

**Observation no: 166**

**Country-year: 1976 - 1977**

**1. Did the current regime come to power in a military coup?**

Yes

Somalia was formally established as an independent republic on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960 and on the same day representatives from Somalia's two main territories elected President Dr. Abdirashid Ali Shermarke. On October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1969 a policeman assassinated President Shermake and in the power vacuum that followed, Major General Mohamed Siad Barre, head of the 25 member Supreme Revolutionary Council, took control. On October 21<sup>st</sup>, a bloodless coup occurred and Siad Barre assumed power. The 1960 constitution was suspended, the National Assembly was dissolved, and political parties were abolished.<sup>1</sup> Civil society welcomed the coup for relieving some of the political and economic tensions over the past year that were seen as signs of a looming political crisis. This same regime actively supported "Pan-Somalism" and led them to commit troops to the Ogaden.<sup>2</sup>

**2. Has the country ever experienced a military coup?**

Yes

*See above.*

**3. Is the country's top leader a former military officer?**

Yes

Mohamend Siad Barre gained an accelerated promotion to the rank of Brigadier-General of Police but he opted to join the nascent Somali National Army in April 1960. He was quickly promoted to one of its deputy commander before succeeding to the rank of Commander-in-Chief of the Somali armed forces after his predecessor died in 1965.<sup>3</sup>

**4. Is the military officer corps largely closed to those who do not share the leader's ethnic or sectarian background?**

Yes

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<sup>1</sup> Africa Watch Committee, *Somalia: A Government at War with Its Own People : Testimonies About the Killings and the Conflict in the North* (Africa Watch Committee, 1990), 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Greenfield, "Obituary: Mohamed Said Barre," *The Independent*, accessed June 20, 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-mohamed-said-barre-1566452.html>; Committee, *Somalia*, 15.

Nominally, Barre sought to substitute a system of democratic centralism for clanism in Somalia. In addition to circumscribing the legal and political functions of clan elders, Barre officially banned clanism under penalty of death.<sup>4</sup> In actuality, Siyad balanced clan loyalties to buttress his power. By the early 1970s, the military and political leadership exhibited a relative balance of clan loyalties: from a *Darod(Majertain)/Hawiya* alliance prior to 1969 to a *Darod (Marehan/Ogaden/Dulbahante)* alliance after 1969.<sup>5</sup> By the late 1970s, the state leadership utilized clan affiliation to retain control over the army and state security institutions. The MOD faction as it was known consisted of officials affiliated with the *Marehan*, Siyad Barre's father's clan; the *Ogaden*, his mother's clan; and the *Dulbahante*, one of his son-in-law's clan. By the early 1980s, after the Ogaden war, the *Marehan* occupied most government, party, and army positions, including the majority of Army troops in the Mogadishu region.<sup>6</sup> All Red Brigade personal bodyguard troops of the President were *Marehan*.<sup>7</sup>

## **5. Are there strict ideological requirements for entry into the senior officer corps?**

Yes

Under the idea of “scientific socialism”—a mix of Islam and Marxist-Leninist ideology—President Barre took active steps to transform Somalia from a conservative Islamic state into a modern socialist state.<sup>8</sup> This entailed an amendment providing equal rights to men and women in 1975, contrary to the Islamic law of inheritance, and claims that particular verses from the Quran were obsolete. Many political leaders (e.g. General Mohamed Ainanshe, Vice President of the SRC; General Salad Gavere Kedie, a senior SRC member and the Minister of Public Works; Major Abdul-Kadir Dhel, a former army officer) and religious leaders were sentenced to death for defying this ideology, if not Barre.<sup>9</sup> This led to the creation of the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party (SRSP) as the supreme political authority and only political party in the country on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1976. Furthermore, military officers were required to give lessons to civil servants on the political theories of Marx and Lenin and the various policies meant to transform Somalia into a socialist state. That said, these soldiers usually lacked formal educational training and thus, when military officers were put into civil service positions, they became frequently frustrated for jobs they were unqualified for and departed into obscurity.<sup>10</sup> That said, Marxist-Leninism was not deeply rooted in Somali society;

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<sup>4</sup> Maria Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State in Somalia: From Statelessness to Statelessness?* (International Books, 2001), 172–173.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 169; Committee, *Somalia*, 24.

