barre in 1991. The fall of state leadership and governance organs resulted to disastrous insecurity situation that have hampered socio-political and economic development. The political instability has been characterised by rivalries by clans over power. Even with the peace initiatives that have led to establishment of federal governments, insecurity persists due to failure by different groups to put aside selfish interests and work towards stabilizing Somalia. Despite the rivalry, insecurity situation has been made worse by Al-Shabaab and lawless groups that capitalise on Somalia's instability to further their own agendas.

To stabilize the country, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) has initiated several interventions such as National Stabilisation Strategy (NSS) amongst other plans like the 2020–2024 National Development Plan and the Wadajir Framework for Local Governance. This is to specifically to ensure stability through community discourse, promote transparency and government legitimacy, foster justice to all Somali citizens and enhance socio-economic opportunities. However, another sector that needs focus is security and more specifically reforming the security intelligence agency. This is given that security challenges continue to evolve every day, and to tackle these challenges, the federal government needs new and dynamic approaches of coordinating and developing the capability to shape the national security atmosphere. Security comprises the provision of national collective and individual security and is the prerequisite for rebuilding a fragile nation like Somalia as it entails securing the lives of civilians from close and far violence and the stability of national leadership and country's territory. Intelligence, an important component of state security, entails collecting, processing analysing, and disseminating information on risks to the state and its citizens. Mark M. Lowenthal (2016) defines it as: “intelligence is the process by which specific types of information important to national security are requested, collected, analyzed and provided to policy makers; the products of that process; the safeguarding of these processes and the information by counterintelligence activities, and the carrying out of the operations as requested by lawful authorities.”

The key purpose of intelligence agency operations is safeguarding and enhancing national security. But over time in the world, intelligence agencies have played a major role in nation building and have become a key cog in ensuring that a nation advances in the right direction politically, socially and economically. And for a country like Somalia that is rebuilding itself, amidst historical, cultural challenges, and new age threats such as terrorism, its needs to reorganize and transform its intelligence services. Loch K Johnson (2007) asserts that transforming intelligence services from repressive security apparatus into an effective and transparent democratic community remain a prerequisite. However, Johnson notes that there are challenges ahead that an agency like Somalia's which needs transformation, is likely to face. For instance,

- The inheritance of the undemocratic system
- Lack of professionalism
- The transitional government's lack of experience in the conduct of intelligence reform
- The autonomy possessed by the military (in this case the Somali National Army) because of the monopoly they enjoyed during the authoritative regimes

Restructuring intelligence services in a state like Somalia is one of the most important and difficult activities a government can face. To rebuild Somalia, having an effective intelligence service is critical as it would enable the federal government which oversees internal security to discharge its mandate of ensuring that citizens live in stability, peace and tranquillity and contribute to nation-building. The government will also have ample time to carry out development activities.

Historical Background

When the democratic regime was overthrown and the military regime took over, it suspended the democratic constitution, the political parties, and the right of the people to free speech, political associations, and gathering. Major General, Mohamed Siad Barre staged a military coup against the civilian government on October 21, 1969, and took over the reins of power, he began the transformation and restructuring of the country. But Barre depended heavily on the military institution to consolidate his personal power as the USSR, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, helped him to set up and modernize one of the best-equipped, largest, and well-trained armies in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ingiriis, 2016).

Besides that, with assistance from the USSR, Somalia established the National Security Service (NSS) in 1970 and placed under the Interior Ministry. The Service was modelled after the Committee for State Security (KGB), had unlimited power, maintained a wide-ranging network of informers, and worked closely with the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC). Instead of only carrying out spying, information-gathering, reconnaissance, intelligence and counterintelligence to advance security agenda, the NSS also became the apparatus of the post-independence regime from 1970 to 1990. It became a tool for suppressing clans and purging regime's political adversaries. Its operations such as the selection and promotion of NSS soldiers was heavily influenced by Clan loyalty. Moreover, the USSR also exercise enormous control over the agency as it trained the Somali intelligence agents. The Soviet Union also ensured that Somali leaders who had studied in the Soviets were placed in key ministries such as finance and defence.

Due to its inclination to serving the selfish interests of the regime, the agency became notorious for carrying out heinous acts such as the detention, torture and even execution of individuals who were political adversaries or threat to the existing regime. To carry out its clandestine activities, the NSS had its own grilling centres, prisons and notorious underground jail and maximum-security prisons involved in torture. The NSS also checked postal traffic, communications,

foreign operations, and radio programmes, and carried out intelligence and counterintelligence activities in Somalia and in neighbouring countries.

