

Contextualising the Somali Conflict

INTRODUCTION TO SOMALIA

With its estimated population of 10 million Somalia has, unlike most other countries of the continent, one of the highest ethnic homogeneity. Over 85% of the population is ethnic Somalis. The total size of the country is 637,657 km² with predominantly semi-arid or outright desert land. Droughts are frequent. Almost all Somalis are practicing Sunni Muslims. Clan lineage is an important component of Somali identity and has become increasingly important in the functioning of society since the collapse of the state. Lineage-based clans define nearly every aspect of life in the country, including, but not limited to, individual and group identity, status and security, and serve as a problem-solving mechanism and communal safety net. Somali families comprise both the nuclear family unit and the extended next of kin family. The line between a family and an extended family is often blurred. Grandparents, cousins, distance relatives and even close friends are part of the family circle. It is not uncommon for such people from rural areas who have it hard in life to come to live with extended family in urban areas, for example.

Contemporary Somalia is typically divided into three parts: South and Central Somalia, Somaliland, and Puntland. The latter two are somewhat separate from the rest of Somalia, and are relatively stable areas. Somaliland declared independence from Somalia in 1991, but it remains unrecognised by the rest of the world. Puntland declared itself an autonomous part of Somalia in 1998. Today's Somalia is the unification of

what were British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland. They gained independence and unified in 1960. French Somaliland became Djibouti when they got their independence in 1977. Two civilian governments ruled from 1960 until the military government of Mohamed Siyad Barre took over in 1969.

He ruled the Somali Democratic Republic until he was overthrown in 1991. After Siyad Barre was toppled, the country ventured into a long and violent civil war. Besides enduring civil war, and later intense fighting with Islamist insurgent groups, Somalia has continually attracted sustained international media attention due to several droughts and famines leading to dramatic humanitarian catastrophes, and intense growth of piracy. From 2000 onward, Somalia saw a wide variation of interim federal administrations. The first, the Transitional National Government (TNG), was established in 2000, by clan elders and other senior figures at a conference in Djibouti. It was set up to bring warring militias to peace. This platform failed to make progress in uniting this devastatingly divided country. It was followed by the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) set up after protracted talks in Kenya in 2004. The TFG relocated to Mogadishu in 2005 and was met by fierce opposition from warlords that de-facto controlled the country and the United Islam Courts (UIC) that emerged later in June 2006. The UIC succeeded in eradicating the militias and warlords from Mogadishu, provided social services and brought some semblance of stability. It was estimated that during UIC control of Southern Somalia, around 4500 Somali families returned from western countries (Tharmalingam 2011: 189). The Islamists successfully gained control of much of South Central Somalia in a short time (Grigoryan 2015). But within 6 months they lost grounds to the TFG, supported by Ethiopian troops who had assumed control of most of Somalia's southern areas from the collapsing UIC. Internal divisions led to dissolution of the UIC, which gave birth to more radical groups such as al Shabaab and Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS). All UIC offshoots started fighting the TFG and the Ethiopian troops for control of the region. After the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops in January 2009, TFG and the Djibouti faction of the ARS (ARS-D) reached a power-sharing agreement. The leader of the other faction of ARS, ARS Asmara (ARS-A), Hassan Dahir Aweys established Hisbul Islam. Hisbul Islam began fighting the TFG after former UIC and ARS-D leader Sheik Sharif Sheik Ahmed took over the presidency of the TFG. Corruption, poor management and continued power struggle

failed to contribute to reconciliation and cooperation of key actors of the political arena of the country.

The Federal Government of Somalia was formed in 2012 as the first permanent central government in the country since 1991, after the TFG's interim mandate expired. The provisional constitution was passed in 2012 and reframed Somalia into a federation.

UNPACKING THE CONFLICT

Somalia is often referred to as the longest-running humanitarian catastrophe in the world. The country has been plagued by armed violence, civil strife and insurgencies, piracy, droughts and famines. The civil war occurred in 1991, at a time of a serious drought. That combination proved disastrous for the population at large. By 1992, almost 4.5 million people, more than half the total number in the country, were threatened with starvation, severe malnutrition and related diseases (UNOSOM report 1992). The magnitude of suffering was immense. According to the UN, an estimated 300,000 people died. Some 2 million people, violently displaced from their home areas, fled either to neighbouring countries or elsewhere within Somalia. All institutions of governance and at least 60% of the country's basic infrastructure disintegrated.

Over 1 million fled to Middle Eastern and western countries (Human Rights Watch 1995). The humanitarian catastrophe led to the Somali conflict becoming home to some of the most ambitious, precedent-setting external stabilisation operations in the post-Cold War period. The UN, then headed by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, proposed a resolution (733) that the situation in Somalia constituted a threat to international peace and security, a resolution that was unanimously adopted by the Security Council in January 1992. The resolution stipulated that the internal situation in Somalia warranted enforcement action given the international threat that this was perceived to pose. This led to the presence of US forces as well as a UN-led military presence in 1993. Since then, the presence of international community members has been a recurring event. In 2006, Ethiopian troops entered Somalia at the invitation of the Somali Transitional Federal Government to assist in the battle against the Islamic Courts Union. There is also the presence of the African Union's mission to Somalia, which has been on Somali soil since 2007.

The security, economic and political stakes are high due to the increasingly globalised dimensions of the Somali conflict and the growing prominence of Al-Qaeda and ISIS and US security interests in the country.

Much can be said about the causes of the conflict and identifying contributing elements has been the source of many on-going debates. Majority of the arguments that have been brought forth can be broadly encapsulated into three key themes; impact of clannism, international community engagement and poverty, inequality and unequal access to resources.

