

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

Robin Crigler

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

Abstract

This investigation examines the legitimacy of the claim that the Republic of Somaliland, a secessionist state proclaimed in northwest Somalia in 1991, should gain recognition by the international community as an independent country. It also explores the possible consequences of such an action, and attempts to identify reasons for the relative success of Somaliland when compared to other governmental efforts in Somalia, which was last effectively ruled in 1991 by the dictator Siyaad Barre.

To answer these questions, this investigation utilised a great deal of literature on the subject, notably the work of Mark Bradbury and I.M. Lewis, among others. Regional newspaper articles describing key events were also consulted, as well as a speech given by the academic Ahmed Samatar at a Somali youth conference in the summer of 2009.

Ultimately, conclusions confirmed the starting hypothesis that Somaliland ought to command a greater degree of international support, if not full recognition. Most arguments against recognition of the country were found to be self-motivated, and the opportunities recognition presents, that of a democratic Muslim state which could be the West's partner against piracy and Islamism in the region, were found to be potentially beneficial to the international community. The investigation took special issue with the doctrine of pan-Somalism, a term describing ethnic nationalist sentiment among the Somali, refuting it as a fundamentally ephemeral and reactionary ideology, throwing the whole idea of the possibility of a unitary Somali state in doubt. The lessons that Somaliland could teach the rest of Somalia in terms of government and democratisation are valuable and could perhaps be applied to a confederation of Somaliland-like polities in the region. In any case, the investigation found

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

Somaliland's nascent democracy to be both too successful and too potentially vulnerable for the world to continue to ignore.

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

Introduction: A Different Kind of Nation State

In 1964, British academic I.M. Lewis, writing his history of the Somali people, coined the phrase “pastoral democracy”, to refer to the civility and open discourse enshrined in the traditional Somali kinship system¹. At the time, Somalia stood out among its neighbours as an example of pan-Africanism triumphant, in the spirit of Nkrumah and Nyerere. Here two separate colonies with very different histories had united to become a single political entity tied together by culture, language, and popular will². In many ways, this was contrary to most nascent African states, which were created arbitrarily without regard to cultural boundaries by European powers in the early 20th century. Because of this difference, Somalia's new leaders hoped that their state would be a shining light in a new post-imperial Africa: a state that was also truly a nation, in Lewis' words³. Yet just thirty years later, Somalia would become the most tragic example of state failure Africa had ever seen. Even today Somalia still does not have a functioning central government, and the civil war that started before 1991 continues to claim lives and create refugees: 240,000 Somalis fled from Mogadishu, the capital, over a three month period in 2009 alone⁴. Yet the carnage has not been universal. Paradoxically, in the northwest of the country, the secessionist Republic of Somaliland, declared in 1991, has functioned peacefully since 1996⁵. Though it has gained no official international recognition, the country operates an army, police force, school system, and a bicameral parliament chosen through free and fair elections. Now, after the United States alone has poured almost a trillion dollars into nation building efforts in Muslim countries like Iraq and Afghanistan by force, with limited success, Somaliland stands out somewhat incongruously as a Muslim state determined to move

¹ Lewis 12

² Lewis 165

³ Lewis 2

⁴ Samatar, July 2009

⁵ Bradbury 129

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

forward with democratisation even in the absence of meaningful Western support⁶. With the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Mogadishu locked in a stalemate with the al-Shabaab Islamist militia that controls most of the fertile southern riverine areas, and still not gaining the popular legitimacy most experts say it requires, one wonders why Somaliland has not gained more international attention. Assessing the past and future of Somaliland's bid for national legitimacy requires an examination of both African politics and the nature of the Somalilander state itself, to ascertain the possible consequences of Somaliland's recognition on the full situation in the horn of Africa. It must also be rooted in the context of modern Somali history.

A Nation Dismembered: Modern Somali History to 1991

The Horn of Africa, the traditional homeland of the Somali, despite historically disenfranchised Arab and Bantu minorities, is one of the most ethnically homogenous regions of Africa⁷. Because of British and Italian treaties with Ethiopia in the late 19th century however, today the land occupied by the Somali is divided among four countries: Somalia proper, Kenya, Djibouti, and Ethiopia. Though after World War II, the British briefly controlled all of "Greater Somalia", their proposal to create a single Somali state within ethnic borders, the Bevin Plan, was rejected by the international community, resulting in an Italian mandate over its former colony in the south, and most controversially, continued control of the Ogaden by Christian Ethiopia⁸.

⁶ National Priorities Project

⁷ Eno 71

⁸ Lewis 124

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

In the years before independence in 1960, the challenges involved in only the small scale union of British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland were daunting⁹. Italian Somaliland received heavy Italian investment during its colonial period, becoming a major banana producer and the site of expensive attempts by fascist Italy to establish a plantation system in the fertile Juba-Shabelle region¹⁰. Italy's U.N. trusteeship combined a firm timeline with strict oversight, and by independence the territory was much more developed and educated than its northern counterpart, with a growing urban population and a budding political class¹¹. In contrast, the British protectorate's administration was not aware of its coming union with the south until just three years before independence in 1960¹². Before the subsequent mad dash to hold elections and build up local infrastructure, the British had adopted an extremely limited role in Somaliland. In their view, the protectorate was necessary only as a supplier of meat to Aden, and insurance of friendly waters at the Red Sea's mouth. Partly as a result of a prolonged military debacle that the British engaged in against Sheikh Mohamed 'Abdille Hassan (the "Mad Mullah") from 1899 to 1920¹³, the British had invested minimally in the protectorate, resulting in the primacy, after independence, of the Italian Somali political establishment under a southern president¹⁴.

