

From Pre-Colonial Past to the Post-Colonial Present: The Contemporary Clan-Based Configurations of Statebuilding in Somalia

Mohamed Haji Ingiriis

Abstract: This article is driven by an empirical paradox over where Somalia came from (pre-colonial clan-states) and where it ended up (return to pre-colonial clano-territorial conflicts). Existing academic studies on contemporary Somalia, which were supposed to provide critical analysis, continue to applaud the creation of clan-states within the failed state of Somalia. Based on a variety of unique primary sources, this article offers a new perspective on the current state formation processes occurring in the purview of the Somali State. Somali clans are determined to come to terms with the state collapse by averting the return to political power of the detested military regime, which was led by one clan-based leadership that tended to terrorize other rival clans and denied any equal power- and resource-sharing framework. Conceptualizing the contemporary Somali state as similar to pre-colonial clan-sultanates, this article argues that contemporary Somalis are reverting to a pre-colonial realm where each clan had

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Mohamed Haji Ingiriis is a doctoral candidate at the Faculty of History, University of Oxford, the U.K. He is also a research associate at the African Leadership Centre, King's College London, U.K. He is furthermore a book reviews editor for both the *Journal of Somali Studies* and *Journal of Anglo-Somali Society*. He is the author of *The Suicidal State in Somalia: The Rise and Fall of the Siad Barre Regime, 1969–1991*, University Press of America, 2016. His articles have been published in *African Affairs*, *African Identities*, *African Renaissance*, *African Security*, *Africa Today*, *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, *Contemporary Security Policy*, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *Journal of International Women's Studies*, *Journal of Somali Studies*, *Méthod(e)s: African Review of Social Sciences Methodology*, *Northeast African Studies* and *The Northern Mariner* (an academic journal for maritime research). Ingiriis's research ranges widely and invokes the disciplines of anthropology, history, and political science. He has written on cultural, historical, intellectual, legal, maritime, political, and social aspects of Somali society. He locates his work at the intersection of state systems and structures that shape societal changes in Somalia. E-mail: ingiriis@yahoo.com

its clan sultan seeking for a clan-state of its own right. Where else do clan-states compete against each other in entering into “treaties” with external entities intent on exploiting war-torn Somalia as *tabula rasa*? It is towards the objective of answering this question and of providing a better understanding of the Somali conflict that this article is offered to add a comparative empirical understanding of the different trajectories of state formations in Somalia.

Résumé: Le paradoxe empirique de la provenance de la Somalie (États-clans précoloniaux) et de sa trajectoire finale (retour aux conflits de clans-territoriaux précoloniaux) est le guide conducteur de cet article. Les études académiques actuelles sur la Somalie contemporaine, qui étaient censées fournir une analyse critique, continuent d’applaudir la création d’États-clans dans le cadre de l’État de Somalie défaillant. Cet article qui s’appuie sur une variété de sources primaires uniques, offre une nouvelle perspective sur les processus actuels de construction d’état se produisant dans le cadre de l’État somalien. Les clans somaliens sont déterminés à parvenir à accepter l’effondrement de l’État en évitant le retour au pouvoir politique du régime militaire détesté, qui a été contrôlé par la direction d’un clan monopolisateur avec une tendance à terroriser les autres clans rivaux et a nié tout schéma d’égalité du pouvoir et de partage des ressources. En conceptualisant l’État somalien contemporain comme semblable au clan-sultanats précoloniaux, cet article fait valoir que les Somaliens contemporains reviennent à un schéma précolonial où le Sultan de chaque clan était forcé d’être à la recherche d’un État-clan de plein droit. Existe-t-il ailleurs des États-clans qui rivalisent entre eux en concluant des « traités » avec des puissances extérieures qui ont la pleine intention d’exploiter la Somalie déchirée par la guerre en tant que *tabula rasa*? Ayant pour objectif de répondre à cette question ainsi que d’apporter une meilleure compréhension du conflit somalien cet article se propose d’apporter une compréhension empirique comparative des différentes trajectoires de la construction des états en Somalie.

Keywords: Pre-colonial; post-colonial; state collapse; state failure; Somalia

Introduction

Somalia is both an astonishment and an amazement empirically. While studies on collapsed states and failed states have often traced both the causes and the consequences of the 1990s post-Cold War armed conflicts, tracking their drivers and dynamics (Rotberg 2003; Zartman 1995; for the Somali case, see The World Bank 2005), the legacies of the state collapse in Somalia are largely analyzed from an international perspective (Daniels 2012; Hansen 2013; Makinda 1999). Building upon empirical and ethnographic research, scholars examining the Somali state collapse have identified society without state (Doornbos 2002), nation without state (Fahy 1999), social order without state (Bakonyi & Stuvøy 2005; Sorens & Wantchekon 2000), violence without state (Besteman 1996), conflict without state (Cassanelli 1996), economy without state (Little 2003; Mubarak 1997; Webersik 2006), growth without state (Leeson 2007),

commerce without state (Webersik & Crawford 2015), class and power without state (de Waal 2002), political order without state (Menkhaus 1998), peacebuilding without state (Makinda 1993), governance without state (Menkhaus 2006/07; Raeymaekers, Menkhaus, & Vlassenroot 2008), land without state (Bakonyi 2011), law without state (van Notten 2006), justice without state (Ganzglass 1996; Le Sage 2005), police without state (Hills 2014), and syndrome without state (Patman 2010). What is remarkably unexplored, nevertheless, is the fact that the phenomenon of the modern state without the Westphalian state is not new but rather a reality left over from pre-colonial Somalia. Tracing the long historical trajectories of the state collapse dating back to the pre-colonial period to locate the contemporary conundrum of state formation is therefore highly justified.