IMPACT OF CLANNISM

The impact clannism has had on the way Somalis live and, ultimately, the way they fight, is multifaceted. Firstly, it is important to distinguish between clan and tribe as, from an anthropological perspective, Somalis are for the most part considered to be culturally, linguistically, religiously and ethnically homogenous belonging to a common ancestry or tribe but divided into clans (Lewis 1994). Somalis have, as far back as history depicts, lived together as communities structured around their clan system, leading primarily pastoral and agricultural lifestyles without any type of centralised hierarchical rule. The British novelist Gerald Hanley, who served as a soldier in the British military in the 1930s during the occupation of Somalia, depicts this rather acutely in his novel *Warriors: Life and Death amongst the Somalis* (1993) and goes on to explain how this setting of communal governance was the norm amongst Somalis, which agrees with what Lewis refers to as a ‘pastoral democracy’.

The ancestors of the present-day Somalis are considered to have moved from the Omo and Tana rivers region, stretching between southern Ethiopia and the Lamu coast into the Horn of Africa and absorbed or drove away earlier populations that inhabited the region (Cortinois 1994). The primary cleavage that Somalis descend from lies in the genealogical construct of the Samaale tribe, which is where the name ‘Somali’ is derived from. There are four clans that descend from Samaale: Sab, Dir, Daarood and Hawiye. The Sab are southern agriculturalists and are considered to be mixtures of indigenous populations residing in the inter-riverine area (Laitin 1977: 23).

The two sub-clans that trace their origin to the Sab are the Digil and the Rahanweyn (also known as Mirifle). The Dir clan are in the north

and mid regions, the Hawiye in the south and the Daarood reside in the northern, mid and southern regions. These three clans all lead primarily pastoral existence making their livelihood from camel, cow and sheep herding. Each of these clans has many sub-clans preserved along the father's name forming a basis for a lineage that each Somali can trace his or her origin to.

The traditional clan governance stipulates social contracts amongst clans and their ties are strengthened through inter-clan marriages. Each clan has several well-respected elders who serve as the wise negotiators, intellectuals, peace-makers and peace-keepers. Agreements such as a well-defined blood group paying for the transgressions of one of their sub-clan members ensured responsibility as well as discipline were communally shared. The institution of the 'heer', which is a legal social contract, mediates between the demands of Islamic law and the dictates of native common law (Cortinois 1994: 26). In other words, clan governance provided a systemised balance that helped members to navigate social relations along their ethnic lines whilst adhering to their Muslim faith, as Somalis were devout Muslims. Somali citizenship is defined not by borders but rather by the Somali language and customs, the Somali language being the most powerful symbol of their nationality (Laitin 1977: 42). The clan is answerable for all its members and, at the same time, held liable for their settlements (Issa-Salwe 2008). Every male and female in the clan lineage is identified through the father and is thereby linked to the line of descent (Lewis 1994). Somali culture is oral rather than written. Through the practice of memorising and reciting the names of one's forefathers, when a man dies he remains in the consciousness of the lineage members because his place in the clan lineage is fixed. If the cause of the death was a feud killing this too will live on in the memory of his clan. The resort to force is the standard procedure expected to be used in the case of a feud killing. The bereaved kin will feel offended and lacking in respect and dignity. To restore their status, they have to retaliate. The sooner a reckoning takes place, the stronger and more confident the wronged family feels. Sometimes a poet of the lineage might compose a poem that incites his lineage to retaliate for the killed kin and thus regain its status. The victim may become immortalised through the words of the poet. In the case of external threat such as another clan, feuding lineages of the same clan will set aside their antagonism and unite in common defence (Issa-Salwe 2011). If the 'eye for an eye' system doesn't work, clan elders intervene and find a resolution.

This type of existence was rudely disturbed when colonisation reared its head. The Portuguese were the first perpetrators in 1506 when they ransacked the southern coastal town of Baraawe with an army of 6000 spearmen and since then the Somali lands have been the scene of an unusual amount of foreign contact (Laitin 1977: 43). Clan-based governance was properly disturbed when colonisation took firm root in Somalia in 1880s. The colonising forces took advantage of the disunited nature of the Somali clan structure, signed treaties with some of the clans and pitted those residing within the same areas against each other using existing hostilities as the gunpowder for war.

The clan became the instrument of a government technology of power by which the rulers coerced and co-opted, in a classic divide-and-rule fashion, the ruled and by which the ruled competed with each other to prise benefits or just gain security from the colonial state (Kapteijns 2013: 75). Herein lies the beginning of the shifting nature of Somalis' amicable co-existence under clan-based governance and clannism becoming an inevitable root cause. From 1885 onward, all the Somali territories were under colonial rule and centralised administrations became necessary. Italy, France and Britain each set up a locally based administration with a central command. This was the second disturbance to the decentralised nature of Somali governance and further cemented the unending clash between clan and governance (Lewis 1994; Notten 2006). Echoing the words of Lee Cassanelli in his book *The Shaping of the Somali Society* (1982), Somali society ought to be regarded as the product of interactions amongst herdsmen, farmers and townsmen who came together under diverse circumstances in the past. Somalis were never a nationally united people but rather lived amongst each other consensually in their respective clan communities, which unfortunately worked against them when colonisation came knocking. The notion of nationalism was only introduced during the struggle for independence and was later taken on by the subsequently formed Somali governments. However, in a clan-divided society like Somalia, a focused relation between clans and any incoming state is inevitable, which is the 'pre-eminent theatre for social intercourse and collective conflict'.

Since independence, which was gained in 1960, Somalia has had three successive governments, two civilian and one military. All three of them were based on centralised governance but the two civilian administrations, which existed between 1960 and 1969, tried, without much success, to integrate the clan structure with the state.

This failed attempt could be attributed to the new leaders being unfamiliar with centralised ruling and they thus fell back to the familiar clan-based governance. Members depended on loyalty from their clans and kinsmen to generate public support (Lewis 1994: 29). Ties of kinship bound elected members of the National Assembly to their rural areas and subsequently made clan-related corruption a recurring event (Lewis 1994: 29). Many members of the government used political parties to engage their subjects just like the colonial powers did, namely as clans. They mobilised their clan constituencies to obtain votes and influence whilst the constituencies looked to them for access to government jobs, scholarships and other benefits (Kapteijns 2013: 76). Lineage solidarity became, for political entrepreneurs, not only an axis of political mobilisation but also of a masking of personal ambition (Compagnon 1990: 458).