Northern discontent was first felt in 1961 when northerners rejected the country's first constitution and continued to grow through the 1960's and into Gen. Siyaad Barre's Scientific

⁹ A union of the two Somalilands, an idea supported by the West, became inevitable by 1957, where Lewis writes that "all [political] parties shared the common aim of...unification with Somalia" in the British protectorate. In the short term, this rush of ethnic solidarity can be traced back to Britain's 1954 withdrawal from the Haud region in favour of Ethiopia, which sparked widespread fears of subsumption by Ethiopia, a further testament to the reactionary and irredentist basis of pan-Somalism (Lewis 153)

¹⁰ Lewis 97

¹¹ Henwood 170

¹² Lewis 155

¹³ This operation, commonly known as the War against the "Dervishes" because of Sheikh Mohamed's Sufi Islamic background, was fought at enormous cost to the British and represented the first modern, ultimately unsuccessful effort to unite the Somali across clan boundaries (Lewis 81)

¹⁴ Lewis 165

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

Socialist dictatorship¹⁵¹⁶. Siyaad, a member of the Darood clan family from the nation's south, largely ignored the region; during the 1980's, as his government became increasingly kleptocratic and clanist, only seven per cent of the national budget went to the north of the country, despite the tremendous importance of the port at Berbera¹⁷. When in 1981 a group of Isaaq clan intellectuals, the Hargeysa Group, petitioned the government for increased openness and domestic investment, Siyaad responded by firing all Isaaq ministers in his cabinet, and jailing the petitioners. Outrage over this brutality resulted in the creation of the Somali National Movement (SNM), a northern Isaaq rebel group whose goal was ousting Siyaad's government¹⁸. From hideouts in Ethiopia, they attacked the government of the north, which had been placed under martial law, resulting in enormous retribution from Siyaad's government. 628,000 people were driven from their homes in one of the largest single refugee exoduses in African history¹⁹. 50,000 people died when Siyaad ordered the bombing of Hargeysa, the northern capital, and 80 per cent of the city's buildings were damaged. The brutality of the southern-dominated government engendered support for independence that ultimately was irresistible, when the SNM, along with southern rebel groups, finally wrested control of the country from Siyaad in 1991²⁰²¹. Somalia has never seen the rule a credible national authority since.

The Difficulty of Governing Nomads

¹⁵ Gen. Siyaad Barre, who ruled from 1969-1991. originated the concept of Scientific Socialism in 1970. Its literal translation from Somali means "wealth-sharing based on wisdom" and was unique for its commitment to self reliance and its initial commitment to national unity. It also exemplified Somalia's increasing closeness to the Soviet Union during this period (Lewis 209).

¹⁶ Bradbury 34

¹⁷ Bradbury 60

¹⁸ Bradbury 55

¹⁹ War Torn Societies Project 25

²⁰ Other such groups included the Majerteyn Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) and the Hawiye United Somali Congress (USC), led by Mohamed Farah 'Aideed', which literally pushed Siyaad Barre's government out of Mogadishu in January 1991 (Lewis 262)

²¹ Bradbury 78

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

The failure of the modern Somali nation state can largely be traced back to a return to traditional ideas which held no place for ethnic nationalism. The Somali are one of the most homogenous and culturally cohesive ethnic groups in Africa, yet their culture is remarkable for its lack of hierarchy, and has always been rife with internal conflict. Ethnic homogeneity is complicated by a deeply intricate system of kinship groups called clans, which can be further divided many times into subclans and minor clans. Within clans, nomadic groups are governed by clan elders. The separation of the Somali by international boundaries was especially disconcerting, because clan boundaries tend to be nonspecific, resulting in reactionary displays of nationalism that became pan-Somalism. Even today most Somalis still follow a traditional nomadic way of life, tending to flocks of sheep and goats within a vast and weakly defined clan area, moving seasonally²². Governing Somalia is made difficult because political power is concentrated in the hands of the nomadic clans, the Isaaq, Darood, Hawiye and Dir, while more lucrative agricultural and industrial pursuits are carried out by downtrodden sedentary clans, called the Saab, the most prominent examples being the Digil and Merifle²³.

Southern Somali History After 1991: The Great “Civic Death”²⁴

After 1991, the historical paths of north and south Somalia diverged. Despite enormous foreign assistance and over a dozen reconciliation conferences, the historically prominent south is no further to forming a viable government than it was in 1991. The United Nations' UNOSOM 1 and 2 programmes in the early 1990's failed to end the civil war largely due to overstretched resources and the fact that the United States, which led the mission, had no real stake in its outcome. Despite efforts by Djibouti to establish a Transitional National Government

²² Bradbury 13

²³ Eno 69

²⁴ Samatar, July 2009

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

at Arta in 2000, and by Kenya in 2002 to engineer the T.F.G. under president and former warlord Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, Somalia found herself again locked in combat in 2007 against the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), a coalition of local khatarchies formed according to tradition and largely free of foreign Islamist influence, at least in their early days²⁵. This recent conflict, which resulted in a full-scale invasion of the country by Ethiopia, has plunged the region into new and ever more savage throes of violence. Since the Ethiopian invasion, the Islamic movement in Somalia has only increased in size, radicalised further and grown closer to international terrorist organisations²⁶. This can hardly be considered a surprise, given the Somali's historical reaction to perceived Ethiopian imperialism, Now that the TFG is widely regarded both as an Americo-Ethiopian puppet and an undisciplined gang of warlords, the problems of Somalia grow ever more inescapable for the West. Why then has the international community not recognised Somaliland, in the north, as an independent state? It is impossible to venture any well-reasoned argument for a resolution to the Somali problem without examining this question, and investigating what sets Somaliland apart from Somalia.