When Somalia's relation with the USSR worsened AFTER the 1977-78 Ogaden War, the NSS started to collaborate with secret services from the US and South Africa (Pateman, 1992, p. 576). With time Siad Barre's leadership weakening and eventually being overthrown in 1991 by clan-based armed opposition groups, the NSS was disbanded.

From National Security Service (NSS) to National Intelligence Security Agency (NISA)

With the failure of UN peace operations (UNOSOM I and UNOSOM II) and earlier peace conferences, Somali warring groups with the help of neighbours and international organizations established the Transitional National Government (TNG) in 2000. Although the TNG was not able to function effectively, after protracted negotiations it led to formation of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2004 which paved the way for formation of Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) in 2012. And with bid to organize and reorganize government structures to rebuild Somalia, national intelligence service was established in the following year.

This was premised on the federal constitution that permits the establishment of five security institutions – the Somali National Army (SNA), the National Intelligence Service Agency (NISA), the Federal Police Force (FPF), the State Police Force (SPF), and the Federal Custodial Corps (FCC).

Therefore, in January 2013, the Federal Government of Somalia established the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) in place of the defunct NSS with a mandate of assuring national security. Since then, the Agency has been receiving continuous financial and moral support from Somali civil and federal law enforcement agencies, the international community, AMISOM forces and foreign secret services especially in its fight against the al-Shabaab.

The change in name from National Security Service (NSS) to National Intelligence Security Agency (NISA) was made to better reflect the agency's mandate and responsibilities. It is charged to be responsible for Somalia's national security and intelligence, work to protect the country from internal and external threats and to support the federal government in its efforts to stabilize the country and build capacity within the security sector.

However, NISA just like its predecessor fell into the trap of political leadership. It has become a tool for the executive leadership to oppress political dissidents and serve narrow interest of selfish leaders. For instance, according to Yabarag, 2013, the NISA was designed to be subordinated to the same purpose as the NSS, the personalization of power. That with its empowerment, the government was able to suppress its political opponents and maintain order in territories controlled by them in the capital. To consolidate executive power, respective executive leaders revived methods used by past repressive regimes, for example arresting of individuals without following due process of law whenever they voiced their opinions against the government (Yabarag, 2013). A typical example is when the Agency cracks down and arrests Somalis for voicing their criticism against the government.

But a look at its composition since NISA was formed, shows that the agency could not have performed any different from its predecessor. It became engaged in malpractices that have dented its image. For instance, it has been:

- Entangled in the ‘dirty war’ between the federal government, Al-Shabaab and opposition figures.
- Torturing the anti-government individuals and oppression of political opponents
- Fighting against the perceived enemies of the state and to promote the personalization of power.

Could it be that there was just a change of the name and law, but the character of the actors never changed. A notable feature is that five out of the eight NISA directors had somehow been involved in the past regime and had taken part in the recent political leadership. Compared to NSS, NISA seems to lack a clear organization structure and hierarchy and has fallen bait to authoritarian policies of the existing leadership thus making it had to be independent and effective in discharging its mandate.

Role of NISA in Somalia

The maintenance and promotion of national security (stability, peace, and development) should be a key objective of any government. Given that intelligence is an instrument to achieve this objective, emphasis should be placed on the ability of a country to secure its existence, protect its territory, and maintain law and order within its boundaries. Therefore, intelligence should play a

central role to help in identifying threats or potential threats endangering country's existence and prosperity as well as suggesting strategies that can be used to ward off the insecurity.

The main role of an intelligence services is to provide governments with credible information about possible threats to the state and its population. To this extent, NISA becomes an important part of Somalia's security sector and can reform the sector. The agency's efforts are helping to improve the state of the security although there is still a long way to go. It needs to advance its intelligence capacities and capabilities to be effective.

In the modern age, intelligence agencies to be relevant must assist in good governance by providing honest critical, intelligence that highlights the weaknesses and errors of government, and tell the federal government what they ought to know and not what they want to know. It should also provide the policymakers, timeous, critical and sometimes unique information to warn them of potential risks and dangers.

The agency is organized into four main divisions:

- The National Security Division responsible for protecting Somalia from external and internal threats.
- The Intelligence Division gathers and analyzes intelligence to support national security decision-making.
- The Counterterrorism Division works to prevent and disrupt terrorist activity.
- The Training and Capacity Building Division provides training and support to government security forces.

NISA should have a wide range of capabilities and resources at its disposal, including a network of informants, surveillance capabilities, and access to international intelligence databases. The agency should also work closely with the Somali National Army, the Somali Police Force, and other security agencies to ensure the safety of Somalia and its people.

