

RIFT VALLEY INSTITUTE | CONTESTED BORDERLANDS

Between Somaliland and Puntland

Marginalization, militarization
and conflicting political visions

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BETWEEN SOMALILAND AND PUNTLAND

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The painting depicts the complexities of political belonging since the collapse of the Somali state in 1991. The yellow lines indicate the frontiers claimed by Somaliland and Puntland. The colour closest to gold portrays the contest for resources. The blue, white, green, and red—found on the flags of Somaliland and Puntland—illustrate the complexities within the borderlands.

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Map 1. Somalia

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I wish to dedicate this book to the memory of Garaad Cabdulaahi Garaad Soofe, who died towards the end of the holy month of Ramadan on 20 July 2014. This was when I was reworking the manuscript. I had the pleasure of meeting Garaad Cabdulaahi in Buuhoodle in early 2004, and thought him a true, traditional leader of his people. He did not tire of searching for settlements for conflicts—large and small—concerning his people and other peoples living in the contested borderlands between Somaliland and Puntland. *Soomaalidu waxay tiraahdaa: Garaad waa nin rag yaqaan, rabi yaqaan iyo run yaqaan. Garaad Cabdulaahi garaad run ah buu ahaa!* (Somalis have said, ‘a garaad is a man who knows men, knows God, and knows the truth’. Garaad Cabdulaahi was a true garaad!)

Note on transliteration

Somali place and personal names in this text follow Somali orthography: the Latin ‘c’ stands for a sound close to the Arabic ع (ayn), ‘x’ denotes the strongly aspirated ح (ha), while long vowels are indicated by doubling them, as in Laascaanood or Faarax. Because other sources use other conventions, the reader will sometimes find other forms of place names and personal names in the text, often where direct citations are used or in references.

Somali authors are usually referred to in the bibliography under their first name, as in the case of ‘Ahmed Yusuf Farah’. With Somali names, the first name refers to the person himself or herself, the second to their father, and the third to the paternal grandfather. If Somali authors have themselves published under a particular last name—their father’s or their grandfather’s name, as in the case of ‘Samatar, Said S.’—this last name is used in the bibliography for listing.

Names in inverted commas, such as Maxamed Xaaji Ibraahim ‘Cigaal’, indicate nicknames, but alone or with a title (‘President Cigaal’ or Sheekh Attam’), the inverted commas are not used. Somalis, particularly Somali men, are frequently better known by their nicknames than by their formal names (Somalis sometimes say that a nickname is the ‘far-reaching name’, *magac dheer*). Some nicknames are inherited from the father or other ancestors. Nicknames frequently have a rather prosaic meaning, referring to physical features like ‘tall’, ‘big ears’, or ‘lame leg’; these are ‘mass nicknames’ which, in combination with a first name and sometimes a place of residence (such as Cabdi ‘Yere’ from Buuhoodle) suffice to specify an individual.

Some nicknames, however, are unique and refer to particular events or deeds concerning a specific person. In this text, nicknames are—with one exception (‘Tolwaa’)—not translated since it would distract the attention of the reader and, in some cases, require a considerable amount of space to explain the exact, often idiomatic, meaning and implications of a nickname. The exception is justified since, in this case, the meaning of the nickname has a direct bearing on the main theme of this

book—political relations between individuals and groups in the northern Somali region.

Somalia, Somaliland, and Puntland are contested ideas, and the use of any one of those names can evoke an emotional response among the people of those territories. Understanding why this should be is part of the purpose of this book. ‘Somalia’ refers to the internationally recognized territory of Somalia, ‘Somaliland’ to the northern region whose independence was proclaimed in 1991, and ‘Puntland’ to north–eastern Somali region that was established as a federal state in 1998.

Preface

I wish to begin this book by clearly stating that I am biased, at least in the sense that doing research on conflict in a conflict zone makes it impossible not to be influenced by the experience of people affected by the conflict. Anthropologists have written extensively on how the observer and observed influence each other: even if conflict were not the topic of research or the environment of it, in all honesty no researcher would be able to remain completely impartial. Nonetheless, the purpose of a book like this is to encourage those who only see one side to be open to other perspectives. Here, I will briefly reflect on the reasons for my particular bias.

I came to northern Somalia through Hargeysa, the capital of Somaliland, and was initially socialized in the capital of this de facto state, inhaling the spirit of independence and self-reliance that filled the air there. The first time I visited Hargeysa was in July 2002, a little more than decade after everything had been lying in ruins, and I was impressed with the beauty of the place. I made friends in Hargeysa and over the past 12 years have almost always entered the region through this ‘gate’. Thus, I am deeply indebted to people and authorities there. Traveling through the country, though, particularly towards the east, showed me a more nuanced picture of what I had seen in the capital. While it is not unusual for the rest of a country to differ markedly from its main city, traveling to the regions of Sanaag and Sool for the first time one had the impression of being almost in another country—or actually, several—at least with regard to the political opinions voiced there, and the stories told, in comparison with those heard in Hargeysa. This awoke my interest and I decided to conduct my PhD research on the topic of state and identity formation in the region.¹

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¹ Markus V. Hoehne, *Political Orientations and Repertoires of Identification: State and Identity Formation in Northern Somalia*. Unpublished manuscript, (Martin-Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg, 2011).

My original plan was to divide my research time between the centres of Somaliland and of Puntland, and in important settlements in the borderlands. In this way, one could observe the processes of state and identity formation in the making in northern Somalia, with Somaliland and Puntland emerging as states and political identities being contested between them. This promised interesting insights into regional social and political dynamics that would also be relevant to broader theory on emerging states and their identities. I balanced my time relatively equally between these research zones (Somaliland, Puntland, and the areas in-between), but happened to get stuck in the Dhulbahante lands. This is meant less in a physical than in a psychological sense, as I spent at least as much time in Hargeysa in Somaliland as I did in Laascaanood in the disputed Sool region; Ceerigaabo in Sanaag was also a long-term field site.

Over the years I returned regularly to all of these places, but emotionally, I became very close to some people living between Taleex, Laascaanood, and Buuhoodle. Again, I am not talking so much about individual friendships since I had very close friends in all my research locations, but in terms of my ‘group feeling’ or, even better, my ‘adopted group feeling’, I identified and was identified increasingly as Dhulbahante. This perception is, of course, worrisome for someone who sees himself as a social scientist. I know the central task of social science is considered that of reflecting—from a distance—upon social phenomena. I myself can claim that, after periods of getting close to people and events in *every* location where I have spent time, I have also distanced myself again and, when writing, have never placed the importance of friendship and other allegiances over that of analysis. It is also true, however, that eventually I related to places like Hargeysa, Ceerigaabo, Garoowe, or Badhan as a visitor from another clan. Of course, I was in fact a visitor from another country and I never forgot that, but whenever people jokingly wanted to enlist me in their group—which happened in every location—I replied I already had one; I was Dhulbahante/Nuur Axmed/Faarax Cali from Taleex. This was a joke but it reflected a certain degree of reality: it was the social setting of my own choice, made during a trip to the

Nugaal valley to deliver some food aid in December 2003. It was also the place in which people everywhere in northern Somalia, from Boorama to Gaalkacyo, put me. This certainly is my bias and I admit it. Without it, this text would not have been written the way it is. I would certainly not have had the same access to the often quite intimate information about the micro-dynamics of politics and conflict I have had, had I not identified myself as (and been identified as) Dhulbahante. Among the Warsangeli I was at least considered (again, jokingly) as a ‘Harti brother’. This created additional trust and trust is the basis of all good social science research, as well as commitment and empathy.

The downside of this identification was that some of my ‘fellow’ Dhulbahante wanted to engage me in projects well beyond my means or interest; I had never intended to become a spokesman for one clan. Many non-Dhulbahante also became suspicious of me. This culminated in my being arrested in mid-2004, firstly in Garoowe and then only a few weeks later in Hargeysa as a ‘spy’. Even more worrying was the fact that towards the end of my PhD field research in October 2004, I was called ‘Somaliland-*diid*’ by some people in Hargeysa—someone who rejects Somaliland, who is anti-Somalilander. More recently, in an online-debate about a short piece I published in 2014, I was called ‘*kacan*-revisionist’ (‘defender of the [Darood] revolution’) because I allegedly cited too many ‘Darood sources’ when writing about the Dervish history.

Therefore, I state it here again openly: that although I am admitting to some degree of clan affiliation or bias, I have never seen myself as a ‘politician’ taking up the cause of one group against another. I admire what people in Somaliland and Puntland have achieved and cannot imagine the hardship that many people, particularly in central Somaliland, must have gone through in the 1980s, before they ‘stood up’ and created their own largely peaceful and, in many regards, flourishing state.

All texts on Somaliland, Puntland, and Somalia are written with a certain amount of bias that their authors may not openly admit to or, perhaps, some may not even be aware of. Literature written since 1991 from ‘a Hargeysa point of view’ has, as far as I can see, dominated the academic output concerning Somaliland and northern Somalia in general.

What I produce here is an alternative perspective—one that, I hope, will be worth reading. In combination with other texts written from different angles (or perspectives), it may help a clearer, more ‘objective’ picture to emerge. My hope is that it will contribute to a more peaceful and less contested northern Somalia.

Methodologically, this book is based on long-term ethnographic research. I conducted field research for a stretch of eighteen months between 2002 and 2004, and for shorter stays over one-and-a-half years between 2008 and 2013. The field-sites I visited repeatedly were Hargeysa, Laascaanood and Ceerigaabo, but I also spent substantial amounts of time in Garoowe, Gaalkacyo, Buuhoodle, Bahdan, and Ceelbuuh, and many more places such as Boorama, Eyl and Maydh for anywhere from a few days to a week. Besides my own interviews, which I conducted mainly in Somali and which inform the text, I drew extensively on material sent to me by close informants and friends in the field. If not indicated differently, translations from Somali to English are mine.

The audience I had in mind when writing this was not people without much knowledge of Somali affairs, seeking to learn something about the region in general, but local actors and specialists. This is the reason why the text goes into such detail. This detail is necessary, in my view, for developing an understanding of the micro-dynamics of both the politics and the conflict that are the subject of these pages.

1. Introduction

Because boundaries connote the site at which things are done differently or the limits to where things are done in one way, they are social constructions. And as the site where different ways of doing things meet, they are likely to be replete with tension and conflict.²

Northern Somalia covers the Horn of Africa from the port of Saylac in the north-west of present day Somaliland, to Cape Guardafui in Puntland on the north-eastern tip of the Horn, and Gaalkacyo on Puntland's border with Somalia to the south. Geographically, the hot coastal zone (*Guban*) along the Gulf of Aden is distinguished from the mountain range (*Golis*), the cooler high plateau (*Oogo*), and the farther hinterland stretching south-west into Ethiopia (*Hawd*).

The four main seasons in the Somali territories are the long rainy season *gu* (April to June), the windy dry season *xagaa* (July to August), the short rainy season *dayr* (September to November), and the long hot dry season *jilaal* (December to March). Most people in the north traditionally live as pastoral nomads keeping sheep, goats, and camels. Animals and animal products are used for subsistence, as well as for export to the Arabian Peninsula. Farming is possible in only a few areas, mainly around Gabiley (west of Hargeysa) and Ceerigaabo. Some inhabitants of the roughly 1,500 kilometres-long strip of coast from the Gulf of Aden to the Indian Ocean (down to Garacad in south-eastern Puntland) are fishermen while along the mountainous northern coast people collect frankincense and wild honey.

In pre-colonial times, northern Somalis existed without centralised rule apart from the few city state 'sultanates' that existed between

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2 Joel S. Migdal, 'Mental Maps and Virtual Checkpoints: Struggles to Construct and Maintain State and Social Boundaries'. In: J.S. Migdal (ed.): *Boundaries and Belonging. States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 5-6.

today's Harar and Saylac from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Egypt, Britain, and France showed an interest in the Horn of Africa as the construction of the Suez channel (1839–1869) made the location strategically important. Egypt was the first to establish its rule over north-western Somali areas in 1869; its forces, however, had to retreat from there to fight the Mahdi insurgency in Sudan in 1884. Subsequently, France and Great Britain moved in and eventually established French Somaliland (later Djibouti) and British Somaliland, respectively. Italy strived to gain possession of southern Somalia in the mid-1880s and acquired a protectorate over the coastal Benaadir in 1889. Italian Somaliland, including the north-east of the Somali peninsula, was established in 1905, and was completed with the transfer of Jubbaland in the south from British to Italian control in 1926.

From the Somali perspective, Ethiopia is still perceived as an African colonial power: its expansion into western Somali territories began with the conquest of Harar in 1887 by the forces of Menelik II. Henceforth, the Ethiopian empire set out to consolidate its eastern periphery and to subjugate its inhabitants through military force. In 1897, Ethiopia and Great Britain concluded a treaty establishing Ethiopian rule over the region, including much of the *Hawd*, which is rich pastureland and thus very important for Somali herders. The treaty was renewed in 1954.³

British Somaliland gained independence on 26 June 1960; the Italian Somali territories followed suit on 1 July. On 1 July 1960, they united to form the Somali Republic. When the central Somali state collapsed in 1991, the political map of northern Somalia was dramatically rearranged. In the north-west of the country, politicians in Somaliland declared an independent state, using the old British colonial borders to define it. Its secession from a collapsing Somalia or, as some would have it, its unilateral dissolution of the voluntary union of British and Italian Somaliland in 1960, had not originally been on the agenda of the guerrilla leadership

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 3 Ioan M. Lewis. *A Modern History of the Somali*. Oxford: James Currey (2002); Lee V. Cassanelli. *The Shaping of Somali Society. Reconstructing the History of a Pastoral People, 1600–1900*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982).

fighting in the north-west against a Mogadishu-based regime it saw as dictatorial. Its declaration of independence initially served as a security measure to stop the violence in southern Somalia from spreading north to it. Traditional strategies of conflict settlement and clan representation, proportional to estimated group-sizes, were the basis for establishing a new state. It took many years before Somaliland became stable.⁴

Once it had become clear that a united Somalia would not be re-established in the short term, people in the north-east (part of the former Italian territory) agreed to establish Puntland as an autonomous regional state.⁵ In the way it was set up, leaders in Puntland mimicked Somaliland, establishing a government through inter-clan conferences and traditional authorities. Their aims, however, are different: Puntland does not claim independence but works to rebuild a federal Somalia. Consequently, Puntland has rejected Somaliland's unilateral secession and ignored the full significance of its shared border, imposed by Hargeysa.⁶

To write about Puntland, Somaliland, and the contested borderlands between them comes with several challenges. The first is the unclear political status of the entities in the region and the problematic terminology related to them. Somaliland perceives itself as independent state, but has so far not received broad international recognition. Puntland sees itself as part of Somalia. The international community officially refers to both in inverted commas and sees the area still as northern part of Somalia. There is no way to do justice to all actors involved terminologically. To complicate the situation even more, the local terminology is partly at odds with the standard meaning of the English terminology. In Somali, the north-west (today's Somaliland) was from

4 Mark Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland* (Oxford: James Currey, 2008); Marleen Renders, *Consider Somaliland: State-Building with Traditional Leaders and Institutions*. (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

5 In Somali it is called *maamul goboleed*, which just means 'regional administration'. I use the term 'autonomous regional state' to indicate that Puntland's government acts autonomously when the federal Somali government is not strong, and it also acts like a state in other ways though it does not aspire to independence.

6 Markus V. Hoehne, 'Mimesis and mimicry in dynamics of state and identity formation in northern Somalia', *Africa* 79/2 (2009), pp. 252–281.

colonial times onwards referred to as ‘*waqooyi*’, which means ‘north’. The whole Italian administered territory including the north-east was usually called ‘*koonfur*’, which means ‘south’. Therefore, when Somalis speak of ‘northern Somalia’ they usually mean only the former British Protectorate, today’s Somaliland. For this text, I chose to use northern Somalia or north (without inverted commas) in the standard sense it would be used by non-locals—referring to the whole geographical north of the Somali peninsula, covering the territories claimed by Somaliland and Puntland. Only where I explicitly refer to the local terminology (in English), I use ‘north’ and ‘south’ in inverted commas (referring to *waqooyi* and *koonfur*).

The second challenge when writing about (northern) Somali affairs in general is the absence of almost any reliable statistics. The last official census in Somalia was conducted in 1985 and 1986, but its results were not published.⁷ Since then, the Somali population has seen massive death, displacement, and flight abroad. During the same period of time, Somali women have had an extremely high birth rate and Somali refugees have also returned home, particularly to the north. This means there is great fluctuation of populations. Moreover, the administration of any local or regional political order existing in the territory of the former Somali Republic is quite limited in its reach. Frequently, as in the north, territorial control is contested between various actors. Thus, it is difficult to find out who controls what and where, and rival administrations are likely to compete with each other through numbers. Consequently, figures produced by these administrations have to be taken with a grain of salt.

Somaliland’s authorities claim to possess a territory of 137,600 sq. km, as of 2014, with 3.5 million people in it. Puntland’s authorities claim

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7 UNDOS summarized this tricky issue in 1997: ‘The first census carried out in 1975 was not published, and only an analytical report based on the census results was brought out in 1984. A national demographic survey was carried out in 1980–81, but the data were not processed, barring a few hand-tabulations. Another census was carried out in 1985–86, and once again the census got bogged down in doubts about its accuracy, and was not published.’ UNDOS. Population Statistics of Somalia (1997), p. 3. Online: <http://www.somali-jna.org/downloads/ACFA9.pdf>

212,510 sq. km with, as of 2014, 3.5 million people living in them. These numbers are, in my view, highly problematic. The territorial extent of Somaliland goes back to the demarcation of its borders during the time of the British Protectorate, but the area of square kilometres the government claims sovereignty over does not indicate which territory is really under its control. The extent of Puntland's territory can only be a very rough estimate since no demarcation has ever been conducted. Both completely neglect the fact that parts of the territories they claim are overlapping. Also, the population figures are highly unreliable. The government of Puntland, in a 'facts and figures' publication in 2003, said the population of Puntland was 2.4 million. In 'Somaliland in figures', published in 2004, the government of Somaliland wrote 'the population of Somaliland was estimated at three million in 1997'.⁸ It is, however, unclear how the two administrations arrived at these numbers. Over the past decade, this number has increased—at least on paper—by almost 50 per cent to 3.5 million people for each of these state-like entities in northern Somalia. If true, this would represent considerable demographic growth (particularly for Puntland); it also would mean that 7 million people would reside in the geographic north of Somalia alone, while standard estimates indicate a population of about 10 million for the *whole* of Somalia (and the geographic south of Somalia is much more densely populated than the north).⁹ In the absence of reliable population or other statistics, numbers are not a good way of analysing conflicts in the region.

The capital city of Somaliland is Hargeysa, a booming centre of commerce and of politics that has been rebuilt from the ruins of civil war in the past two decades, largely with the help of private investment, much of it from the Somaliland diaspora. Hargeysa is the main gate into Somaliland, and for reasons of security, business or comfort many foreign visitors actually spend their entire time there (except for a trip

8 Ministry of Planning and Statistics. Puntland facts and figures, (Garowe, 2003), p. 11; Ministry of National Planning and Coordination. Somaliland in Figures, (Hargeisa, 2004), p. 5.

9 See for instance the CIA factbook (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html>)

to the beaches near Berbera, perhaps). Hargeysa has pleasant restaurants and hotels and is, in many regards, a much more secure and clean city than several of the other capital cities in the region. Berbera is the main port of Somaliland: it is where the country's main export, livestock, is shipped to the Arabian Peninsula. Many imports destined for Ethiopia, including humanitarian aid, land here as well, and are transferred via the 'Berbera corridor' that passes via Togwajaale into Ethiopia. Important towns in the interior are Boorama in the far west, where the country's first university is located (Amuud University, opened in 1998); Burco in the centre to the east, through which much of the livestock coming from the *Hawd* is channelled; Laascaanood in the south-east; and Ceerigaabo in the north-east.

Puntland's capital is Garoowe. It was a small place in the 1980s and has grown in tandem with political developments in the autonomous region. The economic centre of Puntland is Bosaaso, the major port-town in the north, where the import and export trade connects the Somali hinterland with the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian sub-continent across the ocean. Gaalkacyo in the south is a border city—the main gate to and from central and southern Somalia. It is an important commercial centre but suffers from insecurity due to its location. Another important town in Puntland is Qardho between Garoowe and Bosaaso, which is the place where the traditional ruling family of the Majeerteen clan has its residence.

All Somalis in the north, the south and across the whole Somali peninsula (which includes parts of today's Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya) speak Somali, are Sunni Muslims and adhere to very similar myths of origin, constituted by partly fictitious patrilineal descent from various legendary ancestors, some allegedly descending from the Quraish, the extended family of the Prophet Mohamed.¹⁰ Despite the ethnic unity of Somalis, rare in Africa, they are notoriously divided along lines of

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 10 Abdalla O. Mansur. 'The Nature of the Somali Clan System', in Ali Jimale Ahmed (ed.), *The Invention of Somalia*. (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1995), pp. 117–134.

descent, as well as harbouring other allegiances that have been playing important roles in politics since pre-colonial times.

Patrilineal descent (*tol*) matters in Somali society. Each person, male or female, belongs to a certain descent group in the father's line. In the segmentary system of Somali society, large descent groups such as clan-families are sub-divided into clans, sub-clans, and lineages down to the level of the individual (male) family head.¹¹ Somaliland is dominated by members of the Isaaq clan-family and its clans, and sub-clans; they constitute roughly two-thirds of the population and reside in central and parts of western Somaliland, as well as up to the north-east (Ceerigaabo and Maydh). The main group in Puntland is the Majeerteen. They reside between Bosaaso and Gaalkacyo in the area of the pre-colonial Majeerteen sultanate (Majeerteeniya). In the segmentary order, the Majeerteen are part of the Harti clan-collective, which is part of the Darood clan-family.¹² Besides these 'majority' groups, so called 'minority' groups exist everywhere in the Somali setting. In the north, these are mainly Midgan or Madhiban, Muuse Diriye, Tumaal and Yibir. They constitute 'caste-like' groups and their traditional occupations are shoemaker, haircutter, and blacksmith. In the past, some were also hunters; Yibir were considered 'sorcerers'. The majority-minority group divide is still relevant, and many minority group members are disadvantaged in public and political life.

This does not mean that nothing has changed in Somali society over the course of the twentieth century, which saw the introduction of relatively stable colonial and post-colonial state-orders in the Horn. While post-colonial Somali politicians officially played down the role of 'clan', they

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11 Ioan M. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

12 In this text, the clan affiliations of individuals will be presented in brackets after their name, where necessary, in descending order: first clan-family or clan, then clan or sub-clan, followed by sub-clan or lineage, e.g., Isaaq/Habar Awal, or Dhulabahante/Faarax Garaad/Baharasame.

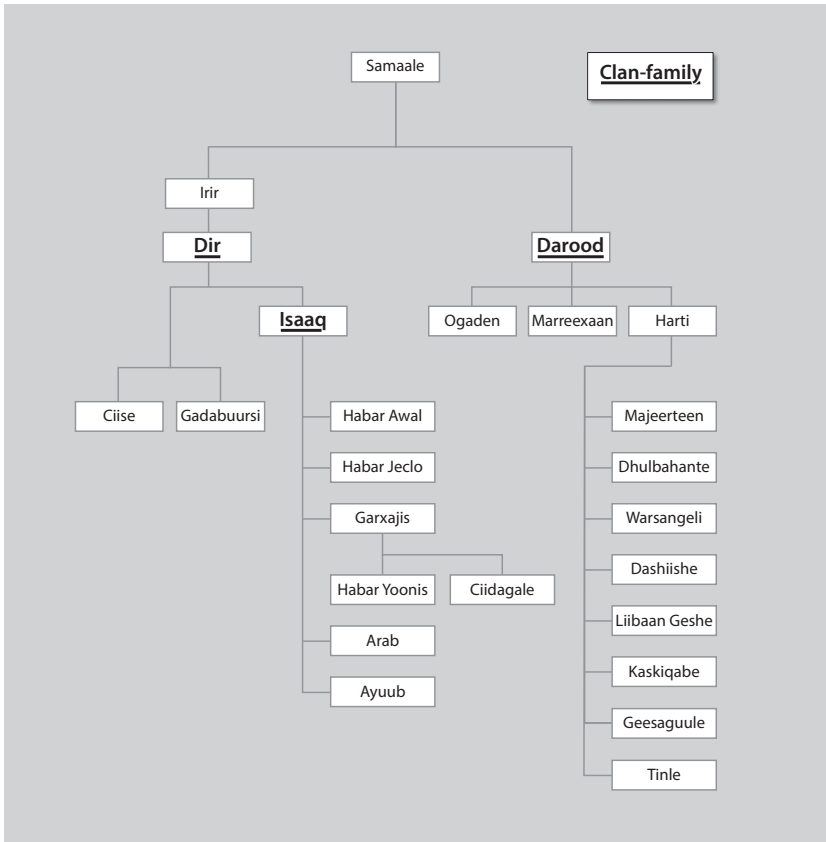


Diagram 1. Main descent groups in northern Somalia¹³

actually continued to use and abuse it. Combined with the power and resources of the central state, clan or better, ‘clannism’ (which implies to the excessive use of patrilineal ties in economic, political and social

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 13 In this genealogical sketch, the Isaaq are subsumed under Dir. In reality, however, Isaaq are a clan-family on their own, due to their size and political weight. The Dir as a clan-family is mainly the Gadabuursi and Ciise clans in northern Somalia and some other clans like the Akishe and Bimaal in eastern Ethiopia and southern Somalia.

matters) unleashed its destructive potential.¹⁴ Eventually, Somalia crumbled into clan or sub-clan-based guerrilla movements that tore at each other's throats; later, it was divided into clan and/or sub-clan-based fiefdoms, run by warlords craving the resources of the failed state. Simultaneously, patrilineal descent became a fallback option for creating a semblance of security and political order in parts of collapsed Somalia, particularly in the north. As clan representatives, traditional leaders negotiated peace between people and took the lead in setting-up political administrations in Somaliland and Puntland, where power was divided in proportion to alleged clan strength. In Somaliland, the Isaaq took the lead, but smaller groups such as the Gadabuursi and Ciise in the west, or the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli in the east received a share that, initially, seemed acceptable to most of them. In Puntland, the main Harti clans divided positions among themselves, with a Majeerteen becoming president, Dhulbahante vice-president, and Warsangeli speaker of parliament.

While Somaliland was established as a successor to the British Protectorate, Puntland emerged as the administration for all Harti clans in the north-east. Somaliland, therefore, is based on a territorial logic and Puntland on a genealogical logic. Both state-like entities collide in the territories of the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli west of the Anglo-Italian colonial border in Somaliland. The territory is claimed by the authorities in Somaliland, but because of the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli are part of the Harti clan collective, it is also claimed simultaneously by Puntland. This constituted the beginning of the conflict between Somaliland and Puntland over the borderlands.

Here it needs to be emphasised that 'clan' is not destiny. As far back as the 14th century, the Arab historian and scholar, Ibn Khaldun, found the pure genealogical tree to be useless.¹⁵ Many centuries later, the French

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 14 Abdi I. Samatar, 'Destruction of State and Society in Somalia: Beyond the Tribal Convention'. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 30/4 (1992), pp. 625-641; Daniel Compagnon. 'Political Decay in Somalia: From Personal Rule to Warlordism'. *Refuge* 12/5 (1992), pp. 8-13.

15 Ibn Khaldun, *al-Muqaddimah*. (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, 1999), p. 226.

sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, described genealogical trees as being like ‘abandoned roads on an old map’.¹⁶ Jama Mohamed, himself Somali, has outlined the difference between genealogy (*nasab* in Arabic) and group feeling (*casabiya* in Arabic). Referring to Ibn Khaldun, he stresses: ‘What creates such togetherness is “social intercourse, common defence, long association and familiarity, and companionship in childhood and in all other aspects of life” (Ibn Khaldun 1999: 327).’¹⁷ During the Somali civil war, violence and flight made clan or patrilineal descent a relevant category of practice. This continued during the conflicts within Somaliland and Puntland, and between them in the borderlands. If clan was important before the war it became more important during the war. Consequently, clan borders also became more significant.

Clan borders became salient negotiable units in the new political landscape of the northern Somali states. Of course, other allegiances—uterine (clan of the mother) and affinal (marriage) ties, friendship, common biographical connections through schooling or work, membership of a Sufi order (*tariqa* in Somali and Arabic) and other personal connections and preferences—also created a sense of belonging and complemented the importance of agnatic ties. The political and social weight of clan cannot be underestimated, though, even more so now since the relationship between descent groups and territory changed over the course of the twentieth century and has become more relevant. The social anthropologist, Ioan M .Lewis, found that, traditionally, the relationship between descent group and territory was very weak and existed only—if at all—at the clan level.¹⁸ More recently, Cedric Barnes has added an important qualification: although genealogical and territorial orientations in Somali society are blurred, there is ‘a historical continuity to genealogically justified territorial struggles’, though this

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 16 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 38.

17 Jama Mohamed Jama, ‘Kinship and contract in Somali politics’, *Africa* 77/2 (2007), 226–249, p. 239–240.

18 Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, p. 4.

does not, perhaps, fully explain how clan relations to territory changed over the twentieth century.¹⁹

The convergence between descent groups and territory grew stronger all over Somalia in the course of the civil war. This study, which focuses mostly on the period from 2002 to 2014, sheds light on these complexities. In reaction to violence and insecurity, descent groups moved into the territories they considered their clan homelands (*degaan* in Somali). Many people who were born, grew up, or spent much of their adult lives in the urban settings of Mogadishu or Kismaayo, moved to villages and towns in northern Somalia after 1991 and established their lives there. Within northern Somalia, the convergence of descent groups and land in the context of violent conflict continues still, particularly in the contested borderlands.

What one can observe here is state formation in the making after state collapse. This study focuses on a volatile area where these processes have become most obvious: the borderlands between Somaliland and Puntland. These border areas pose critical challenges for the experiments in self-government in Somaliland and Puntland. It is here, too, that new forms of clan-autonomy—clan ‘statelets’—have emerged over the past few years.

These dynamics are not only relevant to the stability of northern Somalia but have implications for the whole of Somalia because it is here that relations between Somaliland and rest of Somalia will be decided. Even once the city of Mogadishu and the whole of southern Somalia are at peace, the future of the Somali state or states will be taking shape in areas that remain contested. In this sense, the borderlands are central to the future of the Somali people.

The book is organized as follows: chapters two and three introduce the borderlands, discuss the role of borders in the Somali context, and outline in relevant detail the political history of Somaliland and Puntland. Chapters four and five concentrate on conflict dynamics in

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 19 Cedric Barnes, ‘U dhashay–Ku dhashay: Genealogical and Territorial Discourse in Somali History’, *Social Identities* 12/4 (2006), p. 491.

the Dhulbahante-lands in the regions of Sool, Sanaag, and southern Togadheer/Cayn: taken together they present a case study outlining the militarization of clan territory and the attempts by the Dhulbahante to establish their own regional administration separate from Somaliland and Puntland. Chapter six shifts attention to the Warsangeli and their lands in eastern Sanaag. Here, the focus is on the escalation of conflict in the Golis Mountains west of Bosaaso. The chapter looks at resource conflict and the advent of militant Islam in the area.

While the chapters on the Dhulbahante and on the Warsangeli are different in many regards, a number of similarities connect the two case studies. The lands of the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli are marginalized regions caught between emerging states (Somaliland and Puntland). Both were subject to encroachment by the centre, offering what I call ‘borderland entrepreneurs’ the chance to make careers and gain resources and influence. But despite this, these borderland areas have stayed marginal and, in some regards, have become even more marginal, leading in the late 2000s onwards to a kind of borderland state-building in opposition to Somaliland and Puntland. The lack of state presence and accountability means that these areas have become viewed from the centres and among regional and international actors as ‘ungoverned spaces’—places that are potentially attractive to extremist groups. The seventh chapter draws out several themes that emerged from the study, and the last chapter concludes with policy considerations.

2. Political geography of the borderlands

A journey through the borderlands

My own frequent journeys between Somaliland and Puntland gave me a feeling for the extent and nature of the border and the borderlands. In the middle of 2002 and the second half of 2003, when I began traveling eastwards from Hargeysa, both the governments in Somaliland and Puntland laid claim to Laascaanood, the capital of Sool region, but neither had established a strong foothold there. Driving from Hargeysa to Laascaanood over a distance of roughly 450 kilometres, I would usually stop after about five hours for a break in the town of Burco. There, in the middle of Somaliland, Somaliland shillings, introduced in 1994 were exchanged for Somali shillings that were still the currency in eastern Somaliland, as well as in Puntland and southern Somalia. Continuing eastwards from Burco, I would exchange my white Somaliland licence plate for a black Somalia equivalent. I realized that this was a routine operation for travellers, and every driver on the road to or from Laascaanood carried both plates and the necessary toolkit.

Along the way between Burco and Caynabo, an area inhabited mainly by Isaaq who, as a rule, support Somaliland's independence, the Somaliland flags hoisted above the roadblocks were tattered. (I recollect a contributor to a local newspaper, visiting from the diaspora in 2004, who commented on how the state of Somaliland was reflected in the bad shape of its flags along the tarmac road.) As soon as the car entered territory inhabited by Dhulbahante in Sool region, the flags were no longer those of Somaliland but of Somalia. On reaching Laascaanood, you were tempted to think you were now in Puntland. In fact, when I first made this journey, local policemen demanded that I buy a Puntland visa there. Both the colonial border and contemporary perspective of the Somaliland government, however, meant that Laascaanood was part of Somaliland.

Continuing from Laascaanood to Garoowe, the capital of Puntland, I discovered yet another division of the border space. At the next roadblock,



Map 2. Political divisions in northern Somalia from 1998



120 km farther east just before Garoowe, passengers from Laascaanood were checked carefully. As a foreigner, I had to show my passport and my visa for Puntland. Initially, the soldiers at the checkpoint did not want to let me pass. The local police officers in Garoowe demanded that I buy a second Puntland visa, arguing that they could not accept a visa issued in Laascaanood. When I insisted that, according to their government's position, Laascaanood was part of Puntland and showed my readiness to address their superiors in this matter, the officers left me alone.²⁰

The same journey would be a quite different experience in 2014, reflecting the changing geographical and political dimensions of the border. The Somaliland shilling is now in use until just outside Laascaanood, where you must change money. The area along the tarmac road between Burco and Laascaanood, and Laascaanood itself, came under the control of Somaliland in October 2007, and since then the Somaliland flag has replaced the flag of Somalia. Licence plates have to be changed east of Laascaanood now, close to the village of Tukaraq where the first checkpoint under Puntland's control is located. Foreigners are not allowed to cross over from Laascaanood to Garoowe (or the other way round) because the militarized borderlands have become 'no-go zones' for international NGO workers and others like them. This has serious implications for people's access to humanitarian aid and development projects in the contested borderlands, and adds to the marginalization of the region. It also inhibits further in-depth research on the social and political dynamics of the area.²¹

What was previously a vague and shifting border zone has become a more sharply defined frontline between areas under the military control

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20 Markus V. Hoehne, 'People and Politics along and across the Somaliland–Puntland Border', in *Borders and Borderlands as Resources in the Horn of Africa* (eds. Dereje Feyissa and Markus V. Hoehne) (London: James Currey, 2010), pp. 103–4.

21 Up until my most recent visit in March 2013, I was allowed to visit Laascaanood from Hargeysa, but only with a police escort. The same goes for Ceerigaabo in Sanaag region. The government of Somaliland refused me access, however, to places like Buuhoodle, Taleex and Badhan, which I had visited between 2002 and 2004. The police escort made sure I stuck to the rules. I have received updates from these and other places, though, through friends and informants.

of either Somaliland or Puntland running north–south, roughly parallel to the tarmac road that links Bosaaso and Garoowe. This frontline has undergone changes because of attempts by the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli to establish autonomous administrations of their own. These have forced people living in the borderlands to think about where they belong and demarcate their own clan-borders. Thus, political belonging, mental maps and social borders are constantly being redefined.

Land and Genealogy

Throughout the Somali peninsula, the relationship between genealogical groups and the land has changed significantly over the past 150 years. In pre-colonial and early colonial times, fixed territories were not as important for pastoral nomads who, until recently, comprised the majority of the Somali population.²² Secure access to water and pasture were the main requirements for nomadic herders, and because rainfall varied, pastoralists had to move regularly. The only tie to a fixed territory at a very local level was through claims to permanent wells, though even the ownership of wells changed frequently due to conflict.

When they controlled north-western Somalia (1888–1960), the British tried to prevent conflict between Somali clans and, in some cases, forbade the building of settlements in contested clan borderlands. To enforce these rulings, it was necessary to decide roughly which territory belonged to which clan.²³ The colonial administration fostered, at the same time, the construction of *berkedo*—water reservoirs or cisterns built in the shape of small ponds that filled up in the rainy season and were covered with a wooden grid and leaves to protect against animals and dirt. *Berkedo* allowed northern Somali pastoral nomads to migrate less frequently, facilitating settlement and some degree of territorial ownership. Similar changes also took place in the north-east of Somalia under Italian rule (1894–1960).

