Africa 74 (4), 2004

DIFFERENCES THAT MATTER: THE STRUGGLE OF THE MARGINALISED IN SOMALIA

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A NATION WITHOUT A STATE

In many African states, ethnicity has been considered as a major obstacle to modern state-building causing political instability and violent conflict. In Somalia, political observers and analysts were more optimistic. They assumed Somalis share the same ethnicity, one religion, a common language and a predominantly pastoral culture: a predisposition for the development of modern nationalism. The egalitarian character of Somali society promised a political role model for other African states. Scholars argued that ethnicity, so commonly invoked as an explanation of conflict in contemporary African states, seemed less relevant here. And yet, Somalia was overtaken by a bloody civil war after the overthrow of Siyaad Barre's dictatorial regime in 1991, resulting in starvation and up to 280,000 deaths in 1991–92 (Hansch *et al.* 1994: 24).

We are left to ask why a 'nation of poets' rooted in egalitarian and religious institutions turned to one of banditry and civil strife. I argue that the breakdown of the Somali regime can be explained by the unjust distribution of new sources of wealth in post-colonial Somalia rather than by existing 'internal divisions based on the ideology of kinship' (Lewis 2004). The purpose of the article is twofold: first, to suggest an explanation of the breakdown of Barre's dictatorial regime, and second to analyse the social consequences of political and economic exclusion that followed the state collapse. I argue that inequalities between groups (horizontal inequalities) are based on both material and imagined differences. Further, the heterogeneity of the southern Somali people questions the existence of a common Somali identity that was conducive to the development of modern Somali nationalism.

Since the ousting of Siyaad Barre in January 1991, Somalia has not experienced political stability and widespread economic prosperity. Clan loyalties persisted and, in the years that followed, clan affiliation became an important protection for individuals against violence. In his article 'Visible and invisible differences: the Somali paradox' in this issue, Lewis makes what appears to be a problematic distinction between ethnicity and clanship, based respectively on 'visible' and

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'invisible' properties. Social boundaries, with arbitrary external markers, have long existed among the southern Somali clans such as the Digil-Mirifle (Rahanweyn), among minority clans such as the Jareer and among nomadic clan families from the central and northern regions. The Rahanweyn community, which traditionally is engaged in rain-fed agriculture and in agro-pastoralism, had been neglected by the Mogadishu regime for the past few decades. Most Rahanweyn speak a different language, namely *af-maymay*, which is related to *af-maxatiri* spoken in the central and northern regions. *Af-maxatiri* was made the official Somali language when the Latin orthography was adopted in 1972 (Cassanelli 1996: 17). The distinction of speech between the Digil-Mirifle and the nomadic clans of the central and northern regions is part of a wider cultural, geographical and social primary division. Only the dominantly nomadic Hawiye, Daarood, Dir and Isaaq clan families comprise the 'Samale' clan families constituting the Somali nation whereas the agro-pastoral Digil-Mirifle are considered 'Sab' (Lewis 1988: 6). In this respect, it is misleading to speak of one culture, one language and one religion that are shared by Somalis. The society is diverse rather than homogeneous as often claimed in the literature (Laitin and Samatar 1987; Lewis 1961).

In today's Somalia, both the 'visible' and 'invisible' force of clanship has served as a political resource. Here, I agree with Lewis that the concept of a 'pastoral democracy' did not work in Somalia to promote peace and stability, as major lineage groups, such as the Haber Gedir, sought to monopolise power. In southern Somalia, economic marginalisation and the political exclusion of minority groups, such as the Jareer (or Bantu), are based on external—rather than invisible—markers. This boundary between 'ethnic' Somalis and the Jareer is mainly based on racial stereotypes, according to which adopted members, the Jareer, display more pronounced 'African' features. The term *Jareer* literally means 'hard' and refers to people with hard and curly hair. As shown in the following section, major lineage groups used imagined differences to maintain their power in the southern agricultural regions. In turn, groups who felt excluded from economic and political life, took up arms to be heard.

EXPLAINING THE SOMALI CRISIS

In contrast to Lewis's 'traditionalist' approach, I argue that the modernisation process in Somalia played a significant role in shaping violence in Somalia. Scholars like A. I. Samatar suggest that explanations of the Somali calamity must 'begin by tracing the nature of the changes that had taken place in the social rather than in the genealogical order of this society' (A. I. Samatar 1992: 631). The country went through a dramatic change from a pre-capitalist to a capitalist society whereby modes of production changed. The main social unit in traditional Somalia was the household. Livestock was owned by the household and access to grazing areas and water resources was not restricted. In the pre-colonial

period, livestock was not produced for international markets and pastoralists were producers, consumers and traders at the same time. Pre-colonial pastoralism mainly supported producers whereas capitalist pastoralism had to support two additional social groups, traders and members of the state elite who did not participate in the production process. According to A. Samatar, the commoditisation of the pastoral and peasant economy transformed the social composition of Somali society. He argues that the decomposition of the pre-capitalist communitarian Somali tradition began with the establishment of colonial rule in 1869 (A. Samatar 1988). The consequences were twofold: first, the colonial state created bureaucratic structures that enabled a small Somali elite to overcome spatial constraints in discussing Somali-wide issues; second, this new configuration of political authority undermined the traditional form of decision-making processes, such as the kinship-based moral order, and generated patrimonial structures and nepotism (A. I. Samatar 1999: 183). Moreover, colonial rule imposed a new legal order under which each Somali had to belong to a group that was headed by a chief. In turn, this new system created incentives for authoritarian bureaucratic structures. As a consequence, social power became a function of clan identity and international relations.

