Revisiting Alliances in Somalia's Civil War

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Abstract

Alliances in Somalia have often appeared unpredictable to external observers. Since the collapse of Siad Barre's regime in 1991, the country's civil war has been characterized by fluid political alignments and constantly renegotiated alliances. Although lineage solidarity – the main determinant of political allegiances according to the classic Somali studies literature – has remained the foundation of political mobilisation, it cannot explain alliance choices on its own. At many times, the most intense fighting has been between rivals from the same clan or sub-clan, who have established alliances with groups involved in similar intra-clan competition within other clan-families, illustrating the limits of lineage solidarity based on genealogical proximity.

This thesis suggests a framework for understanding alliance formation in Somalia's civil war that builds on the classic Somali studies literature, but moves away from culturally specific explanations by drawing on alternative approaches to alliance dynamics, including the realist tradition and the literature on the political economy of civil wars. It argues that Somalia's civil war has not been about winning as much as it has been about not losing, and points to an underlying defensive logic to alliance formation often overlooked in favour of explanations that emphasize opportunism. It argues that alliance choices have largely been determined by perceptions of threat: the main tendency has been for political actors to focus on the main threat to their interests, and to draw support from allies accordingly. The thesis highlights three patterns in alliance formation: how alliances have been formed vertically as well as horizontally between local, regional, and national actors; how interaction between different arenas of competition in Somalia has shaped alliance formation; and how expectations of the emerging political order in Somalia have shaped perceptions of threat and informed alliance choices.

Through its analysis, the thesis provides a detailed historical narrative about alliances in Somalia from 1988 to 2001 and outlines a number of alliance patterns that can be seen in that particular period as well as in the country's past and in the contemporary crisis. It builds on interviews with key players in Somalia's civil war, including faction leaders, politicians, foreign diplomats, and representatives from other countries in the region, as well as original documents from Somali factions and international organisations.

For Anna

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List of Acronyms

AIAI	al-Ittihad al-Islamiya
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ARPCT	Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism
ARS	Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia
ASF	Allied Somali Forces
ASWJ	Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a
G-12	Group of Twelve
HDM	Hizbiya Digil-Mirifle
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
JVA	Juba Valley Alliance
MOD	Marehan, Ogaden, and Dulbahante
NFD	Northern Frontier District
NSS	National Security Services
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
RRA	Rahanweyn Resistance Army
SACB	Somali Aid Coordinating Body
SAMO	Somali Africans Muki Organisation
SDA	Somali Democratic Alliance
SDLF	Somali Democratic Liberation Front
SDM	Somali Democratic Movement
SDU	Somali Democratic Union
SFG	Somali Federal Government

SNA	Somali National Alliance
SNDU	Somali National Democratic Union
SNF	Somali National Front
SNL	Somali National League
SNM	Somali National Movement
SNU	Somali National Union
SOSAF	Somali Democratic Action Front
SPM	Somali Patriotic Movement
SRC	Supreme Revolutionary Council
SRRC	Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council
SSA	Somali Salvation Alliance
SSC	Somali Salvation Council
SSDF	Somali Salvation Democratic Front
SSNM	Southern Somali National Movement
SWP	Somali Workers Party
SYC	Somali Youth Club
SYL	Somali Youth League
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
TNC	Transitional National Council
TNG	Transitional National Government
TPFL	Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
UNITAF	United Task Force
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
USC	United Somali Congress
USC-PM	United Somali Congress-Peace Movement
USF	United Somali Front

USLF	United Somali Liberation Forces
USP	United Somali Party
WSLF	Western Somali Liberation Front

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perspective to the research topic – but with the same enthusiasm and support. Apart from encouraging a stronger theoretical perspective, Nic proved to be the perfect supervisor in terms of supporting and encouraging when the writing was slow. It is hard to imagine better supervisors.

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Introduction

"In Somalia, clan informs everything and determines nothing".[1]

Alliances in Somalia have often appeared confusing and unpredictable to external observers. A veteran diplomat in the Horn of Africa once suggested that if you want to describe patterns of alliances in Somalia, the best comparison is probably marbled paper – "that is what alliances in Somalia look like".[2] It is an appropriate comparison for several reasons. Apart from the obvious similarities in terms of asymmetrical shapes and odd variations, there is also something about the way in which these patterns are made: they never turn out the same way twice and even the slightest outside interference can result in some unpredictable but nevertheless significant reconfiguration.

The standard explanation of alliance formation in Somalia can be found in *A Pastoral Democracy*, Ioan M Lewis' classic anthropological study of pastoralist politics in what used to be British Somaliland.[3] It begins with the observation that foreign visitors to the region have usually been "baffled by the shifting character of the nomad's political allegiance and puzzled by the fact that the political and jural unit with which he acts on one occasion he opposes on the next".[4] According to Lewis, the main variable behind these frequent realignments is clan solidarity – "the key to Somali politics lies in kinship"[5] – and the reason for the fluidity

[1] This expression was used by a number of individuals interviewed for this thesis. It has been attributed to Andre Le Sage, a US-based expert on Somalia, but it has not been possible to find in print.
[2] Interview with Western diplomat (Interview #1).
[3] Ioan M. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa* (Hamburg: LIT Verlag, 1999)
[4] Lewis, *Pastoral Democracy*, p. 1.
[5] Lewis, *Pastoral Democracy*, p. 1.

is that clan solidarity can be mobilised at different levels of segmentation depending on the particularities of the situation. In simple terms, close agnates tend to unite in opposition to more distant agnates, but the alliance between them tends to fall apart when the situation that motivated the alliance changes. The ways in Lewis described these processes of fission and fusion laid the foundation for how politics in Somalia is commonly understood among non-Somalis.

If we fast-forward almost sixty years from the publication of Lewis's classic study, the pastoralist landscape that he described has largely ceased to exist. It has been transformed through land degradation, commercialisation, mobile networks, and globalisation. The political landscape has changed in similarly dramatic ways. After nine years of civilian administration following Somalia's independence in 1960, more than two decades of increasingly repressive rule under Siad Barre's regime, and twenty-six years of *de facto* state-collapse, there is little left of the pastoral democracy that Lewis described.

However, the confusion over what determines political alignments in Somalia remains unchanged. In the years since the collapse of Siad Barre's regime in January, 1991, the civil war has been characterized by constantly renegotiated alliances, fractionalization among the various factions, militias, and Islamist groups, collusion between them, and frequent realignments with enemies becoming allies and vice versa. Warlords, Islamists, and clan militias have all managed to adapt their alliances in response to changing circumstances, "transferring affiliation as appropriate to whichever role suited their personal interests or those of their patrons".[6] Although clan solidarity has remained "the most potent force within

[6] Markus Hoehne, "Political Representation in Somalia" in *Whose Peace Is It Anyway?: Connecting Somali and International Peacemaking* by Mark Bradbury and Sally Healy, eds., (London: Conciliation Resources, 2010), p. 37.

Somali politics and society"[7] – a fact that even those who claim to offer an alternative to clannism in Somalia have been forced to deal with – it has not generated stable cleavages in the national political arena. Instead, the norm has been cross-clan alliances, and the most intense fighting has often been between rivals from the same clan or sub-clan who have formed alliances with groups involved in similar intra-clan competition within other clan-families, illustrating that there is a lot more to alliance dynamics in Somalia than clan solidarity as invoked in the classic proverb "my clansmen, right or wrong".[8]

The Puzzle: Making Sense of Alliances in Somalia

How can we make sense of the shifts in alliance formation in Somalia's civil war? This is the question addressed in this thesis. The thesis builds on interviews with key players in Somalia's civil war, including faction leaders, politicians, foreign diplomats, and representatives from other countries in the region, as well as original documents from Somali factions and international organisations. It provides a detailed historical narrative about alliances in Somalia in the years revisited – from 1988 to 2001 – and outlines a number of alliance patterns that can be seen in that particular period as well as in the country's past and in the contemporary crisis.

One of the main challenges when trying to explain alliances in Somalia along these lines is how to manage the many interacting variables. Anyone who has tried to describe Somalia's political landscape in a Venn-diagram with overlapping circles representing different interests and issues – land disputes, regional competition, clan solidarity, state-building, humanitarian aid, Islamist agendas, business interests, the legacy of colonial rule, and so forth – knows the challenges involved. It easily turns into a big mess, and in the end, it does not even resemble

[7] Hussein M. Adam, "Political Islam in Somali History" in *Peace and Milk, Drought and War: Somali Culture* by Markus Hoehne and Virginia Luling, eds., (London: Hurst, 2010), p. 133.
[8] Ioan M. Lewis, *Blood and Bone: The Call of Kinship in Somali Society* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1994), p. 201.

a diagram. Instead, it looks like one of Hermann Rorschach's famous ink blots, and tends to function in the same way too. In other words, depending on one's viewpoint and preconceived ideas, some variables appear more significant than others. Therefore, attempts to explain political dynamics in Somalia in highly reductive models with reference to only one or two variables are often met with considerable scepticism. An accurate analysis must consider the interaction between the many variables that have shaped politics in Somalia over the past several decades. For that reason, this thesis focuses on the historical context of alliance formation in Somalia as much as parsimonious modelling.

At the same time, there are good reasons for moving away from the kind of culturally specific explanations that have dominated Somali studies in the past. The most obvious is that we find similarly fluid alliances in other multi-party civil wars, including those in Afghanistan, Chad, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, and Syria. If we assume a longer historical perspective, we find that the constant reconfiguration of alliances in these civil wars represent only "the latest instance of a recurring pattern" that has been described throughout history.[9] In other words, what we see in Somalia does not constitute a particularly "Somali" puzzle – it is a far more general puzzle that has been described in a variety of cultural contexts.[10]

Approaches to Alliance Formation: Three Strands in the Literature

The literature on multi-party conflicts in other parts of the world provides several alternative approaches for understanding alliance formation in Somalia. The availability of such approaches has also increased tremendously in recent years as there has been a trend in

[9] Stathis Kalyvas, "The Ontology of "Political Violence": Action and Identity in Civil Wars" in *Perspectives on Politics* 1:03 (2003), p. 478.
[10] The many historical examples underline that alliances of convenience and opportunistic side-switching can hardly be seen as modern phenomena linked to the character of "new wars". For discussion, see Mary Kaldor *New & Old Wars* (Stanford: University Press, 2007).

academic research aimed at "disaggregating civil wars".[11] This has resulted in theoretically oriented work on alliance formation and many adjacent topics,[12] including group cohesion,[13] the determinants of individual participation in civil war violence,[14] the use of state-sponsored militias,[15] ethnic defection and collaboration,[16] the influence of external sponsors on militias,[17] and the role of resources in shaping insurgent strategies and their relationships with civilians.[18]

The ambition in this thesis is to find a middle ground between the most relevant approaches in the comparative literature and the culturally specific explanations of alliance formation that have dominated Somali studies. Two approaches from the comparative literature appear particularly suitable for such cross-fertilization. On the one hand, there is the realist approach outlined by researchers like Fotini Christia, who draws on neorealist balance of power theory

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[11] For an overview, see Lars-Erik Cederman and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Introduction to Special Issue on "Disaggregating Civil War"" in *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53:4 (2009); Laia Balcells and Patricia Justino, "Bridging Micro and Macro Approaches on Civil Wars and Political Violence: Issues, Challenges, and the Way Forward" in *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58:8 (2014).

[12] Fotini Christia, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: University Press, 2012); Lee Seymour, "Why Factions Switch Sides in Civil Wars: Rivalry, Patronage, and Realignment in Sudan" in *International Security* 39:2 (2014); Navin Bapat and Kanisha Bond, "Alliances between Militant Groups" in *British Journal of Political Science* 42:04 (2012); Kathleen Cunningham, Kristin Bakke, and Lee Seymour, "Shirts Today, Skins Tomorrow: Dual Contests and the Effects of Fragmentation in Self-Determination Disputes" in *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56:1 (2012).

[13] Michael Findley and Peter Rudloff, "Combatant Fragmentation and the Dynamics of Civil Wars" in *British Journal of Political Science* 42:04 (2012); Scott Gates, "Recruitment and Allegiance: The Microfoundations of Rebellion" in *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46:1 (2002); Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Kristin Bakke, Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, and Lee Seymour, "A Plague of Initials: Fragmentation, Cohesion, and Infighting in Civil Wars" in *Perspectives on Politics* 10:02 (2012).

[14] Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy Weinstein, "Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War" in American Journal of Political Science 52:2 (2008); Elizabeth Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (Cambridge: University Press, 2010); Roger Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: University Press, 2001); Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: University Press, 2006).

[15] Ariel Ahram, *Proxy Warriors: The Rise and Fall of State-Sponsored Militias* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Corinna Jentzsch, Stathis Kalyvas, and Livia Schubiger, "Militias in Civil Wars" in *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59:5 (2015).

[16] Stathis Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection in Civil War" in *Comparative Political Studies* 41:8 (2008); Paul Staniland, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Insurgent Fratricide, Ethnic Defection, and the Rise of Pro-State Paramilitaries" in *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56:16 (2012).

[17] Navin Bapat, "Understanding State Sponsorship of Militant Groups" in *British Journal of Political Science* 42:01 (2011).

[18] Jennifer Hazen, *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); Jeremy Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: University Press, 2007).

and argues that alliances in multi-party civil wars are determined by the relative distribution of power rather than notions of shared identity based on ethnicity, clan, religion, or any other attribute.[19] According to Christia, armed groups in a multi-party civil war have two main objectives: winning the war and maximizing their share of the spoils as members of a minimum winning coalition. This means that they tend to form balancing alliances aimed at countering the most powerful group or alliance to maximize their influence in a winning coalition. In order to achieve this, they choose their allies without concerns for ethnic, religious, or ideological affiliations.[20] In short, when the balance of power changes, alignments change as well. According to Christia, this means that there is "no such thing as an impossible alliance in the context of a multi-party civil war".[21] This proposition resonates with the observation cited in the epigraph for this chapter – that clan informs everything and determines nothing in Somalia.

A radically different approach comes from the literature that emphasizes that civil wars do not always revolve around winning – the idea of war as a contest can actually be highly misleading according to this literature[22] – and therefore moves away from the Clausewitzan tradition that authors like Fotini Christia work in.[23] According to David Keen, war is an enabling environment in the sense that it allows actors to pursue a range of objectives that may be more difficult to pursue in peacetime, which means that "prolonging a war may be a higher priority than winning it".[24] As a result, supposed enemies frequently "join together and form local alliances or 'informal understandings' in order to reap economic and material

[19] Christia *Alliance Formation*.
[20] Christia, *Alliance Formation*, p. 6-9.
[21] Ibid., p. 4.
[22] David Keen, *Useful Enemies: When Waging Wars Is More Important than Winning Them* (London: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 21.
[23] For examples, see Mats Berdal and David Malone, eds., *Greed & Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000); Mark Duffield *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London Zed Books, 2001); Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, eds., The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed & Grievance (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003).
[24] David Keen, "War and Peace: What's the difference?" in *International Peacekeeping*, 7:4 (2000), p. 2.

benefits from a state of war",[25] and this results in "politically perverse but economically rational alliances".[26] In other words, alliances are formed to pursue short-term objectives and not only (if ever) to establish minimum winning coalitions. In that sense, armed groups can be expected to operate with a "shortened political horizon".[27] Again, this makes sense in relation to the collusion and side-switching that has characterised Somalia's civil war over the past three decades.

The most parsimonious framework for understanding alliances along these lines is the idea of a political marketplace.[28] According to Alex de Waal, we should think of political allegiances in a county like Somalia as being negotiated and traded in a political marketplace where "the prices of the commodities of cooperation and allegiance are determined by supply and demand".[29] They are bought and sold to the highest bidder and then renegotiated further down the road when the market price for loyalty changes. This results in fluid alliances and few stable cleavages linked to identity or ideology. However, in contrast to Christia, de Waal does not see realignments as reflecting assessments of what a minimum winning coalition will look like at the end of the war. Instead, he describes alliance choices as based on short-term opportunism and rent-seeking, and argues that the marketplace functions according to the same logic in peacetime as in times of civil war. In that sense, he offers an explanation of alliance choices that stands in stark contrast to the approach taken by Christia.

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[25] Mats Berdal, *Building Peace After War*, The Adelphi Papers, 49:407 (Oxford: University Press), p. 83.

[26] Stephen Jackson, "Making a Killing: Criminality & Coping in the Kivu War Economy" in *Review of African Political Economy*, 29: 93/94 (2002), p. 528.

[27] William Reno, "Shadow States and the Political Economy of Civil Wars" in Berdal and Malone, *Greed and Grievance*, p. 45. *Although* Reno uses this term when discussing African rulers, the term works equally well for describing violent non-state actors.

[28] Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War, and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press). The framework suggested by Alex de Waal relates to a system of governance, but de Waal applies it to Somalia as well, despite the *de facto* state collapse.

[29] Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics*, p 19.

This thesis borrows concepts and ideas from these approaches – the realist approach to alliance formation and the political economy literature – and establishes a middle-ground based on the recognition that these approaches highlight different sides of the same multi-faceted reality.[30] For this reason, there is little to gain from treating them as mutually exclusive even though they may seem incompatible at first glance. A better approach is to draw on their respective strengths, and at the same time take into consideration the particularities of the Somali case in order to avoid the feeling that we "mechanically impose an alien theory on Somalia data".[31] In the following section, an analytical framework for understanding alliances in Somalia along these lines is outlined, with an emphasis on two arguments and three alliance patterns. These are explained in more detail in Chapter I and then traced throughout the empirical chapters in this thesis.

The Argument

The main argument in this thesis is that Somalia's civil war has not been about winning as much as it has been about not losing. Although the difference between these two things may appear rather subtle, the distinction is important and highlights a defensive rationale that is often overlooked. For all the opportunism, rent-seeking, greed, and collusion that has characterised Somalia's civil war, the dominant tendency has not been for rival groups to establish alliances in order to maximize their short-term gains or belong to a minimum winning coalitions. Rather, they have established alliances to manage threats. In simple terms, they have focused on countering the main threat to their interests, and then drawn on whatever allies available to help them do so. This has resulted in the kind of fluid alliances that both Christia and de Waal describe, but the underlying rationale behind alliance choices

[30] It is worth noting that both Fotini Christia and Alex de Waal use Somalia as a case in their studies; they do not treat the country as an outlying case or exception that does not fit their models.
[31] Abdi Samatar, *The State and Rural Transformation in Northern Somalia, 1884-1986* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 5.

has generally been different from what these authors suggest. It has been about managing threats rather than maximizing gains, and even though many of the ideas and insights that these authors provide are worth building on, it is demonstrated in this thesis that we are better served thinking of alliance formation from a perspective of defensive considerations.

In other words, we should not think of alliance choices as linked to opportunism or concerns with winning. A better starting point is to take Fotini Christia's assumptions about actor behaviour and then tweak them in a defensive direction to say that competing political actors in Somalia have been concerned with *not losing* (as opposed to winning) and maximizing their gains *in the short-term* (as opposed to at the end of the war) with the latter objective being subordinate to the former. This more accurately captures the paradoxical combination of risk-aversion and opportunism that has characterised alliance formation in Somalia. It underlines that even though opportunism has frequently appeared to be the most important variable at many times – it has been a critical component of the "tactics of political survival"[32] – there has been an underlying defensive logic to alignments that has resulted in considerable continuity beneath the surface. Moreover, as will be described in Chapter I, these assumptions resonate with classic defensive realism as well as the particularities of the Somali case. For example, they resonate with the egalitarian pastoralist culture that is more concerned with avoiding subordination than seeking dominance; the assumptions make sense in relation to the fact that alliances and *xeer* agreements in the traditional pastoralist setting were mainly about "collective defence and security";[33] and they reflect the "collective fear of the re-emergence of a predatory state"[34] that has permeated Somali politics in the decades following the collapse of Siad Barre's regime.

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[32] Christopher Clapham, *The Horn of Africa: State Formation and Decay* (London: Hurst, 2017), p. 4.
[33] Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, p. 162.
[34] Ken Menkhaus, *Somalia: State Collapse and the Threat of Terrorism* (Oxford: University Press), p. 16.

A second argument presented in this thesis is that it makes little sense to assume that all groups in Somalia's civil war have been fighting the same war – *the* war – over the past thirty years. As noted by Stathis Kalyvas, civil wars tend to be "imperfect and fluid aggregations of multiple, more or less overlapping, smaller, diverse, and localized civil wars".[35] Indeed, this has been the case with Somalia's civil war, and the importance of subnational competition in structuring alliances at the national level can hardly be overstated. This means that political entrepreneurs on all levels have focused on what they have perceived to be the main threats in their own "arena of competition"[36]. At the local level, for example, the civil war has often been fought between rival groups involved in competition over tangible issues, like access to water and pasture, for decades or more. At the provincial level, regional strongmen have competed over influence and strategic resources, including airstrips, natural resources, harbours, and the institutions that allow them to control these resources, with focus on regional outcomes rather than national politics. Similarly, at the national level, elites involved in externally driven state-building efforts have focused on threats in their own arena, trying to position themselves in relation to elites from other clans, while simultaneously trying to marginalize rival political entrepreneurs within their own clans.

It is therefore impossible to understand alliances in Somalia by looking at national level politics exclusively. Instead, we must assume that definitions of what has constituted *the* war have varied considerably over time and place, and that alliances have reflected interaction between different arenas of competition. If we take this as a point of departure when looking at alliances, three patterns emerge, and these patterns are summarized over the next pages and then traced throughout the chapters in this thesis.

[35] Kalyvas, "The Ontology…", p. 479.
[36] Daniel Posner, "Regime Change and Ethnic Cleavages in Africa" *Comparative Political Studies* 40:11 (2007), p. 1309.

Pattern I: The Role of Horizontal and Vertical Alliances

The first pattern that we can see in Somalia's civil war is that alliances have not only been formed *horizontally* between political actors operating in the same arena of competition – they have also been formed *vertically* between local, regional, and national political actors. This interaction between different levels is not unique to Somalia's civil war. As noted by Stathis Kalyvas, civil wars are characterized by a convergence of interests between supralocal and local actors whereby the former provide local actors with external muscle in order for them to come out on top in their local disputes.[37] In return, this allows supralocal actors to "tap into local networks and generate mobilization".[38]

Alliances of this kind have been a critical feature in Somali politics for more than a century (see Chapter II). In the colonial era, they were the foundation for British and Italian indirect rule, and Siad Barre managed the peripheries through similar alliances using a divide and rule strategy that utilized the fact that local and regional rivals tended to see each other as the main threat. In that sense, these vertical alliances are not unique to the civil war era, and experiences from the past have continued to shape expectations about how a ruling coalition in Somalia will function in the future.

Importantly, these vertical alliances have often contradicted the ideal of clan solidarity based on genealogical proximity. The simple reason is that rivals in many subnational arenas have been from the same clan-family, clan, or even sub-clan. When they have viewed each other as the principal threat, they have formed alliances with actors involved in similar intra-clan competition elsewhere, leading to cross-clan alliances that have illustrated the importance of subnational competition in structuring alliances at the national level.

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[37] Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence*, p. 383.
[38] Ibid., p. 383.

In Somalia's civil war era, this can be seen in numerous examples, as described in the empirical chapters, but it is nevertheless worth illustrating the point with a brief example from southern Somalia. In the early 1990s, militias associated with two Hawiye clans – Galjeel and Sheikhaal – competed over influence in Jilib. These clan-based militias allied themselves with different sides in the competition over Kismayo, the economic hub in southern Somalia, where the main rivals were strongmen from the same clan-family, namely General Mohamed Hersi Morgan (Daarood-Majerteen) and Colonel Ahmed Omar Jess (Daarood-Ogaden). These protagonists were simultaneously involved in national level politics where they allied themselves with the two main contenders for power in Mogadishu, General Mohammed Farah Aideed (Hawiye-Haber Gedir) and Ali Mahdi Mohamed (Hawiye-Abgal), who led the two cross-clan alliances at the national level, the Somali National Alliance (SNA) and the Group of Twelve (G-12).

This illustrates the limitations of thinking in terms of clan solidarity exclusively. It also shows that alliances at the national level have often been structured around subnational rivalries, and the overall balance of power has far from always been the main concern for constituent groups. Similarly, it shows that an emphasis on the maximization of pay-offs easily underestimates the continuity that we find in subnational arenas and suggests that groups can be co-opted relatively easily; that alliances can always "be mixed up like a pack of cards, provided a certain equality is the result", to paraphrase Lord Acton.[39] However, this is seldom the case given the primacy of local rivalries.

In sum, what we see in Somalia in the period discussed in this thesis is not a pattern of alliances between fairly similar political actors operating in the same arena – a singular

[39] Abbot Gasquet, ed., *Lord Acton and His Circle* (London: Burns & Oates, 1906), p. 250.

national arena – with similar objectives and priorities. Instead, we see a complex web of alliances and interactions among local, regional, and national actors where outcomes in one arena of competition are closely linked to outcomes in another.

Pattern II: Alliance Formation as a Multilevel Game

A second pattern in alliance formation in Somalia is that even though political actors on all levels have focused on threats and outcomes in their own arena of competition, they have been forced to consider developments in other arenas as well, since outcomes in one arena of competition are closely linked to outcomes in other arenas. If alliances in Puntland in the northeast have changed, it has had implications in Kismayo in the south. If alliances in Kismayo have changed, it has had an impact on alliance dynamics in places like Bardera and Jilib in the neighbouring regions, as well as on the options available to rival groups in Mogadishu, which in turn has mattered for alliance dynamics in other subnational arenas of competition.

This means that alliance formation has taken on the form of a multilevel game – a more complex version of Robert Putnam's two-level game[40] – with considerable interaction effects between different arenas. These interaction effects have been particularly significant to political entrepreneurs at the national level who have been forced to consider how alliance strategies pursued in one arena affect alliance options in another arena, for example by marginalising a clan in one arena that is a key ally in another. As noted by Robert Putnam in his original article, "moves that are rational for a player at one board … may be impolitic for the same player at another board".[41] At the same time, the ways in which outcomes in different arenas are connected may result in synergetic effects, and a skilled politician like

[40] Robert Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games" in *International Organization* 42:3 (1988).
[41] Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics", p. 434.

Siad Barre may "spot a move on one board that will trigger realignments on the other boards, enabling them to achieve otherwise unattainable objectives".[42]

This makes it impossible to say that one level is paramount in alliance formation. It is rather the interaction between local, regional, and national politics that matters; minor events in local arenas can have major implications at the national level, and vice versa.[43] To borrow a parable from Alex de Waal, this corresponds to "the political version of the climatologists 'butterfly effect'".[44] To make things even more complicated, these interactions take place within a regional arena of competition in the Horn of Africa that functions according to the same logic. In other words, competing regional powers, including Ethiopia, Eritrea, Egypt, Djibouti, Kenya, and Sudan, engage in Somalia and choose their allies and clients there to counter threats posed by other states or non-state actors in the region, not to achieve any particular preferred outcome in Somalia (see Chapter VI).

These interactions between different arenas make alliance choices extremely hard to model and predict – it requires the kind of deep understanding of local histories, interpersonal relationships, and linkages between arenas that Siad Barre possessed. Nevertheless, the ability to understand these interactions constitutes the essence of political entrepreneurship in Somalia, and the uncertainties involved and the multiple possible outcomes are fuel for endless political discussions and *fadhi ku dirir*.[45]

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[42] Ibid., p. 434.
[43] For similar reasoning, see Bernhard Helander, *Rumours of Rain: Ideas of Centralization, Social Fragmentation and the Nature of Power in Post-Government Somalia" (unpublished paper).*
[44] de Waal, *The Political Marketplace*, p. 17.
[45] The term *fadhi ku dirir* translates to "fighting while sitting" and refers to heated political debates.

Pattern III: The Role of Expectations

A third pattern that we can see in alliance formation in Somalia's civil war is that perceptions of threat – the main determinant of alliance choices – have been closely linked to expectations of what the emerging political order in Somalia will look like. In some regards, these expectations have changed considerably over the years. Around the time of the fall of Siad Barre's regime, for example, the conflict revolved around the capturing of the centralised state with faction leaders "fighting either to become Siad Barre, or not allow others to become Barre".[46] However, these expectations changed when the state collapsed and the main focus became capturing the remnants of the state in a *literal* sense through looting and resource grabbing (see Chapter IV). When the United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM) launched state-building efforts to resurrect governance structures, the image of the new political order that these state-building efforts projected became a variable in alliance formation and shaped perceptions of threats and opportunities (see Chapter V). After the failure of these efforts and the withdrawal of UNOSOM, lack of externally-driven initiatives towards centralised state-building led to a shift in the "locus of political competition"[47] and resulted in realignments, as focus turned to the creation of regional administrations and competition at the subnational level rather than the national level (see Chapter VI). In a similar way, the recent federalization process in Somalia can be seen to have shaped perceptions of threats and consequently played into alliance formation (see Conclusion).

In other regards, there have been considerable continuities in expectations of what the political order in Somalia will look like. For example, it has been widely assumed that any

[46] A Somali elder cited by Abdullahi A. Osman in "The Somali Internal War and the Role of Inequality, Economic Decline and Access to Weapons" in *Somalia at the Crossroads: Challenges and Perspectives on Reconstituting a Failed State* by Abdullahi A. Osman and Issaka K. Souaré, eds., (London: Adonis & Abbey, 2007), p. 83.
[47] Daniel Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005), p. 143.

ruling coalition needs components from different clans – clan-balancing was the norm in the civilian era in the 1960s and even Siad Barre had a relatively balanced cabinet – which has been manifested in efforts to bring in representatives from different clans in alliances. For the same reason, there has been considerable intra-clan competition over representation at the centre. If we take this into consideration together with the previously discussed intra-clan competition in subnational arenas, we can more easily understand why alliances at the national level have been cross-clan in composition rather than reflections of clan solidarity based on genealogical proximity.[48]

To summarise, the analytical framework suggested here provides a middle-ground approach for understanding alliance formation in Somalia's civil war. It builds on the underlying logic of the Lewisian framework – that external threat is an important variable in alliance formation and that lineage solidarity is the most important political resource – and connects with the realist tradition that Christia's work draws on. However, in contrast to Christia's model, it does not assume that winning and maximizing gains are the main concerns among protagonists. Instead, it returns to the defensive realism that Christia moves away from when incorporating the idea of minimum winning coalitions. In doing so, it emphasizes the role of perceived threats instead by drawing on Stephen Walt's balance of threat model that travels surprisingly well to the Somali context.[49] It shows that political actors have responded to the most imminent threats by forming alliances "to reduce their vulnerability",[50] which has sometimes resulted in paradoxical alliances and informal understandings with the alleged "enemy" because the most imminent threat has come from some other political actor. In that sense, the framework also connects with the political economy literature, and shows

[48] For a discussion about expectations in the late Siad Barre era, see Anna Simons, *Networks of Dissolution* (Boulder: Westview, 1995), p. 78.
[49] Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).
[50] Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, p 263.

how opportunism, collusion, and rent-seeking in the day-to-day politics of the political marketplace can be understood as strategies for reducing vulnerability and maximizing short-term gains within the larger context of not losing.

The following pages describe the research process and methodological considerations that resulted in this framework. The section starts with a few words about case selection, moves on to methods and the challenges of working with the Somali case, and ends with a brief discussion about what characterises a useful analytical framework for understanding a highly complex case like Somalia's civil war.

Research Design: Case Selection and Methods

In his introduction to *Analytic Narratives*, a book that describes methods for combining historical narratives with theoretical modelling, Robert Bates makes an honest point about case selection, acknowledging that although the first thing that students are taught about methodology is how to apply principles of case selection, the truth is that most researchers choose their cases based on "fascination with particular cases".[51] This is definitely the reason why Somalia was chosen for this study – it came after working with Somali politics as a journalist for several years in a period characterized by rapid realignments and regrouping.

At the same time, Somalia could be seen as a "crucial case"[52] that must be considered by anyone interested in understanding alliance formation in civil wars in general. For more than two decades, Somalia was "a failure among failed states"[53] – a country without even a minimally functioning central administration. For this reason, any model aimed at providing

[51] Robert Bates, *Analytic Narratives* (Princeton: University Press, 1998), p. 13.
[52] Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005).
[53] Menkhaus, *Somalia: State Collapse*, p. 17.

a general theory of alliance formation in anarchic, multi-party civil wars that does not apply to Somalia can only be considered partial. For the same reason, Somalia comes across as an excellent case for developing and refining mid-range theories about alliance dynamics, for example by using process tracing and pattern-matching to confirm whether alliance choices were made in the ways predicted by the models.[54]

Initially, this study was aimed at this kind of theory development, trying to come up with a model for alliance formation in general based on the Somali case. However, as the research project developed and the historical narrative began to take form, it became increasingly clear that the search for *the* model that can explain alliance choices in *all* civil wars might be misguided. As Charles Tilly and Robert Goodin rather understatedly put it, "context matters",[55] and it makes little sense to assume that alliances in civil wars always are always formed according to the same logic, irrespective of cultural and historical context. A more reasonable assumption would be that experiences from alliance formation in peacetime and social structures will influence alliance choices in times of war, much like social structures have been demonstrated to influence other processes in civil wars, including mobilization, organization, and targeting.[56] Obviously, this does not mean that we cannot identify patterns and seek a "systematic understanding" of the situation.[57] However, it does mean that we should not expect law-like regularities or mechanisms that function in similar ways irrespective of context.

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[54] For examples of authors describing this approach, see John Gerring, "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?" in *American Political Science Review* 98:2 (2004); Pascal Vennesson, "Case Studies and Process Tracing: Theories and Practices" in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* by Donatella Della Porta, ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 2008); George and Bennett, *Caste Studies*.
[55] Charlies Tilly and Robert Goodin, "It Depends" in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis* by Charles Tilly and Robert Goodin, eds., (Oxford: University Press), p 5.
[56] For example, see Roger Petersen, "A Community-Based Theory of Rebellion" in *European Journal of Sociology* 34:01 (1993); Lee Ann Fujii, "The Power of Local Ties: Popular Participation in the Rwandan Genocide" in *Security Studies* 17:3 (2008); Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).
[57] Tilly and Goodin, "It Depends", p. 25.

In other words, it would be unreasonable to treat "context as noise, as interference in the transmission of the signal we are searching for" when studying civil war alliances.[58] This could be said (and probably has been said) about every social process, but it seems particularly relevant when dealing with something as tactical, temporal, and situational as alliance choices. In contrast to major historical processes, like social revolutions, alliance choices reflect moments in time. As demonstrated in the empirical chapters, alliances in Somalia have not only reflected structure and historical factors – they have also been linked to personal ambitions, friendships, social networks, historical memory, and expectations for the future, all of which have shaped perceptions of threat. This suggests that if we want to understand alliance *choices*, we have to consider the context in which these choices are made, and this calls for as much "thick description"[59] as possible in combination with a historically oriented research approach, rather than a variable-based research design where concepts are predefined and the number of explanatory variables are kept to a minimum from the outset.[60]

A historically oriented approach differs from prominent recent efforts to theorize alliance formation in civil wars. In general, these efforts have been more concerned with finding causal mechanisms that operate across an entire universe of cases, for example all multi-party civil wars or all self-determination conflicts.[61] Although some have included well-researched case studies, they have usually been grounded in the tradition of what Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers refer to as the parallel comparativists, for whom "differences among the cases are primarily contextual particularities against which to highlight the generality of the

[58] Ibid., p. 7.
[59] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
[60] For a useful comparison of these approaches, see "Comparative Analysis: Case-Oriented versus Variable-Oriented Research" by Donatella della Porta in *Approaches and Methodologies*.
[61] Kathleen Cunningham, *Inside the Politics of Self-Determination* (Oxford: University Press, 2014); Chrisitia, *Alliance Formation*.

processes with which their theories are basically concerned".[62] As a result, they have tended to treat civil war dynamics as following "a coherent internal logic"[63] in a way that suggests that civil wars have more in common with each other than with "normal" politics in their respective location, a rather problematic assumption that has shaped many other efforts to theorize micro-dynamics in civil wars as well.[64] As emphasized earlier, if we want to understand alliance choices in a particular civil war, we must also take into consideration how alliances have been formed in times of peace in the context that we are trying to understand.

In a similar way, the search for highly specified causal mechanisms in this literature has often resulted in an unrealistic separation of interrelated processes. Alliance formation, collusion, inter-rebel fighting, fractionalization, factional flipping, and the emergence of proxy militias – all have been described as adhering to their own particular logic. In Somalia, where a combination of lineage segmentation and *de facto* state collapse means that social categories are fluid and overlapping, these clear-cut distinctions come across as fabricated and unhelpful. As demonstrated by Ken Menkhaus and others, a key dimension of Somalia's protracted crises is the interconnectedness between politicians, business interests, religious groups, and criminal elements: how alliances are formed between actors at different levels in the domestic arena and how they draw on support from external actors; how such alliances sometimes evolve into governance structures on the local and regional level; and how disparate actors have often come together to block the establishment of a central government when such a government has not been perceived to be in their favour.[65] In other words, there

[62] Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22:2 (1980), p. 178.
[63] Charles Tilly, *Identities, Boundaries, and Social Ties* (Boulder: Paradigm, 2005), p. 29.
[64] For this line of criticism, see Sidney Tarrow, "Inside Insurgencies: Politics and Violence in an Age of Civil War" in *Perspectives of Politics* 5:3 (2007), p. 587.
[65] For example, see Ken Menkhaus, "Governance without Government: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping" in *International Security* 313:3 (2007); Tobias Hagmann and Markus Hoehne, "Failures of the State Failure Debate: Evidence from the Somali Territories" in *Journal of International Development* 21:1 (2009): Abdirahman Mohamed Gutale, "The Alliance Framework: A Micro-level Approach to Diagnose Protracted Conflict in South Central Somalia", M.A. Thesis (unpublished), University of Kansas (2008).

is a mismatch between the complexities of the Somali reality and definitions used in recent studies aimed at disaggregating civil wars to describe what constitutes relevant actors and variables.[66]

Again, this suggests that a historically oriented research approach may be the most appropriate for understanding Somalia's civil war. However, such a research approach involves challenges in terms of accessing data and finding sufficient evidence to support a certain interpretation of events. In the section below, some of these challenges and how they were approached during the research process are discussed.

