COLLAPSING EXPECTATION
National Identity and Disintegration
of the State in Somalia

Friederike Teutsch
Abstract

Backed by the nationalist ideology of politicians, it has been a common assumption of scholars of Somalia that Somalia is ethnically homogenous, and that the Somali people share one religion and culture. Thus it had been held that Somalia is a prototype of the nation-state in Africa. The apparent absurdity of the civil war which Somalia has suffered since 1990 raises questions about this perception which has subsequently been revealed to be a myth that has been created in a nationalist undertone. Linked to colonial rule, boundary drawing, independence, military dictatorship and transformation of the economy changes of the social, moral and political order took place. The break-up of Somalia is not rooted in Somali culture, although it provided the lines along which the conflict occurred. The Somali crisis took place on personal, group and state level, and in this dissertation I focus on the social organisation and institutional side. Dealing with the national identity of the Somali people I accentuate its distinguishing link to the state. ‘The Somali crisis’ thus marks the failure of a model of nationalism as well as the failure of the post-colonial state.
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<tr>
<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross</td>
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<tr>
<td>NFD</td>
<td>Northern Frontier District</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NUF</td>
<td>National United Front</td>
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<td>SNL</td>
<td>Somali National League</td>
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<td>SNM</td>
<td>Somali National Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPM</td>
<td>Somali Patriotic Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRC</td>
<td>Supreme Revolutionary Council</td>
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<td>SSDF</td>
<td>Somali Salvation Democratic Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>SYC</td>
<td>Somali Youth Club</td>
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<td>SYL</td>
<td>Somali Youth League</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>USC</td>
<td>United Somali Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>USP</td>
<td>United Somali Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSLF</td>
<td>Western Somali Liberation Front</td>
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1. LOCATING A CONFLICT

1.1 Introduction

Since 1990 Somalia has suffered civil war with horrific consequences, causing thousands of deaths. Eight years later an end to this conflict has not yet been reached and Somali identity is in question: is Somalia a nation or an amalgam of clans; are the Somali people nationalists, clanists, or (religious) fanatics (Mohamed-Abdi 1993:1)? The former UN Envoy to Somalia, Mohamed Sahoun compared Somali society to a vase that has been smashed into small fragments (Luling 1997:292). The question now is whether this vase can be rebuild. In this paper I want to ask what the lines of the conflict are and the underlying causes, and how this relates to Somali national identity. This task is necessary for any attempt to find an end to ‘the Somali crisis’.

As most colonies in Africa became independent and formed new states, Somalia was considered to be unique among them: It was perceived as ethnically homogeneous, with a common language, religion and culture, and a strong national consciousness. Somalia seemed to be the archetype of a nation-state, the unit which builds the basis for the contemporary world order. This view of Somalia splintered after the Somali state and society crumbled in the face of the civil war. Academics responded by shifting emphasis from the unity of the Somali nation to a focus on divisions within the society. Meanwhile international agents, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the UN have striven to find new policies to act in situations where no government or official representation of the people exists.

However this situation has only affected scholars of Somalia secondarily, as the absence of state institutions is first and foremost experienced by the Somali people themselves. Therefore in this dissertation I want to look at the national identity of Somali people and its link to the collapse of the state. My starting point is the supposition that there have been enormous changes in this perception owing to the changes in the social and political organisation. After considering the theoretical framework I give some
aspects of Somali society. Starting my analysis with the advent of colonialism I follow the discussion through independence, military rule and civil war to contemporary attempts of reconstruction. The Somali crisis is largely due to the failure of the post-colonial state and the evolving separation of society and state. The dissolution of identities finally led to a disruption of Somalia, and indicates the failure of the model of nationalism adopted.

1.2 Somali Nationalism in Academic Literature

Somali nationalism has for a long time been an issue in academic writing and a range of models have been advanced. Lewis (1993:25) claims that the Somali people are mono-ethnic, with a common culture, language and religion. They had "traditionally, a strong sense of cultural and linguistic unity". The primordialist tenor of this statement is striking. Lewis' influential work coincided with the propaganda value of a monolithic view of Somalia put forward by nationalist parties, especially as Somalia was claiming large segments of Somali-populated lands belonging to neighbouring countries (e.g. Fitzgibbon 1982; Ministry for Information and National Guidance 1978; Rabeh 1983; 1984). The nationalist ideology thereby favoured a primordial conception of Somalia. Emphasising the unity of the Somalis and drawing (ideological) boundaries against other groups nationalists were pressing for Somalia's right of 'national self-determination'.

Ahmed (1995b:136-140) describes how intellectuals perpetuated a distinctive picture of Somalia and 'produced' the nationalist ideology, sharing a 'fetishised consciousness' with their Western counterparts. Four important groups have contributed to the 'misrepresentation' of Somali society: The historians (Somalis and non-Somalis) reconstructing the past from a specific assumption; the colonial anthropologists "sifting through the raw and the cooked in developing countries" while logocentricly privileging 'modernity' over 'tradition'; Somali politicians who wished to promote their nationalist aspiration; and Somali poets focusing on the poetry of one section of society and masquerading it as universal. Accordingly the view of homogeneous Somalia dominated its presentation
for many years. The civil war however raises questions about this homogeneity as it is difficult to explain within this set of assumptions.¹

More recent research not only reveals the myth of Somalia’s homogeneity, but is based on the assumption that ethnicity and nationalism are social constructions of the colonial period through the reactions of pre-colonial societies to the social, economic, cultural and political forces linked up with colonialism. The paradigmatic move away from primordialist thinking thus enhances our understanding of the Somali case. So Somali nationalism is seen as a recent phenomenon. This approach allows an analysis of the development of identities and ideologies. By stating that both are constructed, mis-matches can be shown and internal tensions revealed. Kusow (1994; 1995) for example states that Somalia is a creation of the last millennium and that Somali national identity was upheld against a presumed external Christian enemy, the British, French and Italian colonisers as well as neighbouring Ethiopia. However, it failed to create a feeling of national unity among the people. Once the phantasm of the external enemy disappeared, internal conflicts surfaced and led to the outbreak of the current civil war.

1.3 Locating a Conflict

To date there are debates about what these conflicts are all about. While many draw on the cultural inheritance of the Somali clan system, Catherine Bestemann (1995; 1996a; 1996b; 1998) emphasises divisions of race, status, language, class and occupation in Somali society. Accordingly, the traditional Somali social system is not blamed for the outbreak of violence, as the changes experienced over the last century have led to a perversion of identities and loyalties. While Lewis (quoted in Hassan 1993:3-4) regards Somali culture as the reason for the cruelties that happened in the civil war, Luling (1997:287) distinguishes between the underlying causes of state collapse, and the ‘fault lines’ along which the collapse occurs.

In this dissertation I will argue that the Somali crisis took place both on an individual as well as state level, before finding material expression in the

¹Touval (1963) for example predicted a very different development of Somalia, expecting problems with neighbouring countries for areas perceived as Somali, not an internal war.
violence of the civil war. The Somali people experienced many changes over the last century, such as colonisation by a multitude of different countries, the struggle for independence, unification of northern and southern territories, and military dictatorship. This had a major impact on the Somali culture and social system, thus influencing Somali identity. The identity, or more appropriately identities of the Somali people contradicted each other, leading to an ‘identity crisis’ (Muhamed-Abdi 1993). Hence it was not Somali culture as such but the contradictions evolving when social facts came into tension with their environment that have led to the break-up of Somalia. I thus agree with Luling (1997) that the mis-match between state and society is at the heart of the Somali crisis and the collapsing nationalism. The clan lines along which the fighting occurred offered an identity in a situation of insecurity and a lack of trust but are not the ultimate reason for the outbreak of violence.

1.4 Africa’s Fate?

Contrary to common assumptions, Somalia in many ways shares the fate of other post-colonial African nation-states. This leads to the discussion of whether Somali nationalism is really as unique as it was assumed to be, as propagated not only by its own governments but also academics. When assumed that the Somali people had a national identity (either constructed or inherited) the question remains why it did not over-ride other forms of identification. Accordingly, following a constructionist line of argument, one can argue that Somali nationalism was not really different from other nationalisms in Africa; it was a nation in creation rather than fully formed.

The Somalia crisis was largely an outcome of the failure of the post-colonial state. As Davidson (1992) describes in The Black Man’s Burden, post-colonial African states were built in an attempt to copy Western nation-states, an enormous task which proved difficult if not impossible. Contemporary literature focuses on the problems evolving from the fact that nationalism and national identities were inventions, and that the ideological basis was imported from Western countries in colonial times. Based on Western thinking and development they were not historically rooted in the moral and social order of African societies. The historical conditions and presuppositions did not favour an European-style development, but indigenous cultures created new identities and orders.
The occurring tensions between the concept of nation-statism and actual developments finally led to a collapse of state and social order. Today the inappropriateness of the transferred concept of nation-statism becomes increasingly debated.

In the post-colonial African states politics were generally dominated by authoritarianism and clientelism, and a particular state-society relation (Berman 1998). By this the legitimacy of the state was eroded, undermining the very basis of the nationalist concept. The instability of Africa's political scene thus can be seen as an outcome of failed post-colonial policies of forging the concept of nation-statism. After the collapse of the Somali state and the failure to recreate another state in its place, many sought for a new concept of political administration, like federalism (e.g. EC Somalia Unit 1996a; 1996b; LSE 1995). As Somalia was considered to be the prototype of the African nation-state its break-up is significant, as it might be taken to indicate the failure of nation-statism in Africa. The new approaches for an establishment of governmental power in Somalia have failed so far. This marks the necessity to debate on how the state’s power can be established in a way acceptable for all Somali people.

1.5 Methodological Issues and Limitations

Working on this paper I had to confront several methodological and practical limitations: I have not been to Somalia myself, and while I held discussions with Somalis living in the UK and have been in touch with the Scottish Action for Somalia, I have been compelled to rely on secondary sources emanating from the West. Therefore I have attempted to read as much as possible between the lines of other scholars' writing. This is linked to a second problem. While I state that Somali identity is in flux, the academic writing I base this dissertation on has repeatedly changed its

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2 Markakis writes (1994:5): “Africa's receptiveness to Western fashionable concepts and theories appears to have suffered little from repeated demonstration of inappropriateness. ... It began with the imperative of the ‘nation-state’ that was to be forged in the process of national integration and institution building.”

3 It is again European-style concepts which are discussed in these papers. For a Somali voice on an alternative concept of a tribe-based state see Duhul (1993). For general approaches by Africans to the theoretical perception of African identity and philosophy see Eze (1997) and Appiah (1992).
focus as well. Academics are interpreting Somali history, social setting and development from a specific angle or perceptual lens. Over time this perspective changes, and a reinterpretation of the historical, social and political development takes place. While scholars analysed Somalia for many years primarily in the light of a strong national unity (e.g. Lewis 1961;1988), and therefore emphasised the egalitarian and all-embracing aspects of Somali society, now a major reinterpretation of the history and social setting is taking place (e.g. Ahmed 1995a). The primordialist view of Somalia as a unitary entity is now regarded as an invention which did not correspond to reality. For example the fight of Sayyid Muhammad 'Abdulle Hassan⁴ is either interpreted as a national struggle of the Somali people against colonial rule, or else the division within Somali ranks is highlighted. This means that it is difficult to distinguish between the actual changes experienced by the Somali people and the changing focus of academics. Yet while I have to rely on secondary sources historically tainted by a particular paradigm prevalent at the time of writing, what I ultimate seek is a better understanding of Somalia.

Additionally, it is problematic to over-generalise the experiences, feelings and identities of the people, as the Somali people have experienced various events in different ways. Information will vary according to who the informing person is, his or her personal experiences and place of living plus the role of the people addressed. However, this is a general problem of empirical analysis, and is not unique to the subject matter of this dissertation.

Moreover, different academic theories operate on different levels of analysis. While some researchers focus on the individual’s level in an atomistic manner, others tend to look at the relationships between individuals and groups. Yet others again adopt a reductionist or unilateral explanation and highlight the economic underpinnings only, finally some aspire to a holistic position which attempts to link individual identity with the concept of the state. In an effort to avoid reductionism, in this paper I state that the Somali crisis is an outcome of conflicts and contradictions between different factors and levels of the Somali society. It takes place at an individual as well as institutional and group level. Thus no unilateral explanation for developments can be given, they must be instead understood as being complex and interwoven.

⁴ see chapter 4.3 for details
1.6 Outline

While all of the above mentioned aspects are important and worthy of closer investigation, these methodological issues are cordoned off in this paper, and I focus on the social organisation in Somalia and the institutional side linked to Somali national identity and nationalism, and its changes up to the collapse of the Somali state and society.