The military regime, whose leader Siyad Barre came to power in a bloodless coup in 1969, enjoyed a more organised way of governing and were able, to a certain extent, to unite the people. However, clan balancing in the major institutions of the government remained an important dimension of government policy whilst also shaping the overall discourse of clan in Somalia (Abdi Samatar 1987: 70).

Siyad Barre aligned his government with the Soviet Union and adopted scientific socialism, the social-political-economic theory modelled on the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Whilst high-level positions were held by individuals from all clan backgrounds, this regime governed as an autocrat in which no group had democratic representation. Its officials, regardless of their clan background, were loyal solely to their leader (Compagnon 1990: 468). The implementation of scientific socialism allowed Barre a number of successes during his reign, a key milestone being the banning of clan as the traditional basis of socio-political identity and replacing it with nationalistic rhetoric based on ideas of socialism. The new government won the hearts and minds of the people by promoting a new self-reliance and self-supporting mentality. This helped to encourage a national rather than clan consciousness for it lessened dependence on traditional clan lineage for survival. The main dream for every Somali was to be unified, including those living under Ethiopian and Kenyan rule. Their regions had been given to Kenya and Ethiopia by the colonial powers when independence came. People were mobilised to participate in the development of their country together building schools, hospitals, community centres and mosques

in the name of nationalism and unity, eradicating clan association in the process (Laitin 1977).

The Barre regime achieved another milestone in writing the Somali language, which was previously merely a spoken language. The official languages of the Somali republic were still English and Italian long after the British north and Italian south were united and independence was gained and this created issues on multiple levels. Firstly, it inhibited most people from receiving education as the country's education was provided in either Italian or English and therefore only an elite number of people who spoke those languages could afford to educate themselves and their children. Secondly, it created communication hindrances within government institutions as those based in the north functioned in English and government officials in the south operated in Italian, which made the integration and effective working relations between the north and the south extremely difficult. When the Somali language was officially introduced in 1972, it became the national language of the country replacing Italian and English, and progressively eradicated the administrative obstacles further enhancing the notion of Somali nationalism. The education in Somali was provided from 1972 allowing many people to gain access. Alongside this a literacy campaign was initiated throughout the whole country to lift the literacy levels of all Somalis residing in urban and rural areas. By 1975, the literacy levels of the Somali people grew from less than 5% to 50–60%. At the height of Barre's reign between 1970 and 1977, his mission to unite the people under the banner of nationalism was successful and he turned his attention to seek the missing Somali territories. These were given to Kenya and Ethiopia during the British colonial evacuation; the French colonial territory was turned into a separate country: Djibouti.

Throughout the early 1970s Barre had been supporting the opposition guerrilla group, the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), who were fighting against the Ethiopian government to liberate the Somali inhabited Ogaden region. By 1977, Barre had intensified that support and waged a full-fledged war against Ethiopia, seizing the Ogaden region. Barre had a superior army in comparison to Ethiopia as his nation, in addition to receiving USSR military aid, received millions of dollars in arms and military training from Egypt whose key interest was to secure the Nile river flow by destabilising Ethiopia (Tareke 2000: 638). The Ethiopian government in return pleaded for help from its

allies the USSR, Yemen and Cuba. The USSR had been supporting both Somalia and Ethiopia but chose to side with Ethiopia in this particular war, to the detriment of the Somali government. The USSR along with Yemen and Cuba sent military support to aid the Ethiopian military, resulting in the counter-defeat of the Somali army.

This defeat set a devastating chain of events in motion. Soon after the withdrawal of the Somali troops from Ethiopia in 1978, army chiefs ordered the killing of more than 80 soldiers for their opposition to the way the war was handled (Kapteijns 2013: 81). Some army officials reacted to this and other punishments by committing an unsuccessful coup d'état. The Barre government responded by stating that most of these army officials belonged to the Majeerteen sub-clan (of the Daarood) and put to death 17 men who were part of the coup organisers and all but one were Majeerteen (Kapteijns 2013: 81). This led to the formation of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), the first armed opposition group, which was established in Ethiopia in 1978. The SSDF's majority members were from the Majeerteen sub-clan and were aided by Ethiopia and Libya. The formation of this first clan-based armed opposition was also the beginning of clannism growing to play a weighty role in the collapse of the Somali state.

The defeat also resulted in a huge refugee influx fleeing from the now-war torn Somali-inhabited Ogaden region in Ethiopia. As many as 50,000 refugees were accommodated in 26 camps, which were later extended to 40 with the help of UNHCR as the number of refugees had increased from 600,000 to 1.5 million by 1980 (Daahir 1987; Simons 1995).

The UNHCR shipped more than \$100 million worth of food (Tucker 1982). These predicaments coincided with a devastating drought in 1977, wreaking havoc across most of the northern Somali regions. However, since economic assistance was no longer coming from the Soviets, the refugee influx and environmental disaster created a huge strain on Somalia's economy. Additionally, government health and social services were largely confined to urban areas making this emergency coincide with an infrastructure that wasn't prepared to handle it. Government resources became stretched.

