



Clanpolitics, Clan-democracy and Conflict Regulation in Africa: The Experience of Somalia

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Introduction

This paper aims to discuss clanpolitics and clan-democracy as strategies for conflict and crisis regulation in the African context.¹ The model of the state and dynamics of nation-state building as sources of conflict in Somalia will be explored and clan-democracy in Somalia re-appraised, as a concept and framework for conflict resolution and achieving political stability in the 21st century.

The paper seeks to demonstrate how tribal allegiance, clan difference (defined in negative terms) and exclusive cultural identity (affirmed outside the framework of true democracy) cause conflict. The experiences in Somalia indicate that, when democratic principles, human rights and civic identity are not the prerequisites for nation building and social cohesion, the dynamics of state building are identical to the dynamics of conflict management and peace building. In this context, the paper seeks to provide information on the stakes and complexity of conflict resolution in Africa.

The ongoing ethnic or clan-based political conflict and civil wars in Somalia and elsewhere in the world represent a challenge to conflict resolution theory and practice. One important point that must be acknowledged is that although much has been written on ethnopolitics, clanpolitics has not been the focus of conflict research and scholarly debate on conflict resolution. The subject is hereby introduced for further research and discussion.

The sub-titles used in the paper indicate the parameters of the issues of clanpolitics, in the context of conflict resolution, which can also be discussed under different headings depending on the approach and choice of focus. It is hoped that the style adopted facilitates the task of the reader.

The Peculiarity of a Clan Nation in the Horn of Africa

Situated in the Horn of Africa, Somalia is at the crossroads between the African and Arab cultures, controlling the passage to the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, and access to the port of Djibouti (Torranzano 1995: 9-12). Ethnically homogeneous, Somali society is distinct from other multiethnic sub-Saharan African societies with the exception of Burundi and Rwanda. The population of approximately 10 million is made up of six major clan families:² the Darod, the Isaaq, the Dir and the Hawiye, the Rahanwein, and the Digil.³ These extended families are what ethnologists and sociologists have defined as clans and tribes. Nuruddin Farah defines them as communities of relations.⁴ The clan families have common ancestral origins and they are interrelated through complex networks of social relationships, which extend over clan territories marked with fluid borders, within the national territory. The knowledge of one's genealogy several generations back is an important identity reference for the individual and the clan community.⁵

¹ Conflict regulation is used as an inclusive term to describe conflict management and conflict resolution.

² According to population estimates of 1994. For more explanation see Torrenzano (1995: 9).

³ Somali society is ethnically homogeneous, but it is divided into clan families.

⁴ Nuruddin Farah is an internationally respected Somali writer. He has written extensively about the social, political and economic transformations in Somalia during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. His outstanding books *Sweet and Sour Milk* (1980); *Sardines* (1983) and *Close Sesame* (1984) form the trilogy known collectively as *Variations on an African Dictatorship*.

⁵ By sociological considerations, the Somali society is ethnically homogeneous and monolingual. In the African context it is similar to Rwanda and Burundi, whose populations speak the same language called Kinyarwanda in Rwanda and Kirundi in Burundi. These monolingual societies are different from other African societies, which are ethnically heterogeneous and multilingual.

In traditional Somali society, the clan was a social and political unit of organisation and government. Each clan had its own leaders and a council of elders as in many multiethnic societies in Africa. Land was communal property and its management was linked to the concept of power, religion and clan (the extended family). However, the post-independence processes of modernisation greatly changed the traditional concept of land and power. In modern Somalia, the clan system and modern forms of social and political organisation co-exist. The traditional clan structures which acted as a framework for identity, the settlement of disputes and conflicts, and communal security, were replaced by a national judiciary and constitutional laws, although the cultural and social status of the clan elders was maintained.

The council of elders and traditional chiefs, who ensured harmony and sustained peace in the clan communities, defined the rights and obligations of the members and their relations, together with the rights and limitations of neighbouring clans. The process of modernisation transformed the political peacekeeping and moral and or spiritual roles of the traditional clan elders and chiefs. The traditional customary conventions on war, the laws of mutual assistance to captives of war; caring for the injured and hospitality, which were part of the customary social and political code of conduct, were defined by the clan chiefs and the council of elders. The reassigning of these roles to a modern judiciary system transformed the peacekeeping roles and status of the traditional leaders in their communities of relations. The change also created a gap between traditional and modern conflict regulation methods, which challenged the international peace and conflict resolution initiatives of the United Nations in Somalia. For example, according to traditional practice, when a clan lost its prerogatives and became vulnerable, it was attached to a stronger clan to ensure its safety and security, and to preserve global peace. This was not defined as annexing a clan territory rather it was seen as a way small clans could be assimilated and protected by the bigger ones (provided that the big and small clans shared a genealogy).⁶ However, this all changed with modernisation and the globalisation of the western model of the state.⁷ The modern territorial Somali state had one national army, whose responsibility was to defend Somali Sovereignty and protect the Somali citizens against any external aggression. Contrary to Somali traditional practices, it was the International Red Cross and not the Somali women who assumed the role of caring for the injured in the clan-political faction war.

The modernisation of Somalia according to the principles of socialism entailed replacing clan solidarity with 'comradeship'. The titles 'cousin', 'uncle' and 'aunt' were all deemed to have cultural connotations and confer social status on different age groups and were consequently abolished. All Somalis were to refer to each other as 'comrades', also meaning compatriot. The comradeship unlike the cultural titles was neither founded on cultural values nor on the principles of human rights and democracy. It stemmed from a particular political ideology i.e. communism.

Like all modern states, Somalia is a territorial state, and according to the prevailing international state system, the people living in this territory are called *Somalians* although they refer to themselves as 'Somalis'. The modernisation of Somalia pursued by the military government from 1969 sought to transform traditional Somali society using the principles of communism. The traditional chiefs were considered 'primitive' and governors were appointed by the central militarised political bureau to replace them. The clan territories

⁶ In the Somali traditional system, rights and obligation of individuals and the clan community constituted a framework for dispute and conflict regulation. Whenever there was a risk of chaos and conflict escalation into violence and war between the clans, the traditional clan elders and women were used to negotiate with the parties in conflict as ambassadors of peace in order to prevent war.