Arguments Against International Recognition

Clearly there are legitimate reasons behind the international community's misgivings about recognising the Republic of Somaliland. According to her government, Somaliland is legally nothing more than the successor state to British Somaliland, which was independent for five days in late June 1960, before the two nations united, yet no country to date has recognised her²⁷. This is due to the confluence of several factors, primarily based on foreign political

²⁵ Eno 61

²⁶ More recently their pull has even extended to the United States, as disenfranchised Somali youth have left their poor neighbourhoods to return to Somalia and join the militants, according to the B.B.C. World Service.

²⁷ Lewis 164

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

realities rather than substantive objections to the actual nature of the Somaliland state. First among these factors is reluctance among African countries to recognise the new state. They fear that recognition would legitimise other ethnic secessionist movements throughout Africa, and essentially give rise to a Pandora's box of Biafras²⁸. Kenya for example, Somalia's neighbour to the south, was only recently, in 2007, rocked by ethnic violence; in Kenya the largest single tribal group, the Kikuyu, make up only 17 percent of the total population²⁹. For African authoritarian leaders leading similarly heterogenous postcolonial states, and probably even moreso for democratic leaders, entertaining any notion of tribal autonomy continues to be seen as tempting disaster. Meanwhile, the developed world continues to hedge on the issue. The United Nations, without a doubt the organisation most actively committed to a unitary Somali state, currently enjoys limited relations with Somaliland, yet during the interventions of 1992-1994 it controversially blocked the vast majority of aid from reaching the stricken north; instead spending vast sums on farcical demobilisation programmes in the south³⁰. Lewis goes on to claim that the UNOSOM mission actively bribed the prominent southern warlord Mohamed Farah 'Aideed to intervene against Somaliland's President Mohamed Ibrahim Egal during the Hargeysa Airport revenue controversy of 1994-1995³¹, in a bid to destabilise Somaliland's government, thus consolidating power with the warlords that chose to ally with the UN³².

The issue is a more emotional one in Britain, Somaliland's former protector and home to one of the largest Somali diaspora populations in the world³³. British prime minister Tony Blair, speaking on the issue in 2007, reiterated the government's position that "African countries

²⁸ Henwood 175

²⁹ Jan Lahmeyer

³⁰ Lewis 283

³¹ This conflict stemmed from the reluctance of the 'Idagalla Isaaq clan to share lucrative airport taxes levied in Hargeysa. It resulted in military intervention by the government and spread across the country, causing hundreds of thousands of people to flee to Ethiopia, whence, ironically, many had just recently returned (Lewis 285)

³² Lewis 285

³³ Ojo 185

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

should take the lead in recognising any new arrangements which emerge from any dialogue”³⁴.

The United States takes a similar position, having been badly burnt by its intervention in Somalia in the early 1990's, citing African Union recognition of the state as a prerequisite for US consideration³⁵. Again, these responses are not substantive evaluations of the actual nation in questions but rather generalised statements made by nations who do not want to be seen as neocolonialists. Indeed, most of the concerns levied by the international community against Somaliland are illegitimate. The idea of regional independence leading to a balkanising effect across Africa was used in the early 1990's by supporters of the Ethiopian government against Eritrean rebels, and international recognition for that country produced no wave of revolutions³⁶. Meanwhile, Somaliland operates already with many of the privileges of an independent nation, trading with her neighbours, receiving diverse, if very limited foreign investment, and policing her borders.

A De Facto Power: The Nature of Somaliland's Current Status

When Somalia is probed more deeply, one sees more positive aspects. Despite its nonexistent official status, the nation enjoys generally friendly informal relations with most of its neighbours. Interestingly, Ethiopia boasts excellent relations in particular with her historically conservative Muslim neighbour. She has a trade representative in Hargeysa, and much of what little aid Somaliland receives can be traced back to Ethiopia. Yet in the Foreign Affairs ministry's current white paper on Ethiopian-Somali relations, the government, like the UK and US, rejects the idea of full recognition as “creat[ing] negative feelings on the part of Somalis living in the rest of Somalia and...[inspiring]...suspicio[n] of our intent”. Nevertheless, the government pledges in the same document to “try to help those regions which are comparatively

³⁴ Somaliland Times

³⁵ Bradbury 255

³⁶ Henwood 174

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

stable...in order that the relative peace they enjoy is maintained and even strengthened". Even some more critical organisations such as the AU have limited relationships with Hargeysa, and have concluded that the Somaliland state exists as a fragile island of peace surrounded by turmoil, with perhaps the most democratic atmosphere of any nation in the region.

Among Somalis themselves, opinions are similarly divided. Within Somaliland, at least outside of the disputed eastern frontier regions, support for the new state is astronomically high, with 97.9 percent in these regions supporting a strong national constitution in 2001, out of over a million votes cast. Outside of Somaliland opinions range from grudging toleration to outright hostility. Some, such as Professor Ahmed Samatar, still believe a single Somali state is possible, and ultimately necessary, to the restoration of peace in the region. Yet even the president of Puntland recognised the de facto independence that Somaliland enjoyed, in May 2006, when he said despite his ongoing dispute with Somaliland over Sanaag and Sool, that his nation would not interfere with Somaliland's aspirations for recognition³⁷.

