

5. From Irredentism to Secession

The Decline of Pan-Somali Nationalism

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THE FACT THAT SOMALIA remains synonymous with “ethnic chaos” and “state collapse” makes it a splendid case study for contemporary theorists of African nationalism¹—not least of all due to the simple reality that Somalia was one of the brightest stars of the galaxy of studies on Africa nationalism at the beginning of the contemporary independence era. In a continent that, in the words of Emerson, was “rich in nationalisms but poor in nations,” Somalia stood out during the 1960s as one of three largely ethnically homogeneous African countries (the other two being Lesotho and Botswana).² It is for this reason that Somalia was often heralded—one could even say admired—by academics and policymakers alike as having a dramatic head start compared to the vast majority of other, more multiethnic African countries on the “nation-building” goal pursued by the first generation of African nationalists.

Somalia also served as a lightning rod for regional and international condemnation due to the irredentist dimension of Somali nationalism that sought to incorporate the Somali-inhabited portions of neighboring countries into a larger pan-Somali nation-state. For nationalism scholars of the 1960s, the irredentist quest was taken to be a permanent feature of Somali nationalism and therefore one of the greatest challenges for an African continent that considered as “inviolable” the inherited frontiers of the colonial era.³ The presumed enduring quality of both the domestic nation-building and the international irredentist elements of what can be termed the “pan-Somali nationalist project” was captured in the title *Somalia: Nation in*

Search of a State, one of the classic English-language introductions to Somali politics and international relations.⁴

The primary purpose of this chapter is to examine the rise and decline of the pan-Somali nationalist project during the second half of the twentieth century. An important argument of this chapter is that, contrary to the major assumptions of the nationalist literature of the early independence era, the pan-Somali nationalist project was neither inevitable nor a natural outgrowth of the ethnic homogeneity of Somalis living within the Horn of Africa.⁵ Ethnic homogeneity does not, in and of itself, automatically provide the basis for politically inspired and enduring nationalist movements.⁶ The emergence of the pan-Somali nationalist project was instead the direct result of the unique confluence of several historically specific developments, most notably the rise of a new generation of Somali political elites during the 1950s and the 1960s who were initially interested in ridding their region of foreign control. Once successful in this regard, however, self-interested and competing groups of elites largely broken down along clan lines employed the rhetoric of nation-building and Somali nationalism to guarantee their quest for and/or hold over power, ultimately squandering whatever degree of pan-Somali nationalism that once existed among the elites and to a much lesser degree the general population as a whole.

This chapter examines a series of political-military events, ranging from the Ogaadeen War between Ethiopia and Somalia in 1977–78 to the Somali civil war of the 1980s and the 1990s, that clearly demonstrate the shallowness of an elite-driven, pan-Somali nationalism that ultimately resonated little with the general population. Somalia's defeat in the Ogaadeen War intensified divisive, clan-based tensions that at a bare minimum historically have been below the surface of this seemingly homogeneous society. The Somali civil war, which culminated in the complete collapse of the Somali state and a series of United Nations-sponsored military interventions from 1992 to 1995, further strengthened clan-based centrifugal forces that, in the words of Adam and Ford, "ripped" the fabric of Somali nationalism.⁷ Indeed, northern Somalia's secession and declaration of independence as the Somaliland Republic in 1991 signaled the death knell of both the nation-building and the irredentist components of the pan-Somali nationalist project.

This analysis of the decline of the pan-Somali nationalist project also allows for a modest contribution to the relevance of three major sets of

competing theoretical approaches—primordialism, constructivism, and instrumentalism—that have sought to explain the rise and enduring nature of nationalism both in Africa and other regions of the world.⁸ Proponents of what is often referred to as the *primordialist* approach have argued that Somali nationalism is the natural outgrowth of historically grounded and enduring affective ties in which individuals recognize their attachment to an overarching Somali ethnic identity.⁹ These scholars in particular focus on the ethnic homogeneity of the Somali people as the cornerstone of politically inspired nationalist movements. Proponents of an alternative *constructivist* approach have argued to the contrary that the idea of a unified Somali people in search of a state is essentially an “invented memory” or “myth.” The myth was initially propagated by civilian and military rulers of the postcolonial Somali state and ultimately became the cornerstone of both Somali and Western academic scholarship.¹⁰ This myth not only became the basis of the failed pan-Somali nationalist project but also constitutes the essence of internationally inspired attempts to resolve ongoing ethnic conflict and state collapse in Somalia through the resurrection of the unified Somali state originally created in 1960. Finally, proponents of what can be labeled the *instrumentalist* approach have emphasized the voluntarist role of elites in creating and molding politically inspired nationalist movements.¹¹ In the case of Somalia, these scholars would argue that the pan-Somali nationalist project was generated from above by a diverse group of Somali political elites who perceived the political benefits to be derived from creating a nation-state that transcended traditional clan differences among the Somali peoples inhabiting the Horn of Africa.

The tentative theoretical conclusion of this chapter is that, although each of these three approaches has shortcomings, a reformulated instrumentalist approach that draws upon elements of both its primordialist and constructivist counterparts offers the most promising avenue of research for understanding the death of Somali nationalism and the evolution of similar nationalist projects throughout contemporary Africa. The remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections. After briefly setting out those factors necessary for a comprehensive understanding of Somali nationalism, a second section documents the rise of an elite compact that formed the basis for the historically specific pan-Somali nationalist project of the 1960s. A third section documents how a series of political-military events, most notably the Ogaadeen War (1977–78) and the initial stages of

the Somali civil war (1980–91), led to a turning point in Somali nationalist history that signaled the decline of the pan-Somali nationalist project. A final section offers general conclusions and avenues for further research.

Building Blocks of Somali National Identity & Nationalism

Four factors serve as essential building blocks for any comprehensive understanding of the rise and decline of Somali nationalism. The cornerstone of primordialist interpretations of Somali nationalism is the often-stated belief that Somalia constitutes one of Africa's most *homogeneous* countries. The population is composed of two major groups: the dominant Samaale (75 percent of the population), who are descendants of a pastoral nomadic past, and the Sab (20 percent), who traditionally have been distinguished as sedentary or semisedentary agriculturalists inhabiting the interriverine area of the country. Although a social hierarchy exists in which the self-ascribed "noble" Samaale of pastoral descent consider the Sab to be socially inferior, these two groups nonetheless constitute part of an overarching Somali culture.¹² Somalis are further united by a common language, literature, and religion. Despite the lack of an official written orthography until 1973 and the existence of several regional dialects, Somali is spoken throughout the territory.¹³ An extremely proud oral tradition places Somali singers and poets in high esteem, with early nationalist leaders being renowned for their oratorical skills.¹⁴ Somalia is also united by religion. An estimated 99.8 percent of the population is Muslim, with most Somalis belonging to the Shafi'i rite of the Sunni sect of Islam, as well as to several Islamic brotherhoods, most notably the Qadiriyyah, Salihiyyah, and Ahmadiyyah.¹⁵

Somalia's cultural homogeneity is nonetheless challenged by extremely strong and enduring *kinship-based networks* referred to as *clans*. This second building block for understanding Somali nationalism is based on the simple yet powerful reality that individual clans (if not clan members) can usually trace their common lineage back hundreds of years to a specific founding member or ruling family dynasty. As artfully demonstrated in Lewis's pioneering work on Somali clan structure,¹⁶ the Somali ethnic group is divided according to at least six major clan families: four from the predominantly pastoral Samaale (Daarood, Dir, Hawiye, and Isaaq) and two from the predominantly sedentary Sab (Digil and Rahanwayn). These clan families are further subdivided into smaller units that assume respon-

sibility for organizing social, economic, and political activities. The smallest group, known as the *reer* (nomadic hamlet), ranges in size from five to fifty individual Somali families, and the largest, the clan, often includes thousands or tens of thousands of members. The clan remains the cornerstone of Somali society, and its political manifestation is perhaps best captured by the maxim “There are no permanent clan friends or enemies, only permanent clan self-interests.”