⁷ The problems relating to the model of the state in Africa are extensively discussed by BADIE, Bertrand (1992), in the book 'L'Etat importé: l'occidentalisation de l'ordre politique l'Espace politique', Fayard, Paris.



which had been under the authority of the chiefs became districts and provinces, administered by the governors who were army officers from other clans. Consequently, the chiefs lost both their political roles of 'spokesmen' for their clans and their social status.

History has shown us that in many ways the political history of Somalia is comparable with that of many other African countries: colonial administration, de-colonisation and independence, one-party and multiparty politics, civilian and military governments and dramatic social, political and economic transformations. Like the societies of Burundi and Rwanda, the ethnically homogeneous society of Somalia, is monolingual, has one majority religion and a shared culture. As mentioned earlier, the people call themselves Somali, the language is Somali and the geopolitical space inhabited by the Somali population is Somalia (meaning land of the Somalis).

By definition Somalia corresponds to a nation-state, the Somali population shares a common citizenship, culture, religion (Moslems by majority) and affirm a cultural patriotism as the basis for a greater Somali nation.⁸ This can be likened, for example, to the French who live in France, speak the French language, and share, in the main part, a Christian religious tradition and a cultural identity. While these attributes were beneficial to the process of nation-state building, social integration and coherence and harmony in France, in Somalia the common religion, shared cultural values and language did not guarantee sustainable social cohesion, stability and peace after independence.

Indeed, political conflict, government crisis, and clan-based civil war in Somalia between 1989 and 2000 have both revealed the negative consequences of clanpolitics and the manipulation of clan differences to achieve power. In addition, such unrest has highlighted the limits of clan-democracy as a framework for conflict regulation. The clan has played a strong part in social, economic and political interactions, and has acted both as a cause of social cohesion and paradoxically, as a cause of political conflict. In traditional Somali society, private and public life were organised on clan principles which sustained the clan communities for centuries before the era of colonisation. Although inter-clan wars were fought, they were brief and generally only involved men. By and large, women, children and the elderly were not involved. However, women would sometimes act as nurses to the wounded and perform roles comparable to those of the Red Cross in war situations.

The Sources and Causes of Social and Political Conflict in Somalia

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the political conflict in Somalia degenerated into a governmental crisis which eventually led to a general militarised social conflict throughout the clan faction network. The institutionalised principles of clan equality and representation in politics constituted a conceptual framework and basis for power sharing and government crisis management but failed to resolve the intense socio-political conflicts of the decade. The Somali government used the framework, although in a limited way, to promote representative democracy, crises management and conflict resolution. In the larger regional context, the pattern of refugee displacement and the dynamics of the spill over of the armed conflicts from Somalia to the neighbouring countries of Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya have on the contrary, revealed the strength of cultural solidarity as a factor of social integration in Africa. The Somali-speaking communities in these countries played active roles in not only receiving but also helping the refugees to integrate into their host communities. Both at national and regional levels, the generalisation potential of the civil war revealed the mobilising capacity of cultural over civic values. The exclusive affirmation of clan identity and the clan-based political system were obstacles to the

⁸ The Westphalian model of the state, for example, sees France as a territorial state, where the population are called French. Similarly the population of Somalia are Somalis. Whereas France is a Republic, founded on the principles of democracy, human rights, civic rights and equality of citizens, the Republic of Somalia under President Siad Barre resembled a cultural state. The practice of clanpolitics led to violations of civic and human rights and unequal treatment of citizens.

promotion of civic citizenship based on human rights and democratic principles. At a military level, the creation of clan armies by political faction leaders greatly undermined the military institution and led to its collapse. Under these circumstances, human rights, tolerance and coexistence principles central to violence prevention, conflict resolution, political stability, peace and development, were greatly undermined.

The political conflicts and governmental crises in Somalia which escalated into a prolonged civil war in 1989 were ultimately the climax of a process which had begun with the country's declaration of independence in 1960. Unification had failed to resolve disagreements over the state's origins, problems of the partisan participation of the different clan communities in the process of decolonisation, power sharing, and the nation-state building process. These problems would not simply disappear. The dynamics of state modernisation and the dispute with neighbouring countries over the national borders defined by the colonial administration became important conflict stakes. The pre-colonial Somali nation defined a geo-cultural space inhabited by Somali-speaking populations found in present Djibouti, the Ogaden Province of Ethiopia, northern Somalia (Somaliland), Southern Somalia and the North Eastern Province of Kenya.

As we know from the country's political history, northern Somalia was a British Protectorate (British Somaliland) and was united with southern Somalia (Italian Somaliland) to form the independent Republic of Somalia in 1960. The majority Isaaq population in the north took more of an active role in politics. Since they were not politically reconciled with the southern clans at Independence, post-independence government crises revived clan differences and conflicting visions of the state and power-sharing models. Thus the challenge was to articulate three political traditions into one coherent system in order that a workable political system could be defined. The Italian political model and the French and British political traditions, had to be united into one coherent model. A heterogeneous model, at best required a federal type of government which took into account the different political traditions and philosophies of Italy, France, Britain and Africa. However, the first post-independence government in Somalia was not representative and disagreements over political power sharing that arose on the eve of independence would not be resolved for some time.

The ensuing civil war in Somalia developed over several years. It was caused by a combination of several factors both local and international and involved many different actors. At the national level, several years of continued frustration over basic human needs caused unrest: children could not go to school because education was not free; the sick could not be cared for sufficiently because there were no facilities; populations from famine affected areas (from 1972) could not be fed because there was not enough food in spite of the provisions made by international humanitarian NGOs; and social and political aspirations could not be achieved because the political framework was not democratic. In addition, the ineffective economic policies of the government worsened economic difficulties, causing extreme poverty, intense government crises characterised by constant reshuffles of cabinet ministers and the loss of state authority; a politicised army, and coups and counter coups d'Etat which were attempts to change government and social fracture. Consequently, between 1972 and 1989 the population became poorer and gradually desperate. The very difficult living conditions became an incentive for young men to join faction armies opposed to the government in office. A culture of violence and crime emerged as a strategy for ensuring livelihood.