Assessing Darood Exceptionalism and the Isaaq Puppet State Hypothesis

Others have levelled more substantial criticisms of the Somaliland state. One perennial criticism against the current government is that Somaliland is nothing more than an Isaaq state which pretends to be a multiclans entity. These critics point to the Isaaq roots of the organisation that liberated the country, the Somali National Movement, and its role in creating government in an area that is undoubtedly majority Isaaq³⁸. This view, which uses the troublesome

³⁷ Henwood 175

³⁸ Lewis 252

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

disenfranchised regions of Sanaag and Sool as additional evidence of the unworkability of Somaliland's government in areas that will not submit to Isaaq hegemony, sees the restoration of the borders of the British Somaliland protectorate as a high-minded cover for what is in fact just another instance of petty Somali tribalism³⁹. To be sure, Sanaag and Sool, areas which remain the subject of sporadic skirmishes between Somaliland and her Darood majority neighbour Puntland, which does not seek recognition from the international community, have not always submitted easily to Hargeysa's authority. The issue was first addressed in October 1993 when Isaaq, Warsengeli, and Dhulbahante elders (the latter two being Darood subgroups), met at Erigavo, the capital of Sanaag for a peace conference, where they attempted to forge national cooperation through discussions over both constitutional issues such as minority clan representation and civil issues such as looting and local crime⁴⁰.

Despite these strides, just one year later fighting broke out in the Sanaag and Sool regions in which 4,000 people are thought to have been killed⁴¹. The government, in the view of the critics, characterised the conflict falsely as one between federalists and the secessionist government when in fact it all came down to clan⁴². Major political factions in the Darood majority regions boycotted the plebiscite on the constitution in 2001, and to this day large swathes of Somaliland's eastern frontiers lie outside Hargeysa's control. Fewer complaints are directed towards the actual nature of Somaliland's democracy, which though plagued intermittently by allegations of corruption, and periodically endangered by political tension, as

³⁹ Bradbury 53

⁴⁰ Lewis 284

⁴¹ The most recent expression of exceptionalism in this region came in July 2007, when a large portion of Sanaag and Sool declared itself to be autonomous of both Puntland and Somaliland, inaugurated as the "Maakhir State of Somalia". with its capital at Badhan. It was recognised by neither polity and regarded as a rebellion led by the marginalised Warsengeli subclan of the Darood. Most of it was re-absorbed into Puntland in August the following year (Wardheer News)

⁴² Bradbury 117

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

was the case with the voter registration controversy of September 2009⁴³, remains among the most free societies in a region incorporating both abject anarchy in some of Somalia and military authoritarianism in Ethiopia.

The Political System of Somaliland

This is due largely to the ingenious way that Somalilanders have crafted their political system, incorporating an upper parliamentary house composed of nonpartisan tribal elders selected on a clan basis, and a lower house composed of MPs elected from constituencies. In order to prevent political parties from degenerating into organs of clan, in December 2002 multiparty elections were held for local councils. Of the six parties that participated, only the three that gained the most widespread and substantial support were allowed to contest parliamentary elections in 2005⁴⁴. Though many, like Bradbury, maintain that this three-party hegemony can amount to a closed political society, for the time being it is an innovative way to balance both competition between political groups and national solidarity. Indeed, elections have proven competitive; in 2005, the president's party, UDUB⁴⁵, won a plurality but not a majority of seats in the lower house, resulting in an opposition-ruled parliament and a UDUB president⁴⁶. The presidential election of 2003 was similarly important because it confirmed the election, by only 80 votes, of a non-Isaaq to be the first directly elected president of Somaliland:

⁴³ This latest political scuffle, which rocked Somaliland to its core, concerned the president abruptly ordering the results of a yearlong voter registration push in Somaliland to be thrown out, and eventually calling for elections to be postponed for a third time and his term to be extended on "security grounds". Before resolution by the Guurti, the row caused clashes between supporters of the opposition-held parliament and the police, resulting in some deaths (Garoowe Online)

⁴⁴ Bradbury 185

⁴⁵ UDUB is the Somali acronym for the United Democratic People's Party. The other two legal parties in Somaliland are Kulmiye, or the Unity Party, and UCID, the Justice and Welfare Party (Bradbury 186)

⁴⁶ Bradbury 208

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

the interim leader Dahir Riyaale Kahin, a Darood⁴⁷. That his election was even a possibility, and that it occurred peacefully is both a testament to Somaliland's democracy and a retort to those who contend that the country is simply an Isaaq tool.

Coming to Terms with Pan-Somalism

It is true however, that a pragmatic approach that would grant Somaliland recognition would require the world to give up the idea of pan-Somalism, at least in the short and medium term. This would be difficult, but Pan-Somalism has met with constant failure, from the time Ethiopia, Italy and Britain first carved up Somali territory in the late 1890's⁴⁸. Its first setback in the modern era came with the decision of the British government to keep the Northern Frontier District under Kenyan rule in 1963, a status quo very unlikely to change⁴⁹. Somali irredentism was refuted again in the early 1970s, when French Somaliland declined to join⁵⁰, and in the minds of many Somalis, it sealed the eventual doom of the Somali state with the Ogaden war of the late 1970s. Dating back to Ahmad Gran's famous jihads against Ethiopia in the 16th century, again and again Somali nationalism, and indeed pan-Somalism show themselves to be chiefly reactionary manoeuvres directed against external threats⁵¹. It is an anomalous occurrence that runs contrary to the Somali's decentralised clan tradition, and whether responding to Ethiopian aggression or Western imperialism, indeed there is little evidence to suggest that a lasting, unitary Somalia is capable of existing. The idea propounded by the UN and others that a Somali