A third building block for understanding Somali nationalism revolves around the Somali people’s classification among anthropologists as a *classic segmented political system*.¹⁷ The term *segmented* refers to a decentralized political system marked by the diffusion of political power. Segmented political systems historically lacked a centralized state and a recognized political authority capable of enforcing a preferred set of policies throughout a territory. Though political authority was diffuse, many communities, such as the Somalis, were nations sharing the same language, customs, and cultural history. The nation simply lacked a central political authority to which the members of that society owed allegiance. In short, a segmented system constituted a nation without a state. This characterization is particularly relevant to the Somali people who, prior to the imposition of colonial rule, were never governed by a centralized political authority. The pre-colonial history of Somali politics is best described by the rise and fall of clan alliances in the absence of any central government, resulting in alternating periods of peaceful competition and clan warfare. Classic segmented systems typically fostered competition and conflict between extended clan families, especially in nomadic environments when drought and famine diminished already scarce water and food resources.

The *impact of colonialism*, most notably the tendency of colonial powers to draw boundaries that often divided African ethnic groups among numerous colonial states, constitutes the final building block for understanding Somali nationalism. Previously united by a common culture but lacking a centralized authority, Somalia’s classic segmented political system was ultimately subjugated and divided among four imperial powers: Britain, France, Italy, and an independent Ethiopia. The northwestern portion of the Somali nation became part of a French colony, Le Territoire Français des Afars et des Issas (French Territory of the Afars and the Issas), which achieved independence in 1977 as the Republic of Djibouti. The western Ogaadeen region was annexed by the Ethiopian empire and remains a province of the present-day country of Ethiopia. The southeast-

ern portion of the Somali nation became part of the British colony (and subsequent independent country) of Kenya and is typically referred to by its original colonial administrative name: the Northern Frontier District (NFD). Two final portions, the British Somaliland Protectorate (often referred to as British Somaliland) and Italian Somaliland, became part of the British and Italian colonial empires. These two portions achieved independence and formed a federation in 1960 that became known as the Republic of Somaliland—the contemporary country of Somalia. The most notable impact of the Somali people's division among several colonial authorities is that it set the stage for what essentially constituted a twofold nationalist project for the elites of the newly independent Somalia: (1) a nation-building goal designed to overcome the divergent colonial pasts of the former British Somaliland Protectorate and Italian Somaliland that were now joined together and (2) the irredentist desire to unite their separated peoples in neighboring territories in one overarching, pan-Somali nation-state.¹⁸

The Emergence of an Elite-Inspired Pan-Somali Nationalist Project

The emergence and strengthening of the pan-Somali nationalist project in the 1950s and the early 1960s was neither inevitable nor a natural outgrowth of the ethnic homogeneity of Somalis living within the divided Somali-inhabited territories of the Horn of Africa. The Somalis had never sworn allegiance to any centralized political authority nor had their common territories ever been ruled by a centralized political state. A unique confluence of several historically specific developments was instead responsible for the development of what Laitin and Samatar refer to as the “new nationalist climate” of the 1950s.¹⁹

First, political activists at both the elite and popular levels were inspired by the political exploits of several “heroes” of Somali history, most notably Ahmed Gurey of the sixteenth century and Sayyid Mahammad Abdille Hasan of the twentieth century. Nicknamed *the left-handed* (a symbol of honor in Somali society), Gurey was a famed Islamic conqueror in Somali folklore who led several Somali-inhabited Islamic sultanates of his era in a campaign against the Christian-ruled Ethiopian empire of Emperor Lebna Dengel. During the twentieth century, the Sayyid (nicknamed *the Mad Mullah* by the British) was renowned for having led the so-called Dervish

struggle against the foreign occupying forces of Ethiopia, Great Britain, and Italy.²⁰ It is important to note, however, that both of these historical figures created regional, clan-based political-military movements rather than territory-wide nationalist movements inclusive of all major clans.²¹

The future basis for the emergence of some degree of pan-Somali nationalism was provided by the temporary unification of significant portions of Somali-inhabited territory under centralized political administration during World War II and its aftermath. The Italians added Ethiopia's Ogaadeen region to Italian Somaliland after occupying Ethiopia in 1935, and in 1940 they added the conquered British Somaliland territory. This latter addition to the Italian empire was short-lived, as Britain reoccupied its territory in 1941. For the next ten years, Britain would place all the Somali-inhabited territories of the Horn of Africa (except for the French colony of Djibouti) under one unified military administration. In both cases, the creation of a centralized political authority allowed for the greater movement of people, trade, and ideas between previously separated territories. "The most notable development under British military rule was the growth of a new and fervent sense of national awareness," explain Laitin and Samatar. "In mosques and markets, in public and private meetings, urban Somalis began to question the legitimacy of colonial rule, to call for political unity, and to help debate large, supratribal issues."²²

Anticolonial sentiment served as an important rallying point of Somali nationalism. Although Somali nationalists, like their counterparts throughout the African continent, were often sharply divided on political agendas, ideological orientation, and economic programs, they could agree on one point: the necessity and desirability of independence from foreign control. One important turning point occurred in 1946 after British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin failed to win the approval of the wartime Four-Power Commission of Allied nations for the creation of a pan-Somali state to be placed under British trusteeship (the so-called Bevin Plan) in preparation for ultimate independence.²³ The Four-Power Commission rejected the proposal (as well as demands of other Somalis for immediate independence) in favor of redividing the Somali territories, subsequently sending a delegation to Italian Somaliland in 1948 that, with the subsequent endorsement of the United Nations General Assembly, paved the way for a return of Italian trusteeship over the territory from 1950 to 1960. The 1948 visit was marked by a political riot known in Somali as *dagahtur* (literally,

“throwing stones”) in which at least seventeen Somalis and fifty-one Italians were killed and which was commemorated by the construction of the Dagahtur Monument in Mogadishu in 1970.

The most important contribution to the new nationalist climate of the 1950s, which has served as the basis of instrumentalist interpretations of Somali nationalism, was the emergence of educated elites who were firmly committed to the pan-Somali ideal. In Italian Somaliland, the formation in 1943 of the Somali Youth Club (SYC), later reorganized in 1947 as a political party known as the Somali Youth League (SYL), signaled the emergence of a pan-Somali nationalist party intent on creating a pan-Somali nation-state.²⁴ The SYL was the most broad-based Somali political party in terms of clan membership, although it only recruited among the four major clans of the pastoral Samaale (Daarood, Dir, Hawiye, and Isaaq). The Hizbia Dighil Mirifle (HDM) political party, later known as Hizbia Dastur Mustaqil al-Somal (HDMS), was also formed in 1947 and sought to serve as a counterweight to the politically dominant SYL.²⁵ Although the HDMS shared the SYL’s pan-Somali political agenda, its recruitment of party members was primarily among the two major clans of the predominantly sedentary Sab (Digil and Rahanwayn). The support for these two parties’ nationalist platforms was demonstrated by their success in Italian Somaliland’s municipal elections of 1958: the SYL won 63 percent of the seats, and the HDMS won 26 percent.²⁶

The formation in 1945 of the Somali National Society (SNS), later reorganized in 1951 as a political party known as the Somali National League (SNL), signaled the emergence of the pan-Somali nationalist movement in British Somaliland.²⁷ Unlike its southern counterparts, the SNL primarily recruited among one clan group—the Isaaq—which constituted nearly two-thirds of British Somaliland’s population. The United Somali Party (USP) shared the pan-Somali dream but nonetheless sought to counter the SNL’s dominant influence by primarily recruiting among minority clan groups within British Somaliland, most notably among the Dulbahante and Warsangali in the east and the Iise and the Gadabursi in the west. In the 1960 elections to British Somaliland’s legislative council, the domination of the SNL and the USP was demonstrated by their winning of 61 and 36 percent of the seats, respectively.²⁸

The emergence of elite-based parties committed to pan-Somali nationalism was more mixed in the three remaining territories inhabited by ethnic Somalis, at least partially due to the determination of colonial authori-

ties to actively suppress such activities. In the case of French-ruled Djibouti, the breakdown of votes related to the 1958 referendum on the *loi cadre* (enabling act) of the Fifth Republic demonstrated a strong commitment to pan-Somali nationalism. Although the referendum was strongly in favor of continued association with France, largely due to a strong yes vote among the Afar ethnic group and resident European populations, the majority of those who voted no were Somalis who supported the pan-Somali platform of Mahmoud Harbi. Harbi was killed in a plane accident in 1960, and a French-groomed Somali alternative, Hassan Gouled Aptidon, who campaigned for a yes vote in the 1958 referendum, not only was elected as a deputy to the French National Assembly in 1959 but also emerged as Djibouti's first president (1977–91) in the contemporary independence era.²⁹