At a more general level, like all developing countries, Somalia's economy was not integrated into the global market economy. The national economy was sustained through dependence on foreign financial aid from Europe and North America. During the Cold War era, in the context of the prevailing ideological conflict, foreign economic assistance and development co-operation with Somalia were linked to the geostrategic economic interests



of the donor countries and the political orientation of the recipient government. Through the mechanism of international relations, super power rivalry was transferred to the countries in the Horn of Africa, including Somalia. Political and military co-operation accords and financial aid from the Western countries and institutions had many strings attached (Farah 2000). Diplomatic relations were continually changing. Allegiances with the Soviet Union and the US were unstable which strongly influenced the internal politics of the country. For example, Somalia had adopted Communist-Leninism as a political ideology (1969-1990), but in spite of this political change it lost Soviet friendship after the war with Ethiopia and established diplomatic relations with the US. The influence of the super powers on Somalia's domestic politics and that of the region was exemplified during the war with Ethiopia over the Ogaden province. The super powers supported and provided weapons to forces involved in the interstate war 1977-78 war which had dramatic consequences for the Somali army. However, given the geopolitical location of Somalia, seen as the gateway to the Gulf region, the super powers sustained their presence in the country. Geopolitical and economic factors were therefore responsible for the establishment or cancellation of diplomatic relations and provisions of foreign aid.

Clan-democracy and clanpolitics were used by the governments in Somalia not only as a framework for ethnic conflict resolution but also as a military tactic, to avoid an unnecessary civil war. The desperate situation caused by intense economic crises, food shortages, insufficient medical services, sanitation, unemployment, insecurity and continued frustration of political aspirations required workable short and long term solutions. In this context, delays incurred in the payment of salaries of the armed forces and public service officers meant that at the level of the extended family and community, parental obligations and social responsibilities in the wider community could not be fulfilled. School fees for children could not be paid, medicines and clothing could not be bought and the hungry could not be fed. In this sense the welfare state had lost its *raison d'être*. To this effect, several international NGOs developed huge projects in Somalia from 1972.

The State Building Process in Somalia

The unity of Somalia, which was proclaimed at independence and symbolised by the national flag, the national anthem, the national constitution and the creation of a Republic, was not founded on a shared Somali patriotism and culture. The challenge was to incorporate relevant Somali traditions into a Western model of state and democracy, translate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into the Somali language and articulate between Somali and non-Somali political philosophies and traditions. Somali traditions and customs, as well as clan networks of social and political associations represented opportunities and challenges for state building and modernisation in Somalia. What emerged were two social and political organisation models which were operated in parallel: a cultural state model based on clan customs, traditions and African philosophies; and a civic state model in the making, based on the principles of human rights, coexistence and democracy. This conflict of visions and value systems created a dilemma for national conflict resolution strategies. Conflict resolution in Somalia therefore, required an alternative framework which incorporated both traditional and modern methods.

At both economic and social levels, poverty, famine, illiteracy, lack of education, and generalised sanitary problems acted as incentives for coups and counter coups. Military intervention in civilian politics between 1960 and 1969 was aimed at not only changing the government but also the prevailing social conditions. The post-independence Somali government successfully prevented political conflicts and government crisis from escalating into civil war but failed to solve the country's socio-economic problems. Clan-parliamentary democracy as a crisis resolution framework proved to be ineffective. The unsolved economic and social problems at the level of the military and civil society were sources of frustration which led to numerous coup d'états on the one hand and civil society protests on the other. Coup d'état was considered an appropriate strategy for

affecting governmental change, ending governmental crisis and political conflict, as well as solving social and economic problems.

Between 1970 and 1990 the military government's conception of politics, inspired by the principles of communism, was ambivalent; on one hand it denounced tribal politics and on the other hand based promotions in the army and the recruitment of civilian state functionaries on clan and tribal criteria. For example, during this period, public officers from the Isaaq, Marehan and Darod clans were recruited to important posts in government and in the army. Clan networks of influence, therefore, prevailed in political, commercial and social relations. A clan-democracy or clan-political hegemony was institutionalised by the military government of President Siad Barre, and politics was commanded through a military chain of officers.

For more than two decades, clanpolitics, Marxist-Leninism and Islam were important factors for political association, division, rivalry and violent conflicts in Somalia. Both the military and civilian political leaders failed to articulate between the different value systems that operated in parallel within Somali society. The governmental modernisation programme progressed more effectively in the urban areas than in the rural areas because the educated population and foreign immigrants lived in the towns, which offered more opportunities in terms of jobs and social services. However, the majority of the population, more than 50%, were illiterate and worked the land in the rural areas where lifestyles were strongly influenced by customs and traditions. Modernising the state and society in Somalia required knowledge, exposure to different value systems and the understanding and knowledge to know what was needed. Marxist-Leninism as a political ideology proved difficult to implement in a coherent manner in Somalia because it was either not understood, or considered by the educated Somalis to be a foreign ideology detached from the Somali social and cultural realities. The socialist state did not change the lives of the ordinary Somalis. The Somalis have a rich spiritual tradition and the national constitution also made references to Islamic teachings, reflecting the extent of religious influence on the lives of the people. Religion, Somali customs and traditions, rooted in the country's culture made more sense to the ordinary Somali than Marxist-Leninism, as a basis for social transformation. The state building and modernisation process was a major source of conflict since the political leadership denounced Somali cultural practices as primitive and made no effort to incorporate relevant cultural values into the mainstream modern system. The prevention of conflict required effective articulation and coherence between the relevant cultural and religious values and the values of Communism. The political framework had to be based on the respect of human rights and democracy.