Researching Alliances in Somalia: Challenges and Options

It is a challenge to research civil war dynamics in any country. As noted by some of those who have gone through the process, there are often limitations to the kind of data that one can access; fieldwork possibilities are often restricted by violence and continued fighting in relevant regions; recollections can be assumed to be partisan or influenced by current events and considerations; outsiders are often treated with suspicion; urban and elite perspectives are likely to figure more prominently than rural perspectives; and informants may not want to participate unless they can be guaranteed anonymity.[67]

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[66] For example, Seymour defines a faction as "an organized group with an established leadership that acts as an autonomous organization respecting no higher command authority" ("Why Factions Switch Sides", p. 96). As will be described in Chapter III, even the most well-organized groups in Somalia, for example the SNM, have largely functioned as alliances of clan militias, and the fluidity of political allegiances therefore makes this definition difficult to apply in the Somali context.

[67] For useful discussions about the challenges in researching violence, see Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius Robben, eds., *Fieldwork under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Lee Ann Fujii, "Shades of Truth and Lies: Interpreting Testimonies of War and Violence" in *Journal of Peace Research* 47:2 (2010); Elizabeth Wood, "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones" in *Qualitative Sociology* 29:3 (2006); Marie Smyth, "Insider-Outsider Issues in Researching Violent and Divided Societies" in *Researching Conflict in Africa: Insights and Experiences* by Elizabeth Porter, ed., (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2005); Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence*, Chapter 2.

However, few countries are as challenging as Somalia when it comes to accessing data. For more than twenty-five years, it has been more or less impossible for non-Somali researchers to conduct extensive fieldwork in the central and southern regions, due to the volatile security situation in these areas. Although some parts have been relatively accessible during some periods of time, like Mogadishu in recent years, most areas have remained inaccessible. This has shaped the academic literature about Somalia. A lot of what has been written about Somali politics following the *de facto* state collapse has relied mostly on secondary data, and although handful of well-established researchers have managed to produce detailed studies of local dynamics and politics (often by working in partnership with international donors and non-governmental organizations), there have been few ethnographic studies like those conducted towards the end of Siad Barre's rule.[68] Moreover, a complete lack of functioning government institutions and a limited international presence in Somalia following the UN withdrawal in 1995 has resulted in a very limited output of official statistics and reports on economic and political developments. As a result, anyone who embarks on research related to southern Somalia today has to take three things into consideration: the limited possibility of conducting extensive fieldwork on the ground; a secondary literature of varying quality; and difficulties in accessing data from international organizations.

Keeping in mind these challenges, the research for this dissertation was organized into three phases: a primary phase of mapping actors and alliances in order to create a detailed timeline and chronology of events; a second phase of interviewing key actors with a focus on getting a sense of the rationale behind alliance choices and realignments; and a third phase of analysing data in relation to the relevant literature. Initially, these phases were envisaged as

[68] For example, see Ken Menkhaus, *Rural Transformation and the Roots of Underdevelopment in Somalia's Lower Jubba Valley*, Ph.D dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1989; Catherine Besteman, *Land Tenure, Social Power, and the Legacy of Slavery in Southern Somalia*, Ph.D dissertation, University of Arizona, 1991; Anna Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1992.

distinct stages of the research process. In the end, however, there was considerable overlap, and it turned out to be a highly iterative process. As noted by Robert Bates, this is usually how case studies evolve; "we move back and forth between interpretation and case materials, modifying the explanation in light of the data, which itself is viewed in new ways, given our evolving understanding".[69] Nevertheless, as indicated above, there was a basic working order according to which things were done.

Mapping Alliances and Relevant Actors

In the first phase of the research, the aim was to create a mapping and general understanding of actors and alliances, a challenging task because of data limitations. Although there are datasets that list actors in Somalia's civil war, these are highly inconsistent in scope and quality. For example, in the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) dataset, many factions that participated in internationally sponsored peace conferences in the 1990s have been omitted.[70] At the same time, entire sub-clans have been included as actors based on their involvement in local or regional conflicts. This inconsistency illustrates the challenge of establishing what the relevant unit of analysis is in a multi-layered civil war like Somalia's. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Database (ACLED), which includes reports of conflict events in Somalia from 1997 and onwards, is detailed and useful, but it is equally inconsistent in its coding and scope.[71] As a result, these datasets (as well as other datasets cited in the empirical chapters) should be seen as useful references, but not as off-the-peg datasets for making sense of line-ups and alignments in Somalia's civil war.

[69] Bates, *Analytic Narratives*, p. 16.
[70] Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Conflict Encyclopaedia (online resource, see bibliography for URL).
[71] Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) (online resource, see bibliography for URL).

For this reason, it was decided to construct a chronology of events by looking at alliances from a top-down as well as a bottom-up perspective. On the one hand, this involved looking at alliances at the national level, starting with various peace conferences and negotiations, and trying to connect changes in line-ups at the national level to sub-group dynamics and events on the ground. On the other hand, the bottom-up approach meant doing things the other way around, collecting data about regional and local dynamics, for example news reports about clashes between clan militias or reports from local peace building conferences, in an effort to link these events to developments in national level politics, without for that matter assuming that there *had* to be a connection.

For this mapping process, a wide range of sources was used. Apart from the available secondary literature, it included statements from Somali factions and organizations; documents from conferences and workshops involving Somali stakeholders; reports commissioned by donors and non-governmental organizations; material from various UN offices; publications like *Africa Confidential* (AC) and the *Indian Ocean Newsletter* (ION); news databases like the *Foreign Broadcast Information Service* (FBIS); and various "grey sources" in archives and libraries. However, more than anything else, this mapping was made possible through numerous interviews with key informants, who shared their own knowledge and also suggested other informants when they were unable to provide detailed information themselves.

In parallel with this mapping of political actors and factions, an effort was made to map their respective bases of power in terms of their clan constituency as well as their influence over strategically important resources and choking-points, including key towns, ports, airstrips, and markets. This effort was motivated by an initial ambition to take a political-economy approach to alliance formation, looking at realignments in relation to changes in the relative

distribution of power whereby "power" would be defined in terms of access to such resources. Although this rather one-dimensional approach to alliance formation was abandoned later on, the mapping effort provided useful information and details about events and areas. In the end, this work resulted in an extensive collection of data, which served as the foundation for the second stage of the research process, where focus turned to interviewing key actors.

Interviewing Key Actors

Although many interviews were conducted during the mapping process, another form of interviewing began once the mapping had been underway for some time, when interviews came to revolve more around questions of "how?" and "why?" alliances had been formed and disbanded. Many of these interviews were conducted with key actors in the conflict, including faction leaders, Somali politicians, diplomats, NGO workers, journalists, and others who had followed events on a first-hand basis. A lot of these interviews were conducted during fieldwork in the Horn of Africa region, especially in Nairobi, but many interviews were conducted in Europe or over telephone or Skype after contacts and introductions had been made elsewhere. All interviews were conducted in English or Somali. When interviews were conducted in Somali with the help of an interpreter, they were always recorded, so that it would be possible to verify the accuracy of the interpretation later on.

As could be expected based on what has been said about the potential and challenges of elite interviewing, the quality of these semi-structured interviews varied considerably.[72] In some cases, interviewees provided detailed narratives and demonstrated a willingness to reflect on events in what they appeared to view as a fairly distant past. At other times, there was mistrust

[72] For example, see Oisín Tansey, "Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing: A Case for Non-Probability Sampling" in *PS: Political Science & Politics* 40:04 (2007); Jeffrey Berry, "Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing" in *PS: Political Science & Politics* 35:04 (2002).

and misunderstanding regarding the overall purpose of the interview, whether it was conducted for academic purposes, or whether it was part of intelligence work or perhaps even an investigation into human rights abuses (something that many of those interviewed have been accused of being involved in). In those cases, answers and narratives usually took on a defensive or exaggerated character. Nevertheless, even these interviews generated useful pieces of information, details, and meta-data that could be used in subsequent interviews, for example during interviews with those who had been on the opposite side of the conflict. In turn, these different accounts could be taken to a third source for additional input and assessment, resulting in a form of triangulation that was employed to the greatest extent possible throughout the research processes. In general, however, most interviewees were happy to share their version of events, and although some described their recollections as more or less the objective truth, others were quick to emphasize that they were only able to provide their individual perspective.

All of these individuals were men. The voices of Somali women are conspicuously absent in this thesis. This reflects two things. On the one hand, it reflects the dominance of men in Somali politics in general and the marginal role of Somali women in elite politics in particular. As noted by de Waal in his book about the political marketplace that was mentioned earlier – a book in which men dominate in a similar way – this is the case in all countries in the Horn of Africa, and "the gendered nature of the business of power should be evident on every page".[73] On the other hand, it illustrates that even though this thesis aims to look at the interactions between local and national political dynamics, its primary focus lies on elite politics rather than local processes in which women are likely to play a more prominent role. Apart from reflecting one of the classic biases in civil war studies described earlier, this also

[73] de Waal, *The Real Politics*, p 34.

reflects the particularities of the Somali case and the difficulties of accessing and collecting empirical data.

Making Sense of Alliance Choices

In the end, the mapping and interviewing process resulted in a broad overview of alliances and alignments in Somalia in the relevant period. Most importantly, the process generated new perspectives on how events and alliance choices could be understood. For example, it became evident in the process of interviewing key actors that those involved often conceptualized alliances and threats in terms of clan politics. Although this hardly came as a surprise, it was a reminder about the need to consider and adapt to the ways in which key actors perceive situations when trying to understand something as context dependent as alliance choices.

For this reason, it was decided to identify patterns that did not only make sense in relation to the academic literature, but also in relation to the narratives that emerged from interviews with key actors in the conflict. This resulted in the arguments and patterns outlined earlier in this introduction: that perceptions of threat have been the main variable in alliance formation; that alliances have formed vertically between actors in different arenas of competition and not only horizontally; and, that interaction between different arenas has been a major factor in determining alliance strategies. All of these patterns can be discerned in the empirical chapters that are outlined in the section below. At the same time, there is obviously more to alliance dynamics in Somalia than these patterns, and that is why each of the empirical chapters highlights a theme that was particularly salient in the period discussed in that particular chapter (see below).

To summarise, this thesis has two objectives. First, it offers a detailed historical narrative about alliances in Somalia between 1988 and 2001 that challenges some established views and adds nuances and details based on interviews with key figures in the conflict. Secondly, it links the academic debate about alliance formation in civil wars to the Somali case and establishes a middle ground between the culturally specific explanations of alliance formation that have dominated Somali studies in the past and the theoretically oriented comparative literature.

In doing so, this thesis tends to emphasize continuity rather than change. It focuses on alliance patterns that can be seen in Somalia's pre-colonial era as well as in contemporary politics. This emphasis on continuity reflects the overall ambition behind this research project: to use a period in Somalia's civil war (the years between the Cold War and the War on Terror) as a lens for understanding alliance dynamics in Somalia more generally. Put differently, the ambition is to look beyond the particularities of the turbulent era of *de facto* state collapse after the fall of Siad Barre's regime and explain events between 1991 and 2001 with reference to historical patterns and tendencies. This means that the thesis goes further towards providing a broader and generalizable understanding of the conflict Somalia than one might expect given the foregoing discussion: it is because the analysis that follows highlights important recurring dynamics in Somalia that it reveals some of the most significant features of the conflict which can then be compared and contrasted to other relevant cases in future research.

The rationale for emphasizing continuity is twofold. On the one hand, it is based on the ambition of making the historical narrative interesting and relevant to non-academics working with Somalia, including diplomats and others in the policy sector, to whom a historical account that emphasizes recurring patterns are more useful than a historical

account that emphasizes the particularities of a certain era. It also seems important to emphasize continuity given the overall tendency in the policy debate to describe contemporary political dynamics in Somalia as radically different from those in the 1990s. As demonstrated in this thesis, Somalia has gone through a series of political and social transformations in recent times, and it could to some extent be argued that the political landscape in Somalia today represents "uncharted territory" with a new order being established in Somalia at the same time as the regional political order in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East are in flux. Nevertheless, there *are* important continuities and these are worth considering together with the particularities of the present when trying to navigate through unfamiliar political terrain.

On the other hand, the thesis emphasizes continuity rather than change to complement previous accounts of the civil war. Much of the Somali studies literature about the 1990s emphasizes transformation and focuses on the particularities of that era, including the political economy of statelessness and "governance without government".[74] Although this literature is invaluable for understanding that particular era, it does not always highlight continuities or draw parallels to other episodes in Somalia's modern history – it mainly focuses on the relatively unique political environment following the collapse of Siad Barre's regime. For this reason, it makes sense when revisiting this period with the benefit of hindsight to take a step back and look at the bigger picture – what can this period tell us about political dynamics in Somalia in general? – which is something that the Somali studies literature written in the 1990s and early 2000s does not always do.

[74] Menkhaus, "Governance without Government".

Somalia in a Comparative Perspective

If the ambition is to identify broad patterns in alliance formation in Somalia's civil war, it is worth considering the extent to which similar patterns can be discerned in other civil wars. For example, are there similarities between Somalia's civil war and other conflicts that allow us to make structured comparisons within a smaller subset of multi-party civil wars? Or are there particularities in processes of alliance formation in Somalia linked to lineage segmentation that make comparisons difficult unless the other cases involved are characterised by similar social structures? As emphasized earlier in this chapter, the ambition in this thesis is not to engage in structured comparisons or develop a general model of alliance formation in multi-party civil wars. Nevertheless, a few words should be said about how the Somali case relates to the broader universe of cases.

The process of selecting relevant comparative cases often involves efforts to identify civil wars with similar structural characteristics. It can also focus on identifying countries with similar social structures if we believe that such structures matter to processes of alliance formation (see discussion in Chapter I). If we begin with the challenge of finding civil wars with similar structural characteristics, the most relevant comparative cases appear to be "symmetric nonconventional wars".[75] According to the typology used by Stathis Kalyvas and Laia Balcells, such wars involve low-capacity governments and low-capacity rebels – "the military technologies of states and rebels are matched at a low level".[76] This is kind of symmetry certainly characterised the factional fighting in Somalia in the 1990s when there was no government whatsoever involved in the civil war. According to Kalyvas and Balcells, this kind of war should be distinguished from wars "fought conventionally with pitched battles and clear frontlines, when both sides have the ability to deploy heavy weaponry

[75] Stathis Kalyvas and Laia Balcells, "International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict" in *The American Political Science Review*, 104:3 (2010).
[76] Ibid. p 418.

against each other",[77] as well as from insurgencies "fought irregularly, in a guerrilla fashion, when the government's conventional military faces lightly armed rebels",[78] because these overall characteristics shape the character of violence and other political dynamics in civil wars. Importantly, this means that insights and lessons from one kind of war are not always transferable to another kind of war.[79] If we want to make comparisons between alliance dynamics in Somalia's civil war in the 1990s and other civil wars, it consequently makes sense to focus on other "symmetric nonconventional wars" to begin with.

At the same time, we have to consider the many continuities in Somalia's civil war when conducting such comparisons. As noted earlier, we can see that the alliance patterns emphasized in this thesis can be seen in Somalia's pre-colonial era as well as in the struggle against Siad Barre's regime and in the post-1991 era. However, these periods have been characterised by different political dynamics and they belong to separate categories in the typology used by Kalyvas and Balcells. For example, the struggle against Siad Barre's regime was a classical insurgency – and the same can be said about the contemporary conflict in Somalia that involves al-Shabaab and the national government – while the factional competition in the 1990s was a symmetric nonconventional war. Nevertheless, we find considerable continuity in alliance dynamics. This underlines the point made earlier in this chapter: that civil wars (even when they are fairly similar in their overall structural characteristics) do not always have more in common with each other than with "normal" politics in their respective location. In other words, we should not assume that an entirely new political logic kicks in when violent competition begins, and even though comparisons

[77] Laia Balcells and Stathis Kalyvas "Does Warfare Matter? Severity, Duration, and Outcomes of Civil Wars" in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 58:8 (2014), p. 1391.
[78] Ibid., p. 1391.
[79] Kalyvas and Balcells, "International System and Technologies of Rebellion", p. 427.

to similar civil wars can help us to identify important commonalities, it is equally important to consider the logic behind the many continuities in Somalia's civil war.

An alternative approach when looking for suitable comparative cases is to focus on social structures. As emphasized by Paul Staniland in his study of the cohesiveness of armed groups, it matters for the behaviour of armed political movements whether they are established upon relatively stable pre-existing social networks – such organizations tend to be more cohesive – or built upon socially divided networks.[80] In Somalia, the clan structures that political organizations tend to depend upon are fluid and political leadership is traditionally situational. This means that although there are traditional leaders at different levels of segmentation (*suldaan*, *garaad*, *boqor*, etc.) any clan member can step forward as the leader of the clan – it is the individual most well-suited to lead under the current circumstances who traditionally receives the backing of the clan (see Chapter I). These key characteristics of Somalia's traditional social structures are central to processes of alliance formation and group fragmentation in Somalia, and they make political organizations in Somalia prone to fragmentation, since rival political entrepreneurs from the same clan compete over the leadership roles within their own fragmented clans and lineages – "[t]he art for would-be political adventurers and leaders is trying to manipulate these different divisions internally and trying to use the widest possible clan backing externally".[81] This important aspect of political organization in Somalia cannot be overlooked and it makes it difficult to compare alliance formation and group fragmentation in Somalia's civil war to similar processes in societies where ethnic groups are relatively cohesive and political leadership positions are institutionalised to a much greater extent.

[80] Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

[81] Ioan Lewis "Salient Features of the Somali Political Scene" in Jan Haakonsen (ed.) *Somalia after UNOSOM: Proceedings from a conference held in Oslo, 9-10 March 1995* (Oslo: Norwegian Red Cross, 1995), p. 17.

The discussion above illustrates why Somalia has often been considered an outlier in comparative studies of civil war dynamics: the combination of *de facto* state collapse and lineage segmentation is hard to find elsewhere and comparisons that overlook either of the two leave out an important aspect of what has shaped political competition in Somalia in recent decades. This is not to say that comparisons are impossible. For example, the main patterns and tendencies in alliance formation that are emphasized in this thesis, like the defensive rationale behind alliance choices and the interaction between subnational arenas of competition, can be seen in other conflicts as well. However, they appear particularly important in the Somali context given the character of Somalia's traditional segmentary lineage politics and the fact the subnational regions have been the principle arenas of competition in Somali history.

To summarise, this thesis does not only describe how Somalia's civil war evolved and changed in character between 1988 and 2001. It also highlights important continuities in Somali politics that can be seen in this period as well as in others, and it takes into consideration the particularities of the Somali case even when it borrows ideas from the comparative literature. At the same time, it moves away from the "traditionalist" literature – it does not explain alliance formation with reference to the logic of alliance formation in the traditional pastoralist setting – and rather emphasizes the interaction between different arenas of competition, the ways in which the social basis of power in Somalia changes over time, and the tendency for political actors on all levels to focus on managing threats, showing why these broad patterns in alliance formation are worth considering in Somalia's current politics as well.

Chapter Outline: Chronology and Themes

The thesis is organized into seven chapters. The first two chapters provide the theoretical and historical foundation. Chapter I examines theoretical approaches to alliance formation in civil wars, and examines the strengths and weaknesses of the previously mentioned approaches. It then recaps the suggested analytical framework in relation to the preceding discussion. Chapter II provides a historical background that describes the ways in which alliance dynamics in Somalia have changed over time. It begins with the pre-colonial era, moves on to the colonial era and the nine years of civilian rule after Somalia's independence, and ends with a discussion about alliances dynamics during Siad Barre's regime.

Five empirical chapters follow. These chapters provide a detailed historical narrative about alliances and conflict dynamics in Somalia from 1988 to 2001. However, as mentioned earlier, even though the chapters are structured chronologically, they are organised so that each chapter deals with a particular period in Somalia's civil war and highlights a theme that was particularly salient in those years. Obviously, this is not to say that a particular theme was relevant in that period *only*. It is rather a way of making the historical narrative more accessible, showing how the conflict has changed in character over time, while highlighting a number of general themes that have been important in alliance formation in addition to the main patterns outlined above.

The first empirical chapter, Chapter III, describes alliances in the struggle against Siad Barre's regime with a focus on the period between 1988 and 1991. It analyses the opposition's difficulties in establishing a united front against the regime, and explains the proliferation of clan-based factions that occurred towards the end of Siad Barre's rule. It demonstrates that alliances in the struggle against the regime were not only about clans positioning themselves for the post-Siad Barre era – they were also about *individuals* positioning themselves – as

illustrated by intense intra-clan competition and the emergence of two cross-clan opposition blocks in the months leading up to the collapse of the regime.

The second empirical chapter, Chapter IV, looks at the most intense period in Somalia's civil war – from early 1991 to late 1992 – which was characterised by the collapse of state institutions, widespread looting, clan cleansing, and the disintegration of the armed opposition groups. This chapter highlights the limitations of elite manipulation, and demonstrates how fear and perceptions of threat made it difficult for the main rivals in the national arena to establish the kind of cross-clan alliances that would have been advantageous for the purpose of undermining their main rivals in elite politics.

The third empirical chapter, Chapter V, describes state-building efforts during the UNOSOM intervention that was launched in response to the famine that followed the regime's collapse. This chapter demonstrates how state-building efforts became a variable in alliance formation – how the image of the new order that UNOSOM projected shaped perceptions of threats and opportunities – and shows how the subsequent failure of these efforts resulted in a "radical localization of politics"[82] following the UN withdrawal from Somalia in 1995 when the locus of political competition shifted away from the national level and came to revolve around the establishment of regional administrations.

In Chapter VI, attention turns to the role of regional powers in shaping alliances in Somalia, with a particular focus on the roles played by Ethiopia, Egypt, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Sudan. It demonstrates how the interests and influence of these countries became more salient after 1995 when the UN and western powers largely disengaged from Somalia. It also highlights the

[82] Ken Menkhaus and John Prendergast, "Governance and Economic Survival in Post-Intervention Somalia", *CSIS Africa Notes* 172 (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1995).

interaction between regional and domestic politics: how rivals in Somalia drew on competing regional powers in order to come out on top in their own arenas of competition, while the regional powers backed rival groups in Somalia to limit the influence of their regional rivals.

Finally, Chapter VII describes the rise of Islamism as a political force towards the end of the 1990s, and examines Islamism as a variable in alliance formation as it highlights the functions of ideology and framing. On the one hand, it shows that political Islam became an increasingly useful frame for mobilization on the domestic level in these years as it was seen as a righteous alternative to the increasingly predatory clan-factions. On the other hand, the Islamist frame became increasingly incompatible with backing from western donors, especially following the September 11 attacks, which provided the Islamists' opponents with an invaluable counterframe for mobilising external resources and support.

It should be emphasized again that this structure does not suggest that the themes outlined above have not mattered in other periods. As discussed in the concluding chapter, we find considerable continuity over time in Somalia's civil war, and even though it may appear on the surface that the conflict has changed fundamentally in recent years, the patterns and themes described in this thesis can be discerned in alliance formation in Somalia in the post-9/11 era as well.

Chapter I

Theory and Literature: Making Sense of Alliance Choices

> *"In lineage segmentation one, literally, does not have a permanent enemy or a permanent friend, only a permanent context. Depending on a given context, a man – or group of men, or a state for that matter – may be your friend or foe. Everything is fluid and ever-changing".*[1]

It was argued in the introduction that we can see three main patterns in alliance formation in Somalia's civil war. First of all, that alliances have been formed horizontally as well as vertically between local, regional, and national players, and that the dominant tendency has been for political actors on all levels to seek allies to manage threats in their own arena of competition. Secondly, it was argued that even though political actors have focused on outcomes in their own arena, they have been forced to pay attention to developments in other arenas as well, since outcomes elsewhere have been closely linked to outcomes in their own arena. Finally, it was argued that perceptions of threat – the main determinant of alliance choices – have been dependent on expectations of what the emerging political order in Somalia will look like in terms of the clan composition of a ruling coalition at the national level, the relationship between rival groups in local and regional arenas of competition, and the relationship between Mogadishu and the peripheries.

[1] Said Samatar, "Preface" in Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, p. xi.

This chapter relates these patterns to the three strands in the literature mentioned in the introduction: the "Lewisian" approach that describes lineage solidarity as the main variables in alliance formation in Somalia; the realist approach that emphasizes the balance of power and downplays the role of identity; and the political economy literature that focuses on opportunism and short-term gains while emphasizing that civil war is about a lot more than fighting the enemy and winning.

In many ways, these approaches represent radically different ways of understanding alliance formation. However, there are also commonalities. For example, when outlining her realist framework, Fotini Christia argues that it is the balance of power that determines alliance choices in civil wars, not static conceptions of identity based on ethnicity, religion, or any other attribute. Identity categories and in-groups are instead adapted and re-imagined in response to changing power relations.[2] By and large, this is also the essence of Somali clan politics. In *A Pastoral Democracy*, Ioan Lewis emphasizes that assessments of relative fighting strength are central to processes of alliance formation in Somali lineage politics. It is power (*hoog*) and the nature of the threat at hand that determines how alliances are formed and on what level clan solidarity is mobilised. Although alliances are primarily based on kinship ties and social contracts according to customary law (*xeer*), the ultimate arbiter in pastoralist politics is force, which means that alliances can be formed without reference to genealogical ties or honour when a situation so requires (*gaashaanbuur*).[3] As noted in the epigraph for this chapter, this means that there are no permanent allies or enemies, only permanent interests, to paraphrase Lord Palmerston. In that sense, Lewis' classic study could easily be read as a

[2] Christia, *Alliance Formation*, p. 6-9.
[3] Lewis, A *Pastoral Democracy*, p. 156.

neorealist take on lineage politics in Somalia – it pays similar attention to the roles of anarchy, self-help, and the balance of power.[4]

There are similar overlaps between the classic Somali studies literature and the political economy strand in civil war studies, and the opportunism that observers like Alex de Waal emphasize resonates with the Somali pastoralist ideology "tailored to seek opportunities in unpredictable environments".[5] In that sense, even though these different approaches may seem incompatible at first glance, there are enough commonalities to make the search for a middle-ground approach worthwhile.

This chapter describes these different approaches to alliance formation and explains how the analytical framework used in this thesis borrows key concepts from them and draws on their respective strengths. In doing so, the chapter also connects the broader academic debate about alliance dynamics in civil wars to the Somali case, which has often been treated as "*sui generis* and such an extreme, complex case that it constitutes an outlier for a whole host of theories on state collapse, fragile states, state-building, peace-building, conflict analysis, mediation, and other fields".[6]

The chapter is organised in four parts. The first part describes the "Lewisian" approach to alliance formation as well as the critiques that a later generation of scholars in Somali studies have raised against it. The second part examines the realist approach suggested by Christia and shows how it can be refined and adapted to the Somali context by focusing on

[4] These are the key concepts in neorealism. See Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).
[5] Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, p. 195.
[6] Ken Menkhaus, "Stabilisation and Humanitarian Access in a Collapsed State: The Somali Case" in *Disasters* 34 (2010), p. 339.

perceptions of threat rather than the relative distribution of power.[7] The third part examines the political economy approach represented by authors like David Keen and Alex de Waal, and shows how a non-Clausewitzian perspective can be combined with defensive realism into a useful framework for understanding alliance choices in Somalia. Finally, the fourth part recaps the main arguments and alliance patterns outlined in the introduction in relation to the preceding discussion.

Alliance Formation in Somalia: The Lewisian Approach and Its Discontents

One of the most common starting points for discussion about Somali politics is the relative homogeneity of Somalia's population when seen in relation to the multi-ethnic composition of Africa's states in general. As summarized by Said Samatar, "the Somalis are a culturally, linguistically, and religiously homogenous people, who are divided along clan lines and sparsely scattered over a harsh, dry land".[8] As will be discussed later, there is a lot more diversity in Somalia than this summary suggests.[9] Nevertheless, the idea of a Somali nation that existed in cultural terms even before there was a Somali state is well-established, and it informed the political vision of the nationalist movement around Somalia's independence when the aim was to unite the five Somali regions that had been separated through European colonialism: British Somaliland, French Somaliland (Djibouti), Italian Somaliland, the Ogaden region in Ethiopia, and the Northern Frontier District (NFD) in Kenya (see Chapter II).

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[7] This essentially means drawing on Stephen Walt's of balance of threat theory. See Walt, *The Origins of Alliances.*

[8] Said Samatar, "The Society and Its Environment" in *Somalia: A Country Study* by Helen Chapin Metz, ed., (Washington: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1993), p. 57.

[9] For further discussion, see Chapter II and Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, "The Plight of the Agro-Pastoral Society of Somalia" in *Review of African Political Economy* 23:70 (1996); Abdi Kusow, ed., *Putting the Cart Before the Horse: Contested Nationalism and the Crisis of the Nation-State in Somalia* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2004); Mohamed A. Eno, "The Homogeneity of the Somali People: A Study of the Somali Bantu Ethnic Community" PhD dissertation, St. Clements University, 2005 (unpublished).

In short, the population in Somalia can be divided into six clan families – Daarod, Dir, Hawiye, Isaaq, Digil, and Mirifle – which are commonly described as claiming descent from a mutual ancestor.[10] In addition to these six clan families, there are "minority groups", including Bantu groups whose ancestors were subjugated as slaves by dominant clans in the south, as well as occupational groups and coastal people of "non-Somali origin".[11] In modern times, the predominantly nomadic clans, especially the Daarod, Hawiye, and Isaaq, have dominated national politics, while the largely agricultural Digil and Mirifle in the inter-riverine area have had a smaller stake.

It is also the nomadic form of political organization that has come to be seen as typically "Somali" – the result of an academic bias as well as government propaganda following Somalia's independence[12] – in contrast to the forms of social organization found among the largely sedentary Digil-Mirifle in the south where clan has not been "a totalizing social idiom".[13] For this reason, the section below focuses on alliance formation in the nomadic setting as described in Lewis' *A Pastoral Democracy* because it remains the most influential study on political organization in Somalia to date. Moreover, it is the pastoralist ideology that has shaped political culture in Somalia through the dominance of the pastoralist clans. After summarizing Lewis' characterisation of lineage politics, the discussion turns to the critique that other researchers have voiced against the "Lewisian" approach to political allegiances in Somalia.

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[10] As will be discussed in Chapter II, this categorization and the Somali genealogical tree in general is deeply contested, something that the so-called "4.5 formula" for clan representation has demonstrated in recent years.
[11] Said Samatar, "The Society and Its Environment"; Markus Hoehne, "Continuities and Changes regarding Minorities in Somalia" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2014); Martin Hill, *No Redress: Somalia's Forgotten Minorities* (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2010).
[12] Kusow, *Putting the Cart*; Mukhtar, "The Plight".
[13] Bernhard Helander, "Rahanweyn Sociability: A Model for Other Somalis?" in *African Languages and Cultures. Supplement* (1996), p. 195.

In his classic study of political organization among northern Somalia's pastoralist communities, Lewis describes a social system that functions without a centralized government, chiefs or formal judiciary. In that regard, it is a stateless and structurally anarchic environment, where "political status is … maintained by feud and war, and self-help – the resort of groups to the test of superior military power – is the ultimate arbiter in political relations".[14] In that sense, it is the structure of the environment that shapes political behaviour. Already here we can begin to see parallels to neorealism and its emphasis on structural anarchy and how it motivates self-help and power balancing.

The political units that Lewis describes in this environment are "based on kinship and are composed of men who trace descent through males to a common ancestor from whom they take their corporate name".[15] These groups make up a segmentary lineage system in which clan-families branch into clans, sub-clans, and primary lineages, where the smallest unit is the *diya*-paying group, which comprises a group of households collectively responsible for the payment of blood-compensation. This is the most important and stable unit in the system. However, the key characteristic of the system is that there is no way of determining *a priori* on which level solidarity will be mobilised; "*all* of these genealogical units are relative, with solidarity mobilized situationally according to the context and the machinations of local political impresarios".[16] This means that there are no stable groups or alliances, and "group" and "alliance" cannot be seen as fundamentally different categories. Instead, what constitutes a group or alliance is defined in response to a particular situation, and "a group (clan family, clan, or sub-divisions thereof) tends to fragment into smaller descent-based groupings in the

[14] Lewis, A *Pastoral Democracy*, p. 3.
[15] Ibid., p. 1.
[16] Ioan M. Lewis, "Doing Violence to Ethnography: A Response to Catherine Besteman's "Representing Violence and 'Othering' Somalia"in *Cultural Anthropology* 13:1 (1998), p. 102.

absence of a resource that needs to be jointly exploited or an external threat to the group as a whole”.[17]

Although Lewis describes the system as based on agnation, he is quick to emphasize that kinship is not the sole determinant of political affiliation in this environment. Social contract based on customary law (*xeer*) plays an equally important and complimentary role in determining political alliances. It is social contract that “enables agnates (and sometimes non-agnates) to unite in corporate political groups sometimes irrespective of their genealogical proximity”.[18] An equally important role is played by alliances through marriage and matrilineal ties. As noted by Mohamed-Abdi Mohamed, “onto that vertical system of kinship is grafted a horizontal system of alliances, based on marriages, the *xidid”*, [19] resulting in another layer to alliance dynamics and even more possible nodes of fission and fusion.

One of the main characteristics of the segmentary linage system in Somalia is that unlike similar systems, for example the Nuer lineage system as described by Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, genealogies are not manipulated to correspond to actual power relations – there is very little tweaking of genealogies in the Somali system.[20] According to Lewis, this reflects the common understanding that recorded lineages only provide “the framework of politics upon which actual political relations are a variation”.[21] When alliances cannot be based on kinship, they are based on contract, and this can be done without patrilineal or matrilineal ties to motivate them, a phenomenon known as *gaashaanbuur* (“pile of shields”) where the

[17] Markus Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland: Marginalization, Militarization and Conflicting Political Visions* (London: Rift Valley Institute), p. 158.
[18] Ioan M. Lewis, “Force and Fission in Northern Somali Lineage Structure” in *American Anthropologist* 63:1 (1961), p. 94.
[19] Mohamed-Abdi Mohamed “Kinship and Relationships Derived from It” in Hussein Adam and Richard Ford, eds., Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for Somali Communities in the 21st Century (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1997), p. 147.
[20] Lewis, “Force and Fission”, p. 109.
[21] Lewis, “Force and Fission”, p. 106.

explicit aim of the alliance is to "acquire fighting strength and with it political power.[22] Again, we see the realist streak mentioned earlier: it is the balance of power and the situation at hand that determine alliance choices, not segmentation or agnatic proximity *per se*. For this reason, alliances are widely assumed to be fluid and closely linked to reassessments of the balance of power, and numerous Somali proverbs emphasize that allies often become enemies, and vice versa.[23]

If alliances in Somalia are determined by power considerations, how is power conceptualized in the Somali social system? This is where Lewis' largely instrumental-rational approach to clan solidarity becomes evident. According to Lewis, the "size factor" is central to assessments of power in the pastoralist setting.[24] It is the ability to mobilize a sufficiently large number of men of fighting age that determines the relative power among competing groups, and "it is largely in the necessity to be able to meet force with force that Somali see the primary purpose of their contractual and kin alliances".[25]

In other words, even though Lewis acknowledges the importance of pride and honour in Somali politics, he does not treat clan solidarity as an expression of what Max Weber calls value-rationality,[26] or the upholding of sacred values.[27] Instead, he focuses on its instrumental-rational aspects, and links clan solidarity to the mode of production in northern Somalia, where sparse resources tend to generate competition between groups whose

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22 Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, p. 157.
23 For example: "if you love a person, love him moderately, for you do not know whether you will hate him one day; on the other hand, if you hate someone, hate him moderately also, for you do not know whether you will love him one day", Lee Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society: Reconstructing the History of a Pastoral People, 1600-1900* (Philadelphia: Penn Press, 1982), p. 21.
24 Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, p. 149.
25 Ibid., p. 301.
26 For a discussion about Max Weber's use of these terms, see Ashutosh Varshney, "Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Rationality" in *Perspectives on Politics* 1:1 (2003).
27 For a discussion about sacred values, see Scott Atran and Robert Axelrod, "Reframing Sacred Values" in *Negotiation Journal* 24.3 (2008).

livelihoods depend on access to the same waters and pastures. Since kinship groups are not restricted to certain localities – "only the rain cycle determines the domain of the nomad"[28] – and there is no village solidarity to draw upon for the pastoralists, kinship ties become the most important resource in political competition.[29] In that sense, "the Somali clan structure typically is not based on blood relationships, but rather it is a fruit of nomadic pastoral life".[30] If we add pride and honour on to this instrumental foundation of clan solidarity, we can begin to understand what Lewis refers to as "the call of kinship in Somali society".[31] As noted by one of Lewis' students, "it is the interaction of the emotional and the instrumental aspects which gives this form of organisation its power".[32]

To summarise, we can see that it is impossible to make a clear-cut distinction between identity and power in the Somali context. Although these may not be synonymous in the modern context (as will be discussed more below) they are nevertheless inseparable. If we consider Max Weber's classic definition of power – "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests"[33] – it is evident that Lewis sees this probability as hinged upon lineage solidarity in the traditional pastoralist environment as well as in modern Somali politics. At the same time, there is so much elasticity within the segmentary lineage system that strategic adaptation of different identities along the lines of what Daniel Posner describes when discussing alliance formation in other cultural contexts – that "individuals will consider each of the identity groups in which they can claim membership

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[28] Alphonso A. Castagno, *Somalia* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1959), p. 353.
[29] Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, p. 127 and p. 240.
[30] Abdalla Omar Mansur, "The Nature of the Somali Clan System" in Ali Jimale Ahmed, ed., *The Invention of* Somalia (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1995), p 122.
[31] Ioan Lewis, *Blood and Bone: The Call of Kinship in Somali Society* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1994)
[32] Virginia Luling, "Come Back Somalia? Questioning a Collapsed State" in *Third World Quarterly* 18:2 (1997), p. 293.
[33] Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 53.

… and embrace the one that defines the most usefully sized group"[34] – comes across as an integral part of the system.