A good example is Ali Mahdi who, after the ousting of Siyaad Barre, was proclaimed interim President because of Italian diplomatic support and his ability to arm his militia, not because he was supported by a particular community or clan (Reno 2003: 28). The Somali political leadership lacked an attachment either to livestock or to agriculture and had little experience of institutionalised party politics. Their failure to support the traditional sectors of the economy and to develop new forms of production made the state the most profitable source of funds (A. I. Samatar 1992: 633). Throughout the last century, social organisation did not change much. What changed were the social forces behind the process of state formation, a process in which clan identity was highjacked by vested interests.

Also during the colonial period, increased demand from the Arab peninsula fostered the production of livestock on a commercial basis. This was due to the commercial exploitation of oil in the Arab countries. Even the domestic consumption of meat increased steadily (Omar 1982). In the past, those families who could afford meat had to share an animal for private consumption. The government showed interest in the commercialisation of the livestock sector seeking additional tax revenue. The commercialisation of the livestock sector triggered the emergence of a new business class of traders and retailers. Gross returns to producers fell below 50 per cent of final sale price (Omar 1982: 59). Pastoralists mainly spent their income on consumer goods which they purchased from retailers in the urban centres. They deposited surplus from livestock sales in shops which were owned by their kinsmen. This favoured urban retailers who could invest capital from livestock producers. In turn, Somali traders invested in the borehole drilling and pumps. Increase in demand and the creation of new water holes by an emerging business elite led to overgrazing and desertification.

After independence, the government continued a policy of constructing boreholes. Another factor favouring overstocking was an improvement in veterinary services. This further upset a fragile balance between livestock and grazing areas. Unfortunately, reliable statistical data do not exist which might document the pressure on grazing areas at this time. The introduction of commercial animal food into the livestock sector led to a decrease of common grazing areas as traders started fencing fertile grounds. A last factor contributing to the deterioration of natural grazing land was a change in livestock composition reflected in a changing ratio of cattle to camels. The increase in cattle compared to camels meant increased pressure on grazing land as cattle are more closely tied to wells and are therefore less wide-ranging than camels, sheep or goats.

The argument that capitalist modes of production and surplus production led to the emergence of violent conflict contradicts Markakis's argument (1998) that resource scarcity embedded in the Horn's fragile environment leads to violent conflict. Given the social resilience of Somali society, the modernisation thesis suggests that greed-related motives triggered by changed modes of production lead to violent conflict. In this respect, commoditisation and the transition from one mode of production to another entailed a change in property relations and a transformation of social classes. During the dictatorial regime, a modern land law was passed, decreeing that a land title had to be acquired from the state by the person who 'owned' the land. This led to 'land grabbing' by civil servants. Many smallholders lost their entitlement to farm their land as they simply could not afford to register for land titles. Many villagers and Bantu farmers became rural labourers employed by internationally financed state farms (Menkhaus and Craven 1996). This development had already started under the colonial masters when large-scale plantations were set up in the early 1950s. Also, violence was used to capture land that was occupied by forced migrants.

Somalia's ability to provide enough food for its inhabitants declined after the beginning of the seventies. The problem of access to natural resources became more acute under Barre's military regime. Somalia has a critical environment that is prone to natural disasters such as droughts and floods having a severe impact on its economy. Pastoralists and smallholder farmers developed sophisticated systems to cope with the changing environmental conditions. Farmers diversified their crops and built up protections against floods in the riverine areas. Nomads' coping strategies were mobility and variation in the composition of herds in order to exploit as much vegetation as possible. Land conflicts were traditionally mediated between clans in accordance with *xeer* and shari'a law. Pastoral land used to be a common good and agricultural land was allocated by village elders according to customary law.

This change undermined their exceptional skills to maintain a fragile balance between humans, their animals and the natural environment. Some pastoral lands were enclosed and access to grazing areas restricted. Encouraged by demand from the Arabian Peninsula, borehole drilling

became a widely adopted practice and privately constructed water tanks allowed herders to stay for a long period in the same area. Large irrigation schemes and increasing international demand for livestock and the opening of the market further upset this balance. As a consequence, with the increased levels of livestock and reduced mobility caused by government restrictions, overgrazing and land degradation became apparent. Even more problematically, Somalis—once extremely resilient in the face of their harsh environment—became vulnerable.

Another worrying development was the availability of weapons, mainly small arms. In the 1970s with the support of the Soviet Union, Somalia had the largest standing army in Africa. Between 1976 and 1980, Somalia's arms imports accounted for 140 per cent of the country's export earnings for that period (Luckham and Bekele 1984: 16). When the civil war broke out in 1988, changing international political circumstances and the misuse of foreign aid left a dangerous legacy. Somalia's geographically strategic situation in the Horn of Africa led to the highest amounts of foreign aid per capita in Africa between 1960 and 1990. By the mid-1980s, 57 per cent of Somalia's gross domestic product derived from foreign aid (UNDP 1998: 57). Up to 50 per cent of GDP was spent on defence and security (*ibid.*). It was estimated that by the mid-eighties, the total development budget was externally funded, and the recurrent budget was largely dependent on loans and grants.

