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TILLYAN FOOTPRINTS BEYOND EUROPE: WAR-MAKING AND STATE-MAKING IN THE CASE OF SOMALILAND

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ABSTRACT:

While international recognition has a long time been coming, the Republic of Somaliland that seceded from Somalia on May 18th, 1991, not only constitutes a de facto state, but also one of the rare cases of effective secession in sub-Saharan Africa. Close to two decades after declaring independence, Somaliland enjoys relative peace, stability and security, contrasting starkly to general developments in South-Central Somalia. Attempting to explain this divergent outcome, past accounts centred mostly around the (in)ability of ‘elders’ to negotiate peace and stability. This article casts, however, a critical eye on such ‘traditional peace’ accounts, advancing an alternative, ‘bellicose peace’ argument, instead. Investigating the explanatory power of the Tillyan ‘war makes states’-argument, it is suggested that the different state trajectories in North and South Somalia are – by and large – to be attributed to differences in war(fare). The proposition is advanced that Somaliland’s violent liberation struggle was constitutive to its state-building project, because the anti-regime war brought about the establishment of a monopoly of violence, led to the state’s economic self-reliance and accountability, and created key political institutions that survived the war and became important pillars of the new state thereafter. Applying a state developmental perspective, the article concludes with some critical remarks regarding the international recognition of Somaliland and their potentially detrimental effects.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The arbitrariness of colonial borders has frequently been cited as a cause for Africa's protracted conflicts. Yet, although some scholars advocate for reconsidering the outcome of the 1884/85 Berlin Conference,¹ the community of states has been sharply opposed to re-drawing borders in Africa.² Partly deriving from this rationale, secessionist movements have usually been denounced as precursors of state failure, catalysts of regional balkanization, and initiators of global anarchy. Thus, rather than undergoing an 'age of secession,'³ Africa has experienced a 'secessionist deficit.'⁴ In tandem with this goes the dominant, neo-liberal interpretation of war and peace, which no longer sees violent conflict as 'politics by other means,'⁵ but demonizes it as 'tragic vicious circles' that constituted 'development in reverse'.⁶

Somaliland challenges numerous of these paradigms. Not only has this *de facto* state in the Horn of Africa reverted to colonial borders upon its declaration of independence on May 18th, 1991, but it has also managed to break out of the 'tragic vicious circles' of conflict, rising like a phoenix from the ashes of war. While Somalia's South, after eighteen years and well over two dozen peace conferences, is still a far cry from peace and stability, its northern break-away region has established comparatively viable structures of governance⁷ and developed into 'one of the most stable polities in the Horn.'⁸ Why has Somaliland been successful in establishing peace and certain structures of governance, and how was the rebellion against the dictatorial Siyad Barre regime turned into a secessionist and relatively successful state-building project?

Countering the 'new wars' theorists who argue that today's wars 'do not make states, but rather unravel them'⁹ and challenging general liberal understandings of war and peace, this article proposes that it was war(fare), first and foremost, that has been constitutive to Somaliland's success. Under the aegis of this proposition, the article casts a critical eye on

¹ See e.g. Herbst 2000:267 or Young 1991:320ff.; Zartman (1994), however, takes an opposite approach, arguing for the reaffirmation of the borders. For a brief summary of these, see Spears 2004b:35ff.

² see OAU Res. AHG/16(I), 1964; cf. Henwood 2007:173

³ Buchanan 1997

⁴ Englebert 2003; Englebert/Hummel 2005

⁵ Clausewitz 1832:24

⁶ World Bank 2008; Mohamoud 2006; Kaldor 1999

⁷ see e.g. Economist 1999; Reno 2003; Doornbos 2002; Forrest 2007

⁸ ICG 2003; see also e.g. World Bank 2005; Bradbury 2008; Höhne 2006:404

⁹ Leander 2004; see also Kaldor 1999; Herbst 2000

past explanations, which have not only largely neglected the instrumental, bellicose phase of state-building prior to Somaliland’s 1991 secession from the rest of Somalia, but which have also argued for and partly romanticized the idea of ‘traditional’ institutions delivering peace to a war-ravaged society. While not negating the important role of the ‘traditional’ elders, I argue that a bellicose argument informed by a political-economic approach offers a stronger and more apt explanation for peace- and state-building in Somaliland.

The following second section reviews and questions some key aspects of past explanations regarding Somaliland’s state-building project. The third section presents the theoretical framework and is a prelude to the empirical analysis of war- and state-making in Somaliland, which constitute section four. A brief discussion of dilemmas concerning the recognition of Somaliland in section five precede the article’s conclusion in section six.

2. WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE: PAST ACCOUNTS OF SOMALILAND’S ‘SUCCESS STORY’

Somaliland constitutes a particularly interesting case of secession and state formation. Not only has Somalia been considered homogenous in ethnic and other terms,¹⁰ constituted the sole irredentist state in sub-Saharan Africa,¹¹ and was perceived as a ‘nation in search of a state,’¹² but also does it appear that its chief rebel movement did not pursue an explicit secessionist policy.¹³ Why then did Somaliland secede? The subsequent section outlines the general justification for Somaliland’s secession, highlights past explanations for its success and points to some shortcomings in the debate as it stands to date.

2.1. ACCOUNTS OF SOMALILAND’S SECESSION

The question of why Somaliland annulled its roughly thirty years lasting union with Somalia on May 18th, 1991, into which it rushed so enthusiastically,¹⁴ is generally answered by pointing to long-standing grievances that the North-West suffered at the hands of the

¹⁰ Laitin and Samatar 1987:2; Samatar 1993:69; Makinda 1993:11

¹¹ Smith 1991:108; Adam 1999:261

¹² Laitin and Samatar 1987; compare Eno (2007:132) and Mukhtar (2007) who state that Somalis were heterogeneous

¹³ Bradbury 2008:22; Warsame and Brons 1994:20; Bradbury et al. 2003:457; Bryden 1994; Bryden 2003:344; WSP 2005:60. Compagnon 1993:10f.. However, this argument is contested by Huliaras 2002:160, who states that debate over secession was present in the SNM as early as 1981

¹⁴ See e.g. Jama 2000

South.¹⁵ Numerous authors highlight that already shortly after the union between the British protectorate and the Italian colony was forged on July 01st, 1960, Somalilanders were dissatisfied with the union.¹⁶ Not only did a majority of its population vote against the constitutional referendum on June 20th, 1961,¹⁷ but also did Sandhurst-trained lieutenants stage an abortive coup already in December of the same year.¹⁸ These examples are, however, only the tip of the ice-berg of grievances and respective reactions by the Somalilanders regarding the union with Somalia. Political marginalization and economic neglect throughout the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the atrocities committed against the in North-West Somalia predominant Isaaq-clan throughout the 1980s, are further arguments brought forth. In addition to this, the long-standing argument of ‘one ethnicity, one language, one culture,’¹⁹ has also been questioned in favour of the view that Somalilanders had a different tradition, spoke a particular dialect, and had religious practices unknown to the South.

Such attempts of re-writing history – whether justified or not – aside, these common explanations advanced to explain Somaliland’s secession have been challenged by alternative interpretations. Compagnon, for example, refutes the ‘economic grievance’ explanation, highlighting the fact that numerous Isaaq migrated to the South and had a stake in the flourishing economy.²⁰ Similarly, Elmi and Barise postulate, that the root causes of conflict lay in competition over resources and power,²¹ and Reno²² and Zierau²³ argue that Somaliland’s independence was less based on grievances, but rather on greed, as certain groups in Somaliland had a vested interest in the region’s independence, from which they ultimately profited. A different argument challenging the common explanation is made by Trzcinski who postulates that Somaliland’s geographic location importantly influenced its strife for and success in secession.²⁴

¹⁵ See e.g. Terlinden and Ibrahim 2008:2

¹⁶ Adam 1994:24; Ahmed and Green 1999:116; Drysdale 1992:14

¹⁷ Jacquin-Berdal 2002:173, who refers to Compagnon 1995, footnote 3, p. 527; see also Touval 1963:120f.