Many academics in the Somali studies realm have nevertheless objected to Lewis' structural-functionalist characterization of Somali politics as being too static. Indeed, it is essential to look beyond kinship when trying to make sense of alliances in Somalia's modern history as will be demonstrated in Chapter II. But a number of the main critiques against Lewis' work should be mentioned here already. First, the criticism that Lewis overlooks many other factors that have determined political allegiances in Somalia. For example, Catherine Besteman, whose work focuses on the legacy of slavery in southern Somalia, suggests that there is "a variety of social identities that cross-cut, undermine, shift, or supersede clan identities" and argues that "status (derived from collective social constructions of race, language, and purity) has presented a far greater constraint on individual agency and identity than clan membership".[35] Others have pointed to the role of Islam as a political identity with the capacity to supersede clan loyalties, while some have taken a class perspective, emphasizing economic and political competition between the cross-clan merchant class, the state-elite, and the bulk of the pastoralist and agricultural population.[36] According to these critics, the argument that clan loyalties trump all other identities and interests results in a one-dimensional image of Somalia as a static society where only one logic determines political allegiances; it becomes a country in which "people and the communities in which they live have little ability to innovate, to learn from others, to engage in self-improvement or self-destruction, and to undergo social transformation".[37]

[34] Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics*, p. 4.
[35] Catherine Besteman, "Representing Violence and 'Othering' Somalia" in *Cultural Anthropology* 11:1 (1996), p. 125.
[36] Abdi I. Samatar, "Destruction of State and Society in Somalia: Beyond the Tribal Convention" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30:4 (1992).
[37] Ibid., p. 628.

A second line of criticism does not question the continued relevance of pastoralist principles in shaping alignments *per se*. Instead, it emphasizes that there has been a gradual diversification of the social basis of power in Somalia over the past centuries, which to some extent has changed the instrumental rationale for clan solidarity that Lewis describes. According to Ahmed Samatar, this diversification of the social basis of power began in the pre-colonial era with the induction of the pastoralist economy into the global economy via the commercial trading towns along the Somali coast.[38] It was through these connections that political entrepreneurs in the interior gained access to new sources of power and external muscle, and "the development of these external relationships began to impact gradually on the political organization of the Somalis".[39] Similarly, Marcel Djama argues that the social basis of power in the "traditional" setting was far more diverse than Lewis suggests, and that his structural-functionalist model "takes into account only a part of the resources that can be mobilised for political ends".[40]

In other words, the probability that a group will be in a position to dominate others has over time become less dependent on the numerical strength as emphasized by Lewis with regards to the "traditional" setting and become increasingly tied to other sources of power. This leads to a third strand in the critique, namely that clannist politics in the modern setting should be seen as fundamentally different from clan politics in pre-colonial times.[41] This argument echoes the wider debate about the perversion of tradition through indirect rule in colonial times,[42] and suggests that blood-ties became political tools that were separated from

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[38] Ahmed I. Samatar, *Socialist Somalia: Rhetoric and Reality* (London: Zed Books, 1988).
[39] Ibid., p. 15.
[40] Marcel Djama, "The Political Anthropology of 'Pastoral Democracy'" in *Peace and Milk, Drought and War: Somali Culture* by Markus Hoehne and Virginia Luling, eds., (London: Hurst, 2010), p. 110.
[41] Abdi I. Samatar and Ahmed I. Samatar, "The Material Roots of the Suspended African State: Arguments from Somalia" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 25:4 (1987).
[42] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Kampala: Fountain, 2004).

the moral codes that existed in the pastoralist setting when they were used in post-colonial politics – it became a "xeer-less" version of lineage politics.[43]

It has also been noted that the logic of alliance formation changed when Somalia became an independent state as it created a national arena of political competition for the first time in Somali history. This resulted in a new form of tension between national and local political logics. In short, there was a need for clan balance at the national level that did not always translate to subnational arenas of competition. [44] Moreover, the need for different clan components in national coalitions meant that close agnates were not only natural allies in the new political setting – they were also potential threats and competitors over positions in a balanced national government – which contradicts the principle of clan solidarity based on genealogical proximity. As will be described in Chapter II, the ideal of clan solidarity based on genealogical proximity was further undermined by Siad Barre's divide and rule policy, which played local rivals from the same clan or even sub-clan against each other, resulting in alliances that reflected the logics of patronage politics and subnational competition rather than genealogical proximity.

To summarize, we can see that researchers in Somali studies in the generation after Lewis have shown that there is more to alliance formation in Somalia than clan solidarity and genealogical proximity. Obviously, Lewis acknowledged many of these changes, and he had a far more nuanced approach to alliance dynamics than many of his critics suggest when using him as a "primordialist strawman". However, there was never a revised "Lewisian" framework for understanding alliance formation, and none of Lewis' main critics outlined an alternative framework for understanding alliance choices either. The suggested approach in

[43] Samatar and Samatar, "The Material Roots of the Suspended African State", p. 681.
[44] Simons, *Networks*, p. 211.

this thesis is therefore an attempt to bring in these critiques in the Somali studies debate, while at the same time drawing on ideas and concepts borrowed from two strands in the comparative literature: on the one hand, the realist approach to alliance formation; on the other hand, the literature on the political economy of civil wars. In the two following sections, these approaches are briefly summarised with a focus on their respective strengths, as well as the reason why they are not suitable as "off-the-peg" frameworks for understanding alliance formation in Somalia.

The Realist Approach: Power, Balancing, and Threat in Alliance Formation

One of the most ambitious and well-received attempts to explain alliances in civil wars in recent years is the realist model outlined by Fotini Christia.[45] It builds on the observation that civil war alliances in Afghanistan and Bosnia – the two cases used by Christia to develop her model – did not reflect stable cleavages based on ethnic or religious identities. For this reason, Christia argues, notions of shared identity cannot be seen as the main variable behind alliance choices – "some other variable is at play".[46] It is against this backdrop that Christia steers away from identity politics and rather emphasizes the balance of power when explaining alliance formation and group fractionalisation in multi-party civil wars.

The model operates at the macro-level primarily and builds on three different strands in the literature: neorealist theories of alliance formation in international relations;[47] theories of legislative coalitions and the idea of minimum winning coalitions;[48] and the civil war studies

[45] Christia, *Alliance Formation*. For examples of other approaches, see Seymour, "Why Factions Switch Sides"; Michael Woldemariam *Why Rebels Collide: Factionalism and Fragmentation in African Insurgencies*, Ph.D Dissertation, Princeton University, 2011; Bapat and Bond, "Alliances between Militant Groups"; Kathleen Cunnigham, *Inside the Politics of Self-Determination* (Oxford: University Press, 2014); Cunningham et al., "Shirts Today, Skins Tomorrow".
[46] Christia, *Alliance Formation*, p. 27.
[47] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.
[48] William Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

literature that emphasizes "greed" rather than "grievances".[49] With concepts borrowed from these different strands in the literature, Christia suggests two causal mechanisms behind alliance formation and group fractionalization.

The first mechanism explains alliance choices as based on the relative distribution of power among competing groups. As noted in the introduction, Christia argues that all actors in a multi-party civil war have two overarching objectives: winning the war and maximizing their share of post-war returns as members of a minimum winning coalition. This means that they "want to be in a coalition large enough to attain victory while small enough to ensure maximum political payoffs".[50] It also means that groups will not only fear losing the war – they will also fear winning the war as the weaker partner as there can be no credible commitment from the stronger group that it will not "turn on its weaker partner(s) after the war and capture complete political control after the war's conclusion".[51] As a result, "the weaker alliance partner, *even when it appears to be on the winning side*, will often prefer to defect and prolong the war if this gives them a chance to be relatively stronger within a winning alliance".[52] The consequence is that as long as power is relatively balanced, we can expect to see realignments and defections as elites form "balancing" alliances to maximize their stakes in the post-war settlement. It is only when a group appears strong enough to win on its own that elites are expected to change tactics and side with the dominant group– they will "bandwagon" rather than "balance"[53] – and this is done without concerns for ideological or ethnic differences.

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[49] Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War" (Washington: World Bank, 2001); James Fearon and David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War" in *American Political Science Review* 97:01 (2003).
[50] Christia, *Alliance Formation*, p. 6.
[51] Ibid., p. 32
[52] Ibid., p. 32
[53] For more on "balancing" and "bandwagoning", see Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

This means that notions of shared identity based on clan, ethnicity, or religion will have no "sustained causal role in the formation of alliances".[54] If power considerations suggest that a certain alliance should be formed, elites will do so, irrespective of past interactions and ideological differences. However, to motivate their power-driven alliance choices, elites will use their "identity repertoires"[55] to construct legitimizing narratives based on attributes that they share with their allies but not with their foes. In that sense, identity attributes do matter as they can be used instrumentally to "ensure and enhance compliance with the new alliance or group allegiance"[56] among followers who may not subscribe to power-driven motivations of alliances. In the end, however, it is the relative distribution of power that dictates alliance choices. When power considerations call for realignments, in-groups and communities will be re-imagined to make them correspond to these new line-ups.[57] This means that there is "no such thing as an impossible alliance in the context of a multi-party civil war",[58] which resonates with the constant reconfiguration of alliances in Somalia's civil war.

A second mechanism describes processes of group fractionalization. It emphasizes that groups involved in civil wars often contain sub-groups led by local elites divided along regional lines. These elites make alliance choices based on assessments of maximizing returns in similar ways. Importantly, they do not necessarily have the same interests and priorities as national level elites, but as long as they feel like they are on the winning side in the national arena, Christia argues, they will remain loyal to their group. However, if local elites begin to feel that their group's relative power at the national level is diminishing – if they are no longer able to "rely on the centre for backup and protection"[59] – they will break away and "fight

[54] Christia, *Alliance Formation*, p. 32.
[55] Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics*, p. 7.
[56] Christia, *Alliance Formation*, p. 49.
[57] In this regard, Christia draws on Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
[58] Christia, p. 4.
[59] Christia, p. 43.

their locally relevant wars".[60] In that sense, Christia makes a distinction between how groups and sub-groups function: "the bonds within the group are strong enough that the component subgroups are willing to jointly pursue the superordinate goal of achieving victory, and thus they do not worry much about being exploited by more powerful subgroups within the group".[61] In short, in-group loyalty means that "while a warring group that is increasing in relative power is likely to attract enmity from other groups, it will maintain the loyalty of all its constituent sub-groups".[62]

This is where Christia's model becomes problematic in the Somali context. As noted in the previous section, the level on which solidarity is mobilised in Somalia's segmentary lineage system is dependent on the context, and there are no "initial" groups that always define others as out-groups.[63] In Somalia, groups are "reactively defined in opposition to opponents",[64] and even though a crude interpretation of lineage politics would suggest that sub-clan and lineages at lower levels of segmentation would unite against members from another clan-family at a higher level of segmentation, this is not how clan politics works in reality. As noted by Jama Mohamed with reference to Ibn Khaldun, "in itself, the genealogical tree is useless"[65] and what constitutes a group or alliance is always dependent on the situation. Moreover, the assumption that groups "only break off in contexts of asymmetric losses or when the group's survival is at stake",[66] does not work in relation to Somali lineage politics where the logic is rather the opposite: fragmentation is the norm and groups are formed in response to perceived threats.

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[60] Ibid., p. 43.
[61] Ibid., p. 46.
[62] Ibid., p. 242.
[63] Ibid., p. 46.
[64] Ioan Lewis "Salient Features of the Somali Political Scene" in Jan Haakonsen (ed.) *Somalia after UNOSOM: Proceedings from a conference held in Oslo, 9-10 March 1995* (Oslo: Norwegian Red Cross, 1995), p. 17.
[65] Jama Mohamed, "Kinship and Contract in Somali Politics" in *Africa* 77:02 (2007), p. 234.
[66] Christia, p. 242-243.

There are several other weaknesses in Christia's model that make it problematic in the Somali context, despite the realist commonalities, for example the false dichotomy between identity and power that the model builds on, the tendency to downplay the role of subnational rivalries in structuring national alliances, and the assumption that alliance dynamics in peacetime and expectations for the future do not shape wartime alliances. Over the next pages, these issues will be discussed in relation to the broader literature to illustrate why it makes sense to refine Christia's realist model and focus on perceptions of threat rather than the balance of power. This means drawing on Stephen Walt's critique of balance of power theory, and building on the refinements he suggested when developing balance of threat theory as an alternative.[67] As demonstrated later, Walt's model travels surprisingly well to the civil war setting, and makes it possible to overcome many of the limitations in Christia's model when applied to the Somali context.

The Realist Approach: Weaknesses and Ways to Overcome Them

If we look at the main limitations of Christia's model, the first limitation is that it builds on a false dichotomy between power and identity. From the outset, identity and power are treated as mutually exclusive and described as competing explanatory variables.[68] Although Christia never defines power, she operationalises it in terms of territorial control, access to financial resources and arms, and other resources commonly associated with coercive capacity. In contrast, identity is conceptualised in value-rational rather than instrumental-rational terms.[69] It is based on this fundamental distinction that Christia makes a leap of faith from the indisputable fact that ethnic group identities have not generated stable cleavages to

[67] Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*.
[68] Although Christia never defines power, she operationalizes it in terms of territorial control, demographic size, military capacity, and other resources commonly associated with instrumental-rational assessments of power. In contrast, identity and group solidarity is conceptualized in value-rational terms as something upheld for sentimental reasons rather than for instrumental-rational purposes.
[69] See previous reference to Varshney, "Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Rationality".

the conclusion that "some other variable is at play".[70] However, this setup dodges the fundamental question about the *extent* to which identity may shape instrumental-rational assessments of the relative distribution of power.

An alternative approach would be to treat identity as inseparable from power considerations (and to perceptions of threat as will be discussed later). This also makes it easier to see how framing processes may be closely linked to power considerations, and have less to do with securing compliance from grassroots supporters than mobilising resources from other important audiences, for example through extraversion strategies.[71] Put differently, even if we may choose to avoid the more complex debate about how normative commitments linked to identity and ideology influence alliance choices, we nevertheless have to consider the instrumental use of identity attributes;[72] how assessments of power are linked to the social endowments available to fighting groups,[73] the resources that constitute the social basis of power,[74] or the "soft power" possessed by different groups,[75] all depending on the lens we prefer.

A second weakness in Christia's model is that it gives priority to developments at the national level, despite the stated aim of examining interactions between micro- and macro-level dynamics in alliance formation. The model examines how changes in the balance of power play into subnational dynamics, but has little to say about the ways in which subnational

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[70] Christia, *Alliance Formation*, p. 27.

[71] For discussions about extraversion and international audiences, see Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010); Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999); Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996).

[72] For a useful approach and discussion, see Francisco Sanin and Elisabeth Wood, "Ideology in Civil War: Instrumental Adoption and Beyond" in *Journal of Peace Research* 51:2 (2014).

[73] Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*.

[74] Norman Uphoff, "Distinguishing Power, Authority & Legitimacy: Taking Max Weber at His Word by Using Resources-Exchange Analysis" in *Polity* 22:2 (1989), p. 295.

[75] Joseph Nye, *Soft Power*: *The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004)

rivalries structure national alliances.[76] However, this seems like a critical aspect of alliance formation in Somalia as well as elsewhere. As noted by Stathis Kalyvas, what we find beneath the surface in most civil wars is considerable continuity in alignments: how local and provincial rivals tend to end up on opposite sides no matter what the conflict at the national level revolves around, and appear to be more concerned with subnational outcomes than national politics, always drawing on whatever domestic and international backers are available.[77] For example, when describing this continuity beneath the surface in the Philippines, Alfred McCoy noted how local actors adapted to changing circumstances and reframed themselves in relation to developments in the capital, but remained focused on the main threat in their own arena of competition: "Costume and casting directors changed constantly, but actors and dialogue remained the same. While the context shifted and factions and their alliances split and realigned, peer rivals remained in constant diametric opposition".[78]

This is also one of the key characteristics of Somalia's civil war. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, it is hard to overstate the importance of subnational rivalries in structuring national alliances in Somalia, and even though the balance of power can be seen as a key variable in alliance formation, it has to be assessed and understood in relation to subnational arenas of competition, not only in relation to national politics. Put differently, we must start from Kalyvas' understanding of civil wars as "concatenations of multiple and

[76] According to Christia, the model is "agnostic" about what causes initial alignments with different sides on these levels and only concludes that "once (local) leaders sort themselves into factions (regardless of their motivations), they will tend to behave consistently with the national-level dictates of that faction". *Alliance Formation*, p. 138.
[77] For examples of similar discussions about interaction between national and subnational politics, see Joel Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge: University Press, 2001); John Sidel, "Economic Foundations of Subnational Authoritarianism: Insights and Evidence from Qualitative and Quantitative Research" in *Democratization* 21:1 (2014), p. 161; Catherine Boone, "Decentralization as Political Strategy In West Africa" in *Comparative Political Studies* 36:4 (2003).
[78] Kalyvas, "The Ontology of Violence", p. 477.

often disparate local cleavages, more or less loosely arrayed around the master cleavage",[79] and then try to understand how national alliances are structured. As demonstrated in the empirical chapters in this thesis, decisions by political entrepreneurs or armed groups in Somalia to side with one national coalition over another may often be explained with reference to subnational dynamics rather than developments in the national political arena.

Finally, the third weakness in Christia's model is that it disregards how alliances have formed in peacetime: what is the experience of coalitions and what is a viable coalition in the post-war era expected to look like? Obviously, this varies with the context, but in many countries plagued by multi-party civil wars, including Afghanistan, cross-ethnic alliance building has been the norm, not only in terms of elite bargaining, but also in alliances between the centre and regional strongmen.[80] In that perspective, there is nothing puzzling about cross-ethnic alliances at the group level. On the contrary: if we had seen stable ethnic cleavages at the group level in times of civil war when political competition in peacetime has been "less between differently defined ethnic groups than between regional rivals within the same administrative categories", *that* would have been a puzzle.[81] In many African countries, the tendency has been the same with "extremely broad ethnic coalitions"[82] at the centre and vertical alliances between elites and provincial strongmen. Autocratic leaders have "asserted their authority by developing patrimonial relations with people from different lineages, creating a core of support that crosscut lineage affiliations",[83] which has resulted in forms of

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[79] Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence*, p 384.
[80] Dipali Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongman Governors, and the State in Afghanistan* (Cambridge: University Press, 2016); Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: University Press, 2010), p. 135.
[81] Thomas Barfield, "Afghanistan Is Not the Balkans: Ethnicity and Its Political Consequences from a Central Eurasian Perspective" in *Central Eurasian Studies Review* 4:1 (2005), p. 4.
[82] Nicolas Van de Walle, "Meet the New Boss, Same as The Old Boss? The Evolution of Political Clientelism in Africa" in *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition* by Herbert Kitschelt and Steven Wilkinson, eds., (Cambridge: University Press, 2007), p. 65.
[83] Rogers Brubaker and Fredrick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'" in *Theory and Society* 29:1 (2000), p. 24; Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: University Press, 2000).

"decentralized despotism",[84] where the ability of local political entrepreneurs to capture their respective ethnic group's vote has been their most valuable bargaining chip in the national arena – that is what has made them useful in the eyes of the executive.[85]

In other words, cross-ethnic alliance formation does not suggest that identity is irrelevant – alliances are often cross-ethnic *because* ethnicity is a key variable. Moreover, if it is assumed that a ruling coalition must include representatives from all major groups or clans, this will most likely shape alliance formation as there will be a demand for different components. In turn, this may also lead to considerable intra-group competition over positions at the centre. As noted by Donald Horowitz when discussing ethnic coalitions, the most likely coalition partners under such circumstances are usually those furthest away from each other on the ethno-political spectrum because they have "the least chance of competing for the same clientele".[86]

As mentioned earlier, we can see this tendency in Somalia's parliamentary post-independence politics as well as in the country's civil war (see Chapter II). For this reason, the idea that civil war alliances are formed with eyes on a minimum winning coalition is not particularly useful unless we have a more precise understanding of what such a ruling national coalition is expected to look like more precisely. Obviously, it also matters whether the expected outcome is a heavily centralised state, a loose federation, or a rump state with one region seceding, since all of this can be assumed to shape perceptions of threat and impact on alliance choices. As argued by Daniel Posner, "the usefulness of any coalition will depend on

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[84] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*. For slightly different takes, see Bruce Berman, "Ethnicity, Patronage and the African State: The Politics of Uncivil Nationalism" in *African Affairs* 97:388 (1998), p. 305; Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).
[85] Nicolas van de Walle, "Presidentialism and Clientelism in Africa's Emerging Party Systems" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41:02 (2003), p. 314.
[86] Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 378.

the boundaries of the arena in which political competition is taking place",[87] and when expectations of the emerging political order change during the conflict, we can expect the "locus of competition"[88] to change as well and result in repositioning and new alliances.[89] Put differently, rather than envisaging the post-war order as a "clean slate", we should take into consideration the ways in which competing groups envisage the emerging political order, and how their expectations shape their perceptions of threat and inform alliance choices.

To summarise, these limitations make it difficult to use Christia's model as an "off-the-peg" framework for making sense of alliances in Somalia. However, the realist foundation is worth building on because the main ideas and concepts resonate with the Somali case – it provides an alternative, non-culturally specific terminology for understanding alliance choices – and the limitations can largely be overcome if we turn to Stephen Walt's refinements of classic defensive realism as suggested earlier. [90] In short, in his classic study of alliances in the Middle East during the Cold War era, Walt argues that alliance choices are determined by perceptions of threat rather than assessments of relative power. This means that states seek allies to help them against the most threatening actor – as opposed to the most powerful actor – and this often turns out to be a neighbouring country or other state in the same arena of competition. In other words, the most powerful actor in the system may not be the most threatening – it can rather be an ideal ally depending on the circumstances – and Walt illustrates this with numerous examples from the Middle East, demonstrating how regional powers picked sides during the Cold War based on their assessment of threats in the regional arena.

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[87] Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics*, p. 5.
[88] Posner, "Regime Change", p. 1302.
[89] Although Christia acknowledges that focus may shift from national level politics to the regional level in some instances, like it did in the civil war in Bosnia for a short period, she does not specify how and why such shifts may occur. For discussion, see Costantino Pischedda in "H-Diplo/ISSF Roundtable Reviews", p. 12.
[90] Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*.

If we think of alliance formation in civil wars along similar lines, we can overcome many of the previously described limitations in the balance of power model, and begin to make sense of the alliance patterns that we find in Somalia's civil war: how subnational rivalries have often structured national coalitions; how expectations of the future political order have shaped perceptions of threat and influenced alliance choices; and how previous interactions and other contextual factors have also shaped perceptions of threat, all of which is difficult to capture with teleological explanations of alliance choices based on the relative distribution of power alone. Importantly, if we emphasize threat rather than power and the maximization of gains, it also brings us back to the essence of defensive realism, which Christia effectively abandons when bringing in the minimum winning coalitions logic.[91] In short, it makes it possible to think of alliance choices as defensive first and foremost, and as reflecting the overarching aim of *not losing* rather than winning the war and maximizing post-war gains.

The idea of civil war being about not losing rather than winning also resonates with the political economy approach – the third strand in the literature examined in this chapter – which provides another way of making sense of alignments in civil wars. As demonstrated in following pages, many of the key insights in this literature are difficult to reconcile with the framework suggested by Christia. However, they can be combined with the refined realist approach that emphasizes perceptions of threat rather than the balance of power, resulting in more solid and nuanced framework for understanding alliance dynamics.

[91] For discussions about defensive realism, see John Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism" in Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (Oxford: University Press, 2013); Jack Donnelly *Realism and International Relations* (Cambridge: University Press, 2000).

The Political Economy of Civil Wars: Alliances for Profit

In the late 1990s, there was a surge in academic research on economic drivers of civil wars,[92] motivated by the character of the main conflicts in Africa and elsewhere in the years before, especially the "resource wars" in countries like Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This resulted in a wide range of works examining the political economy of civil wars, from the rather simplistic debate about "greed or grievance", to more nuanced takes on the interaction between economic and political agendas.[93] In short, economic agendas appeared to be a key variable in the "new wars"[94] in the post-Cold War era, when foreign patronage was no longer available to the same extent and there was "an observable increase in the self-financing nature of combatant activities".[95] In the years since then, there has been continuous research on the role of economic agendas in civil wars, including studies on how access to resources shapes insurgent strategies.[96]

Two important things characterise this literature apart from the attention to economic agendas, and both are relevant discussions about alliance dynamics. First of all, there is a non-Clausewitzian understanding of wars – a recognition that wars are not only about winning and defeating the enemy – which sets this literature apart from the more conventional approach to violent conflict, including the approach taken by Christia as described earlier. As noted by David Keen, wars are enabling environments, and "[p]art of the function of war may be that it offers a more promising environment for the pursuit of

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[92] For a brief discussion about earlier efforts, see Chris Cramer, "Homo Economicus Goes to War: Methodological Individualism, Rational Choice and the Political Economy of War" in *World Development* 30:11 (2002).
[93] For examples, see Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, eds., *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed & Grievance* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003); Mats Berdal and David Malone, eds., *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000).
[94] Kaldor *New & Old Wars*.
[95] Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, "Introduction" in Ballentine and Sherman, eds., *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict*, p 1.
[96] For examples, see Jennifer Hazen, *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*.

aims that are also prominent in peacetime".[97] For this reason, "prolonging a war may be a higher priority than winning it".[98] This is why civil wars are often characterised by considerable collusion through the avoidance of pitched battles, coordination of movements between rival groups, trading arrangements between opponents, and the sale of arms and ammunition to the enemy.[99] All of these things appear irrational from a conventional perspective on war as being a competition. However, they make sense if we assume that there are multiple functions of war, and that violence can often be better understood as "performing immediate functions rather than as part of a longer-term, political project".[100]

The second characteristic of this literature is that it does not make a clear-cut distinction between political dynamics in times of violent conflict and "normal" politics. Put differently, it does not assume that an entirely new logic determining political allegiances kicks in as soon as violent competition begins. Instead, key authors in this literature tend to emphasize the many continuities: how pre-conflict patronage politics shapes the organization and behaviour of armed groups,[101] and how civil war often comes across as "the continuation of economics by other means".[102] As emphasized by Mark Duffield, "if we wish to examine conflict we must begin by analysing what is normal … those long-term and embedded social processes that define the conditions of everyday life".[103] Similarly, we must consider how wartime networks continue to shape politics in post-war settings.[104] In many regards, this is the logical

[97] Keen, "War and Peace", p. 2.
[98] Ibid., p 2.
[99] David Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*, The Adelphi Papers, 38:320 (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p. 17-18.
[100] Mats Berdal and David Keen, "Violence and Economic Agendas in Civil Wars: Some Policy Implications" in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 26:3 (1997), p. 801.
[101] William Reno, "Patronage Politics and the Behavior of Armed Groups" in *Civil Wars* 9:4 (2007).
[102] Keen, *The Economic Functions*, p. 11.
[103] Mark Duffield, "Post-Modern Conflict: Warlords, Post-Adjustment States and Private Protection" in *Civil Wars*, 1:1 (1998), p. 67.
[104] For examples, see Marielle Debros, *Living by the Gun in Chad: Combatants, Impunity and State Formation* (London: Zed Books, 2016); Christine Cheng, *Post-Conflict Transitions and Extralegal Groups* (Oxford: University Press, forthcoming).

flipside of the non-Clausewitzian coin: if there is no clear-cut distinction between war and peace, the meaning of winning becomes rather unclear.

The political marketplace as described by de Waal brings many of these insights together into a framework for understanding the fluidity of political allegiances in states that are commonly characterised as "fragile" or "failed" – a kind of terminology that de Waal finds distracting rather than helpful for understanding "the real politics" in these environments.[105] In short, the political marketplace is a system of governance that revolves around rent-seeking and monetized patronage; it is a dynamic system in which "the conduct of political business as exchange is the central feature, and the prices of the commodities of cooperation and allegiance are determined by supply and demand".[106] This means that there is constant bargaining over political allegiances on all levels – from local politics to elite manoeuvring in the capital – and political entrepreneurs spend considerable time managing their fragile alliances and networks.[107] The use of violence as a bargaining tool is integral to the system; the same goes for involvement in criminal activities without which it usually becomes impossible to outbid competitors.[108] In that sense, the suggested model echoes the literature on neopatrimonialism, but takes the logic one step further, with de Waal arguing that the emphasis on kinship ties and culture in the literature on neopatrimonialism "does not do full justice to the dynamism of political bargaining under the turbulent conditions of globalized political finance".[109]

Although the model is developed with Sudan in mind, it works in many other countries as well, including Somalia, where it resonates with the fluidity associated with lineage

[105] de Waal, *The Real Politics*, p. 19.
[106] Ibid., p. 19.
[107] Ibid., p. 17.
[108] Ibid., p. 23.
[109] Ibid., p. 33.

segmentation, the "short-range view of politics",[110] and the interaction between Mogadishu and the regions through patronage and indirect rule as seen in colonial times as well as during Siad Barre's regime (see Chapter II). It also captures many of the aspects of Somali politics with which Christia's model fails to resonate. For example, it makes sense in relation to the point made earlier that clan solidarity cannot be taken for granted even when a group appears to be winning; battlefield wins and access to more funds may equally bring up the price of loyalty and result in new bargaining rounds. It also makes sense in relation to how local rivals seek funds from elsewhere to manage their own patronage networks.

However, the model does not work as an off-the-peg framework for understanding alliances in Somalia in the period examined in this thesis. There are three main reasons for this. First, even though the model captures alliances along the vertical axis, it has little to say about national coalitions and how they are formed.[111] Secondly, it emphasizes opportunism rather than risk-aversion, and it is not well-suited for understanding alignments in the most intense periods, like the immediate aftermath of the collapse of Siad Barre's regime, when alignments were shaped by existential threats as much as calculation of pay-offs (see Chapter IV). As noted by Ken Menkhaus, this is one of the general weaknesses of political economy theories when applied to the Somali case: they tend to underestimate the role of risk-aversion.[112] In that sense, the political marketplace provides a framework for understanding the character of politics in general in Somalia as revolving around bargaining and patronage, but it does not work for describing alliance choices in periods characterised by collective fear.

[110] A. A. Castagno, "Somali Republic" in James Coleman and Carl Rosberg, eds., *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964), p. 557.
[111] The model suggested by Lee Seymour when examining factional side-switching resembles de Waal's framework in many regards – as well as the approach in this thesis – but resembles de Waal's model more as it does not address national coalitions and emphasizes opportunistic side-switching. See Seymour, "Why Factions Switch Sides".
[112] Menkhaus, *Somalia State Collapse*, p. 45.

Finally, the model is much better at explaining fluctuations than continuities – a point that de Waal also acknowledges[113] – and overestimates the ability of political entrepreneurs to bend social structures in their favour. In relation to Somalia, for example, de Waal argues that "[t]he capacity of Somali political actors to realign their coalitions, within and across lineage lines, shows that clan animosities tend to be transient and circumstantial: they are a product of organization for conflict, not its cause".[114] As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, this is only half the story, and competition over tangible issues like land and water at the subnational levels is anything but transient and circumstantial. As argued by Lee Cassanelli, it is the interaction between the two that is of central concern: realignments in elite politics "can and do affect claims to resource rights in the rural peripheries, just as rural struggles for control of strategic resources reshape alliances at the centre".[115]

Nevertheless, in combination with the refined realist approach that emphasizes perceptions of threats, the political marketplace model and the insights that it builds on – the non-Clausewitzian understanding of civil wars and the attention on continuities between war and peace – can be used to move beyond the culturally specific explanations of political allegiances in Somalia as described with reference to Lewis in the first part of this chapter.

The Suggested Approach for Making Sense of Alliances in Somalia

This chapter has examined three strands in the literature and showed how ideas and concepts borrowed from these can be combined to provide a framework for understanding alliances in Somalia. In the chapters that follow, this framework will be used to make sense of alliances and critical junctures in Somalia's civil war, and to show why alliances are better understood

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[113] According to de Waal, he is more concerned with "the material factors that drive change rather than the cultural factors that ensure continuities". *The Real Politics*, p. 33.
[114] de Waal, *The Real Politics*, p. 111.
[115] Lee Cassanelli, *Hosts and Guests: A Historical Interpretation of Land Conflicts in Southern and Central Somalia* (London: Rift Valley Institute), p. 8.

from a defensive rather offensive perspective. The chapters will demonstrate the validity of the two main arguments: that the civil war in Somalia has not been about winning as much as not losing, and that the various armed groups in Somalia cannot be understood as fighting the same war with similar objectives. Moreover, they highlight the main alliance patterns outlined earlier: the way in which alliances have been formed horizontally as well as vertically between local, regional, and national level political actors; how actors have focused on threats and outcomes in their own arena of competition, but nevertheless been forced to consider developments and outcomes in other arenas; and how changing expectations for what the coming hierarchy in Somalia will look like have shaped perceptions of threat.

If we say that alliance choices in Somalia have been determined by perceptions of threat primarily, how do we conceptualize threat? There are two ways of dealing with this key question. One way is to put together a list of things that determine what political actors perceive to be threats. This is how Stephen Walt approaches the issue when suggesting that we should think of threats in the international environment as determined by aggregate power, proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions.[116] The same variables could actually be used as a point of departure when defining threats in a civil war environment.[117] However, even though this approach works when looking at alliances between states, it becomes problematic in a civil war context, where there is more than one relevant unit. This means that we would either have to assume that the factors determining perceptions of threat are essentially the same for all political actors, irrespective of whether they are minor Islamist groups, regional clan militias, or major factions, or put together a

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[116] Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, p. 22.

[117] This could be motivated with findings from other studies of group dynamics in civil wars that show how changes in the relative strength of one group may lead to a security dilemma and countermobilisation, or how local actors tend to perceive neighbouring groups as a greater threat than more distant ones. For example, see Rogers Brubaker and David Laitin, "Ethnic and Nationalist Violence" in *Annual Review of Sociology* (1998); Daniel Blocq, "The Grassroots Nature of Counterinsurgent Tribal Militia Formation: The Case of the Fertit in Southern Sudan, 1985–1989" in *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8:4 (2014); Barry Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict" in *Survival* 35:1 (1993).

more extensive list to accommodate the diversity. In the end, though, even the most detailed list may end up obscuring more than it clarifies by being too broad and general to allow for predictions about how alliances will unfold, and at the same time too detailed and cluttered to provide a framework that can help us see the bigger picture – an "intuition of the whole" that can help us make sense of the parts.[118]

For this reason, a more reasonable approach is to assume that perceptions of threat are context dependent, and have to be understood from the viewpoint of the actors involved to the greatest extent possible. This approach also makes sense in relation to the overall purpose of this thesis: to offer a detailed historical narrative about alliances in Somalia's civil war and explain variations as well as continuities. In that perspective, it seems less important to identify a fixed set of variables that determine perceptions of threat, and more important to offer detailed data and concrete examples to demonstrate how a more reductive explanation not only fails to capture important nuances in alliance formation, but also misreads the rationale behind alliance choices at various critical junctures.

In the chapters that follow, the usefulness of this approach will be demonstrated in relation to alliance formation in Somalia's civil war. To set up this analysis, the following chapter will provide a historical background to show that the alliance patterns emphasized in this thesis can also be discerned in Somalia's past.

[118] Louis Menand, "Foreword: The Historical Romance" in *To the Finland Station: A Study in the Writing and Acting of History* by Edmund Wilson (New York: New York Review Books, 2003), p. ix. It is worth noting the similarities to Kenneth Waltz' understanding of the main functions of theory as something that "depicts the organization of a realm and the connections among its parts … theories lay bare the essential elements in play and indicate necessary relations of cause and interdependency – or suggest where to look for them". See Kenneth Waltz, "Evaluating Theories" in *The American Political Science Review* 91: 4 (1997), p. 913.

Chapter II

Historical Background: A State in Search of a Nation

"In Somalia, history is deadly ammunition in today's political wars".[1]

Alliances in Somalia's civil war cannot be understood in isolation from alliance dynamics in the country's past. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, there is no universal logic to civil war alliances that allows us to brush local histories aside; nor an internal logic to civil wars that makes alliance formation in times of violent competition fundamentally different from alliance dynamics in "normal" politics. For this reason, it makes sense to consider the historical context before trying to assess the rationale behind alignments in Somalia's civil war, and even though a general model may help us in our search for patterns, it can never be a substitute for in-depth knowledge about local history.

This chapter provides a brief historical background and looks at four eras in Somalia's modern history: the pre-colonial era, the European colonial era, the nine-year period of civilian rule from Somalia's independence to the military coup in 1969, and, finally, the two decades of escalating repression under Siad Barre's regime. The chapter does two things. First, it demonstrates that the main alliance patterns in Somalia's civil war era can be discerned in the country's past as well. Second, it shows that the historical record offers little support for the clichés that have underpinned many popular narratives about political dynamics in Somalia. Among these clichés are the notion of a deeply-rooted Somali

[1] David Laitin and Said Samatar, *A Nation in Search of a State* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), p. xvii.

nationalism;[2] the idea of a homogenous Somali people that comes together against outsiders despite internal clan rivalries as they are "steeped in antagonism to outsiders"[3]; the idea that clan solidarity is always the main variable in alliance formation; and the misperception that Somalia has always been important to global powers due to its strategic location in the Horn of Africa. As demonstrated in this chapter, these clichés have little historical bearing, and we use them as starting points for understanding contemporary politics at our peril.

This chapter shows that a more appropriate approach for understanding alliances in Somalia is to move away from the notion of a Somali nation and instead focus on the interaction between various local arenas of political competition in the Horn of Africa. It demonstrates how alliances in pre-colonial times were formed within regional resource systems that connected pastoralists in the hinterland to city-states along the Somali coast; how dominant groups in these systems used resources beyond kinship to form alliances and gain influence over larger territories; and how clan representatives appeared "ready to enter into relations with all comers"[4] when dealing with European colonial powers as they viewed them as potential allies against local rivals rather than as immediate threats. Furthermore, it explains how the European colonial powers treated their Somali territories as expendable assets and developed low-cost governance schemes based on indirect rule that reinforced clan divisions and established weak state structures,[5] and shows how the post-colonial state in Somalia

[2] For a discussion about this perception, see E. R. Turton, "Somali Resistance to Colonial Rule and the Development of Somali Political Activity in Kenya 1893-1960" in *The Journal of African History* 13:1 (1972).
[3] Ioan Lewis cited in Ahmed Qasim Ali "The Predicament of the Somali Studies" in Ahmed, ed., *The Invention of Somalia*, p. 76.
[4] David Laitin, *Politics, Language, and Thought: The Somali Experience* (Chicago: University press, 1977), p. 71.
[5] According to Laitin and Samatar, the British treated its Somali territory as "an expendable asset" (*A Nation in Search of a State*, p. 60), and even though the Italians were more engaged, Somalia was its least cherished colony, illustrated by the fact that Italy preferred to keep Eritrea and Libya after World War II, but "recovered the only colony it was not interested in – Somalia". See Paolo Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy in Somalia: Rome and Mogadishu from Colonial Administration to Operation Restore Hope* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), p. 168.

never managed to overcome the legacy of indirect rule, despite efforts towards centralization and modernization based on a reformulated Somali nationalism.