The extent to which Islam affected the lives of the ordinary Somalis made it difficult to create a secular state in Somalia. Islam as a religion and institution is by definition a mobilising factor, thus a factor for solidarity and social mobilisation. At the political level, the 1960 Somali constitution was influenced by Islamic doctrine. The Arab Muslim missionaries, by offering their Islamic faith to the Somalis, also shared their cultural world-view (in the same way as Christian missionaries did in other African countries), on which the Somalis constructed their subsequent understanding of the world. In this way, Islam was incorporated into Somali thinking and way of life. In addition, through Islam, some aspects of Arab culture were incorporated into Somali culture. For example, Allah (God) created cosmos which is very different from traditional Somali views of cosmos. As part of the state modernisation process in Somalia, Islam contributed to the grafting of non-African concepts onto Somali cultural explanations of creation. The introduction of scientific socialism modelled on Leninism provoked a conflict of values between Islam, atheist communism and Somali culture.

Profiles of the Stakeholders



On 30 March 1968, an unsuccessful coup d'état was organised against the civilian government, which was dominated by the Darod clan. However, this did not serve to unite Somalia's military officers. On the contrary, the military coup led by Abdullahi Yousouf, Salad Gavveire and Ali Samantar highlighted the conflicting visions and divisions present in the army. On 15th October 1969, the national army assassinated the elected civilian President Shamarke. The senior military officers formed a military junta, established a military government and appointed General Siad Barre president. The police commander Ali Khorschel was appointed vice-president and chief of the police. The post of Prime Minister was abolished and the parliament was replaced by a Revolutionary Socialist Council (RSC) composed of military officers from the Hawiye clan (Torrenzano 1995: 21-32)

In 1970, another unsuccessful coup d'état organised by Giama Ali Khorschel, yet again served to demonstrate strong rivalry and power struggles within the army. The politically ambitious army officers were engaged in a political power competition. As a strategy to resolve the conflict among the army officers the president reshuffled his militarised cabinet on the principles of equal clan representation in government to ensure a balance of power. To this effect, Hussein Afrah Kulmie from the Hawiye (Abgaal) clan was appointed to the post of vice-president. But the resentment in the army persisted and in 1971 yet another failed coup d'état was organised by General Mohamed Ainanse Goleb and Salad Javeire Kedie. The cabinet was again reshuffled, for the third time in 1972. As an alternative strategy to solve the political conflict and in an attempt to end the government crisis, the president established three posts of vice-president and appointed three officers from three different clans to occupy them.

In 1973 a Public Relations Office (PRO) was created to improve state-civil relations and army officer, Giama Ali Giama was appointed to the post of executive director. By 1974 the new posts were occupied by several officers including Hagi Mussale, nephew of the President of the Republic. These continued changes in governmental positions reflected the difficulties of achieving consensus among the army officers and ensuring equal clan representation in government.

Faced with both local and international problems of legitimacy, and in search for international credibility and support, the government submitted an application for Somali membership to the Arab League. The cabinet and the military officers were opposed to Somali membership but the President took a unilateral decision. The admission of Somalia to the Arab League had serious political and social consequences. At the level of the army, a consensus was not reached on Somali membership to the Arab League and the army officers who opposed the decision were executed. Their execution was resented both in the army and civil society. However, in spite of internal opposition, the Republic of Somalia was eventually admitted to the Arab League in February 1974. Both civilian and military protesters were arrested and charged with anti-religious propaganda and subsequently detained.

The persistent political conflict and governmental crisis accentuated the severe economic and social problems. Military efforts were made in vain by the president to solve the multiple causes of conflict. The worsening social conditions in the army and society owing to unpaid salaries and poor facilities and social services demanded urgent practical measures and concrete actions. In 1978 a further unsuccessful coup d'état was organised by Abdullahi Yousouf and Mohamed Sher in an attempt to resolve the situation in the army. The President had become weary of military officers, between 1975 and 1979 twenty-eight army officers accused of treason or attempted coup d'état were executed. The execution of high-ranking officers revealed the extent of clanpolitics in the national army. By this time, the national army was clearly divided into three main rivalry clan groups, Marehan, Dulbahante and Ogaden. The unity of the Somali army emphasised by one of the popular officers, General Daoud Abdulleh had been lost. The frequent cabinet reshuffles were inefficient in solving the deep-rooted prolonged social conflict. The

appointment of new officers and the creation of new posts in government after each cabinet reshuffle did not respond to the political power sharing problems. A genuine political framework based on democratic and human right principles was required.

In 1978, the decision of the Somali government to support the Ogaden Liberation Movement against the government of Ethiopia catalysed rivalries among the cabinet members and the military. The Ogaden Somalis had always affirmed Somali patriotism and cultural solidarity within the geo-cultural space comprising Ethiopia and Somalia. The armed liberation movement organised by the Ogaden Somalis against the central government of Ethiopia was transformed into an interstate war between Somalia and Ethiopia in 1978 and 1979. The war involved international support from Cuba, the Soviet Union and the United States of America. The combined Ogaden Somali and the national armed forces of the Republic of Somalia were defeated by the Ethiopian army. The war reduced the capacity of the Somali infantry forces from 65,000 to 10,000 men and left military officers dissatisfied; their political ambitions were frustrated.

The humiliation and frustration of the Somali national army caused by the failure to liberate the Ogaden Somalis from Ethiopia was difficult for the weakened government of President Siad Barre to contain. The cost of the war in both human and material terms on the one hand, and the withdrawal of Soviet military and economic assistance to Somalia on the other, further weakened the military government and the national defence system and accelerated the creation of political clan armies and the collapse of state authority.