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 22 Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, pp. 4–5, and 49.

23 John Hunt, *A general survey of the Somaliland Protectorate 1944–1950*, (Hargeysa, 1951), provided an interesting outline of descent groups and their ‘home wells’.

During the post-colonial period of centralized governments, many northern Somalis moved south in pursuit of education and work. The socialist government of Siyad Barre, which came to power in Mogadishu in 1969, used the devastating drought in 1974—called *dhaba dheer* ('long tail') in Somali—as a pretext to resettle, with help from the Soviet Union, thousands of destitute northern pastoralists in southern Somalia's Jubba and Shabeele river valleys and along central and southern areas of the coast in government farming and fishing schemes. The idea was to turn nomadic pastoralists into farmers or fishermen. Under this socialist government, the notions of clan and clan homeland were considered backward. They were actively discouraged and, as a matter of policy and practice, the government rotated its employees (such as administrators, teachers, members of the security forces) around the country.

Many young boys in Mogadishu were sent to the countryside during the school holidays to learn the art of animal husbandry from their nomadic relatives. Otherwise traditional pastoralist life became relatively unimportant for an increasing number of urbanized Somalis. The pastoralist–nomadic world, *tol* and *xeer* (the customary laws administered by elders that regulated Somalis' group relations), and other relationships foundational in rural areas, such as *xidhidh* (affinal or marriage ties), lost some of their relevance for urbanized Somalis.

Paradoxically, despite its anti-tribalist rhetoric, clannism (*qabyaalad*) was strengthened by Siyad Barre's government.²⁴ President Maxamed Siyaad Barre (1969–1991) stabilized his rule through carefully allying his own descent group, the Marrexaan, with his mother's clan, the Ogaden, and the Dhulbahante, which was the clan of several of his sons-in-law. This alliance became referred to by Somalis in the mid-1970s by

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24 Some authors make a distinction between *tol*—which captures the 'traditional' ways of relying on patrilineal relatives for cooperation and protection, and is complemented by *xeer* and other forms of relationships—and *qabyaalad*, which they believe refers to politicized clannism at the level of the state, leading to exclusion and resource monopolization, and is given as the reason for the destruction of the Somali state. For this argument, see: Ahmed Ismail Samatar. 'Introduction and Overview'. In: A.I. Samatar (ed.), *The Somali Challenge: From Catastrophe to Renewal*, (London, 1994), pp. 3–19; Lidwien Kapteijns. 'Gender Relations and the Transformation of the Northern Somali Pastoral Tradition'. *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28/2, pp. 241–59.

the abbreviation 'MOD'.²⁵ During the civil war that began in northern Somalia in the 1980s and spread south in the late-1980s and early 1990s, a number of clan-based guerrilla movements were established, and the MOD alliance crumbled when Ogaden military leaders formed the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) in 1989. With the demise of Barre's government in 1991, clan became the fallback option for those mobilizing military support and seeking to reestablish political order.

For tens of thousands of ordinary Somalis, patrilineal descent became a matter of life and death during the large-scale 'clan-cleansing' in Mogadishu and parts of the south in 1991 and 1992.²⁶ Members of the Darood clan-family were held liable for the crimes of the Barre regime. Many others, particularly members of minority groups, were collectively subjugated to warlord rule, exploitation and starvation.²⁷ Somalis who were not killed, or did not flee to Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen and elsewhere, moved to their clan homelands (*degaan*), where they felt more secure. Many former residents of cosmopolitan Mogadishu and other ancient ports like Baraawa and Kismaayo on Somalia's Benaadir coast, found themselves living in places they had previously considered 'uncivilized' some way inland.

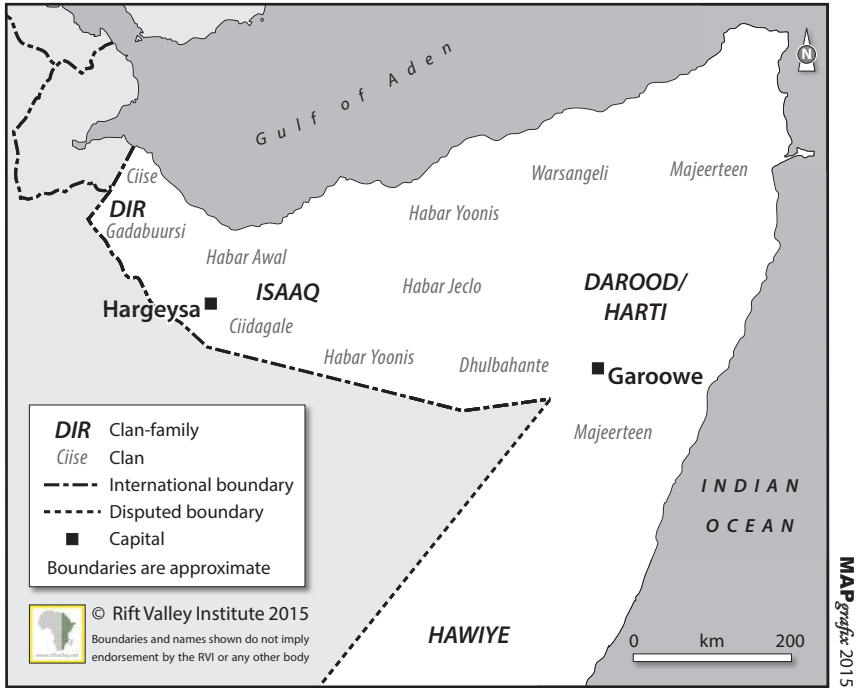
As many Dhulbahante, Warsangeli and Majeerteen fled north, members of these clans established themselves in their respective *degaan*. Also, for Isaaq, intra-clan family divisions and seeking refuge in clan and sub-clan homelands became significant when the Somali National Movement (SNM) crumbled during in-fighting between 1992 and 1995. The consequence of such mass internal relocation was that for the first time in Somalis' known history, firm ties were established at all levels of segmentation between territory and genealogical identity: clan-families,

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25 'MOD' standing for Marreexaan, Ogaden, Dhulbahante, and Ministry of Defence, in which these Darood clans were strongly represented. Ioan M. Lewis. *Blood and Bone: The Call of Kinship in Somali Society*. (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1994), p. 165.

26 Lewis, *Modern History*, p. 263; Lidwien Kapteins, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia: The Ruinous Legacy of 1991* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2013).

27 Alex De Waal. *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*. (Oxford: James Currey, 1997), pp. 163–73.



Map 3. Clan areas in northern Somalia

clans, sub-clans and lineages now had ‘their’ place. The only exceptions were among agro-pastoralist communities scattered in pockets of the north (for example, around Gabiley and Ceerigaabo), where a more permanent and defined relationship to land had existed in the pre-colonial past. Whereas for pastoralist Somalis, maps had previously been defined by settlements near important wells or features of the landscape such as mountains and valleys, nowadays maps are defined more closely in relation to political influence and in accordance with which clan forms the majority in any particular place.

The relationship between territory and genealogy is not the only thing that has changed, particularly since 1991; individual self-perceptions have changed too. Many Somalis who grew up before 1991 in cities in southern Somalia, where clan identity was not necessarily important in daily

interactions, did not always know as much about their own genealogy as they do now, though some would have been taught something about their genealogies, usually by their fathers. Many learnt about it from 1991 onwards, often in the context of flight and inter-clan fighting.

As the demography of the country changed, and territories and genealogies intersected, new perceptions emerged—both of the self and of others. Cabdulaahi ‘Qalafu’, for example, had spent his formative years in Mogadishu, coming to Laascaanood in 1991 fleeing the violence in the south. Like many other people displaced from an urban setting, he expressed nostalgia for his previous lifestyle:

I have no camels, sheep or goats. I am a man from the city, not a nomad. Nomadic life is all about camels, camels, camels... I do not like the nomads’ food. The market in Mogadishu was full of fruits, fish and so on. Here, you eat only rice. When I came here, my family offered to collect some animals for me: I refused. My children will be educated; I want education, I don’t want camels! I pay US\$30 every month for private schools for my children. I want them to learn English.²⁸

Not only the relationship between Somalis and the land, but social relationships too, changed as a result of the civil war. The fighting in northern Somalia by Isaaq clans against Dir and Harti clans led to changes in their normally exogamous marriage patterns. This was obvious in places like Ceerigaabo where, in the past, Isaaq and Harti clans had inter-married. In the unsettled 1990s, marriages sometimes took place instead between close patrilineal cousins (*ina adeer*) within a lineage. With the return of relative peace, this appears to have changed back again.

In rural areas, clan borders had always been blurred by the necessities of nomadic life—resource sharing, intermarriage and, occasionally, feuds between groups, usually brought to an end by traditional authorities. Such agreements were established under customary law (*xeer*). They are supposed to be binding but last, obviously, only for as long as both sides

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28 Interview with Cabdulaahi ‘Qalafu’, Laascaanood 14 September 2002.

respect them. Though politically opposed to Somaliland's independence, Dhulbahante elders in rural areas have nonetheless described their bonds with their Isaaq neighbours as close: '*Waa isku degaan; waa isku dhaqan; waanu is dhalnay*' ('We live in the same area; we have the same culture; we gave birth to each other').²⁹

In the past, the concept of territorial boundaries was weak in the northern Somali region; borders between clans were not usually clearly defined; intermarriage and changes in the control of land and resources through conflict and/or migration were the norm. Land and genealogical belonging became more closely linked during the civil war and the collapse of the Somali state. There is still much flexibility, though, particularly in rural areas.

The more the conflict increased between Somaliland and Puntland—and after 2009, between local clan militias and the armies of these centres—the more people tried to draw firm territorial borders, something which has also hardened their political identities on the ground.

Multiple perspectives on borders

State borders are essentially political and legal constructs that mark inter-state divisions under international law.

Borders have imagined and practical aspects: according to Joel Migdal, 'boundaries include symbolic and social dimensions associated with the border divisions that appear on maps or, for that matter, other dividing lines that cannot be found on any map at all.'³⁰ Borders influence population movements and the location of infrastructure, and have economic, social and political dimensions.³¹ Borderlands, on the other hand, are defined as the imagined or physical space along and on both sides of

29 Interview with Maxamuud Xaaji Cumar Camey and some others, Buuhoodle, 12.03.2004.

30 Joel S. Migdal 2004, 'Mental Maps and Virtual Checkpoints Struggles to Construct and Maintain State and Social Boundaries'. J.S. Migdal (ed.): *Boundaries and Belonging: States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 5.

31 E. Fischer. 'On Boundaries', *World Politics* 1/2 (1949), pp. 196–222.

borders.³² In the case of northern Somalia, the borders are notoriously ambiguous and ill-defined, with three different perspectives on them distinguishable: one from the international community (represented by the UN); another from the region's state-like entities, the Republic of Somaliland and the autonomous regional state of Puntland; and another by people in the borderlands.

Under international law, northern Somalia remains part of a larger nation state that has been in various stages of collapse since 1991, but still continues to exist as a (virtual) state with representation at the UN and other international organisations. States as legal constructs are very resilient.³³ Almost all overtures by the international community towards Somalia since 1991 have held on to the fictitious unity of Somalia as a country. This has led to the formation of a series of transitional governments since 2000—first under a centralized constitution and then under a federal constitution. The most recent government, the Somali National Government (SNG), was installed in mid-2012, and recognized in early 2013 by many states as representative of Somalia.

Since then, there have been modest signs that things will improve. In July 2014, however, the SNG still only controlled parts of Mogadishu and a number of other urban centres with the help of thousands of foreign troops from Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti, and other African states. Local strongmen/warlords and militant Islamists of Al Shabaab challenge the power of the government. Insecurity and lawlessness remain a problem in Mogadishu and much of southern and central Somalia. Most ordinary Somalis live without public services and state protection, and many are dependent on humanitarian support and help by relatives in the diaspora.³⁴

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 32 M. Baud and W. van Schendel. 'Toward a comparative history of borderlands', *Journal of World History* 8/2 (1997), p. 216.

33 Daniel Thürer, 'The "failed State" and international law', *International Review of the Red Cross*, No. 836 (1999). <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/article/other/57jq6u.htm>.

34 International Crisis Group (ICG). *Somalia: Al-Shabaab – It Will Be a Long War*. Africa Briefing No. 99 (2014).

For the governments of Somaliland and Puntland, there is a border; actually, there are two. The government in Hargeysa (in Somaliland) claims its border runs along lines demarcated in the Anglo-Italian protocol of 1894.³⁵ When the independence of Somaliland was declared on 18 May 1991, its borders were delineated within the old colonial borders, including its eastern one. From this perspective, the territory of British Somaliland—officially declared in 1888 (its borders fixed in later agreements) and lasting until 26 June 1960—is identical to the territory of the present-day Republic of Somaliland.

For the government in Puntland, the border dividing British and Italian-administered Somali territories dissolved when the two were united in a voluntary union that established an independent Somali Republic on 1 July 1960. Civil war and the collapse of the Somali state has meant that ‘clan’ has evolved not only as a foundation for guerrilla forces, but as an option for local governance.³⁶ Puntland was established on 1 August 1998 as an entity representing clans belonging to the Harti clan collective. Its borders are, therefore, genealogically defined, and extend to where Harti and some smaller Darood groups, such as Awrtable and Leylkase, reside in the north-east.

While borders can be recognized and legitimized on maps, they also have to be recognized by the people who live on and around them; to be effective, they have to be integrated into their lives. In the case of Somaliland and Puntland, the claims of their respective governments did not match the reality on the ground. Those people living in the contested borderlands have lived without a border for many years. It took six years (1991–1997) for people in Somaliland to achieve peace and political stability, during which time it concentrated on politics in the central and, to a lesser extent, western regions of the country stretching from

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 35 Lewis. *A Modern History of the Somali*, pp. 47–61, 99.

36 Guerilla fighters and local order are not necessarily a contradiction. Even warlords initiated some form of local order beneficial to their followers; see: Jutta Bakonyi and Kirsti Stuvøy. ‘Violence and Social Order Beyond the State: Somalia and Angola’, *Review of African Political Economy* 104/5 (2005), pp. 359–382.

Boorama to Burco.³⁷ Some effort was subsequently made to manage the east as well, but any meaningful administration there remained limited until the mid-2000s. When Puntland came into being, its government, also, focused on putting the polity between Bosaaso and Garoowe (and to a lesser degree, Gaalkacyo) in order. This means that throughout the 1990s no state border whatsoever existed for the people in what gradually became the contested borderlands. People respected clan borders between Isaaq/Habar Jeclo and Isaaq/Habar Yoonis, and Dhulbahante and Warsangeli to the west, and between the latter and the Majeerteen to the east. These were usually vague and permeable, though, and in the dry season and times of drought nomads from any of these clan groups could criss-cross the area in search of pastures and permanent wells.

From the perspectives of the two political centres, their eastern or respectively western peripheries appeared on the radar as areas worthy of more serious engagement only when, in late 2002, Somaliland prepared for its first democratic elections and took steps towards exerting its control over Laascaanood. Puntland reacted militarily, which marked the beginning of protracted military engagement between Somaliland and Puntland. This was the first time the reality of a contested border had been brought home to local people. The military conflict between Somaliland and Puntland in the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli territories over the following decade turned a border ‘grey-zone’—in which locals could ignore any alleged border—into a border war-zone in which some lines became complicated to cross, or crossing them triggered consequences beyond their control.

The local economy suffered. Double taxation (carried out by Somaliland and Puntland) and, sometimes, restrictions on movement in the conflict zone, negatively affected trade; national and international NGOs and UN organizations understood the borderlands were insecure and held back on starting substantive, sustainable projects in them;

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 37 Ulf Terlinden. ‘Emerging Governance in Somaliland: A Perspective from Below’, in Eva-Maria Bruchhaus and Monika M. Sommer (eds), *Hot Spot Horn of Africa Revisited*, Hamburg: LIT Verlag (2008), pp. 51–67.

and Dhulbahante and Warsangeli in the Somali diaspora viewed their own clan-homelands as too risky for private investment. The already marginalized areas became further marginalized and the grievances of the borderlanders grew.

The border has been taking shape ever since there was a military confrontation between Somaliland and Puntland. In the late 2000s, when people living in the borderlands began to think that neither Somaliland nor Puntland was acting in their interest, they distanced themselves from both to set up autonomous clan administrations of their own. The interaction between the centres and peripheries changed once again, and altered the pattern of political and military confrontation. While previously the fighting had been between the 'national' armies of Somaliland and Puntland (with contingents of local clans enlisted in both), now it featured clan militias from the borderlands pitched against the armies of the centres. This meant that powerful local elites turned to parochial projects instead of trying to integrate their communities as part of Somaliland or Puntland.

Meaningful representation of borderlands constituencies in the centres decreased as conflict in the borderland increased, and the social and political distance between borderlanders and the centres grew. Also, rifts within the local community became more prevalent. Besides economic and political marginalization, fighting came at considerable human cost: since 2006 hundreds of people have died in fighting between Puntland's forces and Warsangeli militias in the Golis Mountains, and between the Somaliland army and Dhulbahante militias between Taleex, Laascaanood, and Buuhoodle since 2010. Many more civilians have been wounded and displaced. Civic rights and freedom of expression and association have been curtailed, particularly in Laascaanood.³⁸ Warsangeli residing in Bosaaso have also become the subject of state oppression.

Fighting between Somaliland, Puntland and local clan militias has been sporadic, though, concentrated in a few places in the *Hawd*, the Nugaal valley and the Golis Mountains. The long-term effect in the

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 38 Amnesty International. *Human Rights Challenges: Somaliland Facing Elections* (2009).

space between Somaliland and Puntland has been the hardening of the border—both in the minds of the inhabitants of the region, and more literally on the ground in the form of militarized checkpoints and frontlines. The border has remained ‘soft’ for some, such as local educationalists and aid workers who choose to ignore the conflict to provide assistance. The border is also soft in those places that the frontline has not—or not yet—reached.

Where the border lies and when it came into being are questions with different answers. For Hargeysa there is no doubt: Somaliland’s eastern border, demarcated in colonial treaties, was revived on 18 May 1991. One problem with colonial borders in general, however, is that they were rarely demarcated very precisely—in terms of markers on the ground. And even when they were, what may have seemed accurate on paper was rarely left uncontested.³⁹

The border relevant to Puntland is defined not territorially but genealogically, which means it is vague for a different reason, since members of genealogical groups often move. For the borderlanders, the location of the border is decided upon pragmatically and on a day-to-day basis—wherever (at the moment) a frontline exists, the border is there.

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 39 C. Boonen and L.J.M. Seymour. *What if Pandora’s Box is empty? Rethinking uti possidetis and Territorial Order*. Paper presented at the 1st World Conference of the Association for Border Studies, ‘Post-Cold War Borders: Global Trends and Regional Responses’, June 2014, pp. 9–13, Joensuu, Finland and St. Petersburg, Russia (2014).

3. The making of a contested borderland

The foundation of Somaliland

The Republic of Somaliland was declared an independent state on 18 May 1991 at a clan conference convened in what was then the relatively small north-western Somali town of Burco. This meeting brought together guerrilla leaders and delegates from all the region's clans. It had been preceded by a multitude of small-scale clan conferences held to bring an end to fighting between groups that, in the late 1980s, had been on different sides of the civil war.⁴⁰

Between 1981 and 1991, the Somali National Movement (SNM)—essentially an Isaaq-based guerrilla movement—had fought the regime of President Maxamed Siyaad Barre in Somalia. Other groups in north-western Somalia—such as the Gadabuursi, Dhulbahante, and Warsangeli—had sided, as a rule, with the Barre government. In mid-1988, the SNM briefly took control of the key north-western towns of Hargeysa and Burco and in reaction, the government bombed them from the air, killing many thousands of civilians. Then fighting escalated into full-blown civil war. Clan militias loyal to the Barre regime fought against the SNM, which to them by then meant the Isaaq as a whole.⁴¹ The SNM gained the upper hand militarily in the north-west of Somalia in early 1991 as the Barre government in Mogadishu was overthrown by other clan-based military forces in the south.

The conference in Burco in April and May 1991 took place in a chaotic, emotionally charged atmosphere. The most important thing on its agenda was restoring security; the idea of independence came second. The idea was fraught with complications: the SNM leadership was not in favour

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⁴⁰ Academy for Peace and Development (APD). *Peace in Somaliland. An Indigenous Approach to State Building*. (Nairobi: Interpeace, 2008).

⁴¹ Gerard Prunier, 'A Candid View of the Somali National Movement', *Horn of Africa* 13/3 (1990) and 14/4 (1991), p. 109.

of secession—Somali unity was, in fact, written into the movement’s manifesto. The rank and file of the SNM, however, were fed up with Somalia, which to them meant being ruled from Mogadishu, the Somali capital, and by southern Somali, mainly Darood clans. Anyone who had supported the regime (which included some Isaaq) was called *faqash*. Soon, this derogatory term (which refers to ‘filth’ or ‘dirt’) became synonymous with ‘Darood’. While he was in power, President Barre had placed members of his Darood/Marrexaan clan in charge of the military in the north-west, and had deployed Somali soldiers from southern clans there, including members of minority groups.

Anti-Darood and anti-Mogadishu (or southern) sentiment already existed in the north for other reasons. In the wake of Somalia’s short war with Ethiopia for control of the Ogaden (1977–1978), many ethnic Somali refugees from eastern Ethiopia, who were mainly Darood/Ogaden, settled in what were broadly regarded as Isaaq territories in north-western Somalia: some were later armed by the Barre regime against the SNM. SNM war propaganda fuelled these existing tensions. This anti-southerner propaganda ignored other facts: the territory where the Darood clan-family lived was huge, extending from northern to southern Somalia, and into eastern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. Many non-Isaaq in the north had supported the Barre regime. In the south and the north-east, Hawiye and Darood/Majeerteen clans had suffered under the Barre regime, too. The United Somali Congress (USC) that overthrew Barre in January 1991 was Hawiye-led.

As a clan-family, though, the Isaaq felt they had been especially singled out for their armed opposition to Barre’s military regime. For ten years, Somalia’s central government had subjected the Isaaq to sporadic looting, rape, and killing. In 1988 Hargeysa, the largest city in the north, was flattened by Barre’s air force. At the conference in Burco in May 1991, all this could finally come to an end.⁴²

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42 Africa Watch, ‘Somalia: A Government at War with its Own People: Testimonies about Killings and the Conflict in the North’, New York, 1990.

The latest news reaching Burco from Mogadishu in May, however, was worrying: one of the USC's leaders, Cali Mahdi, had usurped the presidency on 31 January 1991. The USC had been in alliance with the SNM and Cali Mahdi had taken the presidency without the consent of his co-leader, Maxamed Faarax Caydiid, and without consulting other armed factions in the country. Parts of the USC were still fighting against Barre, who had fled to the Marrexaan heartland in Gedo region of south-western Somalia. The USC split with one wing supporting Mahdi and another Caydiid. Other clans established militias and joined the war, fighting mainly for spoils. Mogadishu and the rest of southern Somalia was on the verge of collapse. When state-run Radio Mogadishu said the SNM leadership had agreed to meet southern armed groups, large demonstrations broke out in Burco and other major north-western towns.⁴³

The SNM leadership and representatives of non-Isaaq clans present in Burco felt compelled to support the declaration of independence for their region. 'The declaration of northern independence is the result of a costly war of liberation,' said Yuusuf Cali Sheekh Madar, the SNM's second chairman (1982–1983) and Somaliland's first foreign minister (1991–1992). 'It is also the answer to unheeding arrogance and domination.'⁴⁴

The declaration of independence happened 'without benefit of planning or careful considerations of the possible consequences'.⁴⁵ This is important since the declaration is a turning point in the political history of northern Somalia. It is the subject of contradicting interpretations: it followed the will of the largest and best armed group in the region, the SNM, and its mainly Isaaq supporters, the most populous clan in the region. The Burco declaration provided a basis for peace in the north-

43 John Drysdale, *Somaliland: The Anatomy of Secession* (Hove: Hove Publications, 1992), p. 25; Cabdiraxmaan Jimcaale, 'Consolidation and Decentralization of Government Institutions', in *Rebuilding Somaliland: Issues and Possibilities*, ed. (Lawrenceville, NJ/Asmara: Red Sea Press, 2005), pp. 60–61.

44 Yuusuf Cali Sheekh Madar, Foreign Minister of Somaliland, speech at Uppsala Forum 28–30 August 1991, reproduced in Maria Brons, *Somaliland: Zwei Jahre nach der Unabhängigkeitserklärung* (Hamburg: Institut für Afrikakunde, 1994), p. 75.

45 Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, pp. 82–3.

west of the Somali peninsula and everybody agreed on the need for peace after years of civil war.⁴⁶ It was several years before Somaliland would become stable, but without the Burco agreement there would have been no framework for peace-building and state formation.

The question of who actually supported secession is contested. Most Isaaq were in favour of it. Daniel Compagnon, writing closer to the time, stresses that non-Isaaq groups favoured independence as well because of a feeling of marginalization by Mogadishu—an issue particularly for the Gadabuursi who had waited in vain throughout the 1980s for a road and other infrastructure for building the economy of their areas. The Dhulbahante and Warsangeli were apparently shocked by the extent of clan-cleansing taking place in the south in 1991, led by the Hawiye, to which many Darood fell victim. Compagnon suggests the idea of separating from a Mogadishu under USC-control, in which Hawiye-rule (though split) seemed to have replaced Darood-rule, appeared to interest non-Isaaq too.⁴⁷ Later, some Dhulbahante and Warsangeli would argue they had not agreed to secession; rather, they felt they had no alternative given the SNM's greater firepower and the unfolding chaos in the south. The Gadabuursi and Ciise, 'cornered' and defeated by the SNM, were not known as secessionist either. In other circumstances, most non-Isaaq might have opted for Somali unity but given the situation in early 1991, they believed that going against the will of the Isaaq majority would have led to new fighting.⁴⁸

Both interpretations have their merits. The official version of Somaliland's history (written by its government) sweeps aside the differences of opinion surrounding independence, while other versions make it clear

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46 In superficial analyses of the Somali disaster it is often overlooked that the Somali civil war had started in the 1980s in the north. When fighting broke out in the south in 1991 (which usually but wrongly is taken as starting point of the Somali civil war), people in the north had already had their fair share of fighting and suffering and were tired of war.

47 Daniel Compagnon. 'Somaliland, un ordre politique en gestation?', *Politique Africaine* 50 (1993), pp. 9–20, pp. 13–14.

48 Interview with *garaad* Cabdiqani, Laascaanood, 10 September 2002.

that, at the time, the SNM leadership itself had mixed feelings and many non-Isaaq, tacit reservations. This has not been addressed openly since. Among members of the region's older generation, the chaos of the Burco conference was an open secret silenced in public for political reasons; but among many of Somaliland's younger, mostly Isaaq, inhabitants, secession is viewed as a *fait accompli*. This is why many younger Somaliland nationalists today consider the conflict in the Harti-territories between Somaliland and Puntland the result of treason on the part of Dhulbahante and Warsangeli. They argue these two groups agreed to join Somaliland and dropped out only later when they seemed on the verge of getting a better deal from Puntland or southern Somalia.

In the early 1990s, the lack of open debate about these differences did not make much difference. Somaliland's independence went without international recognition. The world concentrated on Mogadishu; the north was ignored. The first interim government led by the SNM was extremely weak. Cabduraxmaan Axmed Cali 'Tuur', the SNM's chairman, and Xasan Ciise Jaamac, his vice-chairman, became president and vice-president. Their cabinet consisted of eleven high-ranking SNM members, who were Isaaq, and six people from non-Isaaq clans.⁴⁹ The lack of state revenue, a ruined regional infrastructure, the large number of armed militias, splits within the SNM, and a president who did not himself support secession, made any form of effective government impossible. Fighting among the Isaaq broke out in Berbera and Burco in 1992, and for two years, little progress was made in developing the polity of Somaliland as a whole.⁵⁰ Somaliland's western and eastern peripheries were left to fend for themselves.

The internal conflicts within the Isaaq were settled by traditional authorities, mainly from non-Isaaq clans, illustrating the degree of cooperation there could be between all groups in the 'north' when it came to restoring peace. A second national *shir* ('assembly')—also called

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49 Renders, *Consider Somaliland*.

50 Patrick Gilkes, 'Two wasted years: The Republic of Somaliland 1991–1993', Save the Children Fund, London, 1993, pp. 21–24.

shir weyne ('grand conference')—was held in the town of Boorama in the Gadabuursi area of Somaliland in the first half of 1993. A national charter was adopted, which functioned as a provisional constitution for Somaliland. This separated the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, and introduced a bi-cameral parliament consisting of a House of Elders (*Golaha Guurtida*, commonly shortened to *Guurti*), and a House of Representatives (*Golaha Wakiilada*). Thus a hybrid political order incorporating both traditional and modern elements of governance was established in Somaliland.

At this conference, an experienced Isaaq politician, Maxamed Xaaji Ibraahim 'Cigaal', was elected as Somaliland's new president for a two-year term. Cigaal had not been part of the SNM struggle, but enjoyed respect as an elder statesman. He had been the first minister of an advisory council established by the British administration in 1959, and Somalia's prime minister before the 1969 coup that brought Maxamed Siyaad Barre to power. Cigaal's Habar Awal clan held economic assets in Somaliland, controlling the port of Berbera and several large businesses in Hargeysa. This would prove crucial for his administration. Cabduraxmaan Aw Cali 'Tolwaa', an SNM veteran and a Gadabuursi, became vice-president. Almost the only Gadabuursi in the SNM, his nickname 'Tolwaa' meant 'without clan', a sign that he was seen as having already left his patrilineal descent group to join another clan-family (in his case, the Isaaq). The Boorama conference was a 'watershed event in Somaliland', establishing a political framework for the country for the coming years.⁵¹ The fact that the 1993 *shir* was held in Gadabuursi territory suggests that most non-Isaaq in the west of Somaliland were already reconciled to the idea of independence.

The centre of Somaliland at this time was far from stable: rifts within the Isaaq clan-family between those supporting the former president, Cabduraxmaan 'Tuur', and those supporting the new government led to fighting in Hargeysa and Burco in 1994 and 1995. Despite this, President Cigaal was able to take important steps in state-building. In 1994, he

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51 Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, p. 98.

introduced a new currency, the Somaliland shilling, which by early 1995 had become legal tender in western and central Somaliland as far east as Burco. The government started taxing imports and exports. With this it began demobilizing the SNM and other clan-militias, and paying members of its administration and security forces modest salaries. Against the backdrop of the general disintegration of the region, this was an enormous achievement. Still, there was a long way to go for Somaliland to become a 'state'. The key public service the government provided to its people was basic security in central Somaliland, usually in cooperation with local elders. In more peripheral regions, Hargeysa's authority was minimal.

Violent conflict in central Somaliland concerned only some of the country's inhabitants. Life for most Isaaq in the Sanaag region as far as Ceerigaabo, as well as non-Isaaq clans in the east and west, remained peaceful but without government administration. In their territories, traditional and other community leaders, such as former military officers, police officers and teachers, provided some governance, often with financial and other help from the diaspora.

The conflict in the centre was brought to an end by traditional leaders, members of the Somaliland diaspora, and the government of Ethiopia—which was worried that clan clashes would spill over its borders into Ethiopia's 'Region 5' (*killinka shanaad*). A final, grand inter-clan conference was held in Hargeysa from October 1996 to February 1997 to end the large-scale fighting in Somaliland. In contrast to the previous conferences in Burco and Boorama, the *shir* in Hargeysa was clearly dominated by the government and incumbent president.⁵²

Officially, the meeting was presided over by members of the *Guurti* and House of Representatives, as well as delegates from Somaliland's various clans. Cigaal persuaded delegates to endorse candidates from pro-government groups, something that alienated some clan-leaders from the peripheries.⁵³ A list of delegates from Sool proposed by

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52 Renders, *Consider Somaliland*.

53 Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, p. 126.

Garaad Cabdiqani, the highest-ranking Dhulbahante traditional leader, was rejected.⁵⁴ This irritated the *garaad*, who had been moderately pro-Somaliland up until that point. Cigaal may have been trying to integrate other branches of the Dhulbahante, not represented by the *garaad*, into his government.

Broadly speaking, among the Dhulbahante, Garaad Cabdiqani headed the Faarax Garaad branch and Garaad Saleebaan the Maxamuud Garaad branch. Though never in favour of a separate Somaliland, for reasons of political strategy Garaad Saleebaan had begun to position some of his relatives in Hargeysa. Up to then, Garaaq Cabdiqani had been taking the lead in this regard. Clan representatives living there had been viewed as pawns manipulated by the government; consequently, they had lost some of their of legitimacy in their local constituencies, particularly among Dhulbahante and Warsangeli.

Cigaal was re-elected President of Somaliland by a council of elders in February 1997. Daahir Rayaale Kaahin, a little-known Gadabuursi who had worked in Somalia's National Security Service (NSS) under Maxamed Siyaad Barre before becoming a trader, became the new vice-president. The number of seats in the houses of parliament was increased from 75 to 82 per chamber. Most of the new positions were used to appease the Isaaq clans of Habar Yoonis and Ciidagale, which had fought Cigaal in 1994–1995. They were also used for giving minority clans representation.⁵⁵

Whatever its shortcomings, the Hargeysa conference enabled people in Somaliland to move ahead with political, economic, and social reconstruction. From 1997 onward, Somaliland as a polity took shape with struggles for power and participation among leading politicians, members of the business community, SNM veterans, traditional authorities, members of its nascent civil society and the diaspora. Interestingly, religious leaders did not play a visible role in the process of state formation in Somaliland at that time.

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54 Garaad, meaning 'chief' or 'wise man'.

55 Interview with Muuse Cali Faruur, Hargeysa, 15 February 2009.

Financial remittances sent home to their families by Somalis abroad ensured not just survival but comparative wealth for many people in Somaliland. Collective initiatives by those in the diaspora contributed to the establishment of basic infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, and even universities. Members of the diaspora also involved themselves in local and national politics.⁵⁶ From the mid-1990s onwards, through the introduction of national symbols, holidays, and newspapers, Somaliland gained substance as a *de facto* state possessing all the attributes of a state and enjoying legitimacy among the majority of its population. But it continued to lack international recognition.⁵⁷ Multi-party elections and a constitutional referendum in May 2001 have since lent the Republic of Somaliland more credibility as a largely peaceful and democratic polity—a relatively stable state in a difficult neighbourhood.

This process of *de facto* state formation and community building, however, involved only a part of the country and its people, those who lived from Boorama to Burco and Ceerigaabo. The majority of the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli clans in Sool, eastern Sanaag, and parts of southern Togdheer, distanced themselves from the idea of an independent Somaliland. In 1991, they had been sceptical about the independence of Somaliland, and during the 1990s, this scepticism had grown. What appeared to people in central Somaliland as a period of peace and rebuilding from ruins, appeared to people in the east as a period of breakdown (*wakhtiga buurburka*). This meant that by the time central and western Somaliland had been consolidated in the 2000s, roughly 30 per cent of the territory of Somaliland and 20 per cent of its population were still not integrated into the new nation.⁵⁸ Members of these clans felt politically and economically marginalized. They had

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56 Mohamed Hassan Ibrahim, 'Somaliland's Investment in Peace: Analysing the Diaspora's Economic Engagement in Peace Building', *Diaspeace* (University of Jyväskylä) Working Paper No 4, August 2010.

57 Scott Pegg, *International Society and the De Facto State* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), p. 4.

58 There are no reliable population figures for Somaliland, Puntland, or Somalia. All numbers issued either by officials of these respective administrations, international organizations or the author are rough estimates.

experienced Somali history in a different way from most Isaaq.⁵⁹ The national symbols and memorials of Somaliland did not invoke a sense of belonging in them; quite the opposite, they stood for the defeat of their values (particularly that of Somali unity) and the Darood clan family's dominance of Somali politics.

In summary, the Burco conference in 1991 initiated a successful process of state formation from the bottom upwards that produced a peaceful, stable and legitimate political order, at least in central and western parts of Somaliland.⁶⁰ This eventually led to the emergence of a national identity for Somalilanders. These processes had their limitations, however, in the east of the country.

'Traditional' governance in Somaliland's east

Throughout most of the 1990s, the Somaliland government left the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli in Sool, eastern Sanaag, and southern Togdheer to their own devices. The same was true for the Gadabuursi and Ciise in the Awdal region in the west, and Isaaq areas in Sanaag to the west and north of Ceerigaabo.⁶¹ Strapped for money, the government invested little in the peripheries of its territory, and businesses, members of the diaspora, and the aid community concentrated their investments in the heart of the country too. The government was busy getting the central region in order; and besides, Puntland did not come into being and present a challenge until mid-1998.

In the absence of government, Somaliland's eastern areas were governed locally through traditional institutions of the elders and customary law. This brought some stability but not much development.

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59 Stig Jarle Hansen and Mark Bradbury, 'Somaliland: A New Democracy in the Horn of Africa?', *Review of African Political Economy* 34/114 (2007), p. 470–71; Hoehne, 'People and Politics', pp. 105–115.