Although some Somali nationalists may object to this characterisation of the country's past, especially those who claim that modern clannist politics is "a temporary aberration that will inevitably give way to a new nationalist thinking",[6] it is argued that an approach that emphasizes local competition rather than nationalist sentiments is more in line with the historical record, and therefore serves as a better foundation for understanding alliance dynamics in Somalia's civil war era.

Alliances in Pre-Colonial Somalia: Regional Resource Systems and Indirect Rule

As mentioned in the previous chapter, two dynamics tend to be emphasized in historical backgrounds to Somalia's civil war: first, that Somalia was a stateless society before European colonialism, and second, that even though there was no state, there was a Somali nation characterised by "ethnic and cultural uniformity".[7] If we start with the alleged statelessness, the standard argument is that although there were city-states along the Somali coast for centuries, including those in Zeila, Berbera, Mogadishu, Merca, and Barawe, as well as sultanates that controlled larger territories further inland, like Adal, Ajuraan, and Geledi, there was no central authority for the entire Somali region that stretches from Djibouti in the north to Tana River in the south (see map in Appendix 1). Instead, it was the uncentralized and egalitarian pastoralist culture that constituted the norm. In 1960, when Somalia became independent, this was still the case – approximately two-thirds of the population were pastoralists or semi-pastoralists[8] – and it was against this background that

[6] Hassan Ali Mirreh "On Providing for the Future" in Ahmed Samatar, ed., *The Somali Challenge: From Catastrophe to Renewal?* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994), p. 22.
[7] Laitin and Samatar, *A Nation in Search*, p. 21.
[8] Ibid., p. 22

authors like Ioan Lewis and Abdullahi Hersi maintained that "in traditional Somali society 'central political authority meant nothing … and does not even today'".[9] As a result, the state in Somalia came to be described as "a foreign construct sustained by foreign resources and subject to foreign strategic interests".[10] At the same time, even though Somalia had never been a political entity in pre-colonial times, it was described as the only nation state in Africa with a population "as culturally uniform as the Ethiopians are mixed".[11]

There are two major flaws in this common narrative: first, it underestimates the diversity of the Somali population; furthermore, it exaggerates the lack of hierarchical political structures in the Somali region in pre-colonial times. If we begin with the alleged homogeneity, it overlooks the existing differences in Somalia with regards to ethnicity, language, and culture. According to Abdi Kusow, these differences were downplayed as part of the modern nationalist project in Somalia that favoured "a mythical-based state supported lineage-based narrative … [which] operates from the premise that the Somali society is essentially homogeneous and fundamentally egalitarian".[12] This narrative "glorified the nomadic tradition but also ignored and degraded other Somali traditions",[13] and it built on the myth of a common Somali ancestor named Hiil, the father of Sab and Samaale, from whom the two main branches in Somalia's total genealogy extend, and connections to the lineage of the Prophet Mohamed, the Quraysh.[14]

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[9] Lewis citing Ali Abdirahman Hersi, "The Arab Factor in Somali History: The Origins and the Development of Arab Enterprise and Cultural in the Somali Peninsula" (PhD dissertation) University of California (1977).
[10] Mark Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland* (London: Progression, 2008), p. 23.
[11] Tom Farer, *War Clouds on the Horizon: A Crisis for Détente* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), p. 50.
[12] Abdi Kusow, "Contested Narratives and the Crisis of the Nation-State in Somalia: A Prolegomenon" in Abdi Kusow, ed., *Putting the Cart Before the Horse: Contested Nationalism and the Crisis of the Nation-State in Somalia* (Trenton: Africa World Press), p. 10.
[13] Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, "Islam in Somali History: Fact and Fiction" in Ali Jimale Ahmed, ed., *The Invention of Somalia*, p. 21.
[14] Abdalla Omar Mansur, "The Nature of the Somali Clan System" in Adam and Ford, eds., *Mending Rips in the Sky*, p. 124.

In reality, however, the origin of the Somali people appears to lie in the southern Ethiopian highlands from where the people migrated towards the north.[15] This migration resulted in commercial interaction with coastal communities and Arab traders, and it led to "the induction of the pastoralist economy into the global economy" as well as the emergence of major towns and the beginning of mass conversion to Islam.[16] In the 12th century, these coastal communities "expanded beyond their means and resources".[17] This led to a second migration towards the south, which resulted in the Somali population of the region as well as the establishment of new trade routes, which connected the coast with the hinterland and "helped transform the Somali economy from a single mode based on pastoralism to one in which pastoralism went hand in hand with long distance trade".[18]

The result of this migration was not the establishment of the Somali nation as much as the emergence of a patchwork of what Lee Cassanelli has described as "regional resource systems".[19] Put shortly, these regions were the most relevant units in the pre-colonial setting, with each region containing "the complex of [natural and nonpastoral] resources needed to insure the nomad's survival".[20] According to Cassanelli, each region was "identifiable by a major market town or towns, by a series of well complexes that serve[d] herdsmen from several clans, and by caravan trails that link[ed] these two nodes of pastoral activity".[21] In that sense, it was the region – not the nation – that constituted the relevant arena of competition in this period; it was in relation to regional developments that groups assessed threats and opportunities; and it was within the region that groups would "carry out their seasonal rounds, forge alliances of marriage or of convenience, establish exchange

15 Laitin and Samatar, *A Nation in Search*, p. 5.
16 Ibid., p. 8.
17 Ibid., p. 9.
18 Ibid., p. 8
19 Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 82.
20 Ibid., p. 68.
21 Ibid., p. 68.

relationships, and, not infrequently, fight with one another".[22] In other words, it was not only "decentralized processes of political and marital alliances that inhibited national consciousness"[23] – it was also that the Somali region as a whole did not constitute an arena of competition in pre-colonial times.

This leads us to the second fallacy of the standard narrative about Somali politics in pre-colonial times: it underestimates the extent to which hierarchical forms of political rule structured social relations within this patchwork of regional resource systems. Although there was no central authority for the entire Somali region, there were certainly hierarchical structures within these regions, like the previously mentioned sultanates and city-states. Already in 1331, Ibn Battuta described Mogadishu as an "exceedingly large city" which must have required a centralised authority,[24] and the same applied to the Ajuraan and Geledi that wielded influence over larger areas in the hinterland.

Alliances were absolutely key to the ways in which these sultanates functioned. According to Cassanelli, they relied on their ability to control "the central nodes of pastoral activity"[25] through alliances with clans in the hinterland, as well as through alliances with external actors, like the sultanates in Oman and Zanzibar. In the mid-1800s, for example, when the Benaadir region was under the nominal rule of Zanzibar, politics in Mogadishu was characterised by the ways in which "different factions of the ruling class sought to ally themselves with powerful external partners both in the interior and from overseas" in ways that were

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[22] Ibid., p. 68.
[23] Charles Geshekter "The Death of Somalia in Historical Perspective" in Adam and Ford, eds., *Mending Rips in the Sky*, p. 70.
[24] Laitin and Samatar, *A Nation in Search*, p. 15.
[25] According to Cassanelli, "the resource system also set the limits on the size of the regional polities in the past, since centralizing authority could be exercised only as far as the resource base used by its subjects extended". *The Shaping of Somali Society,* p. 72.

"absolutely typical of virtually all coastal towns".[26] In Merca, the Zanzibari representative relied on the Biimaal clan, while the Tunni confederacy held a similar position in Barawe, and so forth.[27]

In other words, there was a pattern of indirect rule even before the arrival of the European colonialists, as the rulers in Oman and Zanzibar had "neither the incentive nor the resources to take direct control of their Benaadir possessions, a circumstance that predisposed them to rule though Somali intermediaries".[28] In short, even though alliance formation in pre-colonial times may have revolved around the *reer* and *shiir* as described by Lewis when seen at the micro-level, it was the interaction between pastoralists in the hinterland, urban traders along the coast, and the regional powers that characterised alliance dynamics at the macro-level.

This meant that when the European colonial intrusion began in the late 1800s, there were several political entities in the Somali region, all loosely held together through alliances – the Geledi sultanate, the Harar emirate, the kingdoms of Majerteen and Obbia, and so forth[29] – and it is in relation to this patchwork of interconnected arenas of competition that the colonial partitioning of the Somali region must be seen.

Alliances in the Colonial Era: Alliances in a Bifurcated Society

The Somali region was never highly prized by the European colonial powers. When the Portuguese sailed along the coast in the 1500s, "the coastal towns of Somalia were of no immediate interest", although they had considerable interests in Abyssinia that motivated

[26] Edward Alpers, "Muqdisho in the Nineteenth Century: A Regional Perspective" in *The Journal of African History* 24:4 (1983), p. 447-448.
[27] Laitin and Samatar, *A Nation in Search*, p. 18.
[28] Ibid., p 18.
[29] Ibid., p. 19.

interaction with the Somali region.[30] When Europe's other colonial powers began to show interest in the region in the late 1800s, they did so according to the same logic: they all established a presence in the region for reasons other than controlling the land and its resources *per se*. For example, the British signed a series of treaties with Somali clans along the northern coast in order to safeguard the provision of livestock for its garrison in Aden – an important stop on the way to India – without any ambition to establish a protectorate, although these treaties subsequently evolved into the establishment of British Somaliland.[31]

Similarly, France acquired the port town of Obok and later Djibouti to establish French Somaliland, motivated by competition over the most important geopolitical resource in the region – the Nile – which also attracted Russian and Ottoman interest.[32] However, the French had no real interest in the southern coast, and neither had the British government, as underlined by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Salisbury, who described it as "a coast without harbours, trade, produce, or strategic advantage".[33]

It was this relative lack of competition that allowed Italy – a latecomer in the colonial race – to establish a presence in the south through acquisition of the Benadiir from Zanzibar.[34] At first, the colony was run by chartered trading companies, the Filonardi Company and later the Benadir Company, which functioned as "semiofficial overseas extensions of the metropolitan government"[35] until the government took over in 1905. But there were serious doubts about the economic potential of the land from the start, and leading figures in Rome

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[30] Robert Hess *Italian Colonialism in Somalia* (Chicago: University Press, 1966), p. 6. See Laitin and Samatar, *A Nation in Search*, p. 17.
[31] For discussion about these treaties, see Sally Healy, "British Perceptions of Treaties with the Somalis: 1884–1897" in Hussein Adam and Charles Geshekter, eds., *Proceedings of the First International Congress of Somali Studies* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).
[32] Ioan Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland* (London: Hurst, 2008), p. 28.
[33] Laitin, *Politics and Language*, p. 69.
[34] Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, p. 38.
[35] Ibid., p. 179.

described the colonial enterprise in Somalia as "destined to represent a perennial economic delusion and consequently a political weakness".[36] This also turned out to be the case: colonial administrations in the Somalilands always required subsidies from London and Rome as a result of their own meagre tax incomes.[37] Nevertheless, the Italians remained in Somalia for reasons of prestige in Europe.[38] In that sense, they viewed their colony as a stepping-stone for grander ambitions, including the conquering of Abyssinia, in the same way as they regarded Africa in general as "only the whetstone on which we Italians shall sharpen our sword for a supreme conquest in the unknown future".[39]

If the European colonial powers viewed the Somali region has having limited potential, it was the other way around when it came to the Somali stakeholders and their assessment of the European colonial powers: they perceived them as highly useful allies (or dangerous opponents) in their own arenas of competition. In the northeast, for example, the sultan of Majerteenia, Osman Mahmoud, sought German "protection" as early as 1885 in order to undermine the greatest threat to his interests – his rival cousin, Yusuf Ali Kenadid, the sultan of Obbia – but the Germans showed no interest.[40] Similarly, the sultan of Obbia asked for Italian protection in 1888 after a dispute with Zanzibar,[41] after which the Majerteen sultan sent a representative to Aden to ask for British protection.[42] In 1899, however, when a new force was on the rise in the north – the *dervish* movement – both sultanates accepted "protection" as relatively independent parts of *Somalia Italiana*.

[36] Ibid., p. 86.
[37] Ibid., p. 195.
[38] Ibid., p. 50.
[39] Laitin, *Politics and Language*, p. 57.
[40] Hess, p. 27.
[41] Ibid., p. 25.
[42] Ibid., p. 128.

In other words, alliance choices were based on perceived threats, and the same logic applied in the south: the clans in Merca "offered their friendship to the Italians to counter Arab bid for local dominance";[43] the Shidle and Elay in the inter-riverine area were sympathetic to the Italians because "they stood to gain most in intertribal disputes with their hostile nomadic neighbours";[44] the British were actively invited by sultans in Jubbaland because they feared an Ethiopian invasion;[45] and the Harti in Kismayo cooperated closely with the British "to counter the dominance of the larger, militarily superior Ogadeen".[46] As noted by Turton, the overall logic was that "an expanding colonial government was not the only outside threat that [Somali clans] experienced, nor, until after 1910, was it from their point of view necessarily the most important".[47] Moreover, what seemed like a threat to one group appeared as an opportunity to their rivals. Nevertheless, by drawing on external allies, the Somali contenders for power became what Jean-Francois Bayart has described as "active agents in the mise en dépendance of their societies"[48] when discussing colonialism in relation to local dynamics in general.

This obviously does not mean that there was no resistance to European colonial rule – on the contrary. There was considerable resistance to subordination, and the Italians did not even try to extend their rule into the hinterland in the early years, since they knew it would generate resistance.[49] As suggested by Tom Farer, it could even be argued that the initial agreements regarding "protection" never suggested any subordination – the Somali signatories never gave up any land but only promised that they would not sell it to others – which explains why many clans were eager to receive "protection" to gain external muscles

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[43] Ibid., p. 41.
[44] Ibid., p. 93.
[45] E.R. Turton, "The Impact of Mohammad Abdille Hassan in the East Africa Protectorate" in *The Journal of African History*, 10:4 (1969), p. 643.
[46] Peter Little, *Economy Without a State* (Oxford: James Currey, 2003), p. 26.
[47] Turton, "Somali Resistance to Colonial Rule", p. 121.
[48] Bayart, *The State in Africa*, p. 24.
[49] Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, p. 76.

for their local conflicts.[50] However, "when this protection also involved some loss of freedom there was a tendency to react against it".[51]

But there was never a unified Somali opposition – only various *oppositions* – and if there was a cultural Somali nation, "it had no political manifestation in resistance to Europeans".[52] Instead, resistance became embedded in local politics – a logical consequence of the British and Italian indirect rule that embedded domination in local politics – which undermined the possibilities of a broader opposition. As demonstrated later in this thesis, the same pattern could be seen in the struggle against Siad Barre, who used similar policies of indirect rule towards the end of his rule, resulting in a fragmented opposition characterised by competition between and within clans (see Chapter III). In colonial times, the European powers maintained their influence in similar ways, utilizing divisions within as well as between clans as "factions that had traditionally competed for status and authority often took different positions on the colonial question".[53]

An important exception to this norm of localised resistance was the twenty-year campaign of resistance against the British led by Mohammed Abdullah Hassan, who is commonly seen as Somalia's foremost national hero. In 1899, the *Sayyid* launched his jihad against the British colonialists, and over the following two decades, he managed a strict religious, militaristic organisation that cut across clan lines with "followers who invoked his name not only in the heat of battle, but also at the cold hour of execution".[54] However, the *dervishes* were not nationalists in a strict sense because they mobilized based on a religious identity rather than

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[50] Farer, *War Clouds on the Horizon,* p. 53.
[51] Turton, "The Impact of Mohammad Abdille Hassan", p. 643.
[52] Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, p. 182.
[53] Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 238.
[54] Douglas Jardine, *The Mad Mullah of* Somaliland (London: Herbert Jenkins), p. 314. For further discussion, see Said Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The Case of Sayyid Mahammad 'Abdille Hasan* (Cambridge: University Press), p. 220.

a Somali national identity. In that regard, they resembled the movement led by Ahmed Gurey – another Somali nationalist hero who defeated the Abyssinians in the 1500s – whose followers went to war as Muslims rather than as Somalis.[55] Moreover, the tactical alliances of the Sayyid – he cooperated with the Italians as well as the Ethiopian emperor at various times – make the nationalist label somewhat problematic, not to mention his targeting of Somalia's other religious orders and rival clans that posed threats to his interests.[56] In other words, the dervish movement confirms rather than contradicts the main patterns in alliance formation – a focus on perceived threats and a primary concern with the immediate arena of competition – but it also illustrates the role of Islam as a unifying factor and frame for mobilization as will be discussed in the context of Somalia's civil war (see Chapter VII).

After the defeat of the dervish movement, resistance against European colonial rule became "somewhat dormant",[57] and the period between 1920 and 1940 was characterised by colonial consolidation.[58] In the process of this consolidation, the north and south embarked on markedly different trajectories, which resulted in a political divide that was hard to overcome following independence. In the south, the Italian administration launched a program of social transformation following the fascist takeover in 1923.[59] In short, the administration abandoned indirect rule and adopted a policy that incorporated Italian imperialism's three main elements – "direct rule, racism and demographic colonialism".[60] This changed the political landscape in several ways: it reduced the traditional elders to "decorative figures"[61]

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[55] Laitin and Samatar, *A Nation in Search*, p. 12.
[56] Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism*, p. 183 and p. 133.
[57] Abdi Samatar, *Africa's First Democrats: Somalia's Aden A. Osman and Abdirazak H. Hussen* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p. 84.
[58] Laitin and Samatar, *A Nation in Search*, p. 59.
[59] Lee Cassanelli, "The Ending of Slavery in Italian Somalia: Liberty and the Control of Labor, 1890-1935" in Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).
[60] Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy in Somalia,* p. 5.
[61] Gérard Prunier, "Benign Neglect versus La Grande Somalia" in Hoehne and Luling, eds., *Peace and Milk, Drought and War*, p. 42.

and deprived them of any real influence; it established borders between areas determined to be occupied by different clans;[62] and it promoted a settler economy through "the dissolution of the tribal collective land tenure system … preparing the conditions for a new form of ownership, individual and foreign".[63] All of this was done with the help of violence. In the process, the fascist administration destroyed much of the traditional authorities' capacity to manage inter-clan relations, and broke up existing inter-clan agreements regarding tangible issues such as water and pasture.[64]

In contrast, the British maintained a very loose form indirect rule in the north. Its main policy, according to a Somali elder, was "to have no ideas and spend no money",[65] which reflected their assessment that Somaliland would never be profitable given the lack of minerals, oil, and other valuable resources.[66] These differences in the colonial experiences not only created a rift between north and south that made unity problematic following Somalia's independence, but also contributed to different trajectories in the post-1991 era, when traditional authorities in the north were in a better position to provide leadership and stability than their counterparts in the south (see Chapter IV).[67]

Apart from creating a northern-southern divide, the consolidation of colonial rule resulted in an urban-rural divide that became equally important in alliance formation following Somalia's independence. It resulted in what Mahmoud Mamdani has described as a "bifurcated state", meaning a society in which the urban elite adopted "the language of

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[62] Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, p. 182-184.
[63] Marco Guadagni, "Colonial Origins of the Public Domain in Southern Somalia (1892-1912)" in *Journal of African Law*, 22:1 (19878), p. 25.
[64] Prunier, "Benign Neglect", p. 46.
[65] Charles Geshekter, "Anti-Colonialism and Class Formation: The Eastern Horn of Africa before 1950" in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 18: 1 (1985), p. 19.
[66] "The country is largely barren and without any substantial natural resources … so far as is known the country has no mineral wealth; extensive surveys have failed to locate oil". Somaliland Protectorate Development Plan: Colonial Development and Welfare Acts 1940 & 1945 (Hargeisa, 1950).
[67] Prunier, "Benign Neglect", p. 46.-47.

rights" associated with the colonial administration, while traditional leaders empowered through indirect rule spoke "the language of tradition".[68] This resulted in two categories of political elites with different sources of legitimacy and power: on the one hand, there were the traditional authorities appointed as *akils*, whose titles as *suldaaan*, *ugaas*, *garaad*, and so forth, had been ceremonial in the past, but now became associated with stipends and powers from the colonial administration; on the other hand, "a new elite whose power was based not on the traditional political culture, but on urban wealth, western education, and association with the colonial regime – that is, government employment and service".[69]

In the end, however, it was the traditional system that was undermined by the colonial system, especially since those who accepted positions as colonially appointed *akils* rarely were the ones with authority and influence over their own communities,[70] resulting in competing claims to leadership that seemed to "weaken the stability of diya-paying groups".[71] In that sense, the colonial legacy was the same in north and south: it undermined and corrupted traditional authorities; it provided numerous incentives for clan competition but none for pan-Somali affinities; and it established a clear link based on clan representation between the administrative powers and the majority of the population. As will be discussed below, this legacy had major implications for alliance formation in Somalia following independence.

The Somali Republic: A Divided and Incomplete State

The rise of Somali nationalism in the 1940s was not the result of internal processes as much as a consequence of the Second World War in the Horn of Africa.[72] In 1941, the British

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[68] Mahmood Mamdani, "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 43:4 (2001).
[69] Jama Mohamed, "Constructing Colonial Hegemony in the Somaliland Protectorate" (unpublished Ph.D thesis) University of Toronto, p. 308.
[70] Jama Mohamed, "Kinship and Contract in Somali Politics", p. 230-231.
[71] Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, p. 203.
[72] Saadia Touval, *Somali Nationalism: International Politics and the Drive for Unity in the Horn of Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 76.

occupied Mogadishu and became the occupiers of four Somali territories after the defeat of the Italians: British Somaliland, Somalia Italiana, the Ogaden, and the Northern Frontier District (NFD) in Kenya. According to Abdi Samatar, this was "an occasion for Somali nationalists to recognize the silver lining that the defeat of Italy brought about: a Somali union".[73]

In 1943, the Somali Youth Club (SYC) was established in Mogadishu as one of the first nationalist groups. It was led by young, educated professionals from the urban elite who restricted membership of the organization to men under thirty, since they wanted to exclude "reactionary elders who did not understand modern requirements".[74] In 1947, it was renamed the Somali Youth League (SYL), and it was at that point the leading nationalist movement with two goals – the establishment of "Greater Somalia" and the elimination of clannism[75] – which resonated with the British government's increasingly positive attitude towards a unified Somalia.[76]

However, the Four Power Commission that decided on the fate of the Italian colonies after 1948 opted for an alternative arrangement that separated the five Somali territories: the British Somaliland Protectorate was reinstated; the Italians returned to administer their former colony under a UN Trusteeship for ten years in preparation for independence; the Ogaden region was gradually returned to Ethiopia; French Somaliland remained a colony under Paris; and the NFD remained part of Kenya.[77] As noted by Abdi Samatar, this partitioning of Somalia was a decisive moment, without which the next fifty years in the country's history may have looked radically different.[78]

[73] Samatar, *Africa's First Democrats*, p. 84.
[74] Castagno, "Somali Republic", p. 521.
[75] Castagno, *Somalia*, p 359.
[76] Turton, "Anti-Colonialism", p. 137.
[77] Lewis, *Understanding* Somalia, p. 32.
[78] Samatar, *Africa's First Democrats*, p. 84.

In 1960, when the Somali Republic was established as a union between British Somaliland and Somalia Italiana, it was consequently seen as an incomplete state – it included only two of five Somali territories – and unification became the country's main objective inscribed in the constitution.[79] This put the country on a collision course with Ethiopia and Kenya: it resulted in a short war with Ethiopia in 1964 as well as the formation of the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), and it resulted in clandestine support to Somali fighters in the so-called Shifta War in Kenya.[80] The aim of Greater Somalia also motivated an enormous Soviet-supported military budget (the Americans were already backing Haile Selassie in Addis Ababa) and this motivated an Ethiopian-Kenyan defensive agreement aimed at handling the Somali threat.[81]

However, in parallel with the nationalist rhetoric, there were (rather paradoxically) considerable challenges in bringing together the two territories in the union. Apart from the challenge in harmonizing legislation and administrative practices,[82] there was a general sense of "reduction in prestige" in the north as Mogadishu quickly became the locus of power.[83] In 1961, this was manifested in a failed coup attempt led by officers in the north, and a referendum in which the majority of northern voters were against the constitution of the union.[84] In that sense, the young Somali Republic did not only represent "a nation in search of a state" – it was also "a state in search of a nation" in which the bonds between constituent parts were not as strong as the rhetoric suggested.

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[79] Ioan Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali (Oxford: James Currey, 2002)*, p. 179.
[80] Ibid., p. 202.
[81] Jamal Mubarak, *From Bad Policy to Chaos in Somalia: How an Economy Fell Apart* (London: Praeger), p 10.
[82] Paolo Contini, *The Somali Republic: An Experiment in Legal Integration* (London: Cass, 1969).
[83] Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 172.
[84] Ibid., p. 172

An equally important development in this period was the formation of new political parties and alliances. There was a rapid proliferation of lineage-based parties around the time of the Four Power Commission, and this continued into the period leading up to independence, which underlined "the desire of the political leader of each major locality and tribe to have his own party",[85] and even the parties that propagated against clannism, like the SYL, were "compelled to rely on traditional leaders and to employ agnatic cleavages wherever and whenever they could enhance the party's strength".[86]

In that sense, the logic behind alignments was familiar from before: all parties drew on lineage solidarity and sought alliances to counter the main threat to their interests. However, the establishment of a national political arena also resulted in a widening of the "clan alliance system", which motivated a "realignment of lineage and tribal interests at a new level",[87] with clan-family identities becoming more important. This was most evident in the establishment of the Hizbia Digil-Mirifle (HDM) – an opposition party that built on the Sab communities in the inter-riverine arena – which pushed for a federal governance structure and feared the dominance of the predominantly pastoralist Samale clans that led the SYL.[88] Like in previous eras in Somalia's history, these rivals mobilised external supporters to gain the upper hand, with the SYL taking a strong anti-Italian position and drawing on British support, while the Italians initially supported the HDM and created an opposition alliance between them and other anti-SYL parties – it was "a modified Somali *gaashaanbuur-ta* … an ad hoc coalition … for purposes of common defense".[89]

[85] Castagno, *Somalia*, p. 357.
[86] Castagno, "Somali Republic", p. 528.
[87] Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, p. 271.
[88] For further discussion, see Mukhtar, "The Plight of the Agro-Pastoral Society of Somalia".
[89] Castagno, "Somali Republic", p. 524.

But the emergence of a national political arena also changed the underlying logic of alliance formation. Most importantly, it changed the rationale for cross-clan alliances as there was a new need for clan balancing at the national level – clan balancing became "a standard operating procedure"[90] – which resulted in intra-clan competition over representation at the centre. For example, when Aden Abdulla's government had its first major crisis in 1961, it was because a rival Hawiye candidate – rather than a deputy from some other clan-family – tried to depose the president by establishing a breakaway party.[91] At many times, local rivals supported different sides in national politics, irrespective of whether they were directly associated with the clans involved, like in Afgoye, where support for the SYL and HDMS came to reflect pre-existing cleavages, "so the old division crystallised in the new political form".[92]

In other words, there was a somewhat new logic, in the sense that close agnates were not always natural allies against more distant clans in national politics – they could also be threats in competition over positions in the higher levels of government. This logic contradicted the ideal of clan solidarity and was exacerbated by the tension that existed between outcomes in local and national arenas of competition in the new political setting. As noted by Anna Simons in a passage worth quoting at length:

> "… a stable democratically elected government [in Somalia] has to rely on a balance at the national level, which often contravenes the balance (or lack of balance) that exists at the local level. Balance achieved nationally, with one Hawiye carefully placed in this position and a Darood in that position, will not necessarily translate

[90] Laitin and Samatar, *A Nation in Search*, p 70.
[91] Ibid., p 73.
[92] Virginia Lulling, *Somali Sultanate: The Geledi City-State over 150 Years* (London: Haan, 2002), p. 89.

> outside of Mogadishu, where in any given area most people would be either Darood or Hawiye (or Isaq, Raxanweyn, etc.), and more specifically still from X or Y lineages and not A or B clans. Hence, there is constant potential for friction at the national level over what is taking place locally, which can't be translated nationally. At the same time, what is being posited nationally has the potential for alienating local power blocks".[93]

In practice, this meant that the first government in the Somali Republic was based on a coalition between three parties, the SYL, SNL, and USP, with a carefully balanced cabinet and no real parliamentary opposition.[94] This reflected the dominance of main parties as well as a tendency for groups to seek accommodation within the government – as opposed to taking on the role as loyal opposition – because "to be a member of an opposition party was not a profitable venture".[95] As a result, intra-government negotiations became critical, and it was through extensive internal bargaining that the government maintained itself. However, the coalition fell apart in 1963, and when it came to elections in 1964, there were twenty-four parties competing for parliamentary seats. This was mainly a strategy for achieving bargaining power in the new government, and once the elections were completed, "21 of the non-SYL deputies crossed the floor and joined the majority party" in a way that illustrated an unwillingness to be on the losing side as much as a search for pay-offs.[96]

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[93] Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, p. 211.
[94] For more on clan balancing in the first government, see Samatar, *Africa's First Democrats*.
[95] Samatar, *The State and Rural Transformation*, p. 112.
[96] Ahmed Samatar, "The Curse of Allah: Civic Disembowelment and the Collapse of the State in Somalia" in Samatar, ed., *The Somali Challenge*, p. 114.

The competition over seats in parliament has to be understood in relation to the economy of the Somali Republic and its reliance on external resources.[97] In the period from 1960 to 1969, Somalia received more foreign aid per capita than any other African state, and there was extensive borrowing that resulted in a spiralling external debt.[98] As noted by Abdi Samatar, this "made access to state resources, and their distribution, the central object of competition and envy", since "accumulation based on domestic production was of much less significance than foreign aid".[99] In the end, this produced a "xeer-less" political culture in which politicians and the state relied on clanship to function, but was separated from the pastoralist economy and the moral codes that had guided politics in the traditional setting.[100] In that sense, there was a "privatization of public life",[101] and parliament became "a sordid market-place where, with little concern for the interests of those who had voted for them, deputies traded their votes for personal gain".[102]

This culminated in the 1969 elections when more than 60 lineage-based parties competed for 123 seats in the national assembly, and although the SYL won "only" 73 seats, the remaining 50 opposition members crossed the floor in parliament to join the dominant part, meaning that "Somalia had become in effect a one-party state".[103] However, the situation changed dramatically when the president, Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, was assassinated after the elections, leading to confusion and intense bargaining within the SYL regarding the appointment of a new president. On October 21, 1969, the night before parliament would

[97] For a detailed discussion about the economy in the trusteeship period, see Mark Karp, *The Economics of Trusteeship in Somalia* (Boston: University Press, 1960).
[98] David Laitin, "The Political Economy of Military Rule in Somalia" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14:3 (1976), p. 452.
[99] Samatar, *The State and Rural Transformation*, p. 87.
[100] Samatar, "Destruction of State and Society in Somalia", p. 634.
[101] Samatar, "The Curse of Allah", p. 113.
[102] Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 205-206.
[103] Mukhtar, "The Plight of the Agro-Pastoral Society", p. 549.

assemble to vote for a new president, the military stepped in, which became the starting point for more than two decades of repressive military rule.

The Regime of Siad Barre: A Dictatorship in Three Acts

The military coup in 1969 was greeted with support and optimism by most Somalis because the military represented all the values that the political elites had disowned, including nationalism, professionalism, and patriotism.[104] This impression was reinforced when the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) that seized power appointed civil servants who were "technocrats chosen for their ability rather than with an eye to achieving an even representation of the country's traditional clan and lineage divisions".[105] However, under the auspices of its leader, Mohamed Siad Barre, the military regime soon changed.

The following two decades of increasingly authoritarian rule can be divided into three periods characterised by different alliance dynamics. First, there was a period of political centralisation and consolidation during which the SRC was at the centre of power, followed by a period during which power became associated with the main clans around Siad Barre's family – the Marehan, Ogaden, and Dhubahante – known as the MOD alliance.[106] Finally, the third period, in which the ruling circle was narrowed down to Siad Barre's immediate family and a limited number of Marehan elites. Paradoxically, even though the ruling circle became smaller, this period saw a reversal of the centralisation tendencies as formal state structures began to disintegrate and the regime began to arm clan militias and other non-state actors. In other words, there was a return to the familiar logic of indirect rule seen in

[104] Samatar, "The Curse of Allah", p. 115.
[105] Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 208.
[106] Ioan Lewis, "Somalia: "Nationalism Turned Inside Out"" in *MERIP Reports*, 106, Horn of Africa: The Coming Storm (1982), p. 19.

the colonial era, when domination was maintained through alliances with rival groups that focused on outcomes in subnational arenas rather than on national politics.

In the first period between 1969 and 1975, the regime's main priority was domestic development through economic and political centralisation.[107] This included nationalisation of domestic as well as foreign businesses, and there was a rapid change in local administration, as civilian governors at district and regional levels were replaced by military personnel who oversaw local revolutionary councils that mirrored the SRC in Mogadishu.[108] At the heart of this effort was a campaign aimed at eradicating clannism. Prison terms and fines were meted out for activities classified as tribalism and the death penalty was introduced to replace *diya* payments.[109] After the first anniversary of the military takeover, when Siad Barre announced that "scientific socialism" would be the revolution's overarching ideology, the SRC's efforts became couched in anti-imperialist language, and met with considerable support among Western intellectuals, especially after the regime's expansion of social services, the formalisation of the Somali language, and the launch of an extraordinarily ambitious literacy campaign.[110]

But these achievements came at the expense of civil liberties as the regime became increasingly repressive – the National Security Services (NSS) were given "arbitrary powers of arrest and detention"[111] – and Siad Barre soon became the object of a growing personal cult. It also became clear how the regime would deal with perceived opposition. In July, 1972, two members of the SRC were executed for promoting counterrevolutionary ideas, and three years later, the regime executed ten Islamic scholars after protests against a new family law

[107] Mubarak, *From Bad Policy to Chaos*, p. 12.
[108] Lewis, *Understanding Somalia*, p. 38.
[109] Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 208.
[110] At the time of Somalia's independence, 90 percent of the population was illiterate. Samatar, *Africa's First Democrats*, p. 86.
[111] Lewis, *Understanding Somalia*, p. 40.

that Somalia's sheikhs considered un-Islamic.[112] These events set the standard for the regime's handling of oppositional voices in the following years.

This crackdown created an environment of fear and uncertainty in the society as well as in elite politics. In contrast to the civilian government's focus on maintaining a relative clan balance in appointments, Siad Barre adapted a more unpredictable approach by rotating and changing the balance. On the surface, this made it appear that clan identity was not a variable in appointments, but in practice it also became a way of keeping people on their toes and never knowing exactly what to expect.[113]

In the second period of Siad Barre's regime, there was a change in focus towards external issues, especially the Ogaden region.[114] This change was motivated by domestic as well as regional politics. On the domestic level, a major driver was the general perception that the clans in the MOD alliance held the reins of power in Somalia, not the SRC. Although this was true to some extent, it was not a "monopoly of state power"[115] as suggested by some observers. Siad Barre was "too clever to allow himself to survive on a MOD foundation alone".[116] He promoted "figures from obscure, minority segments of major clan groups who were flattered to serve him and present themselves as clan representatives",[117] and "used state institutions and state resources to neutralize his perceived enemies, regardless of their clan affiliation, and to build temporary alliances based upon varying clan, locality and class

112 Samatar, "The Curse of Allah", p. 117.
113 Interview analyst in Nairobi (Interview #2).
114 Lewis, A Modern History, p. 227.
115 Martin Doornbos and John Markakis, "Society and State in Crisis: What Went Wrong in Somalia?" in *Review of African Political Economy*, 21:59 (1994), p. 85.
116 Laitin and Samatar, A Nation in Search, p. 94.
117 Lewis, A Modern History, p. 250)

considerations".[118] Importantly, this strategy also involved targeting of Marehan elites who were seen as potential threats.[119]

Nevertheless, as noted earlier, the idea of MOD dominance was firmly established by the mid-1970s. In this context, the prospect of reclaiming one of Somalia's "missing territories" became a way of shifting attention from the MOD alliance to an external threat, and when the Ogaden War began in 1977, it created "a stunning tide of popular energy not seen since the agitation for independence".[120] At the same time, the effort to reclaim the Ogaden region was motivated by developments in the Horn of Africa. In 1974, when the *Derg* overthrew Haile Selassie in Ethiopia, it created a historic opportunity; the Ethiopian state was in disarray and when the WSLF militias began to make progress as a consequence, it became impossible for the regime in Mogadishu to remain passive without risking internal dissent.[121]

However, the possibilities of reclaiming the Ogaden and the Haud pastures changed dramatically when the new leadership in Addis Ababa became close with the Soviet Union. In the years before, Moscow had backed and trained the Somali military to counter the American presence in Ethiopia. In April 1977, however, there was a change in superpower alignments as Mengistu Haile Mariam closed down American military installations and went to Moscow to sign a declaration of mutual collaboration.[122] At this point, the fighters of the WSLF were already on the offensive in Ethiopia and regular Somali troops were becoming involved as well.[123] However, when Soviet and Cuban troops deployed in support of the Ethiopian military, it changed the balance of power and resulted in a Somali withdrawal that

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[118] Ali Khalif Galydh "Notes on the State of the Somali State" in *Horn of Africa*, 13 (1990, p. 22.
[119] "It should be noted that in all three elements in the MOD, even the Marehan, support came from only part of the clans concerned". Gilkes, *Ethnic and Political Movements in Ethiopia and Somalia*, p. 60.
[120] Samatar, "The Curse of Allah", p 116-117.
[121] Laitin and Samatar, *A Nation in Search*, p. 88.
[122] Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 233.
[123] Laitin and Samatar, *A Nation in Search*, p. 89.

was catastrophic in terms of human losses and economic costs, and equally devastating for the dream of Greater Somalia. Defeat in the Ogaden War was a humiliation from which the nationalist project in Somalia never recovered.