In academic studies, popular discourse, and even symbolic visual art, Somalia still stands out as the most protracted case of collapsed state in the world (Hagmann & Hoehne 2009:46; Ingiriis 2015:68). As such, Somalia occupies a special place in the scholarship on collapsed states and failed states. Existing scholarship on state formations in Africa has tended to stress the failure and fragility of the African states which are commonly attributed to colonial legacies and post-colonial politics (Hagmann & Péclard 2010; Villalón & Huxtable 1998). The case of state failure and state collapse in Somalia is almost entirely attributed to the clan, colonialism, and Cold War dynamics, with the same causality and consequences (Baadiyow 2017). This article suggests instead that pre-colonial political topography reveals much longer trends of Somali socio-political structuration based on clan-states. In doing so, this article refutes two myths in Somali Studies: (1) that Somalis were historically a “stateless society” before colonial rule, and (2) that the current various states in Somalia were solely the result of the “civil war.” It is argued that the claims and counter-claims for colonial or clan bordering between the current clan-based states within the failed clan state of Somalia as well as the discourses for legitimacy and statehood cannot be studied in isolation from the patterns of pre-colonial state structures, clan constraints, and competition for resources. This article classifies and conceptualizes the emerging states as clan-states similar to the parochial pre-colonial mono-states.

Observers such as Menkhaus (1998:220) have postulated that the post-colonial Somali state was like a “castle built on sand” (Menkhaus 1998:220). Although there were no strong foundations for the nation-state right from the beginning in the post-colonial period, clans were antagonized during the brutal military dictatorship of General Mohamed Siad Barre, when the political unity of Somali statehood was forced to return to pre-colonial administrative state structures (Ingiriis 2016a; 2016b). A myriad and mosaic of pre-colonial clan-states have re-emerged since the military dictatorship was ousted. The Somali State is now practically synonymous with the notion of the failed state which was popularized at the time Somalia collapsed. As a result, Somalia occupies a prominent and permanent place in the Western imagination as the most extreme example of piracy, secessionism, terrorism,

and paralyzed state collapse in modern history (Brazhalovich et al. 2016:264; Maxwell & Majid 2016:189). Although piracy escalated over the past ten years in Puntland, it has now gradually decreased as a result of external intervention. Yet, the consequences of the state collapse are evident in much of south-central Somalia. This has made Somalia a mere geographic entity where everything remains upside down from the perspective of the international community. To this day, it has not one functioning unitary nation-state. Rather, the country is carved up by various competing clan-states—reminiscent of the pre-colonial spatial Somali clan organization—which are manipulated by political players to seize power through clan territorialization (Bootaan 1996; Hoehne 2016).¹ In contrast with states within states, these contemporary “bifurcated state(s)” (Mamdani 1996) are quasi-states without a nation-state in the Western sense of the term (Bryden 2004; Kingston 2004).² These are clan-states, not just because they are heavily dominated by one clan, but because they are recognized by the Somali public as states created for and by certain clans. Every three to four years, a new and hopeful leadership initiative emerges, promising that the lack of a unitary functioning nation-state will soon be remedied by overcoming the obstacles that have hindered it so far (Radio Mogadishu 2017; *The Somalia Herald* 2014a), but nothing tangible comes of such promises. Despite the strong euphoria surrounding Somali independence in July 1960, what began as one unitary nation-state came to disintegrate through similar African political process in January 1991 (Ingiriis 2016a, 2016b, 2016c).

Somalia: The “Wrecked Watermelon”

In the language of international diplomacy, Somalia is currently divided along three territorial zones: Somaliland, Puntland, and South-Central Somalia. Although the international community’s approach toward state-formation processes in Somalia has always been problematic, the Somalis themselves should be blamed for much of the current stalemate that is obstructing the constitution of a functioning nation-state. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) expressed the complexity of Somalia in the 1990s: “[w]hen mentioning Somalia, it is difficult to know who exactly we are talking about” (UNDP 1998:1). This reflects the empirical fact of clan-based states within the failed “federal” state in Somalia: (1) Somaliland claims independence, (2) Puntland insists semi-independence, (3) Jubbaland enjoys autonomous authority, (4) Southwest seeks autonomy, while (5) Galmudug and (6) Hirshabelle were dependent on the patronage of the previous regime interests in Mogadishu which represented the economic control of an authoritarian state power. This article encompasses a combination of theoretical and empirical contributions to an examination of these paradoxes. It does not purport to explain why the fragmentation of the Somali nation-state was possible or even why it continues to persist, but it draws attention to an often-overlooked historical and contemporary discursive scholarship justifying and legitimizing the notion of each clan having a state of its own.

While closely considering the case of the post-state collapse clan-states in southern Somalia, this article is also concerned with mapping Somaliland, not because it still is legally party of the Somali State, but because it has been striving with no avail for international recognition since 1991. It is thus the only entity to date seeking an official divorce (as an independent state) from the rest of Somalia, in contrast with Puntland which appears to entertain the idea of following Somaliland's example sooner or later (Hesse 2010a), and taking into account the new emerging state structures in southern Somalia.³ Official titles such as the "The Republic of Somaliland" and "The Puntland State of Somalia" emphasize the variance between the two entities. Menkhaus (2016:163) has aptly pointed out that Somaliland and Puntland are "functional failed states," whereas southern Somalia is a "dysfunctional failed state." However, Somaliland is both interesting and unique; interesting because it is qualitatively different from other post-state collapse clan-states due to structural considerations, and unique because of clan considerations that will be explained below. Fieldwork for this article was carried out in South-Central Somalia (May–September 2015 and April–July 2016), Somaliland (July–August 2016) and an earlier investigative trip to Puntland in December 2001. Unlike the case in South Sudan, where foreign scholars learn the language and spend years conducting research in conflict-ridden zones (e.g., Stringham & Forney 2017), most of those studying Somalia write from the comfort zones of the Ivory Tower in the West, or spend a few months in Kenya when they could not spend a few hours in the Mogadishu airport. This article draws information both from the public and the political power holders.