60 Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, p. 127–136; Markus V. Hoehne, 'Not Born as a *de facto* State: Somaliland's Complicated State Formation', in *Regional Security in the Post-Cold War Horn of Africa*, eds. Roba Sharamo and Berouk Mesfin (Pretoria: ISS, 2011), pp. 309–346.

61 Terlinden, 'Emerging Governance in Somaliland', p. 54–62.

Traditional elders have long played an important role in northern Somalia politics and society. *Garaad*, *suldaan*, *ugaas*, or *boqor* are the highest-ranking elders, with *cuqaal* (sing. *caqil*) at the intermediary level, and ordinary elders called *oodayaal* (sing. *ooday*) at the bottom. Diminished by the colonial introduction of centralized state structures and by post-colonial statehood, their powers and positions had been restored during the civil war in the north. In the early 1990s, they became peace brokers between members of various lineages, sub-clans, and clans, and as such, helped lay the foundations of Somaliland and, later, Puntland.⁶²

The Somali diaspora, though far from homogenous, grew even more active—already it had been responsible for founding the SNM and the USC. A tiny Somali diaspora had existed in parts of Europe since at least colonial times, a larger one springing up in the Arabian Peninsula during the 1970s oil boom. The collapse of the Somali state led to the mass flight of Somalis to neighbouring countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya, and further afield to Europe and North America. Once settled abroad, sometimes with a little money and status, Somalis became involved in politics back in Somalia or Somaliland.⁶³ Uncertainty over the allegiances of people in the eastern peripheries prevented players in the diaspora from making major investments back home.

In the absence of effective government, the Warsangeli in eastern Sanaag organized their affairs through Suldaan Cabdisalaan Suldaan Maxamuud Cali Shire and his brother Ismaaciil. Suldaan Cabdisalaan had inherited his position in 1961 upon the death of his father, Suldaan Maxamuud Cali Shire, who had been a famous clan leader in the first half of the twentieth century. He had first allied with and then fought against

62 Markus V. Hoehne, 'From Pastoral to State Politics: Traditional Authorities in Northern Somalia', in *State Recognition and Democratisation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A New Dawn for Traditional Authorities?* eds. Lars Buur and Helene M. Kyed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 155–182.

63 Joakim Gundel, 'The Migration-Development Nexus: Somalia Case Study', *International Migration* 40/5 (2003): 255–281; Ken Menkhaus, 'The Role and Impact of the Somali Diaspora in Peace-Building, Governance and Development', in *Africa's Finances: The Contribution of Remittances*, eds. Raj Bardouille, Muna Ndulo and Margaret Grieco (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009), pp. 187–202.

Maxamed Cabdille Xasan and his Dervishes in the 1910s, and established an autonomous Warsangeli sultanate under British supremacy. By the early 1990s, Suldaan Cabdisalaan was old and sick but still powerful enough to keep the peace. He became suspicious of his brother's growing power, however, and particularly Ismaaciil's contact with the German NGO, Agro-Action, which had been called in to provide services in the area in 1993, but which later became a source of political tension.⁶⁴

When Suldaan Cabdisalaan died in 1996, his son Siciid was installed as successor but conflict within the ruling family continued. Ismaaciil Suldaan sought to transfer rule over the clan to his immediate family, while his nephew tried to retain his father's influence. In the following years, intra-clan splits led to opposing political orientations towards the emerging polities of Puntland and Somaliland. Ismaaciil Suldaan positioned himself as a Harti hardliner standing up against Somaliland and helped establish Puntland in 1998. Suldaan Siciid, in contrast, was close to Somaliland under President Cigaal. This caused several years of unrest among Warsangeli. Different sub-groups installed new leaders. For instance, Ismaaciil Suldaan installed Cali Garaad Maxamuud from the Reer Garaad—the royal family of the Warsangeli—as *boqor* ('king'). Boqor Cali Garaad Maxamuud also gave his support to Puntland.

In early 1993, the Dhulbahante held a local *shir* in Boocame in the south-east of the Sool region while the second 'national' Somaliland conference was underway in Boorama. The Boocame conference, which became known as 'Boocame I', was co-organized by some of the Dhulbahante living in Kenya, most of them opposed to the secession of Somaliland.⁶⁵

Hardliners from the diaspora tried to play the clan card, calling for Darood solidarity against Isaaq domination in central Somaliland. They wanted to prevent Dhulbahante from attending the Somaliland conference in Boorama, but when an Isaaq delegation came and invited them, elders at the Boocame conference decided to send about fifty Dhulbahante delegates. This illustrates the continuous manoeuvring of Dhulbahante

64 Interview with Cabdullahi Maxamed Jaamac Jalac, Ceelbuuh, 12 July 2004.

65 Interview with Yasin Faraton, Laascaanood, 4 November 2003.

BOX I. THE DERVISH UPRISING

The Dervish uprising (1899–1920) came as a shock to many people in northern Somalia. It was led by Maxamed Cabdille Xasan, born near the village of Buuhoodle in the mid-1950s to an Ogaden/Bah Geri father and Dhulbahante/Cali Geri mother. He was a *wadaad* ('itinerant sheikh' or 'teacher of religion'), a poet and, later, a warrior.

Maxamed Cabdille Xasan, whom the British disparaged as 'the Mad Mullah', was the Somali representative for the Salixiya *tariqa*—a contemporary religious reform movement. After he returned from Mecca in about 1895, he settled briefly in Berbera to win over new followers for his *tariqa* ('way' or 'sect' in Arabic). This brought him into conflict with other Somalis, mostly Isaaq followers of the Qadriya *tariqa* in Berbera, which though dominant in the Somali peninsula since the sixteenth century, tolerated innovation.

Maxamed Cabdille Xasan preached against practices introduced by British colonialists, such as the consumption of tea and *qaad* (a mild stimulant grown on *qaad* or *qat* trees [*Catha edulis*] in the Ethiopian highlands). He warned Somalis against Christian missionary activities. He left Berbera in anger, retreating to the territory of his mother's clan, where he established his first centre in the area of Caynabo.

The Sayid (as Maxamed Cabdille Xasan was known to his followers) started a military movement in about 1899. He combined an autocratic style of leadership with the sort of charisma exuded by a local Mahdi. His troops were called Daraawiish ('Dervishes'). They were mostly Ogaden and Dhulbahante but also, at the beginning, members of some Isaaq clans such as the Habar Yoonis and Habar Jecllo from the area around Burco.

The first raids the Dervishes carried out were on settlements of the Axmediya *tariqa*, an offshoot of the Qadriya, near a place called Sheekh. Dervish attacks and raids soon threatened law and order in the British Somaliland Protectorate. They also caused unrest in the Somali territories under Ethiopian rule, which were mostly inhabited by Ogaden. Britain and Ethiopia dispatched military expeditions against the Dervishes, the latter employing hit-and-run tactics and avoiding open battle.

The Dervishes were badly defeated in the few open battles they fought. Between 1904 and 1909, they retreated into the Italian-administered north-east of the Somali peninsula, where they had a centre in the coastal settlement of Eyl (also called Illig in colonial sources). After 1909, they moved back into the British protectorate, establishing fortifications in today's Sool and Sanaag regions. The most famous and most strongly built was the castle at Taleex in the Nugaal valley. The British defeated the Dervishes in 1920.

While the Dervish history is complex, involving inter-clan, sectarian, and anti-colonial fighting, it was reinterpreted as a heroic, proto-nationalist struggle by Somali nationalists in the second half of the twentieth century. Under Maxamed Siyaad Barre, the Dervish history was covertly conveyed as Darood history underlining the supposed birth-right of members of this clan-family to rule Somalia.

Many Dhulbahante and Ogaden are proud of this Dervish history, even if in reality Maxamed Cabdille Xasan was a cruel ruler who mercilessly persecuted opponents and killed many of his own people. One of his more famous victims was Garaad Cali, the grandfather of Garaad Cabdiqani, who rejected the power-hunger of the Sayid. Assassinated in about 1902, it was his grandson who led negotiations between Dhulbahante and SNM in the early 1990s.

The Dervishes wrought havoc among people in the north-west, and those who suffered most were the Dhulbahante who were devastated by external attacks, internal feuds, and a famine worsened by war. After 1920, many Dhulbahante were refugees, seeking shelter with Isaaq in the areas around Sheekh and Berbera and with the Majeerteen around Bosaaso. Western neighbours of the Dhulbahante, particularly the Habar Jecló, used the clan's weakness to gain control of important wells and grazing grounds.

Sources: 'Abdi Sheikh-'Abdi. *Divine Madness. Mohammed Abdulle Hassan (1856-1920)*, (London: Zed Books 1993); Said S. Samatar. 'Maxamad Cabdille Xasan of Somalia: The Search for the Real Mullah'. *Northeast African Studies* 1/1 (1979), pp. 60-76.

between their concerns in Somaliland (keeping peace with their Isaaq neighbours to the west) and their desire for Somali unity. When the Dhulbahante delegation came back from Boorama, they found the anti-Somaliland faction in the ascendency, with the majority of people in Boocame opposed to Somaliland's newly declared independence.⁶⁶

The result of the controversial Boocame discussions was the establishment of a local council for Sool region called *khusuusi* ('advisory council')—the same name as the council of the 'Dervishes' under Maxamed Cabdille Xasan in the early twentieth century. Dhulbahante in the 1990s and 2000s in fact regularly referred to the Dervish movement to help bestow a sense of legitimacy on what they were doing. (Interestingly, when asked, John Drysdale and Ioan M. Lewis—who had conducted research in Somaliland when it was a British Protectorate in the 1950s—did not recall the same Dhulbahante attachment to the Dervish history at that time.⁶⁷ This suggests this history has been consciously revived to give the Dhulbahante clan some sense of political orientation after the collapse of the Somali state.)

The Dhulbahante advisory council consisted of 33 men, mostly intellectuals and former professionals. Local traditional leaders cooperated with this council.⁶⁸ The Boocame I conference revealed the Dhulbahante clan's prevailing will to regulate its affairs autonomously, but at the same time it highlighted a division between Dhulbahante in the 'north' (Somaliland) and the 'south' (the rest of Somalia).⁶⁹ Some members of the clan, including Garaad Cabdiqani, had been moderately pro-Somaliland in the period of the early 1990s, seeing cooperation between groups in the north-west as a path to peace and prosperity. Others distanced

66 Interview with Yasin Faraton, Laascaanood, 4 November 2003.

67 Personal communications of the author with John Drysdale during visits in Hargeysa between 2009 and 2011, and with Ioan M. Lewis in London between 2005 and 2010.

68 Interview with Jaamac C. Shurie, Laascaanood, 11 September 2002.

69 Here, it has to be remembered that the Somali term for 'north' (*waqooyi*) refers exclusively to the former British Somaliland Protectorate, while the term for 'south' (*koonfur*) includes the whole former Italian territory, from the northeast (today's Puntland) to the south.

themselves from Hargeysa after the *shir* at Burco in 1991, seeing it as contrary to their long-term interests. The more stable the new state became, the more Dhulbahante, Warsangeli, Gadabuursi, and Ciise realized they were minorities in it. In contrast to the 'Darood-pride' that had been nurtured in Dhulbahante and Warsangeli by the Barre regime, in the 1990s, the Darood/Harti developed a kind of inferiority complex in Somaliland that made them look for other options in Puntland and Somalia.⁷⁰

Between 1993 and 1996, the Dhulbahante *khusuusi* or council worked for peace in the Sool region, its capacities limited by its meagre finances. It kept up relations with the administration in Hargeysa, in particular through Garaad Cabdiqani who, in the recent past, had been in contact with the SNM trying to prevent fighting from escalating between Isaaq clans and the Dhulbahante.⁷¹ Cabdiqani continued this by staying in contact with President Cigaal.

The Somaliland government in Hargeysa was neither interested enough nor did it have enough resources to get involved with the Sool region then. Cigaal knew he could not easily win over people in the east of Somaliland who were, as a rule, in favour of a united Somalia. He therefore held back from putting them under political or military pressure, choosing to pay important traditional leaders for their loyalty in case something needed doing in areas under their influence.

In late 1996, when the last national conference of Somaliland was underway in Hargeysa, anti-Somaliland forces with strong support from the diaspora organized a 'counter-*shir*' in Boocame. This conference became known as 'Boocame II' among the Dhulbahante; the local council established at Boocame I had grown inactive. Boocame II was dominated by Harti-hardliners, such as Maxamed Cabdi Xaashi, who later became vice-president of Puntland. It paved the way for the Dhulbahante clan's

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 70 The Isaaq had similarly suffered from an inferiority complex in the Somali Republic after the unification in 1960. This, in retrospect, can be identified as one reason for the growing distance between Mogadishu and Hargeysa that, together with other factors, led to the SNM insurgency in the early 1980s.

71 Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, p. 79

commitment to the establishment of Puntland. In parallel, there was a power-struggle within the ruling family of the Warsangeli, which led parts of the clan under Islmaaciil Suldaan towards the idea of their own Harti administration.

Foundation of Puntland

The anti-secessionist position of the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli found a political home in the Puntland State of Somalia,⁷² established in 1998 as an autonomous regional administration. The attraction was clear. With the majority of its population from the Harti descent group, the political base of Puntland was *Hartinimo* ('Harti solidarity'). The emergence of *Hartinimo* in the 1990s is an example of the flexible and constructed nature of genealogical identities.⁷³ Harti had become an important genealogical reference in the clan cleansing that had taken place against Darood in the south after the fall of Siyaad Barre. *Hartinimo* had emerged as a significant dynamic in the fighting around the southern Somali port of Kismaayo (where Harti from the north-east had settled in about 1900), and in the defence of the Majeerteen clan against Hawiye forces in the town of Gaalkacyo between 1991 and 1993. For those Dhulbahante and Warsangeli who wished to distance themselves from Somaliland, Puntland provided a real political alternative.

Following the fall of the Barre regime, north-eastern Somalia came under the control of the revived Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), the first of the armed insurgencies against the Barre regime. Formed in 1979 following a failed coup in the wake of the Ogaden war, it was dominated by Majeerteen officers and led by Colonel Cabdullaahi Yuusuf. The SSDF's patrons, Ethiopia and Libya, had wanted the SNM to merge with it. Although both were supported by Ethiopia, the

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 72 Matt Bryden, 'New Hope for Somalia? The Building Block Approach', *Review of African Political Economy* 26/79 (1999), pp. 134–40.

73 The same goes, of course, for all collective identities (e.g. ethnic or national identities), as anthropological and historical research from the mid-20th century onward has shown.

SNM leadership refused to do so.⁷⁴ The SSDF virtually collapsed in 1985, when Cabdulaahi Yuusuf was imprisoned by Ethiopia. He was released in 1991, when Ethiopia's Mengistu Haile Mariam was overthrown, and immediately re-established the SSDF and joined the Somali civil war.

The state of Puntland was founded on 1 August 1998 at a *shir* that took place in the town of Garoowe from May to August 1998. Participants came from all the north-eastern clans and from the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli in eastern Somaliland. Other Darood, such as Marrexaan from the Mudug region, sent delegations.⁷⁵ The former SSDF leader Colonel Cabdulaahi Yuusuf was selected as the first president of Puntland, with critical support from Dhulbahante who saw him as a hero (*geesi*) and defender of Darood interests in Somalia. Cabdulaahi Yuusuf's 'warrior-status' echoed their renewed admiration for Maxamed Cabdille Xasan and the Dervishes.

Puntland's formula for integrating clans and traditional leaders mirrored that developed at Somaliland's formative conferences in Burco, Boorama, and Hargeysa. Unlike Somaliland, however, Puntland did not declare independence from Somalia. Article 1.4 of the Puntland charter, which served as its preliminary constitution, stated: 'Puntland is part of Somalia, and it is striving to regain the unity of Somali people and the creation of a Somali government based on a federal system.'⁷⁶

Article 1.2 of the charter brought the following regions under Puntland's wing: Bari, Nugaal, Sool, South Togdheer (Buuhoodle district), eastern Sanaag and Mudug (except for the districts of Hobyo and Xarardheere). This means that, at least on paper, Puntland carved the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli territories out of Somaliland, challenging the Somaliland

74 Renders, *Consider Somaliland*.

75 Federico Battera, 'Remarks on the 1998 Charter of the Puntland State of Somalia', United Nations Development Office for Somalia (UNDOS) Working Paper, 1999; Ahmed Yusuf Farah, 'Somalia: Modern History and the End of the 1990s', in *Rebuilding Somalia: Issues and Possibilities for Puntland*, ed. War-Torn Societies Project (London: HAAN, 2001), pp. 7–29.

76 Charter for the State of Puntland: unofficial translation prepared by UNDOS Information Unit, Nairobi, 17 August 1998.

government's use of the old colonial borders to justify its demand for recognition as an independent nation. This move set the stage for the conflict between Somaliland and Puntland in the borderlands of Sool, eastern Sanaag, and southern Togdheer.⁷⁷

The Dhulbahante and Warsangeli tried to make the best of the situation by opportunistically maintaining a foot in both camps. As descendants of inhabitants of the former British protectorate, they followed the territorial logic adopted by the government in Hargeysa: Somaliland's citizenship law defines a citizen as anyone whose paternal ancestors lived in Somaliland before its independence from Britain on 26 June 1960. As descendants of Harti, they followed the genealogical logic of the government in Garoowe.

On the one hand, the position of borderlanders—caught in-between states—increases their marginality. On the other, it turns them into the ones who, at certain moments, can tip the scales.⁷⁸

Encroachment by the centres (1999–2003)

Despite the enmity between them, the rival authorities in Hargeysa and Garoowe refrained from direct military confrontation over the borderlands in the first few years after Puntland was formed. Maxamed Xaaji Ibraahim Cigaal maintained communication with Cabdulaahi Yuusuf and emissaries moved between the two sides. To avoid armed conflict, the presidents of Somaliland and Puntland appear to have had an informal agreement not to confront the issue of the contested territory, enabling

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77 This book will not touch on further political developments in Puntland, unless they directly concern the conflict with Somaliland over the contested territory. Literature on Puntland in general is scarce. For background information and political updates see: WSP (War-Torn Societies Project) (ed.). *Rebuilding Somalia: Issues and Possibilities for Puntland*, (London: HAAN 2001); International Crisis Group (ICG). *Somalia: Puntland's Punted Polls*. Africa Briefing No. 97 (2013).

78 The advantages and disadvantages of borderlands for the people living in them have been outlined at a more general level in Dereje Feyissa and Markus Hoehne, 'State Borders and Borderlands as Resources: An Analytical Framework'. In Dereje Feyissa and Markus V. Hoehne (eds.), *Borders and borderlands as Resources in the Horn of Africa*. (London: James Currey, 2010), pp. 1–25.

them to focus on stabilizing their respective centres.⁷⁹ Their territorial disagreements were limited to public statements in the media.

Neither the authorities in Somaliland or Puntland acted on their sovereignty claims: both were too weak to exert their authority even in their own undisputed territories without the cooperation of local clans. In 1999, however, both parties began to encroach on the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli areas by establishing local administrations in Laascaanood, Taleex, Badhan, Buuhoodle and elsewhere in Sool, Sanaag, and southern Togdheer regions. Governors and vice-governors were appointed in the main towns, and mayors in smaller towns and villages, supported by military and police commanders. Personnel were drawn exclusively from the local Dhulbahante or Warsangeli populations. Before long, two different administrations existed in most major borderland settlements, and it became common to find brothers and first or second patrilineal cousins (Somali: *ina adeer*) working in the same location for rival authorities.

Borderland clans sought representation at the national level too: their elites sat in both Hargeysa and Garoowe as ministers, vice-ministers, speakers of parliament, parliamentarians, and high-ranking military and police officers. Throughout the 1990s, power was divided in Somaliland and Puntland proportional to estimated clan strength: the top positions were held by the Isaaq in Somaliland and the Majeerteen in Puntland, but all other groups received a fixed and, in the eyes of many, relatively fair share of posts. This continued in Puntland until 2012. Political reforms introduced in Somaliland in 2001, changed the rules of the game, when a referendum was held on a constitution that would lay the path for a move to multi-party politics. It opened the way for Isaaq domination of government institutions as the most votes would flow to the largest group.

Political logic aside, for populations in the borderlands there was an economic logic in serving both governments as the salaries paid by

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79 Interview with Maxamed Siciid Gees, Hargeysa, 27 February 2011.

both authorities directly or indirectly benefited their extended families.⁸⁰ The loyalties of officials on the payroll of Somaliland or Puntland were generally divided between serving one of the ‘regional administrations’, as they called them, and keeping their distance in the hope a united Somalia would be revived.⁸¹ The political elites had to respect the interests of the local communities they represented as well. This meant their position was frequently complicated by the contradictory demands of the centres, on the one hand, and the personal convictions or priorities of their families on the other.

Over the years, Dhulbahante and Warsangeli who held high office in Hargeysa or Garoowe lost touch with their people in the borderlands. During field research in Laascaanood, Ceerigaabo and Badhan, I came to realize that some of those who served as ministers in the centres—and presented themselves there as important political players—were locally regarded as ‘lost sons’.

Another factor that increased the contest for the borderlands was Puntland’s delineation of new regions in Dhulbahante and Warsangeli territories. In 2003, the government in Garoowe created the region of Heylaan, with its capital at Badhan, in what for Somaliland was eastern Sanaag. Heylaan included the grave of Sheekh Cabduraxmaan Ismaaciil al-Jabarti ‘Darood’, an impressive tomb, surrounded by a Sufi settlement, in the middle of a semi-desert.⁸²

The Garoowe authorities also pronounced the creation of Cayn region, with its capital at Buuhoodle, in what according to Somaliland is southern Togdheer. Cayn encompasses Dhulbahante areas from Buuhoodle as

80 The monthly salary of an ordinary Somaliland or Puntland soldier was not more than US\$40–50 in the early 2000s. Higher positions came with more income and additional job opportunities for guards and drivers.

81 Officially, Somaliland was called *dawlad* (‘government’), but many Dhulbahante and Warsangeli, and some Isaaq, called it *maamul*, a regional administration. Both words are Arabic loan words. Sceptics would say: *Somaliland waa maamul, dawlad ma ah* (‘Somaliland is a regional administration, not a government’). Puntland officially called itself *maamul goboleed* (‘regional administration’).

82 Sheekh Isaaq’s tomb is equally impressive and can be found at Maydh, north of Ceerigaabo, by the sea.

far as Widhwidh in the east and Horufadhi in the north. Its name was carefully chosen to refer to the wells in Caynabo, about 120 km south-east of Burco. At the start of the twentieth century, Dhulbahante had lived in and around Caynabo and controlled the important wells there. Isaaq/Habar Jeclo armed by the British to counter the Dervish uprising had taken over Caynabo, however. Conflicts between Dhulbahante and Habar Jeclo over the ownership of Caynabo and its wells had been a frequent recurrence.

The earlier loss of Caynabo to the Isaaq constituted a kind of collective trauma for Dhulbahante, one expressed in a proverb composed in the 1960s: '*Lixdan jirka Dhulbahante iyo lababatan jirka Isaaq ku ma heshin karaan Caynabo*' ('A 60 year-old Dhulbahante and a 20 year-old Isaaq cannot agree on Caynabo'). A Dhulbahante born before 1910 would have grown up believing Caynabo was in his *degaan*, while a far younger Isaaq would have thought Caynabo part of his. In the early 2000s, Caynabo touched a raw nerve among many Dhulbahante around Buuhoodle who were opposed to the secession of Somaliland, which they saw as Isaaq-dominated and would sometimes even call 'Isaaq-land'.

By creating the new region of Cayn, the government of Puntland was evoking highly sensitive memory politics. In early 2003, a ceremony was held in Buuhoodle to mark the inauguration of the town as a regional capital; Puntland sent ministers to attend who belonged to Dhulbahante lineages from the area of Buuhoodle.

Somaliland could do little about Puntland's creation of a new region in territory it laid claim to because many Dhulbahante, including those on Somaliland's official payroll, were happy with it. The administration in Hargeysa did not dare to go to war over the matter, while it was still consolidating its power in its central regions. To retain a little influence, Hargeysa continued to pay its district administration in Buuhoodle and, from 2003 onwards Garoowe did the same.⁸³

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83 These differences regarding the administrative status of the Buuhoodle and surroundings are the reason I will from now onward write 'Cayn/southern Togdheer' in this text when discussing regional dynamics.

4. Militarization of the Dhulbahante territories (2002–2009)

Escalation of the conflict between the two centres

The presidents of Somaliland and Puntland did not set foot in the regions they contested until 2002. From mid-2001 to mid-2003, Puntland had been weakened by internal conflict; when President Cabdulaahi Yuusuf's term of office ended in July 2001, he was unwilling to step down and had not, as the rules demanded, prepared for an election. A group of elders and politicians opposed to his autocratic leadership organized a *shir* in Qardho. In November, they proclaimed Jaamac Cali Jaamac (from the Cusmaan Maxamuud sub-clan of the Majeerteen) to be the new president of Puntland. Cabdulaahi Yuusuf, who was Majeerteen/Cumar Maxamuud, retreated to his hometown of Gaalkacyo, organized his forces and, ensured of support from his patron, Ethiopia, marched on his opponent who had occupied the presidential palace in Garoowe.

Jaamac Cali Jaamac, who was not a military officer, retreated from the capital to his hometown of Bosaaso, and in early 2002 fled Puntland altogether. General Maxamuud Muuse Xirsi ('Cadde Muuse')—a patrilineal relative of the fugitive president—continued the military struggle against Cabdulaahi Yuusuf. Somaliland's government gave Cadde Muuse logistical and other support, allowing him to set up camps in western Sanaag near Ceel Afweyne where he would be out of Cabdulaahi Yuusuf's reach and could organize his forces. The conflict was settled in mid-2003, after the mediation of Suldaan Siciid of the Warsangeli clan and Boqor Buurmadow of the Isaaq/Habar Jeclo. The agreement was that Cabdulaahi Yuusuf would remain president and Cadde Muuse and his troops would be integrated into the Puntland army. Additionally, some figures received high government positions, including Cabduraxmaan Maxamed 'Faroole' who would, like Cadde Muuse, later play an important role in Puntland.

In Somaliland, the country was preparing for its first district elections after the constitution was adopted by a referendum in 2001. In May 2002, prior to the elections, the sudden death of Cigaal after surgery in South Africa saw his vice-president, Daahir Rayaale Kaahin, become president. In preparation for the elections, but against the advice of senior members of his administration, President Kaahin visited Laascaanood on 7 December 2002. It was the first time a Somaliland president had ever set foot in the town.

Daahir Rayaale Kaahin had served as National Security Service (NSS) officer in Laascaanood in the 1980s.⁸⁴ He still had acquaintances among the local elite and may have thought he knew the people in Laascaanood better than his predecessor had. About 200 soldiers and more than a dozen 'technicals'—pick-ups mounted with heavy machineguns or anti-aircraft guns—accompanied him on his visit. The visit was largely kept secret from people in Somaliland and Sool. The convoy travelled all night and President Kaahin arrived for a very early breakfast in the town. After that, he took a nap.

Taken by surprise, the Puntland government reacted, sending five or so technicals of its own. The two sides clashed in the middle of town in the early afternoon and several soldiers and civilians were killed or wounded. Despite the fact his troops were superior in number, President Kaahin ordered them to retreat to Caynabo. Reportedly, he feared a popular uprising and more bloodshed. Somaliland also withdrew its shadow administration from Laascaanood. Claiming victory, Puntland's forces returned to Garoowe, leaving Laascaanood without any real administration from either side for a year. The clash in Laascaanood brought to an end the silent diplomatic stand-off between the Hargeysa and Garoowe governments. In contrast to the experienced politician, Maxamed Xaaji Ibraahim Cigaal, Daahir Rayaale Kaahin no longer had lines of communication with Cabdulaahi Yuusuf.

A year later (in December 2003), armed clashes in the Hawd region (south of Laascaanood) between two Dhulbahante lineages, the

84 The NSS was one of several intelligence agencies of the Siyad Barre government.

Baharasame and Qayaad, gave the Puntland authorities the reason they needed to send troops back. Together with elders from various lineages they enforced a ceasefire to bring the unusually violent conflict to a halt.⁸⁵ At first, Puntland's police force was set up in Laascaanood, but more troops and administrative staff soon followed.

Initially welcomed as 'Harti-brothers', after a few days local community leaders urged the government in Garoowe to withdraw its forces, concerned their presence would provoke a military reaction from Somaliland. Puntland's soldiers were irregularly paid and demanded free food and *qaad* in the local market. Their technicals ran over people in the streets, including children. After four weeks, however, most Laascaanood residents had accepted the fact that a new phase had begun, one that might bring military clashes over the future of Somalia either as a unified or a divided state. Many locals prepared for war, polishing their guns and checking over the technicals parked in their backyards, which had last been used against the SNM in early 1991.

Cabdulaahi Yuusuf was at the time away campaigning for the Somali presidency at a lengthy national peace conference organized in Kenya under the auspices of the Inter-governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) that took place first in Eldoret and later in Mbagathi on the outskirts of Nairobi. In Garoowe, his vice president, Maxamed Cabdi Xaashi, a Dhulbahante/Qayaad and a Harti-hardliner acted in his absence. Somaliland's government reacted to Puntland's moving into Laascaanood by sending troops to within 30km west, near Adhicideeye village. Media in Hargeysa drummed up nationalist feelings and put out reports on Puntland's forces 'oppressing' people in Laascaanood, and about borders being violated.

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85 The conflict had started as a shoot-out between *qaad* traders and escalated to the burning of villages and injury of women and children. Its repercussions were still being felt months later when individuals from both sides fell victim to revenge killings. Among these was my friend Cabdulaahi 'Qalafo', who was shot dead in the market of Laascaanood in April 2004.

It was possibly the first time that Laascaanood and Somaliland's eastern border had featured so prominently in the minds of people in central Somaliland, particularly in the capital. Public opinion in Hargeysa was in favour of Somaliland's territory being defended. One leading politician was even quoted as saying it was noble to sacrifice one's life in defence of the border.⁸⁶ This was a far cry from the traditionally relaxed attitude of northern Somali nomads towards borders and illustrates a deepening sense of statehood in Somaliland.

There were, as yet, no real resources to gain from the borderlands. While some prospect of oil might come to exist in Sool, the resource issue did not feature in public or private discussions during my field research at the time. This would later change.

The conflict took a new turn in the second half of 2004. In Kenya, on 10 October, Somalia's newly established Transitional Federal Government (TFG) elected Cabdulaahi Yuusuf President of Somalia. The longstanding Harti dream had come true: Puntland's former president was leader of Somalia, in charge of implementing a federal constitution, which had been the aim of many in Puntland from the start. Moreover, in Cabdulaahi Yuusuf a Darood hero was to take power in Mogadishu. Many Dhulbahante and Warsangeli in Sool and Sanaag expected that within weeks, Somalia would be on its way back to stability and unity. In contrast, many Isaaq were worried. Newspapers in Hargeysa sarcastically 'welcomed' the election of Cabdulaahi Yuusuf, with assurances from SNM veterans that they were ready to go to war again against the 'south'.

The new Somali president used one of his first announcements to state his opposition to the splitting up of the country. This threat to Somaliland was certainly motivated by the recent developments in Sool, and led to clashes between the armies of Somaliland and Puntland west of Laascaanood on 29 October 2004—the first time the conventional armies of these rival states had engaged each other in battle with heavy

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 86 Markus V. Hoehne, 'Newspapers in Hargeysa: Freedom of Speech in Post-conflict Somaliland', *Africa Spectrum* 43/1 (2008), p. 105.

weapons. Several dozen soldiers on both sides were killed or wounded. Laascaanood, though, remained under Puntland's control.⁸⁷

In subsequent years, the situation remained tense but without such serious fighting. Cabdulaahi Yuusuf's forces were caught up in the south. Between 2006 and 2008, the TFG fought against the Islamic Courts and Islamist militants in and around Mogadishu (including the nascent al-Shabaab). In Puntland, Cadde Muuse was elected by the 66 members of Puntland's parliament to become the new president in January 2005.⁸⁸ In contrast to his predecessor, economic development and the exploitation of natural resources (oil, minerals and metals) in the Majeerteen heartland around Bosaaso (where Muuse himself came from) became his main focus. Laascaanood and the conflict with Somaliland were not on his agenda. But this hunger for resources did bring him into conflict with the Warsangeli in eastern Sanaag.

Neighbouring Ethiopia was watching developments in Laascaanood carefully. The government in Addis Ababa had a vested interest in Laascaanood and its surroundings being administered properly as it feared that Islamists or rebels of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) could infiltrate from there, the Ogaden being part of the Darood clan family to which the Harti clans belong. With Puntland showing little interest in controlling and stabilizing Laascaanood, the Ethiopian government pushed for the Somaliland administration to take it over.⁸⁹

The chance for such a changing of the guard arose in 2007. Members of the Maxamuud Garaad branch of the Dhulbahante, who come from Laascaanood and north of it in the Nugaal valley, held much of the power in Puntland. The previous vice-president of Puntland had come from

87 Markus V. Hoehne, 'Political identity, emerging state structures, and conflict in Northern Somalia', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 44/3 (2006), pp. 397–414.

88 Seats in parliament were divided between various descent groups in Puntland according to their estimated strength, and parliamentarians were nominated by their own traditional leaders, mainly *cuqaal*. This was in accordance with the clan-based system of power-sharing that provided the basis of Puntland's domestic politics.

89 Interviews in Laascaanood, Garoowe, and Boorama between 11 December 2010 and 25 February 2011.

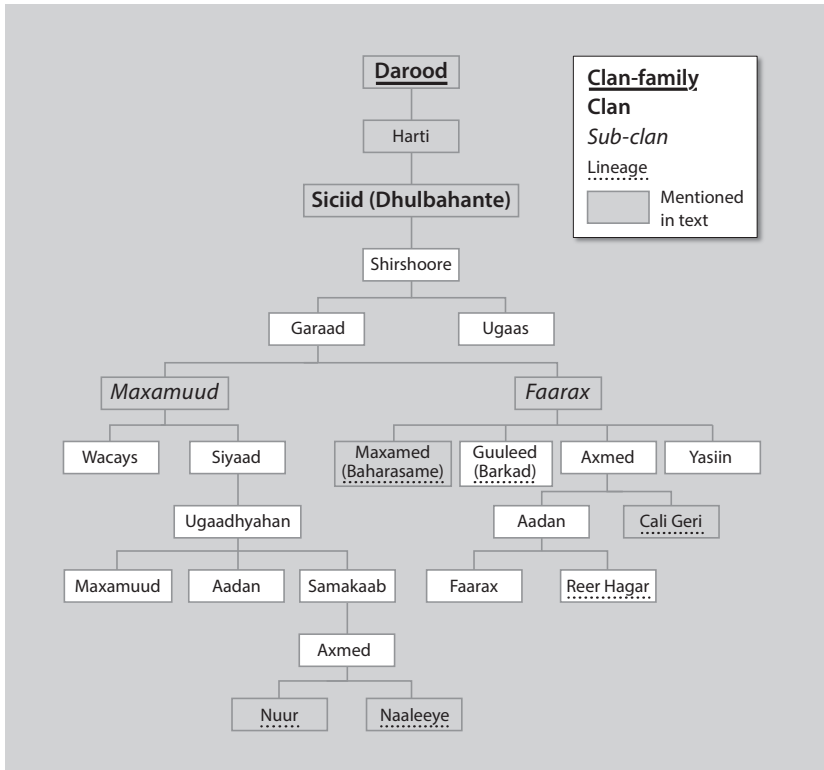


Diagram 2. Simplified genealogy of the Dhulbahante clan

a small Dhulbahante lineage, but in 2005, Xasan Daahir Maxamuud ‘Afqurac’ from the Maxamuud Garaad took the second highest position in Puntland. This angered the equally influential Faarax Garaad from the Hawd (the dry season grazing area stretching from southern Togdheer into the Somali region of Ethiopia). Consequently, many Faarax Garaad began to distance themselves from Puntland.

In March 2007, Dhulbahante/Faarax Garaad/Baharasame and Majeerteen/Cumar Maxamuud nomads clashed near Cagaare in the Somali Region of Ethiopia. The Baharasame casualties from this fighting were brought to Hargeysa for treatment, which was much farther away than the hospital in Garoowe, suggesting they did not trust the Majeerteen to

treat them in Garoowe, being home to the Majeerteen/Ciise Maxamuud sub-clan. This deepened the rift between Dhulbahante/Faarax Garaad and Puntland.⁹⁰

In September 2007 came the news that Axmed Cabdi ‘Xaabsade’, Puntland’s interior minister and a Dhulbahante/Faarax Garaad/Baharasame by descent, was trying to establish a local administration in the Buuhoodle area separate from both Somaliland and Puntland.⁹¹ This reflected a wider rejection of Somaliland’s secession by Dhulbahante in the area; more closely, it also signalled the minister’s disgruntlement—shared by his Faarax Garaad relatives—at losing power in Puntland. Many other Dhulbahante beyond the Faarax Garaad had come to realize that Puntland was not administering Laascaanood properly. There had been no economic or social development since Puntland had taken it over in 2004. They complained that ‘Puntland was just military’. In this environment, ideas about an autonomous clan administration flourished.