The defeat in the Ogaden War marked the beginning of a third phase in Siad Barre's rule. If the prospect of reclaiming a missing territory had inspired "a time of new earnestness and confidence",[124] the defeat inspired the opposite: public demoralisation, an intense search for scapegoats linked to renewed clannism, and the emergence of the first armed opposition movements.[125] Less than a week after the end of the Ogaden war, in April 1978, a group of military officers, most of them belonging to the Majerteen, led an attempted military coup that failed miserably. According to Lewis, the obvious dominance of the Majerteen in the initiative made it seem like a "narrow, parochial initiative",[126] especially when seen in relation to the Majerteen's dominant role in civilian politics in the 1960s. The coup was therefore perceived by many as attempt by the Majerteen to reclaim power, and it "alienated members of the other groups who shared their feelings of miscontent".[127] As will be discussed in Chapter III, it was against this background that the sole survivor of those involved in the coup attempt, Abdullahi Yusuf, became leader of the first armed opposition movement, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), which was established in Addis Ababa in 1979 and soon became a predominantly Majerteen organisation. In the following year, the second armed opposition group, the Somali National Movement (SNM), was established by members of the Isaaq diaspora, who were motivated by the perceived marginalisation of the north (see Chapter III).[128]

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[124] Samatar, "The Curse of Allah", p. 116.
[125] Ioan Lewis, "The Ogaden and the Fragility of Somali Segmentary Nationalism" in *African Affairs*, 88:353 (1989), p. 575.
[126] Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 246.
[127] Ibid., p. 246.
[128] "They were not sufficiently represented, in their view, but they were never completely excluded". Lewis, "Somalia: Nationalism Turned", p. 19.

The rise of armed opposition movements in the 1980s coincided with a decline in the country's economic well-being. The livestock export trade suffered from lower prices,[129] the informal economy outgrew the normal economy,[130] and corruption became widespread in all sectors, especially in the handling of development aid as officials skimmed "up to 40 per cent of each contract as a private payoff".[131] The result was an erosion of state institutions and a rapid reversal of the centralisation that had characterised the regime in the early years.

All of this played into the regime's *modus operandi* for handling the opposition and maintaining influence in the peripheries: it returned to the kind of vertical alliances that had characterised colonial rule, and outsourced coercive power to army units and clan militias that could pursue their own interests relatively independently. It also meant that when the government targeted clans for their association with the opposition, it was usually not through blanket targeting. Instead, it targeted particular sub-clans, and then provided benefits and opportunities to elite members of other sub-clans, building on intra-clan rivalries.[132] As noted by Marleen Renders, this meant that "although the regime was oppressive, opposition did not consolidate so long as there was some scope to share in the spoils of corruption for businessmen, military and politicians".[133] It also meant that resistance against Siad Barre's regime became embedded in local politics in the same way as resistance against colonial rule had been. As argued by Abdisalam Issa Salwe:

[129] Abdi Samatar, "Empty Bowl: Agrarian Political Economy in Transition and the Crises of Accumulation" in Samatar, ed., *The Somali Challenge*, p. 71.
[130] For a discussion about the economy, see Vali Jamal, "Somalia: Understanding an Unconventional Economy" in *Development and Change*, 19:2 (1988).
[131] Laitin and Samatar, *A Nation in Search*, p. 95.
[132] Patrick Gilkes, *The Price of Peace: Somalia and the United Nations 1991-1994* (Bedfordshire: Save the Children's Fund, 1994), p. 20.
[133] Marleen Renders, *Consider Somaliland: State-Building with Traditional Leaders and Institutions* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 85.

> "Between 1980 and 1990 there was not a clan that did not fight against its neighbouring, and sometimes related clans. The list is long: the Majerteen fought against the Mareehaan, the Hawaadle (Hawiye) against the Ayr (Habar Gidir), the Leelkase against the Sa'ad (Habar Gidir), the Majerteen against the Sa'ad (Habar Gidir), the Abgaal against the Hawadle, the Mareehaan against the Saleebaan (Habar Gidir), the Dhulbahante (Daarood) against the Habar Tol-Je'le (Isaaq), the Ogaadeen against the Mareehaan, the Duduble (Habar Gidir) against the Ayr (Habar Gidir), the Isaaq clans against the Gadabuursi (Dir), the Habar Yonis (Isaq) against the Ogadeen (Daarood), the Issa (Dir) against the Isaaq clans, the Galgale (Daarood) against the Abgal (Hawiye), the Sideedle against the Sagaalle (both of them Rahanweyn clan-family)".[134]

A similar process of fragmentation and competition could be seen within the regime. In 1986, two events illustrated this process, both of them contributing to the subsequent disintegration of the regime. First, there was a car accident in which Siad Barre was badly injured. As he was taken to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment, a power struggle began within the regime: on the one hand, there was the "constitutional faction" with the First Vice-President, General Mohamed Ali Samatar, and other loyalists, like Kulmiy and Dafleh;[135] on the other hand, there was the faction around Siad Barre's family that was itself divided between two of the sons competing to take over from their father.[136] During the weeks that Siad Barre was hospitalized in Saudi Arabia, tensions between these factions showed that

[134] Abdisalam M. Issa-Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State: The Impact of the Colonial Legacy* (London: Haan, 1996), p. 105-106.
[135] Laitin and Samatar, *A Nation in Search*, p. 168.
[136] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 63.

there were serious divisions even within the Marehan. When Siad Barre returned, he therefore embarked on a process of "Marehanization" in the military to shore up support. In the process, however, he sidelined many Ogadeni officers, which resulted in resentment and an even narrower powerbase: the MOD alliance was falling apart.[137]

A second event was an agreement between Siad Barre and Mengistu that began to take form in January 1986, with both leaders pledging to stop supporting opposition groups operating on the other side of the border. This came to be seen as "the final betrayal of the WSLF and the Ogadeni cause",[138] more or less synonymous with handing over the region to Ethiopia, and it contributed to further disintegration within the already weakened MOD alliance. Moreover, it made the SNM reassess its options in the north, and as it became clear that their rear bases in Ethiopia could be closed, the SNM crossed the border to launch an "offensive of despair"[139] in the north. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this offensive not only escalated the civil war – it also changed it in a qualitative sense as the SNM became more embedded in the local population, resulting in organisational changes that in turn played into alliance dynamics within Somalia's opposition in general (see Chapter III).

From the Past to the Present

The historical overview in this chapter has highlighted a number of patterns in alliance formation that can be discerned throughout Somalia's modern history. It has demonstrated how alliances have been formed within as well as between subnational arenas of competition, and how political rivals in different arenas have drawn on whatever allies they have been able to attract in order to counter the main threat to their interests. It has also demonstrated how alliances have frequently contradicted the ideal of clan solidarity based on genealogical

[137] Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, p. 67.
[138] Gilkes, The Price of Peace, p. 63.
[139] Gérard Prunier, "A Candid View of the Somali National Movement" in *Horn of Africa*, 13 (1990), p. 115.

proximity. Moreover, it has showed that external involvement in Somalia has rarely resulted in united national resistance against foreign oppression, but has more often been perceived as a variable in various local conflicts, with one side seeing it as a threat and the other as an opportunity. Importantly, for all the emphasis on clan as variable in alliance formation in this historical background, we can see that alliances have not only been about clans mobilising and positioning – they have equally been about *individual* positioning in a system based on clan representation where leadership is "fluid and informal" and "based on successful performance rather than inherited right".[140] In the chapter that follows, Chapter III, this important aspect of alliance – the positioning of individuals – will be discussed in more detail when examining the alliances that were formed within the opposition against Siad Barre's regime towards the end of the 1980s.

[140] Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 86.

Chapter III

A Plague of Initials: Alliances in the Struggle against Siad Barre (1988 - 1991)

"What is the matter with the Somali opposition? They do not seem to be out to agreeing and getting on with the job that they say they want to get on with, and that is [to] overthrow President Siad Barre. What is the matter with them?".[1]

The struggle against Siad Barre's regime has usually been described with an emphasis on clan mobilisation.[2] Although the first groups that took up arms against the regime in the early 1980s – the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) and Somali National Movement (SNM) – were relatively inclusive in the early years and had members of different clans in their respective leadership structures, they became increasingly clannish over time. This resulted in a rapid proliferation of clan-based opposition groups in the final years of Siad Barre's rule when elites from other clans established their own movements. In the late 1980s, Somalia thus appeared to be suffering from "a plague of initials"[3] as there were more than a dozen opposition groups with confusingly similar names: the SSDF associated with the Majerteen, the SNM associated with the Isaaq, the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) associated with the Absame, the United Somali Congress (USC) associated with the Hawiye,

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[1] Robin White, editor of "Foucs on Africa", interviewing the BBC's correspondent, Yusuf Hassan, August 23, 1990, after reports about rivalries and divisions within the USC. See "USC Leader Arrested", *BBC News*, August 23, 1990 (accessed via FBIS).
[2] For examples, see Daniel Compagnon, "Somali Armed Movements: The Interplay of Political Entrepreneurship & Clan-Based Factions" in Christopher Clapham, ed., *African Guerillas* (Oxford: James Currey, 1998); Hussein Adam, *From Tyranny to Anarchy: The Somali Experience* (Trenton: Red Sea Press, 2008).
[3] George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 47.

the Somali Democratic Movement (SDM) associated with the Digil-Mirifle, and so forth. As it turned out, these movements were unable to establish an opposition alliance, and less than a year before the collapse of the regime, there was "an absence of any real coordination between the different movements".[4] According to several observers, this reflected the underlying clannishness of the opposition: all clans focused on replacing the Marehan in the presidential palace, *Villa Somalia*,[5] and the various opposition groups had nothing in common except their opposition to the dictatorship – "they hated each other as much as they hated Siyad [Barre]".[6]

This chapter revisits the final years of the struggle against Siad Barre's regime and argues that the common emphasis on clan mobilisation in the struggle is somewhat misleading for two reasons. On the one hand, it overestimates the unity and coherence of the opposition groups. In many ways, these movements were alliances in their own right rather than organisations with centralised command structures; there was considerable rivalry between sub-groups and political elites who competed over leadership positions; and the overall struggle against the regime was deeply embedded in subnational conflicts that often appeared equally or more important than the fight against Siad Barre's regime. On the other hand, it underestimates the importance of cross-clan collaboration and the extent to which political entrepreneurs from different clans used their personal networks to establish alliances with the post-Barre era in mind. In that sense, the final years of Siad Barre's regime were not only about different clans mobilising "to ensure themselves a place in the new Somali order"[7] – they were also about *individuals* positioning themselves and forming alliances based on expectations of what

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[4] "Economic, Political, Military Situation Viewed", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, March 31, 1990 (retrieved via FBIS).
[5] Mohamed Haji Ingiriis, *The Suicidal State in Somalia: The Rise and Fall of the Siad Barre Regime, 1969–1991* (Lanham: American University Press), p. 250.
[6] Mohammed Haji Mukhtar, "Somalia: Between Self-Determination and Chaos" in Adam and Ford, eds., *Mending Rips in the Sky*, p. 55.
[7] Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, p. 78.

a ruling coalition in the post-Barre era would look like with components from different clans and regions.

This chapter demonstrates how individual positioning within the opposition became increasingly evident in the final year of Siad Barre's rule. In mid-1990, the military commanders from the main armed opposition groups – Abdurahman Tuur of the SNM, Colonel Ahmed Omar Jess of the SPM, and General Mohamed Farrah Aideed of the USC – formed an alliance to coordinate all military and political activities in the struggle against "the fascist regime of Siyaad Barre".[8] However, the alliance was not established in opposition to the regime only. It was also formed in response to the Manifesto Group, a civilian cross-clan opposition that emerged in mid-1990 and sought to "ease Barre out of office peacefully" through reforms and negotiations.[9] It was this rise in intra-opposition competition that sealed the alliance between the military commanders. In that sense, the alliance was not only aimed at overthrowing the regime – it was also established according to a defensive logic as "an alternative to the Manifesto".[10] This underlines the fallacy in treating it as the moment when Somalia's divided opposition finally came together and it was "only a matter of time before Siad fell".[11]

The outcome of this intra-opposition rivalry was two cross-clan opposition blocks that actively undermined each other in the final months of Siad Barre's rule: on the one hand, a militarily stronger block, led by Mohamed Farrah Aideed, Ahmed Omar Jess, and Abdurahman Tuur, pushing towards Mogadishu from the north in order to remove Siad

[8] Somali National Movement, "A Joint Communiqué", Somali National Movement's Secretariat for Foreign Relations in London, October 2, 1990.
[9] John Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?* (London: Haan, 1994), p. 21.
[10] Roland Marchal, *Survey of Mogadishu's Economy* (Nairobi: European Commission/Somali Unit, 2002), p. 30; Daniel Compagnon, "Fausses pistes..." in *Politique africaine* 50 (1993), p. 130.
[11] John Prendergast, *The Bones of Our Children Are Not Yet Buried: The Looming Spectre of Famine and Massive Human Rights Abuse in Somalia* (Washington, DC: Center of Concern, 1994) p. 11.

Barre by force; on the other hand, a militarily weak but politically astute and internationally well-connected civilian block around the Manifesto Group that continued to seek a negotiated solution, while simultaneously mobilising militias to be on par with the insurgents moving in from the north.[12] Although there were numerous overlaps between these opposition blocks – as well as overlaps with the elements of the regime – they clearly illustrated a number of arguments made in previous chapters: how alliances tend to be established in response to perceived threats; how they tend to reflect a concern with not losing rather than winning; and, how past interactions and social networks among competing elites are important in terms of shaping perceptions of threat. As will be emphasized in the following chapters, this aspect of alliance formation has been central to political dynamics in Somalia in later years as well, with individual positioning in a system based on clan representation being a key variable in alliance formation.

The chapter is organised in four parts. It begins with a discussion about the lack of alliances in the early years of the struggle against Siad Barre's regime. The second part examines the main drivers of the proliferation of opposition movements in the late 1980s. The third part describes the two opposition blocks that emerged in mid-1990 and the logic behind them. Finally, the last part summarizes events in the final months of Siad Barre's rule when the two opposition blocks not only pushed to topple the regime, but also actively undermined each other in the eyes of the Somali public and the international community. Although this intra-opposition competition did not lead to outright fighting until after the regime's collapse, it nevertheless illustrates the divisions that existed within Somalia's opposition, and provides a first indication of what alignments in the post-Siad Barre era would look like (see Chapter IV).

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[12] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 25.

The Armed Struggle Begins: From Nationalism to Clannism

If we want to understand alliances in Somalia's civil war, we should start with the non-alliances, meaning the alliances that never happened as the opposition against Siad Barre's regime failed to come together. Already in the early years of the struggle when there were only two armed opposition groups – SSDF and SNM – they often appeared to be each other's competitors as much as Siad Barre's.[13] This section provides a background about these movements and explains the lack of cooperation.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the SSDF was established as the first armed opposition movement in the aftermath of the Ogaden War, when a group of mainly Majerteen officers attempted a coup that not only failed in terms of overthrowing the regime, but also failed to attract popular support as it appeared to be a "narrow, parochial initiative"[14] from the Majerteen that "alienated members of the other groups who shared their feelings of miscontent".[15] The only coup plotter who managed to escape, Abdullahi Yusuf Mohamed, crossed into Kenya where he was received by members of the Somali Democratic Action Front (SOSAF). This was a civilian opposition group that had been established in 1977 and operated in exile from Nairobi with many Majerteen intellectuals and prominent figures from the civilian administration in the 1960s.[16] However, the Kenyans were unwilling to host an armed Somali opposition group, and it was therefore decided to seek support from Ethiopia and its allies instead.[17] This resulted in the establishment of the SSDF in Addis Ababa, through a merger between the groups from Nairobi and two leftist opposition groups, which

[13] Renders, *Consider Somaliland,* p. 69.
[14] Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 246.
[15] Ibid., p. 246.
[16] For more on these groups and individuals involved, see Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 19, and Daniel Compagnon, "The Somali Opposition Fronts: Some Comments and Questions" *in Horn of* Africa, 13 (1990), p 47.
[17] Interview with senior SSDF member London (Interview #3).

were backed by Yemen and opposed Siad Barre on ideological grounds, the Somali Workers Party (SWP) and the Somali Democratic Liberation Front (SDLF).[18]

In that sense, the first opposition group that took up arms against the regime was essentially an alliance, which illustrates the difficulty in making a clear-cut distinction between "alliance" and "group" as analytical categories (see discussion in Chapter I). The fact that the SSDF was an amalgamation of groups was also reflected in its relatively mixed leadership with members of different clans and a wide spectrum of ideological standpoints.[19] However, the SSDF soon came to be dominated by the Majerteen and Abdulahi Yusuf's own sub-clan, the Omar Mohamoud, in particular.[20] On the one hand, this was a consequence of Abdullahi Yusuf's autocratic leadership style; he "appeared to have identified criticism with non-Majerteen clans" and consequently promoted members of his own sub-clan.[21] On the other hand, it reflected processes of mobilisation inside Somalia where militia units built on existing social structures and mainly operated in their "home areas". In 1982, when the SSDF launched its first major offensive with significant Ethiopian military backing, it focused on the Mudug region – the home region of Abdullahi Yusuf where the Omar Mohamoud is the dominant clan – and this meant that most of the rank and file came from this particular sub-clan.[22] However, there were also militias from clans in the region, including Hawiye sub-clans, whose involvement with the SSDF was linked to local conflicts with the Marehan, illustrating the link between rivalries in subnational arenas of competition and mobilisation against the regime.[23]

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[18] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 19.
[19] "The original executive committee of the SSDF included seven Majerteen, two Isaaq, one Dolbuhunta and one Hawiye, and covered a wide ideological spectrum". Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 19.
[20] "In Somalia, political science can be turned upside down: over time an organisation gets identified with its leader and not the opposite". Roland Marchal, *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War* (unpublished report), p. 19.
[21] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 20.
[22] Compagnon, "The Somali Opposition Fronts", p. 31.
[23] The first Hawiye militias were mainly Salebaan involved in local conflicts with Siad Barre's regime. Interview with senior TNG member (Interview #4).

The dominance of the Omar Mohamoud resulted in significantly less support to the SSDF from the other sub-clans that claimed Majerteen leadership, the Issa Mohamoud and Osman Mahmoud.[24] These divisions within the Majerteen were also reflected and reinforced in Siad Barre's strategy for handling the SSDF as he launched "a carefully targeted campaign aimed specifically against the Omar Mohamoud".[25] At the same time, he promoted representatives from other sub-clans to shore up Majerteen support, all according to the logic of divide and rule as described in the previous chapter (see Chapter II). As a result, the SSDF failed to attract broad support inside Somalia and became increasingly dependent on support from Ethiopia and Libya.

In 1982, the SNM began to operate from bases in Ethiopia as well, and this resulted in competition over external patronage from the host country and its main allies, Libya and Yemen. As noted by Marleen Renders, "the Ethiopian government expected a degree of compliance with Ethiopian direction" in return for the sanctuary it provided,[26] and there were repeated demands from Ethiopia and Libya that the two groups should merge in order to continue receiving support. However, even though there were several agreements and working groups established to generate a merger between SSDF and SNM, it never happened, not only because the groups were fairly dissimilar in terms of ideological standpoints and organizational structures, but also because none of them would accept to be the junior partner in a broader organisation.[27]

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[24] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 20.
[25] Gilkes, p. 20.
[26] Renders, *Consider Somaliland*, p . 69.
[27] Compagnon, The Somali Opposition Fronts, p. 39.

In the following years, the Ethiopians gradually scaled down their support for SSDF as the organisation became entangled in internal leadership disputes. In 1986, the Ethiopians tried to "rescue its investment in the SSDF"[28] by imprisoning Abdullahi Yusuf in order to bring about a change, but this only resulted in splits within the movement, and the rank and file largely returned to Somalia where they were given amnesty by Siad Barre before going to the north to fight against the SNM. This meant that the SSDF's military wing crumbled, and even though the organisation survived under the civilian leadership of Hassan Ali Mirreh and Musa Islan Farrah, the result was that the Majerteen – a historically dominant clan in Somalia – did not play a major role in the final years of the armed struggle, when the clan was divided between the remnants of the SSDF, other civilian opposition groups, and the regime, with the son-in-law of Siad Barre, General Mohamed Said Hersi "Morgan" (Majerteen) bringing many rank and file soldiers back from across the border.[29]

The SNM followed a markedly different trajectory – it went from being an elitist group in exile to representing "the Issaq people up in arms"[30] – but it was similar to the SSDF in the sense that it became increasingly clannish over time. As noted above, the SNM was established in Saudi Arabia in 1979,[31] and it was dominated by Isaaq elites from the start. However, there were attempts to broaden the organisation several times, and it had a major Hawiye component for several years.[32] This ambition reflected the attitudes of the SNM leadership, which included many former high ranking government officials who were sceptical of "Isaaqism" for ideological as well as tactical reasons.[33] It was in that regard an elitist movement "with few actual contacts within Somalia".[34] This meant that in 1982, when

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[28] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 20.
[29] Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, p. 90.
[30] Prunier, "A Candid View of the Somali National Movement", p. 109.
[31] Renders, *Consider Somaliland*, p. 64. For more on the history of the SNM, including the organisation's other roots in the United Kingdom, see Ioan Lewis, *Blood and Bone*.
[32] Renders, Consider Somaliland, p. 33.
[33] Ibid., p. 68.
[34] Ibid., p. 85.

the SNM launched its first guerrilla attacks into northern Somalia from bases in Ethiopia, the organisation was largely resented by the Isaaq population – the rural people "just wanted to be left alone" and did not expect anything from the SNM elites that until recently had been members of Siad Barre's government.[35] As noted by Mareleen Renders, it was only when the regime began its brutal crackdown on the entire Isaaq population "that the Isaaq more or less united in opposition against it".[36]

The Offensive of Despair: A Symbolic Turning Point

The critical turning point came in 1988 when the SNM launched its "offensive of despair" into northern Somalia following the agreement between Siad Barre and Mengetsu that risked depriving the movement of its rear bases in Ethiopia (see Chapter II). The decision to launch the offensive was made despite an offer from Mengistu to the SNM and SSDF to throw the agreement out the window if they agreed to establish a united front (a suggestion that the weakened SSDF was willing to consider but the SNM turned down).[37] After the SNM captured Burao and parts of Hargeisa, the regime launched a genocidal campaign against the entire Isaaq population; the main towns were destroyed through air bombings, and civilians in towns where there was no SNM presence were killed and buried in mass graves in an "extremely violent assault on the unarmed civilian Isaaq population".[38]

Apart from ordering the army to target the civilian population, the regime used its divide and rule strategy to arm local militias from regional rivals to the Isaaq, including Ogaden militias from the refugee camps, units from the WSLF that operated in Ethiopia with Siad Barre's support, and militias from the Issa, Gadabursi, and Dhulbahante clans that feared Isaaq

[35] Ibid., p. 85
[36] Ibid., p. 85.
[37] Interview with senior SSDF member (Interview #3).
[38] Robert Gersony, "Why Somalis Flee: A Synthesis of Conflict Experience in Northern Somalia by Somali Refugees, Displaces Persons and Others" in *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 2:1, p. 49.

hegemony in the north.[39] As a result, the conflict between the SNM and the regime was embedded in local politics in the same way as resistance against colonial rule had been (see Chapter II). This this resulted in the Isaaq population rallying around the SNM, which came to function like a traditional clan alliance established in response to a commonly perceived threat.[40] Meanwhile, the local rivals drew on support from the regime, not to maximize their influence in national politics, but rather because they focused on the main threat in the subnational arena of competition.[41]

In the process of becoming a popular movement, the SNM became increasingly Isaaq in character, and it was accepted even among those who opposed clannism for ideological reasons that mobilisation along lineage lines was the only viable alternative for operating on the ground.[42] This meant that the SNM gradually transformed itself from a diaspora-led vanguard to "a popular rebellion led by Isaaq clan elders".[43] In short, local clan leaders became responsible for the military campaign, while the exiled leadership mobilised funding and managed external relations.[44] This change was also reflected in the SNM's organisational structure: it developed a system for rotating leadership positions among different Isaaq sub-clans; it established a council of elders (*guurti*) that served as an advisory board to the central committee; and it operated with "regiments" linked to different Isaaq-sub-clans that could "enlist "nomadic members of its own clan when necessary".[45]

This clan foundation was a strength as well as a weakness. On the one hand, it meant that even though the SNM "only" had 4,000 regular fighters, it could bring together ten times as

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[39] Compagnon, "The Somali Opposition Fronts", p. 39.
[40] Lewis, *Blood and Bone*, p. 194.
[41] "… the Gadabursi elders who came to seek support for their militia did not care whether the money or the rations came from the government or the traders". Renders, *Consider Somaliland*, p. 83.
[42] Lewis, *Blood and Bone*, p. 194.
[43] Renders, *Consider Somaliland*, p. 82.
[44] Interview with senior SNM member (Interview #5).
[45] Prunier, "A Candid View of the Somali National Movement", p.

many for an offensive through sub-clan mobilisation.[46] On the other hand, it meant that the SNM often appeared to be "a mere symbolic referent for quite independent clan-based guerrilla groups",[47] and these groups often pursued their own interests first and foremost. This meant that efforts to reach the SNM's overall aim of overthrowing Siad Barre's regime were often conditioned or trumped by local and regional political dynamics. As noted by Lewis, "inter-clan rivalries were marked and, despite their common cause, often reduced the effectiveness of military operations".[48] Moreover, it meant that the SNM could never even consider taking the fight to the south on their own because the local arena of competition was paramount to the clan militias – it was "even difficult to convince a Habr Yuunis to go and fight in a Habr Awal area".[49] In that sense, the SNM leadership was limited in their options when it came to broader alliances and operations in other regions. According to a senior SSDF member, this became evident when the SSDF at one point suggested that the organisations should swap fronts to undermine Siad Barre's divide and rule strategy. In response, the SNM leaders explained that it would never work – "their fighters would end up going back to their camels instead".[50]

To summarise, the inability of the opposition to establish a united front in the early years of the struggle against Siad Barre when it was still considerably weaker than the regime – they were nowhere near a minimum winning coalition – can be seen as grounded in two logics. On the one hand, there was elite competition over leadership positions and external patronage; none of the leaderships would accept to become the junior alliance partner. On the other hand, the fact that groups within the SNM and SSDF were motivated by subnational competition primarily meant that strategies that would have made sense in

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[46] Prunier, "A Candid View of the Somali National Movement", p. 115.
[47] Renders, *Consider Somaliland*, p. 80.
[48] Lewis, *Blood and Bone*, p. 214.
[49] Prunier, "A Candid View of the Somali National Movement", p. 118.
[50] Interview with senior SSDF member London (Interview #3).

national politics did not always make sense from the local vantage point where distrust between Isaaq and Harti communities was deeply entrenched. As will be discussed in the following section, this obstacle to the establishment of wider opposition alliances became even more evident with the proliferation of opposition groups in the final years of the regime.

A Strategy for Self-Preservation: Clan Mobilisation and Individual Positioning

The regime's brutal response to the SNM's offensive in 1988 undermined its domestic as well as foreign support and contributed to a rapid proliferation of opposition movements and local resistance against the regime.[51] In 1989, several new groups were established, and the most important were the SPM and the USC – two openly clan-based movements that mobilised the Absame and Hawiye – which operated in their respective "home regions" in the same way as the SNM operated in the northwest: the USC mobilised in the central regions among the Hawiye sub-clans, and the SPM mobilised in the Jubba regions primarily by drawing on Absame support. A number of smaller opposition groups were established as well, for example the Somali Democratic Alliance (SDA), the Somali Democratic Movement (SDM), and the United Somali Front (USF).[52] However, these groups did not develop significant military capacity; they were essentially elite initiatives established in exile, and the relationships with local militias were vague. Nevertheless, they were important signs of the times in the sense that they illustrated that the regime faced opposition from more or less all clans, except the Marehan, including many of those that had previously collaborated with the regime, like the Gadaabursi and Issa, even though the latter mobilised to balance the SNM

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[51] Terrence Lyons and Ahmed Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention, and Strategies for Political Reconstruction* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1995), p. 19.

[52] For excellent overviews of opposition Somali opposition groups and factions in this period, see Patrik Gilkes, *Ethnic Political Movements in Ethiopia and Somalia* (London: Save the Children Fund, 1992); Patrick Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*.

as much as the regime, resulting in complex alignments and realignments in the northwest as the civil war went on.[53]

There were "push factors" as well as "pull factors" behind this proliferation of opposition movements. On the one hand, there was the collapse of the Somali economy discussed in the previous chapter. In short, the reduced flow of foreign aid that followed from the increasingly repressive character of the regime contributed to the collapse of the patronage system that Siad Barre had managed to uphold for years by controlling domestic as well as external resources.[54] As opportunities and benefits associated with loyalty to the system began to dwindle, defections became increasingly common as government officials, military officers, and businessmen – many of whom had done relatively well under the regime until then – sought opposition roles in order to position themselves for the new political era that appeared to be on the horizon. As noted by Marleen Renders, "although the regime was oppressive, opposition did not consolidate so long as there was some scope to share in the spoils of corruption for businessmen, military and politicians".[55] As a result, most of the opposition leaders who emerged were former high-ranking members of the regime. Apart from revealing the opportunism of these individuals, this illustrated the demand for well-positioned political entrepreneurs who could represent their respective clans in a period of rapid political change.

If repression and dwindling opportunities were among the 'push' factors behind the opposition activity, the relative success of the SNM in the north was one of the main "pull factors". As noted by Anna Simons, it was only when the SNM began to make progress that

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[53] For an illustrative example involving the Issa militias in the northwest, see Prunier, "A Candid View of the Somali National Movement", p. 114.
[54] Lee Cassanelli, "Explaining the Somali Crisis" in Lee Cassanelli and Catherine Besteman, eds., *The Struggle for Land in Southern Somalia: The War Behind the War* (London: Haan, 2003), p. 22.
[55] Renders, *Consider Somaliland*, p. 85.

other clans mobilised on a broad scale.[56] Importantly, even though it resulted in a weaker opposition against the regime, the elites who defected did not mobilise to support one the established movements. Instead, they established separate clan-based organisation, which some observers at the time described as counterintuitive.[57] However, this makes perfect sense in relation to the alliance patterns and defensive logic emphasized in this thesis. All groups were primarily concerned with *not losing* and the establishment of opposition movements was about "posturing for self-preservation as much as any real push for power".[58] In that regard, the final years of Siad Barre's regime resembled the years before Somalia's independence, when there was similar proliferation of political organisations as clans and political entrepreneurs assumed bargaining positions for the new order that appeared to be on the horizon (see Chapter II). It also meant that when Siad Barre tried to curb dissent and appease critics with promises of reforms and cabinet reshuffles, it only seemed to have the opposite effect and reinforced the perception that the regime was coming to an end, which contributed to further opposition mobilisation and positioning.[59]

Two New Variations on a Theme: The Establishment of the SPM and USC

If we turn the two main movements that emerged, the SPM and USC, it becomes clear that their organisations were essentially variations on the SNM structure – only less developed – with elites concerned with national politics and militias largely motivated by local grievances. The USC was founded in Rome in January 1989, under the leadership of Ali Mohamed Osoble "Wardhigley", who had left the SNM in 1987 after losing his position as deputy-

[56] Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, p. 78.
[57] "At a time when the SNM had seriously challenged the government army, it was surprising to see some of its Hawiye members founding their own independent organization". Compagnon, "The Somali Opposition Fronts", p. 36.
[58] Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, p. 78.
[59] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 24. It is worth noting that many marginalized and historically discriminated clans did not get involved in the race for power at all around this time: they had "suffered from the political domination of the three major clan families either during the civilian regime or under Mahammad Siyaad Barre's rule" and they expected little from "a change limited to governmental circles". Compagnon, "The Somali Opposition Fronts", p. 40.

chairman. Although many Hawiye had left the SNM together with "Wardhigley", especially those from his own Murosade sub-clan, some militias had remained with the SNM in the north, and some had remained with the remnants of the SSDF in the central region.[60] As mentioned earlier, these clan militias had mobilised in response to local conflicts with the Marehan – they were mainly from Salebaan and Saad communities – and when the USC was established, it provided a new umbrella for this local conflict in which the Marehan drew on support from the regime against their Haber Gedir neighbours.

Problematically, the USC had two leaderships from an early stage – one in Rome and another in Mogadishu – as well as militias from different sub-clans operating in different regions. According to Ali Mahdi Mohamed, a key member of the USC in Mogadishu, the USC was "an organization in two" from the beginning,[61] and a third power centre emerged in late 1989 when General Mohamed Farrah Aideed defected from his position as Somali ambassador in India and travelled to Ethiopia to build up the USC's armed wing in Mustahil.[62] All of these power centres were perceived to be linked to sub-clan interests: the group in Mogadishu was seen to be dominated by the Abgal and Murosade; the militias that Aideed mobilised in the central regions were mainly Haber Gedir and Hawadle; and the leadership in Rome was seen as mixed but nevertheless closer to the Mogadishu wing of the organization.[63] This meant that the organisation never developed an overarching structure, like the SNM, to mediate between sub-clan interests. Instead, the USC was "a loose coalition of Hawiye clans, whose contributions to the liberation war took different forms, and was certainly unequal from one

[60] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 22.
[61] Interview with Ali Mahdi Mohammed (Interview #6).
[62] The arrival of Aideed and other senior Haber Gedir-Saad officers who claimed the senior positions created tensions with the Salebaan officers who were leading the militias that had already been established in the region Interview with senior TNG member (Interview #4). As noted earlier, there were defections and fighting by Hawiye units in the years before Aideed's arrival, for example by the Hawadle around Beldweyne. See Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 31.
[63] Interview analyst in Nairobi (Interview #2).

segment to another".[64] This lack of a central command meant that the USC militias operated even more independently than the SNM militias. When they took over an area, it was the sub-clan militias that did so, not the USC as an organisation.[65]

The divisions within the USC were also linked to individual positioning based on the logic of clan balancing and expectations of what any post-Siad Barre ruling coalition would have to look like. If one Hawiye sub-clan, or rather, an individual associated with a certain sub-clan, came out on top, contenders for power from other Hawiye clans would run the risk of being side-lined by members of other clan families when it came to the formation of a national government. For this reason, even though the Hawiye elites within the USC needed each other in the build-up phase, they were potential competitors in the long run. Although the same logic applied within all clan-families, it was most apparent within the Hawiye and the USC, and it was expected by many that there would be splits once Siad Barre had been removed because "there were a lot of ambitious people [in the USC] who wanted to be Head of State".[66]

If we turn to the SPM that was established in the same year, it was unique in the sense that it was established inside the country. It built on the Absame in general and the Ogaden clan in particular as the latter had been a component of Siad Barre's MOD alliance before the "Marehanization" of the regime began (see Chapter II). According to a senior SPM member, the initiative was taken by officers in Mogadishu who saw the need for an Absame movement as other clans were establishing opposition groups.[67] In that sense, the SPM was established in response to the threat of other movements as much as in opposition to the regime.

[64] Compagnon, "Somali Armed Movements", p. 80.
[65] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #7).
[66] Interview with Ahmed Omar Jess (Interview #8).
[67] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #7).

However, it was motivated by other issues as well, including the agreement between Siad Barre and Ethiopia that renounced Somalia's claim to the Ogaden; the "Marehanization" of the armed forces that marginalised many Ogadeni officers; and the violent conflicts over land in the Juba regions between Marehan and Absame communities that had started several years before and resulted in the formation of a local Absame resistance movement known as Abris.[68] This movement was a response to perceived Marehan encroachment on shared lands that had started in the early 1980s,[69] and showed that even though the Ogaden may have been seen as part of the MOD alliance at the national level, these elite alignments did not necessarily make sense in relation to local realities.

However, the key event that sparked the establishment of the SPM was Siad Barre's dismissal and imprisonment of the Minister of Defence, Aden Abdullahi Nur "Gabiyow" (Ogaden-Aulihan), who had led the counterinsurgency against the SNM in the north. This resulted in mutinies by Ogadeni soldiers and policemen in Afmadow and Kismayo in early 1989, and after discussions in Mogadishu and London, it was decided to establish the SPM under the leadership of Bashir Bililiqo, the son-in-law and assistant to Aden Gabiyow, and that the group should support the local uprising in the Jubba regions.[70]

In mid-1989, a second SPM front was established after the defection of Colonel Ahmed Omar Jess (Ogaden-Mohamed Zubeir) from his position in Hargeisa. Importantly, when he defected together with a small group of Ogadeni soldiers, Ahmed Omar Jess went to the SNM areas because he was close to many of the SNM officers; he had grown up in Hargeisa and had matrilineal ties to the Isaaq-Igdalle – "we were good friends, we were the officers,

[68] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #9).
[69] Ibid. For further discussion, see John Prendergast, *The Gun Talks Louder Than the Voice: Somalia's Continuing Cycles of Violence* (Washington, D.C.: Centre of Concern, 1994), p. 11.
[70] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #9).

we were together, we grew up together".[71] According to an SNM member, this meant that there was a general acceptance and "a kind of amnesty" for Ahmed Omar Jess that other Ogadeni officers involved in the counterinsurgency never would have been shown given the hatred against the Ogaden in the northwest.[72] This personal link with the SNM remained as Ahmed Omar Jess established a second sector of the SPM in El Barde in Bakool, after having marched his troops through the Ogaden with permission from Mengestu.[73] As will be discussed later, this personal connection also became a major factor behind the alliance between the SNM, SPM, and USC insurgency leaders in 1990.