In 1982 yet another unsuccessful coup d'état was organised against the government by army officer Ali Aboubakar as a strategy to solve the situation. As a consequence, the President declared a curfew, introduced political reforms and created the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party (SRSP). This transition from a military government to a one-party democratic government was not achieved through any electoral process. Democratisation was commanded. The SRSP replaced the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC), established in 1969. It then reinforced the powers of the Head of State, Field Marshal Siad Barre, General of the Somali armed forces, President of the Republic and Secretary-General of the Party. Power and authority were invested in the Head of State and the government. The Supreme Revolutionary Council which preceded the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party was composed of sixty-four members: forty-one military officers and twenty-one generals.

Clanpolitics as Conflict and Crisis Resolution Strategy

The years 1982 and 1987 were marked by the declaration of the state of emergency, characterised by frequent decrees issued by the government. Free movement of the people and items within the country were restricted, and roads and ports were manned by security personnel. Road transport was subjected to severe military and police controls, passengers and goods were subject to strict controls, including checks on the registration of vehicles and the number of passengers; their names, home addresses and reasons for travelling had to be declared. These practices eliminated the possibility of any form of civil protest or the organisation of any political opposition. Fear, secrecy and uncertainty spread.⁹ The government became unpopular and lost the confidence of its people.

The state security information service recruited as service personnel ill-educated youths, - men and women who served the government according to the oral tradition.¹⁰ They were not required to present proper written reports; it was sufficient to report orally and on an everyday basis. The secret information service too, operated according to the country's

⁹ Fear at its embryonic stage can make an individual cry, laugh, remain silent or patiently wait and stare at the emptiness in space, but it may also cause restlessness and aggressive behaviour

¹⁰ In Somalia as in any oral culture, rumours play a very important role in maintaining tribal allegiances, creating fear and intimidation.



oral tradition; its agents were expected to report verbally about what they saw and heard. The security service agents needed no written warrant for arrests. Two-thirds of prisoners in detention were arbitrarily arrested, had no file records and served indefinite prison sentences or were eventually killed depending on the decision of the military tribunal. The normal judiciary system became irrelevant; justice was administered on the basis of rumours, gossip and allegations. As a result, rumours, and plans for revenge concerning apparent miscarriages of justice spread. The government became suspicious of its own citizens and the citizens were mutually suspicious of each other (see Farah 1979: 45). The educated Somali community, and in particular the intellectuals and nationals from other countries were considered by the government to be politically dangerous. For example, the intellectuals were spied on, arrested and detained or forced into exile, especially after the publishing of a memorandum called the 'Manifesto' addressed to the government. They denounced the political role of the army and the appalling sanitary conditions and called for democratic elections and a return to civilian leadership.

The private and state information service also relied upon rumours and hearsay for their information. The source of oral information was neither investigated nor confirmed. The ordinary Somali did not understand the reasons for the prevailing situation, the informers were secretive and the ordinary civilians were discrete, afraid and silenced. Individuals were confined to their clan networks, they had limited knowledge about politics and could neither read nor write to benefit from the press or media. In addition, they did not understand the complex national and international interconnections of the economic, political and social problems affecting their society. No official information was released by the official government press unless a rumour had been published in the newspapers, and nothing was made public until the President's informants had provided their own version about any event or predicted public opinion concerning the issue in question. The Somali population, whether informed or ignorant, was forbidden to discuss politics in public and all forms of association were considered to be political, therefore criminal. Politics had become a private matter. Fear, uncertainty, frustration and tension increased; the system also encouraged a negative form of individualism by isolation.¹¹ Citizens were like prisoners, their right to association was banned, they were isolated from their clan communities and from each other, by fear. The military government used coercive methods to enforce policy measures and decrees were unilaterally decided (Farah 1980).

The security officials in uniform, both junior and senior were authorised to arrest and detain any person who matched their definition of 'offender', 'traitor' or 'enemy of the state'. Any civilian who caused social disorder or publicly disobeyed or denounced the government was arrested and detained for at least three months before appearing before the military tribunal. The armed and civilian guards were clan-based militiamen, commonly referred to as the revolutionists.¹² Their task was to ensure security and maintain peace and social order.

The military and the use of rumour became institutionalised conflict management strategies. Progressive Somalis and government critics were humiliated and intimidated by the security personnel. Corruption was also institutionalised and government officers used public funds for private interests.¹³ Armed robbery, violence, drug and firearms trafficking and begging for arms increased as desperate survival strategies overwhelmed the government's capacity for conflict management. Its violent and repressive methods proved ineffective.

¹¹ Fear at its embryonic stage can make an individual cry, laugh, remain silent or patiently wait and stare at the emptiness but may also cause a state of restless and aggressive behaviour.

¹² The armed and civilian guards were referred to as green guards because they wore green uniforms.

¹³ Corruption was a survival strategy to ensure the basic needs of individuals and their large families.

The failure of the government to ensure the availability of social services, eradicate famine or solve the political crises undermined its legitimacy and authority. An alternative crisis management and conflict resolution framework was required, one that would allow for political solutions and transform the military dictatorship into a democratic government. The prerequisite for sustainable peace, security and development in Somalia was democratic government, respect for human rights and satisfaction of the population's basic needs. The reasons for the escalation of inter-clan violence in 1989 were social crises, government crises and clanpolitics coupled with poverty, misery, ignorance and insecurity.

The military government did not sustain state-society relations through dialogue and co-operation. Fear and suspicion among the Somalis was an obstacle to civil rights activists, especially among intellectuals. Civil society was subdued and rendered politically indifferent. To avoid arbitrary arrests, detention and torture, intellectuals, civil rights groups and political activists submitted to the dictatorial government because they had family responsibilities and obligations.¹⁴

The Clan Factor in the Army as a Conflict and Crisis Regulation Strategy

From 1979 President Barre increased his allegiance to the Mahren clan as a political strategy to prevent a coup d'état. To ensure this policy he appointed individuals from the clan to important government posts. Several years later, in January 1991, the other clans mobilised against his government. The autocratic president had abolished the policy of clan equality and representation in government. Coup attempts by army officers against the government were treated as treason, and their organisers were executed.