With the demise of the unitary nation-state in Somalia following the collapse of the Somali State, Somali nationalism mediated and maintained by democratic state structures eventually led to the brutal and barbarous patterns of Siad Barre's military dictatorship, which culminated in the creation of many Somalias rather than one Somalia, an astounding case of collapse in comparison to all other African state collapses. Somalia today, as previously during the military reign, remains the only place in the world where the concept of the nation-state proved unworkable, to such an extent that the term "Somalia" is now irrelevant in Somali discussions. In other words, there is no longer one unified Somalia, but rather numerous new Somalias that have emerged and gained ground, with some appearing to be more successful than others. Somalia as Siad Barre's ghost appears as an aberration and an anomaly to outside observers, baffling and puzzling political scientists and pundits alike, such as anthropologists, ethnologists, ethnographers, and ethnohistorians (Ingiriis 2016d:74). How can unity be created when unity itself is considered a danger, both internal and external? Put another way, what kind of a future is possible when the Somalis have no unified state to shield them from the dangers of globalization and regional threats? In other words, how can Somalis survive without a unified—not necessarily centralized (but sharing many other commonalities)—state in the twenty-first century? How is it possible that a country characterized as the

most promising democratic and developmental state on the African continent in the 1960s suddenly sank into full-blown dictatorship (1969), disorder (1977), and disarray (1990), and now appears as *qare qarxay* (wrecked watermelon), to use a Somali metaphor for something that no one could ever restore (Ingiriis 2016a)? What would nationalism in this context offer, other than fattening a small clique of elites from one single clan to suck the marrow from a partially profitable nation-state?

The “Burned Land”: The Pre-Colonial Clan Republics

The emergence of clan-states in contemporary Somalia is not a new phenomenon in Somali history. Against the Western models of the nation-state, it is assumed erroneously that pre-colonial Somalis were a “stateless society,” which overlooks that the pre-colonial Somali world abounded with clan republics with rules but without rulers. The clan-based republics in the Somali world observed by European explorers and ethnographers under colonial and pre-colonial dominions did not follow the Weberian model of the nation-state defined by territory (Baldacci 1909; Burton 1856; Christopher 1844; Colucci 1924; Cruttenden 1844–46, 1849; Guillain 1856–1857; James 1888; Miles 1872; Robecchi-Brichetti 1899; Révoil 1882; Swayne 1900; Walsh 1910). From the perspective of the colonial explorers, there were no internationally acceptable states, no recognized national administration exercising real power authority, no formal countrywide legal and judiciary system, no national banking and insurance services, no national telephone and postal systems, no national public services, no national formal educational and health systems, no national police and public security, and no water services. Yet, Somalis survived and thrived, using their own socio-political systems and state structures (Ahad 2014; Djama 1997; Marlowe 1963). During the pre-colonial and most of the colonial period, the Somali lands around the coastal zones in the North were known as “*Guban*,” roughly translated as the Burned Land. Before colonial intrusion, the Somali country (or, more aptly, countries) was divided into clan-based zones, whose existence was conventionally accepted. Each clan recognized the others living in nearby zones, even if water, land, pasture, camels, and women were fiercely contested. The contemporary coastal capital Mogadishu alone had two sultans at this particular time and was compartmentalized into two sections: Shingaani and Hamarweyne (Alpers 1983:442). This was when the French explorer Charles Guillain visited the Sultan of Geledi, and the British intelligence agent Richard Burton went to Haji Sharmarke Ali Saleh, the leader of the Seylac (Zeila) coastal fiefdom, to gather vital information for potential imperial European powers (Burton 1856; Guillain 1856–1857). Several other explorers also observed clan-states in other Somali zones, discovering customs, cultures, and traditions to pave the way for a future colonial statebuilding enterprise (Colucci 1924; Cruttenden 1844–46, 1849; James 1888; Miles 1872; Robecchi-Brichetti 1899; Révoil 1882).

With the advent of colonialism in the early 1880s, the Somali zones in the Horn of Africa were carved out by colonial regimes into five territories: British Somaliland in the North, Somalia Italiana in the South, a Somali-occupied northeastern province of Kenya (the Northern Frontier District [NFD]), La Côte Française des Somalis (the French Somali Coast, or—in the language of the colonial state—the territory of Afar and Issa, later renamed Djibouti), and the Somali-populated eastern Ethiopia (Cassanelli 1982; Cerulli 1957; Mohamed 1992; Vigner 1980). Two out of the five became independent in July 1960. No one expected then that the formation of the new republic formed out of the merger between British Somaliland and the UN Trust Territory of Somalia (the former Somalia Italiana) would end up a failed post-colonial statebuilding experiment (Ingiriis 2016a). Where the colonial regimes carved the Somali zones up into five lands, the Somalis in Somalia alone have currently divided themselves into five states: alphabetically, the Galmudug State, the Hirshabelle State, the Jubbaland State, the Puntland State, and the Southwest State. There are also ongoing active efforts within Somaliland to create (at certain levels violently) five clan-states: the Awdal State, the Khaatumo State, the Zeila/Lughaya State, the Maakhir State, and the *Beesha Dhexe* (Central Clan) State. That this trend was a reversion to the pre-colonial period was evidenced by the way those clan-states were reconfigured. If the state collapse in Somalia had not been unique in terms of clan composition, one group would have been able to take over the country completely, rather than the actual result of each clan having its own fiefdom as a clan-state.⁴ Every clan-state president in the present-day Somali world has his own sycophants, not so dissimilar from the nineteenth-century Burtonian clan chiefs in the Somali lands, each having a poet-panegyric for the clan-state (Burton 1856). This confirms the report received by a British colonial officer from an African auxiliary: “Somalis, Bwana, they no good; each man his own sultan” (quoted Ingiriis 2010:3; Laitin 1977:30). It is the same way in contemporary Somalia, when every clan is selecting its own self-styled president, creating a situation of each sub-clan equalling one state system. The nineteenth-century poem: *Baardheere waa beled Ujuuraan* (Baardheere is a town of the Ujuuraan [clan]) was intended to emphasize that Baardheere belonged to the Ajuuraan, although they were by then largely banished from that town.