¹⁸ Jacquin-Berdal 2002:176

¹⁹ See e.g. Lewis

²⁰ Compagnon 1993:11

²¹ Elmi and Barise 2006:33

²² Reno 2003

²³ Zierau 2003

²⁴ Trzcinski 2004:207

While the motivations for Somaliland's secession are one side of the story, the process and accomplishment thereof are another important one. Thus, we now turn from the question of *why* Somaliland seceded to the question of *how* it could be so successful.

2.2. EXPLANATIONS OF THE SOMALILAND 'SUCCESS STORY'

It is commonly accepted that Somaliland's success in re-establishing functioning institutions of governance roots in the revival of 'traditional' institutions in general, and the institution of the 'elders' in particular.²⁵ The general argument is that the victorious SNM handed over the (inter- and intra-clan) peace-making initiatives to the clan elders due to a 'set of deeply embedded social norms that emphasized the importance of dialogue between antagonists,'²⁶ and that these 'elders' successfully resolved conflict between warring factions and 'are responsible for the success of Somaliland today.'²⁷ This argument reaches back into colonial times, citing divergent colonial practices in British and Italian Somalia as explanatory variable. Thereby, the 'colonial difference' argument contends that Italian direct colonialism extinguished 'traditional' institutions in the South, whereas British 'indirect rule' and a policy of 'benign neglect' left Somaliland's 'traditional' institutions largely intact.²⁸ Thus, it is deduced that in the aftermath of the civil war ending with the ousting of Siyad Barre from Mogadishu on January 27th, 1991, Somaliland was in a comparatively better politico-cultural situation to revive its traditional institutions. On top of this, the 'elders' are generally uncritically portrayed as a homogenous group of wise, old and benevolent members of society.

Although there lies some truth in these arguments and the 'elders' are, indeed, to be attributed a major role in peace-making, this perspective is flawed in numerous respects. Firstly, not only is the notion of 'elders' contested in the literature,²⁹ but the above outlined explanation displays 'traditional' structures as static, neglecting the fact that they had changed at the hands of the colonial, republican, as well as authoritarian regimes over the course of

²⁵ see e.g. Renders 2007; Walls 2008, 2009

²⁶ Walls 2009:1

²⁷ Leonard 2009:13; Flint 1994:36

²⁸ Lewis 1988:169 and 2002; Bradbury 2008:24ff., 29; Prunier 1998:225, cf. Spears 2004a:185; Huliaras 2002:158; Leonard 2009:11; Walls 2008:5; Terlinden and Ibrahim 2008:3; Drysdale 2000:76; Hofmann 2002. Compare Samatar (1989:44) and Jimcaal (2005), who state contrarily that the colonial system affected the Somali political structures in important ways also in the North.

²⁹ See e.g. Compagnon 1993:18, who hints at the fact that 'elders' can potentially be relatively young, prosperous and ambitious members of society

previous decades – from which also the North was not spared. Reno’s account, for example, is informative in this sense, as it concludes that colonial rule changed northern Somalia considerably.³⁰ Along similar lines, Bradbury points to the fact that ‘elders’ had been politicized and corrupted by British colonialists, who bestowed them with limited judicial and revenue-collecting powers, thus giving them a stake in enforcing colonial ordinances.³¹ While clan leaders had been incorporated into the state administration since independence in 1960,³² they experienced a particular revivification after the Ogadeen war in 1978, when the government reinstated, unofficially, the traditional leaders and used them to contain challenges from new opposition groups of various clans. ‘As the weakening of the regime assumed a dramatic downturn, the traditional leaders acquired more political power in their respective areas. The formation of clan-based militias to fight against the regime further enhanced the resumption of elders’ political status within their clan territories.’³³ One indication of this is the increase in the number of ‘sultans’, which rose in Somaliland from eight in 1960 to twenty in 1993,³⁴ while in neighbouring Puntland, the number of titled traditional leaders rose from eleven to twenty in the same timeframe.³⁵

Secondly, this explanation turns a blind eye on the fact that also in the South, ‘traditional’ structures had survived Italian ‘direct’ colonialism, the era of independence, and the brutal civil war. Samatar, for example, demonstrates how the colonial state, post-colonial nationalist movements, and Siyad Barre’s tradition-inimical policy of ‘scientific socialism’ led to a situation in which the Somalis took refuge in strengthening communal kinship systems.³⁶ Similarly, Rothchild and Chazan argue that ‘[t]here is a growing strength in Somali civil society – essentially because the state has collapsed so absolutely.’³⁷ And also Adam points to the fact that not only in the North, but also in other regions and particularly in areas that did

³⁰ Reno 2003:12

³¹ Bradbury 2008:28

³² WSP 2005:52

³³ Osman-Shuke 2004:149

³⁴ Farah and Lewis 1993:22f.

³⁵ Osman-Shuke 2004:152

³⁶ Samatar 1997:36ff.

³⁷ Rothchild and Chazan 1988, as quoted in Adam 2008:20; see also Adam 1995:76 and Samatar 1997:40. Similarly, Leonard (2009:11) argues that ‘when the Somali state collapsed and people were threatened with lives that were ‘nasty, brutish and short’ (as Hobbes would have it) the entire segmentary lineage system of clan governance sprung back into life and became the fundamental organizing principle for attempts at civil order.’

not require the intervention of foreign troops, the role of ‘traditional elders (both secular and religious) has been both visible and positive.’³⁸

Thirdly, this commonly advanced explanation also conceals that Somaliland’s ‘elders’ have not always been successful in their peace-making efforts. ‘Elders’ could neither prevent violent conflict between different clans in Somaliland, nor could they make peace upon command. Bryden and Farah, for example, postulate that ‘[t]he failure of Somaliland’s un-administered peripheral regions of Erigavo and Laasanod to form their own independent regional administrations illustrates the weakness of the traditional system of governance in building wider administrative structures.’³⁹ In line with this, Drysdale postulates that ‘[t]he smooth operation of clan elders in conference does, however, depend on the quality of the government in power.’⁴⁰ While it is true that these accounts do not necessarily provide a counter-argument for the important role the ‘elders’ played, it shows that the peace- and state-making that was at stake in present-day Somaliland does not necessarily and solely depend on ‘traditional institutions,’ but that there have also other forces been at play.

Thus, the ‘traditional peace’ argument can be challenged in numerous ways, partly because it is founded on a flawed basis. In fact, I argue that it mattered only marginally how much the ‘traditional institutions’ in North and South Somalia had been changed through direct or indirect rule, ‘light’ or ‘heavy’ colonialism, but that it was more important to question how these ‘traditional’ institutions were (re)shaped and (ab)used in wake of the state’s bellicose collapse, if wanting to stick with the ‘traditional peace’ argument. Beyond that, however, I contend that a more compelling argument to explain the different state vicissitudes in North and South Somalia lies in the performance of war(fare). We need to understand how civil conflict differed between North and South Somalia and why ‘war makes states’⁴¹ in Somaliland and ‘unmakes states’⁴² in Somalia. To this, we turn now.

³⁸ Adam 1995:79f.