In March 1982 President Siad Barre introduced political reform as a conflict resolution strategy. He declared a state of emergency to solve security problems. In August of the same year he authorised the organisation of general elections and he was re-elected president and secretary-general of the Revolutionary Socialist Party. He appointed twelve civilians and fourteen army officers to ministerial posts. These political reforms were limited and undemocratic. Political pressure groups emerged within the army and underground civil activists became active. The President who was also the army general had lost his authority over the national army and the population had lost confidence in the government.

Several reconciliation meetings were organised within the army between the dissident political and social groups and the military government. However, they proved to be in vain. The urgent economic and social problems required concrete but sustainable solutions. Furthermore, in order to solve the complex conflicts and respond to the urgent survival needs of the population, comprehensive problem-solving methods based on democratic principles and respect for human rights were needed. By 1989, although dissident behaviour was considered criminal, many Somali political activists and intellectuals organised secret meetings and circulated petitions against the government (Farah 1980: 150-155). Educated and professional Somalis who had remained in the country were organised into clan-based political opposition groups. Their organisations eventually formed united political groups with dissidents from the national army. The government and the military had lost their *raison d'être*. The dissident politico-military leaders mobilised more support from civil society in accordance with their clan affiliations. Unemployed adults and youth were recruited into the armies of the clan-based political factions.

The army considered a coup d'état the only strategy for political change and the creation of the conditions required for solving the complex socio-economic crises in Somalia. Three

¹⁴ The Somali have a proverb, which states that 'people who have children do not raise their voices, they raise children'.



military-political clan factions emerged as an organised opposition against the government of Siad Barre. They were the Somali National Movement (SNM, Isaaq clan), the Somali Patriotic Movement (Ogaden) and the United Somali Congress (Hawiye + Habr-Gedir + Abgal). At the level of civil society the Committee for the United Democratic Constituion of Somalia (CUDRSL), the National Union of Somali Students (NUSS) and the Committee of Somali Students Abroad (CSSA) were mobilised for change. The political role of Somali intellectuals had been reduced to secret debates and the drafting of memoranda. They could not perform the traditional role of ensuring the spiritual and moral harmony of society. In May 1990 some traditional chiefs, elders and intellectuals formed a joint non-violent Association for Change in Somalia (ACS). The Association denounced the violence and terrorism practised within the framework of the state, demanded the resignation of President Barre and the organisation of democratic elections. However, the various civil society political activists, community associations, youth and student groups and intellectuals were not united, although they all denounced torture, and the anti-democratic and anti-parliamentarian repression of the military government.

The Somali National Movement (SNM), originally based in Ethiopia, is the oldest of the clan armies that fought against the government in Mogadishu. In June 1988 it had attacked and destroyed the two northern Somali towns of Harguya and Burao. The war with the national army caused the total destruction of the towns and about forty thousand refugees went to Mogadishu and Djibouti. Between 1989 and 1990, other clan-based political factions were created and armed against the government (see Table 1). They were the Somali Social Democratic Front (SSDF), commanded by Abdullaabi Yusuf Ahmed, and the SNM (Migiurtine clan) whose leaders had both been in exile in Ethiopia in the 1980s. The Somalia Patriotic Movement (SPM) and the Somali National Army (SNA) were re-compositions of the national army, the Somali National Alliance (SDA), led by Mohammed Farah Abdullah, and the United Somalia Congress (USC), led by Aidid and Ali Mahdi. The SNM, the SDA, the SPM and the SNA formed a coalition against the SNF, which was led by deposed President Siad Barre. The factions had political aspirations but failed to unite to achieve the common goal: a government of national unity and political stability in Somalia.

Table 1: Clanpolitics and clan armies (Lewis 1980: 221 and Torrenzano 1995: 88-112)

Name of Political Armed Faction	Clan
Somali Social Democratic Front, SSDF	Marjeteen (Ogaden)
Somaliland National Movement, SNM	Isaaq
Somalia Patriotic Movement, SPM	Rahawin, Digil
Somali National Army, SNA	Ogaden
United Somali Congress, USC	Habr-Gedir (Hawiye)
United Somalia Congress, USC	Hawiye-Abgal (Hawiye)
Somalia National Alliance, SDA	Hawiye
Somali Democratic Movement, SDM	Digil, Rahawein
Somali Democratic Alliance, SDA	Gadabursi
United Somali Party, USP	Dolbahante
United Somali Front, USF	Esa

The Somali National Movement (SNM) which was founded in 1982 by members of the Isaaq clan was a liberation movement which fought for the independence of northern Somalia. The Isaaq clan was mobilised against the southern clans in government and their goal was to achieve independence and secession. In May 1991 the Isaaq leaders proclaimed Somaliland independent, but this move did not receive international recognition (Campagnon 1992). In 1990 and 1991 the Isaaq dominated the Somali National Movement (SNM), with its aim to liberate Somaliland and became a member of the coalition formed

against the government of Siad Barre. Since the 1980s its leaders have contested the authority of the central government in Mogadishu.

After achieving victory against the government army, the weak coalition of clan-based armed forces split into several small forces according to their clan identities, greatly reducing their military capacity. The separate clan factions could neither win the war nor form a government without associating with the other clan factions. This inability to form a stable political association created a stalemate situation characterised by inter-clan hostilities, which caused over fifty thousand human casualties and created more than 400,000 refugees (Kurian 1992: 1759-1775).

The government of President Barre encouraged clanpolitics, tribalism, corruption, and secrecy, even once the government was overthrown in January 1991. These factors continued to influence armed conflict and politics in Somalia. The different political clan factions fought in their clan territories and against each other in the towns and across the Ethiopian-Somali, Somali-Djibouti and Somali-Kenya borders until 2001 when a government of national unity was formed to ensure the transition to democracy and to consolidate peace.