In the case of Kenya's NFD region, initial local support for the SYL was quickly quelled by British authorities, who proscribed and closed SYL offices in 1948.³⁰ During the following decade, a series of pan-Somali organizations, particularly the Somali National Association (SNA), emerged in Kenyan urban areas outside of the NFD, but their links with Somali groups and interests within the NFD were extremely "tenuous."³¹ A more activist support for pan-Somali ideals only reemerged in 1960, when it became apparent that the British and Italian Somaliland territories were going to federate and achieve independence as the Republic of Somalia. During this period, increasingly organized political groups in the NFD, most notably the Northern Province People's Progressive Party (NPPPP), offered numerous petitions to British colonial authorities demanding the detachment of the NFD from Kenya and its federation with the Republic of Somalia.³² These petitions were extremely popular in the NFD, prompting Governor Sir Patrick Rennison to promise the Kenyan Somalis that "they would be consulted on any change in the administration of the area."³³

Interestingly enough, the Ogaadeeni Somalis did not create a pan-Somali political party prior to 1960 despite the region's historical distinction as a battleground for the sixteenth-century nationalist forces of Gurey and the twentieth-century nationalist forces of the Sayyid.³⁴ Partially due to Ogaadeeni suspicions that incorporation into a pan-Somali state would deprive them of control over their own resources, as well as a series of ruthless campaigns on the part of the Ethiopian empire to suppress any alternative nationalist political organizations, several events nonetheless demonstrated nascent popular pan-Somali sentiment among the Ogaadeen that

would fully blossom in the 1960s and the 1970s. The most notable incident occurred in the Ogaadeeni town of Jijiga in 1948 when the withdrawing British authorities lowered an SYL flag that had been hoisted by pan-Somali nationalists to protest the Ogaadeen region's return the following day to Ethiopian sovereignty. The British action unleashed a popular riot that resulted in dozens of casualties.³⁵

The first concrete results of the pan-Somali activities of Somali political elites were realized on July 1, 1960, when the former British and Italian Somaliland territories officially federated as the newly independent Republic of Somalia after months of negotiations primarily between the SYL and the SNL. The federation of these two territories represented the formal launching of the twofold nationalist project shared by the political elites of both countries: the nation-building goal—designed to transform the legacies of British and Italian colonialism in the pursuit of socioeconomic and political-military development—and the irredentist desire to unite their separated peoples in neighboring territories in one overarching, pan-Somali nation-state.

Elite Disillusionment and the Decline of Pan-Somali Nationalism

One of the most remarkable aspects of Somalia's heady nationalist experiment was the degree of agreement and clarity among nationalist elites concerning the nature and ultimate justice of their pan-Somali nationalist agenda. Simply put, elites of the new Republic of Somalia were in agreement as to who theoretically formed the Somali nation (all ethnic Somalis) and which territories theoretically formed part of a larger, natural, pan-Somali nation-state (all neighboring, Somali-inhabited territories). As clearly symbolized by the five-pointed star emblazoned on Somalia's national flag, this irredentist quest envisioned the reunification of all five Somali territories within one pan-Somali state. The Republic of Somalia already included two of these territories (British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland), and the elites of that country were intent on seeking the "return" of the three remaining "lost" territories: the Ogaadeen (Ethiopia), southeastern Djibouti, and the NFD (Kenya). From the perspective of Somali studies specialists, the international politics of the Horn of Africa had been forever transformed. A highly motivated and idealistically infused nationalist elite was on the verge of capitalizing on the varying pan-Somali

sentiments of neighboring Somali communities to create a pan-Somali nation-state.

In reality, however, a true, populist-based Somali nationalism was never born. Somali elites, regardless of whether democratically elected or illegally taking power through a military coup d'état, ultimately employed the rhetoric of nation-building and Somali irredentism to guarantee their hold over power—not to promote a pan-Somali nationalism truly capable of overcoming clan-based differences. More than four decades after independence, the domestic and international components of the pan-Somali nationalist project lay in ruins against the backdrop of state collapse, civil war, and the secession and declaration of independence by the north. Three sets of historical events are key to understanding the decline of pan-Somali nationalism.

Military Coup d'État amid Growing North-South Strains, 1960–69

A democratically elected parliamentary regime under the leadership of President Aadan Abdallah Usmaan and Prime Minister Abdirashiid Ali Shermaarke was the first to implement the nation-building goal of the pan-Somali nationalist project. Usmaan, a member of the southern-based Hawiye clan, and Shermaarke, a member of the southern-based Majeerteen subclan of the Daarood, initially oversaw the creation of a clan-based elite compact that ensured proportional representation for individual clans. The regime's first cabinet therefore included four Daaroods (two Dulbahantes, one Majeerteen, and one Mareehaan), two Isaaqs (one Habar Awal and one Habar Yoonis), three Hawiyes (one Habar Gidir and two Abgaals), and three Digil and Rahanwayn.³⁶ In so doing, the Usmaan/Shermaarke administration was presumably attempting to prevent clan suspicions and competition from subsuming the energies of the new administration by making the equitable distribution of political spoils the bedrock of all future initiatives. Among the many achievements of the new administration were the drafting and adoption of a new constitution, the formulation of a new judicial system that blended important components of the British and Italian (not to mention sharia) legal traditions, and the merging of the northern and southern civil services and security forces.³⁷

The newly elected government also lost little time in aggressively pursuing the irredentist component of the pan-Somali nationalist project

through a wide variety of interventionist tools ranging from diplomatic demarches to the funding of guerrilla insurgencies in the three “lost” points of the Somali star. In the case of Djibouti, the government actively supported the military activities of the Front de Libération de la Côte des Somalis (FLCS; Liberation Front of the Somali Coast), a pan-Somali guerrilla organization created in 1963 that primarily drew upon the Iise Somali clan for support. In the case of Kenya’s NFD region, initial diplomatic overtures were replaced by the funding of guerrilla activities after the British colonial government rejected the results of a 1963 referendum that demonstrated overwhelming support for federation with the Republic of Somalia; instead, the British colonial government favored continued inclusion in a soon-to-be independent Kenya. Guerrilla forces denounced as *shiftas* (bandits) by the Kenyan government were embraced as pan-Somali freedom fighters by the Somali government.

The potential risks associated with the pan-Somali quest, namely the outbreak of direct military hostilities between Somalia and its neighbors, were best demonstrated by Somalia’s active support for the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), a primarily Ogaadeeni-based guerrilla organization that was launched in 1963. On June 16, 1963, a full-scale rebellion intent on making the Ogaadeen ungovernable was launched after a meeting of three hundred Somali notables at Hodayo, a watering area north of the Ogaadeeni town of Warder. Numbering over three thousand guerrilla fighters, the Ogaadeeni insurgency became adept at ambushing military convoys and forcing the Ethiopian army to restrict itself to administrative centers within the region. In response, the Ethiopian regime of Emperor Haile Selassie decided to place direct military pressure on Somalia, one of the rightfully perceived instigators and sources of the insurgency. During mid-January 1964, the Third Division of the Ethiopian army, headed by General Aman Adom, launched air and ground attacks against Somali territory at numerous points along the Ethiopian-Somali boundary, including a bombing raid against the northeastern city of Hargeisa, Somalia’s second-largest urban area and the former capital of British Somaliland. Mediation efforts on the part of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) ultimately resulted in the establishment of a cease-fire agreement on March 30, 1964, which clearly favored the Ethiopian government.³⁸

A shift in tactics occurred after Shermaarke’s election as president in 1967 and his subsequent selection of Mahammad Ibrahim Igaal as prime minister. Igaal took the lead in pursuing what was dubbed as a policy of

“détente” with his neighbors.³⁹ With Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda as mediator, Igaal met with Kenyan president Jomo Kenyatta in Arusha. Their talks paved the way for resumed trade and diplomatic relations, along with a “Memorandum of Understanding,” in which Somalia and Kenya agreed to examine possibilities for ending hostilities. A similar policy was pursued with Ethiopia, as meetings were held with Emperor Selassie during the same period. The result of these meetings was a communique calling for a joint ministerial Consultative Council to meet periodically for discussion of the many difficulties between the two countries and to make recommendations for their resolution. Similar inroads were made with the French concerning the rights of ethnic Somalis in Djibouti. Although his meetings only amounted to an agreement to begin a dialogue with Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti, Igaal’s reception at home was far from warm. Many Somalis viewed these meetings as the Somali government’s decision to renege on its promises to ethnic Somalis in neighboring territories.