After the Soviet Union withdrew from Somalia during the Ogaden war, the US did not show much interest in the stability of the country. In the absence of a hegemonic power and with massive weaponry provided by former patrons, Somalia experienced civil strife and banditry on a massive scale in 1991 and 1992. Although the UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo on Somalia (Resolution 733, 23 January 1992), the arms flow to Somalia factions continued. A report of the Panel of Experts on Somalia to investigate violations of the arms embargo found that weapons and ammunition were supplied by several states including Ethiopia, Eritrea, Yemen, Djibouti, Egypt and Sudan (Hogendoorn *et al.* 2003).

Somalia has a long history of armed conflict over land and livestock dating back to pre-colonial times but today, the influx of small arms into Somalia is leading to increased numbers of casualties. Also, weapons are traded within the country. If a region achieves relative political stability, arms and ammunition are sold to more tense areas or stored (Marchal 2002). Once small weapons were readily available, violence became a means to pursue trade, to get employment or to participate in political decision-making. Relief agencies, for example, were obliged to pay large sums for the protection of their staff and the delivery of relief goods. Compagnon (1998) notes that Somalis, including civilians, developed a culture of looting during the civil war. He explains that looting began long before the fall of Barre's regime and that the distinction between public and private goods vanished during his rule. Given the breakdown of the formal job market, looting became one if not the only source of income. Today, the Somali state cannot rely any longer on foreign aid.

This is illustrated by figures on food delivery between 1975 and 1998 (excluding food for refugees). With the exception of 1991–93, food aid decreased steadily compared to massive foreign support in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s.

With the introduction of structural adjustment policies in the late 1980s, aid was increasingly channelled through non-governmental organisations as the government was considered an obstacle to development. The introduction of market-oriented policies coincided with the intensification of the civil war. In order to secure financial resources, the government turned to other sources such as land to compensate for a decline in international aid. In spite of this, the large influx of aid distorted the local economy. Parallel economies (remittances, arbitrage trade, the informal economy) gained in value and importance. International humanitarian assistance then decreased steadily during the 1990s.

The Somali case suggests that the transformation of commodity relations is fundamentally a struggle over valuable resources (A. I. Samatar 1992). Certainly, the civil war further accelerated the struggle for land and valuable resources. Title deeds were replaced by the use of force and smallholders were forced to share their harvest with militias (Marchal *et al.* 2000). It is believed, for example, that violence was deliberately used to distort the local economy and to bring prices down. Cereals were then bought by the controlling faction leader and sold at a higher price in the markets. It is said that faction leader Aideed used violence in Bay region in southern Somalia, a region that is very rich in cereal production, as a means to reduce the price of grain in the local markets in order to sell it at a higher price in markets he controlled in Mogadishu.[1] Following the war, large parts of the population remained excluded from political decision-making and partial economic recovery. These groups include minority groups such as the Jareer or Bantu. Their discrimination was based on racial (visible) stereotypes and they suffered most from an 'ideology of kinship'. To illustrate the social consequences of the force of kinship in Somalia's war-torn society, I will now turn to a localised violent conflict in the Shabelle valley in southern Somalia.

IMAGINED DIFFERENCES IN SOUTHERN SOMALIA

In the following section I analyse an inter-clan conflict between the Jido and the Jareer in Qorioley and Kurtunwarey district in the Shabelle valley in southern Somalia. The purpose is to demonstrate how the politics of exclusion is linked to violence in contemporary southern Somalia. I argue that major lineage groups used existing social boundaries (based both on material and invisible markers) to consolidate their power base in southern Somalia. In this particular

[1] Author's fieldwork in Bay region, southern Somalia, in February 2002.

case, the armed struggle was related to the extraction of water at the river and canal banks and fishing activities. The armed struggle reflects the political and economic exclusion of minority groups in Somalia. Jareer (or Bantu) farmers had to pay for access to the river and the main canals which are situated close to their villages. Prendergast (1994: 68) argues that the farming communities were targeted because of their vulnerability and weaknesses and because 'of valuable farmland coveted by other clans—a problem which pre-dated the civil war and intensified during it'.

The Jareer's exclusion from the political decision-making process is constituted in their lack of political representation in official bodies. Analysing the clan distribution of both districts it seems that grievances expressed by the Jareer about political representation are justified. In the two districts affected by the clashes, the Jareer did not hold any of the key administrative posts. In Qorioley district, the District Commissioner is Haber Gedir. The Jareer had only three members in a thirty-five-member District Council, which was appointed in 1999. In all the preceding local administrations since 1991, no Jareer were nominated for either of the two most important posts, the District Commissioner or Mayor. Only during the time of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) was one Jareer man appointed general secretary of the administration.

