

Somaliland: The Strains of Success

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°113

Nairobi/Brussels, 5 October 2015

I. Overview

Somaliland's hybrid system of tri-party democracy and traditional clan-based governance has enabled the consolidation of state-like authority, social and economic recovery and, above all, relative peace and security but now needs reform. Success has brought greater resources, including a special funding status with donors – especially the UK, Denmark and the European Union (EU) – as well as investment from and diplomatic ties with Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), though not international recognition. It is increasingly part of the regional system; ties are especially strong with Ethiopia and Djibouti. Given the continued fragility of the Somalia Federal Government (SFG), which still rejects its former northern region's independence claims, and civil war across the Gulf of Aden in Yemen, Somaliland's continued stability is vital. This in turn requires political reforms aimed at greater inclusion, respect for mediating institutions (especially the professional judiciary and parliament) and a regional and wider internationally backed framework for external cooperation and engagement.

Successful state building has, nevertheless, raised the stakes of holding – and losing – power. While Somaliland has remained largely committed to democratic government, elections are increasingly fraught. Fear of a return to bitter internal conflict is pushing more conservative politics: repression of the media and opposition, as well as resistance to reforming the increasingly unsustainable status quo. Recurrent political crises and delayed elections (now set for March 2017) risk postponing much needed internal debate. The political elites have a limited window to decide on steps necessary to rebuild the decaying consensus, reduce social tensions and set an agenda for political and institutional reform.

Stronger executive government has driven a shift from government through clan-based consensus to ostensible democratisation, but it has not widened participation of individuals (distinct from their clan-base), or developed strong institutional checks and balances. There is a growing perception that the Isaaq clan dominates, while its sub-clans jockey for primacy through control of particular political parties, government institutions and big businesses. The government's inclination to rely on a close-knit group of advisers identified with particular clans and regions rather than non-partisan state institutions, feeds a growing sense of marginalisation among certain constituencies both in the centre and the peripheries. Poor public services and high unemployment (the few available jobs are obtained through patronage) leave the overwhelmingly

young population, many of whom emigrate, vulnerable to religious extremism and criminality.

Militarised rule in the restive and previously lightly “occupied” eastern borderlands with Puntland (a “semi-autonomous” federal state of Somalia) – specifically the regions of Sool, Sanaag and southern Togdheer – is not new but has become the default setting. The presence and degree of popular acceptance of more conservative Islamist government and society has grown. The government’s soft approach to extremists in its midst is more evident following terrorist attacks with alleged links back to Somaliland in neighbouring Djibouti and Puntland and the existence of a discreet Al-Shabaab presence across the country.

In the short term, especially now that elections are postponed, the government and its international supporters must find ways to support greater dialogue between political parties and key interest groups, particularly parliament’s upper House of Elders (the Guurti) and the business community, or risk further fragmentation of authority. This requires national consultation over the election (or reselection) of the Guurti, the parliament’s upper house; the 2001 constitution calls for its election every six years, but it remains largely unchanged since 1997. The over-used constitutional contingency clause that allows the Guurti to rule on election postponement in the interests of “stability” should be urgently reviewed.

The newly reformed judiciary needs public backing from the government, opposition and the Guurti, especially respecting its constitutionally-defined responsibilities to support the institutions charged with delivering free and fair elections and to resolve disputes. Greater transparency is also needed, to prevent further politicisation of the small, fragile economy and increase government accountability. The House of Representatives should be free to exercise constitutional oversight of public-private development contracts and potential conflicts of interest.

Somaliland also needs to renew commitment to talks with the SFG, despite political risks, not least in recognition of the intimate clan and familial ties that still bind its elites and population in multiple ways to Puntland and the SFG as a whole. These include marriage, religious networks, clan treaties that manage peace and war, politics, business and even extremist groups. Progress on security and economic cooperation and electoral preparations (2016, Somalia; 2017, Somaliland) require a better framework, including appropriate representation from Puntland, the region (potentially the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, IGAD) and wider international community (potentially the African Union and Gulf Cooperation Council).

II. State-Building and its Shortcomings

This briefing outlines the critical pressure points in Somaliland's state-building project, in particular the attempts to strengthen the executive without revising the largely consensual but mediated politics that underpin its stability.¹ Its "hybrid" system – a modern state superstructure, led by democratically-elected politicians, grafted onto a traditional clan-based internal government – may have reached its natural limits.² Certainly peace is costly to maintain, with 52 per cent (in 2013) of the national budget spent on the security sector and social services dependent on foreign aid.³

The state-building necessary for the greater stability the public, donors and regional neighbours expect has required a stronger executive, which is at odds with an earlier focus on egalitarianism and power sharing among clans. The political class (primarily ministers, officials and businessmen in the capital, Hargeysa) has grown more distant from and less willing to consult its constituencies.⁴ The dwindling independence from government and popular legitimacy of the Guurti is particularly revealing of this shift away from consensual politics.⁵ "Modern" institutions to check abuses are not well established; the executive often interferes in the reconstituted judiciary.⁶

A deteriorating relationship with clan elders reinforces the perception the administration is distant from the people, even in the core regions of Borama, Berbera, Hargeysa and Burco. Attempts to decentralise authority through directly elected local and municipal councils have increased formal recognition and representation of clans and sub-clans, with a proliferation of recognised and salaried "traditional" lead-

¹ It is based on field interviews in Hargeysa, Borama, and Berbera in February 2013, May to July 2014, November 2014 and February 2015; and in Nairobi. It does not cover issues such as security sector reform, land tenure, prospects for hydrocarbon extraction, or elections, some of which are discussed in Ken Menkhaus, "Conflict Assessment: Northern Kenya and Somaliland", Danish Demining Group (DDG), March 2015; Markus Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland: Marginalization, militarization and conflicting political visions* (London, 2015); and "The Economics of Elections in Somaliland: The financing of political parties and candidates", Rift Valley Institute, June 2015. In most cases the Somali script is used for places, clans and persons – 'c' for the Arabic 'ayn' apostrophe sometimes favoured, 'x' for the throaty 'h' sound, and the 'dh' for the swallowed 'd' as well as doubled-vowels.

² More bluntly "a 'crippled' hybrid order that advances neither effective democracy nor strong traditional governance", Markus Hoehne, "Securing the Peace in Somaliland: A Summary and Contextual Analysis", Rift Valley Institute, September 2011; or as another scholar has it, "Somaliland's hybridity has ... turned the wrong way". Marleen Renders, *Consider Somaliland: State-Building with Traditional Leaders and Institutions* (Leiden, 2012), p. 264.

³ "Budget Policy: Transitioning from State Building to Development", World Bank paper for the Somaliland Economic Conference, Hargeysa, 29 January 2014.

⁴ How consensual the state ever was is disputed; the departure from clan-based governance began as early as 1993. See Dominik Balthasar, "Somaliland's best kept secret: shrewd politics and war projects as means of state-making", *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2013), pp. 218-238.

⁵ Crisis Group interviews, civil society officials, political adviser, Hargeysa, May 2015. See also Renders, *Consider Somaliland*, op. cit. p. 264.

