A Pocket of Stability: Understanding Somaliland

by Daniel R. Forti

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About the author
Daniel R. Forti is currently an undergraduate student at Duke University in North Carolina, USA, and is on schedule to graduate in May 2012. He is earning his AB in Public Policy Studies from the Terry Sanford School of Public Policy, as well as a minor in African and African American Studies. Mr Forti was a research intern for ACCORD's Knowledge Production Department from May to August 2011. This paper was written as a component of his research internship.

Contents

List of Acronyms

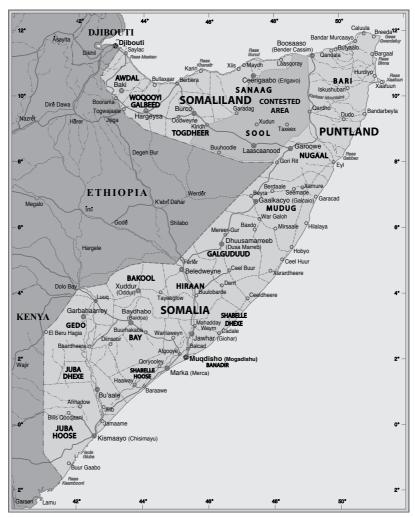|	
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
AU	African Union
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EU	European Union
Kulmiye	Peace, Unity and Development Party
MP	Member of Parliament
SNM	Somali National Movement
SRC	Supreme Revolutionary Council
SSC Militias	Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn Militias
SYL	Somali Youth League
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
TFP	Transitional Federal Parliament
UCID	Justice and Welfare Party
UDUB	United Democratic People's Party
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WSLF	Western Somali Liberation Front

Abstract

This paper provides a comprehensive examination of Somaliland's unusual development and current standing as a self-declared sovereign nation. Unlike Somalia, a state devastated by a perpetual twenty-year conflict, Somaliland boasts a growing civil society along with a relatively vibrant democracy and accountability to the Rule of Law. Since 1991, the region has become a pocket of security and stability, in absence of formal recognition, by creating government and societal institutions that strongly suit the values and needs of its people.

Introduction

On 18 May 2011 the self-proclaimed and unrecognised state of Somaliland celebrated its twentieth year of *de facto* independence from the Somali Republic. Emerging after the collapsed Siad Barre regime in 1991, Somaliland has developed into one of the Horn of Africa's most stable democracies. Over the past ten years the people of Somaliland have gone to the polls on five separate occasions to affirm the country's first constitution, and elect two presidents as well as local and national representatives. Each contest was considered peaceful, fair and free by domestic participants and international observers alike. Although its government lacks capacity and resources, Somaliland fosters an active business community, its own central bank, a functioning national army and police force, and an independent media sector capable of holding its public officials accountable. The government's Foreign Ministry also operates liaison offices in the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Ethiopia.[1]

Somaliland's successes are even more remarkable when juxtaposed against Somalia's collapsed statehood. Fourteen state-building attempts have failed to produce a viable central government in Somalia; the fifteenth attempt, embodied in the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), is largely dependent upon the African Union (AU) peacekeeping force (AMISOM) for survival. Radical insurgents and clan warlords oppose the TFG, foremost among them

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[1] Offices do not have formal diplomatic status under the 'Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations.'

Horn of Africa
ACCORD Map, Source: Adapted from UN Maps

al-Shabaab[2], a militant Islamist movement with affiliations to the al-Qaeda network. *Al-Shabaab* imposes direct control and a strict interpretation of Sharia law[3] through portions of south-central Somalia and operates with impunity in the rest. The fighting in Somalia has displaced over 1.55 million Somalis since the conflict began while reducing the average life expectancy to just below 50 years (US Department of State 2011). Drought and famine have ravaged south-central Somalia since May 2011, displacing one quarter of Somalia's 9 million population while leaving 12 million people throughout the Horn of Africa in need of urgent life-saving assistance (IRIN 2011). In June 2011, the Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP) extended the mandates of President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and Speaker of Parliament Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden until August 2012 despite the paralysing power struggle between the two leaders (Kampala Accord, 2011).

Present-day Somalia is best understood through its three distinct geographical and socio-political regions: south-central Somalia, Puntland, and Somaliland. Despite the population's relative homogeneity, Somalia's five major clans are relatively clustered in and separated by these territories.[4] While Puntland is a relatively independent federal unit of the central government, Somaliland maintains complete autonomy and independence from Somalia and refuses to engage the transitional government in Mogadishu. These diametrically opposed policy-positions trace back to the fundamentally distinct dimensions of Somalia's history and political crisis. Despite the fact that the regions all endured colonial impositions, the predatory Siad Barre regime and the subsequent collapse of the central government, each territory was shaped by and endured the conflict within their own frameworks and experiences. The territories have thus followed distinct development tracks relative to their counterparts.

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2   Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen, or "Movement of Striving Youth."

3   The list of forbidden items and practices in al-Shabaab controlled areas include: shaving;bras for women; radio stations; cinemas; soccer and women in public life. Those who break these rules have been punished by public stoning and floggings, amputations, and beheadings (Jones 2011).

4   The Hawiye are primarily found in south-central Somalia, the Darod in Puntland, and the Issaq in Somaliland.

Understanding the dynamics that spawned Somaliland's internally-driven evolution provides important insights into conflict resolution practices. While Somaliland must implement a number of political reforms to continue its progress, the country's successes should neither be understated nor lost within the political crises ensnaring south-central Somalia. This analysis will examine Somaliland's unique state-building process and contextualise its cultural traditions and recent history into Somalia's state crisis and subsequent collapse. It will also provide an overview of the region today and highlight key aspects of Somaliland's current successes. In addition, the paper will address the region's quest for diplomatic recognition; identify emerging security issues; provide recommendations for broad-based democratic reforms; and highlight lessons learned for students and practitioners of conflict management and resolution.

The Somali Context: Socio-historical perspectives on Somali Nomads

It is imperative to examine the Somali state crisis through the dimensions of the region's culture and history so as to best understand the political developments in today's Somaliland. Somali society is defined through the interaction of aggregated kinship relations; Somali customary law; Islamic practices; and communal conflict mediations. The pastoral nomads of northern Somalia maintain a clan-based traditional socio-political structure that emphasises cooperation and mediation. While men are largely considered equals amongst one another, women are often restricted from formal political participation. Somali identity is further influenced by rich Muslim influences as the region "boast[s] one of the highest percentages of adherence to Islam anywhere in the world" ('Ali 'Abdirahmaan Hersi 2009, cited in Jhazbhay 2008:176). The region's devotion to religion is also mixed with an unusual degree of pragmatism and flexibility, due in large part to the demands and inconsistencies of the pastoral lifestyle (Samatar 1988).

Clan System
Somalis use a tiered clan system to define political and social communities and identities. Kinship relations are established through a common male

ancestor in each respective genealogical tree, aggregating upwards from the immediate family all the way through to one of the five major clan families (Darod, Dir, Hawiye, Issaq, and Rahanweyn). The *diya-paying* group is the basic unit within this structure and comprises a collection of men and women who share not only a common male ancestor but also a collective responsibility for all members of their *diya* i.e. the sub clan. Clan orientation is patrilineal; women hold a marginalised but important 'dual clan' status as they are aligned with both their father's and son's clans. Regardless of personal acquaintances, Somalis can invoke their clan ties with one another on any of the layered aggregations, fostering mutual dependence and support amongst those who share a common ancestor both within immediate and extended communities. As nomadic pastoralists who survive solely on trading and selling livestock, this layered organisation protects communities during periods of drought or famine through shared obligations.