The proliferation of clan-states in the former Somalia Italiana was politicized and legitimized, but the conditions of the division were created by the pre-colonial nature of Somali clans, where each clan was concentrated in its own territory. Contemporarily—as it had been in the pre-colonial period—Somalia is fragmented into clan fiefdoms, languishing the same way as it had been before European colonialism. The “each clan his own sultan” phenomenon has now devolved into each clan having its own state. The former British Somaliland has renounced the 1960 union with Somalia, declaring the Republic of Somaliland in the North, based mainly on the Isaaq clan interests. Within the former Somalia Italiana, the old Majeerteeniya—or Migiurtinia—in the Northeast renamed itself

Puntland, maintaining undeclared secession from the rest to advance the Mohamoud Saleebaan/Majeerteen clan interests. One wonders where the terms such as Majeerteeniya or Ogaadeenya came from. When explorers and ethnographers were surveying the Somalis, they would ask the local Somalis to identify themselves; some would say Somalis, others Mohammedan (meaning the nation of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him), while others would stick to their clan identity. No wonder that new terms indicating that Somalis are no longer related to each other as one nation are now repeated in the public discourse. Very often one hears from the Somali television networks and other Somali-written mass media “*dadka Af-Soomaaliga ku hadla*” (the Somali-speaking peoples) as though Somalis are like unrelated French-speaking or English-speaking peoples in the Caribbean countries or on the African continent.

The contemporary clan-states are frequently referred to in the academic and popular literature as the “Somali territories” as though they are stateless, similar to the Palestinian territories. New discourses have come to the fore to justify claims for autonomy or even independence by clan-states. Most of the clans that dominate the clan-states consider themselves not just states but also “nations,” a point and phenomenon unnoticed in the existing scholarship on the mini-states (e.g., Dill 2010; Doornbos 2000; Johnson & Smaker 2014). Not necessarily a war discourse, the word “Somalia” is heavily contested by some Somalis who consider it to be a term depicting a clan connotation. According to this contention, Somalia was named after the Samaale clan, comprising the Hawiye, the Isaaq, and the Dir, together known as the Irir Samaale (the Daarood are not included in the Samaale as some scholars assumed). A newly adopted concept suggests there are two contrasting languages: *Maay* and *Maxaa Tiri*. Luling (2002) found that “Somalis are separated by inherited grudges, differences in ways of life, differences of speech, and by the divergent legal structures left behind by two different colonial regimes.” It would be a difficult road for Somalis to eliminate or overcome the politicized colonial and clan narratives (Ingiriis 2016c).

The Post-Colonial Period and the Clan-State

When the Somali Republic was formed in July 1960 with the merger of the northern and southern Somali territories, it seemed unlikely that several decades later the nation-state would dissolve into competing clan-states. Between 1963 and 1968, when the republic enthusiastically supported military campaigns in the NFD in Kenya, Ethiopia, and, to some extent, Djibouti, the post-colonial Somali leadership had no way of predicting that somewhat similar secessionism would have to be dealt with in Somalia in 1991. The Somali saying, “*waxbadso wax beel ayay leedahay*” (the consequence of collecting more earnings will be insolvency) is aptly fit for the Somali disintegration and dissolution. Closer analysis of poetic nationalist sentiments from the time of independence can help us understand the present Somali circumstances by superimposing contemporary politics on post-colonial politics.

The former chant “*qarannimiyo sharafkaan qurgooyada u hurayoo, naf iyo maalba u quuree*” (for the statehood and the dignity with whom I had sacrificed for my death, I reserved no life and death) can be rephrased, in consideration of the current reality, as “for the clan and the clan-state with whom I had sacrificed for my death, I reserved no life and wealth.” One of the most powerful nationalist songs by Muse Ismail Qalinle, released on Radio Mogadishu in the 1960s with a powerfully patriotic chorus, offers a revealing picture of how contemporary Somalia is strikingly different from the one of the independence era:

O my land, if I do not cook you for the bone marrow of the enemy
 O my land, if I do not wash your face with blood
 O my land, if I do not restore independence [by using these methods]
 I do not belong to the Somali race.⁵

This song is a compelling reminder of where Somalia once came from, to arrive at today’s dire state of collapse. Emphasizing the land communicated a clear message stemming from the yearning for the Greater Somalia (the idea of the pan-Somali state in the Horn of Africa); regaining all the other “missing” Somali-inhabited lands under non-Somali rule in the Horn was an obligation invested in the post-colonial leaders. Although the song indicated a unified nation-state intent on merging with other Somali lands, it did not forewarn that such quest would end up with conflict and collapse, culminating in the current reality in contemporary Somalia against the background of clan-states.⁶ Closer examination of the song points up the poignant reality that the search for pan-Somali unity led not to a unified country but rather to an aggregation of (sub-)clan states. Indeed, strong nationalistic sentiments paved the way for clan nationalism. An excerpt from one contemporary praise song for the smallest of the clan-states is instructive as to how the wider Somali nationalism has led to clan nationalism: “*danta gobolka xeeriya / xoojiya midnimadiisa*” (ensure the interest of the region / reinforce its unity alone).⁷ This song was clearly contrary to a vivid nationalistic song by Ahmed Naaji Sa’ad in the early 1960s: “*Shanta in la is dhex keeno aya inoo qornayd*” (restoring all the five Somali lands was our written code).⁸ The Somali poet Ali Sugulle “Dun-Arbeed” once chanted in a powerfully notable poem stating “*dab iyo dhagax la iskuma dhuftee, kala dhowraay*” (never hit a stone on fire, watch out and separate each other). This occurs when a unified nation-state is contrasted with the formation of a clan-state.