By the early 1980s, cracks in the country began to appear. Armed opposition based on clan loyalties was spreading across the country. It should be noted that Ethiopia played some role in these clan alignments

since partition of Somalia could only have been in the interest of Addis Ababa with the possibility of a non-Eritrean access to the Red Sea (Metz 1993). The second noteworthy armed opposition group was formed in London in 1981 by the Isaaq clan and took the name the Somali National Movement (SNM). Their military branch also established itself in Ethiopia. The formation of SNM was a reaction to the large-scale government abuse and an economic warfare that seemed to solely target Somalis in the northwest, of whom most were of the Isaaq clan (Kapteijns 2013: 84). SNM along with SSDF were armed and supported by the Ethiopian government of Mengistu Haile Mariam until 1988, when Barre and Haile Mariam reached an official agreement to stop supporting each other's opposition groups. SNM responded to this change in fortune by crossing into the Somali border (with some Ethiopian support still) attacking two major towns in the northwest regions, several refugee camps in the same region and distributing fighters without uniforms or distinctive markings amongst the civilian population. The Somali government responded with the full power of its military to quash the SNM and the cities of Hargeysa and Bur'o that were attacked by the SNM were indiscriminately bombarded. What wasn't destroyed from the air was battered in the artillery battles between the Somali national army and the SNM (Kapteijns 2013: 86). The number of civilian casualties is estimated at 30,000 (Simons 1995). Some 330,000 civilians from the northwest made it to Ethiopia as refugees. This incident fortified the armed opposition of the SNM and became the precursor for the northwest to secede from the rest of Somalia in 1991. Today that region is the self-declared Republic of Somaliland.

During the late 1980s, an upsurge of opposition media was established. Radio stations set up by armed groups like SSDF and SNM operated from Ethiopia broadcasting anti-government programmes to rally oppositional support. Naturally, the Somali government banned these radio stations but the public still had unofficial access to them. Clan opposition groups grew abundantly across the country and all of them wanted to overthrow the Barre government. By January 1991, more than a dozen of them succeeded in this mission but it was particularly brought home by the Hawiye clan's armed opposition group, the United Somali Congress (USC). Law and order were replaced with political disintegration, anarchy and human rights abuses beyond count (Lyons and Samatar 1995). A British journalist reporting from Mogadishu, following

the overthrow of the president, observed a queue of civilians waiting to pass through a roadblock manned by rebels:

As each person was waved through, another came forward and began uttering a litany of names. My guide with the flaming red hair said the people were reciting their clan family trees. The genealogies tumbled back generation after generation to a founding ancestor. It was like a DNA helix, or a fingerprint, or an encyclopaedia of peace treaties and blood debts left to fester down the torrid centuries. I was thinking how poetic this idea was, when bang!, a gunman shot one of the civilians, who fell with blood gushing from his head and was pushed aside onto a heap of corpses. “Wrong clan,” said my flaming-haired friend. “He should have borrowed the ancestors of a friend”.

An organised and purposeful clan-cleansing campaign specifically targeting the Daarood clan, to which the president belonged, was set in motion. Many victims were selected, rounded up and killed on the basis of their Daarood clan background in ways that constitute recurring patterns. The violence was ordered, directed, organised and supervised by USC leaders (Kapteijns 2013: 136–137). USC rebel leaders consistently denied killing unarmed civilians, saying there were people who took the law into their own hands by settling old scores. This rhetoric disguises the fact that the violence was communally organised and ordinary civilians were participating in the clan cleansing as part of an organised campaign (Kapteijns 2013: 138). Early on there was a resentment-driven explicit focus on exterminating middle-class men of distinction that belonged to the Daarood clan such as intellectuals, professionals, politicians and established businessmen. Large-scale rape was part of the clan-cleansing campaign with thousands of women and girls purposely gang-raped in front of or within earshot of relatives and friends (Kapteijns 2013: 144). Beyond those belonging to the Daarood clan, other Somalis who genealogically fell outside the clan structure, were othered and abused by the USC because they were constructed as being foreign. Greed, lust, deprivation, intoxication and resentment are some of the rationale scholars provide for the abuse these groups have endured. However, this clan-cleansing campaign appears to be largely ignored, overlooked or all together denied. Ignored mostly by the international reporters who initially set foot in Mogadishu at the height of the war, because they were hosted by USC handlers and much of their

own security depended on ignoring the campaign. Scholarly work often tends to overlook the campaign and instead either focuses solely on the atrocities committed by the Barre government and therefore frames the conflict as a people's uprising against a terrible dictator or it presents a context of ensuing chaos and clan fighting following the overthrow of the government (Kapteijns 2013: 154). The majority of the USC leaders deny the occurrence of the campaign for obvious reasons. According to Cohen's conceptual framework in his book *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering*, these kinds of denials and overlooking constitute what he calls 'interpretive denials', which is a failure to acknowledge that what happened was the purposeful brutalisation of uninvolved civilians constructed as clan enemy (Cohen 2001: 7, 8, 61). It is therefore imperative to bring to the forefront omissions of this scale as it fills a vital scholarly gap with regards to reaching a comprehensive understanding of the Somali conflict.

New politics, which is based on identity, draws on memory and history and societies where cultural traditions are more entrenched (Kaldor 1999: 85). The fragmentation of the Somali society and their subsequent retrieval to their respective clans indicates how entrenched cultural traditions are in the context of Somali politics and existence.

An attempt was made to officially incorporate the clan into the Somali government during the peace talks in Djibouti in 2000 where rival parties were convened by the UN and other international bodies to establish a transitional government. The government that was declared following those talks was based on a formula dubbed the '4.5', which essentially meant government positions and parliament members were equally divided amongst the three major clans of the Samaale lineage and one clan of the Sab lineage and the minority groups got a 'half'. This introduced a host of issues to the already devastated political scene of Somalia, not the least being that leadership as well as other key positions were being distributed according to which clan had the 'right' to it, rather than someone's merit and ability.

The (Western) international community has made much effort to assist in the rebuilding of the Somali state and nation paying attention to the centrality of clan construction but there is cause for concern with regards to the longevity of their engagement, the lack of coordination amongst them and to what extent their own ends are being served at the expense of resolving the Somali conflict.