While religion and territory play significant roles in influencing intra-community relations, clan identity is the primary locus of identity formation, economic activity and political associations (Harris 2011; Logan 2002; and Walls 2011). While clan-based relations have played an important role throughout Somalia's development, it is important to note that clanship relations are neither defined nor static and acquire meaning within a fluid and specific context. Further, individual identity is not solely limited to clan lineage and can also be traced to Islamic influences and territorial roots (Kapteijns 2011).

Xeer

Another fundamental component of the Somali social and political order is the *xeer,* an unwritten social contract between any two units within the Somali kinship system. These social contracts often outline specific rules pertaining to compensation for injuries or damages (both inflicted by and occurring within a group) or future relations between two conflicting parties. *Xeer* agreements range from explicit terms to mutual understandings, providing the flexibility needed to account for the inconsistencies of nomadic life. By superseding clan relations, *xeer* contracts inherently minimise conflict between different communities. Similar to the kinship system, *xeer* engenders mutual dependence

and reciprocity between the two parties to fundamentally ensure the survival of both communities. These contracts are critical in determining the peaceful co-management of Somalia's limited but crucial water supplies and grazing fields.

Shir

The clan system and *xeer* are seamlessly woven into the third significant Somali social institution, the *shir*. A democratic and consensus-driven community forum, shir is a diffuse, decentralised and broadly participatory system of rule (Lewis 2003). A majority opinion is necessary to obtain a verdict on any issue and consensus is mobilised through lengthy discussions between all participants. While all adult men are active stakeholders in the *shir*, women are excluded: their dual-clan status restricts their ability to formally participate in a *shir* but does allow for women to engage with male participants behind the scenes (Jhazbay 2007; Logan 2002; and Walls 2011). Gatherings are assembled on an ad hoc basis and can last from a few hours to many months, depending on the complexity and gravity of the debate. The size of the *shir* also varies to account for the number of constituents and clan aggregations involved (the larger the aggregation, the larger the *shir*). When inconvenient to have all men formally participate in the *shir,* local communities nominate unofficial representatives to speak on their behalf. While not bestowed with any additional political powers, these leaders can often mobilise the most support amongst their kin. *Shir* are called to address any major decision that would impact a community, whether it concerns the distribution of resources, creation of laws, or, most importantly, resolving conflicts.

Colonial legacies and brief democracy

A collection of centralised and relatively independent city-states, each with their own distinct formal government structures, emerged throughout Somalia centuries before the arrival of the first colonialists. Two dominant power-centres emerged in the fourteenth century: the Adal Sultanate and the Ajuuraan State, each wielding significant influence and strong political control over large swaths of East Africa. These city-states represented important instances where pastoral societies created and effectively operated large centralised government structures

to primarily facilitate expansive trade networks and taxation bases (Cassanelli 1982 and Samatar 1988). While first organised along traditional Islamic principles, the structures emerging out of Somalia soon began relying upon social and ethnic traditions to help shape and form government structures. The Ajuuraan State relied on the agriculture of the Lower Shabelle basin to collect taxes for the government and to exploit and strengthen trade routes throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. While these government institutions did not encapsulate a significant proportion of Somalis in the region, the early city-states did nonetheless underscore the presence of formalised and structured government institutions flourishing within an agricultural and pastoral context.

From 1884 until 1960 Somaliland was a small but important part of the British Empire. To procure cattle for their colony in the Gulf of Aden (present-day Yemen), Britain entered into treaties of protection with northern coastal Somali clans along the Red Sea. The government mandated a minimalist intervention strategy, choosing to do little more than ensure the region's peace and stability. Given the nomadic lifestyle of the northern Somalis, the British were unable to centralise power within the region. Instead of imposing radical socio-political changes in the region, the British adapted their policies to best suit the conditions on the ground. The administration supported secular law, Sharia law, and traditional Somali law; this flexibility enabled the northern Somali pastoralists to use their own methods to resolve challenges and conflicts.

Instead of implanting large batches of European administrators to oversee Somaliland, the British instead incorporated local clan chiefs into the formal institutions as *akils*, who were expected to serve as conduits between British administrators and local Somalis. While Somalis largely continued to conduct themselves according to traditional cultural practices and structures, the colonial administration did facilitate the spread of formal governance structures across British Somaliland. Further underscoring the British lack of interest in developing Somaliland as a fully-fledged colony, the administration's entire 1947 budget for Somaliland was GBP 213,139, the approximate equivalent of GBP 6,480,000 today (Library of Congress 1992).[5]

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5   Prices converted into today's equivalency using Retail Price Index.

The Italians implemented more intense and stringent mechanisms in south-central Somalia in hopes of developing a fully-fledged colony. Their motivation for developing the region was three-fold: "to 'relieve population pressure at home', to 'offer the civilizing Roman mission' and to increase Italian prestige through overseas colonization" (Library of Congress 1992). Colonial appointments and taxation policies simultaneously minimised clan elders' power and expropriated their lands (Samatar 1988). Further, the Italians developed large-scale agricultural projects, highlighted by banana and sugarcane plantations, to develop a fully-fledged commercial economy. From 1923 forward, the Italians, now led by Bennito Mussolini's fascist regime, imposed the *kolonya* system "in which the most fertile land was forcibly confiscated without compensation, with agriculturalists and villagers conscripted as farm workers" (Walls 2011:98). The rapid transition from subsistence to export farming contributed to severe food shortages during World War Two and unintentionally severed traditional trade links between south-central Somalia and other regions (Samatar 1989 and Walls 2011).

Introducing Western governance systems into Somalia centralised power created an elite minority of western-educated Somalis, while placing disproportionate importance on urban areas, unbalancing property rights and *xeer* agreements between different clan units, and inherently weakening the traditional socio-cultural mechanisms founded on widespread participation and consensus (Logan 2002). This fundamental disconnection between the formalised government structure and Somali culture, values, and traditions has become the undercurrent that continues to propel Somalia's crisis. Further, the Italians relied heavily on tying the Somali concept of *soomaaliweyn*[6] into its colonial state-building aspirations to generate support for its rapidly expanding enterprises. During the late 1940s the British government, temporarily controlling both British and Italian Somaliland following Italy's defeat in World War Two, introduced political parties and allowed

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6   *Soomaaliweyn*, Somali for 'big Somali', is best understood as a culturally defined national identity and heritage (Lewis 2002). As with many of Somalia's traditional structures, Soomaaliweyn invokes the concept of a unified and connected Somali people. When translated into the context of colonial and post-colonial state-building, Soomaaliweyn is inherently tied to national and political unity. Both the Somali and Somaliland flags boast five-pointed stars, celebrating the notion of a unified Somali people. The five points of the star represent: British and Italian Somaliland, French Somaliland (present-day Djibouti), the North-Eastern Province of Kenya, and the Ogaden territory of Ethiopia.