⁴⁷ Bradbury 194

⁴⁸ Lewis 107

⁴⁹ Lewis 193

⁵⁰ French Somaliland's situation is unique because of its large non-Somali (Afar) minority. In 1967, in order to discourage closer ties between French Somaliland and Somalia, the name of the area (present day Djibouti) was changed to the French Territory of the Affars and the Issas, removing the word "Somali" from its title (Lewis 231)

⁵¹ Ahmad Ibrahim 'Gran' was the first Somali military leader ever known to have raised a broad Somali coalition into battle. Notably, his victories against the Abyssinian Christians in the 1540s-1560s represent the only time that the Somali have successfully invaded Ethiopia outside of the Ogaden (Lewis 25)

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

nation state ever existed without clanism in more than an ephemeral way is erroneous.

Nationalist fervour and the ideology of Scientific Socialism only went so far; even when it was out of fashion to identify oneself in Somalia by clan, Barre's government was known as the Marehaan government for the president's sub clan, and was deeply exclusive, utilising a complex clan alliance system to consolidate his political power, known as the MOD (Marehaan, Ogaden and Dhulbahante) system⁵². Given the tenuous situation existing now in Somaliland between the Isaaq, Darood and 'Ise, the idea that a large Somali state incorporating all Somali clans would not be riven by even worse internal division seems terrifically misguided, and should not be considered seriously.

The international community would do well, rather, to look towards Somaliland for answers to the question of national recovery. As shown earlier with democratisation, Somaliland's peace process similarly has not been perfect, yet it serves as one of recent history's best examples of successful national reconciliation.

The Somaliland Peace Process and its Lessons

Instrumental to the success of Somaliland's peace and development has been a lack of foreign intervention. Many analysts of the conflict have argued that the same reluctance that has precluded the UN and other international actors from embracing Somaliland has galvanised the people of the country to act for themselves, without the hazards of foreign meddling. As a result, the demilitarisation process in Somaliland has largely been successful. The Somali National Movement enacted a careful strategy for transitioning to civilian government. In southern Somalia, peace conferences are often monstrous affairs, lasting for months and serving mainly as forums for back-room dealmaking amongst warlords and international negotiators. They

⁵² Osman 95, Lewis 256

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

accomplish little, and what they do accomplish has proven to be highly suspect, as shown today by the anemic TFG's widespread corruption and human rights abuses⁵³. That Eno's harsh excoriation of the 2004 Nairobi conference, decried the *fourteenth* such effort to create a viable transitional government in the country is testament enough to the system's flaws.

In Somaliland the push for nationhood was deliberate. At the Burco conference in 1991, the SNM, which was not a secessionist organisation, bowed to popular demand for independence and agreed to govern the country for two years; a promise that it maintained⁵⁴. The initial administration of the SNM under President Abdirahman Ahmed 'Tuur' placed a strong focus on demobilisation and fostering government within the traditional framework of respected clan elders. That is perhaps the most key difference between north and south: early on Somaliland's rulers worked to avert the tide of chronic militarisation that later swept the south. The 1993 Borama conference lasted several months, yet produced tangible results: the SNM willingly ceded power, and the conference adjourned with a strong national charter and a successful model for a government reconciling the principles of western democracy with traditional institutions⁵⁵. Similar plans in Somalia to balance democracy with clan have failed due to control of the proceedings by clan based military factions that care little for the general welfare of the nation due to the benefit they derive by exploiting factional conflict⁵⁶.

Conclusion: A Call for Pragmatism

The Somali are a people plagued by violence and seemingly endless squabbling on all sides. The international community seems to have committed, perhaps disingenuously, on the assumption

⁵³ Human Rights Watch

⁵⁴ Bradbury 83

⁵⁵ Bradbury 100

⁵⁶ Eno 69

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

that the pre-Siyaad Barre Somali state will somehow rise from the ruins of civil war. The failures of nationalism due to both recent and longstanding cultural dynamics has rendered that idea at best a dream far in the future. Yet as nations are frustrated in their attempts to forge this, concerned with the grim threat of Islamism in the region, they ignore a Muslim nation which has made incredible strides towards becoming a free and democratic state, against enormous odds, largely without international interference. Despite Somaliland's considerable problems, this is nothing short of miraculous. Yet it also remains fragile. Al-Shabaab's leader, an ancestral Somalilander, has recently vowed increased Islamist activity in the north, as a follow up to the deadly suicide bombing that shook normally peaceful Hargeysa in October 2008. Somaliland poses little threat to the region, and has the potential to become a powerful ally for the international community and the United States against both piracy and Somali Islamism, as affirmed in a recent report by the World Peace Foundation⁵⁷. Yet without international support, the country remain susceptible to collapse. The controversy over electoral postponement that gripped the country throughout 2009 has raised worries among human rights groups about the sustainability of Somaliland's democracy in this vacuum⁵⁸. Acceptance of Somaliland need not, perhaps, mean total recognition, and could alternatively manifest itself as observer status at the United Nations, or perhaps cooperation with southern Somalia with the condition of a future plebiscite on independence. Yet the evidence is overwhelming that change must indeed come. International organisations, African nations, and the West have, since the 1990's, used the same discredited formula for Somali peace. One novel solution would be a loose confederation of many small administrative divisions with similar governmental models to what Somaliland has currently. At any rate, the time is ripe for a more pragmatic approach to reconciliation in the