³⁹ Bryden and Farah 1996:8

⁴⁰ Drysdale 1992:8

⁴¹ Tilly 1992

⁴² Leander 2004

3. A THEORETICAL WATERSHED: WAR(FARE) AND ITS CREATIVE POTENTIAL

Historic accounts of state formation share an emphasis on the crucial contribution of war.⁴³ Tilly's statement that 'war makes states and states make war'⁴⁴ is infamous in this context. But also Olsen's 'stationary vs. roving bandits' theory points into the same direction: coercion and violence have been the bedrock of state-formation. In view of these historically informed political-economy accounts, Clapham summarizes that 'the experience of warfare has played a central and indeed essential role in the processes of state and nation formation in Europe.'⁴⁵

Naturally, the question about in how far the European history foreshadows current and future developments of 'non-consolidated' states is hotly debated. While Cohen et al. prophesize that 'many of the new states of today are engaged in struggles whose logic is similar to that of the European period of primitive central state power accumulation'⁴⁶ and Taylor and Botea suggest that 'war *can* make states in the contemporary world,'⁴⁷ others are more sceptical. Tilly himself expects that 'Third World state formation should be distinctively different,'⁴⁸ Herbst warns that 'the European experience does not provide a template for state-making in other regions of the world,'⁴⁹ and also Reno takes a more sceptical stance.⁵⁰ Even more critical, Leander postulates that due to a changed international environment and altered preconditions, 'the 'war makes states' argument no longer holds.'⁵¹

While it should be acknowledged that collective political violence is neither the angel of order nor the daemon of decay,⁵² this article challenges propositions contending that 'the connection between war and state-making [...] does not appear to be present at all in the weak states in the Third World,'⁵³ and that '[c]ountries abandoned by the international

⁴³ Tilly 1985, 1992; Herbst 1990, 2000; Huntington 1968:123; Porter 1994; Cohen et al. 1981:90; Colley 1992; McNeill 1983; van Creveld 1991/1999; Cramer 2006; Clapham 2000, Desch 1996, Putnam 1993, Migdal 1988

⁴⁴ Tilly 1992:67

⁴⁵ Clapham 2001:1

⁴⁶ Cohen et al. 1981:902

⁴⁷ Taylor and Botea 2008:28

⁴⁸ Tilly 1992:195

⁴⁹ Herbst 2000:22

⁵⁰ Reno 1998, 2003

⁵¹ Leander 2004:69; see also Desch 1996:242

⁵² Cf. Cohen et al. 1981:902 and Clapham 2001:9

⁵³ Sørensen 2001:341

development community show few signs of autonomous recovery.⁵⁴ The following paragraphs rather theorize and, in section four, empirically revise, how 'war is not equal to the breakdown of societal order'⁵⁵ and how warfare can still be constitutive for state formation in today's 'weak states in the Third World.'

3.1. WARFARE AND THE MONOPOLY OF VIOLENCE

The need for establishing a monopoly of violence as a condition for state-building lies at the heart of any Weberian conception of the state; an argument uncontested even among many 'war-makes-states' critics. Historically, the monopolization of coercive means has thereby been achieved through war(fare), as numerous scholars have pointed out.⁵⁶ Such historical accounts display, how war has not only been a central means in displacing, subduing, or eliminating competitors, but also how warfare has been instrumental in building administrative structures. Such internal political, economic and social (re)structuring within war-waging societies has thereby been key in building state institutions. Even though the 'new wars' literature denies current wars to dispose of such state-building characteristics, what can hardly be disputed is the fact that 'military victory is associated with a more stable and durable peace'⁵⁷ – even if the current era was one of 'new wars.' By resolving political conflict⁵⁸ and reducing institutional multiplicity,⁵⁹ war can be constitutive for state-formation. Yet, besides the politico-military benefit, war(fare) has also been shown to come with economic and administrative advantages for state-building.

3.2. WARFARE AND THE MONOPOLY OF REVENUE

As all governments, regardless of their type, require an economic foundation in order to uphold the monopoly of violence, the development of a monopoly of taxation has, historically, been inextricably linked to the monopolization of the use of physical force.⁶⁰ Snyder and Bhavnani put it starkly by advocating a 'no revenue, no regime'-thesis.⁶¹ Thereby, the penetration of local populations did not only come with the benefit of enabling the

⁵⁴ World Bank 2002, as quoted in Weinstein 2004:2

⁵⁵ Bakonyi and Stuvøy 2005:359

⁵⁶ See e.g. Tilly 1992

⁵⁷ Licklider 1993; see also Toft 2003; Fortuna 2003

⁵⁸ Weinstein 2004:3

⁵⁹ Crisis States Research Centre at the London School of Economics and Political Science

⁶⁰ Migdal/Schlichte 1992:16; see also Jung 2000:6, Jung 2003:17; Tilly 1992; Cramer 2006:178

⁶¹ Snyder and Bhavnani 2005:572

build-up of (large) armies, the ability to conduct wars, and the means to monopolize power, but it was beneficial insofar, as it contributed to the establishment of administrative apparatuses and the building of essential relationships with the population. Taxation has been judged of such importance for state-building that it has been argued that '[a] state's means of raising and deploying financial resources tell us more than could any other single factor about its existing (and immediately potential) capacities to create or strengthen state organizations.'⁶² In this sense, it has even been postulated that '[t]he history of state revenue production is the history of the evolution of the state,'⁶³ and even that '[r]evenue is the chief preoccupation of the state. Nay more it is the state.'⁶⁴ According to Cramer, these findings support the argument that '[m]uch of the institutional apparatus of modern government and economic management has its origins in this compulsion to finance wars.'⁶⁵

3.3. WARFARE AND POLITICO-ECONOMIC SETTLEMENTS

In order to establish monopolies of violence and revenue, supportive or competitive elites must be accommodated. Elites bargain for power, influence and riches, forming some kind of an 'elite cartel' in order to enforce and protect their interests, which are fundamental for the success of the state-building project. In this sense, Tilly states that 'the organisation of major social classes within a state's territory, and their relations to the state, significantly affected the strategies rulers employed to extract resources, the resistance they met, the struggle that resulted, the sorts of durable organization that extraction and struggle laid down, and therefore the efficiency of resource extraction.'⁶⁶ Similar accounts, stressing the importance of 'elite bargains' and their respective influence on state-building, fragility and civil war can be found in the works of Dogan and Higley,⁶⁷ Lindemann,⁶⁸ and di John and Putzel.⁶⁹

⁶² Skocpol 1985:17; see also Herbst 2000:113; Peacock/Wiseman 1967; Organiski/Kugler 1980

⁶³ Levi 1988:1; as quoted in Bräutigam 2008a:1

⁶⁴ Edmund Burke, as quoted in O'Brien 2001:25, see Di John 2006:1

⁶⁵ Cramer 2006:178

⁶⁶ Tilly 1992:57f.

⁶⁷ Dogan and Higley 1998

⁶⁸ Lindemann 2008

⁶⁹ Di John and Putzel 2009

4. GRIST TO THE MILL: SOMALILAND BLEMISHED BY WAR

Partly against the backdrop of these deficient explanations for Somaliland’s success outlined in section two and the theoretical framework presented in section three, several scholars have pointed to the nexus between violent conflict and state-building in Somaliland. Clapham postulates that the Horn of Africa has experienced a ‘relationship between war and state formation [that] has been far more intensive, and of much longer duration, than elsewhere [in Africa],’⁷⁰ Jacquin-Berdal argues that war(fare) was key in establishing a Somaliland identity,⁷¹ and Bradbury not only points out generally that ‘Somaliland challenges the image of war,’⁷² but also observes more particularly that ‘Somaliland has its origins in the war that led to the collapse of the Somali state.’⁷³ Furthermore, Spears notes that the internal peace and solidarity that is to be found in Somaliland ‘was very much a product of war.’⁷⁴ Despite these acknowledgements of the importance of war(fare) for the Somaliland state-building experience, the argument that ‘war made Somaliland’ has, to date, not been spelled out more concretely.