<sup>7</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State in Somalia*, 179. Also verified through Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, *Historical Dictionary of Somalia* (Scarecrow Press, 2003), 159.

<sup>8</sup> Committee, *Somalia*, 22.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

the personal power of and personality cult around Siad Barre were more important than ideology.<sup>11</sup> This suggests that that ideology mattered to the extent that it was an indication of obedience.<sup>12</sup>

**6. Is party membership required for entry into the senior officer corps?**

Yes

There is enough circumstantial evidence to suggest that party membership was required for entry into the senior officer corps. In addition to the fact that only the SRSP party legally existed, nearly 3,000 nominees from the military, security forces, and the administration participated in the SRSP foundation congress, due to their reliability and commitment to scientific socialism.<sup>13</sup> Barre designed the SRSP with the intention of bringing civilian and government, which was largely comprised of military officials, together. All the members of the Supreme Revolutionary Council, which consisted of senior officers, became members of the party Central Committee.<sup>14</sup>

**7. Does military training involve extensive political education or ideological indoctrination?**

Yes

From the early 1960s to 1977, most of the officer training in Somalia was conducted by the Soviet Union. Nearly 60 percent of all active duty officers had received Soviet training by the mid-1970s and as a result gained a markedly Marxist worldview.<sup>15</sup> I would say that since many officers were semiliterate it was more about political indoctrination than any formal education.<sup>16</sup>

**8. Has the military been used to repress internal dissent in the last five years?**

Yes

Barre established two institutions in 1970 to repress internal dissident. First, he formed the National Security Service, an intelligence agency comprised of members

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<sup>11</sup> Helen Chapin Metz, *Somalia: A Country Study*/ Ed. by Helen Chapin Metz (Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, 1992), 40–43.

<sup>12</sup> Mohamed Diriye Abdullahi, *Culture and Customs of Somalia* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), 32.

<sup>13</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State in Somalia*, 174.

<sup>14</sup> Committee, *Somalia*, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Metz, *Somalia*, 206–208; “Permanent Mission of the Somali Republic to the United Nations - Country Facts,” accessed June 26, 2014, <http://www.un.int/wcm/content/site/somalia/cache/offonce/pid/3238>.

<sup>16</sup> Abdullahi, *Culture and Customs of Somalia*, 32–33.

of his *Marehan* clan. Tasked with intelligence and internal security, including monitoring security offenses, the NSS used arbitrary detention and torture to suppress ideological dissidence and root out political opponents to government policies and leadership.<sup>17</sup> Second, a special judicial system—the National Security Court—was formed in 1970, governing all political and security matters and cases related to public order. The Special Prosecutor of the NSC and his deputies were always members of the armed forces and directly appointed by President Barre. As I stated previously, this led many political leaders (e.g. General Mohamed Ainanshe, Vice President of the SRC; General Salad Gavere Kedie, a senior SRC member and the Minister of Public Works; Major Abdul-Kadir Dhel, a former army officer) and religious leaders (ten sheiks to be exact) to be sentenced to death for dissidence in 1972 and 1975, respectively.<sup>18</sup> They were ostensibly accused of misappropriating government funds, which held a penalty of death, but in reality this was a tool to punish senior civil servants, military officers, and businessmen in the private sector.<sup>19</sup>