Following an introduction to the theoretical framework adopted in the analysis of identity, nationalism and national identity in chapter 2, in chapter 3 I describe some aspects of Somali society, giving the unifying and dividing factors in state formation. In chapter 4 I then describe the colonial era when modern nationalism rose. Chapter 5 gives details about the development of the Somali state and society from the time of independence until 1990, leading into the civil war described in chapter 6. Chapter 7 discusses some of the issues which impinge on political reconciliation in Somalia and finally chapter 8 concludes my finding. Thereby I specifically focus on the effects of the state’s repression and enforcement of certain groups in society and organisational forms, for example the clans. Thus the lines along which the civil war broke out will be demarcated, putting into context the task of political reconciliation. Nationalism was built around the idea of a state, in the course of events the state failed to penetrate effectively Somali society. At the same time the national identity of the Somali people came into conflict with the internal logic of the social, political and moral order, as well as other identities.
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will give an overview of the current debates on identity, nationalism and national identity, and draw on the link between nationalism and the state. This debate is important for the consideration of why Somali national identity did not over-ride other identity forms and what the characteristics of Somali nationalism and national identity are. Identity thereby has much to do with people's experience of themselves and others. However there is a range of identity schemes, and our identification varies according to different social settings. National identity is only one form of identity, but has gained considerable interest over the last centuries. The ideology of nationalism evolved in Europe; But with the link to the state ("nation-statism") and the influential role Europe played in international politics, it became the basis for the modern world order. Therefore African states not only engaged in a nation-building process but moreover nationhood, nationalism and national identity were central issues for the analysis of social and political developments. In consequence, national identity focuses very much on the distinguishing culture of the nation, with the material domain of the state playing as much a part in this concept. My thesis therefore is that the national culture is not at the heart of the Somali crisis, but that ruptures in the state's role led to a national-level crisis when the Somali people faced a general identity crisis. In this chapter I give an overview of some of the theoretical concepts linked to these issues, and will outline some of the key variables in the analysis of the Somali case.
2.2 Identity

The debate about identity is centuries-old; however as Craig Calhoun (1994b:9) states, 'the discourse about identity seems in some important sense distinctively modern, intrinsic to and partially defining the modern era'. Having roots in the European context in Hegelian philosophy, Augustine's *Confessions*, the Reformation and Enlightenment, in modern times Freud, Vygotsky and Bakhtin focused on identity as an integral entity. The discourse of self in modernity not only gives cognitive and moral weight to selves and self-identity, but rather has made the concept of identity distinctively problematic. This does not mean that it matters more to us than to our forebears, but that it is much harder for us to "establish who we are and maintain this own identity satisfactorily in our lives and the recognition of others" (Calhoun 1994b:10). Rutherford (1990:24) states that modern life ascribes to us a multiplicity of subject positions and potential identities and, therewith holds the threat of fragmentation and psychosis.

Meanwhile, individualism is seen as one of the most influential social factors of contemporary times. This is combined with a significant break-up, or the reduction to near-irrelevance, of most all-encompassing identity schemes (Calhoun 1994b:11). For instance, it is claimed that kinship still matters as individuals, but no longer offers an overall template of social and political identities. In the Somali context however kinship ties are considered to be of extraordinary importance, as the traditional nomadic society had the concept of collective responsibility. While the significance of kinship is changing over time, its relevance for Somali identity remains undisputed.

Central to debates about identity, as well as nationalism is the distinction between constructionist (or formalist) and primordialist (essentialist) argumentation. Essentialist concepts emphasise the significance of 'primordial ties', hence the existence of an *a priori* givenness, and a given common history, culture and language (Lentz 1995:306). Essentialist approaches have a long history and can be followed up to Aristoteles' work on the relationship between 'essence' and 'appearance', and subsequently romantic approaches or psychoanalysis (Calhoun 1994b).

Formalists on the contrary emphasise the constructedness of social identity under specific historical-political circumstances (Lentz 1995:306). The
roots of social constructionist arguments in European Philosophy lie in Lockean behaviourism and Owenite socialism, and have been extended by nineteenth century social theory (Calhoun 1994b:18).

Identity is then seen as a matter of becoming, as well as being. As Simmel suggested, it is common for people to gain their identity from a range of cross-cutting group affiliations, and from membership in a variety of different salient categories. It is a construction, not something we discover. However, it is inseparably linked with claims to be known in specific ways by others. This leads to the common assumption that social identity (and nationalism as a form of social identity) is intertwined with a sense of me/us and others, for example when the unity of the Somali people and their distinctiveness from the Ethiopian or the British people is emphasised.5

Some theorists emphasise the instrumental value offered by social identities in an utilitarian manner. However, one can criticise this on the grounds that the utility of something is an outcome of social construction, rather than an inherited natural value. Constructionism is however criticised for being as deterministic as naturalising approaches (e.g. Calhoun 1994b:16), by denying individual agency when stressing seemingly omnipresent but diffuse social structures.6

All the same new attempts are being made to bridge the gap between primordialism and constructionism. One example is marked by the expression 'identity politics' or 'the politics of identity' (e.g. Calhoun 1994a; Hall 1990; Rutherford 1990). The basic idea is that rather than demarcating a simple opposition between essentialism and constructionism, a field of possible strategies for confronting issues of identity is possible. It is crucial, however, to remain self-critical of the invocations of essence and identity (Calhoun 1994b:19). De la Gorgendiere (1996) remarks that peoples do not experience the distinction between Primordialism or Instrumentalism (or Constructionism), but are locked into webs of significance and attach emotional, psychological, spiritual, social and

5 Barth (1994:13) however criticises this fixed concept which blunts the analysis of ethnicity. In most plural societies, he states, ethnic relations and boundary constructions are not about strangers, but about adjacent and familiar 'others'.

6 Some, especially early theorists, focused primarily on socialisation.
material significance to ethnicity and nationalism, be it inherited or constructed.\footnote{So people can gain material benefits through membership to an ethnic group or nation, as Samatar (1994b:122) gives personal ambition as one of the reasons for the creation of the Somaliland Republic. The emotional, psychological and spiritual attachments to nations or ethnic groups often find expression in songs, literature and other pieces of art (see Ahmed 1996; Samatar 1982).}

While paying attention to the problematic and fractured aspects of identities, mutual recognition is at the heart of identity politics, and self recognition as much as recognition by others. As subjectivity is always under construction, it entails claiming identity and deconstructing at once, and should not be seen as a harmonious process. Nevertheless, our various claims and resistances to multiple identities only make sense against the background of other identity claims and valuations, thereby raising problems of 'self-relativism, universalism and an urge to naturalise' (Calhoun 1994b).

National identities however not only involve a rhetoric of cultural difference, but in large part are a claim to equivalent standing with other nations. Thus claims about the significance of the identities struggled over are made within particular fields of shared relevance. This is clearly illustrated by the importance put on the recognition as an independent nation-state by the Somaliland Republic, and is the theme of Liisa Malkki's work (1992;1994).

Another important point is the difference between identity vs. identities on individual vs. collective levels. Simply stated, this means that a person has not only one identity, but various identities according to the situation addressed, giving rise to the phenomenon of 'multiple identities'. Accordingly, there are invariably internal tensions and inconsistencies among the various identities of group members, and acting on a certain identity inevitably frustrates others. Thus a Somali might, for example, experience that a clan-related issue contradicts a religiously inspired moral. This is complicated by the fact that identities can and do, to some extent at least, change. Hence "identities are often personal and political projects in which we participate, empowered to greater or lesser extents by resources of experience and ability, culture and social organization" (Calhoun 1994:27/28). The making of political identities and identifications thus cannot be reduced to a singular and predictable logic. Rather, identity
marks the conjuncture of the past with the social, cultural and economic relations we live within (Rutherford 1990:19). "Each individual is the synthesis not only of existing relations but of the history of these relations. He is a precis of the past" (Gramsci, quoted in Rutherford 1990:19-20). This is the context within which the making of our identity must be understood. No final, singular and predictable logic can be found that masters and determines the complex structuring of identity. Acknowledgement of the autonomy of social movements and cultural identities, and recognising their interdependent nature thus opens the space for individual historical agency (Rutherford 1990:21). This means that it is out of the direct reach of actors to influence identities in a certain way, with a specific outcome. For example Barre, dictatorial leader of Somalia for 21 years, was in a position to introduce policies with the aim to abolish clanism. These policies in combination with the regime's bureaucratic practices did not succeed in eliminating clanism; rather then reinforced it. Thus while Barre planned to change identities and indeed influenced them, he was unable to pre-determine the outcome of his action.

2.3 Nationalism and National Identity

Nationalism as the ideological counterpart to the experienced national identity of people is one central way of organising collective identities. It is a rhetoric of identity and solidarity dealing with the problematic nature of state power and the problems of inclusion and exclusion. Nationalist ideologies, similar to ethnic ideologies, stress the cultural similarity of their adherents and, by implication, draw boundaries vis-à-vis others. The distinguishing mark of nationalism is by definition its relationship to the state.

Central to nationalist discourses is its rejection of any notion that identity is essentially fluid and shifting from one situation to another. Nationalist ideologies regard national identity as overruling other identities. Additionally it regards it as an inherited rather than constructed identity (an issue described in Schlee 1997). Accordingly, nationalism is always caught in 'an intimate but ambiguous' relationship with history. Nationalist movements tend to give the nation a specific history, revere martyrs and national heroes like Sayyid Muhammed 'Abdulle Hassan in the Somali context, and cherish sacred dates. But history at the same time reveals
nationality to be a construct, rather than a primordial entity. This point is key to the edited work of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger who in *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) give strong arguments in favour of the production of history in the hands of the powerful. It is applied to the Somali context in Ahmed's edition (1995a) *The Invention of Somalia* and other recent publications. These authors criticise Somali history for being interpreted from a specific angle, the angle of Somalia as a nomadic nation. They stress that some issues have been overemphasised while others such as minority issues received little attention. In chapter 3 I give more details of the nationalist picture of Somalia and the reinterpretation of Somalia's history.

Literature on nationalism is marked, as well, by the debate between the primordialists, and constructionists. Primordialists see nations as natural units of history and an integral part of the human equipment (Smith 1986:68). Constructionists, such as Benedict Anderson, on the contrary, define the nation as "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives an image of their community" (Anderson 1991:6). Therewith he emphasises the role played by the image of a nation in creating a national reality.

In the following discussion I will give some key variables of nationalism and its analysis. One variable is the connection between elites and masses. Some theorists have stressed that intelligentsias, often Western-educated, were central to the rise of nationalism in Africa (e.g. Anderson 1991:116). However, even if the concept of nationalism evolved in Europe and these people propagated in favour of it, the people of Somalia had to adopt this ideology to make it work. As I have indicated before individual agency played its role in this feat, but could not provide a comprehensive

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8 Smith attempts to bridge this gap with his definition of a nation as "a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (Smith 1991:14). However, he is criticised for mixing together the reasons for the emergence of a nation with the results (Tamir 1995:424), and Lentz (1995:305) devalues his attempts as neo-primordial.

9 Anderson is however criticised on the grounds that this definition does not cope with the distinguishing a nation from other communities which lack face-to-face contact between members (Tamir 1995).
explanation. The same is valid for an unilateral explanation of the rise of nationalism due to certain **economic conditions**, brought forward by Gellner. However, I do not want to deny any importance of these factors but understand them as interconnected and results as well as reasons for the development of nationalism in Somalia.

Anderson emphasises the significance of **print-language** for the creation of the imagined national community. However, the Somali *Maxa* language was only recognised as the official language of state in 1972 when a script for Somali was introduced. Obviously Somalia was considered a nation when Somali was still unwritten, thus the explanatory value of Anderson's approach is muted. However the most important point we should consider is not the actual print-language but the possibility and grade of communication. Touval remarked in 1963 that despite the long distances, lack of print-language and low literacy communication in Somalia is not as low as one would imagine because of the links between rural and urban areas and the circulation of information by travellers.

Another vehicle for the rise and spread of nationalism is for example the **educational system**. It is not only linked up to the issue of communication (e.g. literacy) but also is an indicator for social mobility and a key variable in the access to resources; e.g. jobs. This is based on the modern notion of the **individual** (see Simons 1997; Calhoun 1994a), probably the most decisive idea behind national identities (or nationalism): "The process of individuation is important not just metaphorically, but as the basis for the central notion that individuals are directly members of the nation, that it marks each of them as an intrinsic identity and they commune with it immediately and as a whole"(Calhoun 1994c:314). This contradicts the finding of many researchers stressing the extraordinary importance and mediation of kinship in Somali society and national identity. Simons (1997) sees the insufficient individuation and lack of choice in a society which is highly determined by flux and insecurity as one of the major causes for the Somali crisis. Additionally, in the Somali context citizens were often given or denied access to education (and other resources) according to their clan-affiliation or membership to one of the minority-groups rather than their personal qualifications. However, this model of nationalism demands a state apparatus capable of effectively penetrating society, I will elaborate on the connection between nationalism and the state in the following section.
2.4 Nation and State

One of the most important characteristics of a nation and nationalism is the link with the state, being fulfilled by an existing nation-state, or in the form of a claim to state power. In this sense nationalism is distinctively modern, as with the emergence of the modern world system claims to statehood became crucial bases for standing in world affairs, and potentially for political autonomy. These claims for statehood can be justified most readily by professions of nationhood. Liisa Malkki (1992) coined the expression of 'the national order of things' to describe this development towards an ever growing importance of nationhood. So the division of the world into states not only created the political environment, but moreover created continuing pressure for the production of multiple nationalisms. This contradicts claims that with globalisation and constant improvements in communication techniques nationhood will become less important and finally disappear.\(^{10}\) Malkki however points out that this process of globalisation is essentially inter-national\(^ {11}\), and thereby takes nations as the legitimate basis of power, and necessary for political participation.\(^ {12}\) Other reasons why nationalism remains the central form of claiming sovereignty by people is revealed in the history of nationalist discourses, specific experiences of oppression and external challenges, such as the historical experience of colonialism (Calhoun 1994c:320). However, there is no global reason why national identity should be more integrating or disintegrating than other identities: Indeed, it is no more real than other identities which people may claim, feel, or reproduce in their social relations (Calhoun 1994c:314/320).