Somalis to gain more influence overtheir governance, marking the beginning of the region's transition to democracy. British Somaliland declared its independence on 26 June, 1960, with Italian Somaliland following on 1 July. Both legislatures held a joint session in Mogadishu that day to officially unite as the Republic of Somalia, and each legislature enacted a separate Act of Union to unite the two states into one 'Somali Republic' (Republic of Somaliland 1960).[7]

The new republic faced significant challenges from the onset. Clan interests and patronage quickly infiltrated the political sphere as the fluidity of parties and candidates underscored the relative importance and eventual dominance of clan identity in Somali politics.[8] The Somali Youth League (SYL), a political party created in 1943, played an important role in the country's independence and quickly came to represent southern Somali interests. While there was initial enthusiasm for the unitary republic, political developments quickly drove a stake into the coalition of northern and southern politicians. The President, Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Minister of the Interior were all southern officials, as well as 90 of the 123 seats within the National Assembly; Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, Somaliland's most senior politician, was appointed as Minister of Defence (Walls 2011). The independence government struggled to generate any tax revenue from its fledgling economy and was highly dependent on foreign aid for survival.

Mogadishu quickly became the region's epicentre, facilitated by a southern Somali dominance over the political realm.[9] In addition, southern Somalis held fast

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7   The separate Acts of Union contained significant differences, further marginalising northern Somalis relative to their southern counterparts. After British Somaliland's Parliament had ratified its Act and submitted it to the South, Italian Somaliland's politicians passed a distinctly different Act without any consultation from the united Parliament of the Somali Republic (Schoiswohl 2004).

8   During the 1964 and 1969 General Elections, the Somali Youth League (SYL) won the significant majority of votes; immediately following each election, significant numbers of "opposition MPs" crossed party lines and joined the SYL. Further, the 1969 elections saw 1000 candidates representing 62 parties standing for only 123 seats in the National Assembly.

9   As described by Hussein M. Adam: "The south provided the capital city, the anthem, the flag and the constitution. The parliament elected a southern president who nominated a southern prime minister. His cabinet included four northern ministers out of fourteen. Southerners occupied key ministries such as Foreign, Interior, and Finance…" (Adam, reprinted in Schoiswohl 2004).

to *soomaaliweyn*, and along with it a unified and powerful Somali state; northern Somalis initially supported the concept of a greater Somalia (evidenced by their willingness to unite with Italian Somaliland at the onset of independence), though soon became weary of its counterpart's disproportionate influence within all domains of Somali life. Further, part of this contrast is explained by the relative density of the Issaq clan within Somaliland; unlike in south-central Somalia, where the Hawiye are spread across vast swaths of land, the Issaq are confined within a select region of Somalia, thus rendering the concept of a united country less important to those northern Somalis. After examining this motivating concept, one comes to understand why politicians in south-central Somalia sought to centralise power within Mogadishu and then extend outwards to all parts of the region.

In 1963, citizens from Somaliland found themselves dismayed by the government and pressured Egal into choosing between the political coalition and his northern support base. Egal quickly resigned, leading to the collapse of the coalition government. During the first session of the National Assembly after the 1964 elections, 21 of the 53 non-SYL members immediately crossed the isle to join the SYL to create a more powerful political coalition. The former British Somaliland and its predominantly Issaq population were subsequently pushed to the periphery as the Hawiye and Darod politicians of southern Somalia mobilised development projects for their kin at the expense of the rest of the nation. Despite the appointment of Egal to the post of Prime Minister in 1967, the former British region was largely incapable of exerting any influence over national politics.

During the 1969 elections, 1,002 people, representing 62 different political parties, stood for 123 National Assembly seats; after the SYL won 73 seats, all but one of the non-SYL politicians crossed over, effectively creating a dominating single-party state. [10]

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10 "This situation was a direct result of the 'closed list' system of proportional representation that had been in use since independence. Voters selected parties, rather than candidates, with successful candidates identified in order of priority on pre-prepared party lists. Candidates therefore fought first for a high ranking on the Youth League list. If that was not forthcoming, it was in their interests to gather enough signatures from their clan affiliates to form a new party, with theirs often the only name on the party list. In the context of a nascent democracy in a clan-based society, this fostered a factionalised political environment in which the consolidation of parties with coherent policy platforms was sacrificed in favour of the pursuit of narrow self-interest" (Walls 2011).

The Siad Barre era

On 15 October 1969, President Abd ar-Rashid Ali Shirmake was assassinated by one of his bodyguards, setting the stage for a hastened and radical restructuring of Somalia. As head of the government, Prime Minister Egal assumed his obligations to oversee the appointment of an interim president. However, government critics, particularly those within the military, immediately labelled the subsequent succession process as corrupt, citing evidence of open bidding for National Assembly votes that would decide the Presidency. Once it was believed the National Assembly would approve Egal's choice of a Darod politician as the next president, the army instigated a bloodless coup and assumed control of the government. General Mohamed Siad Barre emerged as the leader of a Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) and simultaneously catapulted himself into the vacant presidency. Through his policies of 'scientific socialism' Barre sought to transform Somalia into a modern nation-state that would "substitute the clan in providing leadership, security and welfare…" (Scholiswohl 2004). Following the abolishment of the constitution, National Assembly, Supreme Court and all political parties, Barre and the SRC unilaterally mandated themselves as the sole proprietors of the government. Despite public promises to eradicate tribalism and decentralise power, Barre's policies inversely solidified clan ties while hoarding power in Mogadishu. The President relied heavily on support from the Darod clan family and deliberately manipulated clan rivalries to neutralise all potential opposition (Haldén 2008). Instead of emphasising the country's economic and social development, Barre used generous aid from the Soviet Union to build one of Africa's pre-eminent armies primarily to protect his own power. Clan elders were integrated into the central government in an attempt to marginalise their power within local communities. Despite Barre's repression of Somalis' democratic rights and failed economic policies, the president facilitated a number of positive reforms in the country, including the advancement of women's rights, the expansion of access to education and implementation of the first written Somali language.

The latter half of the 1970s marked the beginning of Barre's fall from grace in Somalia. The 1974–1975 Dhabaadheer drought and famine devastated the country, resulting in the death of about 20,000 Somalis while draining the livestock

export economy (Simons 1995). Instead of implementing policies aimed at reviving the country, Barre turned his attention to Ethiopia in order to reclaim one of the historically Somali territories, the Ogaden. Somalia's western neighbour had also suffered greatly from the drought and found itself on the verge of civil war. Looking to reclaim the Ogaden grazing lands,[11] Barre sent his army to fight alongside the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), the primary rebel group fighting against Ethiopia. However, these expansionist aspirations, primarily underscored by a desire to reunite the five territories of Somalia,[12] led Barre to pursue a large-scale conflict that he was ultimately unable to sustain.

Following a failed peace conference in February 1977 between Ethiopia, Somalia and negotiator Fidel Castro, Barre directed more resources towards winning the battle and reclaiming the land many Somalis believed was theirs. However, Ethiopia's relatively new Marxist regime had recently lost all of its funding from the United States, creating an opportunity for the Soviet Union and Cuba to shift the dynamics of the conflict.[13] In 1978, the two Communist stalwarts cut their aid to Somalia, and quickly redirected significant ground, air, and naval support to help Ethiopia defeat Barre (Haldén 2008).

The devastation brought about by the conflict sparked famine; an influx of refugees; growing public dissatisfaction with Barre's regime; and subsequently, the formation of an Issaq-based armed opposition movement in Somaliland, the Somali National Movement (SNM). A political organisation that promoted a return to "Somali cultural values of cooperation rather than coercion" (Ahmed I. Samatar 1988 reprinted in Walls 2011:123), the SNM's primary grievances against the Barre government included ethnic underrepresentation within the political structure,

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11 A contested region on the Somali-Ethiopian border and home to ethnic Somalis.