In light of this, the subsequent paragraphs provide a first approach in analyzing the connection between war(fare) and state-building in the case of Somaliland. Intrinsicly, I allege that any meaningful analysis of Somaliland’s state-formation project needs to go past May 18th, 1991,⁷⁵ as well as beyond May 05th, 1993,⁷⁶ in order to embrace both the violent anti-regime struggle against Siyad Barre as well as the civil wars within Somaliland and their respective state-building implications. However, due to space limitations this article is confined to an analysis of how the decade-long anti-regime war culminating in the ousting of Siyad Barre in 1991 has been constitutive for the formation of Somaliland. Although some details need to be omitted and not full justice can be done to the argument and its potential counter-arguments, it becomes obvious that, on the one side, ‘traditional’ elders were as much included in making *war* than they were in making *peace*, and, on the other side, that *war(fare)* in the North has been at least as influential in peace- and state-making as is generally

⁷⁰ Clapham 2001:2

⁷¹ Jacquin-Berdal 2002; see also Höhne 2006

⁷² Bradbury 2008:2

⁷³ Bradbury 2008:50; see also Spears 2004a:185; Huliaras 2002:159

⁷⁴ Spears 2004a:185

⁷⁵ The day on which Somaliland declared its independence

⁷⁶ the day on which Mohamed Ibrahim Egal was elected President of the self-styled Republic

attributed to the ‘elders’. Thus, the ‘traditional peace’ argument is challenged by way of a ‘bellicose peace’ interpretation.

4.1. SETTING THE SCENE – ANTI-REGIME STRUGGLES IN SOMALIA

In the wake of a slowly crumbling Somali state and the lost 1977/78 irredentist Ogadeen war against Ethiopia, armed resistance towards the dictatorial regime of Siyad Barre slowly started to take root. The first manifestation thereof was the tentative putsch by Majerteen officers as of April 09th, 1978. While the coup d’état failed, it succeeded in the formation of the *Somali Salvation Front* (SSF)⁷⁷ under the leadership of Col. Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed. While having been the first Somali rebel movement to form against the regime, the SSF soon ‘atrophied as a result of heavy reliance on foreign funding from Libya, Abdullahi Yusuf’s dictatorial leadership, and Siyad’s ability to appease most of the Majerteens as fellow cousins within the Darod clan-family.’⁷⁸

In pursuit of the same objective of overthrowing the Barre regime, the *Somali National Movement* (SNM) was established in London on April 06th, 1981. Having been an elitist diaspora group at its inception, after years of guerrilla tactic warfare the SNM incrementally turned into a mass movement. This was particularly true for the time after May 1988, which was when Siyad Barre had Hargeysa and Burco, the two main cities in Somaliland, bombed to level and when the SNM was expelled from its exile base in Ethiopia. While until 1988 the number of SNM fighters was estimated to amount to roughly 1,200 men,⁷⁹ the rebel movement took on such magnitude that it is estimated having had some 50,000 fighters,⁸⁰ leading Prunier to conclude that there was no SNM, but that it was ‘simply the Isaaq people up in arms.’⁸¹

Facing such, predominantly clan-based, rebel movements, Siyad Barre applied a ‘divide and rule’ tactics, to fend off the threat. However, arming the Ogadeen refugees who had settled on Isaaq soil and stirring up clan-opposition through the other clans residing in the North-West (mainly Gadaburse, Isse, Dhulbahante, and Warsangeli), added nothing but fuel

⁷⁷ The SDF was, in October 1981, renamed into *Somali Salvation Democratic Front* (SSDF), which regrouped the SSF, the *Somali Workers’ Party* (SWP) and the *Democratic Front for the Liberation of Somalia* (DFLS). See Pérouse de Montclos 2001:3

⁷⁸ Adam 1995:76

⁷⁹ Bryden 1994:38

⁸⁰ Flint 1994:37

⁸¹ Prunier 1990/91:109; Prunier 1994:62

to the fire. Barre’s tactic for revenge ‘only served to accelerate the transformation of the SNM guerrilla war into a conventional one.’⁸² Based on the military achievements of the SNM and the faltering dictatorial regime in the late 1980s, numerous other rebel movements mushroomed in the years immediately preceding the collapse of the Siyad Barre regime.⁸³ By the time the South saw the establishment of diverse armed militias and protopolitical clan organizations,⁸⁴ the SNM was already in its demise and in process of handing control over to more civilian administrations. In how far had it by then already laid the foundations and created the conditions for a *de facto* sovereign state?

4.2. MILITARY FEATURES OF THE ANTI-REGIME WAR IN NORTH-WEST SOMALIA

While it is frequently ruled that the SNM was a ‘weak, inexperienced, decentralized, clan-based’ organization, ‘unable to provide capable national leadership and vision,’⁸⁵ its war(fare) in the North disposed of certain criteria constitutive for state-building, which were lacking in the Southern struggle. Among these ‘bellicose state-building benefits’ was the imposition of a clear military victory, and the instauration of a monopoly of violence.

Since the end of the Ogadeen war in 1978, the North-West had experienced a softening of the state’s monopoly of power, partly because the Barre regime had armed and instrumentalized Ogadeen refugees against the rising Isaaq challenge. Additionally, during later periods of the anti-regime war, Siyad Barre had supported the establishment of diverse armed clan-based opposition movements to counter the rebellious forces of the Isaaq clan. Yet, these clan-based political organizations, such as the Gadabursi *Somali Democratic Association*, the Iise *United Somali Front*, and the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli *United Somali Party* could not stop the SNM from emanating from war as the ‘uncontested winner’⁸⁶ and ‘most powerful military force in the north-west,’⁸⁷ having achieved ‘outstanding military

⁸² Aideed 2004:196

⁸³ The Hawiye-affiliated *United Somali Congress* (USC) was founded in May 1989, but soon split into two factions headed by Mohamed Farah Hassan ‘Aideed’ and Ali Mahdi respectively. This was followed by the establishment of the Ogadeen-affiliated *Somali Patriotic Movement* (SPM) under Gen. Adan Abdullah Nur ‘Gabyo’ in August of the same year. The Issa clan launched the *United Somali Front* (USF) in November 1989, and so was the Harti-affiliated *United Somali Party* (USP). Numerous more rebel groups and changing alliances were forged in the years before and after the fall of Siyad Barre. See, e.g. Adam 2008:16f.

⁸⁴ Adam 2008:17

⁸⁵ Adam 1995:78; see also Prunier 1990-91:112; Abdullahi 2007:45

⁸⁶ Compagnon 1998:82

⁸⁷ Bradbury 2008:79; see also Walls 2009:8

success.⁸⁸ The SNM had fought and defeated these opposition groups,⁸⁹ thus having established a 'legitimate claim to exercise power.'⁹⁰ This military supremacy of the SNM excluded opposition movements in North-West Somalia from 'any viable alternative'⁹¹ other than engaging in peace talks. Thus, the advance of 'elders' in the peace process was antedated by a fallback of contesting 'armies'.