⁵⁷ Rotberg 7

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

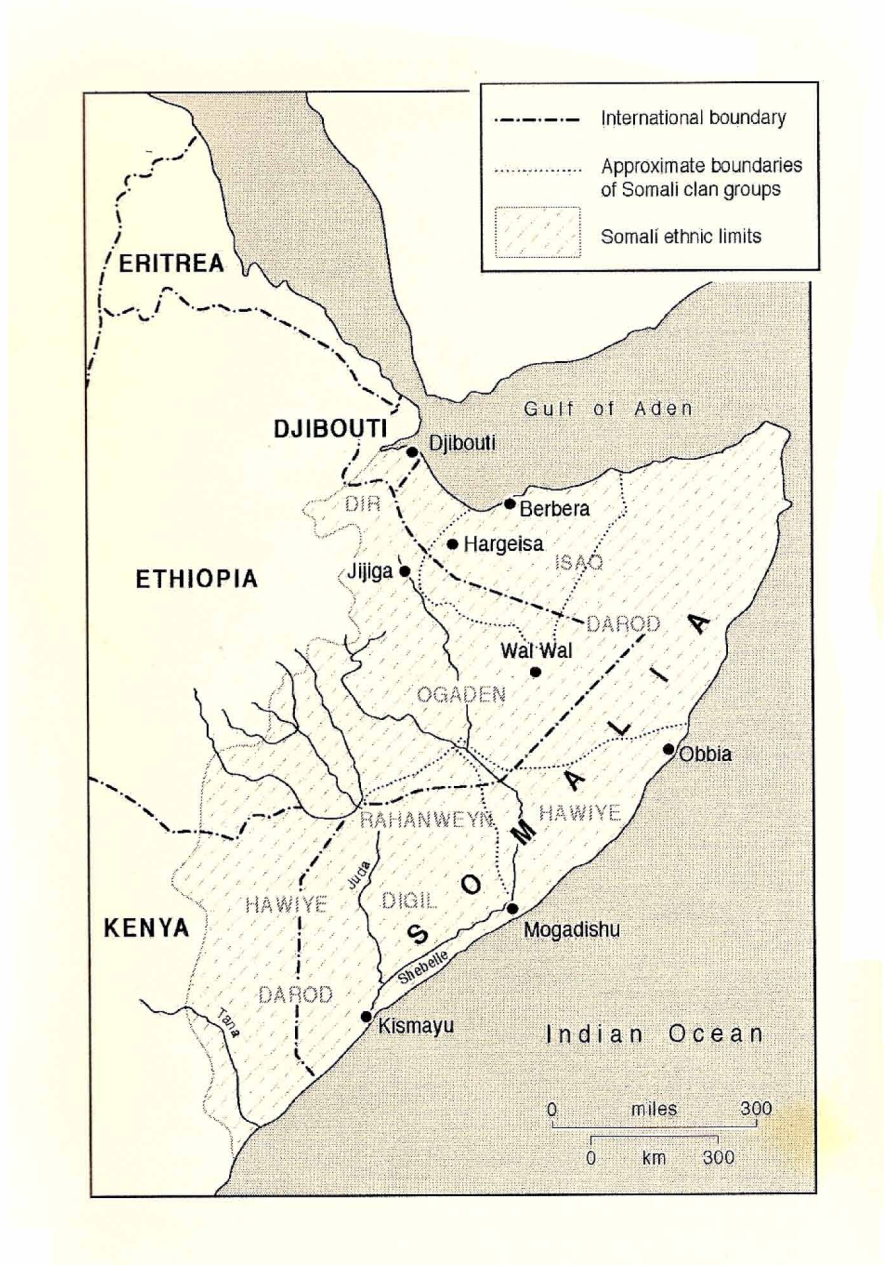
region, starting by securing areas where progress already exists, and working to replicate the success achieved in those areas. Only when that occurs can the Somali people, after decades of strife, again feel secure and hopeful about their future.