⁶ The president's office decided the 24 May 2015 appointment of Supreme Court Chief Justice Adan Haji Ali (Cisse Muse/Habar Awal). Crisis Group interviews, opposition party chairman, civil society official, Nairobi, August 2015.

ers, but with little improvement in local state capacity or the representation of smaller, less influential clans.⁷

Growing concentration of power in the centre (especially Hargeysa) has widened the gap between Isaaq and other Dir clans (Gadabursi/Samaron and Cisse) in the west, and Isaaq and Harti-Darood (Dhulbahante and Warsangeli clans also present in Puntland) in the east, all of whom now fear Somaliland's independence would further entrench Isaaq dominance.⁸ The opposition also appears less "nationally" representative.⁹ Regional weakening of traditional clan authority and parallel deepening of local clan particularism have widened splits between the four main Isaaq sub-clans (Habar Awal, Habar Jeclo, Habar Garhajis and Arab).¹⁰

III. Democratic "Clanocracy"

The political settlement is based on a clan-state accommodation. Yet, for much of the first decade of de facto independence, ascribing political affiliations by clan was taboo, a silence that partially reflected bitter conflicts between Isaaq sub-clans (especially in 1992 and 1994).¹¹ However, as Hargeysa's political importance and state resources have grown, clan-based politicking has become more pronounced, tied to economic and political interests and less constrained by clan authorities.¹² Increased competition among political elites, largely a response to perceived Habar Jeclo (Isaaq) dominance of key government positions and business interests, has led to periodic

⁷ Constituents note lack of local and municipal councillors' experience, capacity or knowledge of mandate to effectively represent their interests. Crisis Group telephone interview and email correspondence, former minister, Nairobi, July 2015.

⁸ In addition to these misleadingly termed "majority" clans, there are "minority" Gabooye, Yabar, Midgan, Madhibaan, Boon and Tumal clans that have significant numbers throughout Somaliland but occupy a second tier in the clan hierarchy with little access to power.

⁹ All three prospective presidential candidates are from Isaaq sub-clans.

¹⁰ Isaaq sub sub-clans dominate the regions that make up the Borama-Berbera-Hargeysa triangle: Habar Awal (Sacad Muse and Cisse Muse lineages) inhabit mainly Maroodi Jeex and Saaxil respectively; Habar Jeclo inhabit mainly Togdheer, with increasing presence in Maroodi Jeex (particularly Hargeysa); Habar Garhajis (Cidigale and Habar Yunis lineages) are more dispersed, especially Habar Yunis, across Maroodi Jeex, Saaxil, Togdheer and Sanaag. Dhulbahante occupy most of Sool and parts of southern Togdheer; Warsangeli are mainly in Sanaag. Gadabursi and Cisse inhabit the westernmost Awdal region. Other smaller clans are Ugaas Labe and Akisha (both Dir) and Faqashini (part of Ceyr/Habar Gedir/Hawiye sub-clan). See Appendices A, C and D for details of regions, clan genealogies and their approximate locations.

¹¹ Somaliland arose out of armed rebellion in the 1980s led by the Somali National Movement (SNM) against Siad Barre's military junta that ruled Somalia from 1969 to 1991. Somalia was a post-independence union between British Somaliland Protectorate (whose colonial boundaries Somaliland claims) and Italian Somaliland (the rest of Somalia). The SNM was closely identified with Isaaq clans, and Siad Barre's regime was eventually identified with Darood clans. The SNM was not originally secessionist but declared independence in 1991. Renders, *Consider Somaliland*, op. cit. pp. 96-97; Mark Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland* (Indiana, 2008), pp. 115-116.

¹² In addition to Presidency Minister Hersi Ali Haji Hassan (Habar Jeclo) and Awil Haji Omar Bashe (Ibraan/Isaaq, the president's son-in-law), significant power-brokers include the president's wife, Amina Sheikh Mohamed Jirde (Cisse Muse/Habar Awal); and her female confidants, including Finance Minister Zamzam Adan (Sacad Muse/Habar Awal). Crisis Group interviews, civil society official and political affairs specialist, Hargeysa, January 2015.

clan-based anti-government protests and political divisions.¹³ “Your position”, a 2012 local election candidate said, “is not owned by the government, but by the clan. There is no sense of loyalty to the state”.¹⁴

A. *Clan or Political Cartels?*

Resistance to perceived Habar Jeclo dominance is especially acute within the ruling party, Kulmiye, in particular over who will be its next presidential candidate. The destabilising effect of prolonged intra-party competition played out along clan lines has become increasingly evident. When Kulmiye Chairman Musa Bixi announced on 7 May 2014 that he would stand against President Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud “Silanyo”, youths were mobilised and petrol bombs thrown in front of the presidential palace. The capital was locked down, and the special police Rapid Response Unit was deployed. Protests spread to Borama, Burco, Gebiley and Berbera, prompting arrests of critical journalists and Bixi supporters.¹⁵

The intra-Kulmiye conflict can broadly be explained as Bixi’s Sacad Muse (Habar Awal/Isaaq) pressing for their turn to lead against the president’s Habar Jeclo sub-clan, in accordance with a pact reportedly made while Kulmiye was in opposition, but it also points to sharply divergent economic and ideological interests within the ruling elite.¹⁶ The Sacad Muse, once content with remaining in the background, are pushing their claims to protect especially economic interests.¹⁷

The power and political influence of business, whose support has always been critical to Somaliland’s success, has grown, and the line between public and private is increasingly blurred. The weak regulatory environment, including no effective taxation of large companies, private sector oversight or formal banking sector, allows a small group of entrepreneurs to dominate the economy.¹⁸ With government dependent

¹³ The Habar Jeclo hold many key posts: President Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud “Silanyo” (Mohamed Abokor); Presidency Minister Hersi (Ahmed Faraax); Minerals and Resources Minister Hussein Abdi Dualeh (Mohamed Abokor), and Civil Aviation Minister Mohamed Hashi Abdi (Muse Abokor). Discretionary powers are also given to Silanyo’s son-in-law, Bashe (Ibraan/Isaaq, closely affiliated with Habar Jeclo), who was recently appointed representative to the UAE. The head of the Guurti, Suleiman Gaal, is Mohamed Abokor/Habar Jeclo.

¹⁴ Crisis Group interview, Burco candidate, Hargeysa, February 2015.

¹⁵ Crisis Group interviews, civil society official, political expert, community leader, Hargeysa, June 2014. Other scores were settled, including the arrest of the former deputy of security, Abdullahi Abokar, who had accused some cabinet members of Al-Shabaab ties.

¹⁶ This conflict also dates back to SNM leadership fights between Bixi and Silanyo, as well as Bixi’s attempts to ensure his candidacy over Silanyo’s supposed favourite, the former finance minister, Abdiaziz Samale. Crisis Group interview, political analyst, Hargeysa, July 2014.

¹⁷ Crisis Group interviews, parliamentarian, government official, Hargeysa, February 2015. Since the 1994-1996 SNM “civil wars”, the Sacad Muse have dominated trade from the Ethiopian border (Tog Wajacle) to Berbera port (controlled by Cisse Muse/Habar Awal “cousins”) and maintained close links with Djibouti (through Bixi and Djibouti President Omar Guelleh’s wife, Khadria Jama Haid, a Sacad Muse/Habar Awal, and her late brother, Jama Mahmoud Haid, ex-Djibouti Central Bank governor). Sacad Muse economic interests, compete with Habar Jeclo-affiliated firms.

¹⁸ A draft banking law to allow more competition and flexible loan schemes is blocked in parliament, allegedly due to business interests inside government. Crisis Group interview, government officer, Hargeysa, February 2015; “French Ambassador Writes to Silanyo”, Indian Ocean Newsletter, 15 December 2014. Regulation is mainly an attorney general duty under the Companies Law. “Constitution of the Republic of Somaliland, translated with extended annotations and explanatory notes by Ibrahim Hashi Jama, April 2005”, at www.somalilandlaw.com.

on informal public-private partnerships for development and basic services, business can block higher taxes and greater regulation.¹⁹

Elections are funded not only by donors but increasingly also by partisan business interests. Elites see government posts as the means to access resources and protect economic interests despite constitutional provisions against the president, vice president and immediate families engaging in business in office.²⁰ Foreign companies bidding to control the Berbera port development and hydrocarbon exploration are closely linked to internal government rivalries.²¹ Business competitors are known to mobilise armed, clan-based militias to support or oppose big commercial developments.²² Attempts to privatise the Berbera oil terminal resulted in an unseemly parliamentary brawl and troop deployments.²³

B. *The Diminishing Democratic Dividend*

Most Somalilanders believe regular, credible elections are critical for peace. Six polls (including one referendum) since introduction of multi-party politics in 2001 and peaceful transfers of power is an enviable record that ensures donor support and is part of the strategy to achieve international recognition.²⁴ Yet, it has distracted attention away from shortcomings in the wider democratisation agenda, such as the Guurti's overdue election, political parties' internal rules and the judiciary's independence.²⁵ Opposition and civil society have failed to press for greater reform and inclusion, contributing to a "culture of silence".²⁶ The result is the hybrid system's unhealthy stasis.