Despite the lack of progress on the irredentist front—no territories had been “reincorporated”—when compared to the seemingly positive strides being made on the nation-building front, it was this latter portion of the pan-Somali nationalist project that was popularly perceived as having floundered, ultimately contributing to the demise of the parliamentary era. Northern clans increasingly perceived their marginalization within the Somali federation despite the fact that Shermaarke chose Igaal, a northerner of the Isaaq clan, as prime minister. Many northerners considered Igaal to be a traitor to his own clan and “window dressing” for a southern-dominated regime.⁴⁰ As a result, Igaal’s selection not only was insufficient to quell growing complaints of injustice among the northern clans but also represented the growing intensity of clan-based centrifugal forces at the expense of pan-Somali nationalism. In sharp contrast to the relatively constrained number of political parties that had served as the founding fathers of the Somali union, an incredible sixty-four largely clan-based political parties vied for 123 seats in the legislative elections of 1969. Not surprisingly, political gridlock was one of the most noteworthy outcomes of the intensification of clan-based rivalries. The heady nation-building rhetoric of 1960 had seemingly been lost amidst interminable clan-based political struggles among a political elite that seemed more interested in pursuing than wielding power for the common good.

The growing political stalemate was broken on October 21, 1969, when, in the aftermath of President Shermaarke’s assassination six days earlier by

one of his bodyguards, Major General Mahammad Siad Barre assumed power in a bloodless military coup d'état. As is often the case with military coups d'état carried out under similar circumstances, Somali public opinion overwhelmingly favored the military's seizure of power.⁴¹ In the days that followed, Siad created a Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) composed of twenty-five military officers, replaced civilian leaders at the regional and local levels with military governors and district commissioners, and named senior military personnel to head Somalia's diplomatic missions abroad.

Propaganda of the Siad regime not surprisingly argued that initial popular support for the essentially bloodless coup was fostered by widespread dissatisfaction with the extremely corrupt practices of the civilian governments of the 1960–69 era.⁴² The civilian politicians, especially legislators of the National Assembly, were portrayed as primarily driven by the self-interest of financial gain, while the nation's business and the national economy stagnated. This propaganda became the essence of early Western interpretations of the demise of the civilian regime, not least of all due to the fact that it had some basis in reality: political gridlock, inter- and intralite struggles, a divided National Assembly, and a faltering economy all increasingly characterized the Somali political system at the end of the 1960s.

The propaganda of the Siad regime nonetheless masked the true essence of the civilian regime's demise that also entailed significant implications for the future of Somali democracy and pan-Somali nationalism. As explained by Compagnon, the decline of the civilian era was primarily due to growing clan tensions over the distribution of extremely limited political resources, including political appointments in various government agencies and the ability to bring home to individual clans and subclans a share of the national economic pie.⁴³ Similar to Schaffer's work on democracy in Senegal,⁴⁴ Compagnon argues that popular Somali conceptualizations of the concept of democracy are not centered on Western-focused conceptualizations of formal parliaments, a leading executive, and multiparty elections, but the simple breakdown and distribution of national resources according to traditional clan networks. As a result, pan-Somali nationalism meant little if anything to local populations, whose daily lives revolved around ensuring the equitable distribution of national resources. In the end, argues Compagnon, the promotion of the pan-Somali nationalist project ultimately became an instrumentalist tool of civilian elites to guarantee their

continued hold over power and to mask growing clan inequalities in a resource-poor political environment. Indeed, even if one counters that the civilian elites of the immediate independence era were truly interested in fostering a national Somali identity that would transcend individual clan ties, the events of the first nine years of independence demonstrated growing strains between northern and southern clans and their respective elites over the future viability of the 1960 union.

Scientific Socialism and the Ogaadeen War, 1969–78

Major General Siad entered office arguing that the nation-building goal of the pan-Somali nationalist project had floundered due to misguided policies of the parliamentary era and that these policies had contributed to the intensification of clan-based pressures. Unlike his predecessors who essentially pursued a pro-Western capitalist path of development, Siad publicly proclaimed a unique Somali brand of “scientific socialism” patterned after the Soviet Union and its Communist allies as the most effective means for overcoming the destructive tendencies of clan affiliation.⁴⁵ Effective nation-building, according to this perspective, could only take place once the country was rid of its “tribalistic” past. In an attempt to legislate such changes from above, the Siad regime outlawed any public reference to clan identities or clan-inspired behavior as a criminal offense and ordered the replacement of clan-based greetings with usage of the term *jaalle* (the Somali equivalent of “comrade”). An extremely close political-military relationship was sought with the Soviet Union and its Communist allies, and a vanguard party—the Somali Socialist Revolutionary Party (SSRP)—was eventually created to ensure effective political control and socioeconomic development. Although Moscow demanded the creation of this party as the means for placing political power in the hands of “true” Communists in Somalia, the party’s central committee nonetheless was firmly dominated by Siad and other members of the military junta.⁴⁶

Siad’s public adherence to a socialist nation-building project was contradicted by an unofficial regime policy that largely practiced the clan-based policies of earlier years.⁴⁷ Although initially careful to include representatives of all the major clans in his government during the initial “honeymoon” period of the military regime, Siad increasingly depended on a more restricted circle of clan relationships that revolved around the clans of his father (Marehaan), mother (Ogaadeeni), and wife (Dulbahante)—often referred to as the MOD alliance, although no official alliance existed

as such. The emergence of political opposition was dealt with through a variety of state-sponsored instruments of repression, such as the National Security Service, the National Security Court, and the Gulwadhayal (Victory Pioneers). State-sponsored repression increasingly became the norm to silence anyone deemed “antisocialist,” “antirevolutionary,” or “anti-Siad” by the military regime.

Nonetheless, one often-cited early accomplishment of the Siad regime was its adoption of a slightly modified version of the Latin script in 1972 as the official alphabet for the Somali language.⁴⁸ Prior to this date, the lack of an official script contributed to a less-than-ideal linguistic mosaic in which the Somali language served as the primary means for oral communication, but all written forms of communication, such as newspapers, government documents, and literature, depended on the uneven usage of three non-indigenous languages: English, Italian, and, to a lesser degree, Arabic. The most curious aspect of this event was not that it took place but that its arrival took as long as it did in a society that has a deep respect and love for its language and bestows great honors on those who can skillfully use its rich poetic heritage in oral discourse.⁴⁹

Siad’s greatest gamble, however, revolved around the irredentist dimension of the pan-Somali nationalist project. Attempting to take advantage of the political-military disarray of the Ethiopian state in the aftermath of a bloody revolution (1974–77) that replaced the Ethiopian monarchy with a Marxist regime headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam, Siad ordered the invasion of the Ogaadeen region. On July 17, 1977, nearly thirty-five thousand soldiers of the Somali army coordinated an invasion of the Ogaadeen with fifteen thousand guerrilla fighters of the WSLF and roughly 250 tanks, twelve mechanized brigades, and thirty fighter aircraft and bombers. By mid-November the Somali army had conquered the majority of the Ogaadeen and was laying siege to the strategically located city of Harer. When the Somali army failed to achieve final victory in Harer and the Ogaadeen War became a set battle of attrition, Siad made a series of diplomatic moves at least partially designed to win U.S. and Western recognition of Somali sovereignty over the captured regions. On November 13, he announced the abrogation of the Somali-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1974, expelled nearly 1,700 Soviet civilian and military advisers and their dependents, and broke diplomatic relations with Cuba.