Although the Jareer were legally allowed to participate in politics, they had neither the economic means nor the educational skills to defend their interests. This is also rooted in the colonial period. The Italians were not interested in providing educational services; rather they 'came to southern Somalia because they were mainly interested in cultivating their farms in the riverine areas. This is why Italians did not promote educational skills. They tried to integrate only in the sense to understand politics in order to counter uprising', claimed a Somali Bantu. In the period of the civil war and thereafter, the Jareer continued to be subjected to discrimination. They have been victims of famine, forced migration and the diversion of humanitarian aid. Menkhaus (1999: 27) remarks: 'In times of war or humanitarian crisis, the distinction between "being Somali" and "being Bantu" is not academic—it can make the difference between living and dying.' As an ethnic group, they are confined to their constructed social borders (Barth 1969). In peace negotiations and emerging non-state administrations they have been allocated little political representation.

In addition, their stalemate was due to internal divisions and lack of political leadership. Leading figures of the Jareer founded the Somali African Muki Organisation in 1986.[2] The term *Jareerweyn* was introduced in order to create a common identity. After its foundation,

[2] Author's interview with Chairman of Somali African Muki Organisation, Mowlid Ma'ane Mohamoud, at the Somalia National Reconciliation Process in Eldoret, Kenya, 9 November 2002. Another source cites the year 1992 for the establishment of the Somali African Muki Organisation (here Somali Africans Muki Organisation) as a Bantu political party. See (Menkhaus 1999: 28).

the organisation soon split into political factions and in 1991 the Somali African Muki Organisation/Somali National Alliance as well as other groups emerged.

This case offers insights into identity politics. Here, conflict is linked to the struggle for self-determination by marginalised groups, such as the Jareer. Most importantly, clan identity is not necessarily related to state formation. The assertion of a distinct identity is more about making claims within states, particularly in states which have become predatory and oppressive in nature (Salim Said 2002: 96). In the past, Somalis experienced a state apparatus whose elites decided who should gain access to land and other valuable resources. Doornbos and Markakis (1994: 84) claim that 'throughout Africa, whatever the ideology of the regime, the state controls the production and distribution of material and social resources. The struggle for resources, therefore, is waged through the agency of the state, because access to state power provides access to resources.'

The Digil clan is one of the largest in Qorioley and Kurtunwarey district in the Shabelle valley. According to anthropological writings, it is divided into seven sub-clans, of which Jido is one. Within clans, in particular in the riverine areas, there are further social boundaries. One is between ethnic Somalis and descendants of former slaves, the Jareer. The continuity of the segmentary clan system depends on the maintenance of social boundaries. They entail 'criteria for determining membership and ways of signalling membership and exclusion' (Barth 1969: 15). Jareer usually do not consider themselves as ethnic Somalis because they are not part of the Somali genealogy. They are largely adopted client members of a Somali lineage. Yet, they see themselves as Somali citizens. Adopted clan status (*sheegad*) is practised by minority groups including Bantu seeking the protection of more powerful clans. In declaring *sheegad*, the adopted member takes on client status within the lineage of the adopting clan. This practice allows the peaceful integration of newcomers into resident clans. Further, it adds to the complexity of lineage identity in the riverine areas, such as Lower Shabelle or the Juba region. In the riverine areas, Bantu were permanently incorporated into the adopting clan through *sheegad* as Menkhaus (1999: 24) notes: 'In some cases (typically, in agricultural communities), *sheegad* status becomes permanent incorporation into the dominant clan; in other cases (typically, in pastoral settings), *sheegad* status can be renounced and old clan identity revived.'

But because they are one of the largest groups in Lower Shabelle, different political groups lobby for the support of the Jareer, possibly with an eye on a future political settlement. This shows how clan identity is used by faction leaders to deploy and perpetuate power in order to access resources. Faction leaders deliberately use ethnic differences between the Jareer and other Somali clans to maintain their power. This highlights the relational aspect of clanism or ethnicity; creating a sense of identity and defining the enemy (Turton 1997).

Nevertheless, clan and statehood in Somalia are complementary. But clan as an organising principle cannot work in a state that is

highly centralised and highly authoritarian, as was the case in Somalia's colonial and post-colonial history. Doornbos and Markakis (1994: 84) describe the Somali post-colonial state as 'highly centralised', seeking 'to impose a uniform set of rules and policies of alien origin on highly differentiated societies. Highly authoritarian, it stifled normal political competition which reflects the balance of domestic social forces, and created explosive opposition pressure that could only be contained by force.'

Violent conflict materialised in the struggle by the Jareer demanding their fair share of precious land and participation in politics. Berry (2002: 639) writes that 'struggles over land in postcolonial Africa have been as much about power and the legitimacy of competing claims to authority, as about control of property *per se*.' Somalia's Bantu population has suffered from racial discrimination and de facto apartheid. Their social vulnerability is due to their lack of control over physical force, i.e. local militias who engage in looting and predatory behaviour. Further, as most of the Jareer are descendants of former slaves, they were integrated into the clan system by being taken into the clan family that owned their parents. They thus became divided among different clans. A third reason for their weak standing in the region was the lack of an educated leadership that could represent their interests in the political arena. Since few Bantu own land, they have been dependent on wage labour largely working on the plantations in the Shabelle valley. They have been poorly paid, coming last in the Somali social hierarchy. Racial discrimination is based on physiological stereotypes and descent. Although they account for a large part of the overall population, in particular in the riverine areas, they are considered a minority by Somalis.