Another 'bellicose state-building benefit' from which Somaliland profited in the post-1991 years was grounded in the military-strategic organization and composition of its forces. While the SNM's early anti-regime struggle was carried through by a relatively small group of 'professional', 'full-time' guerrilla fighters, the 1988-91 era was characterized by a highly decentralized force of 'sporadic', 'part-time' combatants.⁹² Given the relatively meager resources of the rebel movement, the SNM could not afford a 'standing army' and relied on fighters that were mobilized and supported by their clan communities (see subsequent sections). Therefore, '[t]he SNM never graduated beyond a guerrilla army into a conventional army though it has an ample supply of officers trained in conventional warfare.'⁹³ Instead, '[...] the SNM relied on civilian clan-networks for material support, safety and logistics, especially after 1988,⁹⁴ and it is argued that the liberation struggle could only be pursued in the absence of salaried fighters.⁹⁵ The recruitment of combatants through clan networks and the decentralised organization of the file and rank yielded numerous benefits for a successful war-to-peace transition, among others facilitating the establishment of a power monopoly by the 'post-war' administration. Secondly, this meant that the fighters were under relative tight control of their respective communities, whom they had liberated from the *Somali National Army* (SNA), thereby discouraging these fighters from looting property and committing atrocities. Thirdly, given that most fighters had not made a living out of the war and had hardly come to be indulged by the spoils of war, many fighters disarmed voluntarily instead

⁸⁸ Adam 1994:36

⁸⁹ Thereby, the SNM's takeover was not entirely peaceful, as Bradbury attests. "The town of Dilla west of Hargeysa was destroyed in clashes with Gadabursi militia; an SNM force attacked the Warsengeli settlement of Hadaftimo in eastern Sanaag; and Dhulbahante families also evacuated Aynabo in Togdheer region. Fearing reprisals from the SNM, 125,000 people [footnote 1: They comprised 105,170 Gadabursi and 19,362 'Isa (Brons 2001:202)], mostly from the Gadabursi, 'Iise and Darod clans, fled to Ethiopia, where they settled in separate refugee camps." (Bradbury 2008:78)

⁹⁰ Compagnon 1998:82

⁹¹ Terlinden and Ibrahim 2008:2f.

⁹² See Prunier 1990/91:109; Prunier 1994:62

⁹³ Adam 2008:198

⁹⁴ Brons 2001:204

⁹⁵ Warsame and Brons 1994:26

of giving into warlordism.⁹⁶ Furthermore, due to the mutual dependence between the SNM's politico-military elite and the rank and file, the SNM and the first post-war administration could be assured of a broad support base in the population. While the SNM had been an elitist, diaspora movement at its inception, the anti-regime war turned it into a socially accepted movement in the North-West with a broad support base, which furthermore distinguished it from developments in the South.⁹⁷

Thirdly – and in the realm of this article, lastly, the by the SNM pursued military doctrine of 'clan self-determination' unfolded its benefits particularly with the onset of 'post-war' peace negotiations. This doctrine thereby contained the 'conviction in the SNM that one clan cannot 'liberate' another, or by extension subjugate it.'⁹⁸ One example is provided by Bradbury, who observes that 'the SNM made no attempt to enforce its authority over the Harti regions in Sool and eastern Sanaag.'⁹⁹ While this military policy was aided by the relatively coherent settlement pattern of the clans in present-day Somaliland,¹⁰⁰ this meant that the potential for committing atrocities and looting property, thereby fuelling inter-clan greed and grievances, was further reduced, while chances to make peace were greatly enhanced. This generally applied policy of clan-territorial integrity (even though not abided to all the times), signaled other clans respect and willingness to negotiate and led analysts to conclude that the SNM 'did subordinate violence as a means to clearly stated political ends.'¹⁰¹

By these, and other, means, the anti-regime war and the way it was conducted in the North has greatly been constitutive for Somaliland's state formation. The war had allowed the SNM as well as the transitional government drawn from its ranks to establish a monopoly of power. As Reno has it, '[i]n the provisional government that followed, Tuur's

⁹⁶ WSP 2005:61, which outlines that, on the one hand, many SNM militias demobilized voluntarily, while also acknowledging that the 'spontaneous' and 'premature' demobilization was accompanied by the 'mushrooming of irregular militias, whose members included both war veterans and new recruits, seeking to earn a living from banditry and extortion.'

⁹⁷ Cf. Adam 2008:193f.

⁹⁸ Adam 1994:31; see also Bradbury 2008:79; Walls 2009:13

⁹⁹ Bradbury 2008:79. Other scholars, such as Compagnon (1993:13) do, however, not attest the SNM of having had the power to control the territory of potentially hostile clans. Thus, the 'clan self-determination' doctrine might have evolved as much out of necessity as out of principle. In any case, however, this 'non-intervention' as a fact of Northern war(fare) proved helpful for Somaliland's state-formation process – at least when it came to peace-building.

¹⁰⁰ as opposed to the partially quite heterogeneous patchwork of clan settlement in South-Central Somalia

¹⁰¹ Adam 2008:196

political authority rested upon his direct control over armed units.¹⁰² While due to different circumstances the power monopoly evaporated in the ensuing years, it could be restored by president Mohamed Ibrahim Egal in the mid-1990s and did not diffuse to an extent comparable to the era prior to the anti-regime war.

4.3. ECONOMIC FEATURES OF THE ANTI-REGIME WAR IN NORTH-WEST SOMALIA

Arguably, ‘[m]aking money is an important [...] aim in warfare,¹⁰³ and southern rebel movements appear having had easy access to large sums of money, with which they could finance their armies. The Hawiye-clan allied *United Somali Congress – Somali National Alliance* (USC-SNA), for example, relied heavily on the multi-million businessman Osman Hassan Ali ‘Ato’,¹⁰⁴ and gained further income through the occupation of profitable plantations.¹⁰⁵ Somewhat similar in structure, the Majerteen-allied *Somali Salvation Democratic Front* (SSDF) was not only supported by Qadhafi,¹⁰⁶ but presided over the lucrative distribution and looting of foreign aid to refugees.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, the SNM had established internal mechanisms to finance the anti-regime war. What explains these divergent patterns of financing and how did they influence the course of war(fare) and the transition to peace?

First of all, it has to be recalled that the SNM was established some eight years before most of the other major rebel movements, at a time when the outcome of the struggle between ‘David’ and ‘Goliath’ was still highly uncertain. Thus, major Somali(land) businessmen did not readily switch sides in order to have their assets protected and businesses enhanced by the rebels – a logic which made much more sense during later years of the struggle, when the government was already weakened and different guerrilla fractions mushroomed, making the overthrow of the government much more likely. And just as businessmen, potential external funders, such as the governments of Libya and Ethiopia, were not ready to grant the SNM financial support.¹⁰⁸ While apart from some ‘token contributions’¹⁰⁹ in terms of ammunition and fuel, ‘the SNM had never received any

¹⁰² Reno 2003:26; Abdirahman Aw Ali ‘Tuur’ was the first president of the Republic of Somaliland

¹⁰³ Keen 2000:3

¹⁰⁴ Reno 2003:21f.; see also Leonard 2009:8

¹⁰⁵ Reno 2003:11

¹⁰⁶ Adam 2008

¹⁰⁷ Reno 2003:18

¹⁰⁸ Adam 1995:76

¹⁰⁹ Samatar 1997:42

substantial external aid,¹¹⁰ this lack of external funding meant that the SNM needed to develop internal fund-raising mechanisms, in order to ‘provide its own resources or perish.’¹¹¹

In the early days, the SNM was ‘obliged to raise funds among the Somali Isaq communities in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, in other Arab states, in East Africa, and in Western countries.’¹¹² Thus, at its inception, it was not only politically, but also financially ‘more representative of Somaliland’s exile communities than of its local population.’¹¹³ Because these resources drawn from the diaspora via a ‘highly evolved fund-raising structure’¹¹⁴ were a major, but irregular source of finance,¹¹⁵ and due to the fact that the financial demand started outpacing the supply, the SNM was forced to explore further economic sources.