Clan-democracy as Framework for Conflict Resolution

The political orientation and framework for the transformation of conflict and promotion of the development of Somalia between 1970 and 1989 was scientific socialism, defined as 'the redistribution of Somali resources in the light of scientific wisdom', based on the principles of communism and comradeship, co-operation and the equal status of all Somalis, self-sufficiency and the sovereignty of Somalia¹⁵. The government of President Barre wanted to achieve a 'non-tribal', conflict-free society. In keeping with his aim, Barre replaced the polite term 'cousin', the traditional formal address to a fellow clan member, to 'comrade'. Somali social titles acquired a new term, 'comrade', which as mentioned earlier, was also used to mean co-patriot. The traditional title of the council of elders, whose task was to resolve social conflicts at community level, was replaced by a 'peace council'. The traditional practice of imposing a compensatory payment in cases of murder was abolished and a death penalty was introduced to punish crimes of homicide.¹⁶ In the urban areas, political Orientation Centres were established to provide homes for street children, orphans and unemployed youths. Where deaths occurred in the towns, in the absence of the deceased's family, the state ensured a decent funeral for the individual.

In order to meet the challenge of transforming Somali society on the principles of scientific socialism, President Siad Barre established a martial-law government. Somali society was militarised and disciplined. The Somalis were expected to exercise absolute obedience and submission to authority and respect the laws and decrees issued by the President (Torrenzano 1995: 37-44). The Head of State became the one person who provided solutions to the problems of the nation, and wielded power over the entire population.¹⁷

The National Security Service (NSS) and the National Courts of Justice were responsible for the resolution of problems relating to crime and national security (Torrenzano 1995:

¹⁵ Comradeship was the new concept used instead of citizenship.

¹⁶ The practice of compensatory payment for homicide among Somali age groups was a reconciliatory measure meant to sustain clan and tribal allegiance. Its application had social and political significance (Lewis 1980: 217). The death penalty is a non-Somali tradition. In traditional Somali society the death penalty did not exist; its introduction as a mode of punishment reveals how much the process of modernisation replaced Somali value systems. The Somali traditional elders contested the introduction of the death sentence within the political framework as it meant loss of the traditional reconciliatory practices.

¹⁷ Using a similar philosophy, the government of Habyarimana in Rwanda subdued the Hutu population. Total loyalty to the President, including implementing such instructions against fellow citizens as the killing of the Tutsi population.



42-44). The chief of the National Security Service (NSS) was authorised by the President to issue oral arrest warrants against suspected enemies of the state. The punishment for openly declaring opposition to the government was the death penalty. All forms of dissident behaviour were punishable, for example, in July 1972 two military officers were charged with treason and executed in 1975. Eleven Moslem leaders were also executed for opposing the government's new law enacted to improve the status of Somali women.¹⁸ The new law stated that women had the right to inherit property, which traditionally, had been denied to them.

Moslem leaders and the government were in conflict over the implementation of the principles of scientific socialism and the practices of the military government. The leaders had denounced the arbitrary arrest and detention of civilians, and the use of the death penalty. According to both Islamic teaching and the national constitution, it was forbidden to administer martial law, rule by decree or inflict the death penalty on any Somali.¹⁹ However, the President acted above the constitution and the law of the country, he assigned himself constitutional powers and ruled by decrees. Understood within the cultural context, the president had become the great patriarch, father of every Somali family and of the nation, patron of the sovereign Republic of Somalia, and in charge of its security.

The absence of a clear political perspective and the contradictions inherent in the orientation of the scientific-socialist revolution undermined the government's modernisation programme. The practice of recruitment to public service positions on clan criteria and 'tribal up-starts' further reinforced the clan-client system.²⁰ The military government's choice of coercive methods to settle political and social conflict acted as a catalyst for the escalation of generalised armed conflict from 1989.

Prior to the coup d'état in 1969, civilian governments in Somalia used clan-democracy as a political framework for the settlement of political conflict and the military was under civilian administration. From October 1969 onwards, the military government established a Revolutionary Supreme Council and later the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party as the political framework for conflict regulation in Somalia. Whereas clan-democracy was constitutional, and the government structure ensured clan parity in parliament, the military government appointed military officers to positions in the ruling council and in the party leadership. The clan-democracy model prevented the generalisation of government crises or conflicts in the army, expressed as inter-clan rivalries and confrontations.

The political system adopted by the Somali governments between 1960 and 1969 was a clan-based parliamentary multiparty democratic system. This model of democracy was used to prevent civil war and to ensure political stability. Clanpolitics as a political system was institutionalised and clan-democracy acted as a framework for dialogue and non-violent conflict management and resolution. Representatives of the different clan constituencies were expected to identify the priority needs of their populations and include them in government programmes. The economic, social and cultural policies formulated by the government therefore, reflected the needs and aspirations of the people.

¹⁸ 1975 was the international women's year declared by the United Nations. President Barre introduced this law in favour of women as part of his government campaign to improve the international credibility of his government.

¹⁹ The 1960 national Constitution emphasised Islam as the religion of the state (Art. 3), and freedom of worship (Art. 31), but the constitution in force was a modified version which excluded Islam as a doctrine and the principle source of law (Torrenzano 1995: 39).

²⁰ Tribal upstarts are public officers recruited on the basis of clan affinity and loyalty to the government rather than on merit (Ramsbotham & Woodhouse 1998: 194).

Table 2: Parliamentary clan-democracy (1960 – 1975): Cabinet Positions by Clan (Lewis 1980: 221)

Number of Cabinet Positions	1960	1966	1967	1969	1975
Darod	6	6	6	6	10
Hawiye	4	3	4	5	4
Isaaq	2	3	4	5	4
Digil and Rahanweyn	2	3	3	2	0
Dir	0	1	1	0	2
Total	14	16	18	18	20

Table 2 indicates the number of cabinet ministers according to clan representation criteria and multi-party democracy. Between 1960 and 1969, the number of cabinet officers from the Darod clan did not change. The number of cabinet officers from the Hawiye clan varied between three and five during the same period. The number of cabinet officers from the Isaaq clan increased from two in 1960 to five in 1969. There were two cabinet officers from the Digil and Rahanweyn clan coalition in 1960, the number increased to three in 1966 and 1967 but was reduced to none in 1975. The Dir clan was the least represented in government. In contrast, the Darod clan maintained a dominant position in government; there were ten Darod cabinet ministers in 1975.