Puntland’s President Cade Muuse called Axmed Cabdi ‘Xaabsade’ back to Garoowe. When the minister dawdled, he was dismissed for defying orders. Axmed Cabdi responded by striking a deal with the authorities in Hargeysa that guaranteed him a political future in Somaliland. He mobilized his and other lineages to support Somaliland’s forces against Puntland. Ethiopia, which was an ally to both the Hargeysa and Garoowe governments, appears to have given him a green light, with a high-ranking Ethiopian general reportedly visiting Hargeysa on the day the Somaliland

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90 Interviews with Maxamed Xasan Ibraahim, Hargeysa, 22 February 2011, and Siciid Xaaji Nuur, Hargeysa, 23 February 2011.

91 The life story of Axmed Cabdi ‘Xaabsade’ is typical of a member of the borderland elite. Under the Barre regime he made his career in the military. In the late, 1980s, as a close relative of Garaad Cabdiqani, he was involved in negotiations by Dhulbahante with the SNM. In 1993, he became the speaker of parliament in Hargeysa. When he fell out with President Cigaal in 1996, he returned to Laascaanood and took part in the establishment of Puntland. He was particularly close to Cabdulaahi Yuusuf and served as minister of interior in Garoowe from 1998 to 2007. On falling out with President Cade Muuse, he received an offer from Somaliland and held ministerial positions there from 2008 up until mid-2014. On 8 August 2014, Xaabsade again changed sides and went over to Puntland, where he was happily received by President Cabdiwali ‘Gaas’ (elected on 8 January 2014).

army moved toward Laascaanood. Puntland's forces retreated east to Tukaraq without a shot being fired,⁹² as troops from Somaliland's national army positioned themselves around Laascaanood. In mid-October 2007, Dhulbahante militias close to Xaabsade (mainly Baharasame but also Jaamac Siyaad), entered Laascaanood in Somaliland's name.⁹³

As a consequence of Somaliland's move, pro- and anti-Somaliland militias belonging to various Dhulbahante lineages fought each other inside Laascaanood for several weeks. Thousands of Laascaanood's inhabitants fled, mostly to rural locations associated with their sub-clans and lineages, or to Garoowe and Bosaaso in Majeerteen territory. Almost all Dhulbahante traditional leaders who had played a major role in local governance to that point joined the exodus.⁹⁴

This episode illustrates a common phenomenon in Somali power politics. To divide a group or harm someone personally, people from within the group or an individual close to the target are used to do the job or pave the way. This is reflected in the Somali proverb: '*Geed baa yidhi: gudin yahay i maad goyseen ee badhkay ayaa kugu jira*' ('A tree said to the axe, "You would not be able to cut me if a part of me were not [already] part of you"). In October 2007, the 'wood' in the axe was the Baharasame and Jaamac Siyaad militia supporting the Somaliland army.

Implications of Somaliland's takeover of Laascaanood (2007)

At first, the Somaliland national army kept its non-Dhulbahante troops outside the town. When the situation became too volatile, however, it sent soldiers belonging to Isaaq clans into the town as well.⁹⁵ Many

92 Interview with Maxamed Siciid Gees, Hargeysa, 27 February 2011.

93 Markus V. Hoehne, 'Puntland and Somaliland clashing in northern Somalia: Who cuts the Gordian knot?', Social Science Research Council, 7 November 2007.

94 Interview with Siciid Xaaji Nuur, Hargeysa, 27 February 2011.

95 The Somaliland national army is a clan-inclusive force. It involves members of the Dir, Darood, and Isaaq clan families inhabiting Somaliland. The bulk of the army, however, are from the Isaaq, the majority of the population in Somaliland.

locals who protested Somaliland's takeover were imprisoned.⁹⁶ Amnesty International reported cases of rape and pillage during skirmishes in and around Laascaanood.⁹⁷ The situation calmed down in December, but only a few of those displaced by the conflict returned; many families and members of the local elite stayed away.⁹⁸ This had long-term economic and political implications. Parts of Laascaanood became a ghost town and many shops remained close for years, both because their owners did not return and because the number of customers declined. The community lacked leadership because of the absence of the titled traditional leaders (*isimo* and *cuqaal*); many intellectuals also left. This reduced the possibility that locals would voice their concerns and negotiate with the town's new administration.

While some Dhulbahante came to an accommodation with Somaliland and benefited from its control of Laascaanood, most condemned what they saw as the military occupation of their homeland.⁹⁹ The traditional leaders held a *shir* in Boocame immediately after Somaliland's advance, which became known as 'Boocame III'. Few ordinary members of the clan attended the conference, which was held in haste, but almost all *isimo* were there, and the only *garaad* absent—Garaad Saleebaan Daahir 'Afgarshe'—was an exception to the rule. Garaad Saleebaan had been installed in May 2004 with the help of politicians from Somaliland and the administration in Ceerigaabo, and was the only Dhulbahante clan leader who was not concerned about the expansion of Hargeysa's control over Laascaanood.¹⁰⁰

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96 Interview with Siciid Xaaji Nuur, Hargeysa, 27 February 2011.

97 Amnesty International, AFR 52/001/2009, 'Human Rights Challenges: Somaliland Facing Elections', 2009, p. 13.

98 Interview with Axmed Daakir, Hargeysa, 3 May 2009.

99 I use the term 'occupation' here as this is how the Somaliland army's move into Laascaanood was perceived by people from that town. For people in central Somaliland, the army's action was justified because Laascaanood is 'within Somaliland'.

100 Markus V. Hoehne, 'No Easy Way Out: Traditional Authorities in Somaliland and the Limits of Hybrid Political Orders', Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) Working Paper 18, 2011.

A declaration was released at Boocame on 22 November 2007. Signed by fourteen of the highest-ranking traditional clan leaders, it stated:

1. We inform the international community and the Somali people that we are not part of nor do we recognize the administration that calls itself ‘Somaliland’ and that there are no agreements between us (Dhulbahante clan) and ‘Somaliland’, in the past or the present. We believe that the unity of Somalia is sacrosanct.
2. We warn that administration [‘Somaliland’] against aggression, the presence [of its troops] and the capture of our territory.
3. We only recognize *clan borders* that have always existed and the regional jurisdictions of the last Somali Government [1969–1991; italicized emphasis added].
4. We warn about war and more bloodshed among neighbours that will lead to long-lasting conflict.
5. There were links among these people [‘Somaliland’ and Dhulbahante clan] in terms of culture, shared territory and blood, which should have been respected but such ties were broken by the invasion of the Hargeisa [sic] administration.
6. We appeal to the clan elders of north-western regions [present-day ‘Somaliland’] to withdraw their men who invaded our land.
7. We warn the Hargeisa [sic] administration that the tolerance of the people of Sool, Sanaag, and Ayn [sic] regions is reaching an end and that they will not accept the presence of their [‘Somaliland’] troops and that anything that happens henceforth is the full responsibility of Hargeisa [sic].¹⁰¹

The declaration illustrated an important dynamic: in the course of the conflict in the Sool region, ‘clan borders’ have become for local Dhulbahante what ‘state borders’ have become for Somaliland supporters in

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 101 Online at <http://markacadey.banadir24.com/main/news.php?readmore=2405> (accessed 18 January 2011). The Boocame III declaration was originally written in Somali; this translation is by the staff at GaroweOnline.com.

central Somaliland, increasingly fixed and clear cut, at least in their respective imaginations.

The Dhulbahante in the east and the Isaaq (and Dir) in the centre and in the west were following two different political systems and pursuing different goals. Some years earlier, the Isaaq had placed an emphasis on traditional forms of governance, but from about 1996/97, they delegated this responsibility to the Somaliland state representatives, who were increasingly professional politicians. Elders might step in to resolve local disputes but borders were seen as national issues that affected state sovereignty. The Dhulbahante and the Warsangeli held onto traditional forms of governance and viewed elders as the real power in their lands. In their view, Isaaq clan leaders should have stepped in and ensured that their men withdrew from the Laascaanood. They had never really accepted the state administration in Hargeysa and its regional and local representatives.¹⁰² This is not how the matter presented itself to people between Hargeysa and Burco. There, state representatives elected in 'national' elections were in charge and statutory law prevailed, at least in theory, over customary law. Somaliland's forces followed the orders of officers controlled by the government, not by elders. Effective communication between the state administration of Somaliland and people in the contested borderlands became increasingly difficult.

Clearly, the events of October 2007 were, in the local context, a watershed. They convinced many Dhulbahante, particularly members of the political elite, that new measures were necessary to 'defend' their clan and territory and advance their vision of a united Somalia.

The situation in Laascaanood eventually calmed down. Many locals interviewed by the author in April 2009 even stressed that the town was much more peaceful than it had been under Puntland's administration. From 2004 to 2007, Puntland had done little to improve security and stop revenge killings and criminality. In contrast, the new Somaliland

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 102 The same is true for the Puntland administration, but since Puntland was based on clan power-sharing until 2012, with the elders in charge of selecting the parliamentarians and negotiating many political issues behind the scenes in Puntland, from a Dhulbahante and Warsangeli perspective this was not as volatile as it was with regard to Somaliland.

administration in Laascaanood fought criminality and tried to prevent revenge killings. It also initiated some modest development projects: a local institution, Nugaal University, was included in Somaliland's education budget for 2009, its leadership receiving about US\$18,000 from the government in Hargeysa.¹⁰³ Some international NGOs, such as the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), carried out short-term projects in Laascaanood and the surrounding areas. But in general, the level of development in healthcare, education and the economy remained low. Much of what had been promised by the authorities in Hargeysa did not materialize, and many people complained that Laascaanood's economy had deteriorated. Not only had thousands of inhabitants fled, but the armies of Somaliland and Puntland had established a new front line near Tukaraq, about 50 km east of Laascaanood. This hindered trade from southern Somalia through Gaalkacyo, as well as from Bosaaso in the north via Garoowe, Laascaanood to Burco and Hargeysa. In the past, payments from the trucks using the tarmac road running through Laascaanood had benefitted the local economy. After taking it over, the Somaliland administration instituted a revenue collection system in town, which was a burden to traders. Little investment in the local infrastructure was seen in return.¹⁰⁴

The events of October 2007 had repercussions in the transnational space too. Members of the Dhulbahante diaspora who were staunch Somali nationalists and/or strongly pro-Puntland stopped sending remittances. In their eyes, Laascaanood was under foreign occupation and the locals who remained there or returned to it were traitors. According to the vice-chancellor of Nugaal University, for those in the diaspora 'the fact that Somaliland currently is here is much more problematic than for the locals.' Most people living in Laascaanood were willing to cooperate with the Somaliland authorities for the sake of peace and development. 'But those in the diaspora argue: "We have been captured by force and our land and people have to be freed before we can think about

103 Markus V. Hoehne, 'Diasporic engagement in the educational sector in post-conflict Somaliland: A contribution to peacebuilding?', Diaspeace Working Paper No. 5, 2010.

104 Interviews with several informants, Laascaanood, 15–18 April 2009.

development”’.¹⁰⁵ Local and transnational politics were intertwined. The diaspora’s investment in the area, meagre before, diminished further. A considerable amount of money was collected abroad, however, to build and equip a Dhulabahante militia, illustrating the problematic side of ‘long-distance nationalism’.¹⁰⁶

What happened in Laascaanood between 2003 and 2008 nourished local grievances of marginalization and underdevelopment. Neither Puntland nor Somaliland had done enough to change their situation for the better and, after October 2007, even the Dhulbahante diaspora turned its back on the ordinary population in Laascaanood and its surrounding areas. Somaliland’s lack of assistance was interpreted as a form of political ‘revenge’ carried out by the Isaaq against the Dhulbahante for their role as aides to Somalia’s former regime. But most locals could not explain why the administration in Garoowe had not delivered, underlining the fact that most Dhulbahante refused to admit there was a serious problem with Harti solidarity.

Puntland’s waning interest

The presidential election held in Puntland in January 2009 had huge implications for the contested borderlands. Cabduraxmaan Maxamed ‘Faroole’, a Majeerteen from the Ciise Maxamuud sub-clan dominant in Garoowe, became Puntland’s first civilian president. Faroole, who had lived for many years in Australia and held a BA in political science from an Australian university, had been Puntland’s finance minister from 2003 to 2004 under President Cabdulaahi Yuusuf. He had already competed for the presidency in 2005 but lost. After winning the election four years later, he appointed Cabdisamid Cali Shire as his vice-president. This capped the career of a typical borderlander, someone with a foot in both camps. An army colonel from the Dhulbahante/Maxamuud Garaad/Nuur Axmed clan, Cabdisamid had been deputy commander of Somaliland

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 105 Interview with Cabdinasir Abushaybe, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009.

106 Benedict Anderson. ‘The New World Disorder.’ *New Left Review* 193 (1992), pp. 3–13.

army's in the early 1990s, and of Puntland's *Ciidanka Daraawiishta* (the Dervish army) from 2002 to 2004.¹⁰⁷

As Puntland's new president, Faroole nominated several returnees from the diaspora as ministers. They were, as a rule, better educated than those of their peers who had never left Somalia; it was thought Somalis from Europe and North America could help improve Puntland's international relations.¹⁰⁸ Faroole used his connections in Australia to forge links with a company called Range Resources that specialized in the extraction of minerals. Otherwise, the Faroole administration concentrated on security and economic development at Puntland's core, the Majeerteen territory between Bosaaso, Garoowe, and northern Gaalkacyo. Like his predecessor, Cadde Muuse, Faroole showed little interest in moving against Somaliland in Laascaanood, so although Puntland officials regularly vowed to retake Laascaanood, nothing decisive happened, the front line remaining near Tukaraq.

To make things worse for hardcore Puntland nationalists in the borderlands, Cabdulaahi Yuusuf had lost power the previous year, in 2008. In southern Somalia his presidency was overshadowed by his rejection by Hawiye elites in Mogadishu and by an Islamist insurgency. It was only with the support of Ethiopian troops that he had been able to establish his government in Mogadishu at the end of 2006. This served to increase local and Islamist resistance to him and his aides.¹⁰⁹ Renewed violence in Mogadishu and its surroundings spiralled out of control.

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107 Because Puntland never claimed independence, it also formally never established a 'national' army and called its troops *Ciidanka Daraawiishta*, which refers to the rural police during the period of the Somali Republic until 1991. The name appeals to those Darood/Harti who identify themselves with the proto-nationalist Dervish forces; although historically, the Dervishes had frequently fought Majeerteen rulers too proud to succumb to the rule of Maxamed Cabdille Xasan.

108 The new government of Somaliland formed after the presidential elections in June 2010 also incorporated a large number of ministers with foreign passports. President Axmed Silaanyo himself is a British citizen.

109 Harun Hassan and Cedric Barnes. *A Return to Clan-Politics (or Worse) in Southern Somalia?* (2007). Online: http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/Hassan_Barnes/printable.html.

Many thousands of Somali civilians lost their lives, while the extremists of al-Shabaab gained popular legitimacy.

By mid-2008, Cabdulaahi Yuusuf had also lost any support he had accumulated in the international community. Ethiopia, too, was fed up with a Somali president who only came up with military solutions for political problems. The Puntland troops supporting the president had suffered heavy casualties in Mogadishu. Cabdulaahi Yuusuf was forced to step down in December 2008 to free the way for a new TFG with the participation in it of 'moderate' Islamists. As power changed hands in Puntland in January 2009, a new TFG was installed at a conference in Djibouti under the auspices of the UN. Sheekh Shariif Sheekh Axmed, a former Islamist leader reinvented as a 'moderate' Islamist, was to head it. The fact that he was Hawiye/Abgal by clan secured him some support in Mogadishu. Once there, he faced the prospect of restoring stability in southern Somalia, which by then was suffering from some of the most violent fighting it had seen since 1991.¹¹⁰

Initially, some connection between Mogadishu and Garoowe persisted, personified through the new TFG's first prime minister, Cumar Cabdirisak Cali Shamaarke. He was the son of Somalia's last democratically elected president (in the 1960s), and a Majeerteen/Cusmaan Maxamuud by clan. The fact that a number of Majeerteen soldiers Cabdulaahi Yuusuf had ordered to support him had remained in the south briefly gave Puntland an additional stake in southern Somalia. But when Cumar Cabdirisak Cali Shamaarke lost his position in 2010, Garoowe was distanced from Mogadishu once again.

Against this backdrop, many Dhulbahante and Warsangeli lost faith in Puntland's assertion of *Hartinimo* and Somali unity. They felt 'squeezed' between an aggressive Somaliland under Isaaq-domination and a Puntland that seemed to be becoming pure Majeerteeniya. Members of the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli elites, including traditional leaders

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 110 Ken Menkhaus, 'The crisis in Somalia: Tragedy in five acts', *African Affairs* 106/204 (2007), pp. 357–390; Markus V. Hoehne, 'Counter-Terrorism in Somalia, or How External Interferences Helped to Produce Militant Islamism', Social Science Research Council, 17 December 2009.

in Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn/southern Togdheer and in the diaspora, reconsidered: more Dhulbahante fixed their sights on establishing an administration of their own. Most Warsangeli, meanwhile, had decided to make arrangements with Somaliland and Puntland after an attempt to create their own 'Maakhir state' had failed.

5. Dhulbahante autonomy: From the SSC to Khaatumo (2009–2014)

The foundation of the SSC (Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn) movement

During the first half of 2009, meetings of Dhulbahante clan members interested in a separate administration for Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn, took place in Sool, as well as in Nairobi and other places in the diaspora. The initiative seemed to have originated in the diaspora, but the idea of an autonomous administration coming directly under the Mogadishu government resonated with many living in the borderlands. It also reflected the personal ambitions of members of the Dhulbahante elite at home and abroad.

As early as 2003, many Dhulbahante I interviewed had argued they needed a direct connection to United Nations agencies and international NGOs, because neither the administration in Hargeysa nor in Garoowe would allow aid organizations to work in their area. People between Buuhoodle, Laascaanood, and Taleex spoke of establishing their own administration; some even proposed to name it ‘Dervishland’.

The historical reference was aimed at reviving ‘their’ Dervish history. This was the case regarding the *khusuusi* that served as a clan administrative council in the early 1990s. The more successful Somaliland became, the more it seemed the Dhulbahante clung to the Dervish myth that ran counter to the founding myth of Somaliland. What the SNM’s heroic struggle was to the Isaaq, was to the Dhulbahante the Dervishes’s heroic struggle against the British and the Isaaq aiding them. In the imagination of many Dhulbahante borderlanders, ‘Dervishland’ would stand against ‘Somaliland’.

In everyday life, the claim to Dervish history was emphasized by many uses of the word *Daraawiish* in Laascaanood before Somaliland took it over in 2007. There was a *Daraawiish* pharmacy and in the streets

one could buy artistically decorated walking sticks favoured by elders with the name *Daraawiish* branded on them. Many young men would, at least when talking to a social anthropologist, recite poems composed by Maxamed Cabdille Xasan containing graphic descriptions of Dervish fighting or naming lineages that had refused to support the Sayid.

Throughout the 1990s and for most of the 2000s, clan members had failed to agree on a clear stand, whether to be pro-Somaliland, pro-Puntland or completely independent. None of the clan conferences, including Boocame I and II, had successfully resolved the issue. This ambivalence may have been related to the location of the group, between Somaliland and Puntland; some said it had to do with the ‘character’ of the clan members, conforming to the way Somalis define themselves by descent.¹¹¹ Among Somalis Dhulbahante were known for their ‘hot headedness’ and unreliability; *Dhulbahante waa fudayd*’ means ‘Dhulbahante are unsteady’. The clan had a reputation for in-fighting, and non-Dhulbahante asserted that revenge-killings were more prevalent among Dhulbahante than other clans.

The first half of 2009 continued to reflect internal divisions. The Dhulbahante had distanced themselves from Somaliland politically, but did not want to open a new front against Hargeysa, fearing new clashes. Some preferred to stay with Puntland—the Harti-home which espoused Somali unity—although the post-Cabdulaahi Yuusuf leadership in Garoowe was considered weak.

A decisive *shir* was held in Nairobi in October 2009, attended by influential Dhulbahante from northern Somalia and the diaspora. They included Cali Khaliif Galaydh (Dhulbahante/Faarax Garaad/Baharasame) who had been at the 1991 Burco conference and was a former prime

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111 I. M. Lewis has pointed out that the construct of patrilineal descent among Somalis is akin to racism as it developed in Europe, but in contrast to European racism, which builds on phenotypic differences, Somalis create ‘invisible’ differences that are ‘in the blood’; see Ioan M. Lewis, ‘Visible and Invisible Differences: The Somali Paradox’, *Africa* 74/4 (2004), pp. 489–515. The exception to this is the racism directed at Jareer or Somali ‘Bantu’ in southern Somalia that is tied to physical features like ‘hard hair’ and ‘big noses’.

BOX 2. NSUM AND NSPU

The Northern Somali Unionist Movement (NSUM) shares many of the SSC's aims but is almost exclusively based in the diaspora. The influence of the NSUM inside northern Somalia is, however, very limited and it does not have any visible presence in the SSC regions. It is open to non-Dhulbahante and welcomes anybody who shares its aims of Somali unity and against the 'secession' of Somaliland. The NSUM has written open letters to foreign heads of states and senior government officials involved in Somali affairs about what its activists call the 'fallacy' of Somaliland's independence. In its statements, the NSUM calls Somaliland 'the one-clan secessionist enclave', pointing to the domination of Isaaq within the polity. There is a third group called the Northern Somalis for Peace and Unity (NSPU) that shares the aim of the SSC and NSUM regarding Somali unity and the rejection of Somaliland. It summarizes its arguments against the existence of Somaliland in a document called 'The illusory "Somaliland": Setting the record straight', which agrees with those ideas put forward by the SSC and NSUM.

Sources: Interview with Axmed Daakir, Laascaanood, 11 December 2010; see also the documents available at <http://www.n-sum.org>. and NSPU Research Unit (Ottawa), 'The illusory "Somaliland": Setting the record straight', 18 May 2006.

minister of Somalia in the Transitional National Government (2000–2003); Maxamed Cabdi Xaashi (Dhulbahante/Qayaad), the former vice-president of Puntland (1998–2004); and Maxamuud Xaaji Nuur (Dhulbahante/Maxamuud Garaad/Ugaadhayahan), Somalia's ambassador to the United States in the 1980s. Among the more organized diaspora groups involved was the Northern Somali Unionist Movement, (NSUM).

The October 2009 *shir* in Nairobi led to the foundation of the *Haggaanka Mideynta iyo Badbaadinta Gobolada SSC ee Soomaalia* (Unity and Salvation Authority of the SSC regions of Somalia). This selected a government

to administer the SSC regions. It became known simply as ‘the SSC’, the name of the newly established administration synonymous with the regions of Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn. Its leading figures viewed this *maamul goboleed* (‘regional administration’) as subordinate to the Somali government in Mogadishuu. They emphatically had nothing to do with the governments of Somaliland or Puntland. Their responsibility was to members of the Dhulbahante clan residing in the three regions as well as to Dhulbahante in the diaspora who provided them with finance and political guidance alike.

Saleebaan Ciise Axmed ‘Xaglo Toosiye’, a transnational borderland entrepreneur, was elected president, and Cali Xasan ‘Saber’ (Dhulbahante/Maxamuud Garaad/Jaamac Siyaad/Cali Maxamuud), vice-president.¹¹² The charter produced at the October 2009 conference set out the president’s main tasks: focusing on ending what it called the ‘occupation’ of the SSC region of Somalia by Somaliland’s forces; representing these regions abroad; and promoting the interests of their inhabitants in relation to the international community and NGOs. The presidential term was set at two-and-a-half years until mid-April 2012.

The arguments and manoeuvres of the Dhulbahante have some consistency. The Dhulbahante felt ‘starved’ by Somaliland and Puntland, which controlled aid to the region; they demanded a greater share of humanitarian and development aid. A drive for Somali unity was another factor. This was a challenge to Somaliland, which by this time was emerging as a champion of democracy in the Horn of Africa and partner to Western states in the fight against terrorism and piracy, and an increasingly autonomous Puntland, both dominated by power-conscious majorities, the Isaaq and the Majeerteen.

The SSC parliament, charged with approving the budget and reviewing the work of the executive, had the authority to replace the SSC president if they felt he had not fulfilled his duties. According to the SSC charter,

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 112 Telephone interview with Saleebaan Ciise Axmed ‘Xaglo Toosiye’ (in Dubai), 27 January 2011; Liban Ahmed, ‘SSC Leadership Council and the challenges of political partnership in Puntland’, www.lasanod.com, 2010.

BOX 3. SALEEBAAAN CIISE AXMED ‘XAGLO TOOSIYE’

Saleebaan Ciise Axmed ‘Xaglo Toosiye’ was born in Hargeysa in 1968. His Dhulbahante/Faarax Garaad/Reer Hagar/Aadan Hagar lineage resides mainly in and around Buuhoodle. Saleebaan grew up there before leaving for the Somali national university in Mogadishu in the late 1980s. He left Somalia in 1990, travelling to Kenya and then the United States, where he worked as a medical doctor (and where his family still resides). In 2004, he returned to Somalia for the first time and professed his disappointment with corrupt Somali leaders. In his view, Somalia needed a new generation of leaders. He stood as a candidate for vice-president in the Puntland elections in early January 2009. Unsuccessful in the election, he immersed himself in establishing a separate administration for the regions of Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn. Saleebaan’s position may have been stronger had he embarked on the SSC path *before* the elections in Puntland, because some saw him as a member from the diaspora elite interested in position, a person for whom the autonomy of the SSC came second.

Source: Interview with A.D., Laascaanood, 11 December 2010.

the highest-ranking traditional authorities of the clan were responsible for mediating between the executive and the parliament when disputes arose, as well as settling conflicts and maintaining peace in the SSC regions more generally.¹¹³

The SSC regional government was divided into three branches: the executive (*qaybta fulinta*), the parliament (*khusuusi*)¹¹⁴, and the traditional

¹¹³ Telephone interview with Saleebaan Ciise Axmed ‘Xaglo Toosiye’, 27 January 2011; Charter of the Unity and Salvation Authority of SSC, Somalia (author’s unpublished copy).

¹¹⁴ The term *khusuusi* originally referred to the advisory council of the Dervishes; it had also been used as the name of the Dhulbahante’s ‘autonomous’ administration in the early 1990s, established at the Boocame I conference.

authorities (*isimadda*).¹¹⁵ The executive was composed of the president and vice-president with Maxamuud Cali Jaamac (Dhulbahante/Maxamuud Garaad/Naleeye Axmed) as foreign affairs minister, Yasin ‘Tamaat’ (Dhulbahante/Maxamuud Garaad/Nuur Axmed) as defence minister, and ministers for the interior, information, social affairs, and finance. Twenty-one parliamentarians sat in the *khusuusi*: seven from the Faarax Garaad, seven from the Maxamuud Garaad, and seven from the Baho Nugaaleed branch of the Dhulbahante clan.¹¹⁶ Each group had to include a woman. The parliamentarians were chosen not by popular vote but by traditional leaders from their sub-clans and lineages.¹¹⁷

The most important traditional leaders in the SSC were Garaad Jaamac Garaad Cali (Dhulbahante/Faarax Garaad/Baharasame), Garaad Jaamac Garaad Ismaaciil (Dhulbahante/Maxamuud Garaad/Jaamac Siyaad), and Garaad Cali Buraale (Dhulbahante/Qayaad).¹¹⁸ All three had backgrounds in the diaspora; they did not conform to the older stereotype of nomadic Somali leaders whose knowledge was confined to matters of kinship, animals and survival in the semi-desert. The ‘new *garaado*’, as one can call them, commanded transnational relations and were well-versed in

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115 123. The term *isimadda* is a collective name, used mostly in Puntland for the highest-ranking traditional leaders. In Somaliland, the same type of traditional leaders would be called ‘*saladiin*’ (sultans). The *Guurti* in Somaliland does not comprise any of the highest-ranking clan leaders but representatives of clans that are considered wise and fit the general profile of elders, in theory at least. For more details, see Hoehne, *No Easy Way Out*.

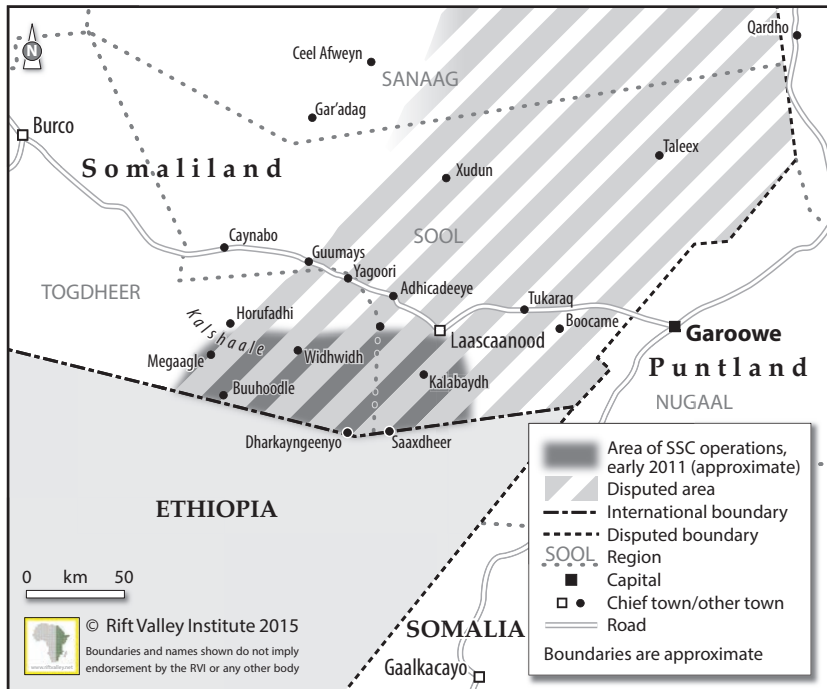
116 Faarax Garaad, Maxamuud Garaad and a part of the Baho Nugaaleed claim descent from a forefather called Shirshoore. Baho Nugaaleed additionally includes a number of otherwise unrelated groups (such as Yaxye) that are only united at a very high genealogical level as descendants of Dhulbahant.

117 While this was the plan, it needs to be stressed that the SSC parliament never became fully functional during the period of existence of the SSC (until mid-2011).

118 Garaad Jaamac Garaad Cali was still relatively young (in his forties) when he was installed as *garaad* in 2006. He had spent many years in the USA and has an American university degree. His father, Garaad Cali, had been an influential Somali nationalist and politician in the late colonial period and throughout the first post-colonial decades. Garaad Jaamac was a nephew of Garaad Cabdiqani. He seems to have played a major role in the establishment of SSC. Interview with Baashe Maxamed Faarax, Hargeysa, 7 December 2010.

‘Western’ culture, but had also had an Islamic education and knew how to manoeuvre in national and perhaps international politics. Still, they needed ‘local credentials’ which meant understanding the problems of nomads and others and finding pragmatic solutions for their survival in a harsh environment.

Not all the Dhulbahante’s traditional leaders actively supported the SSC: some, like Garaad Saleebaan Garaad Maxamed—the second-highest leader of the clan who represented the extensive Maxamuud Garaad branch—sided with Puntland. Others kept as much distance as possible from Somali state politics, focusing instead on local issues including keeping the peace among local livestock herders. Garaad Cabdulaahi Garaad Soofe, who by descent was Dhulbahante/Faarax Garaad/Cali Geri and presided over the lineages in and around Buuhoodle, was among



Map 4. Area of SSC operations 2009–2011

the latter. But even these leaders were sometimes drawn into politics and conflict at the 'national' level between Somaliland, Puntland, and Somalia.

Even if some sub-clan or lineage leaders did not support the SSC, individual members of these groups could still decide to join the newly formed administration. Traditional authorities in Somali society hold precarious power, and are respected only if they prove capable. They lack the power to enforce decisions taken against the will of their people.¹¹⁹

Within all three branches of the SSC administration, positions were divided equally between representatives of the three main genealogical divisions: Faarax Garaad, Maxaamuud Garaad, and Baho Nugaaleed. The capital of the SSC administration was officially Laascaanood, but as it was controlled by Somaliland, Dharkayngeeny, a small village inhabited by the Qayaad and Baharasame some 80 km south of Laascaanood on the border with Ethiopia, became the transitional capital. Another centre of the SSC administration and operations was Buuhoodle, some 100 km south of Caynabo. The SSC movement therefore started very much in the area of the Faarax Garaad branch of the Dhulbahante. This is also where, historically, the Dervish movement had begun, before it expanded and incorporated other Dhulbahante and non-Dhulbahante groups.

The SSC's aims and relations

President Saleebaan 'Xaglo Toosiye's' definition of the SSC's aims was clear: the Dhulbahante should administer themselves and take care of their own security and development. They should also help establish an effective federal Somali government and combat terrorism within the SSC regions. The latter statement was directed at Ethiopia, the SSC's powerful neighbour, because of its concern over preventing an anti-Ethiopian administration on its long eastern border with the Somali territories, which include Dhulbahante areas.

The SSC sought to establish itself as a stable regional partner for the international community. It hoped to qualify as a state in a future, federal

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119 Hoehne, 'From Pastoral to State Politics', p. 155–157.

Somali republic. President ‘Xaglo Toosiye’, emphasized his strategy was not to wage war:

We want peace. I myself ran away from the war in Mogadishu in 1990. The clashes that happened in Widhwidh [in early 2010] and other places in Sool and Cayn were not planned by the SSC. They were the results of attacks from the Somaliland army. Somaliland wants the land, not the people. Puntland wants the people, not the land. We [the SSC] want to work for the development of our people and our land.¹²⁰

His statement conveyed a clear sense of borders—Dhulbahante clan-land-borders—indicating a farther development in the political identity of Dhulbahante related not just to the *Hartinimo* and the notion of Somali unity that had attracted them to Puntland in the late 1990s, but to clan autonomy and a state of their own. The SSC was the first Dhulbahante party to put this vision into practice. Here was also where its problems began, the uncertainty starting (much as Somaliland’s and Puntland’s had) with the exact location of the borders of this clan statelet. In the imagination of SSC activists, Dhulbahante lands included much of the land lost to other clans in the aftermath of the Dervish wars a hundred years earlier, and as a result of other conflicts and demographic changes in the course of the twentieth century. This imagined territory stretched from east of Burco (for decades now mainly in the hands of Isaaq/Habar Jecllo) to north of Ceerigaabo (long in the hands of Habar Jecllo and Habar Yoonis). In reality, the newly established SSC exercised control over only the area between Laascaanood and Buuhoodle.

While the governments in Hargeysa and Garoowe strongly opposed the establishment of the SSC administration, the SSC’s position (or at least, the one stated by its president) was to aspire to be a good neighbour to both states while remaining separate from them. ‘We want to administer our own affairs. We do not want war. We want *deris wanaag*

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120 Telephone interview with Saleebaan Ciise Axmed ‘Xaglo Toosiye’, 27 January 2011.

(‘good neighbourhood’),’ is what Xaglo Toosiye actually said.¹²¹ But from 2009 to 2011, neither Somaliland nor Puntland or Mogadishu entered into official contact with the SSC as a separate entity.

The SSC’s relationship with Puntland was especially complex. While the administration in Garoowe rejected the SSC, Harti solidarity was still strong among ordinary people in the north-east of the Somali peninsula, including among Majeerteen, Warsangeli, and Dhulbahante.¹²² Many people blamed power hungry elites for being behind their political divisions and the SSC leadership had to pitch its policies carefully to avoid losing popular support. At its founding conference in Nairobi, the organizers ‘emphasized [that] the new leadership structure has not cut ties with other Puntland clans’, justifying their separatist move on the basis that Puntland’s government had failed to liberate Laascaanood from Somaliland’s military occupation.¹²³ In other words, Garoowe had betrayed *Hartinimo* as a whole, not just the SSC region. The Puntland government also had to tread carefully and restrain its anger at the SSC to avoid popular unrest, as many Majeerteen thought the Dhulbahante had a right to free themselves from the ‘yoke’ of Somaliland if they so wished.

On 9 November 2010, an SSC delegation that included President Saleebaan ‘Xaglo Toosiye’, Garaad Jaamac Garaad Cali, and the defence minister Yasin ‘Tamaat’, met the TFG in Mogadishu. The TFG delegation included president Sheekh Shariif and Prime Minister Maxamed Cabdulaahi Maxamed. Garaad Jaamac Garaad Cali also met Hawiye elders. The aim of the visit was to brief the TFG about the situation in the SSC regions and confirm the SSC’s allegiance to the rest of Somalia. Xaglo Toosiye later said that the SSC had not received money or weapons from the TFG. The SSC had not asked for anything, he said: ‘Moreover, weapons do not build Somalia’.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, Puntland’s government

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121 Telephone interview with Saleebaan Ciise Axmed ‘Xaglo Toosiye’, 27 January 2011.