GLOBALISED CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS AND COLONIAL ROOTS

From the offset of the ‘scramble for Africa’ from the 1880s onwards, Somalia attracted significant colonial attention. Although European expansion into Africa had already been taking place for 450 years, it is this period that officiated European control over the African lands (Schraeder 2000: 88). I specifically want to focus on this era of the engagement of external powers as a root cause of the Somali conflict stems from this time. There are two components to this root cause. Firstly, the imposition of the European nation-state system created a number of artificially produced states with little concern for local socio-economic or political conditions (Schraeder 2000: 99). Somalia’s case in this context was rather unique in comparison to the other created African states. Most African states constructed by colonial powers brought together diverse tribal and ethnic groups who did not ordinarily live together. The Somali people faced the opposite action; their lands were distributed amongst the four imperial powers of France, Italy, Great Britain and Ethiopia. This forcibly separated a people who ordinarily lived with each other but, more importantly, it brought an end to the traditional clan governance that facilitated consensual co-existence. The colonial powers took advantage of the lack of centralised authority in clan-based co-existence and ruled them separately in a classic ‘divide-and-conquer’ fashion (Kapteijns 2013). They signed dubious treaties disguised as treaties of mutual friendship and respect with local clan leaders. In reality, these treaties meant European domination and ownership of local lands and this intention was often difficult to decipher by the local leaders as the treaties were written in foreign languages (Schraeder 2000: 95).

European colonisation delegitimised traditional clan leaders with the European administration replacing them as the source of power. Only those who pledged unswerving allegiance to the colonial powers were appointed to positions (Schraeder 2000: 103). This set off an unprecedented level of clan tension as colonial demands often ran counter against the interests of the local people and locally appointed clan leaders had to choose between siding with their clan or risk removal from office. The struggle for independence temporarily halted these tensions. The second component is closely connected to first; the imposition of centralised ruling at the expense of decentralised clan governance.

The disregard for reconciling clan governance with centralised ruling sowed the seeds for the perpetuation of hostility between clans and clans against the state into present-day Somali politics. This is not to disregard the fact that clans had conflicted with each other prior to the arrival of colonial powers. Shared territories and scarce water supply in the Somali deserts have been causes for conflict within the context of a nomadic life-style. But colonisation set a new precedence of warfare that was previously unbeknownst to the Somali people.

The division of the Somali people amongst the different colonial powers eventually led to the emergence of irredentism (Schraeder 2000: 99) during the struggle for independence. Somalis unified their efforts to form a national society in their quest to form their own nation-state, which brought together all the Somalis that had been separated. When independence came in 1960, only British Somaliland in the north and Italian Somaliland in the south were united to form the Somali republic. French Somaliland was turned into an independent nation called Djibouti, the Somali territories under Ethiopian rule became a province part of Ethiopia and the south-eastern territories that were under British rule became part of Kenya, which was also a British colony. This gave birth to unending hostile and often violent relations between Somalia and its neighbours. The Somali leaders opted to seek reunification by funding guerrilla insurgencies in Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia throughout the 1960s (Schraeder 2000: 100). Somalia and Ethiopia fought again in 1977 and both governments continued to fund and arm oppositional groups. All of these conflicts are partially the result of illogically drawn European colonial boundaries (Schraeder 2000).

The 1977 war against Ethiopia particularly became internationalised because of the involvement of the two Cold War superpowers of the USA and the USSR and their respective allies. As mentioned in the preceding section, the USSR was a key ally to the Somali military government and suffered tremendously when the former Soviet Union decided to switch its allegiance to Ethiopia during this war.

At the end of the war Somalia became increasingly more reliant on the USA and international organisations such as the World Bank and the IMF to prevent its economy collapsing. They in turn required policies to be put in place that were more in line with a free market economy. The defeat in the war and the subsequent dwindling of government resources coupled with drought, famine and a huge refugee influx imminently produced public dissatisfaction. Political dissatisfaction during this period

also led to the formation of clan-based opposition groups who found a supportive ally in Ethiopia. The establishment of these armed groups signalled the beginning of the end.

The Somali civil war broke out in 1991, which coincided with a post-Cold War transformation in the form of a convergence between liberal and left-wing themes and many international policy developments (Newman 2009: 48); one of the key perceived developments being the construction of a post-Cold War order. Indications of this development were the apparent moves towards international co-operation, an emphasis on democratisation and human rights and an increased prominence of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society movements. The notion of ‘international responsibility’ rather than interference, which was what international intervention was seen as in the Cold War era, to address legitimate involvement in the protection of lives and rights of people across the world, was becoming increasingly influential (Newman 2009: 42). The influence of this notion was characterised by two elements; the strengthening of international institutions such as the UN, particularly in relation to peacekeeping, and the general shift towards democratisation as a policy goal by major institutions with the simultaneous development of a strengthened international human rights regime (Newman 2009: 42).

In 1992 the then secretary general of the UN Boutros Boutros-Ghali published the peacekeeping document that would bolster the institution’s peacekeeping missions from simply managing conflicts to participating in the rebuilding of societies, creating viable institutions, facilitating reconciliation and reconstructing economies. In short, the 1990s introduced an era of ethical frameworks where the international community regarded humanitarian intervention a moral imperative in crises where massive violations of human rights were occurring. The international community channelled much of its humanitarian support through international NGOs (Slim 1997: 4 citing Duffield 2001) and with the collapse of the state, they filled a big part of the ensuing power vacuum. International NGOs developed programmes and agendas that went beyond the distribution of emergency relief and they incorporated resettlement and relocation, macroeconomic reconstruction, income-generating activities, sanitation and health, education, demobilisation, peace-building, human rights protection and democracy and state-building into their work (Newman 2009: 97). As they received major grants from Western donors, they also became implicated in the multiple

policies that Western governments were promoting (Newman 2009: 97) and this further adds to the polarisation that the conflicting policies of the international community are contributing to the Somali conflict. As reliance upon international NGOs grows, so too does their authority, particularly when there isn't a strong alternative in the form of a government in control of its own affairs.