During the 1980s, the SNM started to ‘raise funds through deals with commercial intermediaries within the *abban* system constructed outside of Barre’s control.’¹¹⁶ Thereby, *abbans* are clan-based credit systems that were established as protection from Barre’s nationalization policies already in the early 1970s. Northern businessmen came to increasingly rely on them in order to seek protection from predatory exactions at the hands of government officials in wake of the entrepreneurs’ increasing politico-economic marginalization. These *abbans* ‘enabled local businessman to tap into locally organized informal remittance systems in which overseas senders and local recipients relied upon customary clan authorities to guarantee contracts, protect members, and adjudicate disputes outside state bureaucracies and the informal patronage institutions that had become increasingly inaccessible to them.’¹¹⁷ Thus, while the SNM could in this way access migrants’ remittances to finance its war, it did not culminate in a political-economy where militia leaders were also principal business operators – a situation characteristic of the South.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ Compagnon 1998:79; see also Adam 2008:15, 194

¹¹¹ Samatar 1997:43

¹¹² Adam 1995:76; see also Adam 2008:194

¹¹³ Jacquin-Berdal 2002:173

¹¹⁴ Bryden and Farah 1996:8

¹¹⁵ Compagnon 1998:79f.

¹¹⁶ Reno 2003:24

¹¹⁷ Reno 2003:23

¹¹⁸ However, it needs to be acknowledged that also the SNM saw close interlinkages between the politico-military and the economic elite. The first SNM president, Ahmed Mohamed Gulayd, for example, had been a successful businessman (Jacquin-Berdal 2002:173). This aspect is further highlighted later in the article.

While entrepreneurial behaviour was not suppressed, but contained, clan elders started exercising considerable control over the political-economic process.¹¹⁹ For their part the private commercial partners in these transactions used this alliance to consolidate their market leadership in telecoms and financial services in the 1990s, the two services that the remittance system integrates. In this way, Dahabshil, which later became the largest Somali financial transaction company, got its start as an SNM financier.¹²⁰

Besides drawing resources from the diaspora and several profitable businessmen, a third source of finance for the SNM lay in Somaliland's population. In face of the SNM's expulsion from its Ethiopian sanctuary after the signing of a non-hostility agreement between Mengistu and Barre on April 03rd, 1988,¹²¹ the swelling of its ranks after the bombing of Hargeysa and Burco in May of the same year, and the subsequent major military offensive in North-West Somalia, the SNM needed to rely on local communities and 'develop a popular support base among the Isaaq.'¹²² Fundraising was thus no longer organised by the SNM Central Committee, but organised by the different Isaaq-subclans for their own militias.¹²³ Highlighting this decentralised character of the struggle, Samatar points to the fact that '[t]he fighting units were to be sustained by supporters in the areas where they operated.'¹²⁴ As local resources could not be mobilised without the support and cooperation of the communities' elders, the latter gained an increasing say in control over the finances of the SNM – particularly when compared to their role in Southern rebel movements.¹²⁵ In this sense, the military struggle against the regime resulted in an economic struggle with its own population, whom the SNM started to tax, Tillyan style. In addition to this, not only from a military, but also economic point of view, looting of and preying upon communities was discouraged by the nature of SNM warfare. SNM fighters 'could not loot local communities that provided critical income from remittances and which were the bases of the commercial organizations essential to the militia's continued survival.'¹²⁶ Brons shows how the SNM relied on the population for material support, safety and logistics,¹²⁷ while

¹¹⁹ Compagnon 1998:84

¹²⁰ Reno 2003:24

¹²¹ Compagnon 1993:12; Somaliland Network

¹²² Bradbury 2008:82

¹²³ Bradbury 2008:70

¹²⁴ Samatar 1997:43

¹²⁵ Reno 2004:24; see also Compagnon 1998:84

¹²⁶ Reno 2003:24f.

¹²⁷ Brons 2001:204

Compagnon as well as Ahmed and Green, for example, exemplify how the movement imposed compulsory tributes on the population.¹²⁸ Not only was each individual household required to have a male member join the SNM forces, but each household also needed to make payments of one sheep (or its equivalent in cash) at least once a year, rules which were strictly applied during the war.¹²⁹ The resulting economic self-reliance was 'unique among liberation movements, past and present,'¹³⁰ and did not only lead to the movement's economic independence, but also 'enhanced accountability to its numerous supporters.'¹³¹ Furthermore, the demanded and received support from the population meant that there could no longer be passive sympathizers; '[i]nstead, they were transformed into active participants. Thus the path of self-reliance easily led to the road of democratic decentralization.'¹³²

These war trajectories have partly continued in post-war Somaliland, even though '[t]he SNM's highly evolved fund-raising structure had collapsed almost as soon as victory was realized.'¹³³ On the one side, 'the government has relied on the business community for financial assistance.'¹³⁴ One example is the 1993 Boroma conference, in which the well-heelled Mohamed Ibrahim Egal was the favoured and successful presidential candidate, who, subsequent to his election, negotiated a loan of approximately US\$6 million with dominant Isaaq businessmen in order to rebuild the country.¹³⁵ On the other side, Somaliland has incrementally build upon the taxation system established under the SNM. Already in 1991, a handful of experienced officers started setting up the customs department in Hargeysa.¹³⁶ This department established its first customs checkpoint at Abaarso, to the west of Hargeysa, to begin the taxation of *qaad*¹³⁷ imported from Ethiopia.¹³⁸ Ahmed and Green furthermore state that the emergency laws constituted by the council of elders during the anti-regime struggle jeopardized the function of the traditional system of blood money

¹²⁸ Compagnon 1998:80; Ahmed and Green 1999

¹²⁹ Ahmed and Green 1999:120

¹³⁰ Samatar 1997:42; see also Compagnon 1998:80

¹³¹ Adam 1995:76; Adam 2008:194

¹³² Samatar 1997:43

¹³³ Bryden and Farah 1996:8

¹³⁴ Bradbury 2008:115

¹³⁵ APD 2002a:63; see also Bradbury 2005:115

¹³⁶ APD 2002a

¹³⁷ A mild amphetamine-like stimulant, which is consumed by many male Somalilanders

¹³⁸ APD 2002a:62, Renders 2007:337

payments, instead forming the basis of extracting tax from the population.¹³⁹ These efforts were continued to such an extent that, for the year of 2005, the *War-torn Societies Project* postulates that ‘some 95% of the resources that finance the activities of the government are locally mobilised, mostly through taxation.’¹⁴⁰ Even though the majority of this taxation is raised through customs (approximately 80%),¹⁴¹ it shows that the state has slowly started establishing a system of taxation. This contrasts markedly with the Somalia of the late 1990s, in which the southern Mogadishu courts ‘largely avoided taxing businesses or demanding fees at checkpoints,’¹⁴² and in which ‘key southern businessmen refused to pay taxes to their clan militia leaders, instead financing private security forces and an “independent” judiciary managed by local shar’ia courts.’¹⁴³

4.4. POLITICAL FEATURES OF THE ANTI-REGIME WAR IN NORTH-WEST SOMALIA

A third feature of war(fare) that distinguished the struggle of the SNM from other Somali rebel movements and produced divergent trajectories and war-to-peace transitions, is the political organization of the different insurgency groups. While most rebel movements in South-Central Somalia were headed by long-standing, charismatic and increasingly authoritarian figures,¹⁴⁴ the SNM was more democratic and accountable – two aspects which already emerged in the previous sections. In addition to this, the kind of war(fare) pursued by the SNM led it to create certain political institutions, reflected in today’s state apparatus of Somaliland.