122 Liban Ahmed, ‘Reconciliation for Sool, Sanaag and Cayn stakeholders matters’, www.wardheernews.com, 22 June 2010.

123 Ahmed, ‘Reconciliation for Sool, Sanaag and Cayn’.

124 Telephone interview with Saleebaan Ciise Axmed ‘Xaglo Toosiye’, 27 January 2011.

objected to the SSC's reception in Mogadishu. According to Puntland's president Cabduraxmaan 'Faroole', by receiving the SSC, the TFG had undermined its credibility as a partner in establishing a stable Somalia,¹²⁵ which added to the growing distance between Garoowe and Mogadishu.

Ethiopia's role in the SSC was unclear. Though Saleebaan 'Xaglo Toosiye' insisted his administration had no direct relationship with the Ethiopian government in Addis Ababa, he acknowledged that some of the SSC's leadership had met Ethiopian officials, and that SSC and Ethiopian officers met frequently in Buuhoodle, a town straddling the Somali–Ethiopian border. Many Dhulbahante lived inside Ethiopia's Somali-dominated Region 5. The existence of such relationships was evidence that the government in Addis Ababa at least 'tolerated' the SSC.¹²⁶

The SSC's connections in the diaspora were extremely important. At the end of January 2011, Saleebaan travelled to the US to mobilize support. He hoped to meet Johnnie Carson, then Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. In September 2010, Carson's statement that the US would follow a 'two-track approach' to help rebuild Somalia and combat terrorism had excited many Somalis. The first track was to support the TFG, while the second involved more engagement with regional authorities, such as Somaliland and Puntland, and with local authorities to help end instability and violence.¹²⁷ The SSC leadership hoped it would qualify for US support under the second track. It was exactly the kind of direct external assistance that Dhulbahante had been longing for.

From the outset, however, the SSC had been confronted with two major problems: it was economically weak and the Dhulbahante were divided. For a decade or more, Dhulbahante elites had been playing Hargeysa and Garoowe off against each other. They had used short-term

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 125 GaroweOnline, 'Puntland leader criticizes TFG support of armed clan militia', 17 November 2010.

126 Telephone interview with Saleebaan Ciise Axmed 'Xaglo Toosiye', 27 January 2011.

127 Paul Mwaura, 'U.S. top official hopeful in new "dual-track" Somalia policy', 22 October 2010.

alliances to gain political influence and access to resources, and to settle intra-clan scores and help their own lineages manoeuvre within the Dhulbahante clan. Examples of such were the power struggle between the Maxamuud Garaad and Faarax Garaad (the branches of the clan from the Nugaal valley and the *Hawd* respectively), and Axmed Cabdi ‘Xaabsade’s’ years of yo-yoing between Puntland and Somaliland, which had led to the capture of Laascaanood by Somaliland forces in 2007.

Conflicts and divisions had multiplied. The SSC claimed to be clan-inclusive—a claim reflected in its careful organizational structure allocating equal numbers of positions to representatives of all main branches of the Dhulbahante—but the groups supporting the SSC with men, weapons, and money were mostly Faarax Garaad. This meant the SSC was very much a movement made-up of Dhulbahante from the *Hawd*. Dhulbahante lineages from the Nugaal valley bordering Majeerteen territories were more inclined to support Puntland.

The second major problem was that, in spite of the support of the diaspora, the SSC lacked a ready source of income. Its officials did not get salaries: economic weakness translated directly into administrative and military weakness. In 2010, there was no visible local administration in the regions the SSC claimed to represent. Nor did it have a standing army. Its ‘troops’ consisted of sub-clan militias that were poorly organized and poorly equipped.

Nonetheless, the SSC’s forces would go on to attack Somaliland’s positions in areas south and south-west of Laascaanood, and get involved in large-scale fighting around Kalshaale, south of Burco. The fighting did not secure any territory, but it was important in boosting Dhulbahante aspirations for autonomy and the anti-Somaliland feeling that provided the foundation for the SSC.

Military conflict between Somaliland and the SSC

Statements by the SSC president concerning the peacefulness of the area under his administration contrasted starkly with military developments in southern Togdheer/Cayn and some parts of Sool. The first confrontation between SSC militias and Somaliland troops occurred on 21 May

2010, south of Widhwidh. Skirmishes dragged on until July when another clash in Kalabaydh, south of Laascaanood, took place: the confrontation left fatalities on both sides. Dozens of men were wounded, some prisoners were taken (mainly Dhulbahante militiamen), and families were displaced.¹²⁸

This escalating conflict in the *Hawd* took place during campaigning for the much delayed presidential elections in Somaliland (originally scheduled for 2008). One of the opposition presidential contenders, Axmed Maxamed Maxamuud 'Siilaanyo', pledged to initiate negotiations with the SSC if he won.¹²⁹ He was Habar Jeclo/Maxamed Abokor/Aadan Madoobe, a lineage whose nomadic members resided in or close to the conflict zone in the *Hawd*. Siilaanyo contended that he would understand the problems in eastern Somaliland better than the incumbent President Daahir Rayaal Kaahin, a Gadabuursi from the far west of the country. When Axmed 'Siilaanyo' won Somaliland's presidential elections in June, he kept his promise and sent a delegation of ten mediators to Widhwidh on 2 November 2010. The delegation consisted of members from the new administration in Hargeysa who, by patrilineal descent, belonged to or had good connections in the east.¹³⁰ The mediators met Garaad Abshir Saalax (Dhulbahante/Barkad), the highest-ranking traditional leader from Widhwidh, and some local elders.¹³¹

After several days of talking, the parties reached agreement on five points: militiamen and/or soldiers taken prisoner should be released; there should be compensation for civilians killed (all Dhulbahante); a

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128 IRIN News, 'Somalia: Somaliland clashes displace thousands', 23 July 2010.

129 Siilaanyo had been chairman of the SNM between 1984 and 1989.

130 The delegation was led by Maxamed Cabdi Gaboose (Isaaq/Habar Yoonis/Muuse Carre), the new minister of interior and included, among others: Baashe Maxamed Faarax (Dhulbahante/Faarax Garaad/Baharasame), the second deputy speaker of the House of Representatives; Axmed Xaaji Cali Cadami (Ugayslabe), the minister of defence; Fu'aad Aadan 'Cadde' (Dhulbahante/Maxamuud Garaad/Naaleeye Axmed/Reer Jibril), the special envoy of the president of Somaliland for the eastern regions; and Maxamed Kaahin (Isaaq/Habar Jeclo/Maxamed Abokor/Reer Daahir), the spokesman of the Kulmiye party and a former SNM military leader.

131 Interview with Baashe Maxamed Faarax, Hargeysa, 7 December 2010.

local Somaliland administration should be established in Widhwidh; no militias should operate in the area; local Somaliland police and military units should be established, employing Dhulbahante. The last three points were the demands of the negotiators coming from Hargeysa.¹³²

The agreement was immediately thrown into doubt when Garaad Abshir Saalax left Widhwidh straight after the negotiations for Sweden, where he had a home. In an interview with the BBC Somali Service from Garowe, he said that although he had talked peace with the Somaliland delegation, politically his people were on Puntland's side.¹³³ Perhaps because he had to, the traditional Dhulbahante leader was manoeuvring between the front lines. For the sake of his people in Widhwidh, he had entered into peace talks with Somaliland's army, the dominant military power in the area. So as not to be considered a traitor by the larger Harti community, though, and in order to secure safe passage through Puntland to Europe, he had denounced the very agreement he had just made. People in central Somaliland were outraged. His conduct underlined to them how unreliable the Dhulbahante elite could be.

The episode highlighted a dilemma for traditional leaders in the contested borderlands who, in the absence of a stable state administration, had to double up on their roles, acting as both traditional leader and modern politician. The Somali term for politician is '*siyaasi*', an Arabic loan word. It carries some negative connotations: *siyaasiin* (politicians) are considered selfish and power hungry, more often to be blamed for causing conflict than making peace. The role of traditional leaders, however, was to make peace and work for their community.

Taking on this dual role undermined the credentials of traditional leaders in the contested borderlands. Garaad Abshir Saalax's credibility as a negotiator was weakened in the eyes of the Hargeysa government. He was considered a traitor by some of his people as well because they suspected him making a secret pact with officials in Hargeysa.

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132 Interview with Baashe Maxamed Faarax, Hargeysa, 7 December 2010.

133 Maxamed Axmed Yasin, 'Garaad Abshir Saalax oo si diiran lagu soo dhaweeeyey Garowe', 6 November 2010.

The Kalshaale conflict

Only ten days after the negotiations in Widhwidh in November 2010, fighting erupted in the area of Kalshaale south of Burco between Dhulbahante from the Buuhoodle area and Habar Jeclo/Maxamed Abokor/Suulo Madow.¹³⁴ Kalshaale is grazing land, and a ‘buffer zone’ in the clan borderlands between Dhulbahante and Habar Jeclo. Megaagle, a few kilometres south-east, is Dhulbahante territory, while Qorulugud, a few kilometres north-west, is Habar Jeclo territory. The area had been wracked with conflict for many years. If Dhulbahante provoked Habar Jeclo by building a *berked*, house or even a mosque on land previously considered neutral space or land the Habar Jeclo considered theirs, the Habar Jeclo would do the same in a space that made Dhulbahante equally nervous.

Both Habar Jeclo and Dhulbahante nomads used Kalshaale itself for grazing, which had a big *balli*, or clay reservoir, for watering animals. In October 2010, tensions rose when Habar Jeclo men started to build cisterns (Somali pl.: *berkedo*) there. Building in an uninhabited place stakes your claim to it, and in this way descent groups can expand and secure important resources, including pasture and water. All important settlements in the interior have started around a permanent waterspot or well. For as long as it had remained empty of buildings or cisterns, Dhulbahante had thought of Kalshaale as Dhulbahante land where Habar Jeclo could also graze their animals. Similar reciprocal arrangements existed in other places considered Habar Jeclo land, where Dhulbahante were tolerated as guests.

Environmental degradation, population growth and state politics meant groups frequently clashed over pasture and water. State politics had seen Somaliland gradually expanding its authority east, especially since the October 2007 occupation of Laascaanood. Under its new president, Siilaanyo, this took on the additional ominous characteristic of what Dhulbahante saw as ‘Habar Jeclo expansion’. They suspected their

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 134 President Axmed Maxamed Maxamuud ‘Siilaanyo’ was Habar Jeclo/Maxamed Abokor/Aadan Madobe and thus genealogically very close to this group. The speaker of the Guurti in Hargeysa, Saleebaan ‘Gaal’, also belonged to this group.

long-term rivals in the *Hawd* would use their governmental power to expand their territorial control.¹³⁵ For them, this continued the trauma of Habar Jecllo expansion under the British in the aftermath of the Dervish wars that had led to the loss of Caynabo and its wells. If this was paranoia, it nonetheless shaped Dhulbahante perception of what was going on around Kalshaale.

Developments in Ethiopia added pressure. Ethiopia had tightened its control over Somalis in Region 5; it did not like large numbers of Somali pastoralists crossing over into its territory because it heightened the risk of conflict between different Somali clans. Somalis were generally viewed with suspicion by the leadership in Ethiopia, which worried that once in Region 5, they might claim Ethiopian citizenship. Thus Dhulbahante in the *Hawd* were exposed to the pressure of states, which made them feel as if they were standing with their backs against a wall.

When the Habar Jecllo had started building the cisterns at Kalshaale, Dhulbahante from Buuhoodle had asked them to stop. The Habar Jecllo refused. Elders from both sides agreed to postpone discussions on the issue until the end of Ramadan, but shortly before it ended, an elderly man from the Dhulbahante/Faarax Garaad/Cali Geri lineage, on his way to sell his animals in the port of Berbera, was shot dead by a man from Habar Jecllo/Maxamed Abokor/Suulo Madow. Local nomads had accused him of being a Dhulbahante who wanted to prevent the building of their cisterns.¹³⁶ On 15 November 2010, during the Eid prayer that ended the Ramadan fasting, a group of Dhulbahante attacked the Habar Jecllo in the area of Kalshaale, killing seven men and wounding six. Three Dhulbahante were killed and three others wounded in the attack.

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135 Clan logic plays a major role in Somaliland politics even though the official system is based on political parties and elections. Locals assess the government frequently according to the clan-belonging of the key-leaders; certain positions in the government and the wider administration are also inherited by clan relatives, regardless of party membership.

136 Interviews with Axmed Daakir, Laascaanood, 11 December 2010, and Siciid Xaaji Nuur, Hargeysa, 27 February 2011.

Somaliland troops already in the area of Widhwidh went straight to Kalshaale to position themselves between the two groups. Traditional leaders from other Dhulbahante and Habar Jecllo lineages rushed to the scene. Religious and traditional leaders, intellectuals, and politicians came from as far away as Hargeysa and Garoowe, underlining the concern that the conflict was more than an ordinary shootout between nomads—it had happened in a place and at a time that opened it up to politicization. Puntland and Somaliland used the incident to increase their influence in the contested borderlands and quell any SSC involvement.

A large mediation committee was established comprising traditional authorities from various groups not directly involved in the conflict, including Isaaq, Warsangeli, Majeerteen, and Dhulbahante from lineages not belonging in Buuhoodle. While traditional ways of settling the conflict were underway in the countryside near Kalshaale, Somaliland handed the case to nine religious leaders to make a judgment based on *Shari'a*. Although the religious leaders were supposedly above clan-politics, Dhulbahante complained they were mostly Isaaq.

The religious sheikhs ordered both sides to pay *mag* ('compensation') for those killed: the Dhulbahante for the seven dead Habar Jecllo men, and the Habar Jecllo for the three dead Dhulbahante and the elderly man. They were also ordered to care for each other's wounded until they recovered.¹³⁷ The Habar Jecllo were allowed to keep their three cisterns while the Dhulbahante were allowed to build three for themselves. Both sides were to be allowed to use the area, but without any further construction.

This decision was accepted by the Habar Jecllo but rejected by the Dhulbahante, who argued the area should be used for grazing animals and that there should be no permanent dwellings or cisterns. In the

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137 The *mag* is usually 100 camels payable in cash or in kind per man killed. Groups can agree on a reduced *mag*, such as when two lineages within one sub-clan do not want to overburden each other. In exceptional cases, the *mag* can be raised to 120 or 150 camels—for example, if the killing was gruesome or if the dead person was important. Power-differences can also influence customary proceedings and decisions. See: Günther Schlee. 'Customary Law and the Joys of Statelessness: Idealised Traditions versus Somali Realities', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7/2 (2013), pp. 258–271.

wake of the fighting, they did not feel comfortable living with the Habar Jeclo who they felt could rely on the Somaliland army and were 'close to President Siilaanyo'. Members of the Dhulbahante delegation from Buuhoodle and other parts of the clan's territory, retreated in anger.¹³⁸ Others, including Majeerteen and Warsangeli, returned to their homes. The settlement engineered by the Somaliland government had failed and in the weeks that followed many Dhulbahante and Majeerteen accused the government of Hargeysa of having sided with the Habar Jeclo in deploying the national army in a clan dispute, essentially using the army as a clan militia.¹³⁹

On 9 January 2011, President Siilaanyo declared all local clan militias had to leave Kalshaale and that it was, for the time being, a military zone controlled by the Somaliland national army.¹⁴⁰ For the vast majority of Dhulbahante, this amounted to another illegal occupation of their territory. By then, the Kalshaale issue had become a concern for members of the clan all the way from the *Hawd* to Sanaag and the diaspora. This paved the way for the SSC, which had so far held back, to coordinate armed resistance by the lineages around Buuhoodle. On 30 January 2011, the first clashes between Dhulbahante/SSC units and Somaliland troops occurred around Hagoogane, a village near Kalshaale. The next day there were anti-Somaliland demonstrations in Laascaanood. On 7 February, the SSC and Somaliland's troops fought a battle in the Kalshaale area that left several dozen people dead and up to a hundred wounded.¹⁴¹ This time, the SSC troops were well-equipped and better organized than in 2010,

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138 Interview with Maxamed Qoryooley, Laascaanood, 12 December 2010.

139 In fact, the Somaliland army, stationed in Kalshaale included members of Isaaq and non-Isaaq clans. Harti were less strongly represented in the army than other groups.

140 Boocame Media, 'Axmed Maxamed Siilaanyo oo Go'aan Ka soo saaray Arinta Kalshaale', 9 January 2011.

141 SomalilandPress, 'Somaliland: Fighting erupts in Kalshale, between troops and clan militia', 7 February 2011.

having been re-equipped, probably with help from the diaspora and heavy weapons from various Dhulbahante sub-clans.¹⁴²

More clashes between SSC/Dhulbahante militias and the Somaliland army continued until mid-February 2011. Demonstrations for and against Puntland's military engagement in Sool and southern Togdheer were held in Garoowe. Those who wanted to see Puntland move against Somaliland's army were mostly Dhulbahante; those against were, reportedly, mostly Majeerteen.¹⁴³ Some may have thought that full military confrontation with Somaliland would have a negative impact on the development of mineral resources in their region.

On 21 February, Puntland's President Cabduraxmaan 'Faroole' announced (in an interview with the BBC Somali Service) he would not stand by and watch 'his people' (by which he meant the Dhulbahante between Kalshaale and Buuhoodle) being 'massacred'. He met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in Addis Ababa, where he may well have been warned against fighting Somaliland,¹⁴⁴ as Puntland pulled back from officially supporting the SSC. Unofficially, it was reported to have tolerated some support to the militias fighting near Kalshaale, including the movement of several dozen technicals belonging to Dhulbahante lineages, which had been 'parked' near Garoowe.

Somaliland's President Axmed 'Siilaanyo' published an appeal for peace on 23 February, stating his government was ready to engage in further conciliation. In Somali, this was referred to as rolling out the 'mattress of peace' (*gogosha nabadeed*), on which one would sit and talk. The president had reportedly already ordered the destruction of the cisterns built by the Habar Jeclo, an order carried out on 27 February, opening the door to more dialogue between the Habar Jeclo and the

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 142 A few years ago, it was reported that the sub-clans and lineages in and around Buuhoodle had heavy weapons and even tanks left over from the Somali civil war. These were controlled by local traditional leaders and hidden in the bush.

143 Telephone interviews with Axmed Daakir, 22 February 2011, and Chloe Stull-Lane, 25 February 2011.

144 Hargeysa Online, 'Ciidanka Qaranka oo Heegan Culus la geliyey iyo Ethiopia oo Faroole uga digtay Dagaal ka dhan ah Somaliland', 23 February 2011.

Dhulbahante. But Dhulbahante elders now demanded that *mag* be paid for dozens more men killed in January and February, a demand rejected by the Hargeysa government and the Habar Jecllo, who wished to start afresh from where the settlement of the religious leaders had failed the previous December.

The Kalshaale conflict showed how a local dispute over water, dry season pasture and a clan buffer zone could become a major conflict involving a national army, delegates from rival state administrations, and increasingly well-equipped, well-organized clan militias. It emphasized both the instability of the borderlands and the distance, at least in political terms, of many Dhulbahante from Hargeysa. The conflict massively increased Dhulbahante concerns about being a minority in Somaliland under what they saw as an Isaaq government actively annexing their land.

It also displayed the limitations of a state's conflict management skills. The 'state system' in central Somaliland seemed at odds with the system of 'traditional governance' that dominated the borderlands. Effective communication between ministers and other officials, and traditional leaders, was impossible because their intentions and concerns were incompatible. Some saw themselves acting in the name of 'the state', while others were concerned with locals, resources and matters of 'clan'.

The Kalshaale incident also revealed that Puntland's hands were tied by Ethiopia and could not 'free' Harti areas by force from Somaliland's 'occupation'. This gave Dhulbahante hardliners all the more reason to argue that a new solution had to be found to strengthen Dhulbahante autonomy. This led to a new and, this time, more stable and powerful clan administration.

Deterioration of the security situation in Laascaanood

Before outlining the further development of clan administration, it is important to understand what happened in the epicentre of the Dhulbahante crisis was in Laascaanood, the capital of the Sool region, which many people living there saw as being under occupation. The standard expression one heard from Dhulbahante was: '*baa la haystaa*', meaning:

‘it [Laascaanood] is held [by force]’, or: ‘*waa nala haystaa*’, meaning: ‘we are held [by force]’.

While Somaliland had provided some law and order and nascent development in 2008, and some locals had recognized this, the situation in Laascaanood had deteriorated since, with a series of killings beginning in late 2009 costing the lives of high-ranking officials working for the Somaliland administration.

The first people murdered were Isaaq. Cusmaan Cabdi Yuusuf ‘Afdhilo’ was Habar Jeclo by clan and the Somaliland army’s commander in town. He was popular with people in Laascaanood as he facilitated communication between locals and the administration. He was assassinated with several of his soldiers by a remote-controlled roadside bomb.

Such an incident had never happened in Laascaanood before.¹⁴⁵ It was the type of killing that was the hallmark of al-Shabaab extremists operating in Mogadishu and parts of southern and central Somalia.¹⁴⁶ Al-Shabaab had clandestine supporters in places like Laascaanood; but it was unclear if the killings were al-Shabaab’s responsibility.

The next to be assassinated were Dhulbahante officials working for the Somaliland administration. The commander of police operations in the Sool region, Cusmaan Faarax Cabdi ‘Suxufi’, was killed in January 2010. The following month, small explosions went off almost every other day, injuring people. Four soldiers from Somaliland’s army, most of them Dhulbahante, were killed by a bomb. The commander of the secret service was arrested with three of his assistants, and explosives found in their houses, but the assassinations and bomb attacks continued.

Among other prominent victims killed that year were the governor of Sool, the head of the court of appeal, and the commander of the custodial forces. Others working in the Somaliland administration were attacked but survived. Local people said men in military uniform, their faces

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145 Interview with M.Q., Laascaanood, 12 December 2010.

146 Roland Marchal, ‘A tentative assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 3/3 (2009), pp. 381–404; Ken Menkhous, ‘The Crisis in Somalia: Tragedy in Five Acts’, *African Affairs* 106/204 (2007), pp. 357–390.

covered in the same style as al-Shabaab fighters, had carried out some of the killings. If al-Shabaab was involved, its motive may have been to use the unrest in Laascaanood as a cover to establish itself in the area. A few suspected assailants were captured, including the men allegedly responsible for gunning down Cabdi Ciise Nuur, the commander of the custodial forces, at point blank range. They belonged to a lineage called Fiqishiine. Originally of Hawiye/Habar Gedir origin, this lineage had been living as 'guests' for several centuries in Yagoori, west of Laascaanood. It was unclear if they were contract killers or motivated by inter-clan conflict.

As a result of the assassinations, the relationship between the Somaliland administration and the population in Laascaanood changed. Many locals accused the regional administration of being behind the killings or even thought the government in Hargeysa was trying to get rid of influential members of the Dhulbahante elite. Local Somaliland troops grew nervous and their patrols began to avoid certain areas of town. This made locals rethink anything positive they had had to say about Somaliland.

The Khaatumo state

In the course of 2011, after the events in Kalshaale and Buuhoodle, the SSC collapsed as the result of internal conflict. Its leaders travelled abroad or retreated to the countryside. Supporters in the diaspora were left feeling disappointed by the administration they had helped set up. Most locals realized the SSC could not be their saviour, though its failure had provided, perhaps, the lessons necessary to set up a new—and this time really inclusive—Dhulbahante autonomous administration. This is what happened in early 2012.

The conference that brought the 'Khaatumo State of Somalia' into being took place in January 2012 in Taleex, a small but historically important town in the Sool region. The biggest fortress of Maxamed Cabdille Xasan and his Dervishes was built in Taleex around 1915. Bombed by British planes in 1921, the impressive ruins of the fortress are still visible today in the middle of the stony semi-desert of the Nugaal valley. The conference was known as 'Khaatumo II' coming as

it did after an initial gathering ('Khaatumo I') in London in April 2011. The Somali word *khaatumo* ('good and final decision') comes from the Arabic *khaatim*, a term used for a bureaucratic stamp or even for the Prophet Muhammad himself—the final prophet or the 'seal' of prophets. In the context of Dhulbahante politics, the term has a dual meaning: it stands for a hard-won unity among members of the clan, but also for wider Somali unity—the ultimate aim of most Dhulbahante. Thus the Khaatumo endeavour signified not just a new phase in local politics but reiterated the desire of most Dhulbahante for autonomy, a federal state in a federated Somalia, something that constituted a potential threat to the administrations in both Hargeysa and Garoowe. In relation to Somaliland, the setting-up of Khaatumo state constituted an attempted secession from a secessionist state.

The conference in Taleex was special in that it happened inside the Dhulbahante heartlands and involved important personalities from the region and the diaspora. The driving force behind it may have been rich and influential Dhulbahante abroad, but it was ordinary Dhulbahante and their traditional leaders (*cuqaal* and *isimo*) who did the groundwork. Preparations had been underway for months.

In September 2011, Dhulbahante delegations of local intellectuals and other respected individuals criss-crossed Dhulbahante territories in Sool, Sanaag, and southern Togdheer/Cayn regions, canvassing the opinions of local people about plans for the conference and where to hold it. The administration in Hargeysa knew about these movements and tolerated them. The government of Puntland was not happy about the plans for a conference but also chose not to interfere. The difficulty for the two state-administrations was that a 'normal' meeting of a clan, a traditional *shir*, was not something they could forbid.¹⁴⁷ They could only do this if the meeting were the basis for the formation of a new political organization. Some Dhulbahante intellectuals went to great pains to convince the governments of Somaliland and Puntland that the meeting would not

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147 For example, in 2005 the Habar Jeelo had held a *shir* in Garadag to discuss their position in Somaliland.

BOX 4. KHAATUMO II LEADERSHIP

Originally chaired by a group of six leading personalities, the 'G6' (*Guddiga Lixda*), this number was subsequently expanded to make up the 'G9' (*Guddiga Sagaalka*):

- Chairman: Dr Cali Ciise Cabdi (Maxamuud Garaad/Nuur Axmed)
- Dr Cali Khaliif 'Galaydh' (Faarax Garaad/Baharasame)
- Dr Salebaan Cabdi Ducaale (Maxamuud Garaad/Naaleeye Axmed)
- Dr Juxa (Qayad)
- Dr Cabdikarim Xasan Jaamac (Faarax Garaad/Cali Geri)
- Dr Maxamed Siciid Cumar (Maxamuud Garaad/Cumar Wacays)
- Engineer Maxamed Buraale Xirsi (Faarax Garaad/Baharasame)
- Engineer Nuur Gaas (Maxamuud Garaad/Jaamac Siyaad)
- Dr Cali Xaaji Ciige (Yaxye)

All these men had previously held senior positions in international organizations or worked at universities or think tanks in the West. Many were wealthy. Cali Khaliif Galaydh had been Prime Minister of Somalia under Cabdiqasim Salad Xasan in the TNG established at Arta in Djibouti in 2000. Dr Cali Ciise Cabdi had held senior positions in the International Monetary Fund and was the chairman of an NGO based in Addis Ababa and operating in the Horn of Africa. The G9 aimed for a balanced representation of the three main divisions within the Dhulbahante clan according to their manpower and resources. This had been the formula on which the SSC had been built. In contrast to the SSC, which had been supported mainly by Faarax Garaad, the G9 and the Khaatumo conference (and the subsequent autonomous administration) were truly inclusive.

lead to problems for them. That this proved untrue must have been clear from the outset to, at the very least, the organizers of the conference.

Weeks before the opening of the conference, women's groups, youth representatives and traditional leaders came together. Their resolutions were brought to the attention of the chairing committee. The main points on the agenda were: what are the problems for Dhulbahante between Somaliland and Puntland? How can these problems be solved? What are the community's main needs?

After the consultation phase, around 2,300 members of the Dhulbahante clan came together in Taleex for ten days in January 2012, many accommodated in a tent city on the outskirts of town. The core proceedings of the conference were held—as tradition requires—under a huge tree (with extra sunshields attached to it that offered shade), with titled and untitled elders and intellectuals from the area and abroad playing a central role. Speeches were given assessing the situation of the Dhulbahante in the borderlands. Most leaders and ordinary people were in a good mood and excited. Their answer to fundamental questions about Dhulbahante problems was decisive: an autonomous Dhulbahante administration named the Khaatumo State of Somalia should be established.

The new state would be divided into three councils. The first was made up of the G9 plus *isimadda*, the highest-ranking of the traditional authorities. As the Dhulbahante clan has around 15 *isimo* (*garaado*, *saladiin*, and *ugaasyo*), this council consisted of about 24 individuals. The second was the presidential council, headed by Axmed Cilmi Cusmaan 'Karaash' (Maxamuud Garaad/Naaleeye Axmed), Maxamed Yuusuf Jaamac 'Indhosheel' (Faarax Garaad/Axmed Garaad), and Cabdinuur Cilmi Qaaje 'Biindhe' (Baho Nugaleed/Xasan Ugaas).¹⁴⁸ Each of them were to hold the rotating presidency for six months, with the interim period of Khaatumo due to end after 18 months. A cabinet of six ministers—the portfolios of finance, planning, natural resources, the interior, social affairs and development, and security—and eleven (first and second)

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 148 Axmed 'Karaash' and Cabdinuur 'Biindhe' had been ministers in Puntland before.

deputy ministers would be subordinate to the presidents. Positions among the presidents and the six-man cabinet were equally divided between Maxamuud Garaad, Faarax Garaad, and Baho Nugaaleed. The third body was a parliament of around 47 members including quotas for women and for non-Dhulbahante minorities such as Midgan, Tumaal, and Fiqishiine, all residing in the Dhulbahante territories. The parliament, in contrast to the two other councils, was never fully established. The territory claimed by the Khaatumo state was identical to the territory claimed by the SSC. In the words of a Khaatumo official interviewed by Somalia Report in April 2012, ‘the western border is Labida, 20 km from Burco. The northern border is Jiidale, a small village in Erigavo area. To the east lies Yoooda which is near Garowe and to the south is Buhoodle in Ayn region which shares a border with Ethiopia.’¹⁴⁹ These imagined clan borders were at odds with the situation on the ground.

Political and military dynamics after the establishment of Khaatumo

Support for the conference and its outcome was unusually large among the Dhulbahante. Most Dhulbahante in the region and the diaspora appeared to be in favour of the creation of Khaatumo—by far the most conclusive result of any Dhulbahante conference in 20 years.¹⁵⁰ There were, inevitably, some dissenters. The leadership of the outgoing SSC—particularly Saleebaan ‘Xaglo Toosiye’ and some of his Faarax Garaad/Reer Haggar followers—was understandably opposed to a new administration that would replace their own. Dhulbahante politicians in Hargeysa and Garoowe also tried to downplay the meeting and its outcome.

149 SomaliaReport. ‘What is Khatumo State?’ (A special report on SSC region of Northern Somalia 26.4.2012) http://www.somaliareport.com/index.php/post/3271/What_is_Khatumo_State

150 I visited the region several times shortly before and after the Khaatumo state was established and conducted interviews with members of the Dhulbahante clan up to Ceerigaabo. I was also in contact with friends and informants between Buuhoodle, Laascaanood and Taleex in 2011 and 2012.

But those Dhulbahante who opposed Khaatumo were a tiny minority. Among them was Cabdisamid Cali Shire, the vice-president of Puntland, who had fallen out with most relatives of his Nuur Axmed sub-clan. His brother, Maxamed Cali Shire, once a member of the Somali Revolutionary Council (SRC) under President Maxamed Siyaad Barre kept his distance from the meeting in Taleex. Another politician, Axmed Cabdi 'Xaabsade', had swapped sides so frequently that he had lost the following of his own clan. Garaad Saleebaan was leaning towards Puntland, but for the sake of his people he had to pay some tribute to Khaatumo.

The 'Khaatumo State of Somalia' was declared on 12 January 2012. The declaration was followed two days later by fighting between Somaliland troops and Dhulbahante militias near Buuhoodle. On 15 January, Somaliland's forces attacked Buuhoodle and temporarily occupied part of the town. On 26 January, another attack on the town was repulsed. In these attacks, tanks and heavy artillery were used against the local civilian population. Many families were displaced, more than 20 combatants died on each side, about 30 civilians, mostly women and children, were killed and about 50 wounded,¹⁵¹ and each side took prisoners.

In the aftermath of the attack, pictures of bodies and injured people from Buuhoodle circulated on the Internet. Throughout the Dhulbahante territories and in the diaspora tempers ran high. Pro-Khaatumo demonstrations took place in Laascaanood, Sarmaanyo, and elsewhere in Sool. Several people were killed when Somaliland's local administration in Laascaanood tried to disperse demonstrators and troops opened fire on civilians. They also rounded up more than 70 demonstrators, mainly teenagers and women, and transported them to a high security prison in Mandheera, approximately 350 km west of Laascaanood, near Berbera in central Somaliland.¹⁵² Military confrontation in the area around Buuhoodle and south of Laascaanood continued into early February.

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 151 Report by Cabdi 'Yere', February 2012.

152 This distance from home has serious implications for prisoners: because the food in prisons in Somaliland is not usually adequate prisoners receive daily rations from their relatives. If a prisoner is locked up far away from home this is not possible. Malnutrition and, sometimes, serious illness result.

Diplomatic activity by the G9 leadership and traditional leaders began to build political allies and financial support immediately after the Taleex conference had ended. Cali Khaliif Galaydh and Cali Ciise Cabdi went to Ethiopia, allegedly to consult with allies. By meeting both Ogaden representatives and the Ethiopian government, the Khaatumo leadership was performing a delicate balancing act—it was not clear whether all Dhulbahante agreed on who their closest allies might be. The Ethiopian government might have also had reservations about some of the persons the Khaatumo leaders had met with in the Somali Regional State.

Garaad Jaamac Garaad Cali, the highest-ranking Dhulbahante *isim*, went with other elders to Mogadishu to talk to the TFG to convince them that they still considered themselves part of Somalia and had established their state in accordance with the Somali constitution. They hoped for public endorsement by President Sheekh Sharif, as well as financial and other support. In fact, the TFG at one point ‘recognized’ the Khaatumo state, though this had no tangible effect on Somali politics.

Other members of the G9 travelled further afield. Cali Khaliif Galaydh went to Norway and then in the United States. Many Dhulbahante felt encouraged by the two-track approach’ announced by Johnnie Carson in Washington. They felt the Khaatumo state was exactly the kind of entity that should qualify for US support: a local administration aiming to rebuild Somalia that could counter instability and terrorism within its realm.

The governments of both Somaliland and Puntland rejected the outcome of the Khaatumo II conference. With only eight months to go before a scheduled change of government in Mogadishu, the creation of an autonomous Dhulbahante administration created a huge problem for President Cabdraxmaan ‘Faroole’ in Garoowe, threatening to reduce his influence in wider Somali politics. With the Dhulbahante gone ‘astray’, he no longer represented all northern Somali Harti, something that could cost him votes in the newly established parliament that was due to elect the next Somali president. According to the 4.5 formula upon which Somali politics had officially been built since the Arta conference of 2000, the four ‘majority’ clan-families received an equal share of power

(in terms of seats in parliament and leading government positions); the so-called ‘minority’ groups received half of that share. Darood was one of the majority clan-families, and within it, the clans belonging to the Harti collective were a considerable force.

Those involved with the Khaatumo state agreed, though, to the fundamental idea that lay behind the founding of Puntland, which was to prevent the division of Somalia. This made the idea of an autonomous Dhulbahante administration acceptable to most ordinary people living in Puntland and may have tied Garoowe’s hands in terms of its response to the establishment of this clan statelet. In the first half of 2012, Khaatumo politicians self-consciously went against President Faroole, seeking to project their voices in the larger Darood-Harti sphere as they tried to promote their own interests ahead of the Somali presidential elections and the formation of a new Somali government scheduled for August that year.

The push for Somali unity was exactly what made Khaatumo dangerous to Somaliland, which had much to lose if this new administration kept going. Somaliland was based on clearly demarcated colonial borders. Khaatumo was about to destroy this image sold by the elites in Hargeysa to people in central Somaliland and to supporters abroad, including non-Somali observers and activists. This could potentially damage Somaliland’s representation of itself as a peaceful, democratic, and hence viable state—one deserving of international recognition. For many years, the authorities in Hargeysa could attribute instability in the eastern peripheries to the ‘treason’ of power hungry local elites, the ‘unruly nature’ of some of the people there and/or to the aggression of Puntland depicted as an ‘external’ power. This went a long way as many Isaaq from central Somaliland never went east of Caynabo. Their knowledge about the situation between Buuhoodle, Laascaanood, and Taleex was built on news reports that were biased towards Hargeysa, where parts of the media were controlled by SNM-veterans.¹⁵³ The same goes for non-Somali visitors—NGO workers, journalists or researchers—who

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 153 Hoehne, ‘Newspapers in Hargeysa’.

mostly stayed in the zone between Hargeysa and Berbera, and never set foot in the 'insecure' east.