Rather than following state-building in a neat correlation, nationalism is mostly an issue where the boundaries and power of a state do not coincide neatly with the identity of its members, or the scale of action undertaken by other collective actors. So Somalia was for many years considered to be a 'dismembered nation' with ethnic Somalis living under the governance of

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\(^{10}\) As Eriksen (1993:2) points out, many social scientists in the early 20th century held that ethnicity and nationalism would decrease in importance and eventually vanish as a result of modernisation, industrialisation and individualism.

\(^{11}\) An example is the UN, a composition of united nations.

\(^{12}\) See her excellent point on Hutu refugees from Burundi living in Tanzania. As she describes, these refugees feel that 'the false people' of their state are holding the seat in the UN (Malkki 1994; 1995).
five different states. They were considered a nation, but were not given the right of self-determination. Likewise, since 1991 people in Somaliland have been fighting to be acknowledged as an independent nation-state which is not part of former Somalia.

Chatterjee (1996) distinguishes between an inner domain of national power and the material domain of the state, and points out that the creation of an imagined community takes place in the inner domain of national culture, rather than the state. The 'national culture' is thus invented to distinguish the nation from other cultural formations. Writing on nationalism in the colonial world he states that this process has already taken place during colonial times, so that the nation is sovereign even when the state is under colonial rule. At independence a set of models for the organisation of state power existed, and a particular model was chosen as a reaction to external forces, the world order.

Still, the state plays an important role in nation-building, and can be seen as an actor in group formation which is more powerful than a symbol or idea, concentrating power and force and delineating boundaries between groups. Barth (1994) states that the creation of a group consciousness takes place on three levels: 1. the personal and interpersonal level, 2. an intermediate level where collectivities and stereotypes are created, taking leadership, rhetoric and entrepreneurship into account, and finally 3. a macro-level which is also influenced by state policies. As all these levels are interlinked the possibilities and limitations of individual agency in bringing about structural change spring to mind. Barth (1969;1994) addressed methodological problems of studying phenomena like ethnicity by regarding ethnic identity as a feature of social organisation rather than a nebulous expression of culture. This implies focusing on the boundary and processes of recruitment rather than the cultural material that the boundary encloses (Barth 1994:12). This approach which is shaped by the study of ethnicity, can also be of help in the study of nationalism and national identity. In the case of Somalia, ethnic and national boundaries were often perceived to be identical, hence Somalia as one of the few ethnically homogenous nation-states in Africa faced the problem of being a

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While Lewis sees no reason to distinguish between ethnic groups and nations since the difference appear one of size rather than structural composition, Smith sees ethnic groups as possible predecessors of nations, being a composition of various ethnic groups with one being dominant.
'dismembered nation' with ethnic Somalis living under the rule of several governments.

2.5 Conclusion

To conclude, national identity is only one among a range of identities which people gain through cross-cutting group affiliations. While nationalists claim that national identity should override other identity schemes, in the Somali case this did not occur as Somali national identity was, like in other African countries, in a process of creation rather than fully formed. Individuation as a presupposition was still at a relatively low level. While nationalist ideology was propagated by the intelligentsia and at this time may have correlated to the changing economy, national identity was primarily sustained by the Somali people themselves. Likewise, individual agency played its role in shaping this ideology during the dictatorship of Siyad Barre, but does not provide a final explanation for this phenomenon. Somali national identity was built up in a situation of insecurity and flux during the colonial era, and at the organisational level the claim to nationhood was combined with the claim of statehood. Therewith the standing of Somalia in world affairs could be legitimised.

This was especially important in the face of the conflict with Ethiopia as the link between the nation and the state is one of the most decisive aspects of nationalism. As both are considered to be natural partners in the concept of nation-statism, the failure of the state which took place in Somalia forcefully undermined Somali national identity. Accordingly, we are facing different levels of the Somali crisis. First, the personal and the institutional levels (the distinction elaborated by Barth 1994), and second between the cultural and organisational levels (Chatterjee 1996). My thesis in this chapter is that the Somali people experienced changes on the personal level. At the heart of the Somali crisis however is the failure of the state. I do not consider Somali culture to be the reason for the occurring violence, rather the cultural system provided the lines upon which the conflicts occurred. The probability is that this is the result of a general fragility of the nation-state as a form of organisation in Africa.
3. ASPECTS OF SOMALI SOCIETY

3.1 Introduction

Until recently, in line with the nationalist propaganda, most literature about Somalia perceived the Somali people as ethnically homogenous, with a common religion, language and culture. The more recent literature looks at divisions in Somali society in an effort to come to grips with the reasons why the Somali state and society collapsed, and thereby focus on the sheer heterogeneity of the Somali people. To understand how the myth of Somali homogeneity was perpetuated it is important to understand the economic and social structure of Somali society. Thus I will describe the Somali clan system, nomadism, "agriculturalism" and the position of minorities, the religious aspects, in an attempt to delineate the new divisions in Somali society. These factors influence the perception of "Somaliness" which has changed over the last decades and define boundaries between groups. Even after the emergence of a modern nationalism loyalties and identities were demarcated along the lines of the Somali social system. In the civil war militias were built on clan-bases, however, I do not see the Somali culture as the reason for the occurring conflicts but it did provide the lines along which the fighting occurred, and the national identity did not over-ride other group affiliations.

3.2 The Clan System

The Somali people are said to have a consciousness of their corporate unity, which is shown in a satirical creation myth:

"God first created the family of the prophet Muhammad and was very pleased with the nobility of his handiwork; then he created the rest of mankind and was modestly pleased; then he created the Somalis and he laughed!" (Hussein, quoted in Samatar 1994)

This sense of a common heritage is rooted in the widespread belief that all Somalis descend from a common founding father, Hiil, father of Sab and Samale. Six clan families exist, the Darood, the Hawiye, the Isaq and the
Dir, descendants of Samale, and the Digil and Reewin as descendant from Sab. Map 1 shows where the members of the clan-families mainly live. Although a simplification, it is nevertheless useful as clanism is one of the main characteristics of Somali society and its subsequent break-up.

Each of these clan families has several clans and sub-clans, consisting of various diya-paying groups, figure 1 shows the structure of Somali clan organisation. Genealogy therewith is at the heart of the Somali social system, a basis of identity and organisation. Descendence is patrilineal and young people are taught to memorise the entire genealogy of their descent. Lewis first introduced the term segmentary lineage system into the discourse on Somalia, and argued that in theory every Somali has a place in this vast genealogical tree, figure 2. However, Mansur (1995;1997:127) eloquently argues that contrary to common belief a blood relationship is not the crucial element in determining clan kinship. Furthermore, since ancient times clan families had been formed by the fusion of different peoples, including non-Somalis (Mansur 1997:128). This is an important point, for the vast genealogical tree of 'the Somalis' was erroneously seen as an all-embracing Somali nation. Mansur (1997:12) highlights that the Somali clan structure is the fruit of nomadic pastoral life and recurent migration streams. "The necessity of defence, the need to pasture and water-induced flexibility, including even the severance of kinship ties and the movement to new territory resulted in the formation of new alliances, and later, clans." Thus the genealogies are historically true only in the sense that a parable is true. The vast system of kinship groups or lineages unite or divide people according to the context of opposition on any given occasion. Descendence is supplemented by contracts heer, used as a basis of political solidarity. Following this functionalist view Simons (1995:137; 1997) thus remarks that kinship in the Somali context maps trustworthiness, charting who has trusted whom in the past and where this has led in terms of thicker or thinner relationships, and sustained and

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14 The name Reewin is sometimes written Rahanweyn. Alternatively this clan-family is also called Mirifle.
15 I.M. Lewis' publications give a detailed description of it; and Lewis interprets in his publications from the 1950s until today every part of Somali society and politics in the language of the lineage system. He states that the power of kinship is 'the foundation of social co-operation enters into all transactions between and amongst individuals.' There is 'no significant area of Somali social activity where the influence of kinship is absent' (Lewis 1994:1).
Map 1 Regional Distribution of Somali Clan Families

(Source Lyons/Samatar 1995:ix)
Figure 1 Structure of Somali Clan Organisation

(Source Samatar 1995:12)

- Clan family
  - Clan Clan Clan
    - upper limit of political action, has territorial properties, and often clan-head (Sultan)
  - Primary lineage Primary lineage
    - exogamous political unit
  - Dia-paying group Dia-paying group
    - basic political and jural unit under Government headman. Members united in payment of blood-wealth
Figure 2 Somali Genealogical Tree

(Source Mansur 1995:123)
broken relationships. Nevertheless, even when having practical implications or functions the Somali people attach personal meaning, emotions and feelings to it. The clan system constitutes one of the identities of Somali people and was the ideological basis for Somali unity, until the (attempted) exchange against a Western-style nationalism. However, rather than being over-ridden its power was at first reduced but later reinforced.

3.3 Nomadism, "Agriculturalism" and Minorities

As part of a national ideology common to the second half of this century Somalia was primarily perceived as 'a nation of nomads' (Lewis; Samatar 1995), and two-thirds of the Somali people are said to practice pastoralism as the principle mode of economy. Surprisingly however, the remaining one-third of the Somalis have been left out of the analysis for many years. Agriculturists were neglected, and groups such as urban town dwellers, the new emerging classes, and members of the commercial ruling elites and the armed forces were perceived as urbanised nomads.

Somali pastoral society is described as an egalitarian 'pastoral democracy', although excluding women and non-nomads from this system (Lewis 1961). Until colonialism they did not have a formal, centralised government and instituted authority. The elders are regarded with respect and often decide policies. Individualism, independence and pride are a strong part of the culture. At the same time family affiliation is considered to be very important. For example, nomadic society has a concept of shared responsibility for violence or accidents, which is visible in the payment of blood-wealth. The nomadic society is in some ways similar to the individualistic Western society, but lacks individuation which is seen as the basis for of nationalism.

The nomads have a strong feeling of superiority which led to a distinct perception of 'the Somali people' by colonisers, demarcating Somalis from

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16 I found this reflected in the available literature about Somali. There are many publications about nomads, only in the more recent literature southern, agriculturalist or minority issues are present.
17 See the critique by Duale (1998).
18 The pride of nomads leads to a derogation of handiwork and agriculturalism, sometimes criticised as "laziness".
other Africans. This was, as we will later see, the basis for the construction of 'the Somali nation'. Additionally it is part of the construction of 'pure' or 'noble Somalis', and the basis for discrimination against minorities living in Somalia.

A questionable assumption about Somalia is that the Somali people speak a common language. The main dialects of the northern and southern Somalis vary as much as Spanish and Portuguese do, which means that communication is virtually impossible between the North and the South. Additionally, other languages such as Mai, Jiddu and Dabarre exist; in 1972 the northern language Maxa became the official language of state. This obviously placed the southern societies at a disadvantage.

It should be mentioned that the Somali people have a strong oral tradition, especially of poetry. Poetry constitutes an important part of society, and gives expression to issues of social, political and personal relevance. Accordingly, many scholars have analysed Somali poetry as a reflection of people's identity, visions, moral, etc. (e.g. Ahmed 1996, Samatar 1982). However even here it is said that the nomadic traditions dominated the picture which was drawn of Somali culture, and masqueraded it as universal (see Ahmed 1995b:139).

Although Somalia is primarily perceived as nomadic, agriculturalism constitutes an important part of the country's economy. The inter-riverine area between the Jubba and the Shabelle was labelled Somalia's bread basket. Its agricultural capacity constituted a desirable resource which explains its role in the civil war. The two southern clan families Reewin and Digil practice agropastoralism. Their society is more hierarchically organised, but Helander (1997:139) points out that villages in the inter-river area did not have any institutionalised leadership in the pre-Barre times. In contrast to the nomads, the village constitutes the most important social unit and sometimes even constitutes a diya-paying group. The society tends to be more open to adopting new members who, in the case of the Reewin are moreover not placed in a subordinated position (Helander 1997).

Clans often tended to establish an hierarchical relation to other clans-people living with them. These were bondsmen, known as sab. Though living with a certain clan, being defined over this affiliation and to some extent enjoying protection, they were not full members of their host clan,
but had a servile status. They remained economically dependent and engaged in crafts which were perceived as degrading by the nomads (e.g. leather- and metalworking, pottery, midwifery and haircutting). Intermarriage with 'noble Somalis' was forbidden, as it was for all minorities in Somalia.