Re-Ordering the Pre-Colonial Order

In 1991, the Isaaq, along with representatives from other clans, declared the Somaliland State in Bur’o, the second largest town in the North. Many of the non-Isaaq clans later retracted their consent to the secession, claiming they were forced by the Isaaq to sign the secession declaration. As has been noted in the introduction and will be further examined below, the Somaliland

State seeks recognition as a separate state from Somalia. In 1995, the Digil/Mirifle (mainly the Rahanweyn) sought to establish an autonomous federal state in the Bay and Bakool regions. This experiment failed when a section of the Rahanweyn community persuaded the then most powerful Somali factional leader General Mohamed Farah Aideed of the Somali National Alliance (SNA) to intervene in Baydhabo politics and seize the town (Ingiriis 2016a). In 1998, the Puntland State was declared in Garoowe with the purpose of bargaining a larger share in the future Somali State. In 2013, Jubbaland State was established with the rejection of the federal government in Mogadishu. Within two years, the Mogadishu regime formed for its benefit two states—the Galmudug State and the Hirshabelle State—in Adaado and Jowhar, respectively. The push for a new clan-state for the Benaadir State has recently accelerated with the emergence of a new president on February 8, 2017, who was considered an outsider in Banaadir.⁹ Besides the calls to set up a Benaadir State for Mogadishu, the clanization of the Somali State is now largely complete. Each state adopted praising songs encouraging imitation among each other, such as “*ku dayo Puntland*” (take Puntland as a good example) or “*ma ogtahay, Galmudugeey*” (O Galmudug, are you aware of?).¹⁰ From Puntland to Hirshabelle, the formation of clan-based fiefdoms has been facilitated by Ethiopia, Somalia’s historical nemesis. When the federal government attempted to block the creation of Jubbaland, all concerned parties were called to Addis Ababa for mediation.¹¹ Some of these states, like Galmudug, have dared to negotiate security arrangements with such powerful external actors as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).¹²

The post-state collapse Somalia bears some responsibility for the current situation, due to the way it nurtured the divisive clan system and created fissures in the Somali State. The legacy of the Siad Barre regime is “a war-torn patchwork of fiefdoms controlled by clan chiefs” (Huband 1992), culminating in the emergence of the current federal structure without a negotiated formula, or what can be called “the virus of federalism,” in southern Somalia. Contemporary Somalis appear to be confused by clan-states based on clan domination, as other Somalis from other neighboring clan-states are regarded as a foreigners or—if their *Somaliness* is acknowledged—as “refugees.” This was evidenced by the Puntland treatment of the Rahanweyn communities in Boosaaso and Garoowe (*Horseed Media* 2010). The Rahanweyn case shows that, while some clans opened their clan zones to fellow Somalis, some others refused to receive their fellows. This shows that federalism—at least the way it is now constituted in Somalia—is a system of close-knit political structures inimical to centralized governance. The other risk stemming from the proliferation of clan-states is the attempt to produce textbooks brimmed with mythico-historical tales. In Nigeria, Nolte (2002) observed how federalism based on ethnicity, tribe, or clan spells danger for divided communities. As Kimenyi et al. (2010:1361) observed: “The standard federalist model may not be well suited for Somalia. Given the expressed desire of autonomy by the different factions, it is unlikely that a federal system would adequately accommodate the interests of the various factions.”¹³

The international community has decided to rebuild the collapsed Somali State from the foundations of the clan-states. The international community is adamant in advocating separation—clan-states—as a solution to the Somali syndrome, while at the same time attempting to support the feeble and flimsy federal government in Mogadishu. The only alternative strategy for the international community is to either side with the Mogadishu government or with the clan-states. If they, for example, were to publicly declare that they would directly contact the government and negotiate with Mogadishu, this would send a clear message to those encumbering a reconstitution of the unitary Somali State as it was before the military regime of 1969. But, conversely, the decentralization and local governance structures consisting of clan-states that are being implemented in southern Somalia, which are praised by the international community, have led to further fragmentation, as evidenced in the recent armed confrontations between Galmudug and Puntland as well as the serious clashes within the sub-states.¹⁴ Dire predictions did not come to pass in the satellite state nature of the clan-state slogans manipulated by Kenya or Ethiopia. One female Somali relief worker stated that “many Somalis do not know where the story that says each clan has its own state would lead us.”¹⁵

Even if they could agree to either coalesce in reinstating the nation-state or to depart forever by sticking to their own independent clan-states, the Somalis could hardly do either without the permission of external forces. Whichever route they choose, they will not be able to prevail alone. If the external forces are not provided with some latitude to engage with local Somali politics, Somalis will not be able to find a solution to this conundrum. The external forces have formed and framed their conflicting agendas in several ways. Ethiopia and Kenya have promoted the federal Somalia plan, and most certainly this meant diluted clanization of the Somali State and society, further institutionalizing fragmentation by creating a space where each clan could proclaim its own state for its own benefit. Recalling the past land-related conflicts with Somalia, the neighboring countries prefer a Somalia ruled by warring clans rather than one Somalia ruled by even moderate Islamists. Ethiopia appears to assume the role of “quasi-protectorate” (Mayall 2007:3) of the clan-states. Some regional Arab and African states, like Djibouti, Egypt, and the Sudan, have been determined to see a reunited Somalia with a powerful centralized state. The Western states appear unwilling to back up any system that is contrary to the Western ideals of democracy. Balancing these contrasting interests requires a tactical and calculated plan on the part of the Somali government. Any attempt at resurrecting or reconstituting the Somali State back into the global fold as a unitary entity will at the end of the day look to the past for lessons that can be helpful for the present political realities that are dividing the Somalis into dozens of clan fiefdoms. It is thus high time for the Somalis to come up with a concrete, coherent, and clear policy regarding Somali lands to mediate between the centralists and the federalists in the Somali political spectrum, but also within the clan-states.

Redrawing of Colonial or Clan Boundaries?