Numerically significant "minority" clans in urban areas and borderlands are losing political representation, especially under majoritarian democratic politics. The tri-party system, based on the three parties with the most votes in regional council elections and meant to prevent emergence of single-(Isaaq sub-) clan-based parties in national

¹⁹ In 2012-2013, tax revenue from the profitable telecom industry was \$485,000 and \$782,000. A 10 to 15 per cent levy could raise an extra \$40 million-\$60 million annually. "Somaliland Public Expenditure Report ...", World Bank Special Report, October 2014.

²⁰ Business funding of political parties has helped inflate the cost of elections, "The Economics of Elections", op. cit., pp. 10, 14, 24, 26. See Article 85, Chapter Three, "Constitution", op. cit.

²¹ A deal giving French company Bolloré the management contract for Berbera port collapsed, and Dubai-based P&O is now the rumoured favoured bidder. "Dubai renews discussions in order to counter Bolloré on Berbera", Indian Ocean Newsletter, 15 May 2015; Crisis Group interview, civil society official and political specialist, Hargeysa, January 2015.

²² Protests followed privatisation bids; interested clans sent armed militias to protect interests in the sale of the Berbera livestock quarantine holding area, the Berbera cement factory and Hargeysa's electricity plant. "Somaliland Private Sector Gives New Lease of Life for Ageing Power Plant as HEC", Wargane (online), 10 January 2015; Crisis Group interview, academic researcher, Hargeysa, February 2015.

²³ Parliament considers the terminal a national asset and queries the deal's transparency. Crisis Group telephone interview, Berbera local government official, Hargeysa, September 2015. "Speakers trade blows as session aborts", Somalilandpress, 12 September 2015.

²⁴ The polls include a referendum (2001) and presidential (2003 and 2010) parliamentary (2005) and local/municipal council (2002 and 2012) elections.

²⁵ In 2009, Crisis Group said the principle obstacles to democratisation in Somaliland were a winner-takes-all style of political leadership, manipulation of clan loyalties for political purposes and disregard for rule of law; this has not changed and if anything is more pronounced. Crisis Group Africa Report N°67, *Somaliland: A Way out of the Electoral Crisis*, 7 December 2009, p. 2.

²⁶ Crisis Group interviews, opposition leader, June 2014; civil society official, November 2015, both Hargeysa.

elections, has largely reinforced overall Isaaq dominance.²⁷ While it requires cross-clan coalitions, many smaller and non-Isaaq clans have seen their stake diminish. Thus in the 2012 pre-election vetting process to select the official parties, small clan support for Xaqsoor lost out to large clan blocs; large Isaaq sub-clans now dominate both the ruling party and opposition. Violent protests erupted in Hargeysa, Xudun (Sool), Erigavo (Sanaag), Seylac and Lughaya (Awdal) after announcement of the local election results.²⁸

C. *Still Nascent Institutions*

The Guurti is the primary institution through which small and minority clans feel represented, though long overdue for reconstitution; most members have held their seats since 1997.²⁹ Its role in wrangles over postponement of presidential and parliamentary elections, especially its unilateral 11 May decision to extend the government by 21 months, brought heavy donor criticism.³⁰ Its authority was originally based on the “interim” 1997 constitution, including the “contingencies clauses” that allow it to postpone such elections in the event of “internal instability”.³¹ Though its resolutions can be overturned or amended by the other house or an appeal to the Supreme Court, there is reluctance to challenge a Guurti decision.³² Somaliland’s institutions incline toward preserving stability rather than upholding the rule of law or constitutionality, and the public, for the most part, seems to support this.³³

²⁷ Crisis Group Africa Report N° 66, *Somaliland: Democracy and its Discontents*, 28 July 2003.

²⁸ Crisis Group interview, political analyst, Hargeysa, October 2014; Appendix B. At least eleven people were killed in violence after announcement of preliminary results in Hargeysa (Maroodi Jeex), Hudun and Lughaya. Cisse accused Gadabursi Vice President Saylici of electoral offenses and unfair campaigning in Salal; he accused the government of aiding an Cisse mayor. “SONSAF Report on the Local Council Election ...”, Somalilandpress, 30 November 2012.

²⁹ Crisis Group interview, ex-minister, Nairobi, July 2015. The 1997 Guurti selection was driven by urban-based clan elders, not clan consensus. Renders, *Consider Somaliland*, p. 102.

³⁰ “Somaliland Parliamentary and Presidential Elections”, press release for International Community and Democratisation Steering Committee, 14 May 2015. The 11 May Guurti announcement was at odds with the eleven-month extension from the National Electoral Commission. It cited legal shortfalls, eastern insecurity, party ineptitude and even the weather. “House Decision on Extension of the Terms of the Presidency and Houses of Parliament”, 11 May 2015.

³¹ The clauses were introduced in the 1997 interim Constitution after Somaliland’s civil wars.

³² The constitution authorises the Supreme Court to “adjudicate on disputes between the governmental bodies and the public and between the members of the public” and “which relate to compliance with ... the Constitution”. Articles 97, 98, Chapter Four, “Constitution”, op. cit. See Ibrahim Hashi Jama, “The term extensions are wrong in law and wrong for democracy: A call for an immediate Constitutional Court review and a statutory reform”, Somalilandlaw.com, 16 May 2015. The Guurti postponed local council elections in 2007, 2009 and 2010.

³³ Crisis Group interviews, civil society officials, community leaders, Hargeysa, May-November 2014. A civil society leader said, “the ... population doesn’t care who becomes president; they are easily mobilised and don’t know the issues. As long as there is peace, they ... don’t care”.

IV. Disquiet on the Eastern and Western Fronts

The perception that state-building is overly centralised and captured by particular clans, has produced a strong sense of marginalisation in the lightly ruled east and a more muted one in the historically better integrated west. The growing identification (and confusion) of state authority with one clan family – Somaliland with Isaaq/Dir, Puntland with Harti/Darood (and SFG with Hawiye) means administrative disputes are informed by long-standing clan relationships, including enmities. This presents opportunities for informal dialogue – which regularly happens along various channels – and for retreat into clan particularism and feud, all the more deadly since state militias often take sides. This is another reason for institutionalising regular dialogue within a regional framework without prejudicing the competing claims over legal-political sovereignty.

A. The East

Since 1991, the Sool, Sanaag and southern Togdheer regions (the latter known as Cayn to those who reject Somaliland's claims) have posed the most consistent state-building challenges, especially after Puntland's creation in 1998. Over the past decade, the rivalry between the Isaaq and Dhulbahante has become more militarised and Dhulbahante loyalties more fractured. This has occurred against a background of deteriorating links between the "state" and traditional authorities that are vital for resolving endemic local conflict between clans and sub-clans.³⁴

Tension escalated into conflict following President Dahir Riyale Kahin's infamous 2002 "visit" to Lascanod, Sool's capital, followed by Puntland's 2003 push to create Heylaan and Cayn local administrations in Somaliland-claimed territory.³⁵ The election of the then Puntland president, Abdullahi Yusuf, as president of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia in October 2004 diverted Puntland's interests to Mogadishu and gave Somaliland a freer hand in the east. The October 2007 defection of Puntland's then interior minister, Ahmed Abdi Xaabsade, to Somaliland, allowed it to "re-occupy" Lascanod and renewed localised conflict.³⁶

The Habar Jeclo's rise with Silanyo's victory in 2010 further "nationalised" long-standing local disputes and grievances between it and Dhulbahante clans (particularly the Faraax Garaad).³⁷ The president did not sustain his attempts in 2012-2013 to

³⁴ For further analysis, see Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, op. cit., pp. 36-37, 97; Menkhaus, "Conflict Assessment", op. cit., pp. 65-69.