In 1960 the first Somali Republic and government was formed, Adan Abdulle Isman of the Hawiye clan was elected President of the Republic; the President was a non-executive Head of State. Mr. Abd ar-Rashid Ali-Shirmarke (Darod) was appointed Prime Minister.

In 1966 the second Somali Republic was formed. Mr. Adan Abdulle Isman was re-elected president, and he appointed Mr Abd ar-Razaq Igal Haji Hussein (Darod) as Prime Minister of the Second Republic. One year later, in 1967, the third Somali Republic was formed, led by Abd ar-Rashid Ali Shirmarke as President and Muhammed Haji Ibrahim Igal, (Isaaq) from Somaliland as Prime Minister.

In March 1969, the electoral process resulted in the re-election of Mr. Abd ar-Rashid Ali Shirmarke (Hawiye clan), as President and Mohammad Haji Ibrahim Igal was re-appointed Prime Minister. The President had been re-elected three times; the constitutional mandate of two terms had not been respected nor the interval for cabinet changes. The lack of respect for the constitution undermined its use as a framework and code of political conduct. The President used cabinet reshuffles as a strategy to manage the political conflict and government crisis. The practice undermined state authority and government credibility, provoked division within the army and served as a catalyst for generating the conflict.

Table 3: Clan-democracy and government structure (1960 -1991)

Year	1960-1966	1966-1967	1967-1969	1969-1991
President	Adan Abdulle Isman	Adan Abdulle Isman	Adan Abdulle Isman	Gen. Siad Barre
Prime Minister	Abd ar-Rashid Ali-Shirmarke	Abd ar-Razaq Igal Haji Hussein	Muhammed Haji Ibrahim Igal,	Vice-President Jama Ali Korshell
President Prime	Hawiye Darod	Hawiye Darod	Hawiye Isaaq	Marehan



Minister				
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The political power-sharing model was such that the president came from the Hawiye clan and the Prime Minister was either from the Darod and Isaaq clans.

Conclusion

The mode of operation of ethnopolitics and clanpolitics in the African context are similar, both are based on tribal allegiance. The experiences in Somalia have revealed that when political majority is equated to clan demographic majority and when cultural patriotism is emphasised rather than civic identity and a republican state founded on the respect of human rights and democratic principles, conflict resolution and violence prevention require an alternative framework. Clanpolitics and the Somali model of clan-democracy are a challenge to the concept of democracy as government of the majority. Clan-democracy as a conflict regulation framework encouraged a selective application of democratic principles, for example the organisation of elections and the policy of constituency representation. Considering that elections and votes were influenced by clan allegiance, clanpolitics was a factor of conflict and not its solution.

Somalia is an example in Africa where the social category 'ethnic' has been replaced by the 'clan'. It is by definition a culturally homogeneous nation-state. The clan is the unit of political and social mobilisation and organisation, under normal circumstances, shared cultural values, traditions and customs as well as language are the basis for unity and social cohesion. On the contrary, the dynamics of the armed conflict between 1990 and 1997 revealed the negative potential of exclusive affirmations of clan identity, clan allegiance and non-civic patriotism in politics, to be menaces to the creation of a stable civic state or civil society. The clan-based political factions and armies undermined the conflict resolution processes initiated by the Somalis and the international community.

The dynamics of state building and the modernisation process introduced in 1970s, which required the ability to manage the internal and external affairs of Somalia posed two conceptual challenges. First, overcoming the conceptual opposition between clan and civic identity. Second, promoting the concept of inclusive identity, using a wider African identity framework. As we have seen, Islam as a common religious identity was not useful in preventing civil war. In the African cultural context, identity is the individual's definition of self, conception of membership and allegiance to symbolic social, cultural, political and territorial units. Therefore, identity is continuous and cannot be defined in rigid terms, it has been constructed in relation to a group and with reference to land. This means that the issue of land is important in conflict resolution and the prevention of state collapse.

The conflict in Somalia has confirmed the role of five interrelated issues of identity participation (clan, religious); (democracy, political system) distribution; (management of economic resource) legitimacy (authority of government over the national territory) and state building and governance penetration (extent of authority on population)

The frequent cabinet reshuffles in the 1970s and the democratisation process introduced by President Barre in the mid-1980s as a government crisis resolution strategy, demonstrated that democracy is more than the organisation of elections. It is a culture of governance, a long term process, which entails wider political participation, definition of a political programme which responds to the needs of the population, creation or revival of institutions, freedom of expression of different view points and mechanisms for non-violent regulation of conflict. The experience confirms the argument that freedom and respect for human rights and democratic principles are the conditions for equal citizenship, development and peace.

A sustainable democratic political system cannot be based on impunity or punishment decided by military courts in an arbitrary manner. In theory, sustainable democracy

indicators include freedom of speech, freedom to vote for change of government, an independent justice system, equality among citizens and a military structure whose line of command comes through a civilian government. The establishment of social and political institutions and their normal functioning should promote civic values and civil society, tolerance and state-civil-military relations of co-operation. In addition, disputes and conflict between citizens and groups should be resolved through open and prescribed procedures which everyone understands and which can offer redress.

The prevention of the recurrence of conflict, political crisis and civil war in Somalia required a policy of multicultural education for two reasons. First, because the state has to guarantee the survival of all its citizens, to produce and reproduce citizens and to ensure that the particular clan identities coexist within an inclusive political system and with a more inclusive identity. A more general identity is required to overcome clanpolitics as a factor of conflict and to promote understanding of the various paradigms. In this context, education for responsible citizenship, democratic principles, human rights, tolerance and coexistence are necessary. Civic values and relevant Somali cultural values should be articulated in a coherent manner in order to ensure social cohesion and political stability. Non-African experiences have demonstrated in history how societies that emphasise civic education have been able to develop and sustain stable civic states.

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