Any possibility of a negotiated settlement rapidly dissipated at the end of 1977 when Soviet-Cuban intervention in the conflict raised the regional

ante and threatened to turn an African conflict into a major East-West confrontation. On December 22, the Soviet Union began a massive airlift of Cuban combat troops from bases in Cuba, Angola, and Congo-Brazzaville in a move designed to break the military stalemate.⁵⁰ These troops spearheaded an Ethiopian counteroffensive in late January 1978 that quickly overwhelmed the outnumbered and internationally isolated Somali troops within a matter of weeks, forcing them to flee across the border on March 9.

The Ogaadeen War served as a critical turning point in Somali nationalist history. As Lewis explains, the war was “extremely popular” among Somalis, and Siad’s public approval rating—at least when Somali forces seemed poised for victory—was “never higher.”⁵¹ The resounding defeat of the Somali army, especially considering that it occurred during one of the historical periods of Ethiopia’s greatest weakness and internal disarray, not surprisingly led to “widespread demoralization” and the unleashing of clan-based pressures as “different groups sought scapegoats to explain the debacle.”⁵² The most logical scapegoat was Siad himself, and some observers of Somali politics correctly suggested that his actions (most notably the execution of numerous officers associated with the battle) significantly tarnished his future portrayal in the historiography of the Somali nation.⁵³ Rising dissent was perhaps most notably demonstrated in 1978 by a failed coup attempt by disgruntled military officers of the Majeerteen clan.

The most notable, yet still poorly understood, outcome of Somalia’s defeat in the Ogaadeen War was its impact on the irredentist dimension of the pan-Somali nationalist project. For the first time during the contemporary independence era, the future viability of pan-Somali nationalism had been severely called into question. A difficult relationship had already existed between the Siad regime and Ogaadeeni guerrilla movements, with many of the latter desirous of outright independence, as opposed to the Siad regime’s desire to incorporate the Ogaadeen into Somalia proper. This difficult relationship became even further strained in 1977 when the Siad regime imposed “foreign” governors acceptable to the regime. In the process, traditional Ogaadeeni nationalists were displaced from political power. Many Ogaadeeni nationalists had supported some form of federation with Somalia, but they felt betrayed when it became clear that they would not retain control over their own local affairs within the envisaged pan-Somali nation-state.⁵⁴

The final outcome of the Ogaadeen War further strengthened a sense of

betrayal, even among those who had firmly supported the political machinations of the Siad regime. Ogaadeenis who felt betrayed by the Siad regime's decision to withdraw its forces when confronted with a superior Soviet/Cuban/Ethiopian counterattack surely would be more hesitant in the future to seek recourse to military arms—an option that in any case proved disastrous regardless of the willingness of the Siad regime to maintain its forces in the field. Anything less, however, would also prove ineffective, as demonstrated by the absolute unwillingness of any of Somalia's neighbors to entertain the idea of redrawing their colonial-inherited frontiers. In short, the Ogaadeen War unleashed a tremendous amount of national and international debate that no longer automatically accepted either the inevitability or the desirability of seeking to incorporate the Ogaadeen (or its related Djiboutian and Kenyan territories) within an overarching pan-Somali nation-state. Indeed, Djibouti's independence in 1977 under the leadership of Hassan Gouled Aptidon, a Somali of the Iise clan with close ties to France, meant that there now existed two independent Somali states in the Horn of Africa (although a significant portion of Djibouti is inhabited by the rival Afar ethnic group).

Civil Conflict and Secession, 1978–Present

Somalia's defeat in the Ogaadeen War ushered in an era of multiplying guerrilla insurgencies intent on replacing the Siad regime's authoritarian socialist approach to nation-building with a new approach that, at a minimum, would recognize the preeminent rights of clans within their specific regions. After the failed military coup of 1978, Majeerteen military officers who escaped abroad formed the Somali Salvation Front (SSF), which later was transformed into the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF). These events were followed in 1981 by the rising military successes of the Somali National Movement (SNM), a northern-based insurgency deriving the majority of its support from the Isaaq clan, as well as by the rise of other clan-based insurgent groups, most notably the Hawiye-dominated United Somali Congress (USC).⁵⁵

The Somali civil war entered a new phase when, as part of a “final offensive” designed to topple the Siad regime, SNM guerrillas invaded the northern Somali city of Burao on the evening of May 27, 1988, and assassinated all senior government officials. The guerrillas initially scored stunning successes against the Somali Armed Forces; most notable among these victories was the capture of large portions of Hargeisa, the second-largest urban

area within the country. In a wave of terror that followed the initial military assault, the Somali Armed Forces engaged in a “systematic pattern” of attacks against unarmed Isaaq villages, as well as summarily executing an unknown number of suspected SNM supporters.⁵⁶ Despite the devastation of the north that bordered on genocide, the Siad regime ultimately was unable to stop the advance of guerrilla armies on the capital of Mogadishu, especially after USC guerrilla forces stepped up their attacks in the central region of the country. On January 26, 1991, the Siad regime was forced to flee when advancing elements of the USC guerrilla army overran Mogadishu.

The initial euphoria surrounding Siad’s demise did not mean the end of civil conflict. Choosing to ignore an October 2, 1990, accord, in which the major guerrilla groups agreed to collectively determine the shape of a post-Siad political system, the USC, by virtue of its control of the capital, unilaterally named a Hawiye, Ali Mahdi Mahammad, president of the country. This fateful decision heightened the already tense relations between the Isaaq-dominated SNM and the Hawiye-dominated USC, as well as among scores of other, less-organized clan groupings, ultimately prompting the SNM leadership to declare on May 17, 1991, that the former British Somaliland territory was seceding from the 1960 union and henceforth would be known as the Somaliland Republic. This announcement was followed by the intensification of a second round of clan conflict in the southern portion of the country, which in turn was exacerbated by a reassemblage of Siad’s Daarood clan groupings under the banner of the Somali National Front (SNF). In short, once the common political enemy no longer existed, traditional clan differences, exacerbated by the dictatorial divide-and-rule practices of the Siad years, led to the complete collapse of the Somali state and the continuation of an increasingly brutal civil war.⁵⁷

Northern Somalia’s secession and declaration of independence as the Somaliland Republic served as a momentous event of contemporary Somali political history due to the simple reality that it signaled the decline of both the nation-building and the irredentist dimensions of the pan-Somali nationalist project. Although SNM elites were clearly willing to maintain the essentials of the 1960 federation in a post-Siad era (albeit with the recognition that the Isaaq would enjoy greater control over their local affairs), the perceived power grab by the Hawiye-based USC simply proved too much. Other factors, of course, played a role, including the spread of stories of atrocities by returning Isaaqs who were forced to flee from the

south in what has been referred to as the “great trek,” as well as intraclan power struggles among SNM elites.⁵⁸ These intraclan struggles are documented elsewhere and in any case are beyond the scope of this chapter.⁵⁹ The critical aspect for the purposes of this study is that the perceived power grab by the Hawiye and its aftermath served as an important turning point in the northern elites’ perception of the original elite compact of 1960. Indeed, the role of the USC’s power grab in the transformation of northern disillusionment into demands for outright independence is best captured in a quotation by Jama Mohamed Ghalib, an Isaaq within the Siad regime, whose memoir is entitled *The Cost of Dictatorship: The Somali Experience*,

The overwhelming majority of all repressive government personnel, whether civilian or in the armed forces, were southerners who the people came no longer to see as co-nationals, but rather as an alien occupying force. Over the years, there developed a rejection of anything and everything southern. However, despite all the bad feeling among the people of the North, prior to the overthrow of Siad Barre, it had never gelled into a consensus for a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) before the decision of the United Somali Congress, Mogadishu faction, to usurp power. Before that time, neither the majority of the senior members of the central committee of the SNM, nor their constitution, had contemplated any such separation.⁶⁰

The SNM’s decision essentially was based on a strongly held Isaaq belief among both the elites and the general population that the north would continue to be victimized by a southern-dominated government, as had been the case during both the democratic (1960–69) and authoritarian (1969–91) eras. Southern clans had essentially broken the elite compact of the 1960s too many times; as far as the northern elites were concerned, the nation-building goal so enthusiastically supported in 1960 was beyond repair. Equally important, the termination of Somalia’s thirty-one-year experiment in nation-building by necessity meant the decline of pan-Somali irredentism. Although nation-building could have been pursued in the absence of irredentism, irredentism is impossible to pursue in the absence of successful nation-building.⁶¹ The de facto existence of two Somalias (northern and southern), not to mention a Somali-dominated regime in Djibouti, has effectively dissipated the elite-driven, pan-Somali nationalist spirit that existed in the 1960s.