‘The SNM evolved democratic procedures’¹⁴⁵ and exercised frequent changes in its leadership, two aspects that became characteristic of the SNM. Not only is reported that the SNM strove for consensual leadership and that their congresses were open to broad participation,¹⁴⁶ but it is furthermore known for a fact that the leadership changed six times in the decade from the SNM’s inception to the end of the anti-regime war in 1991.¹⁴⁷ Thereby, the leaders have always been politicians, rather than militaries, with the only

¹³⁹ Ahmed and Green 1999:120

¹⁴⁰ WSP 2005:104; see also Bryden and Farah 1996:8

¹⁴¹ see e.g. EIU 2008:7

¹⁴² Baxter ????:8

¹⁴³ ICG 2002, as quoted in Lindley 2005:18

¹⁴⁴ e.g. Abdullahi Yusuf in the SSDF, Gen. Aideed in the USC, Ali Mahdi in the Manifesto Group

¹⁴⁵ Adam 1995:76

¹⁴⁶ Adam 2008:198

¹⁴⁷ Adam 1995:76; Bryden 1999:9

exception being Col. Abdulqaadir Kosar Abdi who was elected to the post of SNM chairman for the time between November 1983 and July 1984, in order to counter a discrediting campaign launched by Siyad Barre in North-West Somalia with a more aggressive strategy.¹⁴⁸ Due to this frequent transition of authority, power was institutionalized rather than personalized. Thus, Samatar remarks that ‘[t]he absence of ‘charismatic’ leaders and disciplined cadre is one of the ways in which it avoided the build-up of dictatorial tendencies within itself.’¹⁴⁹ These ‘democratic practices’, however, lay not only in the culture of ‘pastoral democracy’ or the circumstance that Somali pastoral society is said to shun ‘charismatic leaders’,¹⁵⁰ but were also ‘facilitated’ by external pressure. According to Reno, ‘Mengistu also interfered in SNM’s internal affairs, and had early leaders arrested to hinder the SNM’s utility as a vehicle for personal ambitions of political entrepreneurs.’¹⁵¹

What contributed to the non-concentration of power in the hands of a few individuals was that with an increasing local resource mobilization through decentralized clan structures came also an increase in demand of voice. Thus, the movement’s platform of decision making steadily increased. The SNM set out as an external, elitist, intellectual movement that had formed in exile, claiming to represent the people of the north.¹⁵² But with the broad-based mobilization after the military debacle in 1988, the SNM transformed from a ‘hopelessly outnumbered and outgunned guerrilla band into a mass movement.’¹⁵³ Along this development, the number of members in the SNM Central Committee rose from eight in 1981 to 99 in 1990. Partly based on this increase in intra-SNM governance, it is alleged that ‘[a]fter 1988 the SNM, for all practical purposes, came to constitute a counter-government with all the responsibilities that go with the transformation.’¹⁵⁴

Closely connected to this is a further, and most important aspect of how the political organization of the rebel movement helped in building the state of Somaliland. Talk is of the clan elders, who have come to prominence due to their role in ‘traditional’ peace making, but who also played a key role in waging the war. After major SNM attacks on government institutions in North-West Somalia in 1988, Siyad’s SNA pushed the northern, mainly Isaaq

¹⁴⁸ Adam 1999:270; Somaliland Network

¹⁴⁹ Samatar 1997:33

¹⁵⁰ Adam 2008:198

¹⁵¹ Reno 2003:24, referring to Adam 1993:10

¹⁵² Adam 2008:201; WSP 2005:59

¹⁵³ Bryden 2003:344f; see also Prunier 1990/91:118 and Adam 2008:193

¹⁵⁴ Adam 2008:196

population across the border into refugee camps in Ethiopia. During this time, [c]lan and religious elders played crucial roles, distributing food aid and other relief, adjudicating disputes, and even recruiting fighters for the SNM.¹⁵⁵ As the support of the (displaced) communities and their respective elites (i.e. clan elders) was essential for boosting the anti-regime struggle,¹⁵⁶ the SNM increasingly included the elders, in order to secure their support¹⁵⁷ – a political maneuver not seen in the South.¹⁵⁸ Bradbury even states that ‘[i]n order to survive, the SNM cadre had no choice but to lead through persuasion and consensus, and in the later years of the struggle even went so far as to incorporate the Isaaq elders into its formal membership.’¹⁵⁹ And just as the importance of the elders’ support for mobilizing resources and fighters had grown over the time of the struggle,¹⁶⁰ so did the elders’ political weight within the SNM. The experimentation with the role of the elders was finally formalized in the form of the *Guurti*, i.e. a permanent council of elders, in order to institutionalize their role. Viewed from an organizational perspective, the *Guurti* became co-equal with the legislative organ of the SNM, the Central Committee.¹⁶¹ Having been created to mobilize support during the war, the *Guurti* was the organ that allowed the SNM to expand such, as to incorporate all of Somaliland’s clans and to create a broad constituency.¹⁶² The *Guurti*, created in 1988, was thus a direct legacy of the war, and an institution that was just as ‘new’ as ‘traditional’ to the Somali political environment.¹⁶³

This ‘particular nature of the SNM as a politico-military movement [...] influence the form of polity that emerged in Somaliland after the war.’¹⁶⁴ After the SNM had defeated the forces of the dictatorial regime and convened a national congress in the city of Burco in April and May 1991, a transitional government (ruling between May 1991 and May 1993) was established that reflected the organizational structure of the rebel movement: not only did the chairman and vice chairman of the SNM assume the offices of the president and vice president respectively, but almost all the executive members of the SNM came in charge of a

¹⁵⁵ Adam 1995:82; Compagnon 1993:12; Brons 2001:204

¹⁵⁶ Compagnon 1998:77

¹⁵⁷ Bradbury 2008:97

¹⁵⁸ Samatar 1997:45

¹⁵⁹ Bryden 1999:8

¹⁶⁰ Adam 2008:201

¹⁶¹ Samatar 1997:44

¹⁶² Bradbury 2008:97

¹⁶³ Compagnon 1993:19

¹⁶⁴ Bradbury 2008:50

cabinet post with the exception of two members who were not holding central committee portfolios.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, ‘the SNM’s leadership structure was transferred virtually intact to the government of the new state.’¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, the *Guurti* continued to thrive and prosper in the ‘post-war’ period, being the *de facto* power in face of a weak and ailing transitional government.¹⁶⁷ Its status was further enhanced through political frictions and military contentions in the mid-1990s, which it used to fill the vacuum in leadership.¹⁶⁸

4.5. WAR-MAKING AND STATE-MAKING IN SOMALILAND

Due to these – and other – circumstances, it is, indeed, the case that ‘[t]he experience of the war in the north was [...] very different from the south.’¹⁶⁹ For one, the SNM did not only achieve a decisive victory and could establish itself as the most powerful force in North-West Somalia, but the war also allowed it to succeed in restoring a monopoly of violence, which had been softened during the late 1970s and 1980s. Secondly, the SNM was able to rely on internal funding mechanisms throughout the war, and keep money at arm’s length from power to such an extent as not to invite serious warlordism. Instead, by means of taxation the war established a close relationship between the military wing and civilian population. Thirdly, given that the greatly important *Guurti* was a direct spawn of war, the struggle also facilitated Somaliland’s state-formation in a politico-administrative sense. In the line of this argument, also Omaar comes to conclude that ‘[r]econciliation was helped by the military supremacy of the SNM.’¹⁷⁰ While it has to be accorded that Somaliland’s achievements are, of course, not only attributed to its ability and way of conducting war, it appears to be true that ‘[i]n sum, as happened in the case of medieval Europe [...], warfare had played a central and indeed essential role in the process of nation-formation in Somaliland.’¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ Warsame and Brons 1994:20

¹⁶⁶ Bryden and Farah 1996:8

¹⁶⁷ Boobe-Paper:18

¹⁶⁸ Boobe-Paper:18

¹⁶⁹ Bradbury et al. 2003:462

¹⁷⁰ Omaar 2004:87

¹⁷¹ Huliaras 2002:159, referring to Tilly 1990 [1992]; McNeill 1983; Van Creveld 1991; see also Höhne (2006:398) who convincingly argues that ‘as a result of the civil war and certain developments in northern Somalia, new identities have formed on the ground.’