Along the banks of Somalia's two major rivers, the Jubba and the Shabelle, exist agricultural communities which in the 19th century were constituted from run-away or freed slaves who originally came from the Bantu-speaking regions of East Africa, probably absorbing some other communities of hunter-gatherers (Cassanelli 1989:216). They speak Somali, practice Islam, share Somali cultural values, are legally Somali citizens, and consider themselves to be members of Somali clans. Yet they are stigmatised because of their physical characteristics. The people are named after the region they inhabit (Gosha and Avai). As Cassanelli (1989) shows, around 50,000 ex-slaves settled in two areas, absorbing people from different ethnic backgrounds. While in Gosha the social organisation was initially along these ethnic affiliations, the Avai grouped themselves along the clans they used to be enslaved at before coming into the region. However, having a distinctive social organisation during colonialism, with a leadership system unknown to the nomads, they became culturally 'Somali-ized' over the time.

As Bestemann (1995:49) describes, the stigmatisation of Gosha (labelled jareer) is along lines of physical distinction, and they are perceived as Africans as distinct from the more Arab Somalis. She argues that the Somali people saw the basis for their superiority in their religion, but it seems to be more in terms of race as physical appearance is put forward in the labels used. Importantly, the Gosha communities were 'lumped together', collectively sharing a lower status within Somali society (Bestemann 1995:50). Bestemann (1995:53-54) thus indicates that Gosha self-identity is different from their external perception; they feel themselves 'a group of people of very different origins, living and working together in one geographical area'. Other than their ancestry, the Gosha living north of Jilib consider their clan affiliation as a very important part of their self-identity, whereas Jubba Valley villagers put greater emphasise on their village affiliation (Bestemann 1995:54). Until recently minority issues were neglected in favour of the emphasis on a homogeneous nation with little resistance by these minorities. They were integrated into the nationalist atmosphere, even if not empowered by it. For example, one of
the founding members of the Somali Youth Club was Gosha (Eno 1997:210). Until the late 1980s, "[e]xclusion from consideration as ethnically Somali ... does not provide the Gosha with an ethnic identity of their own. A stigmatized identity does not create ethnicity" (Bestemann 1995:55). However this seems to have changed in recent years. The perception of minority groups by broader society as well as the Gosha themselves changed with the civil war, and today minorities put forward a distinctive ethnic identity (see Eno 1997).

Further minorities are the seafaring Bajunis, of Swahili origin, living on islands off the coast of Kismayu, and speaking a Swahili dialect; and a few Christian families, barely showing a sense of community (Hill 1997:8). Another minority group is the urban coastal communities. Despite the myth of a traditionally nomadic Somalia we find evidence of early coastal cities. Mogadishu for example was already an urban centre in the 8th century, and was described by Ibn Battuta in 1331 on his visit to the Horn as an "exceedingly large city" (quoted in Laitin/Samatar 1987:15). Some of these cities later developed into small-scale centralised kingdoms. Arab, Persian, Yemeni, Swahili and Asian communities settled there, supplemented by many Somalis. They constitute the Benadiri communities and contain many merchant families, living mainly in Mogadishu, Brave, and Merca.

By emphasising in a nationalist undertone the homogeneity of the Somali people the negation of the existence of minorities led to indirect oppression of these groups. While they initially took part in the nationalist movement the bias towards nomads demarcated them as non-nomadic. In the civil war ethnicity finally became the basis of their new identity scheme.

3.4 Religion

Turning finally to religion, we find that Somalia is one of the few countries in Africa whose population is virtually entirely Muslim. Islam is an intrinsic part of the Somali people's identity, a distinguishing element in the definition of the Somali nation, and a factor promoting unity against the 'other' that was religiously different. Islam is one of the ideological backbones for the overcoming of clan divisions and accordingly, can be perceived as a unifying aspect of society. But Mukhtar (1995) nonetheless shows that it was also a divisive factor in Somali history. The Somali
people follow the Shafi'i Suni school of thought, but unlike other Sunni Muslims, they regard the household of Prophet Muhammad with special honour. Unlike the southern clans, in the north most clans draw a mythical line of descent to Arab ancestors which is linked to the household of Muhammad. Mukhtar (1995:11) however argues that it is very likely that Islam first came to the south where it found more fertile ground. He states that those Somalis who claim to descend from Arab sheikhs speak less Arabic than the rest of the Somali people, and that their features are no different in complexion or structure than those of other Somalis or neighbouring African groups. He concludes that this is a cultural invention which developed recently in an attempt to gain political ascendancy (Mukhtar 1995:20). In the same manner Mansur (1997) points out that the claim to Arab descendence was made in an attempt to gain social standing. For example, many Somalis insisted to the colonial authorities they were not Africans, but Arabs. This consciousness of being different from the rest of Africa was expressed at various points in history, and the link to the Arab world was manifested in 1974 when the Somali Democratic Republic joined the Arab League. In sum Islam is part of the national identity of Somali people. It distinguishes Somalia not only from the colonisers but also from the neighbouring African countries. On the one hand this enforced the Somali perception of a nation; however, on the other hand it had an ambiguous role in Pan-Africanism. Some Somali people identified Christianity with colonialism so that Islam was perceived as an intrinsically African faith even though it never dominated Pan-African thoughts.19

No doubt, nationalism functions within the framework of previously existing identities, one of them being religion. Loukeris (1995) showed how nationalism can treat religion in a diversity of ways, depending on its usefulness to the nationalist project. In a similar vein Samatar (1988:24–26) described the ' politicization of religion' as a transformation of faith into a political ideology and mobilizing doctrine. In Somali history there have been several movements attempting to revive and purify the Muslim faith, having made its compromises with local custom over the time. One of the best known movements is the ' Dervish war' under Sayyid Muhammad ' Abdulle Hassan (chapter 4.3). Likewise. Islamic groups played a major role in the attempts to reconstruct Somalia after the recent collapse of the

19 Interestingly very little literature is available about this topic, and for example in one of the more recent editions about Pan-Africanism by Kelley & Lemelle (1994) Islam is not dealt with.
state. Mohamed-Abdi (1993) states that religion was one of the crucial elements in the identity and moral crisis which the Somali people got trapped in over the last century. Nonetheless, while there have been some attempts to purify the faith many Somalis rejected the religion and its implied moral order. Thus on one hand religion backed nationalist sentiments, on the other its plight contributed to an atmosphere of dissolution which finally found expression in the civil war.

3.5 Conclusion: New Divisions in Somali Society

So far I have given an overview about the Somali social system which demarcated lines of solidarity and conflict over the time. The clan-system for example can be understood as embracing all the Somali nation whilst excluding people who were in servile status. While the nomadic culture and tradition dominated Somali nationalist ideology, the assumption of a homogeneous or unitary "Somalia" was an intrinsic part of this ideology. However, as the economic conditions and the political administration changed over time, so did the social order. For example, the attitude toward Islam which plays an important role for the national identity of Somali people changed. A new stratification of Somali society occurred which is linked up with colonialism and the growth in trade, and is described as a class formation by Bestemann. The newly introduced state-wide administration gave rise to an urban political elite which was later supplemented by the introduction of the Somali army, and the growing significance of international trade. This led to a new concentration of power and resources, encouraged competition among the elite in the region, as I will describe in the following chapters.
4. COLONIALISM

4.1 Introduction

The name Somalia was first recorded in the victory claim of Negus Yeshak (1414-1429) of Ethiopia over the neighbouring Islamic Sultanate of Adal (Kusow 1994:32). However, the name Hawiye for a group living near a river in the territory was already referred to by Al-Idrisi (1100-1166). Both references can be promulgated in favour of different interpretations of Somali history. Some authors take the early mentioning of Somalia as an account for the historical roots of the Somali nation, while others emphasise that since the earlier mentioning of the Hawiye divisions in Somali society is centuries old, the unitary concept of 'the Somali people' is an invention which took place during the second half of this millennium (Kusow 1994:32). Parallel to this, there is an on-going debate on where the people of Somalia originated from, and whether migration into the Horn of Africa was southwards (Lewis 1988:18) or north-eastwards from the highlands of southern Ethiopia (Kusow 1994:33;1995). In this chapter I will however only give a brief overview of the history of the colonial boundary-drawing, and the Dervish war. Therewith some important factors for the longstanding consideration of Somalia as a homogeneous nation shall be considered in light of the construction of the national ideology therein.

In this chapter I argue that colonialism had a formidable impact on Somali society. The economy, social and political organisation altered, owing to the impact of new ideologies and the changing cultural values which the Somali people faced. They experienced in many ways their difference from the colonisers that which made them feel Somali, united in distinctiveness and having a common (colonial and Christian) enemy. So the Somali people could experience themselves as Muslims, distinct from the Christian colonisers as the Muslim belief was threatened from without. According to

Mohammed-Abdi (1993) the reactions were diverse, as some people identified more strongly with Islam, while others experienced a loosening of this identification. As the social order was shattered however space was created for new identity schemes including nationalism. The nationalist ideology was thereby driven not only by the educated elite, civil servants or traditional elders, but in fact found fertile ground among virtually all Somalis. With the experience of colonialism, the changing economy, administrative and political developments a nation-building process was rapidly initiated.

4.2 Early Colonialism: Partition of the Horn

Before the colonial authorities invaded Africa, the Somali territory did not have one centralised state system and did not form a single political unit. However this situation changed when in the 16th century the Europeans started exploring the East African Coasts. British, Portuguese, French, and Dutch merchantmen occasionally visited the region en route to India, but no really systematic explorations were undertaken until the 1830s. With the occupation of Aden by the British in 1839 and some shipwrecks along the Somali coast, there was a growing interest in exploring of the area. While several British and French missions explored the coastal area, the interior beyond the coastal plain however remained inaccessible for Europeans until it was penetrated by Richard F. Burton in 1854 when he undertook a visit to Harar, proudly claiming to make the "First Footsteps in East Africa".

Initially, British interest in the Somali coast was mainly motivated by concerns for the security of trade and communication with India. Prompted by the looting of wrecked ships they concluded treaties with Somali groups to protect crews and cargoes. The first of these treaties was concluded in 1827 between Captain Bremer of H.M.S. Tamar and sheikhs of the Habr Awal. With the establishment of the British protectorate over Aden diplomatic activity in the area increased, leading to treaties with the Sultan of Tajura and the Governor of Zeila. However, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 led to a great change in the geopolitical evaluation of the region as the Red Sea became a major avenue of trade with India and the Far East, so that its shores acquired considerable strategic importance. This coincided with a revival of Egyptian activity directed at acquiring control
over the sources of the Nile, leading to an expedition into the Sudan and Equatorial Africa, and a war against Ethiopia.

Meanwhile the Red Sea was nominally under Turkish rule but was actually governed by local potentates. Expansionist actions provoked the opposition of the British government to Egyptian and Turkish claims. Harar and the coast facing the Gulf of Aden remained under Egyptian rule until 1885 following the Egyptian withdrawal as a result of the Mahdist revolt in the Sudan. In January 1887 Menelik of Ethiopia conquered Harar, and since then Ethiopia has been one of the important power-holders in the region.

The British undertook attempts to consolidate their position in the region, preparing an occupation of the Somali coast which was officially notified in the General Act of the Berlin Conference, 1884-85. However, in December 1884 the French took possession of Tajura, and Italy extended its holding around the Assab near the lower end of the Red Sea. In the climate of acute Anglo-French rivalry France needed a base and coaling station along the route to Madagascar and Indochina, and was combined with an interest in developing trade. Therewith France’s interest differed from Britain’s whose policy was guided by the strategic necessity of securing imperial communication, and in commercial terms only concerned about supplies to Aden. In 1885 the French colony and protectorate was formally established in the boundaries of today’s Djibouti.

Italy’s colonial activities are assessed by Touval (1963:40) as "motivated by aspirations for imperial grandeur" and "a by-product of the rise of Italian nationalism". Yet despite former activities in Eritrea and the Red Sea coast, Italians were attracted to the Somali coast only in the 1880s. In a competition with Germans in East Africa, by 1899 Italy had established its influence over the Somali coast from Bender Ziadeh, on the Gulf of Aden in the north, to Kismayu on the Indian Ocean in the south. As Lewis (1988:40) puts it: 'by 1897 the partition of Somaliland was virtually complete; although subsequent adjustments occurred, the frontiers of the new Somali territories had been defined, at least theoretically.' Map 2 shows the establishment of boundaries between the colonial territories.

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21 Thus Somalia is sometimes said to have been 'Aden’s butcher shop'.
Map 2 Demarcation of Somaliland Boundaries, 1888-1925
(Source Beachey 1990:x)
What is usually referred to as the 'Somali nation' was divided into five parts. The area around Djibouti was under French rule, and the population was ethnically mixed with Somalis and Afars. The British Somaliland Protectorate had Hargeisa as its main town, the neighbouring Italian Somaliland had Mogadishu as its capital. The Ogaden region where Somalis constitute a large part of the inhabitants was under Ethiopian rule, while other Somalis came under British flag in Northern Kenya. Thus, having constituted no political unit before colonialism, the Somali people found themselves part of different centralised political systems. Crucially, however, the colonisers were not only European governments, but also neighbouring Ethiopia.