³⁵ Riyale's visit, the first by a Somaliland president, was accompanied by a dozen pickup trucks mounting heavy machine guns and some 200 soldiers. Crisis Group Report, *Democracy and its Discontents*, op. cit.

³⁶ In fact, it was a "re-defection", since Xaabsade was Somaliland's parliamentary speaker until 1997, when Egal's favouring of Gadabursi prompted a switch to Puntland. Later, unhappy with reduction of Dhulbahante stakes in Puntland under Adde Muse's administration in 2007, Xaabsade organised Dhulbahante militias close to him to enter Lascanod in Somaliland's name, leading to fighting between pro- and anti-Somaliland lineages. Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, op. cit. pp. 68-69.

³⁷ Most fighting has been over land/grazing disputes, historically ownership of the important Kalshaale zone and access to the Haud region (mostly in Ethiopia, but more recently over what is seen as "state-backed" Isaaq expansion through grazing enclosures and well ownership). For background, see I. M. Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali: Revised, Updated & Expanded* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 150-153. A Dhulbahante local politician said, "the SNM stood up against Siad Barre and

ease tensions through nominations and local ceasefire agreements.³⁸ Development in marginalised regions was driven by Isaaq-based business interests and accompanied by increased military presence.³⁹

The possibility of oil and gas exploitation further strained centre-Dhulbahante relations, and local resistance evolved into claims for an autonomous “Khatumo” state.⁴⁰ Armed resistance to foreign contracts and local hiring of Isaaq from Burco instead of Dhulbahante from Caynabo forced the Anglo-Turkish exploration company Genel to suspend operations in September 2013.⁴¹

Tension escalated in June 2014, when both governments appeared to use clan grievances in disputed borderlands to muster flagging domestic political support.⁴² Somaliland forces disrupted the third “Khaatumo conference”, occupying its self-proclaimed capital, Taleex, that month and creating a new electoral district, Hasyimo.⁴³ Puntland’s promotion of Dhulbahante politicians, especially Abdullahi Omar Amaye (an avowed unionist from Buhoodle in Sool) as vice president in January 2014, had weakened Khatumo and irritated Somaliland; in August 2014 Xaabsade returned his allegiance to Puntland, as did a much respected Dhulbahante traditional leader.

Dialogue with Somaliland is more open in neighbouring Warsangeli-inhabited Sanaag region, but Harti/Darood residents are no less resistant to Puntland’s and Somaliland’s overlapping administrative claims.⁴⁴ Yet, as in Sool and southern Togdheer, the administration in Sanaag has an increasingly military face, due, at least in part, to the rise of militant movements and conflict between Warsangeli clans and

against marginalisation, but now they are marginalising us in order to maintain their continued ‘independence’”. Crisis Group interview, Hargeysa, February 2013.

³⁸ Silanyo and Saleban Isse Ahmed “Xaglotoosiye”, then leader of the first local armed resistance, Hagganka Midaynta iyo Badbaadinta Gobolada SSC ee Soomaalia (Unity and Salvation Authority of the Sool, Sanaag and Cay regions of Somalia, SSC) signed a ceasefire in August 2012. The president then appointed Kayse Abdi Yusuf, an SSC field commander, as minister of state for national reconciliation for eastern regions and, in 2013, Xaglotoosiye as health minister.

³⁹ Crisis Group interviews, member of parliament, regional expert, Hargeysa, June 2014.

⁴⁰ The SSC movement in 2009 was created by diaspora and traditional clan leaders, drawing support primarily from Dhulbahante/Faarax Garaad (Harti/Darood) lineages in the Haud. Its forces attacked Somaliland positions south and south-west of Lascaanood in 2011, with major fighting around Kalshaale. Deep leadership divisions and mass assassinations in Lascaanood, perceived as Somaliland-orchestrated, undermined confidence in its ability to protect communities. It lost ground to the more ambitious, self-declared Khatumo state (initially established in August 2012 in the context of the U.S. “dual track” policy that gave support to emerging “regions of stability” against the underperforming Transitional Federal Government).

⁴¹ Genel signed a deal in August 2012 but in 2013 withdrew its expatriates due to insecurity; the government created a paramilitary Oil Protection Unit. Crisis Group interview, energy minister, Hargeysa, July 2014. The behaviour of other paramilitaries, such as the Rapid Response Unit, is perceived as clan-partisan. Crisis Group interviews, parliamentarian, activist against Genel, Hargeysa, July, November 2014; Menkhaus, “Conflict Assessment”, op. cit., pp. 65–66.

⁴² In January 2014, Abdiweli Gaas narrowly won the Puntland presidency and immediately escalated rhetoric on the disputed areas, departing from President Faroole’s quietest policies and anti-Khatumo stance.

⁴³ Khatumo suffers from divisions within its predominantly Dhulbahante support base, no consistent external backer, lack of revenue and failure to liberate Lascaanood. Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, op. cit., pp. 117–118.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 123.

Puntland in 2009.⁴⁵ Al-Shabaab, capitalising on local conflicts and regional tensions, has a strong foothold in the Golis mountain range.⁴⁶

B. *The West: The Awdal Dimension*

For the Gadabursi and Cisse inhabitants of Awdal region, fealty to Somaliland has always been less contentious. Cisse interests are firmly in Djibouti and Ethiopia. The Gadabursi have adroitly navigated Somaliland's de facto independence, playing a third-party mediating role in intra-Isaaq conflicts during the first decade that carved out a special niche in its politics.⁴⁷ This was evident in the smooth succession of the Gadabursi vice president, Riyale, after President Egal's sudden death in 2002. His 2003 election encouraged his clan's further support, including from its more sceptical diaspora. Even after Riyale lost to Silanyo in 2010, Gadabursi continued to prosper politically, with Abdirahman Saylici as vice president and thirteen members of parliament.⁴⁸

Yet, widespread malpractice during the 2012 local council elections, with Cisse and Gadabursi accusing the government and each other of rigging votes, soured communal relations within the Awdal, and between it and Hargeysa.⁴⁹ Tension between the vice president and president came to the fore in 2014, when Saylici compared his "figurehead" role to the presidency minister's unchecked power and apparent growth of Isaaq influence across Somaliland institutions.⁵⁰

Recent developments such as the closure of the Ethiopian and Djiboutian borders (hurting trade) following the May 2014 terrorist attacks in Djibouti, as well as economic grievances over taxes and customs receipts flowing to Isaaq-controlled Berbera at the expense of the local Awdal ports (Saylac and Lughaya), have brought further dissatisfaction in the western borderlands.⁵¹ This has fuelled hostility to Kulmiye and the government, including the rise of a small anti-Somaliland militia movement

⁴⁵ Silanyo visited Lasqoray in March 2014 (allegedly in connection with the Ceeldaahir-Badhan-Erigavo road project), and positioned troops in Hingalol (Sanaag), leading to local community protests. Crisis Group interview, Sanaag member of parliament, Hargeysa, July 2014.