In recent years, NISA has made significant progress in its efforts to reform the security sector and has helped in professionalizing the security forces such as the Somali National Army to be a dependable and capable fighting force. It has also played a key role in the development of the

Somali Police Force and has helped to train and equip police officers across the country. It has also worked to improve intelligence gathering and analysis and has established a network of informants across the country. NISA has also established a counter-terrorism unit, which has been successful in disrupting terrorist activity.

With reforms, NISA will be able to help Somalia's leadership:

- Identify national security interests;
- Design coherent national security strategies and adequate security policy;
- Figure out the mission, creeds, and strategies of the security institutions;
- Prepare for and respond to national crises;
- Prepare for and prevent threats to the state and its citizens.

Why Ex-Al-Shabaab Members occupy High Positions in NISA

In the struggle to stabilize Somalia and safeguard its future, the terror group has been a stumbling block. It has always been staging attacks, killing people, destroying properties, and undermining governments efforts to reign the country. Its intelligence agency is characterised by some kind of organization that makes it easy to outcompete NISA and compromise the political leadership. One way that Al-Shabaab has continued to outwit the federal government as far as security is concerned is infiltrating the NISA.

To counter the terrorist group, the federal government has been supporting the defecting leaders of the militants to transition back into Somali society and advocate upon their behalf. Moreso, it has also been recruiting members who defect, rehabilitate them, and integrate them to the security forces. Such as NISA and the Somali National Army (SNA). The reformed Al-Shabaab intelligence spies to NISA especially those that surrender via amnesty. Through this, they transfer the groups information to the NISA and therefore makes it easy of the federal agency to

engage in counterintelligence. Subsequently, reformed individuals who were leaders of the of the Al-Shabaab intelligence, have been offered key positions. For instance, Sakariye Ismail Ahmed Hersi, the former head of the Amniyat heads NISA's intelligence section carries out most of NISA's operations against al-Shabaab. Why Al-Shabaab members occupy high positions in NISA is because once they leave the terror group, the Authorities NISA think they can bring information vital for fighting the insurgents. However, when they occupy the strategic positions, they become double agents, because they have no idea what they are doing as well to whom they are doing for! That is the why when everyone at the mention of NISA they scared because they are cruel.

Reforms that NISA needs

What kind of reforms does NISA need? Past and recent abuses of power by Somalia regimes and intelligence agencies in addition to insecurity posed by militias due to security lapses make reforms necessary. It is therefore important that the laws governing intelligence AGENCY in Somalia, among other factors be meticulously reviewed so that the agency can properly perform its roles and responsibilities.

Given that carrying out reforms is a process that takes one step at a time, the reforms must take into account the current and future security needs as far as national and global security is concerned. Reforms should also consider the lessons learned from errors committed in the past does not blow the gains and success of the reforms. Some of the reforms include:

Invest sufficient resources

For government to function optimally, and to serve its citizens better, security must be valued and developed as an instrument of development by investing in intelligence. Sufficient resources must be invested in it by the policy and decision-makers, including finances, training, and technological development.

Clear mandate

This involves outlining the tasks that the intelligence agency must perform and have clear guiding principles by which it should carry out its operations and function effectively. A clearly defined mandate helps a security intelligence service to function within a legal responsibility.

What must be avoided in this respect are situations such as those in past dictatorial regimes when the rhetoric of “national security” could be used to justify clamping down on disagreement. To avoid unlawful clamp down, there is a need for relevant legislation to define what ‘national security’ is, and to define parameters which the intelligence service can operate to scan an atmosphere of any looming security threat without jeopardizing the security of the country and peace of the citizens.

Professionalize Intelligence Services

One of the ways of professionalizing intelligence service is training. The professionalization of the intelligence services during the reform process certainly calls for the attention of key stakeholders and political good will by enacting and implementing objective statutes that will allow independence of the agency such as recruiting and training of the officers and their executives, operating without the influence of the executive and political leadership. All the NISA senior officers in different parts of Somalia should be replaced with new ones who have capacities to carry out investigations. Nomination of individuals to the positions should be based on merit and not on who you know as a clan member or a friend. In terms of training, the federal government should streamline and to remodel the content and curriculum of the Intelligence training institute. Due to interference and lack of proper training, NISA has been acting outside the law. They have been engaged in actions that are abuse of power and misuse of intelligence to the advantage of selfish leaders and no one holds them accountable thus abusing and violating human rights. Other actions include unlawful killings, rape and enforced disappearances.