The notion of an overarching Bantu identity developed in the 1990s, when international aid agencies identified Bantu communities as the most vulnerable groups in the famine. As Menkhaus (1999: 28) explains: 'the term quickly caught on, in part because of the perceived political and economic gains for "vulnerable groups" in the context of a massive humanitarian intervention'. Menkhaus claims that the term 'Bantu' was not commonly used in the Somali language before the war: 'Ironically, it was the ethnic Somalis who were more likely to treat all Bantu as a common group, using terms like *Jareer*' (*ibid.*). Other derogatory terms used by Somalis for Bantu people include *adoon*, which can be translated as 'slave', or *oggi*, which in Italian means 'today', reflecting the belief that Somali Bantu only live for the moment without the ability to think beyond their immediate needs.

Intermarriages between the Jareer and the Somali are hardly practised. In Somali society, married women link the clans of their fathers and brothers, to which they belong, to the clans of their husbands, to which their children belong. Nomadic clans practised exogamy, which helped to strengthen strategic alliances between clans and to mediate disputes over water and pasture. The social exclusion from intermarriage with other Somali clans—although polygamy is socially accepted—prevented the Jareer from accessing the protection of their

social and legal rights that clan affiliation brings. This explains why local clan loyalties remained important in post-war Somalia.

In particular in Lower Shabelle, the Bantu constitute a strong demographic component of the population (Marchal 1997: 109). However, estimates of their number vary greatly. Lewis (1988: 7) estimated 80,000 Bantu living along the Shabelle and Juba rivers in the 1980s. In the same period, Van Lehman and Eno (2002) estimated the total Bantu population in southern Somalia at about 600,000 out of a total Somali population of 7.5 million. Many Jareer speak a different language, some practise a non-Muslim religion and can claim a separate ethnic descent. As most Digil clans, the Jareer speak *af-maymay* which is related to *af-maxatiri*, the language of the northern Somali clans. They are not mutually intelligible (Mukhtar 1996). At the southern coast of Brawa some speak Swahili dialects. In this respect, it is worth noting that Somalia is less homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, religion and language, in particular in the South, than claimed by some Somali scholars (Laitin and Samatar 1987; S. S. Samatar 1991). Mukhtar (1996: 543) explains why this myth has survived: 'The monoculture ... is extrapolated mainly from the study of the northern part of the country where most of the field research about Somali culture was undertaken.' In particular the civil war has widened the gap between different social groups. The 2001 UNDP National Human Development Report claims that 'civil war has led to a questioning of a single Somali sovereignty and has revealed the heterogeneity of Somali society and culture' (UNDP 2001: 34).

Menkhaus (1999: 23) points out that ethnic Somali clans were not the first inhabitants of the fertile riverine land. Swahili-speaking Bantu farmers are believed to have migrated along the East African coast and settled in the Shabelle valley before the arrival of 'ethnic' Somali tribes which migrated from southern Ethiopia moving to the northern and central regions of present-day Somalia. From there, ethnic Somali clans moved southward to the riverine areas. What is not clear is to what extent the Bimal, Geledi and other Somali clans took up farming and to what extent they exploited the labour of client-cultivator groups who had settled in the region much earlier (Cassanelli 1982: 163).

Most of the Bantu living in contemporary southern Somalia are descendants of Bantu who were enslaved by the Sultanate of Zanzibar in the eighteenth century (Cassanelli 1982). Their ancestral tribes came largely from present-day southern Tanzania, northern Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi. As slaves they were shipped along the East African coast to serve as labourers in the agricultural sector, mainly on plantation farms. It is estimated that between 25,000 to 50,000 East African slaves were assimilated into riverine areas between 1800 and 1890 (Van Lehman and Eno 2002). The expansion of this sector in the eighteenth century along the Shabelle river made the growth of the slave trade possible. Slavery and the introduction of the cash economy resulted in the breakdown of intertribal economic and social networks. Accordingly, many Africans lost social resilience in times of severe droughts. In foreseeing a better future, they accepted promises

by Omani Arab traders of wage labour in southern Somalia or elsewhere (*ibid.*). The Italian administration started to free the first slaves at the end of the nineteenth century. Then, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Italian administration officially abolished slavery according to the Belgium Protocol.

After slavery, the Jareer were subordinated under whichever Somali clan had owned their parents. Others joined settlements of fugitive Bantu slaves in Lower Juba where they retained their ancestral religion and language. In order to serve the labour needs of the agricultural industry, the Italian administration passed labour laws to conscript freed slaves into the plantations, with the help of former Somali slave-owners. A British official noted: 'The conception of these agricultural enterprises as exploitation concessions engendered under the [Italian] fascist regime a labour policy of considerable severity in theory and actual brutality in practice. It was in fact indistinguishable from slavery' (cited in Van Lehman and Eno 2002). Later under British rule, many Jareer established themselves as smallholder and subsistence farmers. Others migrated to towns and cities where they became manual labourers and petty traders.