Three political developments since Somaliland's unilateral declaration of independence demonstrate the strong unlikelihood that the northern elites will forego separation in favor of some form of reconciliation with their southern counterparts as part of a new Somali nationalist project. First and foremost, it is revealing to note the reaction of northern elites to a further round of fighting that broke out in southern Somalia in September 1991 and, less than two months later, turned into an all-out struggle for control of Mogadishu. Unlike the first round (to overthrow Siad) and the second round (interclan fighting) of the Somali civil war, this round constituted a brutal intraclan power struggle within the Hawiye-based USC guerrilla army between forces loyal to interim president Mahdi (a member of the Abgal subclan of the Hawiye) and those led by General Mohamed Farah Aidid (a member of the Habar Gedir subclan of the Hawiye). According to northern elites, the southern clans, especially the Hawiye, were simply reaping the spoiled fruits of southern-based authoritarianism and the mistreatment of other clans.

Even the three-year intervention (1992–95) by United Nations–sponsored military forces from twenty countries—a development that led to a variety of pan-Somali clan alliances in the south as long as foreign troops remained on Somali soil—failed to garner northern sympathy for the south's plight.⁶² Northern elites largely remained aloof and restricted their activities to successfully opposing any United Nations proposals that sought to send peacekeeping troops to the north. Indeed, northern elites, most notably Isaaq members of the SNM, proudly emphasize northern success in creating a functioning government capable of ensuring peace and stability, while the south remains divided among dozens of clan-based fiefdoms.

A final political development revolved around a referendum that was held in Somaliland in 2001. Although ostensibly held to assess public support for a new constitution, the vote essentially constituted a referendum on independence due to the fact that the constitution contains an article on territorial independence. The vote was especially important in that it occurred less than one year after one of a series of conferences in Djibouti had resulted in the reconstitution of a centralized government in Mogadishu that, however weak (as of 2006 it only controls a very small portion of Mogadishu and no outlying areas), continued to stress the illegality of Somaliland's unilateral declaration of independence. The referendum passed by an overwhelming margin of 97 percent in favor, clearly suggest-

ing widespread support for independence—an elusive quest due to the fact that, as of 2006, no single country has been willing to officially recognize Somaliland's independence. Indeed, no discussion with political representatives of the Somaliland Republic ever ends without at least some discussion as to how northern elites can promote international recognition of Somaliland's independence—a much-coveted status that has yet to be bestowed by any other country in the world.⁶³

Conclusion: Lessons from Somalia & Implications for the Future

A Somali proverb, “Either be a mountain, or find a mountain to lean on,” has been quoted to characterize Somalia's search for external support during the contemporary independence era.⁶⁴ This proverb is also relevant to our understanding of the evolution of Somali nationalism. During the decade of the 1960s, the elites of the former British and Italian Somaliland territories decided to lean on each other in their pursuit of both the nation-building and irredentist goals of pan-Somali nationalism. By the beginning of the 1990s, the elites of the former British Somaliland had decided that such a relationship was no longer viable and instead chose to rely on themselves in their country's pursuit of independence as the Somaliland Republic—in essence deciding to be their “own mountain” regardless of the costs that such an action would entail.⁶⁵ In the process, one of the most widely cited experiments in African nation-building and irredentism had for all practical purposes come to an end.

The case study of the rise and decline of the pan-Somali nationalist project suggests several tentative conclusions for a wider understanding of nationalism in the contemporary independence era, particularly in those cases where previously separate territories were joined together (e.g., Eritrea and Ethiopia, French and British Cameroon) or where ethnically or racially distinct minority groups in geographically distinguished areas have not been equitably incorporated into existing nation-states (e.g., southern Sudan). First, the emergence of Somali nationalism and its African counterparts during the 1950s was the result of a *unique confluence of several historically specific developments*, most notably the emergence of a first generation of nationalist elites who shared the overriding goal of independence from colonial rule. The heady nationalist era of the 1950s and the 1960s fostered a shared elite image of injustices perpetrated on the Somali people at the hands of the colonial powers and fostered idealistic beliefs in the

commonality of the Somali cause, and therefore the attractiveness of unification, in order to restore the dignity of the Somali people. It was precisely for this reason that Somali elites were willing to undertake one of the most ambitious experiments in voluntary nation-building ever witnessed by the African continent. Four decades later, however, the domestic and international contexts within which African nationalisms are evolving have radically changed. The idealism of the immediate postindependence era has largely dissipated, and the international community is less interested in supporting “failed states” in a continent that is perceived to be of marginal economic importance in the post-cold war era. Typically unwilling to actively campaign for the self-determination and ultimate independence of minority regions in existing nation-states, the international community will remain extremely hesitant to recognize the independence of secessionist regions within existing states.

The Somali case also demonstrates the *nation-destroying effects of authoritarianism and civil conflict*. Although the military coup d'état of 1969 and the launching of the Ogaadeen War initially received widespread public support, they both set in motion destructive tendencies for Somali nationalism. The authoritarianism of the Siad regime alienated the elites of increasingly marginalized clan groupings, and defeat in the Ogaadeen War unleashed a variety of clan-based pressures. The extended civil war of the 1980s and the 1990s, most notably the Siad regime's unleashing of what virtually constituted a policy of genocide against northern clans, was particularly destructive for the future of pan-Somali nationalism.

It is interesting to note, however, that authoritarianism and civil conflict have seemingly strengthened a greater sense of national identity in other cases, most notably the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria. In the case of Nigeria, for example, Igbo elites are now more likely to underscore their commitment to a unified Nigeria despite the fact that they overwhelmingly rallied around the cause of an independent Igbo nation-state (Biafra) during the late 1960s. In the case of Somalia, it is clear that the clan-based structure of indigenous Somali society has remained more internally strong than in other situations where authoritarian regimes emerged. The nation-building and nation-destroying effects of authoritarianism and civil war are thus a topic in need of further research.

A third conclusion of the Somali case is that, in the absence of effective policies, a “*turning point*” is reached beyond which elites can no longer conceive of adhering to the nationalist project, opting instead for their region's

pursuit of independence. The SNM's decision to seek independence for the former British Somaliland territory was not made overnight but instead was the result of a series of perceived slights and discriminatory policies ranging from the southern-dominated government of the initial years of the democratic era (1960–67), the policies of repression under the Siad regime (1969–91), and the fateful 1991 decision of the USC to unilaterally name a Hawiye clan member president. Despite the genocidal policies of the Siad regime, the SNM leadership nonetheless remained willing, as late as 1991, to maintain its support for a unified Somalia. After the fateful Hawiye decision of 1991, however, a “point of no return” had been reached beyond which any further consideration of continued adherence to pan-Somali nationalism was impossible. The thoughts of Ghalib are again worth noting:

It now seems impractical—even impossible—for the people of the newly declared “Republic of Somaliland” to abruptly reverse their verdict *vis-a-vis* the South. Nor does the disintegration of the South offer any encouragement for the exploration of any attempt at such a reversal. The continuation of the *status quo* therefore seems inevitable. . . . In the South some form of a confederation or something similar may emerge. Meantime the opportunity has presented itself, for the first time, for the Somalis in Ethiopia to protect their ethnic interests and play their proper role in the modern state with their rights and obligations recognized by all parties. Political realities have vastly changed and there is no more talk of “Greater Somalia”; but every Somali group in Ethiopia remains genealogically linked with one or other clan in Somalia—proper or Somaliland.⁶⁶

Similar dynamics have been documented in other cases, most notably the decision of Eritrean elites to consider nothing less than independence for their territory (an objective obtained in 1991, after nearly thirty years of guerrilla insurgency) despite a willingness to accept less radical proposals (e.g., regional autonomy) in the 1950s. In short, there is a necessity to understand critical turning points, most notably points of no return, in the development and failure of nationalist projects.⁶⁷

The Somali case further demonstrates the *enduring quality of kinship-based (in this case, clan) networks* even during those euphoric eras, such as the first years of the unified Republic of Somalia, in which nationalist sen-

timent appears to be on the rise. Indeed, the postindependence history of Somalia offers several examples of seemingly widespread nationalist support, most notably in favor of Somalia's involvement in the 1977–78 Ogaadeen War and, more recently, against United Nations–mandated foreign military involvement during 1992–95. In each of these cases, however, the emergence of nationalist fervor was short-lived, as what appeared to be unified public opinion ultimately dissipated in favor of clan-based disagreements and competition for political power. The policy dilemma for national elites in these and other cases is how best to simultaneously balance the potentially conflicting demands of nationalism and their kinship-based regional alternatives (i.e., self-determination).⁶⁸ As witnessed by the evolution of northern suspicions and eventual rejection of the pan-Somali nationalist project, Somali elites ultimately failed in finding such a balance during the second half of the twentieth century.