⁴⁶ Harti/Darood outliers like the Warsengeli, Dashishle and smaller Ali Saleban (Majereten) have become entangled with Al-Shabaab (since its then local leader Atam announced allegiances in 2011) to express discontent and seek alternative means of political leverage. Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°97, *Somalia: Puntland's Punted Polls*, December 2013, pp. 14-16.

⁴⁷ Even during the intra-Kulmiye conflict in June 2014, Gadabursi sultans from Borama came to mediate, concerned about stability and Somaliland's image. "Section of Habar Awal Elders Pledges Support for President Silanyo 2015 Presidential Bid", *Somalilandpress*, 15 July 2015.

⁴⁸ The current demarcation of regions (dating back to the 1960s) arguably favours an over-representation of Gadabursi in parliament. Crisis Group interview, donors, March 2015.

⁴⁹ "SONSAF Report", op. cit. Violence erupted in Saylac and Lughaye, when ten local council members refused to take their posts until an Cisse appeal of the results had been decided. Crisis Group interview, clan elder, Borama, November 2013. The Cisse accused Gadabursi Vice President Saylici of electoral offenses and unfair campaigning in Saylac; the Gadabursi accused the central government of supporting an Cisse mayor. In an attempt to redress Cisse grievances the government, with Turkish aid, plans to improve Djibouti-Saylac-Borama roads. "Somaliland: Turkey-funded Saylac Djibouti Road Commences", *Somaliland Sun*, 21 June 2014.

⁵⁰ His August 2014 appointment to champion decentralisation was largely symbolic.

⁵¹ The vice president and Awdal elders initially backed Silanyo in the intra-Kulmiye conflict, but Awdal ministers and legislators did not support the October no-confidence vote. Widespread protests erupted, and a number of Awdal legislators reportedly split from Kulmiye, threatening to boycott the elections. Crisis Group interview, civil society member, Hargeysa, June 2014.

– opposition that has received at least nominal political encouragement from the SFG in Mogadishu.⁵²

Eastern district elections have always had serious shortcomings; even the 2001 constitutional referendum was boycotted in large parts of eastern Sanaag and Sool.⁵³ 2017's outlook is no better, especially with the non-Isaaq Dir and Harti/Darood pressing to participate in selection of the new SFG, when its mandate ends in August 2016.⁵⁴ The Somaliland government, with support from election donors (and Ethiopian authorities at the tri-border point), will need to discuss with neighbouring Somali authorities clear parameters to reduce conflict risk.

V. Underlying Islamism

Contrary to popular perception that Somaliland has been immune to the rise of radical Islamism in the Horn of Africa, there is a growing extremist threat in the eastern borders and a continuing presence of more radical elements in urban centres. Even before the civil war, Islam in the northern regions was seen as particularly conservative, influenced in part by the close proximity (including trading and education links) to Gulf states.⁵⁵ Islamic groups such as Waxda (Al-Wahdat Al-Shabaab al-Islamiya, Unity of Muslim Youth), inclined toward the wider Muslim Brotherhood, arose in the late 1980s in Hargeysa and Burco.⁵⁶

Suppressed by Siad Barre, Waxda found common cause with the Somali National Movement (SNM), viewed resistance to the regime as jihad and established a strong presence in Borama, Hargeysa and Burco.⁵⁷ It was sidelined after 1991 due to support for Somalia's continued unity. Islamist, including Salafist, influence continued, particularly in Burco, where government reach is limited, and Lascanood (where non-armed Al-Itiscam was later established). Local clan rivalry between Habar Garhajis (mainly Habar Yunis) and Habar Jeclo (also Dhulbahante) gave Islamists, who stood above clan politics, more opportunity.⁵⁸

However, Sufi orders (especially the Qaadiriya) – firmly integrated into the clan system and strongly represented among political elites – provided the dominant

⁵² Led by Sultan Suleiman Ali in Borama in August 2014 and by Sultan Wabar in Qulujeed (on the Awdal/Ethiopia border) in January 2015.

⁵³ In Somaliland's 2010 elections, Puntland militia prevented polling in specific locations close to the border in Sanaag; Khatumo forces also prevented voting in towns under their control, in particular Taleex. Crisis Group interview, civil society member, June 2014.

⁵⁴ In processes to choose Somalia parliaments, especially post-2000, elders from disputed regions selected the eight Dhulbahante and nine Warsengeli members. Despite official disapproval, including isolated arrests, most Somaliland clans, not just exclusively those of the borderlands, maintain a political stake in the Somali Federal Government and its member states and regions where they have a presence, including Mogadishu, Puntland and Lower Juba/Kismayo.

⁵⁵ Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, op. cit. p. 179.

⁵⁶ Waxda, not to be confused with Al-Shabaab, was linked to the wider Islamist al-Itihaad al-Islamiya (AIAI) from the mid-80s, but distanced itself when it began to promote armed jihad.

⁵⁷ The Somaliland flag (an inverted version of SNM's red, white, green flag) also includes the Muslim *shahada* (profession of faith) attributed to Waxda's influence. Crisis Group interview, historian and political specialist, July 2014.

⁵⁸ Burco is home to Sheikh Ali Warsame, an AIAI founder and local iman; and Al-Shabaab founding member and former Guantanamo prisoner Ismail Mahmoud Ale. Salafis reportedly hold particular sway over Burco elders. Crisis Group interview, Hargeysa, February 2013.

public religious discourse. The existence of a relatively functioning government and state identity further mitigated the appeal of a supra-clan Islamist agenda. Most Islamists were forced to operate within clan confines, paying lip-service to the Somaliland cause; the state co-opted many “sheikhs” of various Islamic inclinations, making them *ulemaadowla* (official clerics). As with Somaliland’s hybrid system as a whole, the clan role in mediating Islamism has been both an asset that limits such movements’ authority and appeal, and a liability that gives impunity to some individuals who pose real security risks.⁵⁹

A. *Embedded Islamists*

From the early 2000s, many sympathisers joined the more politically active and armed Islamists in Somalia, including Salafi-jihadi groups.⁶⁰ Extremist elements, however, retained a foothold in Somaliland and carried out armed incidents in 2003 and 2004.⁶¹ The 2006 Ethiopian intervention against the Islamic Courts Union and the resulting 2007-2008 nationalist, Islamist armed uprising (*muqawamah*) against the “occupation” pushed many unarmed Islamists back to the relative safety of Hargeysa, Burco and Borama.⁶² They found a receptive audience discontented with Somaliland’s relative stagnation, especially government inability to provide basic education and health services.⁶³ Islamists with good connections to charities and resources offered well organised and financed education and social services that more parochial and poorer Sufi orders could not.⁶⁴

Outward expressions of Salafi influence are evident in urban areas, particularly abandonment of the traditional *dira* (the long, colourful female dress) for the *abiya* (a loose monochrome over-garment) and *neqab* (a face veil, covering all but eyes), as well as the *khamis* (long, knee-length shirt) for men; the segregation of sexes in public places such as restaurants is also common. Many parents prefer the education at well-funded and organised madrasas to low quality, expensive government schools. New Islamic faculties have been established at Hargeysa and Golis Universities.⁶⁵ As in much of East Africa, unregulated funding, mainly from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (and

⁵⁹ Somaliland authorities have been unwilling to take legal action against sheikhs who have publicly declared support for terrorist acts; see as an example regarding the Westgate (Nairobi) attack, www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4bD1EpTSL4, 28 September 2013.

⁶⁰ Leading Islamic Courts Union figures and supporters from Somaliland were living in Mogadishu, including Mohamed Ibrahim Suley and Sheik Barud Gurhan (Hargeysa) and Sheikh Bashir Salad (Burco). Crisis Group interviews, Hargeysa, February 2013.

⁶¹ Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, op. cit., p. 181.

⁶² Many Somalilanders (as well as Puntlanders) fought in the south, including with Al-Shabaab. Crisis Group interview, political expert, Hargeysa, July 2013.