Somali clans with large Bantu-client populations, in particular the Bimal, Dabare and Geledi in Lower Shabelle, reject the term 'Bantu' because they see the danger of their Bantu members breaking away and making political and economic claims (Menkhaus 1999). Yet, making claims within the society or state is considered the constructive element of clan identity. So far, little academic work has been dedicated to the relationship between the Jareer or Bantu and ethnic Somali clans in relation to land and conflict.

Today, segregation between Somali clans and the Jareer is still enforced by ethnic Somali clans. This segregation is based not only on racial differences but also on different livelihoods. Jido are traditionally nomadic herders. Jareer maintain their livelihood from casual labour and smallholder farming. Pastoralists consider agriculturists a lower social class. However, it would be simplistic to classify the inter-clan conflict I describe in the next section as a conflict between pastoralists and agriculturalists.

FACTIONAL CONFLICT IN LOWER SHABELLE

Anecdotal evidence tells that the most recent factional fighting in 2002 was triggered by the murder of a Jido man after he participated in a wedding dance. This Jido man and two Jareer were killed when his house was set on fire. The two Jareer were guests in the Jido's house. In total, an estimated twelve people were killed during a period of a year. In interviews with members of both clans, they argued that the assault was triggered by Jido imposing a tax on Jareer who were fishing at irrigation canals and on river banks. In fact, fish does constitute one source of income for the Jareer, many of whom used to work for wage labour in the banana plantations. Since the collapse of the banana economy

in 1997–98, they have had to pursue other sources of income and subsistence farming. Other accounts mention the illegitimate taxation of Jareer farmers for water extraction from the river and canals: the situation escalated when a member of the Jido clan demanded tax from members of the Jareer who were using a canal for fishing. Demanding 'tax' for watering livestock or extracting water became common after the collapse of the former regime: 'Herders pay fees for water, and even household containers like *ashuun*[3] and *aag*[4] are charged a fee,' a Jido clan elder explains.[5] A Daarood woman from Kurtunwarey complained she had to pay people at the river who control the outlets more than she used to pay under the former government. Flood gates are controlled by armed militia. She added: 'If you open the inlet someone will lock it immediately. You will be forced to pay. Some people will even not be allowed to open the inlet.'[6] Access to water resources played an important role since all the affected villages are situated at either a primary canal or the river Shabelle.

Others argued that the murder was politically motivated. It was said that politicians who largely lived in towns contributed to the destabilisation of the region: 'They remained disconnected from the conflict-ridden areas.' An informant stated that the fighting among the communities was intended to split the Jido and the Jareer. He claimed that since 1993 some one hundred people had died, and he suspected that high potential agricultural areas in the region had triggered violent competition: 'This region is the most fertile. It is called the "bread basket".'[7] Accordingly, farmers were most affected by the clashes. It was said that one week lost during the season meant four months lost of living. Due to climatic variability, displaced farmers can lose a full harvest where they are dependent on rain-fed agriculture. Further, they depend on social networks to overcome labour constraints inherent in their system of agro-pastoral production. If the people affected by the fighting were brothers, neighbours and friends, one resident noted, the ability of local communities to cope with the harsh environment was likely to decrease. One displaced resident raised concerns that he was driven from his home and his property had been looted.

In the following weeks, the conflict spilled over to other areas leaving several villages burned and their inhabitants displaced. At the beginning of September 2002, at least six months after the first recorded incident, members of the affected community gathered in the regional town of Qorioley to discuss a peaceful solution of the localised clashes. Following consultations with third parties (i.e. not Jido or Jareer clan members), it was agreed to establish a committee in each village to ensure the return

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[3] Container made of clay.

[4] Container made of wood, plastic or other material.

[5] Interview conducted by the Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development in Kurtunwarey, southern Somalia, 16 April 2001.

[6] Interview conducted by the Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development in Kurtunwarey, southern Somalia, 16 April 2001.

[7] Author's interview in Eldoret, Kenya, 9 November 2002.

of displaced persons and to monitor a peace agreement. Most internally displaced persons returned to their villages.

A related aspect to the fighting is the struggle for self-determination of the Jareer. In an increasingly insecure environment, clan affiliation gained added importance. In the absence of an effective administration that could redistribute wealth it seems understandable that the Jareer should take up arms to demand their share. Jareer complained that their group did not enjoy equal rights because they are unarmed. Clan identity gained in importance as it became the means of making claims within the state. There was a similar process amongst the Mirifle clans of Bay and Bakool who armed themselves with the support of the Ethiopians, expelled Hussein Aideed's militia from the region in 1999, and restored a regional administration.