The case of Somalia also offers some tentative conclusions for assessing several theoretical approaches to understanding the evolution of nationalism in contemporary Africa. Primordialist arguments are partially relevant in terms of their focus on the enduring nature of affective ties in which all Somalis—regardless of clan groupings—recognize their common identity and belonging to some overarching Somali ethnic group. In their purest form, however, primordialist arguments fail to recognize that a common sense of belonging may not transcend the level of clan ties and certainly may not always result in a common yearning for the creation of a centralized political authority or nation-state—the antithesis of the Somali people's segmented, precolonial past.

Constructivist arguments are also partially relevant in terms of their focus on the role of both democratic and authoritarian governments alike in propagating an “invented memory” or “myth” of a unified, trans-Somali nationalist impulse—a myth that transcended clan and subclan ties and relationships and provided the essence of internationally inspired attempts to resolve ongoing ethnic conflict and state collapse in Somalia through the resurrection of the unified Somali state that existed from the 1960s to the beginning of the 1990s. As already noted, however, this argument in its purest form also fails to recognize the degree of common identity that does exist in Somali society—albeit at the level of individual clans and subclans. It also fails to note that some degree of nationalist consciousness did indeed exist during the 1950s and the 1960s, which served as the basis for launching the pan-Somali nationalist project during this same period.

The most important theoretical conclusion of the Somali case is the overwhelming importance of instrumentalist interpretations of nationalism. As already noted, the pan-Somali nationalist project was clearly derivative of shared elite interests at a particular juncture in Somali political history. Extreme critical views suggest that their efforts were doomed to failure from the start due to the overriding importance of clan-based differences. But a more generous conclusion would suggest that the elites of the 1950s and the 1960s were presented with a unique opportunity that was squandered due to a focus on ensuring their own political survival at the expense of facilitating the strengthening of a pan-Somali nationalist identity. It is precisely for this reason that instrumentalist approaches to nationalism can be enriched by the analysis of the destructive tendencies of authoritarianism and civil conflict and, most importantly, critical turning points in the adherence of the diverse elites to an elite-based nationalist compact.

Several questions immediately come to mind. Would the trajectory of increasing north-south elite strains have been minimized during the civilian era if a more regionally based federation respective of regional clan interests served as the cornerstone of governance (as opposed to the more unitary state fashioned after the colonial model)? Would these elite tensions have been minimized if, after the military coup d'état of 1969, a military regime would have handed over power to a newly restructured civilian regime (as opposed to the creation of an authoritarian regime based on personal rule and maintaining power through "divide-and-rule" policies that purposely pitted clan against clan)? Finally, would these elite tensions have been minimized if, after a successful guerrilla struggle to overthrow authoritarian rule in 1991, the elites of the three opposing major clans had stuck to their new elite compact of 1991 and created a decentralized civilian regime that recognized the regional interests of individual clans (as opposed to one clan army—the Hawiye-based USC—unilaterally imposing a national president from the south)? These and other questions can be answered only through comparative research that analyzes similar cases against the backdrop of critical turning points in individual nationalist histories.

A final comment revolves around the vast amount of scholarship devoted to finding a political solution to the Somali crisis. As of this writing, southern clans refuse to accept the self-proclaimed independence of the northern-based Somaliland Republic, which has yet to be officially recognized by any other country in the world. In southern and central por-

tions of the country, a tentative cease-fire has only succeeded in recognizing the political-military supremacy of existing clan leaders in their individual regions. Thousands of Somalis have died in the periodic intensification of clan-based conflict. The cornerstone of any viable proposal designed to resolve ongoing ethnic conflict and state collapse must be the recognition of the death of pan-Somali nationalism and thus international recognition of the sovereignty of the Somaliland Republic. Unfortunately, the vast majority of proposals fail to recognize that northern Somali elites have reached a “point of no return.”⁶⁹

Even if the international community is unwilling to extend diplomatic recognition, a policy grounded in local realities must, at a bare minimum, provide official support to the fashioning of an electoral process designed to poll the wishes of those living in the Somaliland Republic. One of the potential electoral models, often cited by proponents of independence, is that which led to Eritrea’s independence from Ethiopian sovereignty in 1993: a two-year “cooling-off period” could be followed by a United Nations–sponsored referendum monitored by international observers.⁷⁰ “We northern Somalis are not asking for international charity, nor are we asking foreigners to assume responsibility for what we ourselves are capable of accomplishing,” explains Ahmed Jirreh, a northern Somali from the Isaaq clan who lives in the United States. “We simply seek international recognition of our sovereign right to withdraw from a union we once voluntarily joined.”⁷¹

NOTES

1. For example, see Somalia’s portrayal in David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, eds., *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); and I. William Zartman, ed., *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

2. See Rupert Emerson’s foreword in the first major study of Somali nationalism: Saadia Touval, *Somali Nationalism: International Politics and the Drive for Unity in the Horn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).

3. Such irredentism is, in many ways, a combination of Lowell Barrington’s “variant 1” (external-territory-claiming) nationalism and “variant 5” (co-national-protecting).

4. See David D. Laitin and Said S. Samatar, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987).

5. For example, see Touval, *Somali Nationalism*. For a later, excellent overview of competing interpretations, see I. M. Lewis, ed., *Nationalism and Self-Determination in the Horn of Africa* (London: Ithaca Press, 1983).

6. See the insightful retrospective by Crawford Young, “Evolving Modes of Con-

sciousness and Ideology: Nationalism and Ethnicity,” in *Political Development and the New Realism in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. David E. Apter and Carl G. Rosberg (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 61–86.

7. See Hussein M. Adam and Richard Ford, eds., *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for Somali Communities in the 21st Century* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1997).

8. For an overview of these approaches, see the landmark work by Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976).

9. The scholar most often associated with launching this research agenda within the subfield of Somali studies, although his research is not limited to this approach, is I. M. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

10. This broad label is inclusive of a wide variety of scholarship, including Al Jimale Ahmed, ed., *The Invention of Somalia* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1995); and Catherine Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia: Race, Violence, and the Legacy of Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

11. An important proponent of this approach is David D. Laitin, *Politics, Language, and Thought: The Somali Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); and Laitin and Samatar, *Somalia*.

12. For a classic interpretation of Somali homogeneity, see I. M. Lewis, *A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*, rev. ed. (New York: Longman, 1988). For a more critical understanding that stresses the differences between the Samaale and the Sab, see Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia*.

13. See Laitin, *Politics, Language, and Thought*.

14. See Said Sheikh Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The Case of Sayyid Muhammad Abdille Hassan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

15. See I. M. Lewis, *Saints and Somalis: Popular Islam in a Clan-Based Society* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1998).

16. See I. M. Lewis, *Blood and Bone: The Call of Kinship in Somali Society* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1994).

17. For a general discussion, see Peter J. Schraeder, *African Politics and Society: A Mosaic in Transformation* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), 66–68.

18. Here again, one could mention Barrington's “variant 1” and “variant 5” nationalism related to irredentism.

19. Laitin and Samatar, *Somalia*, 63.

20. *Dervish* means “one who is dedicated in service to Allah.”

21. Gurey's forces largely drew from the Harti and Marehaan of the Daarood clan and the Habar Magadle of the Isaaq clan, and the Sayyid primarily enjoyed the support of the Ogaadeen of the Daarood clan (and to a lesser extent the Isaaq clan). See Laitin and Samatar, *Somalia*, 9, 12, 56, 58.