⁶³ Crisis Group interviews, political analyst, Hargeysa, November 2014 and February 2015.

⁶⁴ Crisis Group interview, religious scholar, Hargeysa, May 2014.

⁶⁵ “[It is evident] people want to go to nice, well-equipped schools; here that means wahhabi schools”. Crisis Group interview, political expert, community leader, Hargeysa, June 2014. There is little regulation of teachers or curriculum or coordination of religion and education ministers. Crisis Group interview, government minister, Hargeysa, July 2014. Hargeysa University is socially more conservative, reportedly no longer permitting theatre and music groups.

more recently Turkey and the UAE) for madrasas and mosques and diaspora returns from the Gulf have increased the influence of reformist interpretations of Islam.⁶⁶

Al-Islah (the local Muslim Brotherhood franchise) and Al-Itiscam (Salafi inclined) are active, the former particularly in education, development and philanthropy, the latter especially in business; both assert greater political influence than in the past.⁶⁷ Popular perception of their differences are minimal, and public disagreements between them, marked throughout the 1990s, have lessened.⁶⁸ President Silanyo has engaged Islamist groups more openly than his predecessors and has considered forming a national *ulema* (council, in accordance with Article 115 of the constitution) to have final say on religious matters and oversight of madrasa curriculum and religious funding.⁶⁹ There is still opposition to institutionalising clerical influence, but he has already put powerful religious figures in government, partly in exchange for the financial and political support they gave Kulmiye in 2010;⁷⁰ prominent, party-supported businesses, are perceived to have strong links to Islamist-oriented business networks in Mogadishu, Djibouti and the Gulf.⁷¹

B. *Laissez-faire Counter-terrorism*

Overt extremist activity has been episodic, with isolated, serious incidents in the early 2000s and big, coordinated attacks in Hargeysa in 2008. Strong intelligence help from Djibouti, Ethiopia and the UK has aided identification of potential sleeper cells and quick response to threats, mainly in Hargeysa and Lascanood, but some believe counter-terrorism is becoming less effective.⁷² Irregular payments to the army and special protection units have affected morale. Growing distance between political elites and local constituencies, particularly in some border areas, Burco, Borama and Berbera, may also reduce intelligence.⁷³

While Al-Shabaab has no confirmed training facility in Somaliland, many question the government's ability to eliminate cells, particularly in the peripheral areas (especially east of Erigavo and south of Burco).⁷⁴ High unemployment, particularly in urban centres such as Burco, Borama and Berbera, leave youth particularly vulnera-

⁶⁶ Religious messages that preach stability and peace and denounce government corruption resonate with the public, but there is anxiety that Islamism favours reunion with Somalia. Crisis Group interview, community leader, university lecturer, Hargeysa, November 2015.

⁶⁷ Crisis Group interview, opinion leader, Hargeysa, February 2015.

⁶⁸ Crisis Group interview, political specialist and community leader, Hargeysa, November 2015.

⁶⁹ Crisis Group interview, community leader and journalist, July 2014. The formation of a national council is suggested in the 2001 constitution.

⁷⁰ Islamist accommodation predated Kulmiye's rule, especially after the death of President Egal, who cold-shouldered Islamist groups. His successor, Riyale cautiously formed strategic alliances with prominent Islamist leaders (particularly after the surge in extremist activity in 2003-2004), hoping to counter more radical elements. Crisis Group interviews, community leader and parliamentarian, November 2014.

⁷¹ Crisis Group interviews, parliamentarian, political analyst, Hargeysa, June 2014.

⁷² Intelligence oversight by the president's office instead of the interior minister is one reason given. Crisis Group interview, former minister, Nairobi, July 2015.

⁷³ Crisis Group interviews, parliamentarian and elder, Hargeysa, February 2014.

⁷⁴ A self-appointed "religious police", similar to Al-Shabaab's religious police force, reportedly operates in Hargeysa and Burco. Crisis Group interviews and observation, community leader, civil society official, Hargeysa, February 2013, June 2014.

ble to recruitment.⁷⁵ Al-Shabaab draws on an intricate network of clan and close family ties to maintain a strong, discreet foothold across Somaliland, as the attempted April 2014 Hargeysa prison break by its inmates and the May 2014 Djibouti attack indicate.⁷⁶ This includes a foothold in the far eastern Golis Mountains (in an area of Sanaag contested by Somaliland and Puntland). Close relatives, even sons, of politicians (including the most senior) have reportedly died fighting for Al-Shabaab; others are widely believed to come to Somaliland for treatment of injuries or rest.⁷⁷

Unlike in Puntland and the SFG (which have both declared war on Al-Shabaab), the government has made it national policy to avoid antagonistic rhetoric and has banned discussing the movement within the cabinet.⁷⁸ Puntland regularly accuses Somaliland of fostering an Al-Shabaab presence on its territory.⁷⁹ The Yemen crisis, with a reported influx of weapons and refugees directly into Berbera and smaller ports, and the relatively few controls on movement (despite international efforts), is likely to strengthen long-standing links between al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Al-Shabaab; high-level Al-Shabaab envoys were reported in the AQAP-controlled Yemeni port of Mukalla in April 2015.⁸⁰

The government's perceived laissez-faire attitude toward Al-Shabaab deeply concerns its allies, especially Ethiopia and Djibouti.⁸¹ The quick turnover of security chiefs since 2010 has not inspired confidence.⁸² Intelligence sharing with Puntland and the SFG is weak, unlike under President Riyale.⁸³ The growing extremist threat demands regular dialogue and coordinated initiatives. International actors should push to restart regular Somaliland-Somalia dialogue and aim to include Puntland.

⁷⁵ Over 70 per cent of the population is under 30; youth unemployment is approximately 67 per cent. Data shared with Crisis Group from a 2014 demographic, quantitative survey. Crisis Group interview, international NGO, Hargeysa, February 2014.

⁷⁶ Familial links identify certain sub-clans with Al-Shabaab: Ahmed Abdi Godane (Al-Shabaab emir killed by a U.S. drone in September 2014) was Arab/Isaaq; his second-in-command, Ibrahim Haji Jama Mee'aad "Ibrahim Al-Afghani", was Sacad Muse/Habar Awal/Isaaq (killed in the July 2013 Barawe "putsch"). Al-Shabaab's new emir, Sheikh Ahmad Omar Abu Ubeydah "Ahmed Diriyee", has close maternal links to Somaliland (Godane's and Abu Ubeydah's mothers are sisters, from the Raaska Reer Sugulle/Habar Yunis/Isaaq).

⁷⁷ In April 2015, Al-Shabaab released a propaganda video alleging (for the first time) that Silanyo's son Abdisalan "Marwan" was active in Golis in 2010. "Warbaahinta Alshabaab oo baahisay muu gaalka will dhalinyaraq oo lagu dilay Galgalla, Sheeqayna inuu dhalay M/waynaha Soomaaliland" [Group publishes outlook of young killed in Galgala, names Somaliland], www.puntlanddone.com, 4 April 2015. Crisis Group interview, Hargeysa, political activist, civil society official, community leader, January 2015.

⁷⁸ Crisis Group interviews, parliamentarian, community leader, May, June 2014.

⁷⁹ See Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°99, *Somalia: Al-Shabaab – It Will Be a Long War*, 26 June 2014. The first comment was made in March 2014. "Puntland Leader Accuses Somaliland of Financing Al-Shabaab", Garowe Online, 25 March 2014.

⁸⁰ Crisis Group interview, political analyst, Nairobi, June 2015.

⁸¹ Crisis Group interview, member of parliament, Hargeysa, June 2014.

⁸² There have been at least three security advisers since Silanyo's election in 2010: Mohamed Nuur, Hussein Kenyate and Jama Mohamed Botan. Crisis Group interviews, parliamentarian and political activist, Hargeysa, June, July 2014.