4.3 The Dervish War

Between 1900 and 1920 Somalia faced a war which is often interpreted as a fight for freedom and a Pan-Somali resistance against colonialism, the 'Dervish War'. Its leader, Sayyid Muhammad 'Abdulle Hassan is considered to be a 'national hero', his resistance is often described as a Pan-Somali struggle with a nationalist undertone. While nationalist ideology interprets the Dervish war as a national fight against colonialism and emphasise its unifying aspects, more recent interpretations dwell on the brutality and cruelty directed against fellow Somalis (e.g. Ahmed 1995b). Aidid & Ruhela (1994:83) give one of the reasons why people obeyed him: fear.

While Sayyid Muhammad was very successful in gaining support among Somalis (the Dervish forces were 20,000 men strong), solidarity nevertheless was often set along kinship lines. So Sayyid Muhammad relied heavily on the backing of his own kin's clans, and his enemies were identified along kinship ties. He opposed clanism in the sense of maximising the political influence of a lineage group (Touval 1963:58). But rather than being a nationalist movement his movement was contrariwise a trans-clan struggle.

Sayyid Muhammad was born in 1856 at the valley of Sa'Madeeq as the eldest son of Sheikh Abdulle. His mother Timiro Seed belonged to the Ali Geri sublineage of the Dulhabante clan, a numerically superior sub-clan of the Darood clan family, then his father's clan. Sayyid Muhammad received a religious education and made several pilgrimages to Mecca, where he
became a disciple of Muhammad Salih, founder of the Salihiyah. Coming back to Somalia in 1895 he first settled in Berbera, preaching the doctrines of the Salihiyah. Meeting little success in Berbera he retired to the interior and settled among the Dulhabante. There his preaching found more acceptance. People respected his authority not only on religious questions but also on clan affairs (Touval 1963:52). British authorities first appreciated his role in settling disputes and maintaining peace in the area; however, in 1899 Muhammad's changing behaviour towards the colonial authorities was revealed. Rumours circulated that he was arming his followers and forcing the neighbouring clans to submit to his authority. However, the religious and political motives seem to interweave, as the colonial government were identified with 'the Christian enemy'. Thus the name dervish for his followers means a Muslim believer who has taken vows of poverty and a life of authority in the service of God (Aidid/Ruhela 1994:79).

The first attack by the dervishes was directed against Ethiopia. Between 1890 and 1907 the troops of Menelik had plundered from Somalis in the Ogaden the tribute of estimated 100,000 cattle, 200,000 camels, and 6,000,000 goats and sheep. But Sayyid Muhammad's war was not simply directed against the economic exploitation of his people. In August 1899 he occupied Burao in British Somaliland and gained control over the watering places of two Isaaq lineages, the Habr Yunis and Habr Toljaha. Declaring himself the Mahdi he proclaimed holy war against infidels, and called upon all Somalis to join him, denouncing those who did not acknowledge his authority as infidels. Therewith Sayyid Muhammad simultaneously fought on a variety of fronts against several enemies. He waged his war on three fronts: firstly against colonial, Christian Ethiopia raiding Somalis'; secondly against the British (colonial and Christian) government holding state power in the northern territory and Kenya; and finally against Somalis who did not join the movement. The Italian government (for a short period) agreed to assign him a territory of his own under Italian protection. Touval (1963) interprets this arrangement in the sense of Sayyid Muhammad's need for a respite after the enormous losses in the battle against British troops.

In summary, it is difficult to distinguish between 'religious' and 'nationalist' motives Sayyid Muhammad had. Initially motivated by religious inspiration, his objective was inseparable from political means. He personally believed in his religious mission, even after he was denounced
The Dervish war thus continued until 1920, the year of Sayyid Muhammad’s death.

4.4 Late Colonialism

Laitin & Samatar (1987:59) describe the years between 1920 and 1940 as a period of "colonial consolidation". Aside for the Italians none of the colonial authorities promoted the economic development of the Somali territory, although they attached a strategic value to the region. In establishing national frontiers colonial administrators had completely ignored the economic necessity underlying the pastoral clan’s cyclical migration between pastureland and water wells, shown in Map 3. With the establishment of frontiers entire clans were cut off from their traditional sources of water and pasture, or found their members under the administration of different colonial authorities. For example, the Marehan and Bah-Gari clan continuing on the Italian side were cut off from essential pasturelands on the Ethiopian side, while having access to traditionally used water wells in the Shabelle Valley. Meanwhile their kin under Ethiopian rule retained the grazing grounds but lost access to water sources. In short the dispute about frontiers was an outcome of colonial rule and agreements were made without consideration of the needs of people living in the Horn.

Ironically, it was the triumph of fascist Italy over Ethiopia which briefly established a great-Somali unity. After its occupation (1935-1940) Italy unified the Ogaden area with its southern Somali colony. With the outbreak of World War II Italian forces invaded British Somaliland and added this region to Italian East Africa. Even though this action fuelled demands for a

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22 In a letter to a Somali group he wrote in 1913: "I also inform you that I am a pilgrim and a holy fighter, and have no wish to gain power and greatness in this world ... I am a Dervish, hoping for God's mercy and consent and forgiveness and guidance, and I desire that all the country and the Moslems may be victorious by God's grace." (quoted in Touval 1963:56) His most famous letter, however, was addressed to the colonial powers, saying: "I have no forts, no houses. ... I have no cultivated fields, no silver or gold for you to take. You gained no benefit by killing my men and my country is no good for you. ... The country is jungle. ... If you want wood and stone, you can get them in plenty. There are also many ant-heaps. The sun is very hot. All you can get from me is war. ... If you wish peace, go away from my country to your own" (quoted in Laitin/Samatar 1987:58).
Map 3 Somali Clan Cross-Border Migration

(Source Samatar 1995:11)
reunification by Somali nationalists, Italy's aim, of course, was not to "fulfill Somali aspirations, but to realize Mussolini's dream of acquiring an African 'place in the sun'" (Laitin/Samatar 1987:62-63). The Italian victory was however short-lived, and in March 1941 the British returned to overrun northern Somalia. Having an agreement with the Ethiopian Emperor in exile, Haile Selassie, they reconquered Ethiopia from Italy with the promise to restore his full sovereignty, and conquered southern Somalia in the process. Thus aside from French Somaliland the whole of the Somali peninsula came under British military administration for almost a decade. In the Big Four Power (Britain, France USA and USSR) negotiations on the future status of the ex-Italian colonies after World War II, Britain originally proposed to establish a UN trusteeship over the united Somali state under British administration. This was rejected and Somalia again partitioned, returning to Italy the administration of their ex-colony as a UN trusteeship for a set period of 10 years. British Somaliland was thus once again reinvented, as Ethiopia was given the Ogaden and adjacent Somali territory despite vigorous protests by their inhabitants (Lewis 1993:28). The far south remained the fifth district under Kenya's administration as part of Kenya even after independence. Djibouti and the surrounding area continued to be under French administration until an independent state was formed in June 1977.

During this time, it is claimed, a modern Somali nationalism emerged. Somalis started to question the legitimacy of colonial rule in private and public meetings, calling for political unity and debating supra clan issues (Laitin/Samatar 1987:63). The recent unification of the country, public humiliation of colonial masters, memory of the Dervish movement, progress in education and economic complexity, growth of an articulate elite and lifting of the ban on open political debate by the new administration were factors which influenced this nationalist spirit.

Somali Nationalism is always identified with the Pan-Somali struggle. Somalis demanded the right of self-determination under their own (all-embracing) nation-state. The struggle was brutally suppressed with executions, jailing and mass exiles by the Ethiopian government, for example the firing on demonstrators in 1948 in Jigjiga.

However, in Italian Somalia preparations for the UN-mandated independence initiated electoral politics with a municipal election in
Of the 22 competing parties almost all were associated with a particular clan. The major exception was the Somali Youth League (SYL), initially set up as the Somali Youth Club (SYC) on May 13, 1943 by the threat of the country's repartition. Reflecting the new nationalist climate it was the first modern political party formed. The SYL was able to secure stunning victories and remained an important political force far beyond the moment of independence in 1960.

Meanwhile, in the north the British did not make provisions for the incubation of political parties until the heat of the elections. Until 1959 political parties were illegal and the British administration insisted on clan representation in governing councils. Additionally, the British refused civil servants the right to engage in politics, "thereby emasculating the potential size of an educated political class" (Laitin/Samatar 1987:66). However, there existed SYL branches in the north. SYL members were seen by the British as communists, finally they tried to encourage the development of a counter movement. Recruiting among merchants, traditional leaders and religious sheikhs, it was the seed for the second party, the Somali National League (SNL). The first general elections in British Somaliland took place in March 1959, however, they were boycotted by the SNL claiming that the British were rigging it against the parties and in favour of the clans (Laitin/Samatar 1987:66). In following elections the SNL won most of the votes.

To summarise the SNL's criticism of the British emphasis on clan structures shows that changes in the Somali society took place. Somalia experienced with colonialism and the forces of the international market a corrosion of the old moral and social order. The internal logic of the social structure became contradictive, the concept of a state was not rooted in the society, and additionally applied world market pressure on the Somali social organisation.

4.5 Conclusion

Colonialism had an enormous impact on the Somali people, their society, political organisation and identity. It was under colonial rule that a unitary

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23 The election was based on direct male suffrage, and so the general election in 1956 was likewise based on universal male suffrage.
Somali national identity was first formed. This feeling of unity was an inversion of the partition of the territory by colonial powers. In an atmosphere of a changing moral order and an identity crisis nationalism offered a unifying alternative identity scheme which initially had the potential to over ride other identities like clanism and ethnicity (Mohamed-Abdi 1993).

With the collective experience of colonialism (as a common destiny), a unified community was imagined. Following the struggle for independence Somalis thus tried to find a place and representation in the new world order. The insistence on an independent Somali state might have been reinforced by the threat of the powerful position of neighbouring Ethiopia and a process of elaborating nationalism which reflected the (national) identity people felt took root. This national identity and its ideological counterpart were based on the partition of Somali territory and the struggle for unification. However, this nationalism erroneously painted a picture of Somalia as a homogeneous entity, and was buttressed by colonial authorities and researchers from a diversity of disciplines. The assumption of a nomadic nation, with a common religion and language thus dominated the picture. This imagery was initially backed by virtually all Somalis. However, during colonialism internal divisions were enforced as the colonial administration supported the establishment of members of the local elite in positions of power. Thus some people were legitimised as spokesmen of the communities but not others, for example by giving elders income, making them civil servants, and therewith consolidating their position in the community in a way it was never before.
5. INDEPENDENCE AND BEYOND

5.1 Introduction

Independent Somalia theoretically had the potential for developing into a nation-state. Indeed, it was one of the few countries in Africa which was assumed to be already a nation; thus a nation-state did seem an appropriate concept to govern (and describe) Somalia. However it was the first Somali state ever as it was for most post-colonial states in the continent. Accordingly, trustworthiness and stability were not yet proved. The Somali state was not yet viewed as solvent and stable enough to be the guarantor of security by large numbers of citizens (Simons 1997). Thus the traditional security net of kinship remained in power. Loyalty was still primarily towards kin; for example in the bureaucracy available funds were siphoned and distributed among lineage members. This could be in cash or in access to education etc. This mechanism was one of the factors for perpetuating certain groups' power, and led to the 'passive' repression of minority groups whose members did not get access to positions which could empower them. Additionally, this was fortified by active government policies such as the unequal distribution of schools or available funding. Accordingly, from the very beginning of the state-building process elite competition was encouraged. Due to the lack of trust in the state, kinship dominated the personal identity of Somali citizens rather than being over-ridden by individualism and national identity. As trust is something which develops over time, in a conjunctional process when the state proves trustworthy, Somalia could potentially build this relation to the state. However the government eventually did not prove trustworthy and actively fuelled clanism. Thus the Somali people experienced relatively little individuation and the relationship between the state and society was ambiguous. The Civil Society which initially developed after independence was finally destroyed due to the political order established under Barre's rule (Hassan 1993).

It was only during the post-independence era that Somali nationalism had to prove its value. At the same time the young state had to establish its authority and power. While the national identity did not yet override other
identity schemes, the state already showed signs of failure in providing security, stability and social justice. The nationalist ideology thus remained only in the sphere of ideology, and was never put into practice.