12 British Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, French Somaliland (present-day Djibouti), the North-Eastern Province of Kenya, and the Ogaden territory of Ethiopia (see footnote 6).

13 Within a one year period, Barre created a number of self-inflicted wounds that irreconcilably damaged Somalia's relationship with the Soviet Union. During the 1977 Peace Conference, Barre was perceived as arrogant while Ethiopian leader Mengitsu Halie Mariam was viewed far more favourably (Walls 2011). In September 1977, Barre travelled to Moscow but was unsuccessful in receiving more donations. Two months later, despite their active and obvious engagement in the Ogaden conflict, Barre publically lambasted the USSR and broke off formal diplomatic relations with the country.

unequal distribution of revenue from the livestock exports and discriminate victims of clan-based persecution and violence (Schoiswohl 2004).

Following the SNM's attempt to establish bases in the northern cities of Hargeisa and Burao, the Somali government launched a full-scale attack against the northern Somali clans (primarily the Issaq), killing over 40,000 people between May 1988 and March 1989 (Lewis 2003). During the final phases of the Cold War, the United States began scaling back its containment policies and severely reduced its foreign aid to Somalia, draining the life-blood of Barre's military power. Other armed groups responded to aid the SNM and created a united opposition against Barre's regime. However, as the SNM primarily operated in northern Somalia, a number of opposition clan leaders and armed actors emerged in the south, creating a strong but uncoordinated movement against Siad Barre; the emerging competing interests would ultimately hinder attempts to create a peaceful transition following the conflict. Anti-government protests and fighting broke out in Mogadishu throughout the latter half of 1990 and culminated in a two-month high-intensity battle through January 1991. On 26 January 1991, Barre fled Mogadishu, collapsing his regime as well as any semblance of functioning governance in Somalia.

Internally-driven state-building in Somaliland

At the onset of Somalia's state collapse in the early 1990s, Somaliland's traditional leaders and SNM senior officials began to lay the foundation for the creation of a new and independent state. Beginning with local *shirs* across the country, elders invoked clan affiliations to establish a rapport, end violence and mobilise support for an independent northern territory, a move critical in framing the Barre regime as a common enemy of all northern Somalis. Due to the respected positions they held in Somaliland's traditional society, these clan elders were able to cut across sub-clan rivalries to develop a broad consensus on the need for peace and stability in the region. Among the most critical arguments advocated by these elders was the opportunity to finally separate the governance of Somaliland from that of south-central Somalia. Barre's predatory state had targeted northern citizens during the war and devastated the region's most prominent cities, while the centralisation of power in Mogadishu

consistently isolated Somalilanders from a significant share of national resources. Thus, elders lobbied for unity amongst all constituents within Somaliland while using south-central Somalia as a constant reference point to elucidate the gravity of the upcoming negotiations, thereby rejecting the notion of *soomaaliweyn.* The juxtaposition with the instability in Somalia would become a significant aligning force throughout the state-building process.

In May 1991, the SNM gathered traditional elders representing all northern clans and senior SNM political members in a clan conference *(shir beeleddka)* in Berbera. Amongst their most important resolutions, the conference's Central Committee called for the end of all violence in northern Somalia and the creation of an independent Somaliland, based on the sovereignty it previously established in June 1960. Further, the SNM assumed leadership of an interim government for two years under the direction of SNM Chair, Abdirahmaan Ahmed Ali 'Tuur.' The agreements arising from the conference also addressed reparations from the conflict: the elders invoked the Somali principle of *halaydhalay,* a concept that erases all personal grievances and injustices so as to rebuild relations between different parties;[14] personal property stolen during the conflict was to be returned to its original owners; and compensation for deaths and property damages would be set aside. Erasing debts between the various *diya-paying* groups eliminated a number of potential conflicts and paved a space for further negotiations between stakeholders. While many conflicts remained unresolved following the conclusion of the conference, a widely-accepted framework for future negotiations had been established.

In October 1992, the SNM government began imploding due to an emerging conflict between two of the organisation's largest Issaq clans: the Habar Yoonis and 'lise Muuse. During the 1991 National Conference, SNM officials had agreed to let revenues from major transportation infrastructure (primarily the Hargeisa Airport and Berbera Port) accrue to the government. President Tuur sent forces into Berbera to secure the port without first nationalising the airport, leading the 'lise Muuse to interpret the decision as a personal attack on their clan and subsequently sparking protracted fighting between them and the Habar Yoonis (the President's clan). After

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14   Halaydhalay, a Somali expression translated as 'he was born last night,' is primarily invoked when reparations to a *diya-paying* group are too complex or extreme to feasibly repay.

weeks of failed political negotiations, a group of elders from the Gadabuursi clan family, a subdivision of the minority Dir clan family, intervened and developed a resolution in which all transport infrastructure in Somaliland would be immediately transferred to the government.

This conflict highlighted unique aspects of Somaliland's state-building process. First, clan elders became significant and formalised actors in the political process. Second, the fighting between Issaq clans and subsequent mediation from a non-Issaq clan underscored the notion that the Issaq would not dominate the new Somaliland (Logan 2002; Moe 2009; and Walls 2011). Third, the continued commitment to non-violence outlined in the 1991 conference and supported by clan elders remained intact despite the outbreak of a small conflict, highlighting the local ownership of the state-building process and continued commitment to the new state.

The next national conference took place from January to May 1993 in Boroma and was critical in transferring power to a civilian government. Led by a national council of clan elders, the 'Boroma Grand Conference on National Reconciliation' comprised over 150 elders along with 700 local observers, advisors and supporters (Logan 2002 and Schoiswohl 2004). The first part of the conference resulted in the 'Somaliland Communities Security and Peace Charter,' which provided an official framework under which future conflicts would be avoided or resolved; the second portion of the conference produced the 'National Charter' which consisted of an interim national constitution. During the four months of the conference, the majority of decisions were made through consensus-building amongst all the constituents. Clan elders ran debates and meetings (reminiscent of *shir*) for virtually every issue addressed, developing widespread support for and ownership of the National Charter (Bradbury 2008 and Walls 2011).

The government that emerged from the conferences contained a rare blend of Western-styled governance institutions and traditional Somali structures, known locally as the *beel* system. This combination was designed to balance clan representation within the new government so that the institution would best reflect the region's dynamics and eliminate clan pressures from unnecessarily influencing other branches of the government. This system comprised a bicameral Parliament that housed an Assembly of Elders *(Guurti)* [Upper House] and an Assembly of

Representatives [Lower House]. The *Guurti* was made up of 82 clan elders from across Somaliland whose primary responsibilities were to maintain Somaliland's fragile peace by settling security arrangements and mediating all outstanding disputes and any future conflicts (Bradbury 2008). The *Guurti* then appointed Mohamed Egal as the country's President for three years.

In addition, the constituents of the Assembly of Representatives were to be determined according to a formula for division of clan power that neutralised competing clan families in Somaliland's new government. The constituents also agreed that regional and local disputes would be managed by the respective clans through the use of traditional Somali customs, which effectively reduced the administrative burden on the emerging government; ensured the local credibility of those intervening in the conflict; and safeguarded against the rise of a second predatory state. Creating a 'thin' and decentralised government, one with a limited mandate and functions, explicitly acknowledged that sensitivity to Somaliland's contextual realities was imperative towards ensuring the government's future stability.