Much less publicised was the underlying Western insecurity with regards to the dangers these 'new wars' (Kaldor 1999) would pose as they were operating in a networked, globalised world. There was a prime concern to defend the interests of the Global North and as part of the post-Cold War developed world order for the Global North to control the Global South through 'global governance' (Duffield 2001: 13–16). Radical critics may dismiss the whole notion of humanitarian intervention as a new way of disguising imperialism (Chandler 2006) but even those sympathetic to the practice would conclude that it seeks to impose Western standards of democracy and political and economic liberalism (Zaum 2007: 229–232). It is the disconnect between these standards and interests and understanding locally prevailing issues and political and economic customs that lead to international community's engagement with the Somali conflict to exacerbate rather than tame the conflict.

Somalia since its state collapse has had international intervention in both a humanitarian and military capacity. It was the issue of humanitarian access, and the question of whether the price of access to famine victims was complicity in a war economy, that raised broader policy concerns and eventually to the fateful decision on the part of the outgoing administration of US President George H.W. Bush to send an unprecedented, 28,000-strong peace-enforcement operation into Somalia in December 1992 (Newman 2009). The prolonged civil war and drought resulted in mass starvation in the country, particularly in southern Somalia. The most common argument put forward to intervene in Somalia, as Piers Robinson (2002) states, is the demands from the media that pressurised the USA to intervene in the situation before it got out of hand, known as the 'CNN effect'. But the key pressure for US intervention seems to have been lobbied for by senior policy makers; media coverage of the Somali crisis didn't become prominent until after the intervention decision (Robinson 2002: 54). The Somali crisis also coincided with the US election period and it became an election issue

(Hirsch and Oakley 1995/1996: 35). Bill Clinton replaced George H.W. Bush in office in 1993. He continued, and in fact expanded, his predecessor's involvement in Somalia.

Now the humanitarian mission started to turn into a political and nation-building effort. However, whilst in pursuit of the best government, UN and US officials helped to exacerbate strife by pitting one warlord against another. One prime example was when Belgian peacekeepers enabled warlord Mohamed Said Morgan to capture the southern Somali town of Kismayo from General Mohamed Farah Aideed's ally, Mohamed Omar Jess. This action infuriated Aideed and his followers. Many violent protests ensued against UN humanitarian efforts, involving road bombs and skirmishes with Pakistani peacekeepers. Consequently, the US changed its policy from a humanitarian to military mission and ordered the arrest of General Aideed.

This move was a mistake and showed the extent to which the USA failed to understand the culture and the clan politics of this nomadic nation. Aideed was undoubtedly a warlord but when a US and UN coalition started to hunt him down he became an automatic hero for Somalis because of his willingness to stand up to the world's superpower. There has always been conflict among clans but as soon as a foreign threat manifests itself old clan rivalries give way to unity against the common threat. Aideed mobilised Somalia's clans, including rivals, against the foreigners. In response, the USA and UN escalated the conflict. This led to 18 US servicemen losing their lives and the infamous shooting down of two Black Hawk helicopters. The nation-building effort never succeeded because of misunderstanding of Somali culture and misguided foreign policy. The war became an embarrassment to the Clinton administration, particularly when images surfaced of an US serviceman being dragged through the street of Mogadishu in 1993. President Clinton admitted the failed US policy toward Somalia and announced that he was bringing forces home.

The US mission was replaced by the UN-led intervention, which lasted until 1994. It is noteworthy to mention that this intervention precipitated a new dimension of UN engagement in the core political and security functions of a failed state, which appeared to be in line with developments of the new world order. Their mandate stipulated three aims:

1. To provide humanitarian and other assistance to the people of Somalia in rehabilitating their political institutions and economy and promoting political settlement and reconciliation.
2. To assist the Somali people to promote and advance political reconciliation, through broad participation by all sectors of Somali society, and the re-establishment of national and regional institutions and civil administration in the entire country.
3. To re-establish the Somali police at the national and local level, to 'assist in the restoration and maintenance of peace, stability, and law and order'.

In addition to military intervention, the UN held several conferences aimed at reconciling the warring factions. In January 1993, the first UN sponsored conference on peace in Somalia was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and another in March of the same year. The conferences were attended by 15 warlords including the most powerful ones, General Mohamed Farah Aidede and Ali Mahdi of Mogadishu. They all reached an agreement to disarm their militias but this was not implemented. Some of the warlords, in particular Aidede and Mahdi, suspected one another of taking advantage of the disarmament. Instead Aidede rejected the UN's involvement and declared himself president claiming he was the legitimate ruler. Another reason that contributed to the failure of the UN peace building efforts was the type of engagement neighbouring countries Kenya and Ethiopia were practicing. In theory they stated they were supporting the warring factions to reach a peaceful agreement but in reality, they were arming the warlords. The UN finally declared the end of their engagement with Somalia and left in 1994.

Little international interest was taken in Somalia until 'the war on terror' programme began. The USA started intervening again under suspicion that the UIC, which was widely regarded as the first force to unite the Somali people and bring some peace and stability to the ground, were funding terrorists. The popularity of the UIC was counter-attacked by the Ethiopian military invasion backed by the US, who installed the Somali Transitional Government partly as a proxy for the USA's 'war on terror'. In 2007 'the US itself undertook military action and in 2008, was still launching sporadic attacks against alleged Islamic extremists'. This engagement by the USA and Ethiopia resulted in the defeat of the UIC but led to a far more lethal creation: Al-Shabab.