**9. Has the military been used to govern the country in the last five years?**

Yes

Ostensibly, the country was run by a civilian administration but President Barre was the commander in chief of the armed forces, secretary-general of the SRSP, and the head of the SRSP politbureau. In fact, all members of the SRC were members of the SRSP, which emboldened the power of army and security forces in the government.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, all public employees were required to enroll in political indoctrination courses at Halane, a military camp in Mogadishu, which lasted for six months and included three months of military training. Military officers were also positioned at senior levels in civil service, despite their inadequate training for the positions.<sup>21</sup> Each of the eighteen regions held a Regional Revolutionary council, comprised of a military governor as chairman and local military and police commanders. Nationally, SRC members, consisting of the military leadership of Somalia, occupied key ministries, such as of defense, of the interior, of information and of national guidance.<sup>22</sup>

**10. Is there a paramilitary organization separate from the regular military, used to provide regime or leader security?**

Yes

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<sup>17</sup> "Somalia: Atrocities Under the Siad Barre Regime," Think Tank, *The Center for Justice & Accountability*, (2014), <http://www.cja.org/article.php?list=type&type=287#7>; Committee, *Somalia*, 16; Metz, *Somalia*.

<sup>18</sup> Committee, *Somalia*, 23.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>22</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State in Somalia*, 173.

The “Victory Pioneers” were a uniformed paramilitary organization established as the regime’s neighborhood watchdog and given the power to arrest and detain dissidents, despite lacking a legal basis to do so.<sup>23</sup> Government employees and ordinary members of the public were expected to attend their local propaganda (“orientation”) centers.<sup>24</sup> To root out dissidents and promote political indoctrination, the “Victory Pioneers” encouraged neighbors and family members to spy on each other and report their failure to attend courses.<sup>25</sup>

**11. Is there an internal intelligence apparatus dedicated to watching the regular military?**

Yes

The internal intelligence apparatus consisted of the National Security Service, the *Hangash (Hayada Nabadgelyada Gaashaandhiga)* or military intelligence, *Dabarjebinta* or military counter intelligence, *Koofiyad-casta* or military police, and the *Barista Hisbiga* or party investigators.<sup>26</sup> The NSS regularly monitored military personnel.<sup>27</sup>

**12. Has a purge of the officer corps occurred in the last five years?**

Yes

In June 1975, after the detention and execution in January of General Mohamed Ainanshe, Vice President of the SRC; General Salad Gavere Kedie, a senior SRC member and the Minister of Public Works; Major Abdul-Kadir Dhel, a former army officer, and various religious leaders, Barre purged the a major purge of the army targeting people who had disagreed (publicly or suspected of having done so) with these executions.<sup>28</sup>

**13. Is there an institutionalized forum through which civilian leaders and military officers regularly exchange information?**

Yes

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<sup>23</sup> Committee, *Somalia*, 7.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>27</sup> Metz, *Somalia*, 217.

<sup>28</sup> Daniel Compagnon, “State-sponsored Violence and Conflict Under Mahamed Siyad Barre: The Emergence of Path Dependent Patterns of Violence | Reinventing Peace” (World Peace Foundation, October 22, 2013), <http://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2013/10/22/state-sponsored-violence-and-conflict-under-mahamed-siyad-barre-the-emergence-of-path-dependent-patterns-of-violence/>.

Three forums were available. First, as previously stated, the SRC established the Regional Revolutionary Council to monitor local government. The Ministry of Interior also established local councils, consisting of military administrators and representatives appointed by the SRC, at the regional, district, and village levels, to gain information and advise the military on local conditions and implement government directives.<sup>29</sup> Second, while lacking real political power, a Council of Secretaries of State (CSS) comprised of civilian leaders functioned as a cabinet assisting the military leadership in the SRC with regular communication to them and the responsibility of the government's day-to-day operation.<sup>30</sup> Third, the Central Committee of the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party comprised of both military and civilian leaders, in which civilians made up a majority of the Council's 73 members.<sup>31</sup> The Politbureau comprised of chairman, party secretary-general Mohamed Siyad Barre, three vice-presidents of the SRC, and the head of the NSS and Military Intelligence.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> "Permanent Mission of the Somali Republic to the United Nations - Country Facts."

<sup>30</sup> Metz, *Somalia*, 37-40.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>32</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State in Somalia*, 174.