Somaliland endured two significant internal conflicts from 1994–1996 when different Issaq sub-clans fought over access to critical resources in Hargeisa and Burao, as well as over political representation within the new government. The *Guurti* initially intervened, but were unable to negotiate a settlement. Nonetheless, their intervention played an important role in calming tensions and opening a dialogue between the conflicting parties. Led by the Peace Committee for Somaliland, a unified collection of Somaliland expatriates representing a broad constituency of clans, civil society pressured the government and the competing sub-clans to participate in the February 1997 Hargeisa Conference. After agreeing to a cessation of violence, the constituencies successfully drafted and affirmed the country's second interim constitution, broadening the political system from a clan based electoral representation to a multi-party democracy free of clan or religious affiliations.

Under the direction of the House of Elders and President Egal,[15] the Constitutional Committee ensured that the new document would be widely

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15 Egal's presidential mandate ended in 1996, but the country was unable to hold elections due to the absence of a ratified constitution.

supported throughout Somaliland. Each article and clause was read and discussed amongst delegates, who routinely consulted their constituencies for advice and support. This affair produced "a remarkably comprehensive collective constitutional artefact, utilizing a notably high level of public deliberation in the process" (Walls 2011:175). On 31 May 2001, Somaliland conducted a national referendum in which 97 percent of voters affirmed the new constitution.

Somaliland today

Within a relatively short twenty-year time frame, Somaliland has successfully grown a non-violent and democratic state that has earned widespread support throughout the country. The government has rebuilt many of the cities destroyed during the civil war; established its own currency; designed an efficient taxation system; built an international airport and major maritime trading infrastructure; signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and successfully prosecuted suspected terrorists and pirates within its borders. Somaliland currently boasts a three-party democracy that largely adheres to the Rule of Law and respects civil liberties. While areas of democratic and economic reform have emerged in recent years, solutions are plausible and primarily require political will more than fundamental transformations to implement.

While far from perfect, the country's electoral successes should not be understated. Following the death of President Egal in 2002, Vice President Dahir Riyale Kahin fulfilled his constitutional mandate and assumed the vacant office within thirty days.[16] This peaceful transition of power was an impressive feat considering Riyale hailed from the Gadabuursi clan, a distinct minority within Somaliland, whereas Egal was from the Habar Awal sub-clan of the dominant Issaq

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16 There remains some constitutional ambiguity about the proper procedure following the death of a sitting Head of State in Somaliland. Article 89 of Somaliland's constitution states that if the President is unable to complete his term within the last two years of his five year mandate, then the VP is expected to assume the office for the remainder of the term; Article 130 states that if the President is unable to complete his term, then the Speaker of Parliament will assume the office for forty-five days until the Parliament jointly elects a new President. ICG reported that the Cabinet and Parliament were fearful of a political vacuum immediately following Egal's death and thus supported Article 89 as a quick and legitimate solution to the looming crisis.

clan family. The next year, Riyale, a member of the United Democratic People's Party (UDUB), was elected to retain the Presidency by a slim margin of 80 votes. The losing political parties, namely the Peace, Unity and Development Party (Kulmiye) and the Justice and Welfare Party (UCID), vehemently contested the results of the elections, causing observers to fear that the region would slip into conflict. After intense deliberations between senior party officials, the House of Elders, President Riyale and the National Electoral Commission, the losing political parties submitted their complaints to the Supreme Court (ICG 2003). On 11 May 2003, the Court upheld Riyale's victory without providing any clear elucidation of its conclusions. Kulmiye and UCID officials reluctantly accepted the Court's findings in order to avoid sparking violent conflict. Independent election observers determined that all three parties had equally benefitted from electoral loopholes and an inadequate voter roll, but nonetheless considered the elections to be just and representative of the will of the people. The 2005 Parliamentary Elections were also judged as free and fair, and represented a landmark occasion as the people of Somaliland had for the first time elected their own representatives within the government. While there were significant and undemocratic delays prior to the 2010 Presidential Elections,[17] the contest was also considered free and fair by international observers, with Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud Silanyo winning the Presidency with 50 percent of all votes.

As Somaliland's government lacks the necessary finances to exert itself economically, the region's economic sector is dependent on Diaspora-led businesses. The government's 2010 budget did not exceed USD 50 million, much of which was generated from taxing the livestock export industry. While tax revenue brought in USD 47 million in 2010, the government intends on fortifying the personal and corporate tax rate while improving tax collection at the major ports, with the goal of increasing government receipts to USD 106 million within a few years (Clapham et al. 2011).

A lack of international recognition is a serious impediment to the country's economic development as the business community is unwilling to invest in Somaliland while it remains legally conjoined to Somalia, and is thus perceived to

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17   Largely the result of a poorly trained National Electoral Commission, the absence of an acceptable voter roll, and unilateral extensions of the President's mandate by the *Guurti* (ICG 2009).

be vulnerable to its instability. None of the approximately USD 80 million of annual international aid is accounted for or administered by the government, hindering its overall coordination effectiveness. However, a significant number of civil society organisations (CSOs) operate in Hargeisa and channel external resources and aid into the country. Recent developments serve to highlight Somaliland's increased stability and future endeavours. As the country is comprised of over 55 percent nomadic herders, the economy has greatly benefitted from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates' decisions to respectively eliminate livestock export bans, estimated to generate an additional USD 250 million annually (Ali 2011). In addition, both the Coca-Cola Corporation and Western Union have publically committed to launching services throughout Somaliland, providing implicit recognition of the region's stability for future business ventures (Guled 2011a and McGregor 2011).

The European Union (EU) has recently committed EUR 3.8 million to an analysis and blueprint for infrastructural upgrades to the corridor from the Port of Berbera to Ethiopia (SomalilandPress 2011c). On 7 June 2011, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) launched a multimillion-dollar initiative, *Partnership for Economic Growth*, in Hargeisa intended on spurring business investments and economic growth throughout the region. Among its most significant policy platforms, USAID hopes to refine and improve livestock trade flows and help Somali women gain entrepreneurial training and access to start-up capital.

Somaliland's print media is largely independent and capable of holding government officials accountable for their actions. Led by *SomalilandPress*, a weekly news portal that publishes in both English and Somali, print media is largely accessible throughout the country and provides thorough and balanced coverage. However, broadcast media, specifically television and radio, are heavily regulated and can be subjected to political biases. The national government owns one of the two basic television channels as well as the only domestic radio station, which serves as a mouthpiece for the ruling party (UKAid 2011).Further, security forces have consistently and unconstitutionally harassed, prosecuted, and jailed media members for highlighting corruption and nepotism within the government. During their coverage of the 2010 Presidential Elections, multiple journalists were temporarily

detained, though all were quickly released and unharmed while in custody. Hamdi Abdisalam Yassin of the *SomalilandPress* has condemned the government for prosecuting a number of journalists on charges of libelling government officials, calling it."another set back to Somaliland's democracy" (Yassin 2011).