It is for these reasons that scholars like Bronwyn Bruton emphasize the need for the international community, particularly the USA, to disengage from Somalia citing that their misguided policies are exacerbating the conflict:

The U.S. government needs to change its Somalia policy—and fast. For the better part of two decades, instability and violence have confounded U.S. and international efforts to bring peace to Somalia. The international community's repeated attempts to create a government have failed, even backfired. The United States' efforts since 9/11 to prevent Somalia from becoming a safe haven for al Qaeda have alienated large parts of the Somali population, polarized the country's diverse Islamist reform movement into moderate and extremist camps, and propelled indigenous Salafi jihadist groups to power. (Bruton 2009: 79)

Bruton further argues that in order to 'both protect its interest in Somalia and to help the country, Washington must abandon hope of building a viable state there' (Bruton 2009: 81). Although I do agree with the notion that misguided policies from the USA and the international community have played a significant role in fuelling the Somali conflict, a disengagement from the country altogether would be disastrous. The country is incapable of addressing the dire humanitarian, political and social catastrophes that it is dealing with and needs the support from the international community. But this support needs to be more coordinated between the different members of the international community. It also needs to be much more in line with the needs of Somalia and the Somali people and less based on the interest of the USA and the international community. This means factoring in programmes that rebuild the social fabric of the society and that can become susceptible to centralised ruling and are inter-connected to institution building.

A key concern seems to be that Somalia has become a safe haven for terrorism and the threat groups like Al-Shabab pose. However, the international community's policies towards tackling terrorism in Somalia is merely dealing with the symptom and neglecting the root cause. The phenomenon of Al-Shabab and elements that led to their creation had long been brewing in Somalia, contrary to common belief. Somalis were one of the earliest societies to accept Islam from the beginning but had always practiced it moderately. It is only as recently as the 1960s that some Somalis began to travel to places like Saudi Arabia, both

for work and study purposes, and became exposed to the more conservative schools of thought. It was during this time that the encounter between Somalis and political Islam emerged. Influenced by Al Aqwan Al Muslimin (the Muslim Brotherhood) and the Wahabi school of thought, Somalis established their own Islamic movement in Somalia (Shay 2008: 4). The public execution of 10 clerics by the Barre regime and imprisonment of other Muslim scholars led the movement to go underground and to continue their activities in a clandestine way. Saudi Arabia, fearful of the spread of communism, made every possible effort to export their brand of Islamist conservatism to Somalia by pouring money into it through charitable organisations and providing many Somalis opportunities to study at Islamic Universities in Saudi Arabia. Most of these students were given the option of returning to Somalia after graduation as paid preachers, an offer that the majority of them seized. This was mainly due to the lack of good governance and political participation that the Barre regime was grappling with, which presented very few viable alternative options for the younger Somali generation. As Professor Jeff Haynes argues:

In recent years, the genesis of numerous Islamist groups is linked to governmental policy failures. This suggests that contemporary Islamist resurgence has its foundations in widespread popular Muslim disillusionment at slow or non-existent progress as well as growing disgust with corrupt and unrepresentative governments. Such perceptions are not helped when such regimes refuse to open up political systems to become more representative. (Hayness 2007: 6–7)

The years leading up to the demise of the Barre government, several Islamist movements had formed but Al-Itihad Al Islamiya (Unity of Islam) was arguably the most popular. Its members were from university educated classes and had ambitions to create a greater Somalia, which would be free from corruption and clan politics and established on Islamic ideologies. With the collapse of the state and the subsequent civil war, they faced many challenges from clan-based militias and they set up a military wing (Shay 2008: 43). However, the military confrontations created a debate within the group where the younger members argued for the continuation and intensification of their military operations and achieving the group's goal for a unified Islamic Somalia through these means in the name of jihad. The elders and scholars of the group argued

that this should be achieved through education and winning the hearts and minds of the people. The elders' argument had prevailed and the military wing was disbanded, much to the disappointment of their youth members. This move eventually led to the movement's dissolution in the late 1990s.

This period coincided with the attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and, 3 years later 9/11, which re-ignited the USA's interest in the Horn of Africa. They set up the Combined Task-Force Unit, based in Djibouti, whose job was to monitor the 'Al-Qaeda cells in Somalia' and to liaise with regional governments, Somali warlords and faction leaders. This angered many Somalis, particularly the youth, who viewed the USA as engaging in the fragmentation of the Somali people and heightening the civil war. US foreign policy was seen only through the eyes of the 'war on terror' and didn't include long-term plans to help the country to attain peace and stability (Menkhaus 2008). This period also saw the resurfacing of Islamist movements. The UIC, mentioned previously, consisted of Mogadishu-based elders and youth who came together to provide social services to the city and set up local sharia courts to bring about some form of law and order in 2006. 'For the first time since the collapse of Somalia in 1991, ordinary citizens found that it was safe to go about their business in the streets of Mogadishu, without fear of attack or molestation'. Muslim clerics once again rose to become prominent political figures with Sheikh Sharif Ahmed, Somalia's president from 2008–2012, being one of the key leaders. Religious networks functioned as a site for an oppositional public sphere and religious thematics were reconstituted as political rhetoric (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994: 35), which in the case of Somalia was an oppositional move against an already weak and unpopular transitional federal government. The movement gained popularity through the social services they carried out, which the local warlords and the transitional federal government saw as a threat. Additionally, the USA began to view the UIC as supporting terrorists. Then US under-secretary of State for Africa, Jendayi Frazer, was reported to have said 'that the Islamic Courts were now controlled by al-Qaeda cell individuals and that the top layer of the Courts comprised of extremists and terrorists'. At the end of 2006, Somalia was invaded by Ethiopian armed forces with intelligence, money and diplomatic support provided by the USA and the UIC was dismantled. It was then that the Al-Shabab we know today (the youth wing of the UIC) came into existence.

Humanitarian actors still expressed the grave humanitarian calamities occurring in Somalia, particularly with the 2006 invasion creating an upsurge in humanitarian needs, which was a mix of drought resulting in a famine and a massive refugee influx into neighbouring countries as well large-scale displacement within Somalia. The need for international humanitarian intervention was a case aid agencies often pleaded; critics of the aid agencies also had a point when they claimed the humanitarian actors had grown too accustomed to being a law unto themselves and had turned into *de facto* local governments controlling almost all of the resources, jobs and contracts, accountable to no one (Menkhaus 2010: 7). Basic human development indicators were so low, food security so chronically poor and malnutrition levels so high in some regions that the country still presented levels of need akin to that of a full-blown humanitarian crisis. Observers voiced alarm that international donors were ‘normalising the crisis’ in Somalia by redefining what constituted a *bona fide* humanitarian emergency, allowing international thresholds of unacceptable human misery in Somalia to rise to reach shocking levels (Bradbury 1998).