⁸³ Riyale, who was senior in Siad Barre's National Security Service, used connections to share with ex-Kismayo and Puntland colleagues. Crisis Group observation, Hargeysa, June, July 2014.

VI. Dilemmas of Dialogue

Talks with the federal government have never been easy, and Somaliland has remained officially distant from Somali-wide peace conferences since the 1991 Burco declaration of independence.⁸⁴ Kulmiye's tenure had seen the most sustained engagement with Mogadishu, until talks broke down in March 2015.⁸⁵ Silanyo's participation in the February 2012 London Somalia Conference shrewdly indicated a new openness to engage with Somalia without prejudice to the independence agenda.⁸⁶ It brought dividends, even though he refused to attend the next London Somalia Conference.⁸⁷ Turkey then took the lead in facilitating dialogue, but without a clear objective. Its role was questioned after the first April 2013 Ankara meeting acknowledged Somaliland and Somalia as equal partners, a seeming concession on independence that unwisely raised the talk's stakes.⁸⁸

The government first approached those talks with a strong show of solidarity; representatives from all three political parties were in Ankara in April 2013. This was not repeated in the July 2013 session, and the opposition parties, looking for ammunition against a beleaguered administration, seized on any hint of independence backsliding.⁸⁹ The SFG had to defend its own position against anti-secessionist politicians and elders from Dir and Harti/Darood clans, who accused it of creating an irreversible precedent on Somaliland's status.⁹⁰

Silanyo's government, like its predecessors, has since slowly returned to public opinion's lowest common denominator – uncompromising independence – and become more hardline in dealings with Somalia.⁹¹ The SFG has become absorbed with

⁸⁴ The 2000 "Arta" conference in Djibouti was the notable exception; many Somalilanders participated and faced stiff penalties upon return to Somaliland.

⁸⁵ Change began with Foreign Minister Mohamed Abdullahi Omar's attendance at a Wilton Park Somalia conference in 2011 and a UN Security Council delegation meeting in Nairobi.

⁸⁶ After a preparatory meeting at the UK foreign secretary's official residence, Silanyo and then TFG President Sheikh Sharif held in Dubai in June 2012 the first face-to-face presidential meeting since Somaliland declared independence in 1991. The general framework is in "Somaliland/Somalia talks: Chevening House Declaration", Somalilandpress, 22 June 2012.

⁸⁷ After the TFG concluded in August 2012, the second London Conference (May 2013) was co-chaired by UK Prime Minister David Cameron and the new SFG president, Hassan Sheikh. Prior to the conference, Silanyo met with the prime minister. Though he could not be persuaded to join the conference, that laid the groundwork for Somaliland's special funding arrangement under the New Deal for Somalia, unveiled later in London.

⁸⁸ The Ankara Communiqué, Article 3, states "the Dialogue is between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Government of Somaliland". Turkish foreign ministry, 13 April 2013.

⁸⁹ Opposition party (UCID and Wadani) chairmen, Faisal Ali Warabe and Abdirahman Irroy, were excluded from the July Ankara talks. "UCID Leader Warns Mogadishu that Agreement in Turkey will not be Honoured", *Somaliland Sun*, 6 July 2013. Disgruntled politicians formed the Council of Consultation and National Guidance, "Golaha Wada Tashiga iyo Toosinta Qaranka", commonly referred to as the Madasha, comprising ex-SNM members, ex-ministers and politicians who lost out in the 2012 party vetting. Crisis Group interview, political actor, May 2014.

⁹⁰ The SFG denied that Article 3 of the Ankara Communiqué amounted to recognition of Somaliland's separate status: "We have not recognised Somaliland as a state. We have not breached the constitution". Crisis Group interview, SFG officers involved in the agreement, Mogadishu, February 2013. Some Dhulbahante and Warsangeli diaspora communities asked their SFG parliament members to resign in protest.

⁹¹ Crisis Group interviews, senior Kulmiye party official, civil society member, Hargeysa, February 2013.

its own fraying legitimacy and less willing to compromise on unity. There have been no talks since March, when the SFG appointed “provocative” Isaaq and Dulbahante delegates.⁹²

Somaliland suspects Turkey’s mediation is ultimately pro-union, given its investment in the Mogadishu government; its attempts at track two diplomacy have caused suspicions.⁹³ Hargeysa says the talks deliberately avoid addressing substantive issues the SFG wants to duck, such as airspace management, and block other facilitators who might allow more constructive engagement.⁹⁴ Foreign Affairs Minister Bixi Yonis said he is open to future talks if they have wider international support and are not in Turkey or under its mediation.⁹⁵ The UAE are an interesting third-party alternative as facilitators and have equally good relations with Mogadishu, but have made greater investments and concession to Somaliland’s special status than Turkey and are viewed with less suspicion regionally.⁹⁶

Discussions are unlikely to resume before the yet-to-be-decided process to end the current SFG mandate in Somalia in 2016 and Somaliland’s 2017 elections, though there is arguably a pressing need for agreement on how the two processes can occur without undermining one another. Somaliland and Somalia have mutual security concerns and need to cooperate on such other important matters as resource management and agree on aid allocation and access to international financial instruments. A working relationship is also vital for progress on a permanent Somalia constitution, though neither side is strong enough politically to make any concession on independence or unity.

Talks should also be complemented by a public debate in Somaliland about relations with the south, still a taboo subject despite the deep links especially in business, religious and clan affairs. Failure to do so is likely to drive a larger wedge between government and people, particularly those in the west and east who may feel a wider union could balance the influence of the larger clans.

⁹² Somaliland’s request that the SFG name no one of Somaliland origin to its delegation was respected until the March talks. Crisis Group interview, opinion leader, Hargeysa, July 2015.

⁹³ In May 2014, Turkey reportedly funded 45 Hawiye elders to visit Somaliland for unclear objectives. Crisis Group interviews, donors and parliamentarians, Hargeysa, May 2014.

⁹⁴ What little has been achieved (eg, on airspace) has reportedly been undermined by Turkey’s refusal to give official endorsement. Crisis Group interview, civil society official, government minister, July 2014.

⁹⁵ “International Observer’s Participation a Must for Somalia Talks Resumption”, *Somaliland Sun*, 28 March 2015.

⁹⁶ The UAE are near to accepting the Somaliland passport; the Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation has development projects in Hargeysa as well as food assistance programs. Somaliland has reportedly allowed UAE military aircraft participating in the Saudi-led Operation Decisive Storm campaign against the Huthi insurgents in Yemen to use Berbera airport for refuelling and emergency landing.