This section brings to light some of the challenging political crises which the clan-based state formations have generated. Of all the post-state collapse states, the most interesting is Somaliland, the break-away northwest region that seeks independence from the rest of Somalia (Hesse 2010a, 2010b; Huliaras 2002; International Crisis Group 2006). Despite much wider state legitimacy than other Somali states, Somaliland is increasingly challenged by Puntland, the neighboring semi-autonomous clan-state, which is still theoretically part of Somalia. Puntland pursues a decentralized state format for the collapsed Somalia, but claims the ownership of eastern parts of Somaliland inhabited by the Dhulbahante and the Warsangeli clans who are genealogically affiliated with the Majeerteen clan, the predominant clan in Puntland, by way of Harti genealogical ancestry. The critical question revolves around whether the border between Somaliland and Puntland remains a colonial border or can be reconfigured into a clan border, basically which one will have the legal basis—the “territorial logic” or the “genealogical logic” (Hoehne 2015:21). The Somaliland authorities claim ownership of the British Somaliland borders and argue for the preservation of the colonial border line demarcation, but—from a paradoxical clan pattern—this is heavily contested by Puntland authorities who have insisted, over the years, on the traditional pre-colonial Harti clan boundary.¹⁶ Somaliland and Puntland are contesting border areas populated by the Dhulbahante and the Warsangeli clans. From a colonial border demarcation, they are part of Somaliland, but from clan logic they are part of Puntland because of the Harti clan genealogy with which they share the Majeerteen, the dominant clan in Puntland.

Each of the other emerging clan-states in Somaliland is competing for recognition from the government in Mogadishu. Khaatumo was declared in the diaspora to represent the Dhulbahante interests, whereas the Warsangeli diaspora announced the formation of Maakhir, another mini-state, aimed to represent the interests of the people of the Sanaag region.¹⁷ However, Khaatumo, which was hostile to both Somaliland and Puntland, has ongoing negotiations with Somaliland authorities. While their claim does not account for the fact that Somaliland was initially formed in the clan conference at Bur’o, the fact that it lobbied for redrawing their border back to the colonial border is not just a colonial nostalgia, but a way of retaining a separate state entity. The formation of Puntland as a clan-state was itself a copycat project from Somaliland as far as its constitution is a document extracted from the latter, except that it permits the existence of “federal” Somalia, given that Somaliland had declared a complete divorce from Somalia (cf. *The Republic of Somaliland* 1996; *The Charter of Puntland State of Somalia*, 1998). The Puntland Constitution is a paradox in that it stipulates that “Puntland is an independent integral part of Somalia,” carrying out everything that the federal government in Mogadishu was previously tasked with. Ironically, the Puntland constitution provides (unwittingly?) a

space in which statelessness could emerge (Hesse 2010b). Puntland emerged out from the building block approach originally proposed by Ethiopia for southern Somalia in the mid-1990s (Bryden 1999; Bøås 2010; Bøås & Rotwitt 2010). Many Somalis believe that this approach was aimed at checking the attempt of the Hawiye clan-group leaders to gain control of state resources over which they have fought for many years.¹⁸

Puntland is a rather fragile clan-state in contrast with Somaliland, but nonetheless less fragile than other clan-states in southern Somalia.¹⁹ The presence of irregular insurgency around the Galgala area, part of which claims to have links with insurgency movements like al-Shabaab and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), makes Puntland more prone to instability. However, the limits and limitations of the peace approach were confirmed by the fact that Puntland has contested borders with other bordering neighboring clan-states, like Galmudug. The relationship Somaliland had to have with Puntland makes it susceptible to armed conflict, leading to regular tension with border clans like the Dhulbahante.²⁰ It also negates the possibility or prospects for Somaliland to re-unite with southern Somalia. In other words, the fragmentation of southern Somalia into clan-states further erodes the prospect for Somaliland to re-join Somalia as one single unified Somali State.²¹ Somaliland can hardly be considered a continuation of Somali clan politics by any means other than a colonial question spurned for secession by the legacy of the military regime. The observation is that people in Somaliland may live without Somalia, but people in Puntland cannot, due to the latter's past patrimonial affiliation with successive post-colonial Somali governments. This explains why one entity insists on secession, while the other prefers to remain as an autonomous state. Some observers seem to suggest that Puntland should follow Somaliland's route, basically to secede from Somalia by creating a separate state (Johnson & Smaker 2014; Ingiriis 2016d), but they appear to ignore the ambitions of the Puntland political players which are, *inter alia*, to use the entity to rule the whole of southern Somalia and control state resources from the capital Mogadishu. As such, the concern of Puntland is more about politics and resources than about secession. Article 48 of the Puntland Constitution clearly articulates that concern:

1. Puntland natural resources belong to Puntland people and can be exploited in conformity with the Law.
2. The Puntland State is responsible for the protection and exploitations of the natural resources.
3. The Puntland State may make agreements with national or foreign companies and give them the exploitation of natural resources.
4. The concession shall be approved by the House of Representatives and cannot last for more than twenty-five (25) years (Constitution of the Regional Puntland State of Somalia 2007–2008).

Conclusion

Somalia is still considered to be a state in theory, but in practice it is a geographical space, one of the ungoverned spaces in the world. Aside from Somaliland, which seeks to be a sovereign state, the Somalia based in Mogadishu is the most paradigmatic failed state on earth. Somalia has become a black hole in the dark African contingent, much worse than the gloomy picture Conrad (1902) and Fanon (1967) had forewarned would await the fate of the African man in the postcolonial world. The former Somalia Italiana, or the clan fiefdoms in southern Somalia, remains an albatross around everyone's neck, even if there were early celebratory accounts on the formation of mini-states in war-torn Somalia (e.g., Abdi 1996; Ali 1996; for other proposals for a solution to the collapse and conflict, see Eno 1996; Gesheker 1996). This article has drawn on ongoing longitudinal qualitative research in southern Somalia to explore how each Somali clan seeks to be either independent or autonomous from the others and has examined the relationships between the emerging clan-states out of the failed Somali nation-state and the pre-colonial clan-based state structures. It has demonstrated how not only the internal actors have complicated—and continue to complicate—the state collapse in Somalia, but also how external intervention has constituted a decisive factor. The unwavering support for armed groups, such as the Ahlu-Sunna Wal Jame'a, and for the proliferation of clan-states by Ethiopia as well as many other foreign states involved in the Somali issues all have contributed to the political conflicts in southern Somalia (*The Somalia Herald* 2014b).