As non-Western donor countries, such as Turkey, Iran and members of the Arab League become more involved with Somalia, they introduce different methods of humanitarian intervention to their Western counterparts. It falls beyond the scope of this book, but it would be interesting, to study the viability of their alternative approaches.

The international community plays a complex role, which can exacerbate the conflict but perhaps what is more pertinent to the average Somali person is that it continues to provide a lifeline in an environment where poverty and unequal access to resources have become mainstays.

POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND UNEQUAL ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Unequal economic opportunities, access to resources and vast differences in standards of living all have the potential to make disadvantaged members of society feel that their particular economic system is unfair and perhaps illegitimate (Brown 1998: 186). As Catherine Besteman argues, it was ‘the shifting of cultural constructions of class, occupation and status that structured much of the violence in in Somalia in 1991’ (Besteman 2008: 124). The lack of economic recovery and employment opportunities during the subsequent civil war is what further heightened the continuity of the war (Menkhaus 2004). It ‘impeded demobilisation

and reinforced criminality and armed conflict' (Menkhaus 2004: 150). Menkhaus continues to argue that 'underdevelopment contributes to state failure by depriving governments of necessary tax revenues to be minimally effective' (Menkhaus 2004: 150) and consequently, state failure produces economic collapse, which perpetuates state failure.

After the 1977 Ethiopia–Somalia war, as mentioned above, the Somali people became demoralised and grew disheartened with their government, which led some members of society to form clan-based opposition groups. Part of Barre's response to tackle this issue was to put more individuals of his own clan, whom he trusted, in charge of many key offices and filled the army with them too (Lewis 1993). As Lewis states, 'the Marehan (Barre's sub-clan) unquestionably and openly dominated the military and Barre's son was put in charge of a special northern command unit' (Lewis 1993: 68). This created a class division amongst society where those belonging to Barre's clan or were somehow affiliated with the government formed an elite upper class and came to have a status above the rest of society. It needs to be noted that due to the nature of the regime being military rather than civilian, belonging or being affiliated to the military had a level of prestige attached to it as well. Furthermore, because Somalis value kinship if a member of the family belonged to the army then the whole family's status is automatically lifted.

It is this event that created resentment amongst ordinary members of society who then responded by supporting their oppositional clan groups. Menkhaus rightfully argues that a lack of economic opportunities lead to armed robbery and criminal activities but this is happening in parallel to clan loyalty and animosity, especially when vying for scarce resources in territories occupied by certain clans, which other clans want to obtain. Warlordism, another act of criminality that fuelled the conflict, is based on clan-loyalties and territorial claim over resources in the areas they control.

Numerous occasions of re-occurring environmental disasters took place, sometimes leading to an outbreak of famine resulting in extortionate loss of livestock, which led to many people losing their means of livelihood (Newman 2009). This meant both Somalis in the rural areas and the city dwellers turned towards whatever economic opportunities that were available. A rise in piracy, terrorism recruitment, refugee influx towards neighbouring countries and an increase in human trafficking are all symptoms of the poverty and lack of economic opportunities within

the country. Often women, children and members of minority clans bear the biggest brunt.

The saving grace for Somalia and its people has been the enduring employment that is attained from agriculture, livestock and fisheries. Although these opportunities remain in flux, they still constitute the backbone of the Somali economy and provide employment to more than two-thirds of the workforce. Additionally, remittances from the Somali diaspora have provided an essential income that about 40% of the population in some areas wholly depend on (UNDP 2011), and from which 80% of start-up capital is sourced. But the levels of human security continue to vary dramatically across Somalia. Since the outbreak of the civil war in 1991, large parts of South and Central Somalia have been afflicted by chronic insecurity. This has a profound impact on the ability to tackle the poverty existing within the country.

According to UNDP's 2011–2014 report, of the total estimated population of 9 million who inhabit Somalia, over one-third live in extreme poverty surviving on less than \$1 a day, 3.2 million require emergency humanitarian assistance and about 1.4 million are internally displaced persons (IDPs), the majority of whom reside in South and Central Somalia and Puntland. Rates of acute malnourishment of children are one in six, one in ten die before the age of five.

SUMMARY

Somalia's conflict is complex to say the least. The disastrous humanitarian, security and political conditions warrant Western international community engagement, but their assistance should be noted as a mixed blessing. It has provided life-saving support to millions of Somalis but it failed to tackle and possibly even exacerbated the man-made dimensions of the crisis. The opaque governance environment in which intervention has been planned, allocated and delivered has benefited those very politicians, warlords and businessmen that have been the source of the problem. For instance, theft and diversion of food aid has been a long-standing issue in Somalia, directly fuelling a war economy vested in the status quo (World Bank February 2012). In addition, the Ethiopian military intervention has created the ability for humanitarian assistance to be delivered to a greater area than before but it has also received the hatred of the Somali people who viewed their coming as an invasion of their land and transgression into their sovereignty. Equally important, the lack

of coordination between the members of the international community has caused confusion to say the least but more detrimentally, it hampers significant progress that can be made to bring stability to Somalia.

Internally, clannism still proves to be a vital factor in the current conflict but it seems to be underpinned by persistent poverty, lack of employment and economic opportunities and frustrations of the youth who haven't got avenues for their aspirations to be fulfilled. The conflict led many Somalis to seek refuge across the world and still many young people are flocking to Europe and North America in search of a better life. The continuity of migration out of Somalia demonstrates the lasting hold that the identified root causes have on the country. The next chapter explores the Somali diaspora.

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