There is considerable evidence that powerful clans who settled in the area after the disintegration of the Somali Republic in 1991 encouraged the grievances of the Jareer to counter opposition from powerful indigenous clans. There is also evidence that newcomers, mainly of the Hawiye/Haber Gedir clan, supported the Jareer militarily in order to weaken the Jido clan. A member of the Digil clan in Baidoa, when asked about the main conflicts in Lower Shabelle, stated that the case of conflict in Qorioley district was mainly caused by infiltration from Abdiqasim's militia, an armed group which wants to divide the inhabitants of the area, one against the other. Abdiqasim Salad Hassan (Haber Gedir/Ayr) is the President of the Transitional National Government. The brother of the local Jido Sultan, Ibrahim Alio, reiterated the divide and rule strategy of the Haber Gedir clan: 'The Jido and the Jareer lived as brothers. If a Jareer kills a Jido, the Jareer would pay money for compensation. Jareer were treated as friends, even intermarriages were possible. After 1991, the Hawiye clan invaded all the country. They started to divide the clans.' Delegates of the Digil community from Lower Shabelle confirmed this assertion at the Eldoret peace conference: 'Problems between the Jareer and the Jido are created from the outside, especially by the Haber Gedir/Ayr clan. They use a "divide and rule" strategy. In order to capture the area they induce conflict between the people living in the area.'

In other cases, violence served purely economic purposes. Violence became a means to acquire fertile land in the riverine areas. A Digil clansman told me that he lost his land to Haber Gedir clansmen. Non-residents from the central regions who lack the expertise to cultivate the land rent it to local farmers. In some incidents, farmers had to pay taxes at river banks, canals and bridges. Yet, hardly any of the 'tax' collected is used for maintenance or service. Moreover, money provided by international aid agencies which is earmarked for the rehabilitation and maintenance of canals and river banks was often diverted to private accounts and away from local communities. A Jareer from Merka explained, 'Today, people do not listen to you if you do not have a gun. At the moment there are individuals who are taxing people at river banks and bridges. But if the bridge collapses, this person would not pay for repairing the bridge.' He explained, 'That is why taxes should

be collected collectively, and should be used within the community,' and he suggested that 'conflict arises over competition for foreign aid.'

The huge influx of foreign aid under Barre's regime and later in the UNOSOM era created rent-seeking behaviour among Somali elites. Between December 1992 and October 1993 donors spent US$2 billion on Operation Restore Hope (de Waal 1997: 185). De Waal writes that 'the very fact of such an enormous action transformed Somali politics by feeding inflated expectations of the return of the aid machine that has sustained Siyad Barre' (*ibid.*). This has created expectations that aid pays for anything, and political groups started to compete for lucrative rents. When humanitarian assistance to Somalia decreased in the late 1990s, competition for foreign assistance increased. As a result, the Jareer were excluded from employment on aid programmes.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In reaction to the exclusion from profitable clientele and kin networks, groups which were formerly marginalised, such as the Jareer, tried to unify and organise to claim a legitimate share in available resources, such as land and water. Conflicts over land and water intensified in the years following the breakdown of the former regime. However, the struggle for resources was a consequence rather than a cause of the civil war that started in southern Somalia in 1991, although land-grabbing by the former government elite was definitely a contributing factor to the fight for regime change. In this context, kin ties 're-emerged' and gained importance, resulting in several violent clashes, with rising death tolls. As shown above, people such as the Jareer, without access to economic and political resources, took up arms to be heard in the international peace talks in Kenya.

Moreover, the analysis of the localised clan conflict is an example of how major lineage groups in Somalia define 'us' and 'them' by referring to external and invisible properties. Clan identity is used as a political resource by militarily stronger clans to gain control over local communities. Here, the Jareer's distinct ethnic identity is instrumentally used by newcomer clans, such as the Haber Gedir, to strengthen their strategic position within southern Somalia. By defining 'us' and 'the enemy', faction leaders mobilise support from local constituencies in order to maintain their military power. They use both 'invisible' and 'visible' markers to construct social boundaries that serve their own vested interests and push minority groups, such as the Jareer, to the margins of society. Whereas local clans have to pay 'taxes' or contribute manpower to emerging non-state administrations, they are excluded from the political sphere.

In the absence of an effective government that could distribute wealth and provide public goods, Somalis had to rely on alternative forms of governance. After Barre's ousting, violent conflict was managed by customary law. But in many parts of contemporary Somalia, the inherited social contract or *xeer* was overruled by force. In this context,

it is not surprising that Somalis should turn to shari'a law when other moral authorities, such as elders, failed to reconcile warring parties. Clan became the only safety net. But to base a future government on clan representation is doomed to failure. Research in contemporary Somalia demonstrates that Somali society is highly fragmented. Differences concerning political representation go well beyond the sub-clan level. The fragmentation of society can even be observed at the family level. The fragmentation of Somali society started well before the disintegration of the Somali Republic. The last unifying movement that united most of the clans, including those in the South, was the struggle for independence materialising in the establishment of the Somali Youth League. Since then, the fragmentation has continued. One of the main failures of the democratic regime of the late-sixties was the splintering of the parliament into dozens of political parties. At the beginning of the civil war, observers considered it to be a fight between clan members of the Hawiye against the Daarood. This perceived dichotomy changed in the first months of the war. Alliances shifted and fighting broke out between sub-clans of the victorious Hawiye, the Abgal and the Haber Gedir. The broad alliances of 1991–92 lost their importance. Over the next decade, sporadic fighting broke out both within and between clans and has tended to be localised.[8] This demonstrates that the clan cannot function any more as a means for the equal distribution of resources.