In that sense, the SPM was divided in a similar way as the USC. It had two sectors and it was a constant challenge to get them to work together.[74] This also resulted in competition and uncertainties regarding leadership positions. In early 1990, the southern sector organised a congress in Kulbiyo without Ahmed Omar Jess, who was nevertheless appointed vice-chairman of the organisation, while Bashir Bililiqo was appointed chairman.[75] At the same time, Omar Moallim Mohamoud, a highly respected former ambassador, who many in the Ogaden clan viewed as a potential future president, was appointed chairman of the foreign committee. However, he acted as chairman of the SPM at times when mobilising funds for the organisation abroad. In that sense, the SPM resembled the USC as it was characterised by competing individual ambitions, sub-clan politics, and local politics in different regions.

In other words, less than a year before the collapse of the regime, the political landscape in Somalia was highly fragmented. On the one hand, the regime was disintegrating at full speed:

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[71] Interview with Ahmed Omar Jess (Interview #8).
[72] Interview with senior SNM member (Interview #5). Also, see Prunier, "A Candid View of the Somali National Movement", p. 116.
[73] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #9).
[74] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #7).
[75] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #9). The logic behind this at the time was that there should be an Aulihan chairman for the organisation because most of the rank and file were Mohamed Zubeir.

no taxes were being collected and the economy was "disastrous";[76] soldiers and high-ranking officers were defecting *en masse* because the military was not being paid and instead encouraged by Siad Barre himself to prey upon the civilian population;[77] and the government only survived thanks to the patronage of Italy, "the last Western country to continue its support for Siad Barre's regime".[78] On the other hand, there was no coordination among the opposition groups, even though they were making progress in their respective areas of operation. Rather than becoming more united in response to the regime's disintegration, the opposition appeared to become increasingly divided with a growing number of clan-based opposition groups, something that observers at the time described as Siad Barre's "most outstanding advantage".[79]

In April 1990, this lack of cooperation was illustrated when the SNM organised its Sixth Congress in Baligubadle, the "capital" of the insurgency in the northwest.[80] At the congress, the idea of an alliance between the main opposition groups was brought up by the USC commander, Mohamed Farrah Aideed, who attended together with Ahmed Omar Jess, the SPM commander from the northern sector.[81] At the conference, Aideed circulated a position paper in which he called for the establishment of the United Somali Liberation Forces (USLF).[82] However, like previous calls for a united opposition, it met with little enthusiasm. Although the SNM's final communiqué from the congress emphasized the need for opposition unity and mentioned that other groups had participated in the congress, the

[76] "Economic, Politic, Military Situation Viewed", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, March 31, 1990.
[77] In late 1990, when even the palace guard at Villa Somalia nearly mutinied over salaries and mounting inflation, Siad Barre reportedly lined them up, snatched a rifle from one of them, and said, "He who has this can never get hungry". Jama Mohamed Ghalib, *The Cost of Dictatorship: The Somali Experience* (New York: Lilian Barber Press, 1995), p. 209.
[78] Economic, Politic, Military Situation Viewed", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, March 31, 1990.
[79] "Economic, Political, Military Situation Viewed", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, March 31, 1990 (retrieved via FBIS).
[80] Prunier, "A Candid View of the Somali National Movement", p. 107.
[81] Interview with senior SNM member (Interview #10).
[82] Ibid.

general understanding within the SNM at this time was that cooperation was for propaganda purposes primarily, not for actual coordination of military and political activities.[83] According to a senior SNM member, it was a way of showing the outside world that Somalia's opposition was gaining momentum, and a signal to the Ethiopians that they should support the SPM and USC in the same way as they supported the SNM.[84] But when it came to actual fighting, the *modus operandi* of the guerillas made the idea of a cross-clan alliance under a single chain of command seem far-fetched. Moreover, there was a lot of mistrust and there was never any enthusiasm for a broader alliance among the rank and file in the north – it was only a strategy for taking the war to the south where the SNM could not go.[85]

To summarise, if we look at the reasons for the proliferation of opposition groups and the lack of unity within the opposition towards the end of the regime, three factors appear to be of particular importance: a weakening of the regime that motivated elite competition and positioning ahead of the expected political transition; a fear of becoming the junior partner within a larger alliance; and a local and regional character to the resistance that made cooperation at the national level complicated. In short, even though elites within Somalia's opposition may have focused on the overall struggle against the regime, they had to consider priorities and objectives at the local level, and alliances that would have made sense in the struggle against the regime were not always logical in local arenas where sub-clans from different opposition groups were often the main rivals. In that sense, not much had changed since the early 1980s, when *Africa Confidential* noted with reference to the rivalry between the SNM and SSDF that "the main strength of Siad Barre's regime is the weakness of the opposition".[86]

[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Interview with senior SNM member (Interview #10).
[86] Cited in Compagnon, "The Somali Opposition Fronts", p. 29.

Two Opposition Blocks: The Manifesto Group and the Dire Dawa Alliance

It was in this context of political fragmentation and escalating violence that the "Somali Manifesto I" was published in May 1990, as an open letter to Siad Barre. It was signed by 114 highly respected businessmen, sheikhs, elders, and politicians from the civilian era, who conveyed an unabashed critique of the regime, describing it as "characterized with unconstrained corruption, from top to bottom, tribalism, nepotism, tyranny and injustice and inefficiency".[87] Among the signatories were Aden Abduallah Osman, the country's first president; General Mohamed Abshir Musa, a former police commander who had been a rival to Siad Barre since the 1960s; Omar Moallim, who was working with the SPM in parallel; and Ismail Jimale Ossoble, a human rights lawyer and the main author behind the text. In addition to being a key member of the Manifesto Group, Ossoble was also a member of the USC who was respected by all sides within the organisation. According to John Drysdale, Ossoble was seen as the person who could unite the USC and potentially emerge as the future president of Somalia, especially since he hedged his bets by supporting the guerrillas under the leadership of Aideed as well as the civilian opposition around the Manifesto.[88] Apart from Ossoble, there were a number of other USC-Mogadishu members among the Manifesto signatories, including Hussein Haji Bod and Ali Mahdi Mohamed, which meant that the Manifesto was seen as closely linked to USC-Mogadishu: these groups were in many ways "overlapping categories".[89]

In their strongly worded letter to Siad Barre, the signatories of the Manifesto blamed the regime for the disastrous civil war and its consequences for Somalia's population and

[87] "Somali Manifesto I" signed by the members of the Council for National Reconciliation and Salvation (see document list). For more on the Manifesto Group, see Mohamed Haji Ingiriis, "The Making of the 1990 Manifesto: Somalia's Last Chance for State Survival" in *Northeast African Studies*, 12:2 (2012).
[88] Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?* p. 21.
[89] Lidwien Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia: The Ruinous Legacy of 1991* (Philadelphia: Penn, 2013), p. 107.

economy; they described the regime's massive human rights violations and its divide and rule policy; and they called for "the immediate abolition of … repressive laws and the restoration of basic democracy" and the holding of a national reconciliation conference outside Somalia – for example in Djibouti, Egypt, Italy, or Saudi Arabia – followed by the establishment of a care-taker government that could save the country from total collapse.[90] In that sense, it was a bold challenge to Siad Barre, who responded by arresting many of the signatories and brushing off their demands, resulting in a new wave of protests in Mogadishu in June.[91] In July, following the release of several Manifesto members, Siad Barre announced a number of reforms as well as the establishment of a Reconciliation Committee with members of the Manifesto Group as well as USC-Mogadishu.[92] In the months leading up to the collapse of the regime, this committee continued to seek a negotiated solution, which suggests that not only did they see the continued fighting as a threat to the welfare of the Somali people, but they also considered the leaders of the insurgency groups a potential threat to their own interests.

The voice of the Manifesto Group was in many ways "the rational and reasonable one of Somalia's first truly 'modern' generation"'.[93] At the same time, the group was a reflection of a network of individuals with shared experiences from the civilian era in the 1960s as well as mutual business interests.[94] Already before the publication of the Manifesto, individuals within this network had suggested that "the 1969 government" should be re-established as a government in exile, and argued that such a government could receive significant international backing from important countries based on the extensive network of contacts that this established elite possessed.[95]

[90] "Somali Manifesto I".
[91] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 25.
[92] Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing*, p. 107.
[93] Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing*, p. 112.
[94] Interview with senior SSDF member (Interview #11).
[95] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #9).

This meant that the Manifesto Group was seen as a party pleading on behalf of certain clans and interest groups by the insurgency leaders in the SNM, SPM, and USC, who viewed the group as a potential threat for several reasons. First of all, it opened up for a negotiated settlement, which would marginalize the military leaders and allow the "moderates" from the Manifesto Group to take center stage. Secondly, the network around the Manifesto Group reflected longstanding personal relationships from the civilian era, and these would most likely shape the distribution of positions in any negotiated post-Siad Barre arrangement. Thirdly, the logic of clan-balancing meant that the leaders from the insurgency would risk being side-lined by clansmen from the network around the Manifesto Group.

This final point is worth considering in particular. From the viewpoint of the SNM, the Manifesto represented the same interests and clans that had dominated Somalia since independence, especially the Abgal and Majerteen, to which many of the signatories belonged. Although the organisers of the Manifesto had tried to assemble fifteen signatories from each clan-family, they ended up with only two Isaaq in a group with 114 signatories.[96] This was perceived as an exclusion of the Isaaq but this was never the intention. Moreover, since many of the signatories had close connections to Siad Barre's regime, or were seen as close to the Italians who continued to support the regime and pushed for a negotiated settlement that included Siad Barre in one way or another, the SNM viewed the Manifesto as "a southern Italian-made group" that amounted to little more than a "cosmetic version of Siad Barre".[97] Any transition to civilian rule led by such southern elites was unlikely to address the main issue that had propelled the SNM insurgency, namely the marginalization of the north. Importantly, negotiations could also lend the regime renewed legitimacy, and this

[96] Interview with Manifesto signatory (Interview #12).
[97] Interview with senior SNM member (Interview #10).

could lead to the resumption of foreign support, which the regime in turn could use to beat back the SNM in the north. According to an SNM member, the Manifesto Group was simply "a Daarod interest group fighting for the longevity of an obsolete Daarod dictatorial regime".[98]

On the USC side, the perceived dominance of elites from the Abgal and Majerteen clans in the Manifesto Group was a key issue for Mohamed Farrah Aideed. As most of the Hawiye signatories belonged to the USC's Mogadishu wing – the "Abgal/Murosade wing" as the American ambassador described it[99] – the Manifesto weighed in on that side in the competition over Hawiye leadership. The Manifesto Group was also seen by Aideed as a political vehicle for the Majerteen following the disintegration of the SSDF's militias, and a reincarnation of the traditional alliance between Abgal and Majerteen aimed at balancing the Haber Gedir.[100] This was in many regards an accurate assessment. According to Ali Mahdi Mohamed, the SSDF was militarily weak at the time, but politically strong and close to the USC.[101] For this reason, Aideed saw the risk of "a repeat of the political scenario of the 60s",[102] with a Hawiye president dominated by the Majerteen in which his own stake would be marginal.

These tensions between Aideed and the USC in Mogadishu became evident after the publication of the Manifesto when Ali Mahdi escaped from Mogadishu to avoid arrest. In June, he travelled to Rome via Ethiopia, where he met with Aideed, who offered him a position in "his" USC organization, a proposal that left Ali Mahdi "miffed" over Aideed's

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98 Ibid.
99 "New Opposition Group Appears", diplomatic cable from the US embassy in Mogadishu, November 26, 1990 (accessed via cablegatesearch.net).
100 Interview with Western analyst working with Somalia (Interview #13).
101 Interview with Ali Mahdi Mohammed (Interview #6).
102 Drysdale, *The Battle of Mogadishu*, p. 5. See also Gilkes, p. 31.

arrogance.[103] In Rome, Ali Mahdi met with others in the USC who were beginning to see Aideed as threat to their interests. According to Abdi Hassan Awale "Queybdid", a close ally of Aideed leading the USC forces inside the country, the feeling in Rome and Mogadishu when it came to Aideed was that "this is a new general … we are fighting one general, and coming to another general".[104]

In the same month, Aideed organised a USC congress in Ethiopia, where he was elected chairman of the organization, which was strongly opposed by the groups in Rome and Mogadishu. Around the same time, the USC in Mogadishu began to set up their own militias, which came under the leadership of General Mohamed Nur Galaal (Haber Gedir-Ayr), who was "a strong critic, and rival, of General Aydeed … an obvious choice as the organizer and leader of the forces raised by the USC (Mogadishu) in rivalry to General Aydeed's USC army".[105] The fact that General Galaal and other individuals on the USC-Mogadishu side were Haber Gedir shows once more that alignments in this period were not about clans and sub-clans positioning themselves as cohesive units. It was also about individuals seeking out opportunities within the context of clan politics. In August, when the only person in the USC who was seen as an acceptable compromise candidate by all sides, Ismail Jimale Ossoble, suffered a heart attack and passed away, these individual ambitions began to take over and divide the organization.[106]

All of these tensions came out in the open in August 1990, when the Ethiopian leader, Mengestu Haile Mariam, brought the commanders of the SNM, SPM, and USC to Dire Dawa where they established the alliance that had been discussed but never established

[103] Drysdale, *Whatever Happened*, p. 24.
[104] Interview with Abdi Hassan Awale "Queybdid" (Interview #14)
[105] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 29.
[106] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 29.

before the publication of the Manifesto. According to the SNM statement that announced the alliance, the three movements would be "united in all spheres of the armed and political struggle" and there would be no participation in "hoax negotiations" or "bogus elections" offered by Siad Barre's regime.[107] This was a clear message to the Manifesto Group and other opposition groups willing to negotiate with the regime. Any talks with the regime, the joint communiqué stated, would be considered invalid by the members of the alliance, who would not recognize "any one who takes part in them to represent the Somali people, and are opposes to them" [sic].[108]

The alliance was immediately opposed by Hussein Ali Shido, the chairman of the USC according to the Mogadishu branch, who publicly argued that Aideed was "not even a member of the USC, let alone a leader of the USC.[109] This resulted in his arrest in Dire Dawa by the Ethiopians, most likely encouraged by Aideed , who seemed to have "the ear of the Ethiopian Government, and, apparently, has said that (Shido) is not working towards the unity and for the welfare of the organization".[110] In the following months, the rivalry within the USC kept on escalating, and when the US ambassador met with Hussein Haji Bod, leader of the USC in Mogadishu, the latter described Aideed as "a subversive figure and not really part of the USC".[111] At the same time, Aideed went public on the SNM radio, stating that those willing to negotiate with Siad Barre were "henchmen of the Mogadishu regime and serve it".[112] In that sense, the USC was divided long before Siad Barre's regime collapsed.

The alliance brought out similar tensions within the SPM over leadership positions. It elevated Ahmed Omar Jess and established a partnership with Aideed that key figures

[107] Somali National Movement, "A Joint Communiqué".
[108] Ibid.
[109] "USC Leader Arrested" (FBIS).
[110] "USC Leader Arrested" (FBIS).
[111] Cited in Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing*, p. 119.
[112] Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing*, p. 119.

associated with Mogadishu and the SPM's southern sector, including Omar Moallim and Bahsir Bililooq, did not consider to be in their interests. At the same time, there was a need for unity, and when the BBC contacted the SPM spokesperson after the agreement in Dire Dawa to find out whether Ahmed Omar Jess was the real leader of the SPM since he had signed the agreement, the spokesperson diplomatically answered that "he can sign" to avoid creating divisions within the movement.[113] This illustrates the balancing act in the months before the regime's collapse: on the one hand, clan solidarity was essential in order to maintain bargaining power; on the other hand, individual ambitions and competition over leadership positions pulled in the opposite direction.

The alliance in Dire Dawa also illustrated the ways in which all sides were drawing on external allies. While the military commanders received support from the Ethiopian regime, the Manifesto Group sought backing from Italy, Germany, Egypt, and Arab countries. In a memorandum to the German government, for example, members of the Manifesto Group, including Ismail Jimale Ossoble and Omar Moallim, described their initiative as "the only credible national proposal on the table to promote national reconciliation".[114] In Mogadishu, the Italian ambassador, Mario Sica, who was close to the USC in Mogadishu and encouraged the publication of the Manifesto in the first place, tried to convince Siad Barre as well as the opposition that he should step down but remain titular head for a transition period.[115] At the same time, he viewed Aideed as "a distant figure … whose representativeness (even his belonging to the USC) was contested by all the representatives of the USC I met".[116] In a similar way, his predecessor, Claudio Pacifico, had very low thoughts about the SNM but was close to many in the Manifesto Group.[117] As noted by Gilkes, this support from the

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[113] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #9).
[114] "Memorandum Submitted to the German Government", *Memorandum by the Action Committee of Manifesto I*".
[115] Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing*, p. 127.
[116] Cited in Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing*, p. 116.
[117] Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing*, p. 117.

Italians was critical and gave key figures around the Manifesto Group the courage to pursue their own agenda,[118] and it was partly these international connections that made the Manifesto Group a serious threat to Aideed and the military commanders, despite its relative weakness in terms of military capacity.

To summarise, the common characterisation of the alliance between the SNM, SPM, and USC commanders in August 1990 as the moment when Somalia's opposition finally came together overlooks the extent to which this alliance was an expression of intra-opposition competition and positioning. It was not really an alliance between three organizations as most summaries of this period suggest – "the SNM, SPM, and USC met in Ethiopia, and agreed to form a united front".[119] Rather, the opposition blocks that emerged in mid-1990 were manifestations of established interpersonal networks and social ties; they reflected intra-clan competition over future leadership positions in a system based on clan representation; and they reflected individual positioning in a political landscape where leadership has historically been "fluid and informal" and "based on successful performance rather than inherited right".[120] Importantly, they also reflected an underlying defensive rationale. If alliances had been formed according to a minimum winning coalition logic, it would have been reasonable to see more unity in this phase. Instead, the tendency was towards defensive positioning and hedging, which resonates with the argument about alliance strategies being determined by perceptions of threat and an overall ambition to keep all doors open in order to not end up on the losing side.

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[118] Gilkes, *The Price*.
[119] Mary Harper, *Getting Somalia Wrong: Faith War and Hope in a Shattered State* (London: Zed Books), p. 56.
[120] Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 86.

On the Brink of Collapse: The Final Months of Siad Barre's Regime

The final months of Siad Barre's rule have been covered at relative length elsewhere and will not be examined in any detail here.[121] In short, this period saw an escalation on all fronts as the main insurgent groups closed in on Mogadishu and a general uprising began in the capital in late December. This resulted in Siad Barre's indiscriminate shelling of the capital's Hawiye neighborhoods, desperate attempts to unite the Daarod to fight back the insurgency and the uprising, and massive looting in the capital over which the opposition and the regime had limited control. All of this culminated with the regime's collapse on January 27, 1991, when Siad Barre abandoned Mogadishu and escaped towards Kismayo in the south. Without going into the details of these events – some of which will be returned to in the next chapter – there are a number of points worth emphasizing with regards to alliance formation and the divergent strategies pursued by the two opposition blocks towards the end of the regime.

First of all, there was a continued willingness among the militarily weaker groups to seek a negotiated way out of the civil war, even when the regime was on the brink of collapse. In November, Egypt and Italy made efforts in partnership with key members of the Manifesto Group and the Reconciliation Committee to organise roundtable talks in Cairo between the regime and the opposition. While Siad Barre hesitated, the militarily weaker opposition groups, including the SSDF, SDM, and the USC in Mogadishu, expressed a willingness to attend.[122] These efforts towards negotiations continued until the very end. On January 23, only a few days before the regime's collapse, there was a meeting in Mogadishu during which members of the Manifesto Group and the so-called Sulux Group, which included

[121] For example, see Mohamoud Mohamed Afrah, *Target, Villa Somalia* (Karachi: Naseem, 1991); Jutta Baknoyi, "Moral Economies of Mass Violence: Somalia 1988–1991" in *Civil Wars* 11:4 (2009); Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing.*

[122] See "SSDF Leader Comments", December 26, 1990, *BBC News* (accessed via FBIS); "Leader of Somali Democratic Movement Explains Himself", November 29, 1990, US Diplomatic Cable (accessed via Wikileaks); "New Opposition Group Appears", November 26, 1990, US Diplomatic Cable (accessed via WikiLeaks).

representatives of the regime, tried to convince Aideed to agree to a cease-fire based on a promise that Siad Barre would leave office in the near future.[123] However, Aideed refused. Apart from highlighting the divisions that existed within the opposition, these discussions illustrate the strategies of hedging and defensive positioning that characterized alignments towards the end, as well as the fluidity and uncertainty involved in the process, which revolved around individual positioning as much as group interests.

Secondly, the character of the violence towards the end illustrates how the regime and the opposition were unwilling and unable to restrain their supporters. Instead, they operated through vertical alliances along the lines described by Stathis Kalyvas by allowing local actors to pursue their own objectives within the wider context of the civil war.[124] As noted by Jama Mohamed Ghalib, in the months prior to the regime's collapse, "Mogadishu was to all intents and purposes in the hands of scores of armed gangs",[125] and many of these gangs were made up by the regime's soldiers and special forces that were given free rein to loot and steal. In late December, when the general uprising began, the event that sparked the protests was symptomatically related to looting – it started with Siad Barre's special forces looting a store in a Hawiye neighbourhood in response to which the entire neighbourhood responded with weapons brought from their homes.[126] As the uprising began, the line between political violence and criminal violence that had been blurred in the years before was effectively erased; looting went together with protests and fighting against the government forces. This meant that even though the USC elites in Mogadishu encouraged and benefitted from the popular uprising, they never controlled it. As noted by General Galaal, the commander of the USC militias in Mogadishu that launched an offensive as the uprising began, "… there

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123 Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?* p. 27.
124 Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence*, p. 381.
125 Ghalib, *The Cost of Dictatorship*, p. 210.
126 Ibid., p. 211.

were a lot of groups with different interests, among them thieves and looters. It was very difficult to control. Operationally, they were participating in the popular uprising, but in reality they were gangs and divided along clan-lines".[127]

Finally, the indiscriminate targeting of Hawiye neighbourhoods fed into the clan polarization that was already underway, and in the final weeks, Siad Barre made desperate attempts to mobilise Daarod solidarity to quell the uprising. For example, when the SPM militias led by Ahmed Omar Jess captured Baidoa, Siad Barre sent a delegation to say that the Ogaden should come back to the government because the conflict had changed; it was becoming a conflict between the Daarod and the Hawiye, not a fight between the opposition and the regime.[128] However, it ended with the envoys siding with the opposition instead, which shows that even though there was clan polarization underway, the opposition against the regime was still holding.

In the final days of the regime, when the USC's militias from the central regions under Aideed's command joined the fighting in Mogadishu, Siad Barre made new concessions by announcing free elections and appointing a new prime minister, Omar Arteh Ghalib, an Isaaq from the north who had been sentenced to death in 1988 for his opposition against the regime. The appointment was immediately denounced in a statement from the USC office in London that supported Aideed, which explained that the SNM, SPM, and USC were already "in the process of forming a transitional government".[129] At the same time, the other side the USC issued a conflicting statement, which announced that a "National Salvation Committee" had been established by four of the Somali opposition movements – the SPM,

[127] Cited in Bakonyi, "Moral Economies of Mass Violence", p. 444.
[128] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #7).
[129] See "Reject Prime Minister Appointment", *BBC News,* January 21, 1990 (accessed via FBIS).

SSDF, SDM, and SDA – and called upon the SNM to join these groups "in the national interest to contribute to the common effort to seek a political solution".[130]

These statements illustrated the confusion and divisions within the opposition on the eve of the regime's collapse: on the one hand, there was the tripartite alliance between the SNM, SPM, and USC commanders; on the other hand, there was the USC's wing in Mogadishu, the weakened SSDF and other smaller opposition groups and influential individuals, including SPM figures like Omar Moallim who were aligned with the Manifesto Group. Although these statements from different sides were obviously highly propagandistic and exaggerated, they highlighted the cross-clan character of alignments based on interpersonal networks in the midst of a conflict that was organised along clan lines. Importantly, they also provided a first indication of what alignments would look like in the post-Siad Barre era.

Conclusion

The balance of power was obviously an important factor in shaping alignments in Somalia towards the end of Siad Barre's rule. It was the weakening of the regime, especially the collapse of Siad Barre's patronage system, and the SNM's progress in the north that resulted in a mushrooming of opposition groups towards the end of the 1980s as clans and individuals mobilised "to ensure themselves a place in the new Somali order".[131] Moreover, there was no side-switching or fighting among the opposition groups as long as Siad Barre remained in Mogadishu. It was only when the regime collapsed that fighting between the opposition groups began, despite the prior existence of internal rivalries and intense individual positioning. In that sense, the two alternative approaches for understanding alliance formation discussed in Chapter I – the realist approach and the political marketplace model

[130] See "Opposition Groups Reach Accord in Rome", *ANSA*, January 23, 1991 (accessed via FBIS).
[131] Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, p. 78.

– make sense in relation to many of the key developments towards the end of Siad Barre's rule.

However, they also fail to capture key aspects of alliance formation in this period, including the defensive rationale behind alignments and the extent to which subnational rivalries and intra-opposition competition shaped alliance choices. This chapter has highlighted this underlying logic and the main alliance patterns described in the introduction in several ways. First of all, it has shown how alignments were shaped by interaction between local, regional, and national political forces; how cooperation against the common enemy at the national level was hampered by the local character of the resistance; and how alliances that would make sense at the national level did not always make sense from a local perspective where perceptions of threat were often different.

Secondly, it has shown that even though "defensive clannism"[132] was a key aspect of mobilisation, it was only one side of the political equation because no clan-family could expect to monopolize power at the national level, which meant that cross-clan alliances would be essential sooner or later. This was reflected in the two opposition blocks in the final year of the regime, which not only represented a "civilian" and a "military" alternative, but also reflected sub-clan rivalry and individual positioning based on perceptions of what a post-Siad Barre ruling coalition would look like.

Finally, the chapter has demonstrated that social ties, friendships, and individual agency played important roles in shaping alliances as well as perceptions of threat. As noted by Anna Simons when describing the final years of Siad Barre's rule, "the history of relationship

[132] Adam, *From Tyranny to Anarchy,* p. 124.

weighed more and more heavily all the time".[133] This illustrates the limits to teleological explanations that focus on genealogical proximity or the relative distribution of power. Following Stephen Walt's approach towards alliance formation, the key question of "who will ally with whom"[134] is impossible to answer without considering these contextual factors. Although it may be tempting to brush such contextual factors aside in search for more parsimonious explanations, doing so would clearly lead us in the wrong direction – not least because these ties did not only shaped alliances before the collapse of the regime, but also reinforced the interpersonal upon which they were built. In that sense, there was a "stickiness" to alignments that the balance of power model or the political marketplace approach cannot explain. This is a point that will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, when the focus shifts to realignments in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of Siad Barre's regime.

[133] Simons, Networks of Dissolution, p. 179.
[134] Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, p. 9.

Chapter IV

Fear and Loathing: Alliances and Elite Manipulation, 1991-1992

"Everything … is shrouded with suspicion and distrust".[1]

The collapse of Siad Barre's regime in January 1991 marked the beginning of one of the most intense periods in Somalia's civil war. As the fallen dictator escaped towards Kismayo to prepare a counteroffensive to retake the capital, the USC militias in Mogadishu embarked on an intensive campaign of looting and killing that initially targeted state institutions and perceived regime loyalists. However, it soon turned into a process of "clan cleansing" that targeted the Daarod population in general. In the following months, the previous "master cleavage"[2] in Somalia's civil war – the overall framing of the conflict as a struggle between the dictatorship and the opposition – was replaced by a clear-cut "Hawiye vs. Daarod" cleavage. In short, when different USC militias attacked the Daarod opposition groups that had fought against the government – the SPM and SSDF – the latter sided with the remnants of Siad Barre's regime. The result was a loose Daarod alliance between former enemies, fighting against the USC militias in Mogadishu that came together despite the deep-seated rivalries among the Hawiye elites.

This chapter revisits the first weeks after the collapse of Siad Barre's regime as well as events in the following months when Somalia experienced a series of interrelated tragedies: the seemingly indiscriminate targeting of Daarod civilians by USC militias; the large-scale looting

[1] Hasan Ali Mirreh, the SSDF spokesperson, in conversation with the BBC's Robin White on "Focus on Africa". See "SSDF Official Reacts", *BBC News*, January 31, 1991 (accessed via FBIS).
[2] Kalyvas, The *Logic of Violence*, p. 364.

and seizure of property and land in the capital and in the inter-riverine region; and, the fallen regime's scorched earth policy in the inter-riverine region that resulted in the famine that led to a humanitarian military intervention in the following year in the shape of the United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM).

The standard narrative of how things unfolded after the regime's collapse emphasizes the role of Somalia's political elites in driving society towards clan polarization: how they stoked fears and "sought to manipulate clan loyalty in order to secure a political power base".[3] This chapter argues that elite manipulation was only one aspect of why the Hawiye and Daarod alliances were formed, and demonstrates that the road to clan polarization was not as straightforward as many observers have suggested. It builds on the main argument from the previous chapter – that national coalitions in Somalia need components from different clans – and emphasizes the extent to which Somalia's rival elites tried to maintain their respective cross-clan alliances from the year before. However, this proved to be difficult as distrust and clan polarization permeated social relations. In many ways, the political elites became prisoners of their own logic[4] – they were forced to adapt to the polarized political landscape that they were responsible for creating in the first place – because the strategy that enabled them to mobilise grassroots support by drawing on clan sentiments made it harder to maintain cross-clan elite pacts. As noted by Roland Marchal when discussing the violence in 1991 and 1992, "clan hatred and violent competition were the norms",[5] and even though Somalia's political elites were highly responsible for polarizing their society in the first place, the tendency to describe them as steering developments in highly calculated ways overlooks "the extremely precarious

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[3] Africa Watch, *Somalia: A Fight to the Death?*, 4:2 (February 13, 1992), p. 5.
[4] Günther Schlee, "Taking Sides and Constructing Identities: Reflections on Conflict Theory" in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 10:1 (2004), p. 144.
[5] Roland Marchal, "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War: Before and After September 11" in Alex de Waal, ed., *Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa* (Addis Ababa: Shama Books, 2004), p. 130.

control that the political leaders were able to exercise, often after the fact, over a group of armed actors".[6]

In other words, this chapter moves away from overly rationalist explanations that emphasize elite manipulation, invented enmities, and rent-seeking, and fail to consider the limitations to elite manipulation.[7] As described in previous chapters, this tendency can be discerned in many recent attempts to explain alliance formation in civil wars, including the realist approach and the political marketplace model discussed earlier (see Chapter I). Against this, the chapter shows that even the "warlords" in this period had to "accept a number of social patterns that were beyond his own will",[8] and their alliance choices consequently cannot be understood as based on cold-headed calculations along the lines of "homo economicus goes to war".[9] In short, the chapter shows that clan solidarity is not only enabling to political entrepreneurs, but also constraining,[10] and even if political elites were able to "act like calculating machines that are unswayed by passion",[11] we would have to consider how fears and distrust on other levels of society may limit the options available in elite politics.

The chapter is organised in three parts. The first part examines the major realignments that occurred in the weeks after the regime's collapse. If there are critical junctures in Somalia's civil war, this is certainly one of them, and that is why these weeks are examined in some detail. The second part describes the breakdown of the Daarod and Hawiye alliances in the

[6] Roland Marchal, "Forms of Violence and Ways to Control It: The Mooryaan in Mogadishu" in Adam and Ford, eds., *Mending Rips in the Sky*, p. 195.
[7] For useful critiques of the perceived rationalist bias in civil war studies, see Roger Petersen, *Western Intervention in the Balkans: The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict* (Cambridge: University Press, 2011), p. 6; Omar Shahabudin McDoom, "The Psychology of Threat in Intergroup Conflict: Emotions, Rationality, and Opportunity in the Rwandan Genocide" in *International Security*, 37:2 (2012); Stuart Kaufman, *Nationalist Passions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).
[8] Roland Marchal, "Warlordism and Terrorism: How to Obscure an Already Confusing Crisis? The Case of Somalia" in *International Affairs*, 83:6 (2007), p. 1096.
[9] Cramer, "Homo Economicus Goes to War".
[10] Schlee, "Taking Sides and Constructing Identities", p. 151.
[11] Martin Van Creveld, The Transformation of War (New York: The Free Press, 1991), p. 157.

second half of 1991, when new cross-clan alliances were established between rival sub-groups from within the Daarod and Hawiye alliances. Finally, the third part examines the complexities surrounding Siad Barre's final attempt to retake Mogadishu in April 1992 when the Hawiye-militias that had fought each other to a standstill in the preceding months came together against what they perceived to be a common threat to their interests.

The central contribution of this chapter to the broader thesis is to highlight an often overlooked aspect of alliance formation – the limitations to elite manipulation – while simultaneously connecting realignments to the main arguments and patterns outlined in the introduction: the interaction between national and subnational arenas of competition; the tendency for actors on all levels to seek allies against the main threat to their interests; and the importance of previous interactions, social networks, and expectation in shaping alliance choices.

The Aftermath of the Regime's Collapse: How the Opposition Disintegrated

The weeks after the collapse of Siad Barre's regime were absolutely critical in terms of shaping developments in Somalia in the following years. According to received knowledge about how things unfolded, a group of key individuals from the Manifesto Group and USC-Mogadishu seized the initiative by establishing an interim administration less than forty-eight hours after Siad Barre's escape from the capital. This administration came under the leadership of Ali Mahdi Mohamed, the USC financier and Manifesto Group member, who was sworn in as president during a ceremony at the police headquarters in Mogadishu.[12] In the meantime, USC militias and ordinary people in the streets outside were busy carrying away furniture and other looted goods, dismantling government institutions and foreign

[12] Only four of more than one hundred members of the USC central committee were present when Ali Mahdi was appointed. Hussein Haji Bod, the USC leader in Mogadishu, was the one orchestrating the ceremony. Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 29.

embassies, and sweeping up the money that covered the streets like fallen leaves outside the national bank that Siad Barre's fleeing forces had emptied out a few days earlier.[13]

Although representatives of the interim administration emphasized that their only task was "to maintain general links with the outside world pending a meeting among opposition groups"[14] – this meeting would be held on February 18 – it was quickly rejected by the other factions as a Hawiye administration.[15] Importantly, it was also opposed by Mohamed Farah Aideed, who described it as "nothing but a continuation of Siyaad Barre's regime",[16] while his supporters labelled the administration "a counter-coup that has happened over our heads".[17] In response, USC-Mogadishu maintained its position from the year before – that Aideed was not even a member of the USC organization[18] – and reached out to elites from other clans instead to attract a critical mass of support for the administration.

However, these efforts were undermined by the anti-Daarod violence on the ground. According to some observers, this violence was organised and directed by the leadership of the USC as a strategy for capturing the state.[19] The Hawiye elites may have been divided internally, the argument goes, but they were united in their opposition to the Daarod.[20] According to Lidwien Kapteijns, the targeting of *all* Daarods, irrespective of whether they

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[13] See "BBC Correspondent Reports on Situation", *BBC News*, January 29, 1991 (accessed via FBIS).
[14] See "USC Communique on Interim Government's Role", *BBC News*, January 31, 1991 (accessed via FBIS).
[15] The initiative to establish an administration also contradicted the "gentlemen's agreement" among the Manifesto signatories that "no one in the group would take up any positions" after the regime's fall. Interview with Manifesto signatory (Interview #12). It also went against the explicit plea by USC-Aideed to the Manifesto: "we asked them in advance, please do not announce anything" Interview with Abdi Hassan Awale "Queybdid" (Interview #14). For reactions from other groups around this time, see "SSDF Official Reacts", *BBC News*, January 31, 1991 (accessed via FBIS); "Reaction to USC Presidential Appointment Noted", BBC News, January 30, 1991 (accessed via FBIS).
[16] Kinfe Abraham, *Somalia Calling: The Crisis of Statehood and the Quest for Peace* (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian International Institute for Peace and Development), p. 71.
[17] Africa Watch, *Somalia: A Fight to the Death?* p. 3.
[18] See "Rebel Representative on Siad, Other Factions", BBC News, January 28, 1991 (accessed via FBIS).
[19] Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia*, p. 135.
[20] "Whereas the USC was divided over Muqdisho they were united in their efforts to overrun the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) which was positioned outside Muqdisho, near Afgooye". Abdisalam Issa Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State*, p. 115.

were supporters of the regime or had fought against it, became "a strategy for making room at the top"[21] aimed at marginalising the leaders of the SPM and SSDF who had emerged as potential rivals to the USC leadership after the collapse of the regime. As will be discussed later, this explanation builds on a radically different understanding of events and alignments in the preceding year – it assumes that mobilisation against the regime was characterised by clan-family solidarity rather than intra-clan positioning as argued in this thesis (see Chapter III) – which leads to a very different interpretation of events after the regime's collapse.

The first instance of fighting between the opposition groups occurred on February 8, 1991, when militias from the USC attacked the SPM militias based in Afgoye where Ahmed Omar Jess had established a base following the SPM's takeover of the Balidogley airbase. Another key event was the attack carried out by USC militias on February 26 in Galcayo where the SSDF had organised a conference a few days earlier. However, this attack targeted civilians primarily and included the abduction of Majerteen elders who were never to be seen again.[22] Nevertheless, it affected elite politics in similar ways, and had the same effect of contributing to the clan polarization that was underway.

The attacks resulted in the emergence of two clan-family alliances. After the attack in Afgoye, Ahmed Omar Jess retreated with his SPM militias towards Afmadow before continuing to Kismayo where he established a working relationship with other Daarod groups, including the remnants of Siad Barre's regime – "they were a defeated government and I was a defeated faction".[23] In other words, the SPM commanders formed a loose alliance with the regime loyalists whom they had tried to overthrow a few weeks earlier, including General Mohamed Hersi "Morgan", the former Minister of Defence and son-in-law of Siad Barre. In a similar

[21] Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia*, p. 199.
[22] Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia*, p. 161.
[23] Interview with Ahmed Omar Jess (Interview #8).

way, the SSDF responded to the attack in Galcayo by siding with the former regime and regrouping to retake Galcayo together with Marehan militias from the central regions. These were the same militias, figuratively speaking, that Siad Barre had used against the SSDF in the years before. In Mogadishu, the Hawiye coalesced in similar ways, and even though there were skirmishes between USC militias, they all focused on the main threat for the moment – the emerging pan-Daarod alliance – with Aideed in particular believing that "given time he could deal with Mahdi".[24]

In the following months, the frontline between these alliances swept back and forth in southern Somalia. In mid-February, Aideed's militias launched an offensive to capture Kismayo, but faced strong resistance in the Jubba valley.[25] In March, the Daarod militias launched a counterattack on two fronts with militias from the SPM and SSDF moving north towards Mogadishu from Kismayo, while the Marehan militias that constituted the remnants of Siad Barre's army – now mobilised as the Somali National Front (SNF)[26] – attacked the capital from the fallen leader's home area in the Gedo region. In April, when these fronts reached Afgoye, only eighteen kilometres from the capital, a united Hawiye alliance led by Aideed first manged to push them back and then continued further south to capture Kismayo on April 25. This resulted in thousands of Daarod civilians and militias fleeing into the hinterland towards Dhobley, near the Kenyan border.[27] This is where the *ad hoc* Daarod alliance was formally established in response to what appeared to be an "existential threat"[28]

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[24] Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, p. 30.