Confrontation between the Khaatumo and Somaliland forces in January and February 2012 set the scene for what was to follow. The Khaatumo administration's priority was to 'liberate' Laascaanood, being the most important Dhulbahante town. The Dhulbahante had built a sizable force of an estimated 50 technicals, with the help of supporters in the diaspora who sent money to buy cars, weapons, ammunition and fuel. An estimated 30 technicals belonged to the Naaleeye Axmed sub-clan and were controlled by the first president of the Khaatumo state, Axmed 'Karaash'.¹⁵⁴ Somaliland's forces were superior in numbers, with as many as 3,000 troops (author's estimate) positioned around Laascaanood, facing perhaps 500–1,000 men under Khaatumo command.¹⁵⁵

At the end of March, Khaatumo units positioned themselves east and south of Laascaanood and, on 1 April 2012, fighting erupted between the two sides. Both the Somaliland troops and the Khaatumo militias used heavy weapons. In this battle, the Khaatumo forces were beaten, retreating to areas around Taleex, Xudun, and Boocame. Skirmishes also broke out near Buuhoodle on the same day.

The Khaatumo forces did not stand a chance of moving on Laascaanood, but they managed to capture Tukaraq, a strategically important point on the road between Laascaanood and Garoowe. A centre for tax collection, it had been held by Puntland's troops until Khaatumo's forces had advanced and occupied it. On 16 June 2012, forces from both Somaliland and Puntland cooperated in the retaking of Tukaraq. As Somaliland's troops moved in, the Khaatumo forces left without putting up any resistance. Afterwards, Tukaraq was handed over to Puntland. This was the first time Hargeysa and Garoowe had shown open military cooperation: allegedly, Puntland had paid Somaliland a considerable sum of money for

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154 Naaleeye Axmed is probably the largest sub-clan of the Dhulbahante. Its members live in areas stretching from Adhicideeye west of Laascaanood, up to Ceerigaabo in Sanaag region.

155 There was no official confirmation of the numbers of troops on either side.

the return of Tukaraq. Puntland's troops had not confronted Khaatumo directly because serious clashes between these two Harti forces could have had serious repercussions within the wider Puntland constituency.

After these military setbacks, the leadership of the autonomous Dhulbahante administration concentrated on diplomacy in Mogadishu. There, key players in Somali politics—the TFG, the government of Puntland, and the UN—were in the middle of negotiating an end to the period of 'transitional' governments. The Khaatumo delegates in Mogadishu and abroad were hoping to influence developments to their advantage. In the Dhulbahante areas Maxamed 'Indhosheel' had taken over the presidency of the Khaatumo state from Axmed 'Karaash' in July 2012.

Aside from military and diplomatic initiatives, Khaatumo's officials and supporters started building Taleex as the provisional capital of the Khaatumo state. A small airport was built to allow direct flights to Mogadishu and the outside world and dirt roads were upgraded. In fact, a plane coming from Mogadishu, chartered by Khaatumo officials, landed there in early December 2012. The airport is called 'Maxamed Cabdille Xasan Airport', which references the (revived) history of the Dhulbahante and their Dervish past.

A Separate Peace for Buuhoodle

Military confrontation between Khaatumo and Somaliland forces in the *Hawd* declined after March 2012. The repercussions, however, led to a serious deterioration in relations between Dhulbahante and Habar Jecllo in the *Hawd*. Numerous revenge killings took place between nomads from the two clans, particularly around such places as Sooljoogto and Maygaagle. Traditionally, Dhulbahante and Habar Jecllo from the *Hawd* intermarry, but massive grievances related to the Kalshaale conflict and its aftermath meant that many inter-clan marriages ended in divorce.

Trade routes that had previously connected Buuhoodle with Burco, Berbera, and Hargeysa, were interrupted. Livestock from around Buuhoodle, an area particularly rich in camels, had previously been taken to Somaliland's port in Berbera for shipping. Now, the trade was redirected

to Bosaaso in Puntland. To address these problems for ordinary people in the *Hawd*, and to reassert himself, Saleebaan 'Xaglo Toosiye', the former head of the SSC, who kept his distance from the new Khaatumo state, entered talks with the Somaliland administration. He secured President Siilaanyo's agreement to hold peace talks with the Dhulbahante from the *Hawd* on the sidelines of a Somali peace conference in Abu Dhabi in June 2012. Initially, people in Buuhoodle were sceptical about this initiative. In August, however, Xaglo Toosiye led a small delegation to Hargeysa that included a famous Dhulbante sheikh called Sheekh Cumar Sheekh Cusmaan. Negotiations with the Somaliland government yielded concrete results: the Somaliland troops posted around Buuhoodle were to be returned to their former positions around Qorulugud, where they had been stationed before the fighting near Kalshaale in 2010; prisoners from both sides were freed; and Saleebaan 'Xaglo Toosiye' became a minister (without portfolio) in Hargeysa.

Most people in the Buuhoodle area welcomed these moves, particularly the return of the Somaliland army to its old barracks and the exchange of prisoners. Saleebaan 'Xaglo Toosiye's' initiative had provided nomads in the area with a pragmatic solution to the pressing problems of daily life. Because there was still no decisive Dhulbahante military victory against Somaliland, everyone had to settle back into a peaceful coexistence in this part of the borderlands.

From September 2012 to July 2014, there was no serious fighting between Somaliland troops and Dhulbahante militias in the *Hawd*. Most Dhulbahante in the area remained opposed to the secession of Somaliland and retained some links to the Khaatumo administration. In December 2012, a delegation led by Khaatumo's president, Maxamed 'Indhosheel', was welcomed in Buuhoodle; Hargeysa did not interfere with the visit. In 2013, the 'airport' at Buuhoodle (an airstrip in the countryside) was opened. This was presented as a Khaatumo development project that had succeeded.

Buuhoodle had in fact seen some development in its infrastructure in the past few years. Due to the fact that the conflict had concentrated on Laascaanood, especially from 2007 onwards, some borderland peripheries

had begun to grow. In Buuhoodle, the diaspora had invested in houses, shops and restaurants, with the presence of Ethiopian troops in the southern third of the town and over the border inside Ethiopia creating a degree of confidence.

This relationship to a strong ‘third party’ (the Ethiopians) had actually helped maintain stability in terms of intra- and inter-clan strife. Although investment in the town had suffered during the worst of the military clashes, the area’s peace agreement with Somaliland in mid-2012 helped to bring it back.

While on the surface, some things had turned out for the better in Buuhoodle, almost two years of fighting had left deep scars in the collective consciousness of the people there. Local Dhulbahante had started to build a war memorial in town for those who had been killed in fighting against the Somaliland army between January 2011 and February 2012. In February 2013, a six year-old boy whose father had died in the fighting was chosen to lay the cornerstone of the memorial.¹⁵⁶ In wanting to place an armoured troop carrier (known as *Bebe* in Somali) captured by Dhulbahante militiamen, on top of the memorial, people in Buuhoodle were making a pointed statement. The memorial would mimic the war memorial with a Russian warplane on top of it in Hargeysa’s Khayriadda square, depicting the 1988 bombing of the city on the orders of the Barre government.

The bombing had affected mainly Isaaq in Hargeysa and Burco. Proportionately, it was an atrocity on a much larger scale but the fact that Dhulbahante from Buuhoodle wanted to depict the 2011 and 2012 killings in a similar way illustrated the degree to which inter-communal relations had deteriorated. By July 2014, the memorial in Buuhoodle was not yet complete yet local officials used the pedestal under construction

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 156 Kalshaale Online, ‘Deg deg: Taaladii Mujihidinta oo Buuhoodle laga Bilaabay & Wiil Aabihii Ku dhintay Kalshaale oo Dhagax Dhigay’, 25 February 2013.

to remind the local public of what the government in Hargeysa had done to them.¹⁵⁷

Dhulbahante Autonomy until mid-2014: A Lost Cause?

On 10 September 2012 in Mogadishu, Xasan Sheekh Maxamuud, a former civil society activist from the Hawiye/Abgal clan, was elected president of Somalia by the parliament. After the elections in Mogadishu, Khaatumo's politicians and their followers pushed for the nomination of one of their leaders as prime minister. Many expressed the hope that Cali Khaliif Galaydh would take over this position once again. Eventually, though, a member of the Marrexaan clan from the Gedo region in the south was nominated. Khaatumo lost out on the national stage. The new Somali president had to concentrate on the ongoing Al Shabaab insurgency in the south. In terms of the north, he may have been eager to avoid trouble and enter into discussion with Somaliland and Puntland, still the key players in the region. Khaatumo's political weight in Somali politics as a whole was rather small.

For a while, the Khaatumo administration seemed stunned. Tensions between it and the government in Somaliland flared up again during local government elections in late November 2012. The government in Hargeysa wanted these elections held in all regions of the country, including Sool, Sanaag, and southern Togdheer/Cayn. In preparation, political organizations embarked on campaigns throughout the country. In Sool, campaigning took place mostly in areas controlled by the Somaliland army. A Dhulbahante politician, Cali 'Sandulle'—a member of a political organization called *Xaqsoor*, which sought to unite Isaaq/Carab, Gadabuursi, and Dhulbahante—was caught with his team by

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157 See for instance the speech of the local military commander from Buuhoodle, who held Hargeysa responsible for the massacres (*xasuuq*) conducted by Somaliland troops in the area (https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=h92qvixyHdM). *Xasuuq* is exactly the term used by people in central Somaliland when speaking about what the Barre regime had done to them.

Khaatumo forces in the Nugaal valley.¹⁵⁸ The Somaliland campaigners and their two cars were brought to Taleex, but were released after a few days. Before and after the elections on 29 November, heavy fighting broke out between Somaliland and Khaatumo forces near Xudun. About a dozen fighters on both sides were killed and many more were wounded.

The next time serious fighting erupted between Khaatumo and Somaliland forces was around Xudun between 28 February and 1 March 2013. Apart from this skirmish, Khaatumo seemed in a deadlock. Its first anniversary saw big celebrations in the areas inhabited by Dhulbahante and around the globe among the Dhulbahante diaspora. But on the ground, Khaatumo supporters lacked the means, and to some degree the political will, to put its political program—to free Laascaanood and develop the Dhulbahante lands—into practice. The Khaatumo administration did not generate much revenue in the areas under its control; it depended mainly on support from outside. Its third president, Cabdinuur Cilmi Qaaje ‘Biindhe’, was supposed to take over in January 2013, but it was March before he travelled from Nairobi with a delegation to Taleex and took up his position.

A persistent source of confusion among the Dhulbahante was the question of when and where the next Khaatumo *shir* would take place to decide the administration’s future after the official end of its first term in August 2013. Many insisted the *shir* had to take place again in Taleex. In the first half of 2013, new splits emerged between the Maxamuud Garaad and Faarax Garaad sections of the Dhulbahante: the former complained that most of the Khaatumo armed forces and much of its military equipment had been provided by them. This in some regards mirrored the situation during the SSC period when the Faarax Garaad led the struggle.

The Ugaadhyahaan section of the Maxamuud Garaad (to which the influential lineages of Naaleeye Axmed and Nuur Axmed belonged) began a meeting in Sarmaanyo in the Nugaal valley that was presided over by

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158 The Somaliland constitution only allows for three registered parties. New parties have to be established as a ‘political organization’ (*urur siyasaadeed*) first. The three organizations coming out of the local government elections with the most votes become the national parties.

Garaad Saleebaan Garaad Maxamed, a traditional leader who in the past had kept rather quiet about Khaatumo affairs. This meeting was, among other issues, supposed to clarify the group's political position. It went on for many months in 2013, delaying the start of the next Khaatumo *shir*.

There were other factors interfering with Khaatumo. Puntland was scheduled to hold its first local government elections in July 2013, with several political parties competing for votes. The process of setting-up the parties was fraught with problems and led to massive tensions in Puntland. President Cabduraxmaan 'Faroole' was accused of manipulating the process to secure his party's victory and his re-election. The local government elections were cancelled at the last moment when it became clear that the ballot would provoke major clashes in the city of Qardho. Puntland instead began preparing for presidential elections in January 2014, just over a year after the one-year extension of President Faroole's term was due to expire.¹⁵⁹ Since the Khaatumo administration had not delivered on any of its main aims, some Dhulbahante elites began to reconsider their relationship with Puntland. In advance of the presidential elections, the 66-member parliament of Puntland, which would elect the president and vice president, had to be constituted anew. Its members had been nominated in accordance with a system of proportional clan representation. Throughout the Dhulbahante lands, individuals consulted their elders to gain the nomination, which caused unrest among Khaatumo supporters.

Part of the uncertainty surrounding the presidential elections concerned the vice-presidency and various ministerial positions. Puntland's vice-president Cabdisamid Cali Shire (Dhulbahante/Maxamuud Garaad/Nuur Axmed/Samakaab Cali) was by descent from Taleex and was interested in re-election. He visited Taleex in late August 2013 on a 'personal mission' to participate in the settlement of a dispute between his lineage and another and stayed until October. The presence of Puntland's vice-president in the heart of the Khaatumo state caused irritation. While

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 159 Faroole had secured a one year extension of his term on the grounds that the time was needed to prepare for the local elections. ICG, *Somalia: Puntland's Punted Polls*.

Cabdisamid was tolerated as a ‘son of the soil’, many Dhulbahante suspected that he was trying to bring the Maxamuud Garaad branch back into Puntland and split the Khaatumo leadership in order to gain votes for his re-election. In mid-September, the Khaatumo state’s supporters were also perturbed by news that Axmed ‘Karaash’—one of the administration’s three ex-presidents—had struck a deal with Garoowe. At the same time, Somaliland’s army increased pressure on Khaatumo by attacking their forces near Taleex, although they were repulsed.¹⁶⁰

On 28 November 2013, after Cabdisamid had left Taleex, a clash occurred north of Tukaraq between forces led by Maxamed ‘Indhosheel’ who had taken the Khaatumo presidency again from Cabdinuur ‘Biindhe’ and Puntland troops under the command of Cabdisamid. Puntland’s army chased Khaatumo’s forces to Taleex where around a dozen people were killed and many more wounded.¹⁶¹

The elections in Puntland took place on 8 January 2014 and were narrowly won by Cabdiwali Maxamed Cali ‘Gaas’ who had served as Somalia’s prime minister under President Sheekh Shariif. Cabdixakiim Cabdulaahi Xaaji Cumar ‘Cameey’ (Dhulbahante/Faarax Garaad/Reer Hagar), from Buuhoodle, became his vice-president. Having a Dhulbahante from Buuhoodle in the second-highest position in Puntland provided serious challenges to the Khaatumo administration. Khaatumo’s president, Maxamed ‘Inshosheel’, and Puntland’s vice-president, were both from the same part of the borderlands. They were now in direct competition for local followers. Axmed ‘Karaash’ became Puntland’s new Minister of Interior, and Cabdinuur ‘Biindhe’, who had also chosen to defect from Khaatumo, was named Puntland’s Minister of Fisheries and Sea Resources. Puntland had succeeded in undermining Khaatumo’s standing among some Dhulbahante.

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 160 Reports by Cabdi Yere, 11.9.2013 and 8.11.2013; UN Security Council. Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia. S/2013/709 (2 December 2013), p. 4.

161 Report by Cabdi Yere, 6 December 2013.

The elections in Puntland also strengthened the position of an influential elder from Buuhoodle, Maxamuud Xaaji Cumar ‘Cameey’.¹⁶² A paternal uncle of the new vice-president, he had come out against Dhulbahante autonomy and in favour of Harti unity. He had rejected the SSC despite the fact that its president, Saleebaan ‘Xaglo Toosiye’, was Dhulbahante/Faarax Garaad/Reer Hagar like himself. Likewise, he rejected the Khaatumo state and remained a firm supporter of Puntland.¹⁶³

In January 2014, his political stand had gained considerable weight. Many people in Buuhoodle were excited about the victory of ‘their man’ in Puntland despite considering themselves citizens of the Khaatumo state. (In online contributions from the diaspora, people from Khaatumo sometimes referred to themselves as ‘Dervishes’.) The second anniversary of the autonomous Dhulbahante administration was celebrated between Taleex and Buuhoodle on 12 January, but much less enthusiastically than the first. In the course of one year, the idea of an autonomous Khaatumo state had lost ground even among the Dhulbahante.

On 15 April 2014, Somaliland’s troops captured Taleex. The Khaatumo forces led by Maxamed ‘Inshosheel’ retreated to Xalin. There were no exchanges of gunfire in this operation. Somaliland’s move provoked an immediate reaction from Puntland’s new administration, which sent its own forces to Taleex district. After the UN and US called on both parties to avoid escalation of the conflict, the Somaliland army returned to its position some 25 km from Taleex. Traditional leaders from the Khaatumo administration, including Garaad Jaamac Garaad Cali, Garaad Jaamac Garaad Ismaaciil, and Ugaas Cabdulaahi Ciise, were far away in Saaxdheer and Boocame. They had already established some contact with the new leadership in Garoowe and both sides had expressed their willingness to talk about future cooperation.

In May, emissaries began to criss-cross Dhulbahante lands in preparation for the Khaatumo III meeting, which had now been postponed for almost a year. Cali Khaliif ‘Galaydh’ visited Buuhoodle on 3 May

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162 His older brother was an influential *caaqil* of the Reer Hagar lineage.

163 Report by Cabdi Yere, 4 January 2014.

2014 as part of the conference's preparations. One of the G9 leaders of the Khaatumo state, he was also a MP in Mogadishu and had good contacts abroad. At a public meeting, he responded to a question about the possibility of talks between Khaatumo and Somaliland by saying: 'How can talks be possible between you and a man who occupies your house and evicted your children and your wife?'¹⁶⁴ Tensions were high when Saleebaan 'Xaglo Toosiye', then minister of health in Somaliland, visited his own hometown of Buuhoodle around that time (May 2014), but there was no violence.

It was decided that the Khaatumo III conference would be held in Saaxdheer. Located on the Somaliland–Ethiopian border like Buuhoodle, it was Garaad Jaamac Garaad Cali's hometown. Shortly before the *shir* opened, fighting between Khaatumo and Somaliland forces took place in Xero Daanyeer near Saaxadheer in which more than a dozen combatants were killed. Somaliland could not, however, prevent the conference from taking place and on 14 August Cali Khaliif 'Galaydh' was elected the new president of the Dhulbahante autonomous administration.¹⁶⁵

Somaliland had strengthened its military presence in places under its control in Sool, and invested in some infrastructure projects, including a new prison in Laascaanood, the renovation of regional government buildings and funding for a new university campus. The government in Hargeysa also earmarked a small percentage of its annual revenue for development in the east. At the same time, underdevelopment and a lack of stable administration continued in most Dhulbahante areas.

Adding to the political tensions, oil exploration and its possible extraction became an increasingly difficult source of contention. In December 2013, the Somaliland minister for energy and minerals sold the rights to explore and extract oil in two blocks in the *Hawd* and the Nugaal valley south of Xudun to a company based in Yemen. Companies with links to

164 In Somali: '*Sidee bay suurto gal kuugu noqonaysaa in uu wadahalal idin dhexmaro nin gurigaagii haysta oo carruurtaadii iyo xaaskaagiiba qaxiyay*'; see: Report by Cabdi Yere, 10.5.2014.

165 Khaatumo Diaspora Organization. Press release (14 August 2014). <http://khatumo.net/?p=3821#>.

Australia, Britain, Norway, South Africa and Turkey also struck deals with the government in Hargeysa. One acquired a block that includes the town of Xudun. At the same time the authorities in Garoowe also sold the rights to explore and possibly extract oil, for example in parts of the area located in Block 18 (Xudun area). Khaatumo's representatives immediately decried these as illegal transactions involving their 'God-given resources'. This further complicated the situation on the ground. In May 2014, Somaliland's troops took a strong stand around Xolxol in Nugaal valley some 30 km south-east of Xudun, where prospects for oil are reported to be good.

These actions to explore oil in the borderlands are likely to increase tension between the three, separate administrations in Hargeysa, Garoowe and Taleex.¹⁶⁶ In addition, the Federal government in Mogadishu is likely to exercise claims, although in practical terms it is likely to have less direct influence on the ground.

Conclusions

In summary, since 2002, the borderland areas inhabited by Dhulbahante between Somaliland and Puntland have seen a proliferation of administrations without any of them being really effective. Aside from traditional forms of governance through elders, Somaliland, Puntland and Khaatumo have established mayors, military and police commanders and forces in many towns in Sool, Sanaag and southern Togdheer/Cayn, all manned by people from local clan lineages. Many local people increasingly view these parallel attempts at administering them with contempt. These multiple ineffective and competing administrations have created more confusion and conflict than stability and security.¹⁶⁷

This part of the borderlands between Somaliland and Puntland fell further behind economically and became more divided politically than

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 166 SomalilandSun.Somaliland: ANSA WIKFS Signs Oil Exploration Contract (21.12.2013); ILPI. Somaliland Risk Analysis. 'DNO oil exploration in Block 18, eastern Somaliland/northern Somalia' (2013). Unpublished report.

167 This came out clearly in research by several local students on security and justice in eastern Somaliland in February and March 2013.

it had been a decade earlier as a marginal but not yet a militarized zone. In the eyes of many Dhulbahante, the declaration of the Khaatumo state of Somalia had a clear logic to it based on the grievances of local people who mourned the lack of development in their homeland and hoped autonomy might help. The SSC and the Khaatumo state both emphasized the aspirations of many Dhulbahante for a united Somalia. Their belief has broadly been in line with international thinking of piecing the collapsed Somali republic back together rather than endorsing a two-state solution that would recognize Somaliland as a separate nation. The views of most external observers and policy makers, however, tended to be influenced by the governing bodies in Hargeysa and Garoowe, which saw the SSC and Khaatumo authorities as troublemakers. This ignored the local logic behind the growing demand for Dhulbahante autonomy.

In the absence of any tangible success, Khaatumo began to crumble within a year of being founded. By mid-2014, the centre of Dhulbahante autonomy was once again the *Hawd* between Saaxdheer and Buuhoodle. This is where the divided political loyalties of the Dhulbahante are illustrated most clearly: no less than three members of the Faarax Garaad—Cali Khaliif ‘Galaydh’, Saleebaan ‘Xaglo Toosiye’, and Cabdixakiim Cabdulaahi Xaaji Cumar ‘Cameey’—have risen to posts as the president of Khaatumo, the minister for health in Somaliland, and vice-president of Puntland, respectively. It may sound paradoxical, but short of gaining political autonomy, this division of loyalties was possibly the second best option for Dhulbahante.

6. Warsangeli *Sonderweg*: Resource conflict and militant Islamism in the Golis Mountains (2006–2014)¹⁶⁸

The previous two chapters have dealt extensively with the Dhulbahante and their part of the borderlands where the main conflicts both between the armies of Somaliland and Puntland, and between local clan-militias and Somaliland's army—and to a lesser extent, Puntland's—unfolded. This was due to infrastructure and clan politics: the only tarmac road through northern Somalia goes from Hargeysa, Berbera, and Burco, on to Laascaanood and then to Garoowe and farther south. This is where goods, ordinary people, politicians and soldiers move, with Laascaanood a nodal point between Hargeysa and Garoowe in both geographical and political terms. Easily accessible from both sides, this facilitated the politicization and militarization of Laascaanood and its surroundings. From there, the conflict spread to remoter places like Buuhoodle, Widhwidh, Saaxdheer, Boocame, Xudun, and Taleex. This had to do with the emergence of the movement for clan autonomy and independent administration that—while the natural centre of Dhulbahante politics, Laascaanood, was occupied—had to take a foothold elsewhere in the hinterland.

The way many Dhulbahante presented themselves and their claims added to the escalation of the conflict. While it is impossible to argue that Dhulbahante in these circumstances have exhibited a collective 'clan character', it is clear (particularly in comparison with the Warsangeli), that many Dhulbahante were much more eager to present themselves as 'warriors' and 'anti-Somalilanders' (and, sometimes, 'anti-Puntlanders') than their Harti-brothers in eastern Sanaag. This construction of their

168 An abbreviated version of this chapter has been published as Markus V. Hoehne, 'Resource conflict and militant Islamism in the Golis Mountains in northern Somalia (2006–2013)', *Review of African Political Economy* 41 (2014), pp. 358–373.

identity provoked harsh reactions from Hargeysa and sometimes Garoowe.

In contrast, the way many Warsangeli voiced political opinions and claims reflected the political climate in their clan homeland for much of the 1990s and 2000s and was, I argue, related to the remoteness of the area.¹⁶⁹ As Nisar Majid, who has researched development and politics in eastern Sanaag, has written:

The Warsangeli were not known as political agitators and although involved in major political processes in Somaliland, Puntland and southern Somalia, this involvement was not marked by clan-based political assertions; rather it reflected individuals claiming Warsangeli identity, or acting as minor constituents within larger political processes.¹⁷⁰

Theirs was an area close to the sea that had for centuries related to the outside world (mainly the Arab Peninsula) more than the Somali hinterland. In the late twentieth to early twenty-first century, there was still no tarmac road anywhere near Warsangeli territory, apart from the far western border with the Majeerteen near Bosaaso. And it is in this vicinity, in the virtually inaccessible Golis Mountains, where the first serious military conflict between Warsangeli militias and Puntland's troops occurred, causing lasting instability in the area.

The Warsangeli homeland

The Warsangeli homeland is located in eastern Sanaag. It lies mainly on the high plateau stretching from Ceerigaabo to the foot of the Golis Mountains in the east. Members of the Nuux Cumar sub-clan of Warsangeli live in the western part. The centre, from Laasqoray at the

¹⁶⁹ This does not mean that there were no conflicts in the Warsangeli area, but that the large-scale conflict that developed in the Dhulbahante areas between 2002 and 2014 has not developed in eastern Sanaag.

¹⁷⁰ Nisar Majid. 'Livelihoods, development and the Somali diaspora', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies, University of Bristol, 2013), p. 212.

coast to Badhan and farther south, is inhabited by lineages belonging to the Maxamuud Cumar branch of the clan. Among them, Reer Garaad is the ‘royal lineage’ to which the highest-ranking traditional leaders belong (that is Suldaan Siciid, his father Suldaan Cabdisalaan, and ancestors). The far east of the territory in the Golis Mountains, bordering the Majeerteen clan homeland, is where members of the Dubays sub-clan reside.

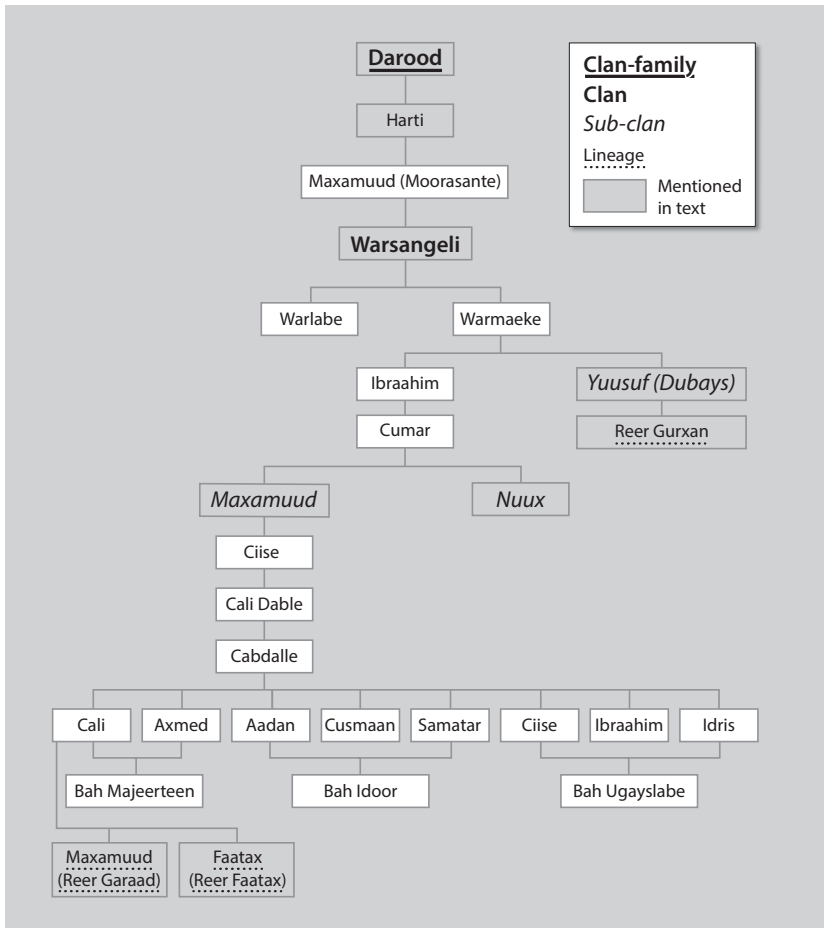


Diagram 3. Simplified genealogy of the Warsangeli clan

Eastern Sanaag is extremely remote. The political centre of the Warsangeli is the town of Badhan, some 120 km east of Ceerigaabo. Dirt roads connect all major centres and a trip from Burco to Badhan, a distance of about 450 km through semi-desert can take 18 hours in a four-wheel drive vehicle. From Bosaaso in the east, circumventing the rough terrain of the Golis Mountains, a journey can take five hours for the 150 kilometres to Badhan. With older vehicles in the past, these journeys took even longer. Physical distance has translated into political distance, placing the Warsangeli far from the centres of power in both colonial and post-colonial times, their marginality within Somalia contrasting with their extensive external links to the Arabian Peninsula and beyond.

People in eastern Sanaag live off animal husbandry in the high plateau, fishing along the coast, and harvesting honey and frankincense in the mountains. Galgala in the Golis Mountains is famous for its dates. In the pre-colonial and colonial past, the small port at Laasqoray was also an important transit point in trade with Yemen. Today, many goods come into Warsangeli territory by truck from the port of Bosaaso in Puntland. Since 2000, this city also has attracted many Warsangeli migrants who went there to work and study.

In general, eastern Sanaag and its people are economically marginalized. Neither the governments of Somaliland nor Puntland have committed substantial resources to the area. But the Warsangeli diaspora and some NGOs—particularly Horn Relief¹⁷¹, founded by a Warsangeli woman—have invested modest development assistance in Warsangeli territories since the 1990s.¹⁷²

After the collapse of Somalia's central government in 1991, power in eastern Sanaag lay with local strongmen from different sub-clans and lineages. Suldaan Cabdisalaan was the highest ranking traditional leader. His son Siciid was installed as his successor after his father's death in

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171 Now renamed Adeso.

172 Interview with Maxamed, Boorama, March 2011 (in order to protect sources, most names of interviewees have been changed in this chapter); Ali H. Abdullah, 'The Galgala conflict and its misleading association with Islamic extremism', 10 August 2010.

1996 and became embroiled in a power struggle with his uncle, Ismaciil, with the main divisions between them resolving themselves upon Ismaciil's death in 2004. The *suldaan's* home is in Hadaaftimo, some 30 km west of Badhan, but Siciid also spends a considerable amount of time in Ceerigaabo, where the Warsangeli have an important stake in the town and constitute roughly one fourth of the population.¹⁷³

Politically, the Warsangeli, like the Dhulbahante, are typical borderlanders with divided loyalties. While most of them support Somali unity represented by Puntland, they are also content to cohabit with Somaliland for the sake of peace and economic gain. The Warsangeli *degaan* underwent similar administrative encroachment as the Dhulbahante areas in the early 2000s. Parallel rump administrations were established in many towns, some under Hargeysa and others under Garoowe. As with the Dhulbahante, the staff of these administrations came from local Warsangeli lineages. Rival states in northern Somalia set out to name new regions in Warsangeli territory. Puntland created the Heylaan region in eastern Sanaag in 2003. Somaliland established the Badhan region in the same area some years later. In contrast with the creation of the Cayn region in southern Togdheer, however, neither Heylaan nor Badhan seemed to mean much as administrative constructs to ordinary locals. In everyday conversations, one rarely, if ever, heard about Heylaan or Badhan from Warsangeli. Therefore, I will continue to call the area eastern Sanaag.

In contrast to the Dhulbahante, the Warsangeli have managed to maintain a peaceful coexistence between the two centres of power in Somaliland and Puntland. Eastern Sanaag was until recently not the focus of serious military confrontation. The combination of self-reliance and physical distance from political hotspots inland served Warsangeli well

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173 This cohabitation with Isaaq clans in Ceerigaabo, where people have immovable property (houses and gardens), is the reason why the western Warsangeli (and also the Dhulbahante lineages in and around Ceerigaabo, mainly Naaleeye Axmed/Aaden Naaleeye and Naaleeye Axmed/Bahrighaye) are less extreme in their political opinions than the eastern Warsangeli or the bulk of Dhulbahante.

for many years. This changed with the conflicts erupting in Majayahan and Galgala.

Initially, this conflict was not related to larger political questions about the future of Somaliland, Puntland, or Somalia, but to very local issues concerning the exploitation of natural resources. From there it spiralled beyond the control of local parties and eventually became connected to the Islamist insurgency and counter-terrorism in Somalia.

First blows: Fighting over resources in 2006

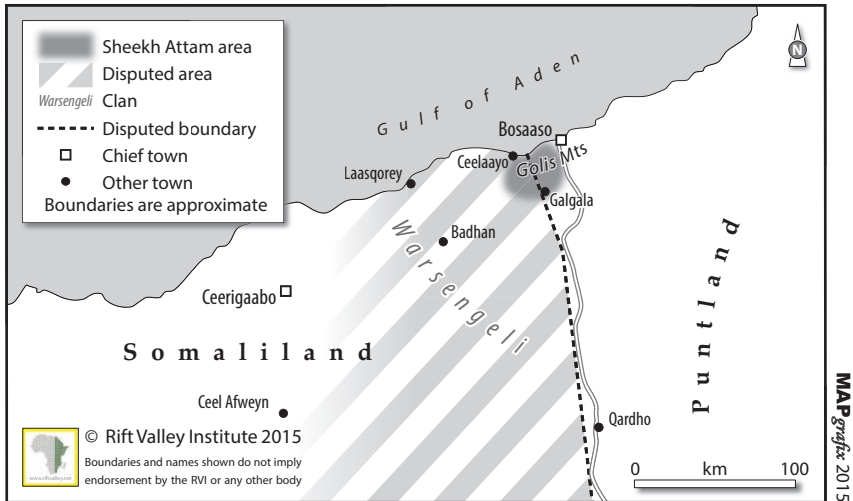
The central issues that provoked the conflict were straightforward: land, the exploitation of resources, and the lack of popular consultation. Since colonial times, if not before, people had known metals and minerals were to be found in the Golis Mountains. In the 1970s, the Somali government had ceded mining concessions to a Bulgarian company that had started to dig in Majayahan.¹⁷⁴ Years later, in 2006, war erupted in the Majayahan area.

Most Warsangeli felt strongly that as the land belonged to them so too must the resources. Suldaan Muuse, a high-ranking traditional leader from the Warsangeli/Dubays sub-clan, and the commander of Somaliland's armed forces in Sanaag, summed up the start of the conflict:

The fighting started first in a place known as Majayahan, which is near to Galgala [town]. In the conflict, the Warsangeli lineage called Dubays—whose members resided in the area—fought the administration of Puntland under President Cadde Muuse. The reason for the fighting was that Cadde Muuse wanted to exploit the minerals that can be found in that area. But the local people refused: they had not even been consulted. The president was therefore unable to exploit the resources for which he had contracted [a company called] Range Resources.¹⁷⁵

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174 Interview with Siciid, Hargeysa, 15 September 2011.

175 Interview with Suldaan Muuse, Ceerigaabo, 10 September 2011.



Map 5. Conflict zone in the Golis Mountains (2006–2014)

To understand the escalation of conflict—and the connections between the first and second war in the Golis Mountains—it is necessary to delve into the immediate past. When Cabduraxmaan ‘Faroole’ was finance minister in Puntland from 2003 to 2004 under President Cabdulaahi Yuusuf, he made contact with Terry Donnelly, an Australian national who was the chairman of an NGO named Kids in Need, which worked in Puntland. Through Donnelly, Faroole established contacts with two Australian companies, Consort Private Ltd. and Range Resources,¹⁷⁶ both engaged in oil and mineral exploitation.

In January 2005, after Cabdulaahi Yuusuf was elected president of the TFG and vacated the Puntland presidency, Cabduraxmaan ‘Faroole’ competed for the post but lost to Cadde Muuse. When he left for Australia, Cadde Muuse reaped what Faroole had sown by striking a deal with Consort Private Ltd., a contract later taken over by Range Resources. However, the TFG under Cabdulaahi Yuusuf rejected the deal insisting that only the internationally recognized Somali government could sign

176 Interview with Siciid, Hargeysa, 15 September 2011.

contracts with foreign companies for the exploitation of Somalia's resources. In November 2005, this issue was resolved when Puntland's administration and the TFG agreed to share some of the money generated from the deal with Range Resources.¹⁷⁷

Several Warsangeli elders met with President Cadde Muuse in Bosaaso at the end of 2005 to discuss plans to explore and exploit mineral resources in their territory. The elders stressed that the Warsangeli expected to be involved in these decisions, but President Cadde Muuse took a hard line saying no payments would be made to the Warsangeli. Consequently, the Warsangeli elders and the president parted on bad terms.¹⁷⁸

Cadde Muuse decided to implement the agreement with Range Resources, if necessary by force. He is from the Cusmaan Maxamuud sub-clan of the Majeerteen clan, of the 'royal line' of the Majeerteen, who are used to ruling.¹⁷⁹ The Golis Mountains are only about 60 km from Bosaaso, where the Cusmaan Maxamuud sub-clan has a presence.