5.2 Independence and the Creation of the Somali Republic

Independence for the southern Somali Trusteeship came in the mid 1960; the British made a surprise and sudden decision to permit their northern territory to become independent within days of Italian Somalia's independence. Representatives of the north and south immediately met in a conference in Mogadishu to create a "unitary, democratic and parliamentary state" (Laitin/Samatar 1987:67). Although backed by virtually all Somalis the task of unification was enormous, and Somali leaders had only a few months to fashion an agreement (Laitin/Samatar 1987:67). Over time the territories had experienced different developments, because as promoted by the Italians the south was in a better position with regards to infrastructure and economic development than the north. The two territories had:

"two different judicial systems; different currencies; different organization and conditions for service for the army, the police and the civil servants. ... The governmental institutions, both at the central and local level, were differently organized and had different powers; the systems and rates of taxation and customs were different, and so were the educational systems." (Contini, quoted in Laitin/Samatar 1987:67)

On July 1, 1960 the former trust territory and British Somaliland united to form the Somali Republic. Somalia was now facing the "formidable task of nation building common to African states in the wake of decolonization" (Laitin/Samatar 1987:67). Thereby Somalia was, and by some people still is seen as unique in Africa, as it is assumed that a Somali national consciousness existed long before independence. As Kusow (1994) shows, Somali nationalism is rather a product of recent developments. It is a nationalism against a considered enemy, but fails to animate a sense of unity among the people. Hence it is not so different from other nationalisms which evolved during colonial times.

Somalia's specific problem is commonly considered to be that it inherited a 'dismembered nation'. Three essential constituent parts were missing: the
Ogaden, the Northern Frontier District (NFD) in Kenya, and Djibouti. The five-pointed star on the flag represents the five regions of which only two became united in the Somali Republic, and over decades Somali politics were determined by this factor. The official, nationalist ideology was based on the dream of Pan-Somalia, in the time of independence as under Siyad Barre's military rule. Many Somali groups were crossing these imposed boundaries on a regular bases as it was an economic necessity for the nomads, and many clans found themselves separated from fellow members by the states' boundaries. Thus the colonial boundaries were alien and experienced as suppressive. Somali national aspiration was to overcome these boundaries.

However, Somalia could not get any diplomatic backing for its struggle. In the context of an Africa where boundaries were drawn in colonial times with disregard of the economic necessities of inhabitants or the existence of ethnic groups, the new African states were a fragile construct. Some, such as Tanzania for example, succeeded in creating a strong national consciousness. Generally however the argument in favour of ethnic self determination remained a sensitive topic. Other governments feared that if the Somali people were to be acknowledged the right to build a state on the basis of the ethno-national boundaries they drew, this would lead to the distraction of virtually all African states as it undermined the concept of multi-ethnic communities. The Organisation of African Unity made a decision on the sanctity of colonial boundaries. Additionally, at the time of Independence, for most colonies African unity was emphasised against the enemy of European colonialism (Pan-Africanism). The recognition of an African colonialism, here the role of Ethiopia, was thus ambiguous.

The civilian government (1960-1969) is criticised for having spent too much energy and resources on the question of great-Somalia by supporting Somali 'freedom fighters' in the Ogaden and Kenya.\[^{24}\] Important problems remained unresolved: the economic development program 'did not capture anyone's imagination' or mobilise Somali people (Laitin/Samatar 1987:75) and as indicated earlier the Somali language remained unwritten until 1972 as no agreement over a standard script could be reached. The infrastructure, especially weak in the north as a reminder to colonial times, stagnated. Additionally, meagre resources were spent on (clan) patronage rather than

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\[^{24}\] In 1964 war first occurred in the Ogaden which revived on a much bigger scale in 1974 (chapter 6.2).
on national development, indicating that solidarity was first towards kin rather than the nation-state.\(^{25}\)

Alternatively, the focus on the Pan-Somali struggle could even be interpreted in a sense of temporary stabilisation, overplaying internal difficulties. As a reminder of colonial times a new line of conflict had emerged between the north and the south. As I have indicated before, the South was economically in a better position than the North. After independence the new government was headed by people from the south; thus a bigger proportion of southerners entered positions which them gave access to scarce resources. In this process a new elite of civil servants emerged. Their position not only offered high incomes, but also gave them access to education.

As the young state was not yet fully recognised as the guarantor of personal security, kinship ties provided access to these resources. Accordingly Individuation was not yet formed in a Western style. Adam (1992:11) remarks that clans in the context of dependent capitalism and uneven class formation acquired a trade union aspect. Thus clans competed for favourable positions; Assuming redistribution functions when one member succeeded the whole clan could benefit. This led to competition between the dominant groups in society, the nomads, which developed into a hierarchical relation between the southern and northern nomads. All the same, both groups were in a better position than the agriculturalists and (ethnic) minorities. The tensions between the North and the South eventually led to the reinvention of a northern Somali state in 1991, in the boundaries of colonial British Somaliland (see chapter 7).

While the link between rural and urban areas was still strong due to kinship relations, an embryonic class structure emerged and new urban groups were created. Hassan (1993:5) lists the following three urban groups which lived a new and more Western life-style, and links their emergence to the enhancement of secular modern institutions in the 1960s: socialist-inclined groups, conservative middle class communities, and religious groups. However, competition between members of these strata turned out to be stronger than any emerging sense of common interest (Luling 1997:291).

\(^{25}\) While patronage and kinship support is regarded as "corruption" in the Western context, in the Somali context, however, failure to support kith and kin was invariably regarded as anti-social. Thus people were expected to do it by relatives and non-relatives (Simons 1997:277).
Still, in the urban population for many people clan identity became less important, and the idealism of early days of independence, the nationalist propaganda, and the melting pot effect of urban life had an influence on people's identity (Luling 1997:291).

Initially however, due to the tensions between the northern and southern regions, in the elections for the Somali Republic's constitution in the less populated north the majority of people voted against the new constitution, although they were outvoted by the southerners. In the 1967 election a coalition of a southern and a northern politician, Egal and Shermarke defeated the Presidency. This brought apparent stability to the Somali political scene. But while the political integration of the two regions seemed to be solved, the government failed to address other problems.

Problems came indubitably into the open when sixty-four parties registered for the election in March 1969. Laitin & Samatar (1987:76) explain that this problem was rooted in the system of voting itself, operating since independence but only demonstrating its full effects a few years later. Votes were given to parties, not single candidates, and every party had a list of potential candidates. Seats were given in the order of the list and consequently a fight for high places in the SYL lists broke out. As a reaction many politicians formed their own party (with themselves on the top of the list) and engaged in securing votes of the members of their sub-clan. Hence once again the significance of clan alliances was reinforced.

However, "a candidate who secured victory as a single member of a party normally rejoined the SYL after the National Assembly met" (Laitin/Samatar 1987:76). Somalia virtually became 'a one-party state' with only one member of opposition in the Assembly (Lewis 1988:204). Laitin & Samatar (1987:76) criticise the system as it "invited factions and exacerbated the anarchic tendencies already present in the society." It led to the expenditure of vast sums of money, social, economic and political stagnation, the misuse of public funds for private purposes, and "made a mockery out of the democratic process". The new government was unable to rule the country, and concentrated on "maintaining balance rather than solving Somalia's deep problems became the leitmotif of Somalia's democracy" (Laitin/Samatar 1987:76).

Only four months after the elections president Shermarke was shot by a soldier as a revenge for pre-election killings among the soldier's kin. Hence
in the ensuing days cabinet ministers and parliamentary members wrangled over the choice of a new president, without finding a solution.

5.3 Military Rule

In the early hours of October 21, 1969 with backing from the police the army occupied key points throughout the capital. A bloodless coup d'état took place, and members of the government and other leading politicians and personalities were arrested. The Constitution was suspended, the National Assembly disbanded, the Supreme Court abolished, and political parties declared illegal. A Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) composed of 25 military and police officers under the Presidency of General Muhammad Siyad Barre was named as the new political force in the country.

Siyad Barre, a "man of average intelligence and no formal schooling" (Galaydh, quoted in Samatar 1995:17), started his career in the Italian colonial police force and rose initially through the ranks of Polizia Africa Italiana, then through that of the British military administration, and finally under the Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana della Somalia. When Somalia created a national army in the early 1960s Barre transferred like numerous police officers to the military to form the officer corps. At the time of the coup d'état he was commander of the military, the second officer in rank, though not in age. It soon turned out that Barre not only chaired the SRC, but was determined to remain firmly in command of the government. He managed to maintain his personal rule and ascendancy for 21 years. He not only steered the country's politics, but was able to influence the perception of Somali citizens.

The new regime declared that it would rid the country of social ills, eliminating corruption and tribal nepotism. Attention would be given to the economic and social betterment for all, and the re-establishment of a just and honourable society. In external affairs the unification struggle continued, and liberation movements and the fight against colonialism were supported (Lewis 1988:205). Catchwords were poverty, disease and ignorance, the 'people's real enemies to be combated'. The state was renamed the Somali Democratic Republic.
Following the frustration over the last government's failing, many Somalis initially saw the coup in a positive light. The new government successfully started its ambitious task from the outset. An internal administrative reform took place, and public work projects were introduced, recruiting those who Lewis (1993:32) calls "unemployed urban tribal drop outs". As part of the strategy to abolish traditional clan divisions the death sentence was reintroduced to replace blood compensation (diya), therewith introducing individual responsibility for any actions; a practice which was uncommon to the traditional nomadic society. It later became illegal to speak about clan issues, and even a new form of greeting was introduced. However, it soon became apparent that Siyad Barre built his power "by manipulating clans and implementing classic tactics of divide and rule" (Lyons/Samatar 1995:14), a point I will come back to later. This development accompanied militarisation and a rise of a military ethos (militarism) in society (Adam 1992:19ff). For example, the proportion of military spending increased in the Somali government's budget, and a military training became a requirement for school and college graduates as well as civil servants.

At the first anniversary following the coup 'Scientific Socialism' was officially adapted. This signalled a significant drift from a pro-Western position to a close relationship with the Soviet Union. This, Lewis (1993:32) states, reflected the Army's growing dependence on Russia and the idealistic orientation of young intellectuals. Laitin & Samatar (1987:79) nevertheless conclude that many Somalis, both urban and rural, were disillusioned with the US and did not need to be 'prodded by Soviet propaganda'. It later became apparent how much Somalia became caught up in the dogfight of the cold war.

Firstly, Siyad's populism and socialism unleashed latent ideological energies. The new socialist vocabulary, jaalle for comrade, set signals that socialist comraderie would surpass kinship, and helped to raise popular consciousness. All the same, Barre had to face the fear of many nomads that they would lose their herds as a result of the translation hantiwadaag as socialism which means 'wealth sharing' with the connotation of 'livestock sharing'.

Laitin & Samatar (1987) conclude that Siyad Barre achieved two major political goals between 1970 and 1974: language reform, with Latin as the official script for the Somali language and Maxa-Somali as the official language of the Republic; and the overcoming of societal inequalities. As I
have discussed in chapter 3 the adapted language put the northern nomadic societies at an advantage, even if it had in theory positive effects on the possibility of political participation by the people speaking Maxa as their mother tongue. However the setting of an official language was a crucial point for the state. It was important for the functioning of administration and trade. As I have argued before, the overcoming of societal inequalities hardly took place as the whole system was biased towards nomadism, and the neglect of agriculturalists and minorities.

However, over time it became apparent that Somalia practised 'Scientific Siyadism' rather than 'Scientific Socialism'. A personality cult around Barre was established, the ruling style became more oppressive, and the National Security Service began to encroach on the privacy of virtually all Somalis. Somali citizens lost their de facto right to free expression. Many people were disappointed with these developments, such as the writer Nurudin Farah, who had in the burst of revolutionary enthusiasm returned to Somalia to teach literature (Laitin/Samatar 1987:88). Unfortunately the brutality, insensitivity, arrests and intrigues were not temporary occurrences, but worsened over the time, taking unbelievable dimensions.26 Here people painfully experienced a gap between official ideology and reality. In the absence of legitimate forums to express their opinions people got caught in a highly compartmentalised clan system, which led to additional fragmentation within society (Ahmed 1995b:150).

The mid-1970s brought a second period of General Barre's military rule, and holding his powerful position his actions had a major impact on Somalia's development. In 1974 Somalia joined the Arab League and both hosted and chaired the Organisation of African Unity Heads of State meeting. The earlier focus on internal problems thus shifted towards a greater involvement in external affairs (Lewis 1988:226). Laitin & Samatar (1987:88) write that "Barre, a military man, was reluctant to rely on intellectuals or even on the vagaries of democratic institutions." Despite the launching of the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party with great fanfare in 1976, Siyad Barre lost interest in socialism and its emphasis on class struggle. He instead turned his attention to the possibilities of a national struggle.