WORD COUNT: 4,000

Appendix: Contextual Maps of Somalia and Somaliland

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

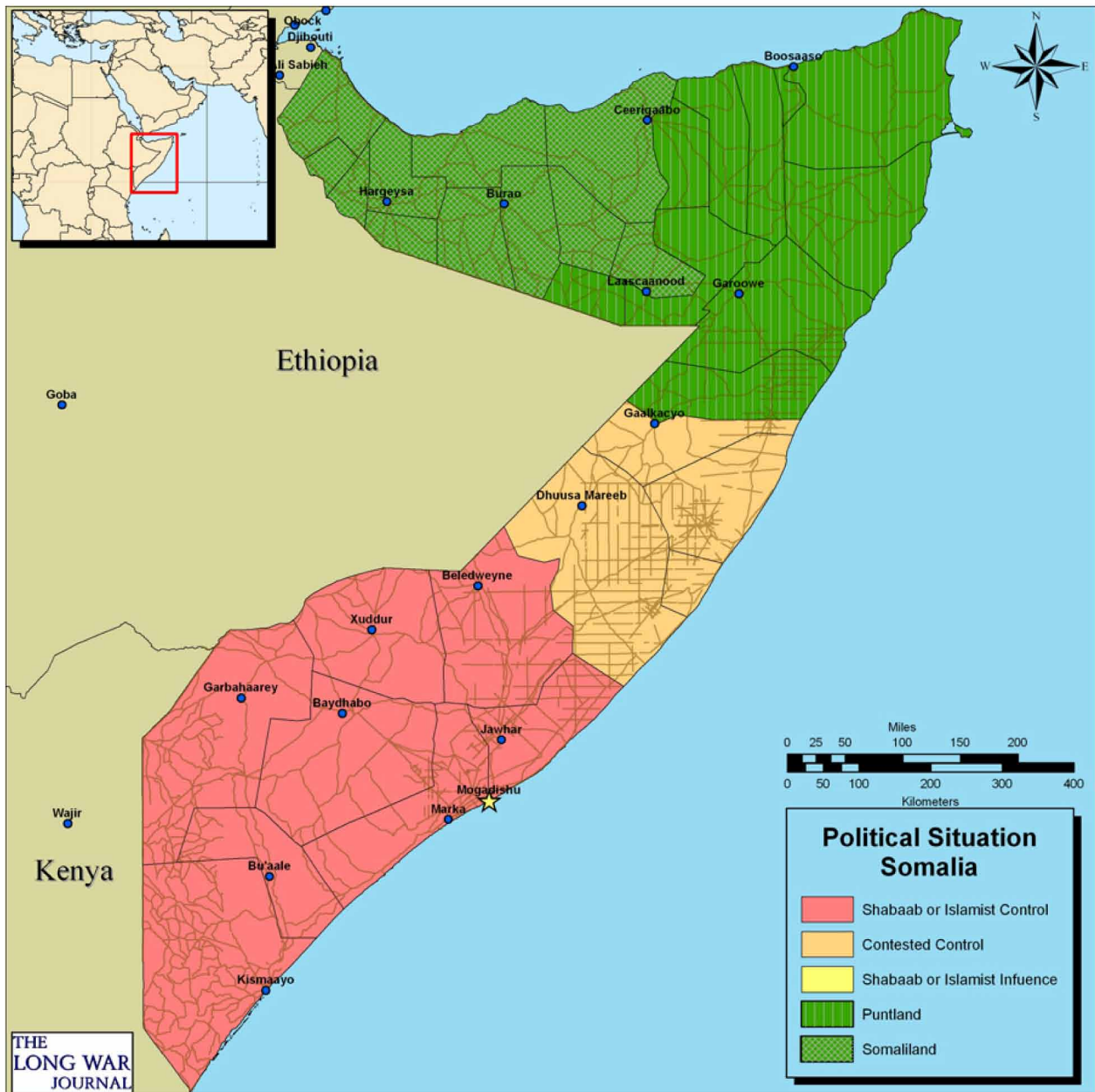
Map A: "Greater Somalia": Distribution of the Somali People in the Horn of Africa with Approximate Clan Boundaries Shown



Source: Lewis, I.M. *A Modern History of the Somali: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*. 4th ed. Athens, Oh.: Ohio UP, 2002. Print.

Map B: Approximate Areas of Control in Somali Civil War as of Early 2009

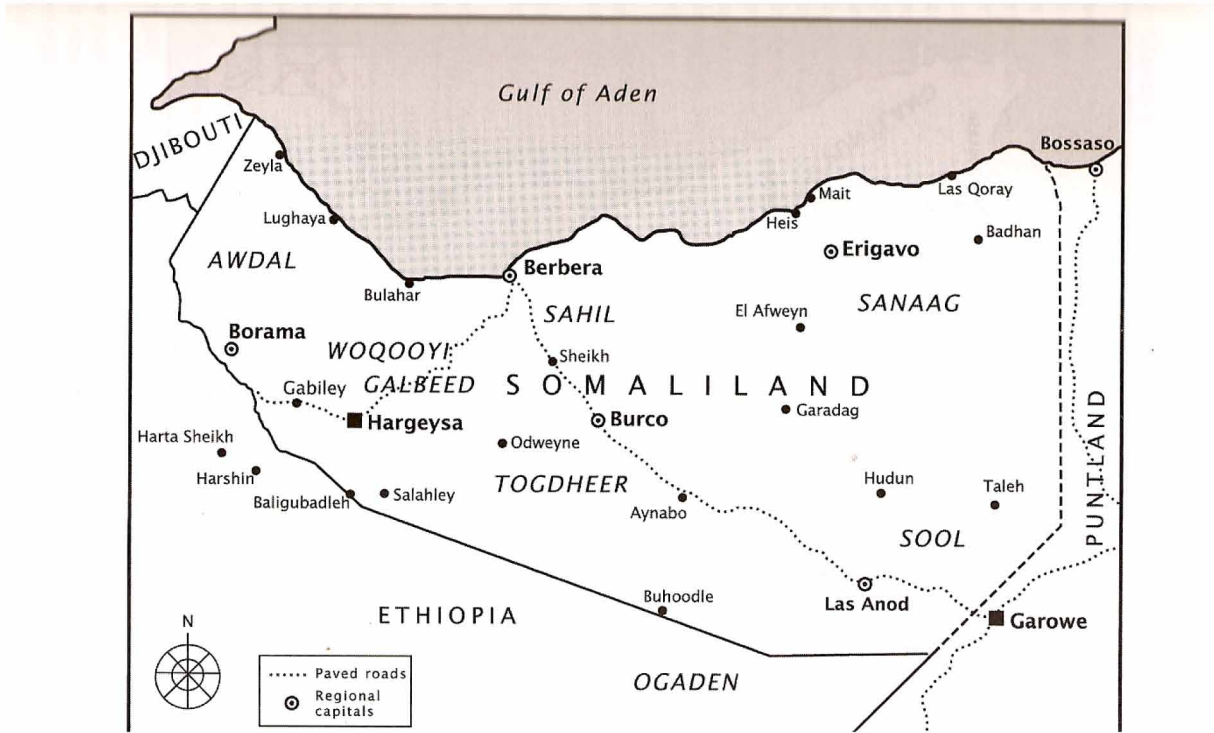
To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?