22. Laitin and Samatar, *Somalia*, 63.

23. The Four-Power Commission was made up of the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France.

24. See Touval, *Somali Nationalism*, 85–100.

25. See Mohamed H. Mukhtar, “The Emergence and Role of Political Parties in the Inter-River Region of Somalia from 1947 to 1960 (Independence),” *Ufahamu* 16, no. 2 (1989): 75–95.

26. See Touval, *Somali Nationalism*, 88.

27. Ibid., 101–8.
28. Ibid., 106.
29. The attraction of Djibouti's Somali population to the pan-Somali dream was also mixed due to the fact that the dominant Somali clan of the country—the Iise—is renowned for an independence streak of its own that, in the extreme, has periodically noted the possibility of creating an independent, Iise-dominated nation-state from the Iise populations in Djibouti, northwestern Somalia, and formerly northeastern Ethiopia (currently Eritrea). Touval, *Somali Nationalism*, 128–29. See also Walter S. Clarke, “The ‘Esayi Dream’: A Footnote to the Ogaden War” (unpublished paper).
30. Touval, *Somali Nationalism*, 147–53.
31. Ibid., 149.
32. Ibid., 150.
33. Ibid., 150.
34. Ibid., 132–46.
35. Ibid., 135.
36. Laitin and Samatar, *Somalia*, 70.
37. See Paolo Contini, *The Somali Republic: An Experiment in Legal Integration* (London: Frank Cass, 1969); and A. A. Castagno, “The Political Party System in the Somali Republic: A Balancing-Coalitional Approach,” in *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa*, ed. James S. Coleman and Carl G. Rosberg, Jr. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964).
38. For discussion, see John Markakis, *National and Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 169–81.
39. See Raymond L. Thurston, “Détente in the Horn,” *Africa Report* 14, no. 2 (February 1969): 6–13.
40. Correspondence with Daniel Compagnon.
41. See I. M. Lewis, “The Politics of the 1969 Coup,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 10, no. 3 (1972): 383–408.
42. For a compilation of some of Siad's early speeches, see Somali Ministry of Information and National Guidance, *My Country and My People: Selected Speeches of Jaalle Major General Mohammad Siad Barre* (Mogadishu, Somalia: State Printing Agency, 1979).
43. See Daniel Compagnon, “Ressources politiques, régulation autoritaire et domination personnelle en Somalie: Le régime de Siyaad Barre (1969–1991)” (doctoral dissertation, l'Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, 1995).
44. See Frederic C. Schaffer, *Democracy in Transition: Understanding Politics in an Unfamiliar Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).
45. For a sympathetic overview, see Philip Decraene, *L'Expérience socialiste Somalienne* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1977). See also Ahmed I. Samatar, *Socialist Somalia: Rhetoric and Reality* (London: Zed Books, 1988).
46. See Compagnon, “Ressources politiques, régulation autoritaire et domination personnelle en Somalie.”
47. For the most comprehensive overview, see *ibid.*
48. See Laitin, *Politics, Language, and Thought*. See also Hussein M. Adam, “Language, National Consciousness and Identity: The Somali Experience,” in *Nationalism and Self-Determination in the Horn of Africa*, ed. I. M. Lewis (London: Ithaca Press, 1983).
49. For discussion, see Adam, “Language, National Consciousness and Identity.”

See also B. W. Andrzejewski, "Language Reform in Somalia and the Modernization of the Somali Vocabulary," *Northeast African Studies* 1, no. 3 (1979–80): 59–71.

50. Accompanied by Soviet tactical commanders and nearly \$2 billion in Soviet weaponry, the number of Cubans airlifted into Ethiopia by mid-January exceeded 2,500 troops and grew to 15,000 within less than two months.

51. I. M. Lewis, "The Ogaden and the Fragility of Somali Segmentary Nationalism," *Horn of Africa* 13, nos. 1–2 (1999): 57.

52. Lewis, "The Ogaden and the Fragility of Somali Segmentary Nationalism." See also Lee Cassanelli, "Explaining Ethnic Conflict in Somalia," in *High Conflict/Low Conflict: Six Case Studies of Ethnic Politics*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1993), 13; and Harry Odada, "Somalia's Domestic Politics and Foreign Relations since the Ogaden War of 1977–78," *Middle Eastern Studies* 21, no. 3 (1985): 285–97.

53. See David D. Laitin, "The War in the Ogaden: Implications for Siyaad's Role in Somali History," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 17, no. 1 (1979): 95–115. See also Abdi Sheikh-Abdi, "Sayyid Mohammed Abdille Hassan and the Current Conflict in the Horn," *Horn of Africa* 1, no. 2 (1978).

54. Correspondence from Daniel Compagnon.

55. For the most comprehensive analysis of the development and role of these and other armed groups, see Daniel Compagnon, "Somali Armed Movements: The Interplay of Political Entrepreneurship and Clan-Based Factions," in *African Guerrillas*, ed. Christopher Clapham (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), 73–90. See also Compagnon's earlier analysis, "The Somali Opposition Fronts: Some Comments and Questions," *Horn of Africa* 13, nos. 1–2 (January–March, April–June 1990): 29–54.

56. See Robert Gersony, *Why Somalis Flee: Synthesis of Accounts of Conflict Experience in Northern Somalia by Somali Refugees, Displaced Persons and Others* (Bureau for Refugee Programs, Department of State, Washington, DC, August 1989); U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), *Somalia: Observations Regarding the Northern Conflict and Resulting Conditions* (GAO, Washington, DC, May 1989); and U.S. House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa, *Reported Massacres and Indiscriminate Killings in Somalia*, Hearing, July 14, 1988, 100th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1989).

57. See Daniel Compagnon, "Somalie: De l'Etat en formation à l'Etat en pointillé," in *Les Etats d'Afrique Noire: Formations, mécanismes et crise*, by Jean-François Médard (Paris: Karthala, 1991), 205–40; and Daniel Compagnon, "Somalie: L'aube de l'après-Siyaad Barre," *Politique Africaine* 41 (March 1991): 129–34. See also Hussein M. Adam, "Somalia: A Terrible Beauty Being Born?" in *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, ed. I. William Zartman (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995), 69–90; Terrence Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention, and Strategies for Political Reconstruction* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1995), 1–24; and Anna Simons, *Networks of Dissolution: Somalia Undone* (Boulder: Westview, 1995).

58. Primarily between the factions led by Ahmed Mohamed Mahamud "Silanyo" and Abdirahman Ahmed Ali "Tuur."

59. See the analysis of Daniel Compagnon in "Somaliland: Un ordre politique en gestion?" *Politique Africaine* 50 (June 1993): 9–20.

60. Jama Mohamed Ghalib, *The Cost of Dictatorship: The Somali Experience* (New York: Lilian Barber Press, 1995), 216–17.

61. Although Barrington discusses both nation-building and irredentism in his introductory chapter in this volume, the Somali case indicates that he does not make a strong enough connection between the two.

62. See John Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia? A Tale of Tragic Blunders* (London: HAAN Associates, 1994).

63. Personal interviews with visiting Somaliland dignitaries, Chicago, May 1997.

64. See Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chapter 4.

65. See Gérard Prunier, "Somaliland Goes It Alone," *Current History* 97, no. 619 (1998): 225–28.

66. Ghalib, *The Cost of Dictatorship*, 222.

67. A similar call for such research, which has yet to be realized, was offered by John R. Wood, "Secession: A Comparative Analytical Framework," *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 14, no. 1 (March 1981): 107–34.

68. For example, see Lewis, *Nationalism and Self-Determination in the Horn of Africa*.

69. See, for example, the policy-oriented conclusions included in Ken Menkhaus and Terrence Lyons, "What Are the Lessons to be Learned from Somalia?" *CSIS Africa Notes* 144 (January 1993); Samuel M. Makinda, *Seeking Peace from Chaos: Humanitarian Intervention in Somalia* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993); Lyons and Samatar, *Somalia*; and Hussein Adam and Richard Ford, "Removing Barricades in Somalia: Options for Peace and Rehabilitation" (United States Institute of Peace, *Peaceworks* no. 24, October 1998).

70. Hussein M. Adam, "Formation and Recognition of New States: Somaliland in Contrast to Eritrea," *Review of African Political Economy* 59 (1994): 21–38.

71. Personal interview with Ahmed Jirreh in Chicago.