Somaliland has benefitted greatly from efforts to improve its education programmes. School gross enrolment has increased from 39 percent in 2006 to over 60 percent in 2010 (SomalilandPress 2011c). Since 2001, primary school net enrolment has increased from 23 to 49 percent, while the proportion of students who stay in school from first to eighth grade jumped from 50 to 96 percent (UNDP 2010a). In addition, the country's literacy rates during this same time period have increased from 20 to 45 percent, according to Somaliland's Ministry of Education. Somaliland also boasts over ten universities and numerous vocational schools, which currently service over 9,000 youth (UNDP 2010a). Significant contributions to all schools come from the country's Diaspora, either directly through grants for construction or indirectly through payment of teachers' salaries and school supplies. However, the country still suffers from too few mobile schools, which the 2010 UN Millennium Development Goals Report asserts are more suitable for Somaliland's nomadic population.

The Diaspora has played a key role in stabilising and shaping Somaliland's development. During the country's state-building process, remittances served as start-up capital for the many peace conferences as well as the transitional government. Relying heavily on external funding layered the peace process with another check on political power by forcing clan elders and politicians to remain accountable to their foreign donors. During the violent conflicts in 1994–1995, Diaspora leaders led negotiation sessions through the Peace Committee for Somaliland when interventions from the *Guurti* failed to end violence between the warring clan factions. Today's Diaspora provides invaluable financial and human capital for the region's fledgling social sector; the remittance economy generates approximately USD 800 million annually, which is approximately twenty times larger than the federal budget (Clapham et al. 2011). Remittance funds currently constitute approximately 40 percent of all education spending and over 50 percent of all health care expenditures (Hammond 2011).

Foreigners invest heavily in private education and health clinics, paying for a wide range of costs from tuition fees to salaries to physical infrastructure. Some Diaspora members provide even greater support by returning to their homeland to practice their trade, which not only increases engagement with the Diaspora but also strengthens the quality of human capital in Somaliland. Civil society organisations are working with the Diaspora to develop a more structured, acute and powerful response to the region's many institutional challenges. The government is currently establishing a Diaspora Liaison Office intended to facilitate and improve coordination between the Diaspora and local CSOs. Many government officials are former members of the Diaspora, including President Silanyo, half of the Executive Cabinet and as many as 30 percent of the 164 sitting Members of Parliament (MPs) (Hammond 2011).

International recognition

Somaliland's most pressing issue moving forward is its need to gain international recognition. As a self-declared 'independent state', the government of Somaliland is ineligible to receive international aid or participate in transnational organisations such as the African Union (AU) or United Nations (UN). Investors are hesitant to commit significantly to the region due to the instability in Somalia. Statehood is also a matter of significant pride to Somalilanders and was among one of the primary reasons why the country's constitution was overwhelmingly approved in 2001. While the country has yet to receive any formal recognition, covert diplomatic support for Somaliland has increased in recent years. In 2005, the AU released a special report on Somaliland, explaining that "Somaliland's search for recognition [is] historically unique and self-justified in African political history…the AU should find a special method of dealing with this outstanding case" (African Union 2005 reprinted in ICG 2006:i) The African Union Commission Chairperson, Jean Ping, recently called "to broaden consultations with Somaliland and Puntland as part of the overall efforts to promote stability and further peace and reconciliation in Somalia" (African Union 2010 reprinted in Pham 2011:147).

President Silanyo and Foreign Minister Dr Mohamed Omar have recently boosted the country's diplomatic profile by hosting delegations from Djibouti, Kuwait, Norway, Pakistan, the UN and the World Bank. Ethiopia, Kenya, and Israel have all declared support for Somaliland's quest for recognition, and lobbied the AU to admit the country as a member of the transnational organisation. The EU has committed over EUR 63 million to development projects throughout the region while the United Kingdom plans to triple its aid to Somalia over the next three years, with 40 percent of that budget earmarked specifically for projects in Somaliland (UKAid 2011). Ethiopia has also entered into trade agreements with Somaliland to formalise their access to the Port of Berbera and establish customs offices at the border of the two countries. On 14 August 2011, President Silanyo met with representatives from Ethiopia and China in Beijing to negotiate economic and trade cooperation between the three countries, with the intention of signing trilateral agreements over gas, oil, and logistical cooperation in the near future. The ultimate goal of the project, according to Somaliland's government, is to expand the Berbera Port to the point where it can service all of East Africa, while China becomes Somaliland's main exporter of natural gas and oil (SomalilandPress 2011e). It seems that international political will is perhaps the most important ingredient missing from Somaliland's search for recognition.

Emerging security issues

Drought and famine crisis

Over the past few months, the Horn of Africa has endured its most severe drought in over fifty years, further amplifying Somalia's already devastating internal crisis, as over 12.4 million people across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia have found their basic security jeopardised and are in need of humanitarian assistance (IRIN 2011). While Somaliland has not faced the same challenges as south-central Somalia, its population is nonetheless at grave risk. Access to clean and affordable water is the most significant crisis as prices have risen to unsustainable levels, forcing communities to rely on unsanitary water to survive. The drought fuels the already deteriorating pastoral and livestock situation,

as grasslands become sparser while livestock are dying at an alarming rate. Somalilanders are subsequently unable to pay for increased food or medicine prices and remain alarmingly vulnerable to dysentery, malaria and tuberculosis. Each day, thousands of Somalis migrate towards the already overcrowded and under-resourced refugee camps (located on the border with Kenya, as well as on the Somaliland/Puntland border) and place additional pressure on aid workers and their limited resources. While over USD 1 billion has been committed to delivering vital provisions across the Horn of Africa, experts project that the sum is only half of what is needed to supply basic provisions across Somalia.

The international community's disproportionate focus on Kenya and south-central Somalia has left Somaliland to fend for itself, as the region requires a significant influx of aid resources to rehabilitate the thousands of malnourished refugees in the Sanaag province. However, on 12 August 2011, Vice President Abdirahman A. Ismail announced that Somaliland would dispatch humanitarian aid to south-central Somalia and readily cooperate with all international efforts to ameliorate the crisis. While it is reasonable to criticise Somaliland for its month-long diplomatic silence following the UN's declaration of famine in portions of Somalia, it must also be noted that the government's first humanitarian mission will also be its first engagement with Somalia's TFG in a number of years. This reverse of Somaliland's foreign policy underscores the gravity of the famine and indicates Somaliland's growing capacity within the international context. Nonetheless, as the drought is expected to last until January 2012, the already high death totals may continue to rise before the crisis is relieved.

Border conflict with Puntland

Somaliland and the semi-autonomous region of Puntland contest the Sool and Sanaag provinces that border the two areas. Armed conflict began in 2007 when local antagonisms over *diya* compensations and allegiances to Somaliland spilled into the larger communities. However, the current drought has amplified the importance of the area's scarce water sources and grazing pastures, leading to an alarming increase of armed conflict. On 2 June 2011, Puntland-sponsored Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn (SSC) militias attacked Somaliland's military base in

Las Anod, the capital of the Sool Province. Political and traditional leaders were quick to convene in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to negotiate an end to the violence and reiterate their commitment to a peaceful coexistence. However, violence erupted two weeks later when Puntland militias launched an unsuccessful attack on Somaliland forces in Tukaraq. It is crucial to note that political officials on both sides have accused the TFG of mobilising SSC militias and instigating violence; the *SomalilandPress* confirmed "in the last several months the TFG has been arming SSC militias in an attempt to create a conflict between Somaliland and Puntland in a mini-proxy war of its own" (SomalilandPress 2011b). On 22 June 2011, Somaliland officials and SSC representatives convened at a peace conference in the Sool town of Widhwidh. Similar to many of Somaliland's peace processes, the Widhwidh Conference was locally organised and broadly supported by constituencies across the region. Both parties emerged from the meetings with a commitment to maintain peace as well as increase dialogue between one another. However, on 10 August 2011, a Puntland-supported militia ambushed, captured, and killed members of a Somaliland delegation outside of Las Anod, headed by MP Saleeban Yusuf Ali Koore. Ahmad Haji Ali Adami, Somaliland's Minister of Defence, responded that his country would not tolerate repeated violations of Somaliland's sovereignty by stating:

> The Armed Forces of Somaliland is here to protect the people of Somaliland anytime and anywhere they are in harm's way, any threat to our people and country will not be tolerated… Every action has a reaction, and we are very displeased by the actions of Puntland government. We will let Puntland know about this displeasure. It is our obligation to protect our country and our people and therefore our military will not sit and watch idly (Guled 2011c:1).