Source: Raymond, Bill. "Shabaab/Islamist Control of Southern Somalia." Map. The Long War Journal. 2 Feb. 2009. Public Multimedia, Inc. 11 Feb. 2010
<http://www.longwarjournal.org/maps/somalia/Somalia_redmap-02022009-norm.php>.

Map C: The Republic of Somaliland

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?



Source: Bradbury, Mark R. *Becoming Somaliland*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press/James Currey, 2008. © Boydell & Brewer, reproduced with permission.

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

Works Cited

Beale, Jonathan. "Deadly Journey: Minneapolis to Mogadishu." BBC World News 20 Nov.

2009. British Broadcasting Corporation. 28 Dec. 2009

<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8363546.stm>>.

Bradbury, Mark R. *Becoming Somaliland*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana UP, 2008. Print.

"Cost of Wars Since 2001." CostofWar.com. 3 Feb. 2010. National Priorities Project. 3 Feb.

2010 <<http://www.nationalpriorities.org/>>.

Eno, Mohamed A. "Inclusive but Unequal: The Enigma of the 14th S.N.R.C. and the Four-Point-

Five (4.5) Factor." *Somalia at the Crossroads: Challenges and Perspectives in*

Reconstituting a Failed State. London, U.K.: Adonis and Abbey, Ltd., 2007. 58-81. Print.
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Office of National

Security Policy and Strategy. Ethiopia's Policy Towards Somalia. 15 Jan. 2010.

<http://www.mfa.gov.et/Foreign_Policy_And_Relation_Relations_With_Horn_Africa_Somalia.php?Page=Relations_With_Horn_Africa_Somalia_1.htm>.

Hirad, Abdalla A. "The Formation of the Maakhir State of Somalia: Too Little Too Late?"

WardheerNews.com. WardheerNews Group, 11 Aug. 2007. Web. 13 Feb. 2010.

<http://www.wardheernews.com/articles_07/august/11_Formation_of_Maakhir_State_Hirad.html>.

"Hostages to Peace": Threats to Human Rights and Democracy in Somaliland. Publication. 13

July 2009. Human Rights Watch. 30 Jan. 2010

<<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/somaliland0709web.pdf>>.

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

Henwood, Franco. "A Contribution to the Case for Somaliland's Recognition." *Somalia at the*

Crossroads: Challenges and Perspectives in Reconstituting a Failed State. London, U.K.:

Adonis and Abbey, Ltd., 2007. 168-79. Print.

Lahmeyer, Jan. "Kenya: General Population Information." Population Statistics. 20 Feb. 2004.

15 Jan. 2010 <<http://www.populstat.info/Africa/kenyag.htm>>.

Lewis, I.M. *A Modern History of the Somali: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*. 4th ed.

Athens, Oh.: Ohio UP, 2002. Print.

Ojo, Akinloye. Inimitable Population Dispersion: The Case of the Somali Diaspora. Somalia at

the Crossroads: Challenges and Perspectives in Reconstituting a Failed State. London,

U.K.: Adonis and Abbey, Ltd, 2007. 180-205.

Osman, Abdulahi A. The Somali Conflict and the Role of Inequality, Tribalism, and Clanism.

Somalia at the Crossroads: Challenges and Perspectives in Reconstituting a Failed State.

London, U.K.: Adonis and Abbey, Ltd, 2007. 83-108.

Rotberg, Robert I. Combating Maritime Piracy: A Policy Brief with Recommendations for

Action. Issue brief no. 11. 26 Jan. 2010. World Peace Foundation. 3 Feb. 2010

<http://www.somalilandtimes.net/sl/2010/418/WPF_Piracy_PolicyBrief_11.pdf>.

Samatar, Ahmed. "Keynote Address." 1st Somali Diaspora Youth Conference. VA, McLean. 31

July 2009. Speech.

"Somalia: Events of 2009". Human Rights Watch. 21 Jan. 2010 <<http://www.hrw.org/en/node/>

87605>.

To what extent is the breakaway Republic of Somaliland's argument for international recognition legitimate and how might recognition effect the situation in the horn of Africa and the problems it faces?

"Somaliland's Election Crisis and the Lessons of Democracy." *Garowe Online*. Radio Garowe,

5 Oct. 2009. Web. 13 Feb. 2010.

<http://www.garoweonline.com/artman2/publish/Editorial_29/Somalia_Somaliland_s_election_crisis_and_the_lessons_of_democracy.shtml>

Souare, Issaka A. "The United Nations Intervention in Somalia: A Retrospective Look and

Lessons for Future Africa-U.N. Partnership in Conflict Resolution." *Somalia at the*

Crossroads: Challenges and Perspectives in Reconstituting a Failed State. London, U.K.:

Adonis and Abbey, Ltd, 2007. 150-67. Print.

"The U.K. Prime Minister's Office's Reply to the "Somaliland E-Petition"" The Somaliland

Times Online 22 Mar. 2007. The Somaliland Times. 16 Jan. 2010

<<http://www.somalilandtimes.net/sl/2006/270/3.shtml>>.

W.S.P. International. *Rebuilding Somaliland, Issues and Possibilities*. Lawrenceville, N.J.: The

Red Sea, Inc., 2005. Print.