A team of specialists that started prospecting in March 2006 consisted of international and local specialists, two Somali geologists (from the Warsangeli and Dhulbahante clans), and was guarded by a contingent of the Puntland armed forces. The team and their military escort travelled by car from Bosaaso west along the coast and then into the Golis Mountains. After two days of exploration in the Majayahan area, fighting broke out. Local Warsangeli militiamen fired gunshots and mortar rounds at the Range Resources team and its guards. When the team and its escort returned the following morning to the exploration site, the Warsangeli

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 177 SomaliTalk.com, 'Qofna kuma Dhiman Hawlgalkii Puntland, sidaas waxaa ku adkaystay Shirkadda Range Resources', 19 April 2006; David M. Anderson and Adrian J. Browne, 'The Politics of Oil in Eastern Africa', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 5/2 (2011), pp. 378–9.

178 Interviews with Suldaan Cabdulaahi, Siciid, and Xasan, Ceerigaabo, 9 September 2011, and Maxamuud, Hargeysa, 15 September 2011.

179 A purely clan-based interpretation of the dynamics of conflict in this case would be unsatisfactory. Sub-clan pride and clan animosities were one factor among others.

militia had mined the access road. A troop carrier drove over a mine and exploded, killing eight soldiers.¹⁸⁰

From that point, the fighting intensified. Cadde Muuse sent 600 extra troops, including armed policemen, members of the Puntland Intelligence Service (PIS), the South African-trained *Ciidanka Macadeeynta* ('minerals army'),¹⁸¹ and members of the *Ciidanka Daraawiishta* or Puntland army. Against them stood a Warsangeli/Dubays force of just 80–100 men with the strategic advantage in the mountains above Majayahan and familiarity with the terrain.¹⁸²

The Warsangeli/Dubays fighters secured the support of other Warsangeli sub-clans and lineages in eastern Sanaag and from the diaspora around US\$20,000 were sent by the diaspora for rations and ammunition.¹⁸³ Warsangeli military officers, not all of them members of the Dubays sub-clan, coordinated the fighting, which meant that fighting in the Majayahan area involved and concerned all the Warsangeli.¹⁸⁴ This is very much in line with the segmentary logic of the northern Somali society as a whole: as soon as a common threat emerges from outside, members of a descent group unite at the highest necessary level (sub-clan, clan or clan-family). Conversely, in the absence of such a threat, a group breaks up into smaller units that fend for themselves.¹⁸⁵ While this is a simplistic analysis, and additional factors complicate the

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180 Interview with Siciid, Hargeysa, 15 December 2010.

181 This was actually part of the Puntland Marine Police Force (PMPF) originally established to counter piracy in the region. After it received training and equipment from sources including the South African-based security company Saracen, it was used for various purposes; see UN Security Council, S/2008/769, 'Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 2060 (2012): Somalia', 12 July 2013, p. 89.

182 These numbers constitute an informed guess based on conversations with various sources close to the events. There were no official sources available indicating any numbers of troops or fighters involved.

183 Interviews with Caydiid, Ceerigaabo, 12 September 2011, and Xasan, Hargeysa, 16 September 2011.

184 Interview with Caydiid, Ceerigaabo, 12 September 2011.

185 Ioan M. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*.

dynamics of allegiance and cohesion, it is still helpful for understanding *some* of the issues outlined in this book.¹⁸⁶

A measure of support also came from the government of Somaliland, or at least individuals in the administration and military under Hargeysa's control. Its scale is still contested. Some allege the Hargeysa authorities helped the Warsengeli fighters with logistics, while others deny the direct involvement of the Somaliland administration.¹⁸⁷ Suldaan Muuse stressed he had personally used his influence and resources as commander of Somaliland's army in Sanaag region to support Warsangeli fighters in Majayahan. He also said the then President of Somaliland, Daahir Rayale Kaahin, was fully aware of this.

During this first war in the Golis Mountains, Puntland's President Cadde Muuse could not fully rely on his own troops and officers because a number of high ranking military and police officers in Puntland viewed his approach to the exploitation of resources in Majayahan as mistaken; some even resigned over it.¹⁸⁸ Cadde Muuse had ordered a popular police commander in Bosaaso, Caydiid (who was Warsangeli/Dubays by clan) to lead the troops in the Majayahan area. Instead he pushed for negotiations with local elders, only to resign from his post. Eventually he left Bosaaso for Dhahar, his home village in eastern Sanaag. En route, he passed through the Golis Mountains, where local residents welcomed him warmly, respecting him for preventing a split within members of the Dubays sub-clan.¹⁸⁹

The fighting between Warsangeli militias and Puntland troops continued on and off for several weeks and several Warsangeli men were captured and imprisoned in Bosaaso. They were decently treated

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186 A similar argument, but with regard to conflict dynamics in Mogadishu in the early 1990s, has been made in Günther Schlee. 'Regularity in Chaos: The Politics of Difference in the Recent History of Somalia', in Günther Schlee (ed.), *Imagined Differences: Hatred and the Construction of Identity*. (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2002), pp. 251–280.

187 Interviews with Suldaan Muuse, Ceerigaabo, 10 September 2011, and Caydiid, Ceerigaabo, 12 September 2011.

188 Interview with Siciid, Hargeysa, 15 December 2010.

189 Interview with Caydiid, Ceerigaabo, 12 September 2011.

as prisoners taken at war, as one former prisoner reported,¹⁹⁰ while dozens of people, however, were injured or killed in the conflict. Almost all of the dead were Puntland soldiers who belonged to various clans, including Majeerteen, Dhulbahante, and some Warsangeli.¹⁹¹ The Warsangeli militias claimed that only one person was killed.¹⁹² The troops of Cadde Muuse eventually retreated and Range Resources left the area, abandoning its efforts for the time being. It nevertheless remained in contact with Puntland over the potential for oil in other parts of the territory, including reserves in the Nugaal Valley, which is part of Sool region still contested by Somaliland and Puntland.¹⁹³

After his defeat in the mountains, Cadde Muuse retaliated indirectly against the Warsangeli/Dubays by arming a group of Majeerteen/Cabdiraxiin, a small lineage whose members lived together with Dubays, at a place called Laag on the tarmac road south of Bosaaso. The Cabdiraxiin fighters used their weapons to expel the Warsangeli/Dubays from Laag. Many of the defeated Dubays fled to the Golis Mountains. The arrival of their relatives from Laag increased the negative feelings of many Dubays to the government in Garoowe. At the same time, the PIS arrested members of the Dubays sub-clan in Bosaaso and the government sent spies—many of them Warsangeli/Dubays—to the Galgala area.¹⁹⁴

These measures diminished people's trust in the government of Puntland. When Cadde Muuse subsequently sought to negotiate with senior representatives of the Warsangeli clan, most of them refused outright. In their view, the president had made a serious mistake using violence to try to gain access to their land and its resources.¹⁹⁵ This was interpreted as a sign of arrogance on the part of the strongest of

190 Interviews with Cabdi and Cali, Ceerigaabo, 11 September 2011.

191 Some Warsangeli may have fought against their relatives in the Golis Mountains for monetary reasons or because they had other personal issues at stake.

192 Interviews with Caydiid, Ceerigaabo, 12 September 2011, and Cabdi and Cali, Ceerigaabo, 11 September 2011.

193 Anderson and Browne, 'The Politics of Oil', p. 379.

194 Interviews with Cabdi and Cali, Ceerigaabo, 11 September 2011.

195 Interview with Maxamuud, Hargeysa, 15 September 2011.

the Harti clans that, under the cover of the Puntland administration, seemed to want to enrich itself. The relationship between Warsangeli and Majeerteen had been tense for a long time, with the Warsangeli feeling threatened by the Majeerteen, whose influence over Puntland politics in particular and Somali politics as a whole was much greater, and who, they felt, had repeatedly tried to acquire more land at their expense.

Brief Interlude: the Maakhir state

The fighting in 2006 distanced the Warsangeli from Puntland but without bringing them into Somaliland's fold. Some of the Warsangeli elite, who had previously worked in Hargeysa or in Garoowe, felt it was time to establish their own state and held various meetings in their own territory and abroad in the diaspora. With support from the diaspora, they founded the Maakhir state as an alternative autonomous Warsangeli administration in eastern Sanaag in mid-2007. The capital of this new statelet was Badhan and its first self-declared president Jibril Cali Salaad (Warsangeli/Reer Garaad). Like the SSC or Khaatumo administration, the Maakhir state was supposed to come directly under the Somali government in Mogadishu. Somalis in the diaspora began referring to the 'Warsangeli sultanate', which existed from around 1928 to 1961 under Suldaan Maxamuud Cali Shire, as the 'predecessor' of this new state.¹⁹⁶

As a young man, this *suldaan*, the grandfather of the present Suldaan Siciid, had joined the Dervishes of Maxamed Cabdille Xasan. After a short while, however, when Maxamuud Cali Shire had recognized the autocratic tendencies of the Sayid, he left, and formed his own force to defend Warsangeli land against intrusions by *Daraawiishta*. The bulk of the Warsangeli, together with some neighbouring Dhulbahante and Habar Yoonis lineages, established a force called *Gaarhaye*, which sided with the British (around 1916 or 1917). Suldaan Maxamuud Cali Shire also had an agreement with the neighbouring ruler to the east, Boqor Cusmaan of the Majeerteen. His centre was Aluula, east of Bosaaso, at the coast. Suldaan Maxamuud's forces engaged in several bloody battles

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 196 Hiiraan Online, 'Statement by the Maakhir Diaspora Forum', 30 December 2007.

with the Dervishes in the British protectorate in the late 1910s, during which the Dervish forces laid havoc to many Warsangeli settlements and the *suldaan* himself was severely injured in a battle.¹⁹⁷

Suldaan Maxamuud Cali Shire positioned himself between the Dervishes, the British, and the Majeerteen *boqor* so cleverly and amassed so much power in his realm that, after the Dervishes had been defeated, the British exiled him to the Seychelles.¹⁹⁸ He was allowed to return in 1928 and established a fort at Hubera in today's Sanaag region. Up until his death in 1961 he ruled his people with great autonomy but in line with British interests, and was decorated with a medal by Queen Elizabeth II when she met him in the southern Yemeni port of Aden in 1954.¹⁹⁹

The choice of name for the new administration in eastern Sanaag in 2007—Maakhir—projected the idea of a distinct identity for the Warsangeli and other inhabitants of the northern Somali coast:

'Maakhir' refers to the people on the coast. These are people who are very secretive and do not mingle with others. They are very civilized and were already in the past connected with the world up to India and China.²⁰⁰ They engaged in international trade. The coast dwellers married among themselves. The Habar Jeclo from Xiis and the Habar Yoonis from Maydh as well as the Warsangeli understood each other. Many of them went to Aden to study. The pastoral-nomads of the hinterland thought that the Maakhir people were very silent. But the Maakhir

197 Interviews with Yusuf Xaaji Siciid, Garoowe, 5 December 2003; Jibril Xasan Du'aale, Ceerigaabo, 19 June 2004; Khalid Suldaan Maxamuud, Badhan, 5 December 2003; and Cabdullahi Maxamed Jaamac 'Jalac', Ceelbuuh, 10 July 2004.

198 Suldaan Maxamuud Cali Shire had many wives. During his time in the Seychelles he married yet again and produced offspring; some of his descendants still reside on the island.

199 Interviews with Yusuf Xaaji Siciid, Garoowe, 5 December 2003, and Khalid Suldaan Maxamuud, Badhan, 3 July 2004. During field research, a distanced relative of the *suldaan* proudly showed me a painting depicting Maxamuud Cali Shire receiving his medal.

200 The word 'civilized' (*ilbax*) in this statement refers to 'good manners' and 'being learned' but also to 'being experienced' and 'having seen the world'. It is frequently used as the opposite of 'nomadic' (*reer miyi*), which carries the connotation of 'narrow minded' and 'stubborn'.

people are very difficult to understand. They can laugh with you now and assassinate you later.²⁰¹

The Maakhir project may have also been driven by the desire among some Warsangeli elites to accrue more influence in the region.²⁰² Jibril Cali Salaad, one of the initiators of the project, was a typical borderland entrepreneur. He had for many years served as a member of parliament in Hargeysa before he sought to increase his influence by setting up an autonomous clan administration. The main idea behind the push for autonomy appeared to be direct access to international aid, and a stronger negotiating position with the TFG in Mogadishu.²⁰³

The Maakhir state remained largely dysfunctional, which may have been due to the lack of will among the majority of the clan's members to seriously confront Hargeysa and Garoowe. They may have understood that such a step would lead to military problems as their fellow Harti brothers and neighbours to the south, in and around Laascaanood, had experienced. Subsequently, most Warsangeli elites continued to play a dual role between Somaliland and Puntland, while ordinary people in eastern Sanaag went about their lives with little effective state administration.²⁰⁴

Second blows: a new militant Islamist agenda

By the end of Puntland's President Cadde Muuse's term in office in early January 2009, the conflict in the Golis Mountains had not been resolved. The winner of the presidential elections, Cabduraxmaan 'Faroole', also sought to attract foreign investments to Puntland, and promptly resumed

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201 Interview in Hargeysa, 9 December 2010.

202 Those leading the initiative included Sahra Jaamac Qorshel, the daughter of the former Warsangeli police general, and Somali Revolutionary Council member; Jibril Cali Salad, a member of the House of Representatives in Hargeysa; and Casha Ahmed Abdallah, a member of the Transitional Federal Parliament. Interview with Siciid, Hargeysa, 15 December 2010.

203 Michael A. Weinstein, 'Somaliland moves to close its borders and is caught in a web of conflict', *Power and Interest News Report*, 31 October 2007.

204 Somalia Report, 'Politics of Ethnicity and Resources in Puntland, 2 October 2012.

contacts with Range Resources. The elections in January 2009 had produced no gains for the Warsangeli. Their candidate for presidency, General Cabdulaahi Axmed Jaamac 'Ilkajir' (Warsangeli/Reer Faatax), had been defeated and Cabdisamid Cali Shire, a Dhulbahante, became vice-president. The Warsangeli candidate for the post of speaker of parliament, a position held by the Warsangeli since Puntland had been founded in 1998, had also lost. The only consolation came with General Ilkajir's appointment as Minister of Interior.²⁰⁵

At the same time new political dynamics had unfolded in the Golis Mountains that had a decisive impact on the trajectory of conflict in the area. Sheekh Maxamed Siciid 'Attam', from the Warsangeli/Dubays/Reer Gurxaan lineage, had gained influence and power in the mountains. A local from Galgala town (his father owned a farm there), he had pursued religious studies in Bosaaso in the early 2000s and opened a pharmacy. After he got into trouble with the PIS, the young sheikh left for his home area, joining the first war of his people in 2006 against the forces of Cadde Muuse. He was considered a trustworthy man, so he was tasked with guarding the ammunition and supplies of the Warsangeli fighters.

After the first conflict had died down, Sheekh Attam remained in Galgala and eventually turned to educating the mountain dwellers in religion. By 2009, Sheekh Attam had evolved as a leader in the Golis Mountains and a serious contender with the potential to threaten Puntland's political status quo. As such, he caught the attention of the government in Garoowe and of international observers.²⁰⁶

The Warsangeli's dispute with the administration in Garoowe had been dragging on, though no new fighting had erupted after 2006. Sheekh Attam added a religious dimension to it, advocating an Islamic government based on Shari'a. The men in charge of Puntland's government had abandoned the correct path, he claimed; they were also, in his

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205 Majid, *Livelihoods, development and the Somali diaspora*, p. 211.

206 He is mentioned (as 'Mohamed Sa'id "Atom"') under the heading 'Armed opposition groups' in UN Security Council, S/2008/769, 'Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia pursuant to Security Council resolution 1811 (2008)', 10 December 2008, p. 12.

view, actively cooperating with the enemies of Islam, particularly the governments in Washington and Addis Ababa. In short, Puntland had become a polity under apostate leadership, one, which from an Islamist point of view, had to be overthrown.

At the end of 2009, Puntland's President 'Faroole' reached out to the Warsangeli, summoning a large number of their elders to a meeting in Garoowe. He proposed several ways of handling Sheekh Attam: he could either join Puntland's administration or remain quiet (the intimation was that his silence would be bought), or he would be given money in exchange for leaving the country.²⁰⁷ A government minister from the Dubays sub-clan led Puntland's negotiations; they did not work.

According to a UN Monitoring Group report, however, it was al-Shabaab that put an end to the negotiations: '...the Al-Shabaab leadership in Mogadishu sent emissaries to pressure Atom [sic] to break off the talks.'²⁰⁸ Sheekh Attam may have anyway had divided loyalties. Aside from al-Shabaab, he was answerable to his patrilineal relatives in the mountains.

Many different groups had a vested interest in the Galgala affair. In the end, the main reason why negotiations failed was a lack of unity on each side. Neither the militias nor their associates in and around Galgala, nor the government of Puntland and its allies, managed to take a firm position and stick to it.

The pressure on Sheekh Attam's suspected militiamen increased. In Bosaaso, a number of Warsangeli/Dubays were arrested in 2010. Already in 2007 and 2008, Bosaaso had been shaken by the abduction of foreigners and the assassination of Puntland officials.²⁰⁹ Puntland's security services had reacted with arrests then too. Described by the UN's Monitoring Group as a Warsangeli warlord with ties to al-Shabaab,

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207 Interviews with Suldaan Cabdullahi, Siciid, and Xasan, Ceerigaabo, 9 September 2011.

208 UN Security Council, S/2011/433, 'Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 1916 (2010)', 18 July 2011, p. 19.

209 UN Security Council, S/2008/274, 'Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia pursuant to Security Council resolution 1766 (2007)', 24 April 2008, p. 12.

Sheekh Attam had seen a significant number of non-Warsangeli fighters join his group. Supposedly, he had training camps in Galgala and the Bari region. Sources suggest there had been a presence of non-Somali instructors and visits from al-Shabaab fighters from southern Somalia.²¹⁰ He appeared to be ‘preparing to confront both the Puntland and the Somaliland authorities more directly’.²¹¹

On 26 July 2010, Sheekh Attam’s forces attacked Puntland’s security forces in the area of Laag in the western Bari region. Most Warsangeli argued that Puntland’s troops had established a post in this area to stop trade and transport between the port of Bosaaso and Galgala town. This had led to food shortages in the town.²¹² This first attack on Laag was followed by heavy fighting in Sugure, a strategic point close to the mountains not far from the main tarmac road.

In response, Puntland’s army attacked militia bases in the Golis Mountains. This time, the administration in Garoowe did not have to contend with internal divisions, as Cadde Muuse had in 2006. The political and military leadership was united against the insurgents. The commanders and politicians in charge of the campaign included Cabdisamid Cali Shire (Dhulbahante /Nuur Axmed), Puntland’s vice-president and, previously, vice-commander of *Ciidanka Daraawiishta*; General Siciid ‘Dheere’ (Majeerteen/Ciisa Maxamuud), the commander of *Ciidanka Daraawiishta*; and Cabdulaahi Axmed Jaamac ‘Ilkajir’ (Warsangeli/Reer Faatax), a former Somali army general who had become interior minister in Puntland. Puntland’s forces captured most of the insurgents’ bases, including the town of Galgala itself, in August 2010. Sheekh Attam’s fighters cached their heavy weapons, retreated to inaccessible mountain areas, and resorted to classic guerrilla tactics, attacking the army in hit-and-run operations.²¹³

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210 UN Security Council, S/2010/91, ‘Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia pursuant to Security Council resolution 1853 (2008)’, 10 March 2010, p. 45.

211 UN Security Council, ‘Report pursuant to Security Council resolution 1853’, p. 45.

212 Interviews with Cabdi and Cali, Ceerigaabo, 11 September 2011.

213 McGregor, ‘Puntland’s Shaykh Muhammad Atam’, pp. 12–13.

BOX 5. SHEEKH MAXAMED SICIID ‘ATTAM’

Maxamed Siciid ‘Attam’ was born in Galgala town in the late 1960s. In 1992, he joined al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI), an earlier Somali Islamist group, which had fought for the control of Bosaaso against the revived Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) under the command of Cabdulaahi Yuusuf. When al-Ittihad was defeated, its adherents fled to Laasqoray, a Warsangeli port on the northern Somali coast. Several thousand Islamist fighters from various Somali clans—including Dhulbahante, Warsangeli, and Ogaden—had gathered there and prepared for the next battle, among them, Maxamed Siciid ‘Attam’. To avoid more bloodshed, the Warsangeli’s military and political leadership (among them General Cabdulaahi Axmed Jaamac ‘Ilkajir’) negotiated al-Ittihad’s safe passage through Warsangeli territory. The condition was that fighters from northern clans should give up their struggle and return home. Other Islamists belonging to southern Somali clans moved on. As a consequence, al-Ittihad split with some of its members continuing to fight between Ethiopia’s Ogaden region and Somalia’s Gedo region under the command of Sheekh Xasan Daahir Awyey while others returned to civilian life. Maxamed Siciid ‘Attam’ dedicated himself to religious scholarship, becoming a sheikh and, in the early 2000s, studying Shari’a at the Eastern African University in Bosaaso. He specialized in Islamic medicine and opened the ‘Baghdad Pharmacy’ in Bosaaso, dispensing medicines based on recipes found in the Koran and in the Hadith. To most Warsangeli in Bosaaso, Sheekh ‘Attam’ was a conventional character respected for his religious knowledge, but he attracted the suspicion of the Puntland Intelligence Service, which arrested him several times in 2003 and 2004. He subsequently left Bosaaso for the Golis Mountains. Sheekh

Attam participated in the war in the Majayahan area in 2006, then traveled south and allegedly joined the United Islamic Courts (UIC), striking up good relationships with leading southern Islamists (some of whom had been fellow AIAI members in the past). He returned to the Golis Mountains after the UIC's defeat by the Ethiopian forces, which worked in alliance with the TFG's forces at the start of 2007. Back in the mountains, Sheekh Maxamed Siciid 'Attam' began preaching, opening a Koranic school and gaining a following among those who were opposed to Puntland for political reasons related to the first conflict at Majayahan. He skilfully merged these concerns with his religious programme, which attracted non-Warsangeli followers from the surrounding areas who were opposed to the Garoowe administration for religious reasons. He was at liberty to agitate politically because after Puntland had been defeated there, the Golis Mountains were without any external administration. Initially, the sheekh may have had the support of local elders because he had supported the clan in the first war and was a learned and religious man. His interviews suggest he was eloquent and could entertain Somalis with his rhetoric, a highly appreciated art and a political resource among Somalis (Maxamed Cabdille Xasan had been a poet as well as a religious man and warrior). In 2007/2008, Sheekh Attam started to receive support from al-Shabaab.

Sources: Andrew McGregor, 'Puntland's Shaykh Muhammad Atam: Clan Militia Leader or al-Qaeda Terrorist?', *Militant Leadership Monitor* 1/9 (2010). And interviews with: Caydiid, Ceerigaabo, 12 September 2011; Cabdi and Cali, Ceerigaabo, 11 September 2011; Axmed, Ceerigaabo, 11 September 2011; Suldaan Muuse, Ceerigaabo, 10 September 2011; Faarax, Nairobi, 18 September 2011.

Publicly, Sheekh Attam developed a careful double strategy that he published in various Somali media in mid-2010. On the one hand, he sought to present himself as an ordinary man from Galgala town (the town famed for its date palms) wanting to defend his land and that of his relatives. Asked in an interview with the BBC Somali Service who was involved in the new conflict with Puntland, he replied: ‘It is the people who live there, whose gardens have been burned. It is the locals.’²¹⁴ During another interview, this time with the Mogadishu-based Radio Simba, Sheekh Attam repeated this argument about local people defending their resources, and added an explicit reference to minerals in the Golis Mountains. In the same interview, he accused Ethiopians of collaborating with Puntland’s army against his people (the Warsangeli/Dubays), and gave his struggle religious legitimacy by appealing to Islamists in Somalia as a whole: ‘As far as I am concerned, the aim of the war we wage is that the Islamic religion will be the basis of rule all over Puntland.’²¹⁵ Sheekh Attam’s position appealed both to conservative Islamists who wanted political change in Puntland and to members of the Warsangeli clan who wanted to defend their land and resources.

Between mid-2010 and early 2011, more than 100 people were killed and hundreds of families displaced. Most of the dead were from Attam’s forces. The displaced, all Warsangeli/Dubays, fled to relatives in such places as Badhan, Dhahar, Bosaaso, and Ceerigaabo.²¹⁶ Rumours that Sheekh Attam was injured circulated in November 2010, one report

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 214 ‘Waa dadki meesha degenaye, beerhoodi la guubayo. Waa dadka degaanka ah’ (author’s translation); BBC Somali Service, ‘Sheekh Atam oo u waramay BBC’, 12 September 2010.

215 ‘Dagaalka waan wadaynaa inta aan ka gaarayno ujeedadeenna oo ah in diinta Islaamka lagu xukumo dhammaan deegaannada Puntland’ (author’s translation); excerpts from interview online at GeesGuud.com, ‘Sheekh Maxamed Siciid Atam: “Wax wadahal ah lama furayo maamulka Putland, dagaalkana waan wadayaa”’, 16 August 2010.

216 Interviews with Caydiid, Ceerigaabo, 12 September 2011; and Cabdi and Cali, Ceerigaabo, 11 September 2011.

claiming, improbably, that he had been brought to Badhan for treatment.²¹⁷ If he had, he could easily have been caught by Puntland's forces, which were stationed in Badhan at that time.

In August 2010, Casha Axmed Cabdalla—an outspoken female Warsangeli MP in the TFG in Mogadishu—accused Puntland's administration of atrocities. In November, the Puntland police chief, a Dhulbahante, resigned from his post in protest at the heavy-handedness of the campaign. Local elders accused Puntland's government of overreacting to Sheekh Attam's militias.²¹⁸ During the capture of Galgala town, the farms of Sheekh Attam's family were burned and his home destroyed.²¹⁹

Most of Puntland's troops were ordered to retreat from Galgala town, leaving only a force of Dubays soldiers from *Ciidanka Daraawiishta* with some PIS troops to guard it. Puntland's army retained control of Sugure and Laag, strategic locations some 25–30 km east of Galgala at the foot of the mountains. Sheekh Attam travelled to southern Somalia, reportedly staying in Mogadishu and Kismaayo.²²⁰ In his absence, the command fell to Yasin 'Kilwe' (Warsangeli/Dubays) and Cali 'Gacamey' (Darood/Harti/Tinle). Yasin 'Kilwe' had been jailed in Somaliland for stealing a car from an international NGO in 2004. Released under President Daahir Rayaale Kaahin, he went south to join Al-Shabaab. Cali 'Gacamey' had spent some time in Malaysia.²²¹ Somalia Report said he had once been a madrassa teacher in Bosaaso, sentenced in absentia for alleged links to al-Shabaab.²²²

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217 Somaliland Press, 'Somaliland: Sheikh Atom receiving medical care in Badhan, Puntland accused of atrocities', 4 November 2010.

218 McGregor, 'Puntland's Shaykh Muhammad Atom', pp. 13–14; Somalilandpress.com: 'Somaliland'.

219 Interview with Caydiid, Ceerigaabo, 12 September 2011.

220 UN Security Council, 'Report pursuant to Security Council resolution 1916', p.–21; various interviews in Hargeysa and Ceerigaabo, September 2011.

221 Interview with Caydiid, Ceerigaabo, 12 September 2011.

222 Somalia Report, 'What is the Galgala Conflict?', 13 April 2012.

Sheekh Attam may have returned to the Golis Mountains in the first half of 2011. In June 2011, his troops attacked the Puntland forces stationed in Galgala town. With most of Puntland's forces removed to the tarmac road, the attackers outnumbered those remaining in Galgala and killed many. Militant Islamists took control of the place again.²²³

Security in Bosaaso continued to be a problem with numerous killings, including those of Puntland officials and influential members of Warsangeli/Dubays (some reportedly Sheekh Attam's close relatives). The authorities in Garoowe accused Sheekh Attam of being behind these attacks and he, in turn, accused the PIS.²²⁴ Attam comes from an important family within the Warsangeli/Dubays; his lineage is called Reer Gurxaan. Its *caaqil* had opposed the Islamists in the mountains and cooperated instead with Puntland's government. As a result, he had been repeatedly attacked and several of his sons had been killed.²²⁵ Some believe the killing of elite Warsangeli in Garoowe could have been organized by Islamists as well. They were known to disregard clan-ties, and—though they had come as supporters of Sheekh Attam—increasingly, they followed their own agenda.²²⁶

By 2010, therefore, the character of the conflict in the Golis Mountains had changed. It was no longer, as it had been in 2006, a struggle of virtually all Warsangeli against some Majeerteen, but a struggle of Islamists from various clans (even some from the south), plus some Warsangeli against the majority of Puntland's people across different clans. The Warsangeli/Dubays got increasingly caught in-between the frontlines.

Rumours circulated of a growing al-Shabaab presence in the Golis Mountains and in Bosaaso. These may have been aimed at attracting external support for counter-terrorism campaigns, but there were some

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223 Interviews with Cabdi and Cali, Ceerigaabo, 11 September 2011.

224 Interviews with Cabdi and Cali, Ceerigaabo, 11 September 2011; Shabelle Media Network, 'Somalia's Puntland blames Al-Shabaab for insecurity in region' (in Somali), 24 June 2011.

225 Interview with Faduumo Jibril, Nairobi, 27 June 2012.

226 Mahad, 'Report on the situation in The Golis Mountains and the situation in Puntland', June 2012.

alleged sightings of individual militants.²²⁷ One person described two men to me near Badhan who ‘wore jeans. One had a cigarette in his hands but did not light it. This was the way they disguised themselves. [...] They travel in small groups and dress so they don’t attract attention.’²²⁸ If they were among al-Shabaab fighters in the area, however, their overall numbers were certainly rather small.

An encounter I myself had in March 2013 illustrates the fluidity with which people moved in and out of armed groups. Driving with my companions from Burco to Ceerigaabo, we stopped for breakfast in an area where the Togdheer region borders Sool—an area almost exclusively populated by Isaaq/Habar Jeclo. The man who had served us tea struck up a conversation with the female Somali student travelling with us. When she mentioned that she came from Badhan, he replied: ‘I know your area, I have been there.’ He said he had been in Galgala. I overheard him and interrupted to check. He was surprised that I spoke Somali and left quickly. In the car, my companions explained that he was likely to have been fighting for Sheekh Attam: what else, they thought, could bring a Habar Jeclo man to a remote place like Galgala? Several days later, we again passed through the settlement. The man we had met earlier waved from a distance. When we sat down for afternoon tea, locals filled the hut and an elder approached me. He sat right in front of me: ‘Thanks to God, we are all Muslims.’ I replied: ‘Thanks to God, we are all children of Adam and Eve.’ It occurred to me that all the people in this small settlement must have known what ‘their boy’ had been doing in Galagala. I interpreted this to mean that one way or another, they had consented to it, possibly seeing it as a religious deed and a protest against Puntland—their enemy as supporters of Somaliland. Thus, individual desire for religious fulfilment and clan interests had merged. No local would ever have thought of the *mujahid* as a ‘terrorist’.

Negotiations between emissaries from Sheekh Attam and from Puntland’s government started in Af-Urur in the Bari region on 21 July

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227 Mahad, ‘Report on The Golis Mountains’.

228 Interview, June 2012.

2011, and lasted three days. Siciid Dheere, the commander of *Ciidanka Daraawiishta*, as well as other officers and MPs, were in Puntland's delegation. The following points were agreed upon:

Results of the Af-Urur meeting, 21/3 July 2011

1. Nine prisoners of war taken by the Puntland forces should be released.
2. The road from Bosaaso to the Golis Mountains should be opened.
3. Puntland troops should leave the mountains and retreat to their former positions.
4. The administration in Garoowe should compensate for the damage done to the property of the people residing in the Golis Mountains.
5. Range Resources and other companies should not be allowed to come to the Golis Mountains to exploit resources there.
6. Another meeting should take place to discuss future developments in the area.
7. No further fighting should happen.
8. The government of Puntland should issue an amnesty for Sheekh Attam and his militia.
9. All fighters not belonging to the local Warsangeli/Dubays clan [militant Islamists from other Somali clans and/or foreign fighters] should leave the area.²²⁹

Shortly before the meeting, however, hardliners from the militia in the Galgala area declared the negotiations unacceptable and said fighting would continue.²³⁰ Fresh fighting between the insurgents and Puntland forces subsequently erupted in Bosaaso on 7 September 2011, marking the

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229 Summary of the negotiations: Muuse, Garoowe, September 2011.

230 Somalia Report, 'Atam's militia rejects amnesty offer', 19 July 2011.

decisive failure of the negotiations.²³¹ With the exception of the release of nine captives, the agreement outlined at Af-Urur was not implemented.

Al-Shabaab takes over

The fighting was concentrated mainly between Bosaaso and Laag.²³² Intensification of it in 2012 coincided with a change of leadership in the Galgala militias. Yasin ‘Kilwe’ and Cali ‘Gacamey’ had replaced Sheekh Attam when he was in southern Somalia (late 2010/early 2011). In the second half of 2011, it was unclear who was in charge. More al-Shabaab fighters from the south were said to have joined, and that those who did not comply with al-Shabaab’s rules, had had to flee their mountain homes.

The shift from a predominantly Warsangeli to a predominantly al-Shabaab militia was marked by the news, in February 2012, that ‘the “Mujahidiin of the Golis Mountains”, formerly headed by Mohamed Sa’iid “Atom”, had formally joined Al-Shabaab’.²³³ Yasin ‘Kilwe’ (reportedly a close associate of al-Shabaab leader Axmed Cabdi ‘Godane’), ‘officially declared himself “Amir” of the “Mujahidiin of the Golis Mountains”’, with Cali ‘Gacamey’ as his deputy.²³⁴ Sheekh ‘Attam’ seems to have resisted. On 19 February 2012, he denied that the militias in the Galgala were allied to al-Shabaab even as, on 25 February, Yasin ‘Kilwe’ confirmed it.²³⁵ By the summer of 2012, there was uncertainty about the exact whereabouts of Sheekh Attam, with the UN Monitoring Group for Somalia describing him as ‘allegedly considering leaving the movement’.²³⁶

231 Jamestown Foundation, ‘Was the battle for Galkayo a clan dispute or a victory for Puntland over al-Shabaab?’ *Terrorism Monitor* 9/35 (2011).

232 UN Security Council, S/2012/544, ‘Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 2002 (2011)’, 13 July 2012, p. 172–73; Somalia Report, ‘What is the Galgala Conflict?’.

233 UN Security Council, ‘Report pursuant to Security Council resolution 2002’, p. 15.

234 UN Security Council, ‘Report pursuant to Security Council resolution 2002’, p. 171.

235 Somalia Report, ‘What is the Galgala Conflict?’

236 Interview with Faduumo Jibril, Nairobi, 27 June 2012; UN Security Council, ‘Report pursuant to Security Council resolution 2002’, p. 171.

New groups of al-Shabaab fighters continued to arrive in the Golis Mountains, not least because of successful military campaigns against al-Shabaab in the south by AMISOM and the TFG, and by Ethiopian and Kenyan troops from early 2011.²³⁷ Destitute local youths from the Warsangeli and other northern Somali clans were also reported to be joining the Islamist militants.²³⁸ According to one source:

The Warsangeli are marginalized and unemployed. This concerns mostly young men: Warsangeli became drifters. It is the worst time now. There is no infrastructure. The tuna factory in Laasqoray [established by the Siyaad Barre's government, looted and then re-established with diaspora money] is closed again. The navy ships [of the various anti-piracy missions] patrol in front of the Warsangeli coast. They shoot at the boats of the fishermen. The Warsangeli have a real problem these days.²³⁹

The renewed conflict in the Golis Mountains had a negative effect on the life of many Warsangeli/Dubays in the far east of Sanaag: they suffered from displacement and the militarization of their *degaan*. In March 2013, a local from Dahar described how wary people were about commenting on the conflict in the mountains. A local journalist said they would rarely do so, suspecting him of working for the PIS.²⁴⁰ Travelling in easternmost Sanaag had become extremely difficult because of the many security checkpoints put up by Puntland's forces. One man from Laasqoray said he had almost been shot when he approached a checkpoint, when soldiers had demanded that he and his companion get out of their car with their hands up. The soldiers were nervous, expecting an attack by insurgents from the mountains.²⁴¹

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237 Somalia Report, 'What is the Galgala Conflict?'; Somalia Report, 'Al-Shabaab vs Puntland in Galgala', 8 May 2012.