Given the contentious relationship between Somaliland and Puntland, along with the additional stress applied by the famine and drought crisis, leaders must be weary of this emerging conflict and its potential negative ramifications on the region's stability.

Al-Shabaab

Until order and security is restored in south-central Somalia, the *al-Shabaab* radical Islamic faction will continue to pose a threat to Somaliland. Spawned in opposition to the TFG, *al-Shabaab* comprises a number of hard-line Somali youth factions who seek to both repel the international community from Somalia and to impose their strict interpretations of Sharia Islamic law. The faction has gained international notoriety for their ties to the al-Qaeda terrorist network; recruiting of foreign soldiers to the *jihad* in Somalia; and incorporation of suicide bombings into its most recent field missions. Its general unwillingness to cooperate with international aid workers attempting to deliver emergency food supplies has posed a grave challenge to Somalis: all five regions of south-central Somalia in which a famine has been declared[18] are under heavy *al-Shabaab* influence.

It is crucial to understand that *al-Shabaab* are not a unified militia, as competition between moderate and extremist ideologies fissures the hierarchy and feeds into its constant struggle to coordinate efforts between its semi-autonomous and poorly resourced cells. *Al-Shabaab* does not operate in Somaliland as the government actively captures, prosecutes and jails its fighters and affiliates. However, the region nonetheless remains threatened by the faction's continued operations in the Somali Republic.

Al-Shabaab's recent commitment to international attacks, highlighted by the suicide bombing at a Kampala sports-bar during the 2010 World Cup, underscores the threat that Somaliland faces as one attack can completely warp a region's internal dynamics. On 6 August 2011, a number of *al-Shabaab* cells withdrew from Mogadishu, allowing for the first humanitarian airlifts to the capital in over five years. While AMISOM declared victory over the movement, *al-Shabaab* spokesmen claimed that the group had devised a new strategy and had not abandoned the conflict. An area of particular concern is the Somaliland/Puntland border conflicts, where spoiler actions from the Islamic militant faction could trigger further fighting.

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18 Famine is declared in a region when 20 percent of the population has access to fewer than 2,100 kilocalories of food per day; 30 percent of children or more have acute malnutrition; and there are 2 adult deaths (or 4 child deaths) per 10,000 people per day (Kohari 2011).

Recommendations for democratic reforms

While Somaliland's democracy has achieved significant successes since 1991, it nonetheless requires further reforms to avoid undoing many of those accomplishments. Many of the following recommendations stem from an engagement with the current political and social initiatives within Somaliland.

Develop an inclusive procedure to nominate and elect Guurti

Somaliland has not yet established a formal mechanism to nominate and elect representatives to the House of Elders. The initial members of the *Guurti* were appointed by their clan bases and represented the region's most revered traditional leaders in 1997. Many Somalilanders assert that the *Guurti* played an instrumental role in the country's state-building process and are crucial for maintaining peace and order (Bradbury 2008; Logan 2002; and Renders 2007). However, there is no institutionalised method of electing the elders to parliament. Article 130 of the constitution prescribes, "any vacancy is filled by a person selected by the community which chose the departing incumbent at the 1997 Conference of the Somaliland Communities" (Republic of Somaliland 2001). Some of the original members have died and been replaced by kin, sparking widespread controversy and dissatisfaction. In recent years, the *Guurti* have often acquiesced to the executive's unconstitutional extensions of power and have become "too arrogant and too corrupt by overstaying in power" (HRW 2009). In 2006, the *Guurti* approved an executive order that unilaterally and unconstitutionally extended the Upper House's mandate for four years.

As an institution based on traditional Somali customs it is imperative that the government continues to adhere to the cultural values that provide the *Guurti* with its legitimacy. Representatives in the House of Elders must have broad support from their constituencies so as to continue to use such respect to position themselves as mediators of conflict. Further, members of the *Guurti* must be held accountable to their communities and be subject to institutional checks and balances that promote and uphold good governance. While a ballot procedure is not necessarily an ideal solution, the people of Somaliland must be provided with an appropriate instrument for choosing their officials.

Invest in the judiciary

Somaliland's judiciary is the government's weakest institution and struggles to complete basic functions and apply the law. The government spends more money on the presidential residence than on the judiciary and only five of the approximately fifty-four employed judges have formal legal qualifications (UNDP 2011). In addition, the Ministry of Justice does not employ a lawyer and some courthouses struggle to obtain copies of the laws (UNDP 2011). President Riyale's multiple unchecked breaches of executive power highlighted the courts' inability to hold the government accountable to the constitution. Judges often apply an arbitrary mix of legal, traditional and Sharia law and detainees are often held in jail for weeks without a trial. The court system has, however, markedly improved in recent years, as defendants are treated with fundamental liberties such as the presumption of innocence, the right to legal representation and the ability to question witnesses. In 2010, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) began implementation of a legal training initiative that graduated thirty-four judges, lawyers, and support staff. Somaliland must continue to invest in legal education and a structured penal code that fairly balances the country's three penal structures. Further, the judiciary must remain independent of the government's desires and develop the political will to prosecute violations of the constitution.

Increase the number of political parties

The 2001 constitution stated that only three parties would be allowed in the country's political system; the United Democratic People's Party (UDUB), the Justice and Welfare Party (UCID) and the Peace, Unity and Development Party (Kulmiye) were the most popular during the 2002 Municipal Elections and remain the only legal parties in the country. This policy was initially designed to minimise clan and religious influences within the parties, and had been contentiously debated during the 2000–2001 creation of the country's constitution.

While the political parties operate within a largely transparent democracy, a constitutional limitation stymies political accountability and competition. Somalis cite numerous challenges to democracy within the political parties,

including an absence of competition for party chairmanship and presidential candidacies and the lack of grass-roots influence within policy and decision-making processes (SomalilandPress 2011d). To its benefit, the government has begun a process to open the democratic sphere. President Silanyo explicitly pledged support for the creation of new political parties during his 2010 Presidential Campaign and subsequently created a committee to investigate the population's willingness to expand the number of parties. Comprised of government officials; academics; religious scholars; traditional leaders; business owners; and civil society activists, this committee of nineteen travelled across Somaliland to gauge support. On 16 June 2011, President Silanyo's political task force recommended, "after conducting 1769 surveys from all the regions of the country, the committee found that the majority of Somaliland citizens are in favour of opening the political parties" (JSLTimes 2011). The new parties should be subjected to the same preconditions that were used to select the initial three in 2000, including a 20 percent voter approval in all six regions of Somaliland to receive formal recognition. This rule facilitates broad-based support of each party and removes significant clan affiliations from the political process.