[25] The attacks and counterattacks in southern Somalia in these first months of 1991 were complex. For a summary from 1991 that illustrates the confusion and uncertainty at the time, see Ken Menkhaus, *Report on an Emergency Needs Assessment of the Lower Jubba Region (Kismayo, Jamaame, and Jilib Districts), Somalia*. Submitted to World Concern. July 1991.

[26] The name SNF was initially used for the entire Daarod alliance, but it later became the name used by the Marehan militias associated with Siad Barre's regime, while the SPM became vehicle for the other Daarod groups in the south (see further discussion in this chapter).

[27] Menkhaus, *Report on an Emergency Needs Assessment*, p. 10.

[28] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #7). The perception that there was an existential threat against the entire Daarod clan-family was real. When Siad Barre was on the border mobilising resources, even individuals who had been in opposition or jailed during his regime came to offer support, including

to the entire Daarod clan-family given the rhetoric from the leaders of the USC, especially Aideed, "who proclaimed his intention of clearing all Darod from Somalia".[29] The result was that SPM managed to take control of Kismayo and most of the Jubba valley in July, when the level of violence against villagers in inter-riverine region was even higher than in the past.[30]

Before turning to the details of how the Hawiye and Daarod alliances came about, it is worth emphasizing that the main victims of the fighting in this period were the unarmed "minority" communities in the inter-riverine region and along the coast. In the first half of 1991, when the frontline between the Daarod and Hawiye alliances shifted back and forth, these groups were exploited and punished by both sides for collaborating with the enemy.[31] To the extent that these communities picked sides in the conflict between the Daarod and Hawiye alliances, they did so according to a familiar logic: they tried to manage the main threat in their own arena of competition. In many instances, this meant trying to appear neutral in the conflict, but it also involved siding with the USC militias that could reverse the dominance of the Darod in the area. For example, the Dir clans in Lower Shabelle mobilized as the Southern Somali National Movement (SSNM) and sided with Aideed to counter the Daarod landlords who had dominated during Siad Barre's regime,[32] only to realign themselves later on when the Haber Gedir and Hawadle emerged as the new landlords in the region (see Chapter V).[33] Similarly, many in the Digil-Mirifle community supported Aideed in the inter-riverine area

individuals associated with the Nairobi intelligentsia that had been in opposition since the 1970s. Interview with senior Marehan diplomat (Interview #15).

[29] Mark Bradbury, *The Somali Conflict: Prospects for Peace* (Oxford: Oxfam, 1994), p. 55.

[30] Menkhaus, *Report on an Emergency Needs Assessment*, p. 11.

[31] Menkhaus, *Report on an Emergency Needs Assessment*, p. 10.

[32] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 146.

[33] Gilkes, *The Price of* Peace, p. 54. The split in the SSNM and Ahmed Warsame's realignment shift from the SNA to the G-12 was sparked by UNOSOM's anti-Aideed policy, which made alignment with the SNA problematic, but it should be understood in the light of the evolving relationship between Haber Gedir and Biimaal in Lower Shabelle. See Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 147.

"because he looked like a winner"[34] and could potentially defend them against Siad Barre's militias that ransacked and destroyed the region while trying to get back to Mogadishu.[35] As noted by Lee Cassanelli, most people in this period "fought only to defend their homes and families",[36] and the ways in which individuals and communities aligned themselves suggest that alliance choices were based on perceptions of threat in the local arena – as would be expected based on the alliance patterns discussed earlier – rather than assessments of the balance of power at the national level or opportunistic maximization of immediate pay-offs.

In the section below, the discussion will return to the to the main alliances, examining the critical junctures that led to clan polarization, showing how the road to a clear-cut "Hawiye vs. Daarod" cleavage was not as straightforward as often suggested.

A Complicated Sequence of Events: The Logic of Realignments

It is important to note that even though many non-Hawiye considered Ali Mahdi's interim administration an attempt by the Hawiye to marginalize Somalia's other clan-families, it was first and foremost an attempt by USC-Mogadishu to marginalize Aideed. It was Aideed who constituted the main threat to their interests, since he led the dominant armed group and was positioned to claim national (and thereby Hawiye) leadership through his tripartite alliance with the SNM and SPM. In other words, even though the administration may have looked like a Hawiye claim to national leadership form the outside, it was first and foremost a way of limiting Aideed's influence without engaging him directly.

[34] Interview with senior RRA member (Interview #16).
[35] The role of the inter-riverine community as participants in the violence has been described by most observers as marginal: "the Merifle clan militias were not in any sense of the word to be considered warring faction". Bernhard Helander, Mohamed Haji Mukhtar and Ioan Lewis, *Building Peace from Below? A Critical Review of the District Council in the Bay and Bakool Regions of Southern Somalia* (Uppsala: Life and Peace Institute, 1995). For a radically different and less substantiated perspective on the role of the Digil-Mirifle community as participants in the anti-Daarod violence, see Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia*, p. 182-183.
[36] Cassanelli, "Explaining the Somali Crisis", p. 14.

There were three challenges that the interim administration had to deal with in order to build a coalition that could balance Aideed's claim to national leadership. First of all, it had to gain international recognition and become the natural focal point in the post-Siad Barre environment. Already before the administration was announced, this was partly achieved, since the Italian ambassador, Mario Sica, actively encouraged members of the Manifesto Group and USC-Mogadishu to establish an administration.[37] It also established itself as the focal point by taking control of the radio station in Mogadishu from which the administration was announced. This was important for several reasons. As noted by Roland Marchal, there was a general assumption at the time that "whoever controls the capital city as Siyaad Barre did in 1989-1990, would be seen as the legitimate representative of the Somali State and would receive international support".[38] If international support would begin to flow, it could be used to buy loyalties in the domestic arena according to the familiar logic of the political marketplace. As noted by David Laitin, this is probably how things would have played out if the Cold War had still been running. In that case, Ali Mahdi would have "declared himself an ally of either the West or East, and received consequential military backing", and assuming that the other superpower would have acquiesced, "all parties in Somalia would then have had to reconcile themselves to procuring positions in an Abgal-led government. No democracy would have resulted, but there would have been order".[39] However, such external support was not readily available in the post-Cold War environment, and this made the process of building a coalition around the interim administration far more complicated.

A second challenge was how to attract domestic support for the administration. This required a clan balance in the leadership of the administration, and key positions were therefore given

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[37] Adam, *From Tyranny to Anarchy*, p. 92. According to Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 29, "Italy's support for the Ali Mahdi presidency in 1991 played a significant role in its survival".

[38] Roland Marchal, "A Survey of Mogadishu's Economy", European Commission/Nairobi Unit (August 2002), p. 11.

[39] David Laitin, "Somalia: Intervention in Internal Conflict", p. 6-7. Available online.

to well-respected, non-Hawiye individuals associated with the group that took the initiative, including Mohamed Abshir, Ahmed Sheikh Hassan, Mohamed Sheikh Hassan Aden, and Jama Mohamed Ghalib.[40] Moreover, Omar Arteh was reappointed prime minister, even though he had marginal support within the Isaaq clan, and he took the logic of clan balancing one step further when announcing his oversized cabinet with ministers "drawn from the members of other (non-Hawiye) clans – not all of whom had actually been consulted, far less accepted office!".[41] In that sense, there was nothing minimal about the coalition that the interim administration tried to assemble. It was rather made as broad as possible to marginalise the main threat, namely Aideed.

But the character of the anti-Daarod violence in Mogadishu made cross-clan coalition building difficult. Although representatives of the administration called for an end to the looting and killing on several occasions, there was understandably little confidence in their sincerity given the situation on the ground, and everything that suggested the opposite was seized upon. For example, when Omar Arteh went on the radio and called on the remnants of Siad Barre's army to surrender to the opposition movements without mentioning the SSDF as one of the movements, it was interpreted as confirmation of the Hawiye bias and a marginalisation of the Majerteen. Although this may seem like a minor issue, it has been described in retrospect as a "critical event" that contributed to clan polarization and distrust.[42]

However, there is little to suggest that Omar Arteh tried to exclude the Daarod groups deliberately. Although he for some reason left out the SSDF in the speech, he did include

[40] See "Acting President Approves Interim Government", *Mogadishu Domestic Service*, February 2, 1991 (accessed via FBIS).
[41] Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 227.
[42] Interpeace, *The Puntland Experience: A Bottom-Up Approach to Peace and State-Building*, Peace Initiatives in Puntland 1991-2007, p. 13.

the other main Daarod group, the SPM,[43] and a written statement from his office explicitly stated that soldiers in Majerteen areas should surrender to the SSDF.[44] Moreover, it seems unlikely that the SSDF would have been excluded given the strong relationship between USC-Mogadishu and the SSDF, not to mention Omar Arteh's own matrilineal ties with the Daarod – "he would never exclude the Daarod on purpose".[45] Nevertheless, when the SSDF was left out in his speech on the radio, it was interpreted as confirmation that the administration indeed marginalized the Daarod. In turn, this perception played into the established pattern of escalating fear and clan polarization. As noted by Hassan Ali Mirreh, the SSDF spokesperson at the time, everything after the regime's collapse was "shrouded with distrust and suspicion",[46] and this made the interim administration's task of attracting support for a national coalition even more complicated.

Finally, the interim administration had to deal with the other members of Aideed's tripartite alliance, the SNM and SPM. According to Jama Mohamed Ghalib, the police commander in the interim administration, he advised Omar Arteh to wait with the announcement of his ministerial cabinet, so that there would be a chance of getting the SNM on board through negotiations. However, even though Omar Arteh agreed initially, he nevertheless went ahead and named his cabinet on the following day, having discussed the issue with Ali Mahdi, who "doubtless … had objected to any consultation with the SNM whom he knew would support Aidid".[47]

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[43] See "Interim Prime Minister Addresses Reconciliation Committee", *Mogadishu Domestic Service*, January 29, 1991 (accessed via FBIS).
[44] See "Former Regime's Army Instructed on Surrender", *Mogadishu Domestic Service*, February 6, 1991 (accessed via FBIS).
[45] Omar Arteh Ghalib's mother was Daarod-Gari Kobe.
[46] See "SSDF Official Reacts", *BBC News*, January 31, 1991 (accessed via FBIS).
[47] Ghalib, *The Cost of Dictatorship*, p. 214. This also underlined that SNM's connections with the USC were "through Aideed and the Habar Gidir rather than Ali Mahdi". Lewis, *Blood and Bone*, p. 229.

At the same time, Ali Mahdi sent a delegation to negotiate with Ahmed Omar Jess and other SPM leaders in Afgoye. According to Ahmed Omar Jess, he had refrained from entering Mogadishu because anti-Daarod sentiments were running high in the city. His plan was to remain in Afgoye until things calmed down and then enter together with Aideed whom he still considered an ally.[48] This was in spite of the flood of displaced Daarod fleeing from Mogadishu via Afgoye, testifying about large-scale atrocities being committed by the USC militias in the capital. In response, Ahemd Omar Jess allegedly explained that "since they tolerated Siad Barre's torture of the Somali people for two decades, they can withstand the present turmoil for a few more days until Siad Barre is ousted".[49]

According to several individuals familiar with these negotiations in Afgoye, the delegation for the interim administration emphasized that Aideed would not emerge as the USC leader in the end, and they offered the SPM two ministerial posts within the interim administration instead.[50] But Ahmed Omar Jess refused and maintained that he would wait until Aideed arrived.[51] In that sense, the tripartite alliance from the year before was still holding. In Mogadishu, Ali Mahdi told reporters that the prospects for agreement with the SPM leaders were good,[52] but this was contradicted by statements from the USC's office in London that sided with Aideed, which called for the establishment of a tripartite state council by the SNM, SPM, and USC, since the establishment of the interim administration "was apparently hasty and contrary to national unity and the interests of the Somali people".[53]

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[48] Interview with Ahmed Omar Jess (Interview #8).
[49] Hassan Ali Jama, *Who Cares about Somalia? Hassan's Ordeal: Reflections on a Nation's Future* (Berlin Verlag Hans Schiller, 2005), p. 24.
[50] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #7).
[51] According to a senior SPM member, there was also a feeling that they were negotiating from a weakened position given the internal divisions within the SPM – "we needed to sit down and discuss before doing anything". (Interview #7).
[52] See "Interim President Holds Meetings, Speaks", *Mogadishu Domestic Service*, January 31, 1991 (accessed via FBIS).
[53] See "USC Calls for 'Tripartite State Council'", *AFP*, February 2, 1991 (accessed via FBIS).

Making Sense of a Critical Juncture

It is in relation to this continued intra-Hawiye rivalry that the USC attack on Afgoye must be seen. Although a range of other explanations have been provided (see footnote) the most reasonable explanation is that the attack against the SPM in Afgoye was carried out by USC militias aligned with Ali Mahdi's interim administration in order to drive a wedge between Aideed and one of his key allies.[54] According to one of the members of the Manifesto Group, it is "one hundred percent clear" that this was the rationale behind the attack,[55] and several Hawiye elders, USC commanders, and senior members of the SPM provide the same explanation. In other words, rather than seeing the attack as part of a joint USC strategy aimed at "making room at the top" by eliminating all Daarod elites, we should see it as a "wedge strategy" – a strategy aimed at reducing "a primary threat by neutralizing lesser ones that might ally with it"[56] – aimed at dividing the tripartite alliance between Aideed, Jess, and Tuur.

The same rationale appears to have motivated the USC's attack against Galcaayo when militias targeted the civilian Majerteen population using heavy artillery and rockets.[57] On this occasion, it was Aideed's militias that conducted the attack to drive a wedge between Ali Mahdi's administration and the SSDF. In the days before the attack, the SSDF had organized

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[54] For example, Mark Bradbury describes the attack as a consequence of clan polarization and weak command structures within the USC – "the USC leaders lost control of the situation and fighting erupted". Bradbury, *The Somalia Conflict*, p. 54. In contrast, Gérard Prunier suggests that it was Ahmed Omar Jess who initiated the fighting in response to the anti-Daarod violence in Mogadishu: "the slaughter was so wide-spread that Colonel Omar Jess, who was among the 'liberators' but who, as an Ogadeen Darod could not condone the wholesale massacre of his kinsmen, had to turn against his former 'friends'". Gérard Prunier "Civil War, Intervention, and Withdrawal 1990-1995" in *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 15:1 (1996), p. 52. A third explanation provided by Lidwien Kaptijns suggests that it was actually Aideed who launched the attack as part of a "strategy for making room at the top" by removing rivals from the Daarod groups – a strategy that Aideed and Ali Mahdi "were in full agreement about". Kapteijns *Clan Cleansing in Somalia*, p. 199 and p. 161. Although she does not present any material to support this interpretation, Kapteijns argues that the "unexpected attack by USC Caydiid on SPM-Jess in Afgooye … represented a stage in the USC's clan cleansing campaign and marked the beginning of the War of the Militias". Ibid. p. 241.

[55] Interview with Manifesto signatory (Interview #12).

[56] Timothy Crawford, "Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics" in *International Security*, 35:4 (2011).

[57] Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia*, p. 162-163.

a conference in Galcaayo during which two important decisions had been reached: first, that Mohamed Abshir would be elected chairman, even though some delegates objected to this because of his close ties with Ali Mahdi;[58] second, that the SSDF would participate in the national conference that Ali Mahdi's administration was planning. In that sense, the conference confirmed the strong relationship between the SSDF and the USC in Mogadishu (see Chapter III). However, if the SSDF were to take part in Ali Mahdi's reconciliation conference, it would lend considerable credibility to the event, and the attack against Galcaayo carried out by militias aligned with Aideed was therefore a way of "making sure that future reconciliation would be out of the question".[59] In short, it made it impossible for the SSDF elites to maintain support for cooperation with the Hawiye-led administration, and although the attack served a number of other purposes as well, "the most important was undermining the alliance with Ali Mahdi".[60]

This interpretation of events is supported by the continued efforts by both sides to maintain allies across the "Hawiye vs. Daarod" cleavage in the following months. As noted by Patrick Gilkes, even though he used hateful rhetoric, Aideed understood the need for Daarod allies.[61] For this reason, he tried to resurrect the alliance with Ahmed Omar Jess at an early stage. In February, when Aideed was on the offensive in the Juba regions, he tried to send a delegation consisting of Mohamed Zubeir elders to talk to Ahmed Omar Jess, but the envoys were attacked by Hawiye militias, and there was no trust in the sincerity of Aideed.[62] In March, three weeks after the incident in Afgoye, Aideed travelled to Ethiopia to meet with Abdurahman Tuur, the SNM chairman, and wanted Ahmed Omar Jess to come as well. For

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[58] Interview with Manifesto signatory (Interview #11).
[59] Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia*, p. 163.
[60] Interview with Manifesto signatory (Interview #12.
[61] "General Aydeed, however much he might claim to dislike the Darod clan family, was well aware that it would be difficult to control southwestern Somalia without some links to at least one Darod clan". Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 41.
[62] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #9).

various reasons, another SPM representative travelled instead, and in the meeting that followed, Aideed explained that the USC militias that had attacked the SPM in Afgoye were not under his command – a comment to which the SPM representative responded "how can we tell the difference?".[63]

The meeting showed that an alliance did not make sense in relation to events on the ground even though it may have made sense in elite politics. On the one hand, the SNM was preparing for Somaliland's secession, which was announced on May 18 1991, and there was no interest in a national alliance from their side, even though they continued to support Aideed with ammunition in Mogadishu when his militias were fighting against Siad Barre's alliance. On the other hand, there was too much mistrust between the Hawiye and Daarod for the SPM leaders to mobilise support for an alliance with Aideed. According to a senior SPM member, even though everyone in elite politics was vying for positions, the reaction was on the clan level – "everybody was forced by the reaction of the people".[64]

The interim administration made similar efforts to establish cross-clan alliances in this polarized political landscape but failed for the similar reasons. In April, for example, Mohamed Abshir, who maintained close relations with Ali Mahdi even when the SSDF distanced itself, went to Kismayo together with Abdirizak Haji Hussein, the former prime minister, to mobilise support for a coalition with the perceived "moderate" side of the USC in Ali Mahdi's interim administration. However, this met with outright hostility from many other Majerteen leaders – a senior SSDF leader described these individuals as "sabotaging" the Daarod alliance[65] – and many civilians "rejected the peace option as completely unrealistic".[66] In an interview at the

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[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Interview with senior SSDF member (Interview #11).
[66] Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia*, p. 173.

time, Mohamed Abshir recognised the challenges in trying to find a middle ground in this polarized environment: "I am Darod, I should side with them [*the other Daarods*]. On the other hand, people like me need to put tribal consideration aside. I hold the USC masses responsible for the killings and lootings, but not the leadership".[67]

In other words, even though an alliance between Abgal and Majerteen elites would have made sense in many ways at the national level, it was not an option given the situation on the ground. Again, this illustrates the constraints on elite manipulation, and although these political elites were undeniably responsible for clan polarisation in the first place, they were not able to change track instantly and completely, like "the type of *homo oeconomicus* who has completely freed him or herself of social constraints and makes decisions on an entirely individual and opportunistic basis".[68]

To summarise, the events described above illustrate two points. First of all, they underline the perceived need for components from different clans in elite alliances in Somalia. It is clear that both sides within the USC were happy to include *their* Daarod allies in a national coalition – obviously in subordinate positions – but they did not want their main rival to lead such a cross-clan coalition. This led to the highly strategic attacks discussed earlier which should not be lumped together with the looting and killing in the "little wars"[69] nested within the overall conflict. Secondly, these events show that clan cleansing should not be understood as "a strategy for making room at the top".[70] Instead, the clan cleansing that *did* occur in Mogadishu and other regions with land grabbing and seizure of property should be understood as a strategy for making room at the *bottom*. As noted by Lee Cassanelli, it was a

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[67] Ibid., p. 173.
[68] Schlee, "Taking Sides and Constructing Identities", p. 151.
[69] Marchal, "Forms of Violence and Ways to Control It", p. 195.
[70] Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia*, p. 199.

strategy aimed at seizing "productive land, port facilities, and urban real estate, which in turn could be used to sustain networks of patronage and support",[71] and it reflected the ambition among Somalia's faction leaders in this period "to reproduce for their own kin and clientele the kind of systematic control over Somalia's resources that enabled Siyad Barre to enrich his own clanspeople and cronies".[72] In short, clan cleansing was a strategy for capturing the remnants of the state in a *literal* sense, not a strategy for eliminating elite rivals to capture the state in a figurative sense.

A Return to Normalcy: The Disintegration of the Clan-Family Alliances

The clan-family alliances established in the first half of 1991 were exceptional in a historical perspective. In general, clan-families in Somalia have been "too large, too widely scattered, too unwieldy" to act as corporate units.[73] The fact that these alliances were nevertheless established in early 1991 illustrates the perceptions of threat at that the time – "clan allegiances were probably sharper and more poisonous than ever before in Somali history".[74] At the same time, there were fundamental underlying tensions linked to individual ambitions and subnational rivalries in these alliances as will be discussed below.

These tensions were held in check in the first months for two main reasons: external threat and temporary power-sharing arrangements between the alliance partners. These agreements were characterised by considerable "constructive ambiguity". The Daarod alliance was based on an agreement that divided key positions in an interim leadership structure and postponed all decisions about who the long-term leaders would be. As noted in the previous sections, the alliance was formalised in Dhobley following the USC's takeover in Kismayo, and the

[71] Cassanelli, "Explaining the Somali Crisis", p. 15.
[72] Ibid., p. 21.
[73] Adam, *From Tyranny to Anarchy*, p. 143.
[74] Jonny Steinberg, *A Man of Good Hope: One Man's Extraordinary Journey from Mogadishu to Tin Can Town* (London: Vintage, 2015), p. 16.

imminent threat from the Hawiye militias at the time meant that there was no time for proper consultations about the permanent leadership.[75] It was agreed that an SPM congress would be held within a year, and that the organisation until then would be under the leadership of Aden Gabiyow and that Ahmed Omar Jess would serve as vice-chairman.[76] According to a senior SPM member present at the meeting, Ahmed Omar Jess was not really consulted about this arrangement, but he nevertheless accepted the outcome based on the promise that there would be a proper SPM congress later.[77] Furthermore, there were no viable alternatives, due to the clan polarization at the time.

However, the tensions that existed within the Daarod alliances were not only linked to elite competition. They were also linked to subnational rivalries and changes in demographics linked to population movements following the clan-based violence. As people who escaped from the anti-Daarod violence sought protection in their clan's respective "home areas", the arrival of perceived "outsiders" upset the balance of power in many towns and districts.[78] For example, the influx of Marehan in Kismayo had an impact on the relationship between the historically dominant clans, the Harti and Ogaden.[79] The relationship was further complicated by the family connection between General Morgan (Majerteen) and Siad Barre, and the alliance that the former built to control Kismayo was heavily dependent on the Marehan from the beginning (see Chapter V). To complicate things even further, the main contenders for power within the loose Daarod alliance in the south that came under the SPM umbrella – Aden Gabiyow, General Morgan, and Ahmed Omar Jess – were all seen by local elites in Kismayo as outsiders since they were not originally from the region (see Chapter V).

[75] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #7) It was also in Dhobley that it was agreed to use the SPM name for the common alliance. This explains the rather counterintuitive development that General Morgan – a high ranking Majerteen member of the regime – became a key figure in one of the opposition movement associated with the Ogaden.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #9).
[78] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 40.
[79] Menkhaus, *Report on an Emergency Needs Assessment*, p. 10.

In that sense, there were also tensions between the elites who used the region as a stepping stone for political ambitions at the national level, and regional elites who were more concerned with subnational outcomes. However, as long as there was an external threat from the USC militias, the alliance between the Daarod groups could be maintained.

There were similar arrangements in Mogadishu to reduce tensions between Ali Mahdi and Aideed following clashes between their militias in April.[80] In June, a nine-point agreement between the two rivals provided a temporary solution, and this was followed by a USC congress before which all claimants to the chairmanship – Mohamed Farah Aideed, Hussein Haji Bod, and Hussein Ali Shiddo – "resigned", to unite the movement behind one leader. When Aideed was elected USC chairman by an overwhelming majority, Ali Mahdi recognised him as the leader of the USC in return for the former recognising Ali Mahdi as interim president. This established "an uneasy peace"[81] in Mogadishu, but it did not address any of the underlying tensions.

These tensions became obvious in May and July when Djibouti hosted the first efforts towards mediation in Somalia's crisis. The outcome was an agreement signed by representatives from six factions – SDA, SDM, SPM, SSDF, USC, and USF – that confirmed Ali Mahdi as interim president for two years, established a national parliament, and committed all groups to the fight against Siad Barre. However, rather than contributing to reconciliation, the conference raised the political stakes; it opened up for individual positioning, and brought out the underlying tensions within the Daarod and Hawiye alliances. According to Patrick Gilkes, the agreement in Djibouti turned out to be "useless as a vehicle for national reconciliation".[82]

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[80] Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, p. 32.
[81] Lewis, *A Modern History*, p. 227.
[82] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 34.

There were two main reasons for this. First, the external backers of the conference were Egypt, Djibouti, and Italy – three countries with their own particular interests in Somalia – which stepped forward as the UN "appeared actively disinterested in what was happening in Somalia".[83] As described in the previous chapter, these countries worked with members of the Manifesto Group in the final months of Siad Barre's regime to find a negotiated settlement (see Chapter III). This resulted in the Djibouti conference becoming dominated by the same individuals associated with the Manifesto Group who now represented different clan factions instead.[84] According to Hussein Adam, it meant that the conference was essentially "intended to confirm Ali Mahdi as president and reject Somaliland's independence",[85] rather than attempt to pressure the interim administration into forming a broader government.

A second reason why the Djibouti conference failed was that elites associated with the other opposition bloc from the year before boycotted the conference. For example, Aideed did not participate – nor did any of his main allies – under the pretence that Siad Barre was still in the country and had to be forced into exile before a new president could be elected. The SNM did not attend given that Somaliland had already declared its independence on May 18 during the conference in Burao where non-Issaq clans in the north participated as well. This meant that the factions that claimed to represent the Gadabursi and Issa in the north during the conference in Djibouti – SDA and USF – had limited support within their own constituencies. In essence, they represented individuals and subgroups that had lost out in Somaliland and therefore looked to the south for allies to gain leverage in the northern

[83] Ibid., p. 47.
[84] For more on the Djibouti conference, see "Somalia: Fragile Agreements", *Africa Confidential*, 25 October, 1991.
[85] Adam, *From Tyranny to Anarchy*, p. 21.

regional arena of competition.[86] Finally, the clans that were most closely associated with the fallen regime – the Marehan and to some extent the Dulbahante and Warsangeli – were excluded from the conference. This underlined the divisions and contradictions that existed within the Daarod alliance: on the one hand, there was continued cooperation between the Marehan militias from the fallen regime and the other Daarod groups; on the other hand, representatives of the SSDF and SPM subscribed to an agreement that stipulated "all out war against Siad Barre"[87] and provided Daarod positions in the national government.

Sticky Alliances: The Old Networks Resurfacing

The conference in Djibouti highlighted that the networks that had shaped alignments in the year before were still intact and resurfacing. For example, Omar Moallim was appointed vice-president together with the SDM's Abdulkadir Zobbe, who had similarly strong ties with the older generation in the Manifesto Group (see Chapter III). A number of other key figures from that opposition bloc accepted ministerial positions as well, including Mohamed Abshir, Bashir Bililiqo, and Musa Islan Farrah. However, no positions were given to Aideed's supporters. [88] Nevertheless, Aideed agreed to the outcome of the conference and signed another separate agreement with Ali Mahdi, but it was evident that the "uneasy peace" could not hold.[89] In early September,[90] the fighting began, and although it was unclear what sparked the first clashes, which lasted for four days, "both sides were prepared for conflict, and both appeared to regard it as inevitable".[91] On November 17, the fighting started again, and this time it continued for almost four months – rather than four days – during which the USC

[86] For more about the factions from Somaliland that participated in negotiations in the south, see Renders, *Consider Somaliland*, p. 123.
[87] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 40.
[88] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 32-33.
[89] There was a nine-point agreement on August 6, 1991, in which Aideed recognised the Djibouti decisions on various conditions that Ali Mahdi never fulfilled. See "Somalia: Fragile Agreements", *Africa Confidential*, October 25, 1991. According to Gilkes, "Ali Mahdi's approach raised serious doubts about his intentions". See *The Price of Peace*, p. 34.
[90] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 34.
[91] Ibid., p. 36.

militias fought each other to a standstill and reduced much of Mogadishu into rubble in the process.

Apart from the human suffering that the fighting caused,[92] it shaped alliance dynamics in two important ways. On the one hand, it divided Mogadishu into two sectors – north and south – separated by a "green line" as the Abgal and other Mudulood clans were pushed out from the south by the Haber Gedir militias. In the process, districts and neighbourhoods within these sectors became increasingly homogeneous with different Hawiye sub-clans controlling particular areas and strategic assets. Secondly, even though the fighting was mainly between Abgal and Haber Gedir militias, other Hawiye sub-clans were unavoidably drawn into the conflict. In simplistic terms, the Hawadle initially supported Aideed, while the Murosade backed Ali Madhi – this was largely a continuation of alignments from the year before – which meant that even though these clans were "ostensibly neutral", the conflict was at many times "a four-cornered rather than a two-cornered fight".[93] This meant that even though Aideed and Ali Mahdi could rely on the support of their own sub-clans,[94] they had to spend considerable time managing their broader alliances within the Hawiye, accommodating political elites and sub-clan leaders whose interests and perceptions of threat often differed from those of the main protagonists.

The intra-Hawiye conflict reduced the pressure on the Daarod groups. In October, Siad Barre took advantage of the situation and advanced from Gabahurrey to capture Bardera and Baidoa. In the process, the SNF militias looted and destroyed food stocks around

[92] The casualty figures vary but Gilkes mentions 30,000 dead and many more thousand injured. *The Price of Peace*, p. 36.
[93] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 35. As will be discussed in Chapter V, these clans had competing claims to Hawiye leadership – after all, the original chairman of the USC was Murosade – and the tendency to forget these clans resulted in problems further down the line when the United Nations tried to mediate and focused almost exclusively on Ali Mahdi and Aideed.
[94] Ibid., p. 34.

Baidoa, "leading directly to the disastrous famine of 1992 and the dispersal of thousands of refugees towards Mogadishu and across the Kenyan border".[95] This was followed by an offensive against Mogadishu that Aideed managed to repel. At the same time, when external pressure from the Hawiye was reduced, tensions within the Daarod alliance began to surface. In December, the supporters of Ahmed Omar Jess from his Ogaden-Mohamed Zubeir clan began to call for the conference that had been promised earlier when the temporary leadership structure was agreed upon in Dhobley. According to some observers at the time, Ahmed Omar Jess "arguably would have had the numerical advantage in his quest to chair the SPM".[96] However, the other main leaders of the SPM were unwilling to organise the conference and risk upsetting the status quo. When supporters of Ahmed Omar Jess went ahead and organised a conference in Yontooy anyway, "Morgan led a Marehan and Harti attack on the conference in order to undermine Jess".[97] The rationale was that it was preferable for the Harti and Marehan that were dominant in Kismayo at the time to have Gabiyow (Ogaden-Aulihan) as chairman of the SPM in order to limit the influence of the Mohamed Zubeir – the main threat to their interests in the regional arena – and in the months that followed, "Gabiyo and Morgan combined forces to remove Jess's forces from Kismayo and Brava".[98]

This marked the beginning of the intra-Daarod fighting in the Juba Valley that reflected interaction between national and subnational interests. On the one hand, it was a competition between elites who were not originally from the region but nevertheless used the region as a stepping stone for national political ambitions. On the other hand, the conflicts reflected

[95] Ibid., p. 141-142.
[96] John Prendergast, *The Gun Talks Louder Than the Voice: Somalia's Continuing Cycles of Violence* (Washington, D.C.: Centre of Concern, 1994), p. 12.
[97] According to Prendergast, "Morgan wanted Gebio to lead the organization, given Marehan and Harti perceptions that he could be used as an instrument in their quest for power". *The Gun Talks Louder Than the Voice*, p. 12.
[98] Bradbury, *The Somali Conflict*, p. 55.

long-standing competition over resources in the region that had been exacerbated in the final years of Siad Barre's regime. As will be discussed in the following chapter, these conflicts and the fact that Lower Juba is the most heterogeneous region in the country made reconciliation particularly challenging, and the negative influence of "external actors" like the main faction leaders made reconciliation among the local communities "virtually impossible" (see Chapter V).[99]

The disintegration of the clan-family alliances resulted in new cross-clan alliances. After seeking approval and support from the Mohamed Zubeir elders in Afmadow, Ahmed Omar Jess re-established his alliance with Aideed. According to a senior SPM member, "we had no alternative other than contacting Aideed, we had no ammunition".[100] In February 1992, this led to the formation of the Somali Liberation Army (SLA) which brought together four movements: the USC led by Aideed; the SPM led by Ahmed Omar Jess, the SSNM led by Colonel Abdi Warsame that had mobilised the Dir communities in Lower Shabelle and sided with Aideed against the previously dominant Daarod; and, finally, the splinter group of the SDM led by Colonel Momahed Nur Aliyow (Elay/Siyeed) who established a connection with Aideed as the SDM was struggling to resist the SNF militias that dominated and pillaged the inter-riverine region as Siad Barre tried to return to Mogadishu.

The establishment of the SLA and its composition illustrates three points related to the overall argument in this thesis. First of all, it illustrates the "stickiness" of alignments in Somalia. If alliances had reflected the balance of power or the maximisation of short-term gains, it would have been reasonable to expect considerable fluidity and some dramatic realignments. Instead, we find considerable continuity in the sense that the cross-clan

[99] "Consultations on Somalia" (see list of documents).
[100] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #7).

alliances that were established in 1992 reflected alignments within the opposition towards the end of the struggle against Siad Barre's regime.[101] This suggests that previous interactions matter. On the one hand, the alliances that were established in the year before the regime collapsed built on established personal networks. On the other hand, these alliances reinforced the same networks and contributed to a degree of path dependency that most teleological explanations that emphasize the balance of power, the maximization of pay-offs, or clan loyalties struggle to explain.

This leads to a second point: the role of trust in alliance formation. If fears and threats are key factors determining alliance choices, it makes sense to assume that trust plays an important role as well in the sense that it mitigates fear and perceptions of threat. Obviously, clan solidarity as described by Lewis revolves around trust, but the examples above illustrate that trust also stems from other things, including friendships and shared experiences. Finally, the formation of SLA illustrates the need for components from different clans and the importance of individual positioning. As noted by one of the SLA members when describing events from 1992 and onwards, "it was very much about individuals competing for positions, not factions … it was clear that there was no such thing as a united Daarod interest, no Hawiye interest … everyone was building their individual alliances".[102]

The Beginning of a New Era: The UN Arrives and Siad Barre Leaves

The destruction of Mogadishu during the fighting between Ali Mahdi and Mohamed Farrah Aideed resulted in the United Nations (UN) stepping up its humanitarian and political efforts in Somalia. In 1991, the UN agencies had for the most part remained outside the country due to the security situation, and even the UN's chief representative in Somalia had worked

[101] Lyons and Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse*, p. 44.
[102] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #7).

from an office in Nairobi.[103] In early 1992, however, the UN's new special envoy, James Jonah, travelled to Mogadishu to initiate negotiations between the main protagonists, and in March, he managed to facilitate a ceasefire agreement between Ali Mahdi and Aideed.

But it was not external pressure from the UN that motivated the ceasefire. It was rather domestic pressure in two forms. On the one hand, Ali Mahdi and Aideed were losing support within their own constituencies, with some Abgal sub-clans raising questions about Ali Mahdi's leadership, and the Haber Gedir elders raising concerns that the clan's manpower "might, quite literally, run out" as a result of the fighting.[104] There were even efforts by Hawiye elders to end the rivalry between Aideed and Ali Mahdi by appointing a compromise candidate from the Hawadle. This underlined that the leaders of the two main factions were not irreplaceable in their positions – they were rather leaders of loose coalitions who were forced to "bargain with their various stakeholders, such as intellectuals, elders, financiers, militia commanders, and even women's groups"[105] to shore up support. As will be discussed later, these main protagonists in Mogadishu often spent more time managing their own fragile alliances than undermining their main rival in national politics (see Chapter V).

On the other hand, there was an external threat from Siad Barre's forces that moved closer to Mogadishu during the intra-Hawiye fighting. In April, after Siad Barre's troops had taken control of Baidoa, they launched a final attack against the capital. In response, Aideed once again mobilized a united Hawiye force that included Haber Gedir, Hawadle, Murosade militias – and even some Abgal militias – that pushed the SNF militias all the way to Bulo

[103] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 46.
[104] Ibid. p. 37.
[105] Compagnon, "Somali Armed Movements", p. 83.