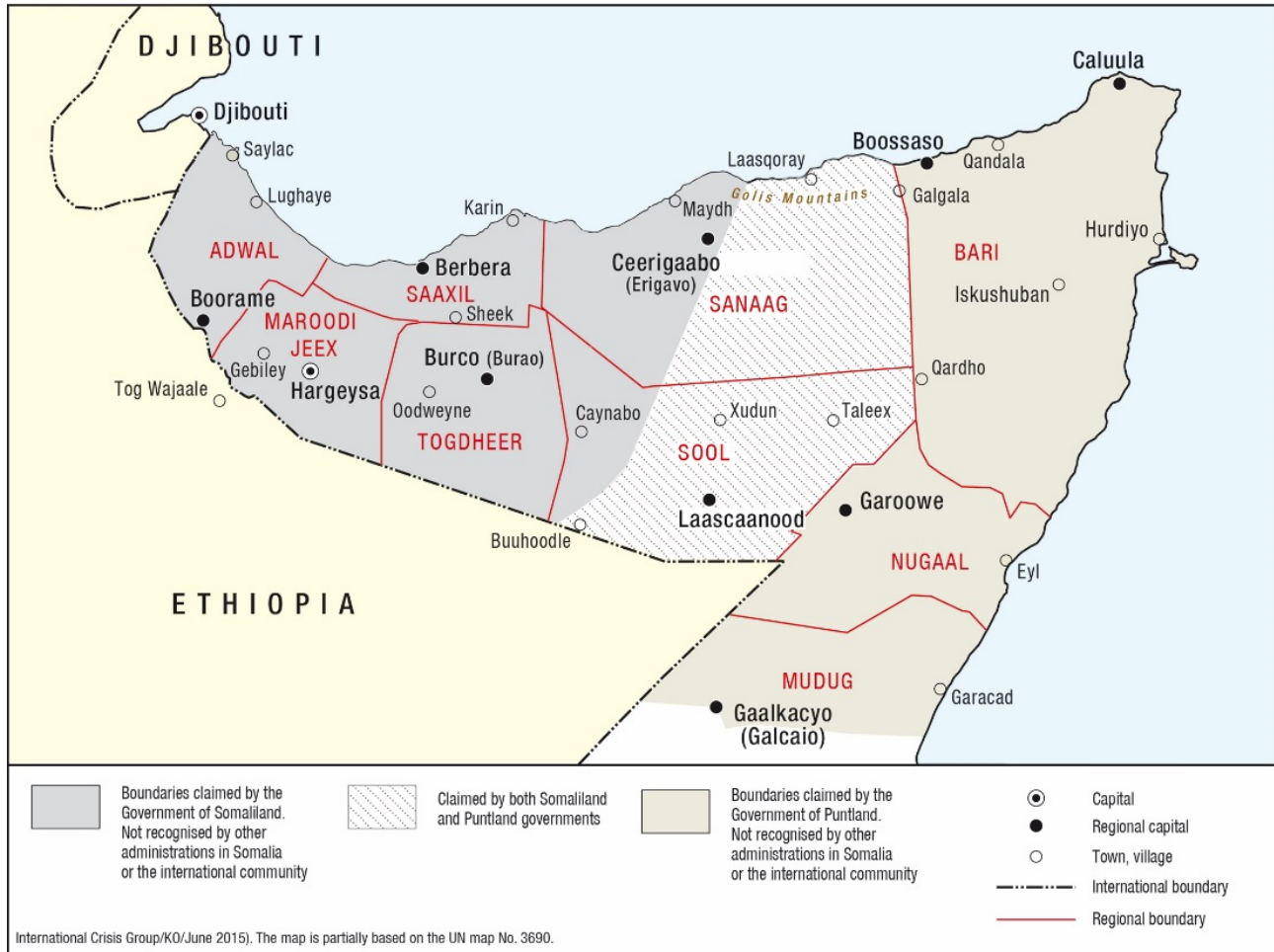
VII. Conclusion

Somaliland's achievements deserve recognition and practical aid, but with success have come strains, and its political and social compact needs urgent renewal. The "hybrid" state has been a successful transitional vehicle but must now be reconfigured to meet longer-term needs for stability, political inclusion, rule of law and development. The history of clan-based military mobilisation and the weak regulatory and mediating institutions make political violence possible. Growing armed extremism is a real threat requiring a regional response of which Somaliland should be an integral part. Mainly clan-based violence around the 2012 local elections set a precedent for likely divisive presidential competition in 2017.

Despite mutual suspicion and the weakness of the Mogadishu government, regular, official dialogue with the SFG (including Puntland) is ever more important, particularly as temperatures rise before selection and election processes, and Al-Shabaab poses a continuing threat. It is time for Somaliland's politicians, international supporters and donors to articulate a vision of stability responsive to growing inequalities and accommodating toward diverse interests. Such a vision would need to incorporate the animated social (clan and other religious and educational networks) and economic (big business and small trader) ties with the populations of the Somalia Federal Government and its federal member states and reflect, as well, Somaliland's increasing regional role, including in the Gulf of Aden.

Nairobi/Brussels, 5 October 2015

Appendix A: Map of Somaliland



Appendix B: Political Parties

The three associations that received the most votes in the 2012 local council polls are recognised as official parties and can contest national elections.

Officially registered political parties			
Political Party	Leader	Composite Clans	Remarks and Comments
1. Wadani	Abdirahman Cirro	Habar Yunis (Garhajis/ Isaaq/Dir) and Gada-bursi (Dir)	Arab, Cisse, Dhulbahante, Warsangeli, Ayub and Gabooye (minority clans) remain unaligned politically.
2. Justice and Welfare (UCID)	Faisal Ali Huseen	Ciidigale (Garhajis/ Isaaq/Dir) and Cisse Muse (Habar Awal/ Isaaq/Dir)	
3. Kulmiye	Muse Bixi Abdi	Mohamed Abukar (Habar Jeclo/Isaaq/Dir) and Sacad Muse (Habar Awal/Isaaq/Dir)	
Political associations that did not qualify as official political parties			
Political Associations	Leader	Composite Clans	Remarks and Comments
Umadda	Mahamed Gaboose	Muse Care and Sacad Yonis (Habar Yunis/ Garhajis/Isaaq/Dir)	Supporters of Umadda joined Wadani in 2013.
Xaqsoor	Hasan Isse Jama	Arab (Isaaq/Dir), Dhulbahante (Darood) and Cisse (Dir)	The supporters of Xaqsoor still have not joined a political party.
Dalsan	Ismacil Yare	Sacad Muse, Habar Yunis and Gadabursi	Some Dalsan supporters joined Kulmiye in 2013; others joined the other two opposition parties.
Rays	Hasan Goofaadle	Habar Jeclo (Muse Abokor), Habar Yunis and Warsangeli	Supporters of Rays joined Kulmiye in 2013.

Appendix C: Predominant Clans and Sub-Clans by Regions

Members of groups are quite mobile and seasonally migrate to different regions; urban areas are often more mixed.

Regions	Predominant Clans and Sub-clans	Remarks/Comments
Awdal	Cisse (Dir)	These two clans are predominant in the region.
	Gadabursi (Dir)	
Maroodi Jeex	Cidigale (Garhajis/Isaaq/Dir)	In Hargeysa, there are the following small clans: Ayub (Isaaq/Dir) and Gabooye (Minority).
	Arab (Isaaq/Dir)	
	Sacad Muse (Habar Awal/ Isaaq/Dir)	
	Habar Yunis (Garhajis/Isaaq/Dir)	
Saaxil	Cisse Muse (Habar Awal/Isaaq/Dir)	In addition, Habar Jeclo (Isaaq/Dir) and Arab (Isaaq/Dir) are scattered in different districts
	Habar Yunis (Garhajis/Isaaq/Dir)	
Togdheer	Habar Yunis (Garhajis/Isaaq/Dir)	In addition, Arab (Isaaq/Dir) and Cisse Muse (Habar Awal/Isaaq/Dir) are scattered across Togdheer region.
	Habar Jeclo (Isaaq/Dir)	
	Dhulbahante (Harti/Darood)	
Sanaag	Habar Yunis (Garhajis/Isaaq/Dir)	In addition, Dhulbahante (Harti/Darood) and Habar Jeclo (Isaaq/Dir) are well-represented.
	Warsengeli (Harti/Darood)	
Sool	Dhulbahante (Harti/Darood)	The Sool region has four districts (Lascanood, Taleex, Xudun and Caynabo). The Dhulbahante clan is predominant in three of these, while Habar Jeclo (Isaaq/Dir) and Habar Yunis (Garhajis/Isaaq/Dir) are scattered in Caynabo and Xudun districts.

Appendix D: Somaliland Tree of “Majority” Clans and Sub-Clans

Shaded boxes = main clans and sub-clans mentioned in the report.

Dashed boxes = individuals.