26 Africa Watch published in 1990 a report about the killings in the Horn by its own government, addressing the last years and the fall of Barre's regime.
5.4 New Wealth

I have indicated before that new wealth was associated with positions of power and access to certain resources. The main sources of new wealth were foreign aid and land (Luling 1997:290; see also African Rights 1993; Besteman/Cassanelli 1996a; Maren 1993; Markakis 1998; Samatar 1989; Simons 1995). Under colonial rule the Italians had confiscated some land for banana plantations. After independence the ruling elites continued to expropriate land, especially from the minority communities in the South. The 1975 land reform offered a pretext for further land alienation whereby a mixture of purchase, bribery, threat and outright violent seizure were used (African Rights 1993:5). In the process a new class of land owners emerged. While most people were associated with clans close to Siyad Barre, leading businessmen from all clans and even minorities were represented. Many of these landowners were elders, which means that the institution of elders has been distorted and stripped of power through the loss of land or through opportunistically registering land as their own (African Rights 1993:6-7). The riverine area was thus not only a source for food but also a source for development funds (Besteman/Cassanelli 1996b). Somalia experienced what Simons calls an 'aid avalanche', first from the West, than from the USSR, and finally from the West again. Those in power made a fortune by alienating the money or food given, especially after the refugee crisis in the aftermath of the Ogaden war. Thus the competition for positions of power increased and the Somali government and economy were highly dependent on aid.

5.5 Conclusion

Independence of British Somaliland and the UN Trusteeship were enthusiastically welcomed by the Somali people. In some ways nationalist policies proved to be successful, and a nationalist spirit was common among the Somali people. However national identity was a recent development, and it did not yet over-ride other identity schemes. At the same time a paradox had emerged: The Somali genealogical model and myth of common descent which had provided the traditional ideological
bases for the unity of the Somali people had to be abandoned in favour of a Western-derived nationalism (Luling 1997:290).

The nationalist enthusiasm for independence day was however soon overshadowed by disruptions at the state level, such as clientalism and corruption ('trickling down' to the individuals' level). After the disappointment about the civilian government, the Somali people welcomed the military coup under the leadership of Siyad Barre. The established regime promoted a Pan-Somali nationalism and initially proved successful. At the same time however new social strata emerged, along with tensions between the North and South. While the minorities people from rural areas in general were neglected, elite competition was nonetheless encouraged. The main sources of wealth were agricultural land and foreign aid. Having assumed the form of trade union the clan system which had been fought before finally became reinforced.
6. THE HORN IN FLAMES

6.1 Introduction

The period from the mid-1970s onwards was politically marked by Barre's changing attitudes. Most obviously he reinforced clanism which he had previously sought to combat. Generating an identity crisis, as Muhamed-Abdi (1993) states, the personality cult around Barre was exchanged with the brutal experience of oppression, undermining the Somali people's identity. 'Barre did not provide the good model for young Somalis as it had been propagated.' Fuelled by externally available funds, including emergency assistance and food aid for refugees in the aftermath of the Ogaden war, elite competition intensified. Class stratification and the empowerment of select groups building were part of Barre's rule. They finally found expression in Somalia's civil war which was neither the outcome of an uprise of ethnic minorities or the weakest people in society, nor a fight of the Somali nation for self-determination. Even the understanding of Somali people 'simply doing what they have always done' - feuding - 'only with greater access to more lethal weapons', fails to acknowledge the complexity of the issue (Bestemann 1996a:122).27

I believe that the Somali people were basically disillusioned about the role of the state. Instead of offering security and a democratic voice for its citizens the state became the people's enemy. High-ranking government officials siphoned off large sums, which meant a flow of money into the coffers of the president's and related clans. The redirection of aid for the development of the country and its citizens was visible in the form of expensive villas or business ventures. Members of the state thus exploited the people and killed off all opposition in the face of resistance.

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27 Catherine Bestemann (1996:122) criticises this presentation of the Somali crisis in contemporary news accounts. Yet Lewis (1998) find this an appropriate description of the slaughtering.
6.2 The Ogaden War

The Ogaden War was important for Somalia's citizens self-perception as it marked the end to the Pan-Somali dream. With the defeat of their troops the Somali people realised that a Pan-Somali state was out of reach. Therewith a dissolution of the nationalist ideology took place.

It is disputed how much Siyad Barre actively encouraged the war in the Ogaden (1977-1978), or whether he was contrariwise driven by events and pressure from others. After the fall of Emperor Haile Selassie in Ethiopia in 1974 enormous changes took place with the socialist revolution, and the problem of consolidating power occurred. Hence Ethiopia was in a relative weak position which was used by the Somali forces to invade areas of the Haud and the Ogaden in August 1977. 35,000 regular Somali troops together with 15,000 fighters from the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) poured into the area and took it in astonishing rapidity, even though the Ethiopian troops outnumbered the Somali units three to one (Samatar 1995:18).

Ethiopia finally defeated the Somalis through international diplomacy, as having declared themselves socialist they appealed for help from the USSR. In the context of the cold war the Soviet Union switched its support from Somalia to Ethiopia, which was more important in terms of international security. In February and March 1978 $US 1.5 billion worth of military hardware was shipped into Ethiopia, along with two leading Soviet generals and 1500 advisers, many of whom came straight from their advisory positions in Somalia. They took virtually all Somali maps and had an excellent knowledge about Somali troops' movements. Additionally, 11,000 Cuban troops joined the Ethiopian forces, within weeks, the Somalis were ejected from the Ogaden.

Previously, Somali nationalism was directed against an assumed external enemy; first the colonisers and later neighbouring countries such as Ethiopia which were identified as Christian in contrast to Muslim Somalia. After the debacle of the Ogaden war Somalia gave up its claim for the region. In 1988 a peace agreement was reached with Ethiopia. By this time however the people started to repudiate the historical animosity between
Ethiopia and Somalia. As the (imagined) threat of Ethiopia's domination was reduced, internal conflicts in Somali society became predominant.

6.3 Reign of Terror

In the aftermath of the Ogaden war, in April 1978 a group of army officers attempted another coup d'état. After the failure of the coup, 17 'ring leaders' were executed of whom 16 were from the Majerten clan. Colonel Abdullaahi Yusuf, a Majerten who was involved in the attempted coup fled to Ethiopia where he founded an anti-Barre 'liberation front', the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF). Thus from 1979 the SSDF started foraying points on the Ethio-Somali border. Barre reacted by punishing the Majerten collectively. Their livelihood was destroyed; they became victims of violence, rape and killings, and thousands died. Generally the regime's practice of clan-based punishment led to the organisation of opposition along clan lines. As I have indicated before kinship was considered to be probably the only trustworthy relationship.

The Isaq clan family traditionally live in the northern part of Somalia. When in 1981 Isaq exiles in London formed the Somali National Movement (SNM), they attempted action to 'rid the country of a bloody tyrant' (quoted in Samatar 1995:19). They had two long-standing grievances: Firstly, since independence they felt that the Daroods and Hawiyes controlled power and privilege to the deprivation of the Isaq. Secondly, denser populated and more developed southern Somalia tended to dominate Isaq territory. "Thus the Isa[a]q feel deprived both as a clan and as a region" (Samatar 1995:19).

In May 1988 the SNM invaded Bur'o and Hargeisa, but were defeated in the middle of June after heavy bombing of these towns. In the counter-attack Barre's regime conducted fearful reprisals against the Isaq as the source of guerrilla recruits. Destruction of watering wells, grazing grounds, and indiscriminate raping of Isaq women were put into effect, on an even larger scale then against the Majerten. Of an estimated 5000 Isaqs killed

28 Ahmed (1996:160-161) describes how in the peace conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Somali artists pointed to radical transformations in the politics of the Horn. The enmity between Somalia and Ethiopia is seen "to have been enflamed by warmongers and ruling elites bent on obfuscating intranational and international reality."
between May 27 and December 1988, about 4000 died in the fighting, and 1000 are alleged to have been cold-bloodedly bayoneted to death, indiscriminate of age and sex (Samatar 1995:19).

The Hawiye is probably the largest or second largest clan-family in Somalia, and since independence members had occupied important administrative positions in the bureaucracy and in the top ranks of the army. In the late 1980s however dissatisfaction with the regime set in, and in 1988 Hawiye exiles in Rome formed an opposition movement entitled the United Somali Congress (USC) 'to liberate their country from the clutches of Mighty Mouth' (Toggle, quoted in Samatar 1995:20)\(^\text{29}\). Samatar (1994:20) states that no clear reason can be given for the Hawiyes' disaffection, it might have been enforced by the retirement of well-respected army officers or the pressure of associating in the presence of the clan-based SNM, SSDF and Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM)\(^\text{30}\) which was dominated by the Ogaden clans. In 1989 the Hawiye were collectively victims of violent persecution, on a scale and frequency matching the assaults against the Majerten and Isaq.

The clan-based opposition was thereby fought by a clan-based regime itself. In the main Siyad Barre relied on his patronage system of three clans: the Marehan, his father's clan; the large Ogaden clan, his mother's clan; and the medium sized northern clan of the Dolhabante. All three clans belong to the Darood clan-family. Barre kept some token Isaq and Hawiye in a handful of lucrative positions, but excluded them from political or military positions of power (Prunier 1995). Thus by the 1980s Barre "relied upon little but terror and the manipulation of clan identities to remain in power" (Lyons/Samatar 1995:15). The clan identities which had before been fought as the enemy of nationalism and development were thus re-asserted. The state was increasingly associated with gross human rights abuses, undermining the Somali nationalism built around the idea of a nation-state. The newly formed anti-Barre groups however failed to develop an agenda beyond the desire to remove Barre.

\(^{29}\) 'Mighty Mouth' or Afiwayne is a candid way of addressing Siyad Barre.

\(^{30}\) Samatar (1995:22) gives a different name for this acronym: Somali People's Movement.
6.4 The Collapse of Somalia

After two weeks of intensive fighting between the USC and government troops, Siyad Barre and his remaining loyalists fled Mogadishu to join his kinspeople in Garbaharey, taking all gold deposits from the Central Bank. Once in Garbaharey Barre started to regroup his forces. His son and son-in-law went on an arms purchasing mission and allegedly bought $US 27 million worth of arms and petroleum on the black market (Samatar 1995:21). Barre thus remained a force in the land, hoping to be able to restore his power. However, after some failed attempts he finally died of natural causes on January 2, 1995 in exile in Nigeria.

In the aftermath of Barre's flight from Mogadishu a leader of the USC, Ali Mahdi Muhamed was proclaimed President by close associates. His appointment was however not accepted by other groups, even within the USC. Since early 1989 two USC branches existed, and the 'internal' branch under the control of General Farah Aideed refused to accept the 'election' of Ali Mahdi. Civil war eventually broke out in Somalia and the fighting took place between several clan political organisations. While yet these clan-based organisations cannot be understood as 'traditional' clan structures as most did not appear before 1990, they are not 'modern' political organisations either (Prunier 1995). Based on clan recruitment they operate as armed militias. While Prunier (1995) describes some clan organisations as primarily defensive, especially in the South, most of them were aggressive. They fought a brutal war against each other in which thousands of people lost their lives. Prunier lists in 1995 a total of 13 clan-based political organisations, however the number changed over the time as new fractions arose and alliances were made. Figure 3 shows with which clans and clan-families some of these political organisations were associated.

When fighting first occurred in Mogadishu, the brutality soon mushroomed statewide. Warlordism arose and former allies began to fight each other with horrific consequences. The lack of organisation of the opposition and the destruction of the centralised state were supplemented by the militarisation and militarism (Adam 1992). Referring to the events in Mogadishu already in 1989 Simons (1994; 1995) describes that individual's behaviour changed 'over night'. She identified the feeling of dissolution among the Somali people. Probably because they had so much information from without but so little credible accounting from within, the residents of Mogadishu did not know whether to consider the mounting crime and
Figure 3 Association between Political Organisations and Clans

(Source Mansur 1995:134)
lawlessness as a matter of temporary dysfunction or significant disjuncture, or whether dissolution would merely continue to threaten without actually leading to anything else' (Simons 1994:820). In this situation of insecurity people fell back on lineage or clan members whom they could trust, and misread groups' defensive or aggressive behaviour. However, 'different people dipped into the violence at different points and experienced the violence depending on what they were reacting to, whether economics, hunger, greed, or sudden misfortune; simply the reactions of others; or theft, burglary, rape, imprisonment, or execution' (Simons 1994:819).

This atmosphere gave rise to groups of "disaffected anomic young fighters" called mooryaan who are not associated with any political organisation, and were feared among virtually all Somalis, looting and killing without obvious political aspiration (see Prunier 1995). In the ensuing violence hundreds of thousands of people either died or were displaced, owing to the fighting, the consequent destruction and looting, and to cap it all, drought and the following food crisis in 1991-1992. When in the aftermath of Barre's defeat fighting between armed militias based on clan recruitment occurred around issues of power-sharing, access to land and aid, the state became virtually non-existent. Neo-clanism interchanged with nationalism; the weakened national identity was superseded by clan and ethnic identities in a situation of internal conflict.