Pledge to uphold women's rights

Women occupy a tenuous position in Somaliland's patriarchal culture. As a result of their dual clan status, women are not fully included within the country's political discourse. While they are allowed to vote, women are severely under-represented in Somaliland's government: there are only three women in the 164 person Parliament and three on President Silanyo's 26 person Cabinet (US Department of State 2011). Women are also denied equal education opportunities in Somaliland. In 2006, 46.3 percent of male children attended primary school compared to only 33.3 percent of female children (UNDP 2010). Women have become primary breadwinners in many families by actively engaging in the informal economy, thus it is imperative that they be given equal access to education, political and legal rights.

Recognise the role of the press

Somaliland's press operates autonomously despite occasional government harassment. The newspaper industry is the media's most liberalised outlet with its three newspapers *(SomalilandTimes, Haatuf* and *Jamhuuriya)* carrying out the most independent, balanced, and critical reporting. The government owns Radio Hargeisa (the only permitted public domestic station) and Somaliland National TV (one of two permitted stations) (BBC 2011a). Journalists have occasionally been arrested, prosecuted and jailed for minor crimes. In August 2009, the editor in chief of the Berberanews website was convicted of a "crime against the Somaliland nation" and sentenced to three years in prison (Freedom House 2010). The managing director of Radio Horyaal was arrested twice in the span of three months last year for investigating a Cabinet negotiation with clan elders over a land dispute (Freedom House 2010). On 31 March 2011, Reporters Without Borders reported that two journalists were confronted by military officers for issuing defamatory reports against the government: Mohamed Abdinur Hashi of Somali Channel TV was arrested while Mohamed Shaqale of Universal TV managed to avoid arrest and was wanted by the military (UKAid 2011). On 6 July 2011, security forces arrested Mohamed Abdi, editor of the *Jamhuuriya* newspaper, for publishing a report on construction costs in the Hargeisa city budget. (SomalilandPress 2011c). Somaliland must liberalise radio and television airwaves and commit to honouring the press' responsibilities and legal rights.

Eliminate the Security Committees

Security Committees operate unconstitutionally and with impunity throughout Somaliland. An institutional legacy from the Barre era, these committees consist of government officials and security officers who order arbitrary and unjust detentions to common criminals. The committees have no foundation in the law and the US State Department reports that over 300 prisoners have been unlawfully detained, tried, and sentenced by the Security Committees (US Department of State 2011). The constitution must be amended to explicitly forbid these committees, not only to respect all inalienable human rights but also to restore the balance of power between the executive and the judiciary.

Lessons learned from state-building in Somaliland

While insights from Somaliland's state-building should not be directly applied to post-conflict interventions, it is imperative to highlight those factors that strongly influenced the stability in northern Somalia. Moving forward, policy makers can look for similar trends and practices within other contexts to best design post-conflict peacebuilding and state-building strategies.

Importance of a locally driven, bottom-up state-building process

Somaliland's recent history epitomises an authentic locally driven and bottom-up state-building process. Marginalised by south-central Somalia's dysfunction and isolated from the international community, Somalilanders engaged in endogenous and inclusive societal negotiations over the composition, structure, and influence of a new national government, which in turn facilitated ownership of and respect for the new institutions. As this government was born from a lengthy political negotiation between the region's different parties and interests, the new leaders of Somaliland were held strictly accountable to their constituencies. Without this widespread support it is unlikely that the emerging government would have survived the inter-clan conflicts that arose during the mid 1990s.

Align formal institutions with societal values, culture and systems

Many of Somaliland's successes should be attributed to its unique government structure that combines Western democratic institutions with traditional Somali laws and customs. Peacebuilding conferences during the 1990s were formalised *shir*, while many of the formal and informal agreements between rival interests were rooted in the same conditions of peace, cooperation and compromise that form the traditional *xeer* social contracts. The incorporation of Somaliland's elders into the formal government mechanisms recognises their inherent social value as conflict negotiators, while simultaneously isolating clan politics within one institution. The flexibility with which Somaliland's elders and political leaders operated should neither be understated nor undervalued. In stark contrast to Western-led peace initiatives

that prescribe certain institutions and mechanisms in exchange for financial assistance, these actors engaged in the state-building process with the relative freedom to design a system that would best suit the country's distinct cultural traditions.

Develop local mechanisms for accountability

Ironically, Somaliland's lacklustre natural resource base and ineligibility for foreign aid and bilateral assistance has facilitated the creation of strong institutional checks and balances on the government. Instead of a heavy reliance on donor aid, a majority of the country's capital emerges from an effective export tax and a committed Diaspora. Cultivated during the 1990s state-building era, both revenue streams have endured to become integral components of Somaliland's society. As the country's economy primarily consists of livestock exports, the government relies on taxation at major commercial centres. This heavy reliance on tax receipts subsequently increased the government's culpability to its citizens, and created a working relationship in which political officials could not design and implement policy decisions without the broad support of its tax base. Further dependence on the country's Diaspora heavily influenced the peace conferences' agenda and created a constituency to which the government was held accountable. The subsequent negotiations between Somaliland's donor communities and the government created a widely acceptable government that could not breach its power without aggravating its primary revenue base.

Commit to peace before policy negotiations

Perhaps one of the most unique aspects of Somaliland is its leaders' universal and unwavering commitment to non-violence. From 1991 through to today, Somaliland's political discourse (from legal documents to public statements) have either started or concluded with an explicit commitment to peace and stability. These declarations often minimised tensions between competing parties and created an environment suitable for educated and honest debate on critical policy issues. Clan leaders and politicians consistently reiterate their desires to maintain a peaceful and stable environment regardless of policy

conflicts or antagonisms. Deliberate calls for non-violence foster political goodwill amongst stakeholders and reduce tensions that may otherwise boil over during negotiations. It is important to note that this mechanism originates from Somali cultural systems and may not translate as effectively within other cultures.

Value of deliberate and lengthy negotiations

Somaliland's state-building process during the 1990s was unique for, among other reasons, its length and inclusiveness, especially within the numerous peace conferences. All decisions were made by consensus and thus required significant deliberations at every juncture; clan elders regularly convened to debate particular policies only to return to their respective constituencies to hear recommendations and mobilise popular support. As a result, Somaliland engaged in an inclusive and thorough state-building process that resulted in widespread approval of the emerging government. These conditions were exemplified by the 1993 Boroma Conference that lasted over four months and involved 850 Somalilanders and gave birth to the political structure that exists today.

Conclusion

Somaliland stands out as a successful case study of African state-building. The region has eschewed the violence that convulsed its southern counterpart in favour of an inclusive and accountable government that blends Western institutions with those expressively unique to Somalia. Now Somaliland boasts a vibrant democracy and a motivated civil society that yearns for international recognition and its benefits. The self-declared state still faces internal and external challenges that could potentially spoil its accomplishments, and would greatly benefit from the bilateral assistance that follows international recognition. The international community needs to increase its engagement with Somaliland and develop an explicit policy to chart the region's path to statehood. President Silanyo and the government should be required to make meaningful reforms before its recognition is brought under legitimate

consideration. However, these benchmarks should be fair and obtainable, especially as Somaliland compares favourably to South Sudan, another novice state in the Horn. The international community currently has an opportunity to validate and support a participatory and legitimate democracy in one of the world's most contentious regions. Failure to affirm Somaliland's achievements will not only harm the region but also democratic efforts around the world.

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