Independence

The Director of National Intelligence should have real control over the service to oversee his entire domain and not serves at the whims of the president and the prime minister. This will help ward of trends that have been experienced. For instance, the President, the Prime Minister (PM) collaborate and appoint one of their own as the Director of the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) and establish a de facto trio-headed authority of the country without constitutional basis. Subsequently, NISA always becomes an instrument to ensure the security and continuation of the poor leadership rule and not the security of the state and the people of Somalia. The rule of the trio, who are not answerable to any internal institutions always

jeopardize efforts to rebuild Somalia. Therefore, this will help NISA not to be used to take care of political and clan interests, assaulting opposition politicians, carrying out rigged elections.

Set out clear principles

It should be clear to federal government, politicians, clans and Somalis that a federal intelligence service is a national asset and shall therefore be politically non-partisan. For it to be neutral and effective in its functions, it should be in principle that no intelligence agency shall be allowed to carry out any operations or activities that are intended to undermine, promote or influence any political groupings or used to further interests of a political or a clan leader at the expense of Somali state.

These principles include the following:

- Ethical code of conduct to govern performance and activities of individual members of the intelligence services.
- Integrated national intelligence capability;
- Specialty intelligence abilities;
- Departure of intelligence from policy making;
- Political neutrality;
- Statutory approval, accountability, and control;
- Balance between secrecy and transparency;
- Effective management and administration;
- Coordination of intelligence and cooperation with departmental intelligence structures;

Set up a National Intelligence Authority (NIA)

A National Intelligence Authority should be established to coordinate the efforts of the nation's intelligence community. This new office will be independent of the Executive Office of the President and will oversee the units that make up the Somalia intelligence agency.

Federal Counterterrorism Centre

The federal government should create a Federal Counterterrorism Center (FCC) to coordinate the work of the nation's intelligence agencies to HANDLE Al-Shabaab terrorist surveillance. Its role will be to collect information, analyse, and undertake activities to protect the state against the actions of hostile groups such as the Al-Shabaab.

Separating NISA into different Units

To prevent one intelligence entity from having a monopoly on its intelligence gathering, analysis, use and execution, there should be a model that allows existence of separate intelligence organizations from, for instance the army, the police, federal police, and separate structures for domestic and foreign intelligence. And all these agencies to be under the Director of NISA. To realize this approach, Somalia should reorganize its intelligence structures with the creation of the following units:

- National Directorate of Intelligence Coordination
- General Directorate of Foreign Intelligence (Foreign)
- General Directorate of Internal Security (Domestic)
- Directorate of Military Security (Military)
- Directorate of Police Security

There should be also creation of several intelligence sharing centres meant to ensure prompt delivery, coordination, and dissemination of intelligence information at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels.

Co-operation and co-ordination

Co-operation and co-ordination are an essential factor in managing a country's security and therefore, the intelligence Agency should work closely with other federal government departments and regional units. In performing its functions in mitigating security threats, NISA should not only advise the federal government but co-operate with other law enforcement institutions such as the army and police and, also cooperate with foreign intelligence agencies.

Intelligence Role

When the Service was constituted, its personnel was trained and deployed to serve but they were also armed like any soldier ready for combat and have been involved in arresting suspects. Whereas an intelligence officer should be always armed, it should not be covert but for purposes of self-defence in case of unexpected attack. But NISA should solely concentrate on intelligence gathering, analysis and advisory role to the government and should not have an armed force. Its army must be disbanded, more undercover officers be hired and be trained to be effective in intelligence role. NISA should only their role is only to investigate and collect information and

share with Police who will then arrest the suspects. They should be a bridge between the Somali Police as investigation department, as it were before.

Hire the Youth

The future of a country is in how it nurtures its youth. As part of reforming the intelligence, NISA should hire more youth from different regions of Somalia, train and deploy them as intelligence officers who can collect information, analyse, and develop intelligence reports. The youth are energetic and enthusiastic and therefore nurturing them to engage in national building aspects such as security, gives them an opportunity to contribute and safeguard the country.

District-Based Intelligence Strategy

NISA should set up three different stations for instance in Mogadishu to operate from and every person who lives in Mogadishu must be registered in respective NISA office, identifying how many people lives in a particular house and what they involved in. This will make it will easier for the Service to have full information of the nature of people who live in a particular locality.

Establish Relations Office

NISA should create an office to foster its relationships with the community members. This will enable them to interact with society for the Service to inform them they exist to serve them by ensuring they live in a safe and secure society. This office will also serve as an avenue for the citizens to air their complains to NISA and thus enhance service delivery and build trust between them.

The New NISA Chief can Reform the Intelligence Sector

To make the Agency respectable, more effective and efficient, the NISA director, **Mahad Mohamed Salad** should reorganize the Somalia intelligence through a proactive approach. He should ensure that the AGENCY should have operate within the rule of law without abusing its authority and that different sections of the agency will require clearly outlined responsibilities all of which should be based on new policy foundations.