5. DROUGHT AND DELUGE: SOME RISKS OF RECOGNITION

While Somaliland has been successful in exploiting war(fare) for its state-building purposes, it has been unsuccessful in securing international recognition. Gaining such recognition has been Somaliland's top foreign policy priority since its *de facto* secession in 1991, and is even said having turned into 'a sort of national obsession.'¹⁷² Like a mantra it has been vocalized by its population, politicians and advocates, perceiving international recognition as a panacea in the struggles against instability, poverty and terrorism. This desire for formal global acknowledgement for the successes achieved is comprehensible, and, from a legal as well as normative point of view, more than justifiable. Not only does Somaliland tick all boxes of state criteria as outlined in the Montevideo Convention,¹⁷³ but also are there good arguments for rewarding good governance.¹⁷⁴ While the arguments and potential benefits of recognition have already been outlined by other authors,¹⁷⁵ arguing that Somaliland's achievements 'are imperilled if recognition continues to be denied,'¹⁷⁶ the following paragraphs caution against some implications likely to come with international recognition of such a relatively young and nascent state. Thereby, the discussion is guided by a state-building and developmental perspective, asking how such an international recognition could possibly impact Somaliland's state-building process and development.

One of the main arguments advanced in favour of recognition is that its lack has resulted in Somaliland not having had 'access to forms of governance support that many post-conflict countries receive.'¹⁷⁷ Yet, some Somalilanders have argued that exactly this absence of massive foreign funds has added to the state's resilience. Prof. Bulhan of Somaliland's *Institute for Development Solutions*, for example, postulates that aid will undermine the territory's self-reliance and aggravate problems.¹⁷⁸ Against a similar background, applying a comparable rationale, and pointing to the case of Eritrea, also Bryden warns that (financial) assistance coming with international recognition will shift the internal balance of power dramatically, thus running the risk of foreign aid breeding a 'corrupt and sclerotic government, crony

¹⁷² Bryden 2003:341

¹⁷³ Montevideo Convention, *supra* note 4, art. 1; see Eggers 2007:217ff. and Adam 2008:184

¹⁷⁴ See e.g. Keen 1995:184

¹⁷⁵ See e.g. Hoyle 2000; Henwood 2007:171ff.; ICG 2006:12

¹⁷⁶ Henwood 2007:168

¹⁷⁷ Bradbury et al. 2003:458

¹⁷⁸ BBC online, 22 March 2005, cf. Henwood 2007:172f.

capitalism, and popular apathy.¹⁷⁹ And also in light of arguments made by Bräutigam et al. highlighting the importance of raising revenue for state building,¹⁸⁰ international recognition has to be viewed critically. Thus, gaining access to World Bank and IMF funds would not only abort Somaliland's self-reliant and debt-free status, but is also likely to result in a situation in which corruption flourishes, transparency withers, and the government's accountability turns away from the population and towards the international community.

Secondly, while it has been argued that external recognition could help new and weak states to consolidate their domestic power base,¹⁸¹ some scholars such as Herbst have convincingly pointed out that the blank cheque of international recognition drawn to weak states has been problematic, as it did not respond to the changing power-relations and situations within the respective countries.¹⁸² Jackson and Rosberg suggest that the recognition of the post-colonial African states around 1960 did little to promote their development, instead leading to a situation in which rulers were left without pressures to penetrate their state territories and deliver certain basic services such as security.¹⁸³ In light of this, recognising Somaliland could lead to a situation in which there remain few if any compelling international pressures on its government to engage in state-building. Along these lines Bryden cautions that upon recognition, 'Somaliland's ruling elite and their followers would be presented with tempting opportunities to entrench their own power and privilege rather than to uplift the welfare of their people.'¹⁸⁴

Thirdly, international recognition is likely to result in an increase of tensions within Somaliland. On the one side, lifting the 'hood' of recognition presumably leads to a situation of increased political competition, as the antagonists are no longer bound together by a 'forced peace' reigning in face of Somaliland's strife for international recognition. Frictions are likely to deepen and internal power-struggles might not be handled as diplomatic as in the past. As noted by Jhazbay, 'the uphill struggles for recognition help to discipline domestic Somaliland politics.'¹⁸⁵ On the other side, tensions and frustration could also increase among the broader population. Many people in Somaliland firmly believe that their

¹⁷⁹ Bryden 2003:363

¹⁸⁰ Bräutigam et al. 2008

¹⁸¹ Coggins 2006:47 referring to Jackson 1990

¹⁸² Herbst 2000; cf. Clapham 2001:3

¹⁸³ Jackson and Rosberg 1986:20; see Spears 2004b:41

¹⁸⁴ Bryden 2003:342

¹⁸⁵ See Adam 2008:212

lives will change with recognition. However, Somalilanders will soon discover that international recognition does not automatically come with full employment, health provision and TVs. If politically not handled correctly, such realizations and frustrations can add up to an explosive socio-political cocktail.

In light of these and other reasons, the Somalilanders as well as the international community should pay good attention at how to handle the issue of international recognition of this self-styled republic. Recognition cannot and should not be withheld forever, but its timing and phasing is crucial in order to support rather than imperil the past achievements in Somaliland.

6. CONCLUSION

While South-Central Somalia has to good extent drowned in violence, and Puntland remained relatively spared from civil strife,¹⁸⁶ it is Somaliland that has best managed to recover from the failed Somali state. Although a multitude of factors has contributed to his benevolent situation for Somaliland, war(fare) apparently played an important role. In this sense, Bryden suggests that ‘[t]he civil war served as a cruel university in the arts of political mobilisation and popular leadership, preparing the SNM better than most for the challenges of peacetime leadership.’¹⁸⁷ Thus, it is not unreasonable to argue that Tilly himself underestimated the value of his ‘war makes states and vice versa’ argument with regards to today’s world.

As this article exemplified on the Somali anti-regime war of the 1980s and early 1990s, war(fare) can in fact be constitutive for state formation processes, even in Africa and even in the present-day. Firstly, the war replaced a situation of a diffuse ponopoly of power with a situation in which the ruling ‘post-war’ administration exercised a power monopoly. Secondly, the groundwork for the revenue basis of the current state was laid during the anti-regime struggle. Private enterprises and a system of taxation introduced during the war remained the bedrock of the ‘post-war’ state of Somaliland. Thirdly, the for Somaliland so famous *Gaurti*, or Council of Elders, was a direct product of the anti-regime war of the

¹⁸⁶ UNHCR 1998, referring to Piguet, F., OSAR-Jalons No. 47, décembre 1997, 29

¹⁸⁷ Bryden 1999:137

1980s and early 1990s. While similar ‘traditional’ structures had existed before, the *Guurti* was an innovation by the SNM, who institutionalized it in the ‘post-war’ era.

In this sense, the SNM can be said having laid the foundations of a state, at least if ‘state capability is measured by the capacity of a state to ‘penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determined ways’.¹⁸⁸ Yet, Somaliland’s peace- and state-building process was not concluded with the victory of the SNM; in subsequent years, Somaliland witnessed civil wars and internal strife that brought the nascent state to the verge of collapse. Even though the country has much advanced since then, the state-building project is far from complete. While Somaliland’s success does not solely rest on the shoulders of the SNM’s anti-regime struggle, it did have state-building effects that have remained under-researched and mal-acknowledged to date.

¹⁸⁸ Abdullahi 2007:4, quoting Migdal 1988:4

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