Since the early 1990s, state formation projects in southern Somalia have been engineered by either Ethiopia or the international community (IGAD Communiqué 2015; New Deal 2014; Somali Compact Report 2015). The dozens of peace and reconciliation conferences held for southern Somalia over the years are good examples.²² The international community and neighboring Ethiopia have had a strong hand in reshaping the structure of the Somali State, while the African Union Forces (AMISOM) stationed in southern Somalia are nurturing the government in Mogadishu with a life-support machine. Despite the Somali people's resistance, the international community has embraced the Ethiopian government's suggestion of creating "clan federalism"—the adoption of an unsettling federal system along clan lines—in Somalia. Somaliland is unrecognized, but its sovereignty is protected, while southern Somalia is recognized but its sovereignty is unprotected. Most of those who write about Somaliland advocate for the secession project by suppressing the emergence of a unified Somali State. One extreme side of this advocacy for Somaliland is expressed by one outside observer who went so far as to rhetorically question: "So, instead of lamenting the collapse of Somalia, might we not rather applaud the decision of the people in old British Somaliland to assume their rightful place as a self-governing polity? Should we not declare that 'the state of Somalia is dead, long live the state of Somaliland?'" (Srebrnik 2004:226).

The growing concern among the Somali people that states within the failed state are prone to external influences leads critics to refer to Somaliland and Puntland as protectorates.²³ Somaliland's economy today relies on the Ethiopian market as it had in the pre-colonial period, when trade commodities from the deep Ethiopian interior had to traverse the scorching sun of the perilous caravan routes to reach the coast in Berbera (Peel 1986 [1900]; Swayne 1990). The contemporary formation of clan-states should thus be seen as a reversion to the pre-colonial political and trade networks. Given all these complexities, the Somalis appear to require a state system that gives them the chance to live in their own clannish world. Two suggestions come to mind in this context: (1) to allow every clan to confirm its aspirations and desires to establish a clannish fiefdom in the federal structure funded by the international community, or (2) to compartmentalize and permit Somaliland and Puntland to become separate states, like Djibouti. The clan federalism should be without (pre)conditions and not—as it is now—based on the condition that two or three regions can form a federal state.²⁴ Freedom for all—*à la* Somali—appears to be the course that would give each sub-clan a way to exercise a version of its own statehood. This may most certainly proliferate the federal mini-states, considering the sixty-four political parties that competed for the parliamentary elections of the March 1969, elections. At that time, Somalia was branded as the country with the second-largest per capita number of political parties in the world (Ingiriis 2016a; Laitin & Samatar 1987). It is hoped that, sooner or later, Prophet Muse's stick could come to the Somali world to swallow up all the clan fiefdoms and form one unified centralized state.²⁵

However, there is no singularity in the Somali world; everything is plural. States come and collapse, but clan never loses its relevance and reality. Even though they failed to face colonialism together, the pre-colonial clan-states were interlinked in other ways, such as the flow of trade in the caravan trade. Their previous experience with outside intervention, as was seen from Ethiopia on the eve of colonialism, should encourage the contemporary clan-states to find a way to unite against external intervention. The threat from neighboring regional states, especially Ethiopia and Kenya, raises the possibility of political, military, and cultural control or domination of Somalis. In light of the growing Ethiopian influence, the majority of those non-Somalis who write about Somalia actively support the contemporary clan-based statebuilding which they consider as bottom-up peacebuilding and statebuilding successes, in contrast with the top-down peacebuilding and statebuilding approach preferred in Mogadishu. It would be a good idea if the current five clan-states—the Galmudug State, the Hirshabelle State, the Jubbaland State, the Puntland State, and the Southwest State—could come together and form a government like the United Arab Emirates, but with a rotating leadership.²⁶ For example, if each clan-state were to send a president to Mogadishu to appoint a prime minister from among the other four, this would foster unity among them. However, the main challenge to the contemporary clan-based state structures springs from the al-Shabaab militant movement, which seeks to

impose a rule not necessarily on the Somalis, but on all Muslims, in Somalia based on strict interpretation of Islamic Sharia. In retrospect, Islam has often been a better tool to unify Somali forces, while clan remains an easy instrument to divide them. It is, however, high time that prejudiced clan justice that dictates “bad government by your own clan is better than good government by another” should be discarded.

Supplementary Material

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2017.144>

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Notes

1. On the concept of the "clan-state," see Ingiriis (2016b:248).
2. For detailed explanation of the notion of "quasi-states," see Jackson (2011).
3. To be precise, whereas Puntland declared itself as an autonomous state more or less a sovereign entity, Somaliland proclaimed independence resembling the Katangese case in Congo or Biafra in Nigeria in the early post-colonial period.
4. In August 1998, the former SSDF leaders, including General Mohamed Abshir and Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf, formed the clan-state of Puntland, which was built on clan, by pushing an idea that the administration would be part of a future Somali state structure. Paradoxically, the Constitution of "Puntland is an independent integral part of Somalia." Yet Puntland undertakes similar state undertakings that the central federal state would have taken as a duty. More recently, Puntland political actors began to entertain the notion of seceding from Somalia. In his comparison between Somaliland and Puntland, Hesse (2010b:355) offers a nuanced observation and insight into how this political arrangement was made: "Puntland's creation is associated closely with the Somali

Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) and the blessing of Darod clan elders, sometimes collectively called *Isimo*. The SSDF had originally been founded as a Darod-clan guerrilla movement bent on unseating the [Siad] Barre regime in Mogadishu. In the years after Barre's fall, it evolved into an organisation advocating a 'decentralised route to unity' for Somalis. In other words, the SSDF's leadership pushed an idea which said any efforts to recreate a centralised Somali state from the top down were destined to fail. Instead, it would be prudent to let smaller autonomous Somali states emerge first, and after that, begin a process of putting Somalia back together again. Though nationalistic on the surface, in reality the SSDF leadership's idea was mostly clan-serving. An autonomous Puntland in the northeast of Somalia was a sure-thing for the Darod (and specifically, the Mijerteyn subclan). Should a working Somalia never materialise, at least the Darod would have their own territory and powerbase. However, if a unified Somalia did one day re-emerge, it would likely be under a framework the SSDF leadership thought they could exploit to their individual, and clan's, advantage. After SSDF arm twisting, and even more discussion, Darod clan elders likewise seemed convinced."