238 Somalia Report, 'What is the Galgala Conflict?'

239 Interview with Faduumo Jibril, Nairobi, 27 June 2012.

240 Interview with Jaamac, Burco, March 2013.

241 Interview with Maxamed, Burco, March 2013.

The conflict also had an impact on Puntland's biggest port, Bosaaso, with assassinations a frequent occurrence from 2007 through to mid-2014. In 2009 and 2010, it appeared as if security forces had lost control or were complicit in the violence. There was a decline in economic activity with some professionals and students leaving Bosaaso to pursue their careers elsewhere in safety.²⁴²

The situation in the Golis Mountains up to July 2014

Sheekh Attam left the scene in 2012. He went into hiding, both from counter-terrorism forces and his own former allies among the militant extremists. The fight in the Golis Mountains had firmly been taken over by al-Shabaab. According to the UN Monitoring Group, in mid-2013, al-Shabaab had about 200 fighters in the Golis Mountains and around the port of Bosaaso. Many dozens of fighters had also been jailed in Puntland.²⁴³ After the demise of Sheekh Attam, the group widened its area of operation and hit targets in central Bari around the town Iskushuban.²⁴⁴ But the north remained a sideshow in the group's operations, albeit a strategically important one. According to UN observers, al-Shabaab has clearly reinforced its presence and logistics capacities in both the Almadow (the Golis Mountains around Galgala town) and Albari regions of the north of Puntland, as well as in Galkayo [sic]. By mid-2014, al-Shabaab in the Northeast represented the main threat to peace and security in Puntland.²⁴⁵ Some Warsangeli/Dubays in the Golis Mountains consented to the change of leadership in 2012, but most realized that al-Shabaab was not interested in defending their land but in using their *degaan* opportunistically for operations against Puntland forces. Many Warsangeli from the mountains fled the conflict zone.

As before, armed clashes between al-Shabaab and Puntland's forces were concentrated in the area between Galgala and Laag. Additionally,

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242 Mahad, 'Report on The Golis Mountains'.

243 UN Security Council, S/2008/769, 'Report of the Monitoring Group', p. 89–90.

244 UN Security Council, S/2008/769, 'Report of the Monitoring Group', p. 93.

245 UN Security Council, S/2008/769, 'Report of the Monitoring Group', p. 94.

Puntland's forces and its security infrastructure were attacked in and around Bosaaso. On taking office the new president of Puntland, Cabdiwali 'Gaas', stressed that his priority was to fight al-Shabaab, with more military operations in the Golis Mountains planned.²⁴⁶ This statement was followed by a heavy shoot-out between Puntland's security forces and Islamist forces at the foot of the mountains west of Laag on 25 January 2014.²⁴⁷

On 7 June 2014, Sheekh 'Attam' surrendered to Somali government forces in Mogadishu. At a press conference, he voiced his disagreement with al-Shabaab under Axmed Cabdi 'Godane'. He denounced violent struggle and was released on condition that he not leave the city.

In March 2014 Somaliland President Siilaanyo's visit to Laasqoray also created tension between Garoowe and Hargeysa, triggering a military build-up by both sides. The Puntland administration accused Somaliland of supporting al-Shabaab, a charge refuted by the authorities in Hargeysa.²⁴⁸

Conclusion

Two conflicts occurred in the Golis Mountains from 2006. The first began over natural resources, pitching the Warsangeli as a clan against President Cadde Muuse and his supporters who sought to exploit minerals in the Warsangelis' area in Puntland's name. No formal solution or settlement for this conflict was found; although armed clashes had ceased by mid-2006 the problem dragged on. The second conflict continued the first one but with an added religious dimension to it. Through the involvement of al-Shabaab, it connected a decisively local affair in a remote region of northern Somalia to the Islamist insurgency in southern Somalia. In this way, the second conflict in the Golis Mountains became a microcosm of the 'global war on terror', although the involvement of

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246 Shabeelle Media Network website on 11 January, 2014

247 Shabeelle Media Network website, Mogadishu, in Somali, 25 January 14

248 UN Security Council, S/2014/330, 'Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia', 12 May 2014, p. 2.

the US and its ally in the Horn, Ethiopia, was only indirect, involving training and equipping Puntland's forces fighting in the mountains. For some time, Sheekh 'Attam' proved himself to be a successful borderlands entrepreneur, combining the grievances of his local relatives with the universalistic Islamist cause, which provided him with support from both the Warsangeli and al-Shabaab and other fly-by-night Islamists. He exhibited the traditional characteristics of a Somali political leader, such as rhetorical skills and generosity, giving presents to followers and to people in need.²⁴⁹ He possessed religious knowledge and the skills of a fighter dating back to his time with al-Ittihad. To some in the northern Somali territories, Sheekh Attam and his 'Mujahidiin' may have seemed like a Warsangeli version of Maxamed Cabdille Xasan and his Dervishes.²⁵⁰

In the course of 2011, Sheekh Attam lost his grip on the militias in the Golis Mountains, which then became a place for al-Shabaab fighters fleeing southern Somalia to regroup. Al-Shabaab appreciated the strategic value of the area as a jumping-off point from which to continue to Yemen, a base from which to destabilize the administrations in Garoowe and Mogadishu, and for its potential for economic resources or the possibility of enrichment—not least the prospect of oil near Bosaaso.

By 2012, Warsangeli borderlanders were caught in the middle. Once al-Shabaab had been invited in, it was difficult to get rid of. If local people in Galgala viewed its fighters as a burden or as 'foreigners' (from the south), there was not much they could do about them. As one observer put it:

Al-Shabaab is in the Golis Mountains but one needs to understand people there stand with their backs against the wall. They are not all al-Shabaab but have to fight against Puntland intrusions and US counter-insurgency. [...] The USA and others should have a more constructive approach. They

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249 Interviews with Cabdi and Cali, Ceerigaabo, 11 September 2011.

250 The results of Sheekh Attam's role were tragically similar for the local Warsangeli/Dubays population to that of the Dervish uprising for many Dhulbahante: destruction and havoc in their *degaan*.

need to offer people alternatives: only fighting and killing will lead to more violence. Warsangeli are becoming the casualties in-between the Islamists and the Puntland anti-terror forces.²⁵¹

Puntland's government was partly to blame for allowing the situation to worsen and for the radicalization of local leaders, including Sheekh Attam. Harsh counter-terrorism tactics against local civilians fuelled discontent among the Warsangeli and contributed to an upsurge in terrorism (as it had done earlier in southern Somalia and elsewhere in Africa).²⁵² Faroole's administration in Puntland did not reassure the Warsangeli that the 'resource hunger' of the Majeerteen had ceased. As a result, the Warsangeli were more marginalized in 2014 than before the conflict because of displacement, destruction of property, the loss of lives, distrust among social groups, as well as Puntland's armed checkpoints, which hindered trade and travel. At sea, anti-piracy operations scared off local fishermen, but did not engage larger, foreign-owned fishing vessels.²⁵³

From 2006 onwards, traditional leaders—elders and leaders like Suldaan Siciid of the Warsangeli clan—had been unable to end the violence. In the first conflict between Warsangeli militias and Puntland's forces, it had seemed as if no impartial arbiters were available. The Warsangeli were unanimously against President Cadde Muuse's policy in their area, while Somaliland's government was at least tacitly supporting the Warsangeli clan militia in the mountains. Cadde Muuse was not ready for traditional negotiations; it seemed that he thought that as Puntland's president it was his right—rather than theirs—to exploit the country's resources. The reason why later negotiations did not succeed is

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251 Interview with Faduumo Jibril, Nairobi, 27 June 2012.

252 Hoehne, 'Counter-terrorism in Somalia'; Jeremy Keenan. Conspiracy theories and 'terrorists': How the 'war on terror' is placing new responsibilities on anthropology.' *Anthropology Today* 22/6: 4–9.

253 In Somaliland in March 2013, some Warsangeli believed that the European and US naval vessels patrolling the coast for pirates continued to allow the illegal exploitation of Somali maritime resources by non-Somali fishing vessels.

harder to understand. Axmed 'Adaami', Somaliland's minister of defence in 2011, and by clan a Ugayslabe (which is close to the Warsangeli), said local elders had watched the rise of Sheekh Attam with concern. They could not stop him, however, because as Dubays they feared the Majeerteen. While conflicts over land go back a long time, the Majeerteen were now the government in Puntland, whereas the Warsangeli remained geographically and politically remote.²⁵⁴ This evokes the problems Dhulabahante experienced in the Kalshaale conflict, when they considered their enemies from the Habar Jeclo clan and arbiters from other clans to be backed by the government in Hargeysa.

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254 Interview with Axmed Adaami, Hargeysa, 15 September 2011.

7. Conclusion: Disentangling the contested borderlands

Borderlands are in many regards margins, and living at the margins comes with various hardships: the lack of infrastructure, the lack of representation, the lack of power, the lack of development and, more generally, the lack of chances. At the same time, though, margins provide some people—borderland entrepreneurs and, in some cases, their followers—with particular opportunities.²⁵⁵

In fluid political situations, such as the one in the northern Somali peninsula where a dysfunctional Somali state (Puntland) and a functional but unrecognized state (Somaliland) sit uneasily side by side, the borderlands between them are ‘super margins’. The governments of the emerging states left the borders alone while they concentrated on the resources they could attract to their respective centres. Thus, throughout the 1990s, these areas remained marginal. The conflicts developing in these borderlands had a negative impact on the local economy, led to displacement and intra-communal splits, consumed the little resources available in military endeavours, and turned the borderlands into no-go areas for national and international NGOs and other organizations. This increased the marginality of the already marginal areas throughout the 2000s right up to 2014. But the borderlands also became more vital politically, the more the rival, state-like entities gained in substance. Tragically, many ordinary borderlanders paid for this rise in the relevance of their areas with more suffering and a deterioration of their living conditions.

The contest between Somaliland and Puntland over the borderlands worked out differently in Dhulbahante and Warsangeli areas. The Dhulbahante areas experienced increasing militarization and, from 2009, the struggle by local militias against the army of Somaliland (and to a lesser extent of Puntland). The cost for the local population was considerable:

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255 Feyissa and Hoehne, ‘State Borders and Borderlands’, pp. 8–18.

hundreds of people died, many more were injured, and thousands were displaced. Dhulbahante sub-clans and lineages fought each other as they sought political positions.

The formation of Khaatumo state in 2012 seemed to bring unity to the Dhulbahante and provided them, for the first time in many years, with credible representation. The Khaatumo project was in essence built on the aim to free Laascaanood from Somaliland's 'occupation'. From the very beginning this objective was unrealistic because Somaliland's army was stronger and better equipped than any clan militia ever would be. The terrain around Laascaanood had also become well known to Somaliland's forces, so local militias had no advantage in this regard either.

Maybe the deciding factor, though, was the will of Somaliland's government to hold on to Laascaanood. In 2002, Somaliland's then president, Kaahin, had fled the town under attack from Puntland's forces. That was when Laascaanood was not yet central to Somaliland's state-building project. A decade later, Laascaanood featured prominently in the political imagination of Somaliland nationalists becoming, for them, 'our soil'. In contrast for almost all Dhulbahante locals, this amounted to the occupation of 'their soil' by a foreign descent group, the Isaaq. This shows how central the margins have become for the government in Hargeysa and for people defining themselves as Somalilanders.

By mid-2014, Khaatumo seemed to have crumbled, or at least been reduced to a minor factor in the politics of the region. Its leadership (traditional leaders, diaspora actors, local intellectuals and military officers) was split and many ordinary Dhulbahante—for the sake of making ends meet in the marginalized borderlands—cooperated pragmatically with anyone providing the bare minimum of what they needed in terms of security and development. This did not mean, however, that the sentiments that had breathed life into Khaatumo's bid for autonomy and the SSC's before it had evaporated.

The Warsangeli lands had been similarly marginalized and contested borderland areas where the ambiguity of political allegiances prevailed. In contrast to Dhulbahante areas, though, they were more often peaceful. Warsangeli played their political cards carefully; the eastern Sanaag

region was also physically remote from Hargeysa and Garoowe with relatively few roads. For the Warsangeli, being marginal had sometimes provided shelter against militarization and costly conflict.

Things changed with the fighting in the Golis Mountains from 2006 onwards. This began in a very inaccessible area that lay close to the tarmac road connecting Bosaaso with Garoowe. The second conflict in July and August 2010 involved attacks around Galgala and Puntland's positions along the road, indicating the centrality of Warsangeli areas, however remote, in relation to Puntland. For a short while, Sheekh Attam and his 'mujahediin' looked like serious contenders to the established order in Puntland. With the help of al-Shabaab, they brought the Islamist insurgency close to Bosaaso, Puntland's economic hub.

The role of natural resources

Some internal analysts and external observers argue that the conflict in the contested borderlands between Somaliland and Puntland is mainly over natural resources, oil and other minerals.²⁵⁶ But the role of natural resources is secondary to political conflict in the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli regions. Primarily, the conflict is over the future of Somalia as a united or a divided state and the unwillingness of Dhulbahante and Warsangeli to give their whole-hearted support to Somaliland's secession in the 1990s. This political vision also provided the basis for the founding of Puntland, which presented itself as the guardian of Somalia's sovereignty and attracted support from the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli. Once the stage was set, secondary issues—among them the question of actual territorial control and, related to that, resources—gained prominence as drivers of conflict.

The role of resources as a point of contention has increased in recent years. This has to do with the fact that Somaliland and Puntland have matured as state-like entities, extending their territorial reach, which puts the issue of resource use on the agenda. In Warsangeli areas, resources

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 256 Anderson and Browne, 'The politics of oil in eastern Africa'. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17531055.2011.573187#.VPOJtin4vII>

beneath the ground became the central issue. The minerals to be found in the Golis Mountains proved so attractive to the government in Garoowe that its leaders were ready to go to war against their own people for them. In the Dhulbahante areas, initially competition over above-ground resources—mainly pasture, water, and administrative centres—triggered armed conflicts. Oil came in as under-ground resource more recently.

In the homelands of the two clans, resource conflicts merged with the existing grievances over marginalization. Debate about the role of oil, particularly in the Nugaal valley in the Sool region, is a way of examining existing problems but not their cause. But if oil exploration is carried out before other problems are settled, it will be a recipe for more conflict and instability in the area.²⁵⁷

Different systemic political logics

One aspect of the drama unfolding in the borderlands from early 2006 in the Warsangeli areas and from October 2007 among the Dhulbahante is the lack of effective channels of communication between centres and peripheries. The people talking to each other from various sides are not equally acceptable in various locations. The centres of Hargeysa and Garoowe behave like states and when there is a conflict to settle or a political matter to negotiate, sending ministers or other members of the administration. Although by patrilineal descent these individuals should have influence, frequently their word counts for little on the ground because people there follow a different political system.

In the Warsangeli and Dhulbahante lands, traditional governance is still the most important method of delivering order and structure. This form of governance once also dominated in central Somaliland and Puntland, but with the maturing of state-like entities and introduction of the multi-party system in Somaliland and attempted turn towards a similar system in Puntland,²⁵⁸ the logic of politics in these centres has

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 257 IRIN. Somaliland, oil and security (7 August 2014), <http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=100460>; ILPI. Somaliland Risk Analysis.

258 ICG. *Somalia: Puntland's Punted Polls*.

changed. Democracy in Somaliland and Puntland favours the majority groups—Isaaq and Majeerteen. The consensus and power sharing formulas that had lent stability to Somaliland until 2001, and to Puntland until recently, have been replaced with competition and a ‘winner takes all’ attitude. The new political system favours city dwellers, intellectuals and members of the diaspora over ordinary people from the hinterlands and traditional leaders. The latter are in principle still integrated into the power structures of Hargeysa and Garoowe, but in reality, their political influence has diminished dramatically over the past decade.²⁵⁹

The borderlanders still place trust in traditional leaders (*garaado*, *saladiin*, *cuqaal*, *odayaal*) who summon their local men (clan, sub-clan or lineage militias) and make them responsible for carrying out their decisions. People in the centres are used to listening to their politicians (*siyasiin*), who are in control of the police and military responsible for carrying out orders on behalf of the state. The two systems do not match each other well, and consequently, those who are influential on either side talk past each other. The situation in Laascaanood in October 2007 illustrates this. While Somaliland’s troops gained control of the town, traditional Dhulbahante leaders met in Bocaame and published a statement that urged Isaaq traditional leaders—not the government in Hargeysa—to withdraw ‘their men’. Similarly, the mismanagement of the first Warsengeli conflict in the Golis Mountains by the government in Garoowe from 2006 onward, and of the Kalshaale conflict by the Hargeysa authorities from 2010, illustrates a lack of effective communication between the political centres of the states and the borderlanders. This miscommunication produces conflict.

Opposed histories and competing traumas

To legitimize their political standpoint, the parties to the conflict in the borderlands produce quite different readings of the past that in interesting

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 259 Markus V. Hoehne. ‘Limits of Hybrid Political Orders: The case of Somaliland’. *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7/2 (2013), pp. 199–217.

ways correspond to each other.²⁶⁰ The supporters of Somaliland, as a rule mainly Isaaq, emphasize the importance of the first five days of their independence as a nation—from 26 June to 1 July 1960—before voluntarily entering into their 30 year union with the formerly Italian-run southern Somalia on 1 July 1960. They argue that this union failed because it was so hasty. Political and economic resources became concentrated in southern Somalia and the north-west became completely marginalized. Later, Somalia's President Maxamed Siyaad Barre singled out and oppressed members of the Isaaq clan family. When the Isaaq-led SNM rebel movement took up arms, the government in the south destroyed entire towns in the north-west of the country and bombed their inhabitants. After a decade, the SNM won their war and the unhappy union with 'the south' was dissolved. Subsequently, people in Somaliland adopted local traditions of conflict settlement and—in the absence of external support—succeeded in rebuilding a peaceful, stable, largely democratic polity that, by mid-2014, had lasted for longer than two decades. The collective trauma underpinning Somaliland's myth of the state is the bombardment of Hargeysa and Burco by the Somali national army in 1988—a large-scale aerial bombardment that under international law constituted a war crime that, at the time, went largely unrecognized as such.²⁶¹

While this version of history was true for central parts of Somaliland (the Isaaq heartland), the leadership in Hargeysa was mistaken in trying to widen it to encompass all of Somaliland and make it central to their struggle for recognition. The Dhulbahante countered this by referring to Maxamed Cabdille Xasan, the Dervishes and their anti-colonial struggle.

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260 This is in accordance with the observation that intimate enemies develop, through their enmity, a deep understanding of each other and, in their behaviour and use of symbols and rhetoric become more similar to each other than they would like to admit; see Günther Schlee, 'Einleitung', in Alexander Horstmann and Günther Schlee (eds.): *Integration durch Verschiedenheit. Lokale und globale Formen interkultureller Kommunikation*, (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2001), pp. 17–46, p. 20.

261 Most nation states have a 'myth' related to their national identities, a narrative of how they 'came about'. Often, this is used to justify the status quo and serve the ruling group.

Their sense of Somali nationalism had sustained their loyalty to Somalia's post-colonial governments, particularly that of Maxamed Siyaad Barre who, like them, belonged by patrilineal descent to the Darood clan family. In their eyes, guerrilla movements like the SNM were bent upon destroying Somali unity.

When the Somali state crumbled in 1991, they agreed on keeping the peace with other clans in the northwest, but it soon emerged that the majority of Dhulbahante saw an independent Somaliland as inimical to their own interests. They joined Puntland to foster their political ambitions and aims. When Puntland seemed to have become too Majeerteen-dominated for their liking, they contemplated self-governance. Dhulbahante would describe the years after 1991 not as a time of rebuilding (as many in central Somaliland would), but as *wakhtiga buurburka* (the time of breakdown). Since Somaliland's takeover of Laascaanood in October 2007, and the Kalshaale fighting in October 2010, Dhulbahante have portrayed themselves as victims of violent oppression by the Isaaq. Some have compared Hargeysa's conduct towards them to Mogadishu's towards the SNM.

For most Warsangeli, the historical narrative is more complicated. As a clan, they did not support the Dervishes, siding instead with the British and establishing their own 'defence force' called *Gaarhaye*. They usually start 'their history' (relevant to contemporary political events) with Maxamuud Cali Shire and his sultanate as a reference point. In post-colonial times, the Warsangeli were part of the Darood clan family that held power in Somalia from 1960 to 1991. But many distanced themselves from Siyaad Barre early on after one of their leaders, General Jaamac Cali Qorshel, was imprisoned by him in 1970. Forced to take sides during the civil war in the north-west of Somalia (1988–1991), the Warsangeli fought against the SNM. When Somaliland was established, their traditional leaders took part in peace negotiations and, from then on, Warsangeli have lived as peripheral borderlanders, mainly minding their own business, avoiding military conflict with the centres (except to defend their territory against Majeerteen intrusion), and quietly hoping for the resurrection of Somalia. For many Dhulbahante and Warsangeli,

the collective trauma became not the 1988 bombing of Hargeysa and Burco, but the 1991 collapse of the central government in Mogadishu and Somaliland's move the same year to divide Somalia.

War and state making

Political and socio-economic dynamics in the borderlands between Somaliland and Puntland can be interpreted as state-making processes that often go hand in hand with war-making.²⁶² Balthasar has argued about the role of war-making in state formation in central Somaliland in the mid-1990s.²⁶³ Extending his argument, state-making through war-making has now reached the peripheries. In the contest over the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli regions, Hargeysa and Garoowe were forced to act increasingly as states, enforcing their competing claims through troops on the ground, establishing administrations and gaining the support of the local population for their cause. This process is ongoing: in reaction to these intrusions, and spear-headed by military operations in the borderlands, clan-statelets such as the SSC or Khaatumo and Maakhir emerged with the basic aim of providing better state-like services to the marginalized borderlanders than Hargeysa and Garoowe had delivered. Even the conflict in the Golis Mountains has comprised aspects of war-and state-making. In its second phase, it posed an Islamist vision of the state based on Shari'a against a more secular and clan-based vision of Puntland, branded an apostate state by its Islamist enemies.

These dynamics are not confined to the local setting: they unfold in a space that is characterized by the dominance of Ethiopia's political weight in the Horn of Africa and that of the still massive influence of the US, UK, and EU on global affairs—particularly concerning the 'war on terrorism' and 'humanitarian aid'. Ethiopia has interfered politically in

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262 Charles Tilly, 'Reflections on the History of European State-Making', in *The Formation of Nation States in Western Europe*, ed. Charles Tilly (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 3–83; also Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1992* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing, 1992).

263 Dominik Balthasar. 'Somaliland's best kept secret: shrewd politics and war projects as means of state making.' *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 7/2 (2013), pp. 218–238.

the contested borderlands by steering the administrations in Hargeysa and Garoowe on a certain course. The status of Laascaanood has been co-decided in Addis Ababa. Issues of terrorism and counter-terrorism have influenced events between Somaliland, Puntland and the conflicts in the Golis Mountains, as well as the series of assassinations in Laascaanood in 2009 and 2010, linking the peripheral borderlands in northern Somalia to happenings in southern Somalia.

For most people in the borderlands, the political dynamics in their clan homelands have led to deterioration in their living conditions. What sometimes looks like quite irrational behaviour and relentless opportunism on the side of the borderland elites and their followers is, from another perspective, a logical and very consistent position. By staying in-between, borderlanders manage to achieve their main aim—that of keeping Somalia together.

Many Dhulbahante and Warsangeli whom I spoke to were proud of being important to the existence of Somaliland and Puntland. Both the Isaaq and the Majeerteen, they argued, needed them for building 'real' states, as neither 'Isaaqland' nor a 'Majeerteeniya' would be viable on their own. This statement can be interpreted as related to the segmentary structure underlying northern Somali society. In the segmentary model, a group (clan family, clan, or sub-divisions thereof) tends to fragment into smaller descent-based groupings in the absence of a resource that needs to be jointly exploited or an external threat to the group as a whole. The presence of another group—Harti clans as opposed to Isaaq, Dhulbahante and Warsangeli as opposed to Majeerteen—helps create cohesion within a group. This other group can serve as a partner for strategic alliances or as a potential threat. Conscious of their crucial position and despite—indeed, because of—their peripheral geographical position, these borderlanders were able to tip the scales in regional politics.

It is my conviction that the political situation between Somaliland and Puntland will remain important long after Mogadishu and the south return to peace and stability, which in 2014 was some way away. This

is because the borderlands in the north are precisely the place where national identities are decided, and where the future political order of the Somali states will take shape, either as two or more states, or as one.

8. Policy considerations

The situation in the regions of Sool, Sanaag, and southern Togdheer/Cayn, as well as in eastern Sanaag, has not received the attention it deserves from political leaders in the centres of Somaliland and Puntland or from international observers. The various conflicts outlined in this book have the potential to affect peace and stability across the northern Somali peninsula. They require urgent consideration and careful, non-violent engagement. While Somalis will decide their own political future, the following approaches to engagement should be considered.

On the confrontation in the Dhulbahante territories:

Seek to avoid military confrontations. All sides of the conflict—Somaliland’s army, Khaatumo’s troops, and other Dhulbahante militias and Puntland forces—should refrain from using military solutions for political problems. Each new round of fighting deepens mistrust and grievances on all sides involved. Somaliland has a strong track record of settling conflicts through negotiations; these could be prioritized.

Negotiate with legitimate representatives. A common problem with negotiations between autonomous Dhulbahante administrations and Somaliland was that the Dhulbahante most welcomed by Hargeysa often enjoyed little credibility or legitimacy at home. To start meaningful negotiations, the government of Somaliland has to reach out to the top traditional leaders of the Dhulbahante clan, particularly the *isimo*. Negotiating teams should be led by Isaaq and other traditional leaders not by politicians. Many of the *Guurti* in Hargeysa have by now become politicized. Therefore, well-regarded *saladiin* and *cuqaal* should lead the talks.

Moderate and achievable aims. Issues linked to armed confrontations must be tackled first, and comprehensively so. To mix negotiations about people who have been killed, property or land issues, with the question of Somaliland’s independence, will bring negotiations to an end before they have started.

Tackle the question of the political future of the region through a transparent process. Eventually, the issue of a one-state or two state solution must be addressed. A referendum in the Sool, Sanaag and Cayn regions could be organized in cooperation with local leaders and the governments in Hargeysa and Garoowe. Once and for all, it could decide the status of the area. Somaliland would not lose much in its claim for recognition because, according to international law, colonial borders are not a pre-condition for statehood.²⁶⁴

On the conflict in the Golis Mountains:

Isolate extremists through non-violent strategies. The number of dedicated jihadists in the Golis Mountains is relatively small. The majority of Warsangeli do not support an extremist ideology, but as long as they feel threatened by Puntland and/or the Majeerteen, people in eastern Sanaag will continue to silently tolerate extremists in their midst to add to their clan's defence. An end to al-Shabaab's presence has to be reached through persistent negotiations with credible Warsangeli representatives. If the extremists in the mountains completely lose Warsangeli support, they will not be able to hide for long.

Address resource exploitation in a new and fair way. All over northern Somalia, people hope to find riches in their clan territory. Due to the weakness of state administrations in the region, the land is firmly controlled by armed clans. In the case of the Warsangeli, the proposed exploitation of natural resources in their clan homeland led to armed conflict. In order to de-escalate this conflict and avoid more in future, the Puntland and Somaliland authorities need to find ways of talking to legitimate, credible clan representatives, and of entering into fair resource-sharing agreements. The authorities in Hargeysa and Garoowe should refrain from striking deals with private companies over the exploration and extraction of resources in the borderlands. The UN Security Council and individual member states should ensure that

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companies focusing on resource extraction do not undermine the fragile peace reached in northern Somalia.

Develop a non-violent approach that addresses structural problems.

The governments in Hargeysa and Garoowe, as well as international NGOs and UN organizations, should develop an approach that facilitates the provision of more sustainable development in the contested borderlands. Education and health care are basic needs in both the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli areas, and require concerted action. Education can be seen as a way of countering terrorism and criminality, including piracy. If young people had the chance to qualify for promising employment in their home areas, they would be less receptive to offers from criminals and extremists. Education needs to be followed up with offers on the job market. Planning and coordination by governments in the region and the international aid community are needed.

Principal characters

Axmed Cabdi ‘Xaabsade’	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Politician, oscillating between Hargeysa and Garoowe; Minister of the Interior in Puntland (1998–2007)
Axmed Cilmi Cusmaan ‘Karaash’	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Politician, Minister in Garoowe, 1st President of Khaatumo State (January–July 2012)
Axmed Maxamed Maxamuud ‘Siilaanyo’	(Isaaq/Habar Jeclo) Politician, 4th Chairman of the SNM (1985–1989), 4th President of Somaliland (2010–)
Cabdinuur Cilmi Qaaje ‘Biindhe’	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Politician, Minister in Garoowe, 3rd President of Khaatumo State (January 2013–July 2013)
Cabdisamid Cali Shire	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Military, Deputy Commander of Puntland and Somaliland armies; 3rd Vice-President of Puntland (2009–2014)
Cabdulaahi Axmed Jaamac ‘Ilkajir’	(Darood/Warsangeli) Military, Minister of Interior in Puntland, 2009–2014
Cabdulaahi Yuusuf	(Darood/Majeerteen) Military, 1st President of Puntland (1998–2004); President of Somalia (2004–2008)
Cabduraxmaan Aw Cali ‘Tolwaa’	(Dir/Gadabuursi) Military, 2nd Vice-President of Somaliland (1993–1997)
Cabduraxmaan Axmed Cali ‘Tuur’	(Isaaq/Habar Yoonis) Last Chairman of the SNM; 1st President of Somaliland (1991–1993)
Cabduraxmaan Maxamed ‘Faroole’	(Darood/Majeerteen) Politician, 3rd President of Puntland (2009–2014)
Cabdiwali Maxamed Cali ‘Gaas’	(Darood/Majeerteen) Politician, Prime Minister of Somalia (2011–2012), 4th President of Puntland (2014–)

Cali Khaliif ‘Galaydh’	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Politician, Prime Minister of Somalia (2000–03), 5th President of Khaatumo State (2014–)
Cali Xasan ‘Saber’	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Military, Vice-President of SSC (2009–2011)
Cusmaan Cabdi Yuusuf ‘Afdhilo’	(Isaaq/Habar Jeclo) Military, Somaliland military commander, Laascaanood (2008–2009)
Cumar Cabdirisak Cali Shamaarke	(Darood/Majeerteen) Politician, Prime Minister of Somalia (2009–2010)
Daahir Rayaale Kaahin	(Dir/Gadabuursi) Security, 3rd Vice-President (1997–2002) and 3rd President (2002–2010) of Somaliland
Garaad Cali Buraale	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Traditional leader
Garaad Cabdiqani	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Traditional leader (died 2006)
Garaad Cabdulaahi Garaad Soofe	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Traditional leader (died 2014)
Garaad Jaamac Garaad Cali	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Traditional leader
Garaad Jaamac Garaad Ismaaciil	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Traditional leader
Ismaaciil Suldaan	(Darood/Warsangeli) Politician, close to Puntland (died 2004)
Jaamac Cali Jaamac	(Darood/Majeerteen) Politician, 2nd President of Puntland (2001–2002, contested)
Maxamed Cabdi Xaashi	(Darood/Dhulbahante) 1st Vice-President of Puntland (1998–2004)
Maxamed Cabdille Xasan	(Darood/Ogaden) Leader of the ‘Dervish uprising’ (1899–1920)
Maxamed Siciid ‘Attam’	(Darood/Warsangeli) Islamist, 1st leader of the Mujahidiin in the Golis Mountains (2009–2012)

Maxamed Siyaad Barre	(Darood/Marrexaan) Military, President of Somalia (1969–1991)
Maxamed Yuusuf Jaamac ‘Indhosheel’	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Military, 2nd and 4th President of Khaatumo State (August 2012–December 2012; August 2013–August 2014)
Maxamed Xaaji Ibraahim ‘Cigaal’	(Isaaq/Habar Awal) Politician, Prime Minister of Somalia (1968–1969), 2nd President of Somaliland (1993–2002)
Maxamuud Muuse Xirsi ‘Cadde Muuse’	(Darood/Majeerteen) Military, 2nd President of Puntland (2005–2009)
Maxamuud Xaaji Cumar ‘Cameey’	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Influential elder from Buuhoodle
Saleebaan Ciise Axmed ‘Xaglo Toosiye’	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Politician, President of SSC (2009–2011), Minister in Hargeysa (2012–)
Sheekh Shariif Sheekh Axmed	(Hawiye/Abgal) Islamist, Chairman of the UIC (2006), President of Somalia, 2009–2012
Siciid ‘Dheere’	(Darood/Majeerteen) Military, Commander of Puntland Army/ <i>Ciidanka Daraawiishta</i> (2009–2014)
Suldaan Cabdisalaan	(Darood/Warsangeli) Traditional leader (died 1996)
Suldaan Siciid	(Darood/Warsangeli) Traditional leader
Suldaan Maxamuud Cali Shire	(Darood/Warsangeli) Traditional leader in early twentieth century
Ugaas Cabdulaahi Ciise	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Traditional leader
Xasan Ciise Jaamac	(Isaaq/Arab) last Vice-Chairman of the SNM; 1st Vice-President of Somaliland (1991–1993)
Xasan Daahir Maxamuud ‘Afqurac’	(Darood/Dhulbahante) Military, 2nd Vice-President of Puntland (2005–2009)
Xasan Sheekh Maxamuud	(Hawiye/Abgal) Politician, President of Somalia (2012)

Glossary

<i>adeer</i>	paternal uncle
<i>balli</i>	clay reservoir
<i>berked/berkedo</i> (pl.)	reservoirs built in the shape of small ponds
<i>boqor/boqoro</i> (pl.)	'king' or belt; title of high-ranking traditional authority
<i>caaqil/cuqaal</i> (pl.)	leader of <i>mag/diya</i> paying group
<i>casabiya</i>	group feeling (Arabic)
<i>Ciidanka Daraawiishta</i>	Dervish Army
<i>Ciidanka Macadeeynta</i>	Minerals Army
<i>cuqaal</i> (pl.)	mid-level elders
<i>dayr</i>	short rainy season
<i>degaan</i>	clan homeland
<i>deris wanaag</i>	good neighbourhood
<i>garaad/garaado</i> (pl.)	chief or wise man
<i>geesi</i>	hero
<i>gogosha nabadeed</i>	mattress of peace
<i>Golaha Guurtida</i>	House of Elders (commonly shortened to <i>Guurti</i>)
<i>Golaha Wakiilada</i>	House of Representatives
<i>golis</i>	mountain range
<i>gu</i>	rainy season
<i>guban</i>	hot coastal zone
<i>Guurti</i>	see <i>Golaha Guurtida</i>
<i>Hartinimo</i>	Harti solidarity
<i>Hawd</i>	dry season grazing area stretching from southern Togdheer into Somali Region of Ethiopia
<i>ina adeer</i>	patrilineal cousin
<i>isim/isimo</i> (pl.)	traditional authority/authorities
<i>jilaal</i>	hot dry season
<i>khusuusi</i>	advisory council, parliament
<i>killinka shanaad</i>	Region 5 of Ethiopia (eastern Ethiopia)
<i>maamul goboleed</i>	autonomous regional administration

<i>mag/diya</i>	compensation (Arabic)
<i>mujahiid</i>	fighter for/in jihad
<i>nabadgeeliyo iyo degenaansho</i>	peace and stability
<i>nasab</i>	genealogy (Arabic)
<i>ooday/oodayaal</i> (pl.)	elder
<i>oogo</i>	high plateau
<i>qaad, qat</i>	stimulant leaf commonly chewed in the Somali territories
<i>qaybta fulinta</i>	executive
<i>reer bari</i>	easterner
<i>sheekh</i>	sheikh, teacher of religion
<i>shir</i>	assembly
<i>siyaasi</i>	politician
<i>suldaan/saladiin</i> (pl.)	sultan; title of high-ranking traditional authority
<i>taliyaha nabad sugida</i>	secret service commander
<i>tariqa</i>	way or sect (Arabic)
<i>tol</i>	principle of patrilineal descent
<i>ugaas/ugaasyo</i> (pl.)	title of high-ranking traditional authority
<i>urur siyasadeed</i>	political organization
<i>wadaad/wadaado</i> (pl.)	teacher of religion, itinerant sheikh
<i>wakhtiga buurburka</i>	the time of breakdown
<i>xagaa</i>	windy dry season
<i>xeer</i>	customary law
<i>xidhidh</i>	affinal ties

Acronyms

AIAI	Al-Ittihad al-Islami
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CID	Central Investigation Department
DNO	Det Norske Oljeselskap (Norwegian Oil Company)
G9	<i>Guddiga Sagaalka</i> (Council of Nine)
HESPI	Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute
IGAD	Inter-governmental Authority for Development
KIN	Kids in Need
MOD	Marrexaan, Ogaden, Dhulbahante
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSPU	Northern Somalis for Peace and Unity
NSS	National Security Service
NSUM	Northern Somali Unionist Movement
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
PIS	Puntland Intelligence Service
PMPF	Puntland Marine Police Force
SNG	Somali National Government
SNM	Somali National Movement
SPM	Somali Patriotic Movement
SRC	Somali Revolutionary Council
SSC	Sool, Sanaag and Cayn
SSDF	Somali Salvation Democratic Front
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
TNG	Transitional National Government
UIC	Union of Islamic Courts
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US/USA	United States/United States of America
USP	United Somali Congress

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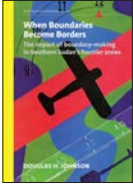
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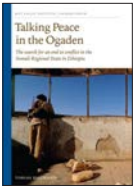
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