The political exclusion of local communities is also reflected in the final report of the land and property rights reconciliation committee of the peace talks led by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Access to land and common resources, such as water, was at the root of the Jareer–Jido conflict. Although the report (IGAD 2003: 34) defines a disputed area as an area 'where indigenous occupants were marginalised and intimidated by invading or expansive elements', it has no provision for the meaningful participation of indigenous residents like the Bantu or elders in the reconciliation process. Moreover, the report states that occupied and disputed regions 'require a quick solution if another civil war is to be avoided' (*ibid.*), an objective that contradicts Somali tradition of localised conflict resolution as a Somali saying foretells: *Aan wada hadalno waa aan heshiinno* ('Let us talk means let us reconcile').

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article benefited from the critiques and editorial advice of David Turton. It also draws on the author's D.Phil. fieldwork in Somalia in 2002.

[8] For example, clashes occurred in North Mogadishu in September 2002 between sub-clans of the Abgal, the Warsan-Geli and the Agon-Yare of the Harti-Abgal sub-clan.

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ABSTRACT

Somalia has been without a government for the past thirteen years. After the ousting of Siyaad Barre in 1991 observers were left with the question why a promising, even democratic, society sharing the same ethnicity, one religion, a common language and a predominantly pastoral culture was overtaken by a devastating civil war. Analysts stressed the significance of kinship and clan politics in the maintenance of sustained conflict. They argued that Somalia's state collapse must be placed in a historical context taking into consideration the cultural heritage of Somali society and the legacy of the colonial past. The purpose of the article is twofold: first, it seeks to explore an alternative explanation for the breakdown of Barre's dictatorial regime; and second, to analyse the social consequences of political and economic exclusion that followed the state collapse. The paper argues that Somalia's state failure can be explained by the unjust distribution of new sources of wealth in post-colonial Somalia. This modernisation process was accompanied by violent clashes and continued insecurity. The breakdown of the former regime did not create a representative government. Instead, faction leaders fought for political supremacy at the cost of the lives of thousands of civilians. In the absence of a functioning government that could guarantee security and protection,

clan loyalties gained importance. Clan affiliation became a condition of being spared from violence. Unjust distribution of pockets of wealth, such as the high-potential agricultural land in the riverine areas in southern Somalia, led to localised clashes. It will be argued that horizontal inequalities, or inequalities between groups, are based on both material and imagined differences. Somali faction leaders use these differences instrumentally, to maintain and to exercise power. Irrespective of the existence of invisible and physical markers, it is important to understand what existing social boundaries mean to their participants. A localised clan conflict in Lower Shabelle between the Jido and the Jareer clan families illustrates the consequences of social and economic exclusion. Groups who felt excluded from economic and political life, such as the Jareer, took up arms. Violence became a means of being heard and taken seriously in the current Somali peace talks in Kenya.

RÉSUMÉ

La Somalie est sans gouvernement depuis treize ans. Après le renversement de Siad Barré en 1991, les observateurs se sont retrouvés devant la question de savoir comment une société prometteuse, même démocratique, partageant une même ethnicité, une seule religion, une langue commune et une culture essentiellement pastorale a pu plonger dans une guerre civile dévastatrice. Les analystes ont souligné l'importance de la politique de parenté et de clans dans le maintien du conflit. Ils ont affirmé qu'il convenait de placer la chute de l'État somalien dans un contexte historique prenant en considération l'héritage culturel de la société somalienne et l'héritage du passé colonial. L'objectif de cet article est double: premièrement, il recherche une autre explication à la chute du régime dictatorial de Barré; deuxièmement, il cherche à analyser les conséquences sociales de l'exclusion politique et économique qui a suivi l'effondrement de l'État. Selon l'article, l'échec de l'État somalien peut s'expliquer par la distribution inégale de nouvelles sources de richesse en Somalie post-coloniale. Ce processus de modernisation s'est accompagné d'affrontements violents et d'une insécurité permanente. L'effondrement de l'ancien régime n'a pas créé de gouvernement représentatif. Au lieu de cela, les chefs de factions se sont battus pour la suprématie politique, au prix de milliers de morts civiles. En l'absence de gouvernement fonctionnel capable de garantir la sécurité et la protection, les loyautés claniques ont pris plus d'importance. L'affiliation à un clan est devenue une condition pour être épargné de la violence. Une distribution inégale de poches de richesse, comme les terres à fort potentiel agricole des régions fluviales du sud de la Somalie, a entraîné des conflits localisés. L'article poursuit en précisant que les inégalités horizontales, ou inégalités entre groupes, sont basées sur des différences concrètes et imaginées. Les chefs de factions somaliens instrumentalisent ces différences pour conserver et exercer le pouvoir. Indépendamment de l'existence de marqueurs invisibles et physiques, il est important de comprendre ce que signifient les frontières sociales existantes pour les participants. Une lutte de clan localisée dans le Bas-Shabelle entre les familles des clans Jido et Jareer illustre les conséquences de l'exclusion sociale et économique. Les groupes qui se sont sentis exclus de la vie économique et politique, comme les Jareer, ont pris les armes. La violence est devenue un moyen de se faire entendre et de se faire prendre au sérieux dans les discussions de paix pour la Somalie qui se déroulent actuellement au Kenya.