5. *YouTube*, "Muuse Ismaciil Qalinle – Dhulkeygow (Wadani)," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g35iHZkti1c> (between min. 00:01 and 00:18), accessed 5 August 2017. My translation.
6. *YouTube*, "Hees Wadani," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBiHncFD0dM> (between min. 00:49 – 01:17), accessed 5 August 2017. My translation. For the fall of Somali nationalism, see Mohamed (1992).
7. *YouTube*, "Hees Ximan iyo Xeeb 2011," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_DoIK6VFro (between min. 03:49 – 04:05), accessed 9 September 2014.
8. *YouTube*, "Hees Wadani ah 'Allaahu Akbar' Erayadii Cabdi Muxumed Amiin (1969)," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqrkgSN2BzM> (between min. 04:46 – 05:15), accessed 20 June 2014. My translation.
9. *YouTube*, "Full Video khudbadaha kulankii Hawiye isku raacay ee Banaadir State," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVp2HAqS-wg> (accessed 31 July 2017).
10. *Somalia24u*, "Puntland ku dayo – Cali Xasan Warsame," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBSUOdO-MKg> (accessed 30 July 2017); *SOMTV*, "SOMTV-Ma Ogtahay Galmudugeey – New Version," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNFaN5aaQZM> (accessed 30 July 2017). My translation.
11. *Caasimada.net*, "Daawo Sawirrada: DFS iyo maamulka KMG Jubba oo saxiixday," 29 August 2013; and *Xogtamedia*, 'Wasiir Faarax Sh. Cabdiqaadir oo si weyn u difaacay Madoobe iyo Maamulka Jubbaland', 6 July 2014.
12. *Codkamudug Radio*, "Galmudug iyo NATO," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9vHOYX6QPk&feature=youtu.be> (30 July 2017).
13. For an earlier analysis on federalism in relation to Somalia, see Adam (1994).
14. Maschietto (2016) has observed how a conflict that arose from the reconfiguration of local governance and contradictions caused as a consequence overshadowed the implementation of decentralisation in Mozambique.
15. S. Sh. A., July 17, 2016, interviewed via Viber. On December 17, 1990, a week before the uprising against Siad Barre erupted in Mogadishu, some Majeerteen elements frankly told the U.S. Ambassador in Mogadishu Bishop that federalism would mean a partition for Somalia, which was not what they wanted for Somalia. Cable from U.S. Embassy in Mogadishu, "Sub: Discussion with Manifesto Signers." Available at: <https://wikileaks.org/cable/1990/12/90MOGADISHU11003.html> (accessed on 31 August 2014).

16. Observers who studied both entities have described Puntland as a bit more authoritarian than Somaliland (Hagmann & Hoehne 2009:50, 53).
17. *Bakri Media*, “Xafladii Sanadguuradii 4aad ee khaatumo state of somalia Toronto Jan 9, 2016”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VejbEjiTwiQ> (accessed 29 October 2016); Maakhir State, “Heesta Maakhir State,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-Oq1ZvcPDK> (accessed 29 October 2016).
18. Field interviews, May-September 2015. According to Compagnon (1993:10), the Isaaq leaders feared for the “Hawiye hegemony” as a result of the fall of Mogadishu in 1991 by the United Somali Congress (USC), the armed group that ousted Siad Barre’s authoritarian military regime. As a Somaliland police officer excitedly asserted, “the problem in Mogadishu is that Hawiye took up arms lately, so they need to refer to clan system and their tradition [for conflict resolution mechanisms]” (A. H. D., Hargeysa, July 19, 2016, conversations).
19. ICG, “Somalia: Puntland’s Punted Polls,” *Africa Briefing*, No. 97, 2013.
20. In an otherwise nuanced study, Hesse (2010a) overlooks the conflict between Somaliland and Puntland but emphasises how the two entities “realised a degree of successful governance in the Horn of Africa.” For the clanization of the conflict between Somaliland and Puntland, see Hoehne (2015); and International Crisis Group (2009). For a detailed history of the complicated statebuilding trajectories of Somaliland and Puntland, see Leonard and Samantar (2013).
21. M. A. M. B., Hargeysa, July 19, 2016, field interview.
22. Field observations, October 15, 2002, Eldoret, Kenya August 9, 2003, Mbagathi, Kenya.
23. Field interviews, Nairobi, September 2016.
24. As Fanon (1967:90) noted: “Tribalism in the colonial phase gives way to regionalism in the national phase, and finds its expression as far as institutions are concerned in federalism.” Clannism in Somalis equates with tribalism in other parts of Africa. A Somali man who once ran for a seat in a Council in North London posed a bewildering question to one of his clansmen in London, saying “as we now have our own president and speaker of parliament, why don’t our clan have a prime minister?” The man was referring to a small clan-state that remains unrecognized by even the Somali government in Mogadishu (ethnographic observations in the Somali community in London, 2011–2012).
25. As Ahmed (1995:151) noted two decades ago: “The curse is still with us. And this is where it becomes important for the Somali intellectual to muster courage and to tell his people that it is impossible in this age to run a tribal government or regime. All trials in this direction have come to nothing. All attempts to institute a clan government have failed miserably, with devastating consequences for all who tried it. What we need instead is the construction of a new ethic. The new ethic must reflect ‘the mode of existence of the new intellectual (which) can no longer consist of eloquence, the external and momentary arousing of sentiments and passions, but must consist of being actively involved in political life, as a builder, an organizer, ‘permanently persuasive’. The intellectual can be the lightning rod for the implementation of this new ethic. We must teach our people by example. We must by the same token learn from them. We must install and strength, wherever it exists, the importance of tolerance and of accommodating the views of others. The only way to break out of this vicious cycle is to initiate a politics of emancipation.”
26. Drysdale (2000) advocates a confederation among the shattered parts of Somalia, hoping eventually for the restoration of a unitary Somali state.