The Somalia new chief of intelligence agency needs to be reformed and re-organized along the following five key tenets:

- Update the legal and policy framework and foundations of the entire intelligence service of Somalia and re-shape the Somali intelligence sector with clearly defined mandates for

all its agencies. This includes clear demarcation of military, police, and civilian intelligence work, and local from foreign intelligence.

- Design and implement a comprehensive investment program on technical capabilities and human resource capacities of the Somalia intelligence community.
- Establish robust and multi-layered oversight of the Somalia intelligence service to ensure civilian and political oversight and hold them accountable for democratic controls.
- Establish a coordination Agency of all the intelligence chiefs of Somalia under the leadership of the federal president as the commander in chief for better intelligence sharing, coordination, and decision making at the strategic level.
- Separate local and foreign intelligence and establish two separate agencies for these areas.
- Invest significant financial, human, and technical resources on counter-intelligence capabilities of NISA through a well-thought-out policy.

How Intelligence Agency can win the hearts and minds of Somali

The primary role of a security intelligence service is to advise executive which runs the affairs of a country on threats to national security and measures that it can undertake to mitigate the threats. As much as NISA directly deals with the Executive of the government, it also deals with the citizens indirectly. Specifically, the citizenry is the ultimate client that it serves because the core purpose which NISA exists is to ensure that security exists for people to live peacefully and engage in nation-building.

Since the agency became infamous for conducting extrajudicial activities, such as the imprisonment, torture and even execution of individuals who were considered to pose any threat to the past and recent regimes, it has lost trust among the vocal and passive citizens. It has become perceived as a hand for the dictatorial regimes meant to harm them and not ensure their security, thus branded as an enemy to the people of Somalia.

To be able to revert to its core mandate and win the trust of Somali people, the security intelligence service needs to reorganize itself, lay down policies and structures, and persuade the public to earn a positive image. It should work on winning the hearts and minds of the people.

Winning “hearts” implies that NISA should persuade people that the Agency is out to work with them to ensure that security is achieved by working together as partners. While winning the ‘minds’ implies convincing the people that the information the Agency gathers will not be used against them but used for developing security mitigation measures for the benefit of the country in the long run.

To win them, it should start engaging in activities and projects that can change the perceptions of local communities and to overcome negative assumptions that they might hold about the NISA. Another one is to access populations and areas considered a risk to the security of the federal government and interact with the communities to build relationships with them. They can also engage in community projects such as health, education and agriculture as a way of winning them.

To implement such an initiative, the intelligence service needs to form a Civilian Affairs Committee (CAC) in the federal regions to team up with community/clan leaders and the local communities to improve relations with local communities. With the help of CAC, NISA will be able to access high risk areas, engage in community activities, gather intelligence, and advise the federal government on security threats thereby help mitigate security threats.

Way Forward

In striving to establish a stable and secure Somalia, recent leaderships have tried to reorganize intelligence service to enhance security, however their approaches have fallen short as they have shaped the intelligence service with traits of autocratic regime’s security approaches. Not only have the operations of the NISA worsen insecurity in Somalia, but they have also made already existing security institutions weaker. the intelligence service has been used by the leadership facilitate dictatorial tendencies such as dictatorship in Somali politics.

The first step into the right direction as far as rebuilding Somali nation is concerned is to carry out an all-inclusive reform of the Somali intelligence system to ensure that it will no longer be used for fostering individual goals such as corruption, abuse of power and eradicating political rivals. The Agency should instead be used to serve the interests of the Somali public. Without transforming the intelligence architecture in the country, the NISA, similarly to the NSS, will continue to operate as a tool of political leadership to realise selfish interests.

Conclusion

Reform the country's intelligence agency as a step towards rebuilding the country. Somali intelligence reforms should only have one purpose: contribute to the security of the Somali people and create an intelligence force with legitimate leadership that serves with integrity and build a culture that allows the agency to fulfil its mandate. To avert LACK OF transparency, overpoliticization, and taking part in illegal activities, and create an accountable and effective agency, Somalia's intelligence structure must be centralised and unified, and reconfigured in a way that can ease security operations and mitigate insecurity threats in Somalia. Transforming the whole intelligence sector requires innovative approaches to revitalizing NISA to serve not the political players but the ordinary people. Without configuring the intelligence sector in a way that enhances security operations, working with the citizens, NISA will remain a tool for every autocratic regime to further its selfish political ambitions. But with goodwill, patience, resolve, and help from the international community, Somali federal government can reform intelligence service and wrestle it from the control political leadership and clannism.

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