6.5 Conclusion

To conclude, due to the oppression and suffering under the rule of Siyad Barre clan-based opposition groups emerged in an attempt to overthrow his regime. Lacking an agenda beyond Barre's removal, and supplemented by the fracture which had emerged in Somali society over the time, the country dipped into a brutal civil war. Fighting initially occurred along clan divisions but was inseparably linked to issues of power-sharing and competition for material resources and social benefits. The traditional regulations adopted in settling disputes were annihilated and the state was eroded from within. When the Somali nation and state was concerned people competed in securing the biggest possible share in available resources, leading to gross human right abuses. Somali unity was

31 For example did the traditional elders no more occupy the social role they had before.
exchanged with the aspiration of command over it, and in the lack of a nationwide consensus warlords, specifically Aideed, tried to unite Somalia by conquest, which made unification the chief enemy of peace (Luling 1997:299).
7. ATTEMPTS AT RECONCILIATION

7.1 Introduction

After the collapse of the Somali state there were several attempts to establish peace: These approaches operate at different levels and are initiated by different groups of people (see Hill 1998). Some operate on the assumption that peace has to be reached on a political-administrative level. They inspired the UN peace conferences, trying to assemble the 'people in power'. In a situation of competition for power, material and social resources at their peak, problems arose over the legitimacy of representation and power-sharing. Meanwhile other initiatives began at a local level with the direct involvement of the people living in the region. It thus seems now to be generally agreed that reconstruction must start from the bottom up (Luling 1997:300).

7.2 UN Intervention

The UN initially started to provide humanitarian assistance to Somalia in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other NGOs. But due to fighting they had to withdraw. All the same, the crisis in Somalia led to an intervention of UN forces, and in April 1992 the UN established UNOSOM I to monitor the ceasefire and support humanitarian assistance. In 1992/93 a military mission (UNITAF/Operation Restore Hope) was authorised with a view to disarm militias and promote institution building. The mission (UNOSOM II) was in 1993 militarily weakened; yet it was finally abrogated in 1994. The UN forces pulled out of the country without having achieved its security objectives or political reconciliation.

The UN had no clear political strategy to deal with the collapse of state and society in Somalia. Lyons & Samatar (1995:37) identify two strategies relating to political reconciliation which were adopted by the UN: The Accommodate Existing Forces model which is based on the judgement that the most powerful actors that survived state collapse have the potential
to form a new, sustainable order; and the **Encourage New Institutions** model which is appropriate when the forces developed in the violence and anarchy of state collapse cannot act as the basis of a new sustainable order. However both models should be adapted to local conditions and should reflect upon what exactly the results would be. For example, African Rights (1993) describes the negative outcome of political deals by the UN which led to an apparent stability and peace in the agricultural areas of the south, but did not prove just as they led to further discrimination against minorities.

The UN strategy was moreover internally contradictory as the attitude towards militia leaders was never settled. By concentrating on the warlords in the peace-making efforts the international community actually strengthened their position while at the same time encouraging potential alternatives and rivals to militia leaders, such as traditional elders, leaders of Somali NGOs, women, and professionals, to assert their political role (Lyons/Samatar 1995:61). Thus while many Somalis did initially welcome the UN intervention their expectations were disappointed as UN troops committed human rights abuses (see Omaar/ de Waal 1994). Thus the Somali people got outraged as the UN seemed to pervert the aim of (humanitarian) intervention.

7.3 "Regionalism" and Reconstruction

The situation in the Northwest, dominated by the SNM forces, differed greatly from the development in the rest of the country. Responding to popular pressure, in May 1991 the independence of the Somaliland Republic was proclaimed along with the boundaries of the former British colony, pointing to the connection between colonial history and regional identity. Since then Somaliland is trying to achieve international recognition, but this has yet not been successful. The reinvention of Somaliland with the borders of the former British colony shows that the aspiration to nationhood is not inherited or primordial, but constructed. The artificially introduced boundaries of colonial times are now used to set the boundaries for a new emerging national consciousness. The citizens of Somaliland thus feel strongly that the dream of a Great-Somali nation-state failed. The Pan-Somali struggle for the excluded regions had to be given up after the Ogaden war and Somalia crumbled away in a brutal civil war.
Somaliland distanced itself from the fighting and brutality in the south. To me it seems that Somaliland identity first is based on distinguishing itself from the rest of Somalia and the civil war. The distinguishing elements, what Barth (1994) calls "the cultural stuff enclosed by boundaries", is only named in a process of building up Somaliland's claims to an independent state, which is akin to Brons & Warsame (1994) asking the (for my consideration inappropriate) question whether the dissolution of the Somali union is justified. Legal bases for Somaliland's independence are given and a distinguishing account of history is invented (see also Cabdi 1994; Caateye 1994; Egal 1994).

While politicians from Somaliland are trying to achieve international recognition as an independent state other people remain critical. A.I. Samatar (1994b:122) suggests four reasons "why the leadership of the SNM took this hurried disquieting step: (1) the savagery in the streets of Mogadishu; (2) the manner in which the interim Mahdi regime was installed; (3) pressure from grass-roots supporters and fighters who were earlier mobilized around clanist and regionalist sentiments; and (4) personal ambition (i.e., the syndrome of big fish in small waters)." In Somaliland peace has largely been established by calling on the service of elders, and seemed to work well during the relatively peaceful period in the area. However, A.I. Samatar (1994b:123) points out that the Isaq politically dominate other communities and that the large appointed cabinet seems to miss "imperatives of parsimony and efficiency". Indeed the Republic of Somaliland experienced internal conflicts, and tensions were again scattered around resource and power competition.

The southern agriculturalists and minority groups were hit especially hard in the crisis. As I have indicated before, much of their land had been alienated by successive governments. In the civil war the fertile ground and economic capacity was a resource aspired to. After a new class of land owners had emerged under Siyad Barre's rule, in the 1990s 'liberators' came to take the land. As the former land acquisition was dominated by groups associated with Barre, antagonised members of other clans wanted their share they were previously denied. The remaining land was looted from locals who were in the ensuing scramble forced to work on plantations or left the country as refugees. In competition for the domination of land various warring parties attacked and destroyed everything left in the area. Due to their marginalisation the Somalis living in the area were militarily weak, and lacking weapons and political mobilisation. The famine of 1991-
1992 was concentrated among minorities, and the inter-riverine area in the following was chillingly dubbed the 'triangle of death'. The fighting for the area confirms shifts in the economic and political importance of agriculturalism (see Besteman 1998). As agriculturalist minorities were alienated from their land, the coastal communities, likewise lacking effective protection and other minority groups were victims of theft and looting.

In the situation of extreme discrimination minorities developed a distinctive ethnic identity (see Eno 1997). This is in line with the work of Turton, which states that ethnicity is not the cause of war but rather the reverse (as in Fukui/ Markakis 1994b:5). Therewith a strong argument against a primordial perception of ethnicity (and nationalism) can be given. At the same time minority issues were made public, while their very existence has been neglected before (see Duale 1998; BBC Somali Section 1998). For example, the BBC Somali Section this year launched a programme entitled Quursigu Qiil Maleeyahay about minorities which was overwhelmingly welcomed. However, I have been told that some Somalis reject the acknowledgement of minorities in Somalia as prompting further divisions in the split society.

However, throughout Somalia various localised approaches for political reconciliation take place by the Islamic movements. Various Islamic organisations which are funded from abroad suggest the submission to Islamic laws in its fullness as the solution to the lawlessness of the country (Luling 1997:295). The movements are not united, differing in their programmes and objectives, and in their degree of acceptance by the people (Luling 1997:296). The Islamic courts enjoy public support as they spread peace and security; however there are critical voices: "It is not the Sharia itself that is wrong but the way these groups handle it. They cut off the fingers of a poor boy who steals a banana - but people who steal millions are still doing their business." "They are exploiting the funds from foreign countries. They lead to fighting of brother against brother. They only succeed due to poverty" (quoted in Luling 1997:296). Luling states that many Somalis feel affronted by the idea of presuming to 'Islamise' an already Muslim nation. She finds that the uncommitted opinion of Somali people is best summed up by a man saying that if he had to choose between the court and anarchy he would choose the court.
Other initiatives for peace are brought forward by elders. Based on their traditional role in settling disputes those of the Hawadle and Habar Gidir in Beled made in April 1996 a pact to seek for peace, "rejecting the politicians who they claim do not represent them" (Luling 1997:297). Some of these attempts proved successful; however, as de Waal for African Rights (1993) observed in the interriverine and riverine area the institution of elders was perverted. Having become part of the landowning class they did not negotiate in favour of the local people but acted on their own benefit.

Some peace initiatives at the local level are deals done by powerful merchants needing stability to run their business, such as the 'Peace Commitee' formed in Mogadishu (Luling 1997:297). Additionally women's group are often cited as a force for peace. Women have an established peace-making role which is linked to the tradition to marry outside their clan (especially of Somali pastoralists) and therewith cross-cutting group affiliations and motivations for reconciliation between their own, their husband's and children's clan. However women have been partisan participants in the civil war as well, and are not necessarily a force for peace.

Interestingly, many Somalis distance themselves from the events of interclan fighting in a recognition that they will not achieve their aims through military means. This is the case both within Somalia as well as among Somalis living in diaspora (Luling 1997:296). Cassanelli (1996:14) emphasises that as widespread as the violence in Somalia has been in recent years, most of the Somali people are not in the 'business of death'. He pleads that the violence of 1991-92 might have been spontaneous and contagious but not as random as it might have seemed to outsiders. Many Somalis fought to defend their homes and families while others acted mainly to avenge the deaths of comrades or kin, or retaliated against members of clans who were seen or assumed to have benefited from Barre's repressive regime. This point is interesting for the understanding of how violence spreads, if we keep in mind that Simons observed a misinterpretation about the aggressive/defensive behaviour of Somali groups.
7.4 Post-National Time?

The international community seems to be stuck on the idea of a unitary Somali state even after its collapse, which indicates that state-hood is an imperative in international politics. Attempts at political reconstruction were made by the UN, but also by the EU and other organisations (see EC Somalia Unit 1996a; 1996b; LSE 1995). For some Somali people however establishment of a new government does not seem to be of primary importance, as to date reconstruction is achieved without state's institutions. As a young Somali man put it: "Because of the last five years, Somalis have come to rely on themselves, and this is working. No one is helping them, there is no government - and business is booming and everyone is working for himself, there is no welfare system. So who is interested in government? No one is interested. We only need a government to represent the name of Somalia - we don't need one which interferes in the affairs of the people" (quoted in Luling 1997:300).

All the same, many political groups advocate for federalism and the decentralisation of political organisation for the re-establishment of a legitimate Somali government (see Adam 1994; LSE 1995). This can be related to the work of Basil Davidson (1992) and other scholars who are raising questions about the postcolonial concept of nation-statism (e.g. Markakis 1994, Simons 1994). To date the nation-state is an imperative in the political world order, but after the collapse of several of these nation-states one might ask for an alternative concept. The Somali crisis then could be an indication for a shift from post-colonial to post-national times.

7.5 Conclusion

In the civil war groups had different agendas to ensure their share of Somalia. Warlord Aideed tried to unify Somalia by conquest, the northern clans voted for independence with the creation of a new state, whereas the Bantu people demanded a governance in Somalia which balances power between communities. The attempts of reconciliation which followed the civil war in Somali operated on different levels and were initiated by various groups of peoples. After the international intervention failed, the 'bottom up approach' is considered to be the most appropriate (Luling 1997).
In the face of the collapsed state, social organisation and moral order people fell back on other identity schemes, some on clan identities as guarantor of security, whilst other Somali built up new identities, as happened with the ethnic identities of minorities. According to Besteman (1995) the Gosha had no distinctive ethnic identity in the 1980s, but today bring issues of ethnicity forward. The attempted (re)construction of a Republic of Somaliland in the colonial boundaries shows as well that ethnic and national identities are not primordial entities but inventions.
8. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the Somali crisis is an outcome of contradictions and conflicts between different factors and levels of Somali society, that have been taking place at individual, institutional and group levels. Although Somali culture provided the lines along which the conflict occurred, at the heart of the Somali crisis is not however culture per se. The collapse of the Somali state was preceded by the disruption of the social order and an ensuing identity crisis. The changing economic and political order led to an erosion of affiliations and loyalties on personal, group and state level. The identities of the Somali people were threatened as the national identity was undermined by the failure of the state, and other identities such as ethnic, religion, class and clan re-asserted themselves or were newly invented.

Somali nationalism evolved during colonial times, accompanied by the genesis of capitalism and trade, and interconnected with the economic, administrative and political changes. Although promoted by politicians it was enthusiastically backed by virtually all Somalis. Hence in some respects the Somali case fits a nationalist model. Somali nationalism was based on the assumption of an homogenous nation, a discourse which was propagated by elites and welcomed by the Somali people owing to its primordialist undertones. But moving away from primordial thinking, we can understand Somalia as a nation in creation or aspiration rather than being fully formed. Therewith, contrary to common assumptions, Somali nationalism is similar to other African nationalisms. However, Somalia used to be perceived as a mono-ethnic nation and unlike other ethnic groups in Africa which only sought to live under a common set of national boundaries the Somali people who comprised a single ethnic group additionally made a claim for an independent Somali state. Yet currently the ethnic homogeneity of Somalia is in question, and is perceived as a myth which was created in a national aspiration that was linked to primordialist polemic for self-determination. With the Somali people’s claim for an independent state, and as nations and states are natural partners, the Somali case is paradigmatic, but it presupposes the ability to

32 See for example the case of the Ewe, described in Welch (1966).


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