Hawo where Siad Barre was finally forced to cross into Kenya and abandon his ambitions of returning to power.[106]

The unity of the Hawiye clearly illustrates the role of threat in shaping alignments. At the same time, there was considerable disunity among the attacking Marehan militias. This highlights the role of threat from another angle. By and large, this disunity was linked to the determination of Siad Barre and his inner circle to return to Mogadishu. In that sense, they were focused on outcomes at the national level rather than outcomes in Gedo and Galguduud, where Marehan militias were fighting against the USC to protect their home regions. In contrast, many SNF commanders and Marehan elites outside the inner circle were beginning to see Siad Barre as a liability. As noted by Patrick Gilkes, these Marehan elites "went along with Siad Barre's delusions of a possible return to power for most of 1991-92".[107] However, when it came to the final attempt to retake Mogadishu, "a lot of Marehan did not want to go back … they wanted to have their land, but they did not feel like going back to Mogadishu … instead [they wanted to] have negotiations as Marehans, not as the old regime".[108]

In short, the only way that Siad Barre could avoid losing was by winning. In contrast, many SNF commanders saw negotiations as a better strategy for not losing, and there were consequently disagreements over tactics when it came to the attack against Mogadishu,[109] with rumours of commanders form the SNF having arrangements on the side with Aideed.[110] Irrespective of whether these divisions mattered to the outcome of Siad Barre's last stand,

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[106] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 118-119.
[107] Ibid., p. 27.
[108] Interview with senior Marehan diplomat (Interview #15).
[109] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 38
[110] According to Gilkes, when Aideed pushed back Siad Barre's retake attempt in October 1991, the SNF militias led by General Gani maintained a loose siege of Balidogle – the strategically important airbase where the qat flights from Kenya came in – but allegedly "refrained from attacking it in return for a percentage of the qat imports". *The Price of Peace*, p. 37.

they resonate with the overall argument in this thesis, for example the points about individual positioning, interaction between national and subnational politics, and the collusion between different actors that cannot be seen as totally distinct from alliance dynamics even when these forms of tactical and opportunistic cooperation do not amount to formal alliances.

The expulsion of Siad Barre from Somalia coincided with the establishment of the United Nations Mission to Somalia (UNOSOM) and these events together marked the beginning of a new era in the conflict. On the side of the war economy, the civil war changed from largely revolving around the capturing of domestic resources through land grabbing, seizure of property, and looting on an industrial scale, to the control of external resources like food aid that was beginning to arrive in response to the famine that Siad Barre's (and to some extent Aideed's) plundering in the inter-riverine region had created. When aid deliveries were stepped up, many of the entrepreneurs who made fortunes in the year before – "the scrap merchants of Mogadishu"[111] who were connected to the factions – began to supply security as well as logistical support to aid organisations, and this became the main source of income in the following years.

On the political side, the expulsion of Siad Barre made possible new alliances based on familiar patterns. In August 1992, Aideed formalised his alliance with SPM, SSNM, and SDM, after having captured Bardera as well as Kismayo, and tried to establish "some sort of administrative control over the whole of southern Somalia … not directly but through elders, using the three organisations which were in alliance with him".[112] In that sense, Aideed established vertical alliances with local leaders based on a well-established pattern, not only because he did not have enough military capacity to govern by force, but also because it

[111] Ioan Lewis, "Recycling Somalia from the Scrap Merchants of Mogadishu" in *Northeast African Studies*, 10:3 (2003).
[112] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 38.

allowed him to claim control over 11 of 16 regions through alliances with factions and traditional leaders. In many ways, the vertical alliances were far more important than the formal alliance structure around the four factions, which were supposed to establish a secretariat with the executive councils of the four movements. However, this was never implemented, and it ended up that the leaders communicated directly with each other and worked through local stakeholders – "it was warlord rule".[113]

At the same time, the new situation (Siad Barre gone and Aideed looking more threatening) resulted in cooperation between the SNF and Ali Mahdi's alliance, the Somali Salvation Alliance (SSA), which later became known as the Group of Twelve (G-12).[114] However, this cooperation with groups associated with Siad Barre's regime, like the SNF and (at least indirectly) General Morgan, resulted in strong criticism from leading figures within the Abgal.[115] This forced Ali Mahdi to organize an emergency central committee meeting during which several of his strongest critics were ousted with some difficulty.[116] In that sense, the suggestion that there is "no such thing as an impossible alliance in a multi-party civil war" should not lead us to assume that all alliance choices are equally likely, or that there are neither risks nor costs associated with tactical alliances that include individuals or groups that are stigmatized in one way or another. It should rather turn our attention to the potential trade-offs and interaction effects that political entrepreneurs have to consider when making alliance choices – how to weigh benefits against risks – rather than leading us to assume that elites are always able to form whatever alliances they want to. Nevertheless, when UNOSOM arrived in Somalia, there were two main blocs with factions that dominated the political landscape, and these became the main stakeholders in UNOSOM's state-building efforts in

[113] Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #9).
[114] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 39.
[115] Ibid., p. 27.
[116] Ibid., p. 121.

the following years, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Conclusion

If there is a Western cultural bias in the current debate about civil war dynamics on the African continent, it is not towards explanations that emphasize ethnicity, primordial ties, or ancient hatreds, but rather towards overly rationalist explanations that emphasize factors like elite manipulation, invented enmities, and strategies aimed at maximizing gains.[117] As noted by Roger Petersen, "violence is often viewed as a matter of very small numbers of actors … making rational decisions to initiate and sustain violence to achieve narrow ends".[118] This can also be seen in recent efforts to explain alliance formation in civil wars as well, for example in the idea of coalitions being formed based on a minimum winning coalition logic, or in a political marketplace that describes "loyalty as fully commoditized".[119] However, as demonstrated by Petersen and other researchers with similar approaches to civil war dynamics, it is impossible to understand conflict dynamics without considering the role of "group emotions"[120] – especially the role of fear and perceptions of threat – in shaping individual and group behaviour. [121]

This chapter has drawn on this non-rationalist literature to describe how alliances in Somalia changed following the collapse of Siad Barre's regime. It has emphasized the limitations to elite manipulation and underlined how collective fears and perceptions of threat following the collapse of Siad Barre's regime played into alliance dynamics: how mobilisation along clan lines enabled Somalia's political entrepreneurs to "marshal support from both

[117] Petersen, *Western Intervention in the Balkans*, p. 6.
[118] Ibid., p. 6.
[119] de Waal, *The Real Politics*, p. 214.
[120] McDoom, "The Psychology of Threat in Intergroup Conflict", p. 119.
[121] **"**Fear, not hatred, is the prime motivator in ethnic conflicts". Anna Simons and John Muller, "The Dynamics of Internal Conflict" in *International Security*, 25:4 (2001), p. 188.

countryside and town, from elites and commoners alike",[122] but also constrained them in the sense that clan polarization made cross-clan alliances in elite politics hard to maintain.

In doing so, the chapter has highlighted the alliance patterns described in the introduction: the tendency for actors on all levels to focus on threats in their own arena of competition; the interconnectedness between different arenas of competition; and the trade-offs that political entrepreneurs have to consider when making their alliance choices. It has also underlined the problems with the assumption that political elites can make alliance choices based on power considerations and then fairly easily construct legitimizing narratives to "ensure and enhance compliance with the new alliance or group allegiance".[123] As demonstrated in this chapter, even though clan identities in Somalia are fluid and reconstructed over time, they are essentially given in the short-term – "for any given actor at any time, they are there and need to be taken into account as they are, with both their restricting and enabling characteristics".[124] In other words, they cannot be optimally reconfigured for the purpose of alliance formation.[125] This is also why the popular use of the term "warlord" was so misleading – it basically assumes that "this figure is the central element of a given reality and marginalizes all other components".[126] In reality, however, "the candidate warlord had to accept a number of social patterns that were beyond his own will: often he was as dependent on his people as they were on him".[127] In the chapter that follows, this aspect of alliance formation will be explored further in relation to state-building efforts

[122] Cassanelli, "Explaining the Somali Crisis", p. 24.
[123] Christia, *Alliance Formation*, p. 49.
[124] Schlee, "Taking Sides and Constructing Identities", p. 152.
[125] As noted by Schlee in a passage worth citing at length: "if an opponent of the Darood clan family makes recourse to Irrir … this implies that he must include clans and sub-clans that claim to descend from Irrir in the definition of the 'we'- group, even those whom he does not like, since otherwise his appeal to pan-Irrir solidarity would become implausible. This means that he must grudgingly accept the unwanted. Were he, as was increasingly the case during the processes of fission of political groups throughout the 1990s, to have recourse to far more recent ancestors, he would end up with a much more narrowly defined group that might not encompass many of the sections he would like to recruit to his side." "Taking Sides and Constructing Identities", p. 151.
[126] Roland Marchal, "Warlordism and Terrorism", p. 1096.
[127] Ibid., p. 1096.

during the UNOSOM intervention that was launched in 1992 in response to the famine in Somalia.

Chapter V

The Coming Hierarchy: State-Building and Alliance Formation (1992-1995)

> *"Clan is useless. It is like a farm where there is only one tractor, and instead of using it together, everyone wants to have it for himself … and the problem [in Kismayo] was how to manage these bullshit clans".*[1]

When the United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM) was established in April, 1992, the country was already a symbol of what Robert Kaplan later famously described as "the coming anarchy".[2] It was a country with a collapsed state and a starving population, where clan-militias and "warlords" looted and killed without any ideological commitments in a civil war that resembled medieval conflicts in the sense that "there was no "politics" as we have come to understand the term".[3] For this reason, the establishment of UNOSOM was seen in many western countries as an ambitious response to what appeared to be a major challenge in the post-Cold War era: how to deal with the anarchy and instability associated with "failed states" and "new civil wars".[4]

But from the viewpoint of the main Somali stakeholders, UNOSOM was not associated with the coming anarchy in the world. It was rather associated with "the coming hierarchy" in

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[1] Interview with senior SPM representative (Interview #17).
[2] Robert Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dream of the Post Cold War* (New York: Vintage 2000).
[3] Ibid., p. 47.
[4] For informative takes on what motivated Western support to UNOSOM and participation in UNITAF, see Gérard Prunier, "The Experience of European Armies in Operation Restore Hope" in Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, eds., *Learning from Somalia: The Lessons of Armed Intervention* (Boulder: Westview Press); Robert Patman, *Securing Somalia: A Comparison of US and Australian Peacekeeping during the UNITAF Operation* (Oslo: IFS, 1997).

Somalia, meaning the establishment of a new political order through the formation of a government that would benefit some and subordinate others in the same way that Siad Barre's regime had generated winners and losers. In that sense, even though the humanitarian dimension of the intervention received far more attention in the media, it was the state-building dimension of UNOSOM's mandate that constituted the main concern for Somalia's faction leaders and various other political entrepreneurs.

This chapter examines the ways in which UNOSOM's state-building efforts played into alliance dynamics in the period from the establishment of UNOSOM in April 1992 to the complete UN withdrawal in March 1995. It argues that events in this three-year period illustrate how state-building efforts can be a variable in alliance formation as much as alliance formation can be a variable in state-building efforts. More specifically, it shows how UNOSOM's attempts to establish a national administration as well as district and regional councils shaped alliance choices; how these efforts structured political competition, shaped perceptions of threats and opportunities, and impacted the balance of power between Somalia's competing factions. For example, it demonstrates how UNOSOM empowered the leaders of the fifteen factions in the SNA and G-12 who signed the Addis Ababa Agreement in March 1993, and thereafter became "the centrepiece of future political developments".[5] It also shows how the process of establishing district councils generated conflict because local rivals often disagreed on the distribution of seats and then sought backing from factions in the national arena, all of which were eager to establish alliances with local stakeholders, knowing that outcomes in the districts would determine the composition of the national government that UNOSOM tried to establish.[6]

[5] Ken Menkhaus, "Getting Out vs. Getting Through: U.S. and U.N. Policies in Somalia" in *Middle East Policy*, 3:1 (1994), p. 150.
[6] Ken Menkhaus, "International Peacebuilding and the Dynamics of Local and National Reconcilliation in Somalia" in Clarke and Herbst, eds., *Learning from Somalia.*

In other words, the chapter demonstrates how the main alliance patterns outlined in the introduction took on a very concrete form during UNOSOM's state-building process: there were vertical alliances between elites in national politics and local rivals in the districts; there were interactions between different arenas in a literal sense as outcomes in the districts determined regional and national outcomes; and there were considerable trade-offs for national elites to consider when trying to maximize their influence on the local and regional levels with eyes on national outcomes. As will be discussed in the concluding chapter, we can see similar alliance patterns in subsequent state-building efforts in Somalia: how externally sponsored efforts to resurrect the state have shaped perceptions of threat and opportunities. For this reason, the processes described in this chapter with reference to the UNOSOM era are worth considering in relation to later events as well.[7]

The chapter proceeds in three parts. The first part provides an overview of the UNOSOM intervention and how it developed over time. The second part describes the state-building efforts that followed the Addis Ababa agreement and describes how UNOSOM's efforts shaped alignments in national as well as subnational politics. Finally, the third part describes the realignments that began when UNOSOM lowered its state-building ambitions after the so-called "Black Hawk Down" incident in October 1993, which marked the beginning of UNOSOM's disengagement from Somalia. At that point, when the state-building process lost traction, the alliances that had served as useful political platforms in the preceding year – the SNA and G-12 – began to lose their *raison d'etre*, and new alliances were established as

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[7] It should be emphasized that UNOSOM and UNITAF obviously had important and lasting consequences for the political landscape in Somalia beyond alliance dynamics. For example, UNOSOM contributed to the emergence of a business class in Mogadishu that benefitted from lucrative contracts with the UN and NGOs during the intervention years, and these businessmen later emerged as challengers to the faction leaders (see Chapter VII). It also contributed to a stronger political position for the Digil-Mirifle and the various "minority" communities in the inter-riverine region, as well as to the establishment of civil society organisations. All of these changes had long-term consequences. However, they are not discussed in any detail in this chapter, which focuses on state-building in relation to alliance formation.

competing political entrepreneurs realigned themselves in preparation for the post-UNOSOM era.

Warlords and Peacelords: An Overview of the Intervention Years

The intervention in Somalia from April 1992 to March 1995 was not *one* operation. [8] It was three different UN-sanctioned missions – UNOSOM I, UNITAF, and UNOSOM II – and they operated with distinctly different mandates from the Security Council. As a result, they impacted on political dynamics in different ways. UNOSOM I was established in April 1992 after the cease-fire in Mogadishu between Aideed and Ali Mahdi. It was given a mandate that was humanitarian as well as political. On the one hand, UNOSOM I would provide humanitarian assistance to the famine victims with a small security unit of 500 members that would protect aid convoys and secure strategic hubs. On the other hand, the UN mission was mandated to deploy military observers to monitor the cease-fire in Mogadishu and work towards a nationwide ceasefire "to promote the process of reconciliation and political settlement".[9] In that sense, even though UNOSOM's humanitarian mission received far more attention, there was a clear political dimension as well, and the UN Secretary General, Boutrous Boutrous Ghali, emphasized from the outset that reconciliation was "an integral part of UNOSOM's mandate".[10]

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[8] The intervention in Somalia has been described at length elsewhere and will only be summarised here. For examples, see *The United Nations and Somalia, 1992-1996* (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1996); Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*; Susan Rosengrant with Michael Watkins, *A 'Seamless' Transition: United States and United Nations Operations in Somalia 1992–1993* (Cambridge: Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government, 1996); Kenneth Rutherford, *Humanitarianism Under Fire: The US and UN Intervention in Somalia* (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2008); John Hirsch and Robert Oakley, eds., *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Operation Restore Hope* (Washington United States Institute of Peace, 1995).

[9] United Nations, *The United Nations and Somalia, 1992-1996* (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1996), p. 167.

[10] Boutrous Boutrous-Ghali, "Introduction" in *The United Nations in Somalia*, p. 20.

The political aspect of UNOSOM's mandate was a key concern for Aideed and his allies in the SNA, who regarded the UN's involvement as benefitting Ali Mahdi and his allies.[11] In contrast, Ali Mahdi welcomed the UN's involvement in Somalia, and one of his key allies from the SSDF, Mohamed Abshir, even called for "a Cambodian solution" to the crisis: a *de facto* trusteeship under a transitional authority managed by the UN.[12] It is therefore misleading to say that the so-called warlords and faction leaders "were, to a man, opposed to the foreign intervention".[13] They all assessed the impact that the intervention would have on their options and the overall balance of power and behaved accordingly. In Somaliland, for example, there was fierce resistance to the involvement of UNOSOM since the latter did not accept Somaliland's secession and treated Somaliland as part of a united Somalia. As could be expected based on the alliance patterns described in the introduction, this meant that groups in the north that felt like they were losing out in Somaliland's new political arrangement were quick to establish their own factions and align themselves with Ali Mahdi's side to gain leverage from the UNOSOM process in the north. At the same time, Aideed continued to work with the SNM based on their old relationship as well as their mutual opposition to UNOSOM. In that sense, we can discern familiar patterns from Somalia's past in the sense that competing groups adopted different strategies towards outsiders based on expectations of how external involvement plays into local dynamics (see Chapter II).

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[11] This was partly because Aideed was militarily stronger and therefore worried that the deployment of UN military personnel would "not only erode his competitive position with Ali Mahdi in Mogadishu … but also affect his political base elsewhere in Somalia". Robert Patman "The UN Operation in Somalia" in Ramesh Thakur and Carlyle Thayer, eds., *UN Peacekeeping in the 1990s* (Boulder: Westview, 1993), cited in Clement Adibe, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Somalia* (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 1995), p. 44-45.

[12] Letter from Mohamed Abshir Musse to Robert Gallagher, Head of Delegation, "Re: SSDF Position on Peace & National Reconciliation in Somalia", March 29, 1992, p. 2 (see document list). The idea of a trusteeship was supported by member of the UN Security Council as well as international experts on Somalia, but it was fiercely opposed by Aideed. See Ken Menkhaus and Louis Ortmayer, *Key Decisions in the Somalia Intervention* (Washington, D.C. Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, 1995), p. 12.

[13] Walter Clarke and Robert Gosende, "Somalia: Can a Collapsed State Reconstitute Itself?" in Robert Rotberg, ed., *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press), p. 131.

The political aspects of UNOSOM's mandate resulted in Aideed refusing the deployment of the military observers, and in the months in mid-1993 when the UN envoy to Somalia, Mohamed Sahnoun, negotiated with Aideed to get the observers in place, the humanitarian crisis worsened considerably. In July 1993, the UN and US began airlifts with emergency aid, but these only generated more insecurity in many places "as armed bandits and factions fought among themselves to control the ever-increasing amount of aid".[14] In August, when UNOSOM's military observers finally arrived after long negotiations between Sahnoun and Aideed, there were still "unprecedented numbers of people … dying of hunger and disease".[15] When the Security Council responded to the situation by increasing UNOSOM's troop strength without first securing Aideed's approval, the latter felt betrayed and stated that he would "send UN troops home in bodybags".[16] From this point onwards, Aideed and the UN were on a collision course.

The inability of UNOSOM to handle the famine in Somalia resulted in the second phase of the intervention with "Operation Restore Hope" and the establishment of the Unified Task Force (UNITAF) in December 1992. In contrast to UNOSOM, UNITAF was not a UN-operation, but rather a coalition of the willing, with more than 30,000 troops under US , and it operated with a Chapter VII mandate that allowed it to use "all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations".[17] In practice, however, the mandate was "cautiously drawn up to be limited in scope, time and objective",[18] and the US considered it a strictly humanitarian operation that would pave the way for a more ambitious UN operation. In short, the Americans would not engage in "nation-

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[14] Rutherford, *Humanitarianism under Fire*, p. 52. It was estimated that 50 percent of the food aid brought to the port in Mogadishu was looted. See David Shearer, "Aiding or Abetting?: Humanitarian Aid and Its Economic Role in Civil War" in Berdal, ed., *Greed & Grievance*, p. 192.
[15] Boutrous-Ghali, "Introduction", p. 23.
[16] Robert Patman, *Strategic Shortfall: The Somalia Syndrome and the March to 9/11* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010), p. 17.
[17] Adibe, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes*, p. 54.
[18] Ibid. P 57.

building" and would not forcefully disarm the militias or factions.[19] In contrast, "the UN Secretariat viewed disarmament as a priority programme which needed to be accomplished by UNITAF before a transition to UN command could be effected".[20] There was consequently tension between the UN and US from the outset due to their different priorities, and these tensions remained throughout the intervention as will be discussed later in this chapter.[21]

Aideed accepted the deployment of UNITAF based on its less political and more humanitarian mandate, and when the American soldiers arrived in Mogadishu, it only took them a week to establish aid corridors and secure strategic locations, without major interferences from the factions.[22] This encouraged US commanders to declare the mission accomplished and call for a handover to UN responsibility. However, this did not happen until May. In the meantime, UNITAF adopted a highly risk-averse strategy for dealing with the faction leaders, especially Aideed, and the American special envoy, Robert Oakley, "insured that Aideed never felt so threatened by UNITAF that he would consider disruptive tactics".[23] In other words, as long as the external involvement did not affect the balance of power in Somalia, it was tolerated by Aideed, which again illustrates the centrality of

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[19] For a discussion about the differences between UN and US perspectives, see Jonathan Howe, "Relations Between the United States and the United Nations in Dealing with Somalia" in Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, eds., *Learning from Somalia*, p.173.
[20] Adibe, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes*, p. 60.
[21] The UNOSOM commanders struggled to manage their alliance in the same way as the Somali faction leaders worked hard to maintain their fragile coalitions. According to Major General Thomas Montgomery, deputy commander of UNOSOM II, "General Bir and I spent every day struggling with just keeping this coalition [UNOSOM] moving in the same direction. It was an enormous challenge". Cited in Rosengrant and Watkins, *A 'Seamless' Transition (B)*, p. 3.
[22] Aideed "welcomed the introduction of the U.S. forces … in part because he recognized the futility of resisting such a powerful force and in part because he perceived that they would forestall any idea by the UN Secretary General Boutrous Boutrous-Ghali to deploy UN troops and impose a UN 'trusteeship'". Lyons and Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse*, p. 39.
[23] Menkhaus, "Getting Out vs. Getting Through", p. 149. Oakley was quoted at the time saying that it would be "too imperialistic" to disarm the "warlords". See Patrick Gilkes, "From Peace-Keeping to Peace Enforcement: The Somalia Precedent" in *Middle East Report*, 185 (1993), p. 22.

perceptions of threat and the extent to which state-building was the key issue from the viewpoint of Somali stakeholders.

This risk-averse strategy made the transition to UN command highly complicated. In March, the Security Council established UNOSOM II as a replacement to UNITAF under similar Chapter VII conditions, with a more ambitious mandate that included disarmament, reconciliation, and the reestablishment of state institutions — its mandate was "as extensive as the Secretary-General's analysis of the problem of Somalia".[24] In other words, the mission became explicitly political again, with a clear state-building agenda against which Aideed took a hard-line position.[25]

After informal negotiations between the main faction leaders in January 1993, the UN organised a national reconciliation conference in the Ethiopian capital. This resulted in the Addis Ababa agreement, signed in March, 1993, which outlined the establishment of a transitional government (see more below). However, even though the SNA signed the agreement, it soon became clear that the SNA would not abide by the agreement if it risked losing its dominant position in the process. Instead, Aideed appeared to be "biding his time, waiting for the U.S. forces to depart [in March 1993] before embarking on some type of campaign to disrupt and undermine the UN operation, which he had concluded ran counter to his interests".[26] As a result, UNOSOM became increasingly focused on dealing with Aideed and limiting his influence over the state-building process. As noted by Ken Menkhaus, "there is substantial evidence to suggest that between March and early June a

[24] Adibe, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes*, p. 63.
[25] Aideed did not want to attend the conference in Addis Ababa initially, but following an attack on one of his camps, he recalculated "the costs of remaining obdurate". Lyons and Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse*, p. 45.
[26] Menkhaus and Ortmayer, *Key Decisions in the Somalia Intervention*, p. 14.

policy course was charted that seemed destined to provoke Aideed, by making him feel that he was being purposefully marginalized".[27]

A critical turning point came on June 5, 1994, when Aideed's militias killed twenty-four UN peacekeepers after an inspection of one of Aideed's radio stations that allegedly also served as an arms depot.[28] This made it impossible for UNOSOM to act as neutral broker: "Once you have 24 people massacred – and I mean disembowelled, throats slit, eyes punched out, terrible things done to them – there can be no doubt in your mind that you've got an enemy out there".[29] Instead, UNOSOM issued arrest warrants for Aideed and his main allies, and began to use its resources to marginalise Aideed politically in the state-building process and capture him physically through military operations together with American units returning to Mogadishu.

On October 3, 1993, this policy reached its climax with the so-called "Black Hawk Down" incident, which claimed the lives of twenty-one foreign soldiers, including nineteen Americans, and hundreds of Somali militia fighters and civilians.[30] This generated an almost immediate course correction from the US and UN. On October 6, it was announced that American troops would be withdrawn from Somalia by March 1994, and when European troop contributors followed suit, UNOSOM was quickly left downsized, ill-equipped, and unable to fulfil its mandate.[31] In February 1994, the UN Security Council consequently scaled down UNOSOM's mandate, explicitly forbidding UNOSOM to get involved in intra-clan

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[27] Menkhaus, "Getting Out vs. Getting Through", p. 155.
[28] There are several versions of what happened on June 5, 1993, but most agree that it was a premeditated attack by the SNA. See Rosengrant and Watkins, A 'Seamless' Transition (B), p. 6). For a somewhat alternative view, see Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*.
[29] Rosengrant and Watkins, *A 'Seamless' Transition (B)*, p. 7.
[30] For a detailed discussion, see Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Grove Press, 1999).
[31] Rosengrant and Watkins, *A 'Seamless' Transition (B)*, p. 19.

fighting.[32] In mid-1994, the UN operation in Somalia "had largely abandoned any preference for political or security objectives"[33] and focused on preparations for its complete withdrawal in March 1995.

In order for UNOSOM to avoid leaving the country as stateless as it had found it, a new strategy that abandoned the Addis Ababa process was adapted with the aim of "brokering an arrangement in which a coalition, centred around General Aideed, would actually declare a transitional national authority in the absence of national reconciliation".[34] However, as will be described later, these attempts to fast-track the process only resulted in lowered expectations about *any* national government being established, resulting in fractionalisation and realignments. As a result, when UNOSOM withdrew in March 1995, there was not even a nucleus of a national government.

To summarise, the main concern for Somalia's political elites during the UNOSOM years was the ways in which the intervention influenced the balance of power in the country. It was not only a matter of how UNOSOM affected the relative power balance between the two alliances at the national level – the SNA and G-12 – but also how it played into local and regional dynamics; how UNOSOM's involvement in regional reconciliation efforts impacted on the balance of power in Somalia, and how the establishment of governance structures at the regional and district level affected alliance dynamics.

The Addis Ababa Agreement: Impact on Alliance Dynamics

The Addis Ababa Agreement, which was signed by fifteen factions in March, 1993, became the overarching framework for UNOSOM's state-building efforts. Broadly speaking, these

[32] Menkhaus, "Getting Out vs. Getting Through", p. 147.
[33] Lyons and Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse*, p. 60.
[34] Menkhaus, "International Peacebuilding and the Dynamics of Local and National Reconciliation", p. 46.

efforts shaped alliance dynamics in two ways. On the one hand, they contributed to considerable stability at the national level where UNOSOM essentially "locked" the political playing field by deciding from an early stage which factions would be included in national level negotiations. The effect was that other actors – for example sub-groups and excluded factions – had to be accommodated within the structure outlined in the Addis Ababa Agreement. As noted earlier, it also resulted in the two main alliances that comprised the fifteen factions – SNA and G-12 – remaining fairly intact as long as UNOSOM's process maintained traction.

On the other hand, the state-building efforts contributed to considerable instability at the subnational level as UNISOM became involved in regional reconciliation efforts and the establishment of district and regional councils. As will be discussed below, these processes were generally conflict generating, not only because they were perceived to be geared towards the establishment of local hierarchies, but also because UNOSOM used these processes to promote an alternative leadership, trying to compensate for the priority given to the faction leaders in national level negotiations. In that sense, UNOSOM vacillated between support for the faction leaders and "grassroots-leaders",[35] and the result was that "neither a coalition of militia leaders nor institutions based on civilian leaders were possible".[36]

In short, the Addis Ababa Agreement envisaged the establishment of a Transitional National Council (TNC) with seventy-four members that would serve as an interim government in Somalia for two years in preparation for national elections. The TNC would include one representative from each of the fifteen factions in the SNA and G-12 that signed the agreement, while the rest of the TNC members would be appointed through a bottom-up

[35] Menkhaus, "Getting Out vs. Getting Through", p. 149.
[36] Lyons and Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse*, p. 61.

process that would start with the establishment of district councils.[37] These councils would be chosen by elections or consensus at local level.[38] In turn, the district councils would send representatives to regional councils, and these regional councils would each appoint three members to the TNC.

In other words, the Addis Ababa Agreement described the coming hierarchy in Somalia in a literal sense: it spelled out the relationships between different actors and regions; it made it clear that there would be a centralized government for the entire country, including Somaliland; it described the powers that would be allocated to the regional and district councils; and it specified how the relative power of clans in different districts would be determined within the local governance structures. In doing so, it opened up to competition on all levels – local, regional and national – based on experiences from Siad Barre's regime and "the zero-sum view most Somali political actors have of control of the state".[39] It also underlined the importance of vertical alliances, since in order to secure national positions, the factions would have to control regional councils, which required alliances with stakeholders at the district level. This meant potential synergies and trade-offs between local and national politics along the lines of the alliance patterns described in the introduction: a multi-level game where outcomes in one arena of competition shaped outcomes and strategies available in others.

At the national level, the setup of the Addis Ababa Agreement boosted the faction leaders at the expense of other potential representatives in national negotiations, including clan elders, religious leaders, and civil society organizations. The decision to work with the faction

[37] The fifteen faction leaders tried to get away from this arrangement by issuing an "appendix" which mandated the factions to select regional council members, but "UNOSOM viewed this accord as legally nonbinding and contrary to the spirit of the actual agreement" Menkhaus, "Getting Out vs. Getting Through", p. 150.
[38] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 93.
[39] Menkhaus, "Governance without Government", p. 77.

leaders reflected a degree of path dependence starting in early 1992 when the UN entered into agreements faction leaders to gain humanitarian access.[40] In the process, the faction leaders became natural focal points, and the UN's approach contributed to a proliferation of factions as contenders for powers tried to secure a seat at the negotiating table. However, the UN largely failed to grasp the significance of the selection process,[41] and the selection of participating factions before the conference in Addis Ababa turned out to be "a casual and haphazard process on the eve of the meetings".[42] In contrast, the Somali stakeholders viewed it as a key issue, and "for much of the eleven days during which the factions were in Addis Ababa, discussions revolved around who should be present at the conference".[43]

A key decision by the UNOSOM leadership was that only "parties that existed before 31 of March, 1991" would take part in the negotiations.[44] This had two major consequences. First of all, it excluded important factions that had been established later than this date. For example, the Digil-Mirifle clans had managed to organise a conference in Bonkay after the set date to unite the SDM, which had been divided between the SNA and G-12. However, this meeting was never recognised by the UNOSOM representatives, who insisted that the Digil-Mirifle should be represented by the SDM factions allied with Aideed and Ali Mahdi, despite the fact that these factions had far less influence on the ground.[45] At the same time, the UN included factions that had been created after March 31, 1993, but cleverly adopted the names of parties that had existed in the 1950s – "self-died ghosts from the closet that

[40] These standardized agreements also involved the formation of a joint committee composed of representatives of all regions for distribution of aid. For example "Agreement signed by Mohamed Abshir, the SSDF chairman, and Robert Gallagher, UN representative", 29 March, 1992 (see document list).
[41] This continued to be the case even after the Addis Ababa talks. For example, the UN special representative in 1994 argued that the issue of representation at conferences was a "procedural problem" that could be dealt with by a credentials committee. See Menkhaus, "International Peacebuilding and the Dynamics of Local and National Reconciliation", p. 58.
[42] Lyons and Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse*, p. 46.
[43] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 91.
[44] Personal correspondence between Bernhard Helander and UNOSOM representative, April 27, 1994.
[45] Ibid.

were recreated solely to form part of the conferences"[46] – like the USP representing the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli. According to Patrick Gilkes, several factions were established in anticipation of the Addis Ababa conference "to boost the number of organisations supporting Ali Mahdi and ensure that General Aydeed's supporters would remain in a minority".[47]

A second consequence of UNOSOM's decision was that all contenders for power had to be accommodated within the structure outlined in the Addis Ababa Agreement. This resulted in considerable tensions within many factions related to the distribution of positions and the relative influence of sub-groups. In the SSDF, for example, it played into the rivalry between Abdullahi Yusuf and Mohamed Abshir over the chairmanship. On the Hawiye side, it meant that all sub-clans had to be accommodated within either Ali Mahdi's or Aideed's factions, including the Hawadle and Murosade, which could have established (and were considering establishing) their own factions.[48] However, once the Addis Ababa Agreement was in place, this was not a viable option anymore. All of this meant that UNOSOM's decision to focus on factional representation rather than clan representation – or any other form of representation – played an important role in determining alignments and keeping the main factors together.

To summarise, it would be mistake to read too much into the composition of the SNA and G-12 as reflecting the balance of power at the national level at the time. Although the core groups in these alliances were the same as in the preceding years, their exact composition was by and large a reflection of the way that UNOSOM structured the political playing field.[49]

[46] Ibid.
[47] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace,* p. 92.
[48] Ibid., p. 113.
[49] As noted by Renders, the smaller factions from the north, for example, emerged "largely as a result of the externally-sponsored peace-conferences. They were small private initiatives of a limited number of individuals without meaningful popular backing, set up in order to win a share in the spoils of internationally-sponsored

As noted by John Drysdale, UNOSOM "distorted the internal Somali political process by introducing a new element in the competitive struggle for power: the perception that political and economic favours could be secured by adopting an integrating stance towards UNOSOM".[50] Moreover, the ways in which factions aligned themselves reflected subnational competition as much as national competition, and the few splits and realignments that occurred at the factional level while UNOSOM's state-building process was still underway were linked to subnational competition rather than national politics.[51] This leads to the issue discussed in the following section: how the factions managed and maintained their fragile alliances during UNOSOM's state-building efforts.

Managing Alliances in Response to State-Building: Handling the Interaction Effects

The state-building process and its impact on alliance dynamics was even more complex at the subnational level. Although there were serious doubts whether the district councils that UNOSOM aimed to establish would succeed, the councils became "accepted as the bottom tier of actual or potential administration, and, as such, the target for faction control".[52] The process was initiated in May 1993, and by the end of the year, fifty-three district councils had been established, as well as eight of thirteen regional councils (excluding the five in Somaliland).[53] However, it was a conflict generating process. As summarised by Ken Menkhaus, "different clans were often able to coexist in relative peace in a single location [but] if asked to form a local government structure with a fixed number of seats, they often

peace-making. The UN political officers supported them in their efforts if they backed UN political priorities". *Consider Somaliland*, p. 123.

[50] Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, p. 9-10.

[51] The only split that did occur during the course of UNOSOM's state-building process was within the SSNM in early 1993. According to Abdi Warsame, the SSNM chairman, the faction aligned itself with the SNA during "our period of growth". It realigned itself with Ali Mahdi in early 1993 when it became "expedient" to leave the SNA in order to participate in the UNOSOM process, and the SSNM had, at this point, began to take back land in Lower Shabelle from the Hawiye that had seized plantations in the years before. In that sense, subnational dynamics appeared to be critical to the realignment, and this impression is reinforced by the fact that the other faction of the SSNM that remained with the SNA was more closely associated with the Dir-Surre clans in Mudug. See Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 147-148.

[52] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 94.

[53] Ibid. p. 95.

fell into heated disputes, sometimes ending in casualties and dramatically worsening local security".[54] The reason was that "the fixed number of seats in local councils forced each clan to quantify its relative importance"[55] – it became a matter of establishing a local hierarchy in a very literal sense – based on the zero-sum logic mentioned earlier.

In many places, this local competition morphed into proxy wars as local rivals sought external support from the main factions or neighbouring clans. In Lower Shabelle, for example, the two Dir clans competing over representation in Qoriyoley district, the Jiddu and Garre, drew on their respective allies in the region, Hawadle and Haber Gedir.[56] Although the latter were allied in elite politics in Mogadishu, the Hawadle in Lower Shabelle had aligned themselves with Ali Mahdi due to land disputes with the Haber Gedir militias in the region. As these clan militias became involved around Qoriyoley, there were implications in Mogadishu as well as in Hiiraan, where the same clans live, which led to "a general deterioration of relations between the Hawadle and the Haber Gedir"[57] that contributed to a split in national politics later on (see below). In that sense, the state-building process became an important variable in subnational alliance formation, and the interaction effects that resulted from linking local, regional, and national politics match with the alliance patterns described in this thesis.

Apart from reflecting a zero-sum view on the state, the overall attitude towards the formation of district councils was shaped by experiences from the Siad Barre era, when the regime used the districts for its divide and rule policy. In 1990, Siad Barre had reworked the district borders and created several new districts to divide clans associated with the opposition and win allies in key areas.[58] However, these districts had never been established on the ground,

[54] Menkhaus, "International Peacebuilding and the Dynamics of Local and National Reconciliation", p. 5.
[55] Ibid., p. 57.
[56] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 96.
[57] Ibid., p 97.
[58] "Report from the Northeast about District Councils", November 19, 1993 (see document list).

and there was considerable uncertainty regarding district borders. For this reason, there was not only competition over the distribution of seats on the district councils. There were also conflicts over which districts should be recognised because this would determine the regional balance of power and shape national outcomes. In the end, this meant that the district councils process "largely complicated rather than simplified the process of achieving some reconciliation",[59] and rather than producing an alternative leadership that could challenge the factions, it became a process in which the factions were heavily involved.

The process obviously had different implications for the SNA and G-12 given their different relationships with UNOSOM. For the SNA that opposed the district councils process, the main challenge was to persuade local allies and supporters to stay out of the process as participation by clans associated with the SNA would lend credibility to the process. For this reason, the SNA began to establish "shadow councils" at the district level, and the SNA used financial resources as well as coercion to keep local stakeholders out of the UNOSOM councils.[60] Many times, this strategy proved to be effective, especially when dealing with militarily weaker communities, for example in the inter-riverine region and along the coast, where the SNA simply threatened to kill elders if they did not submit SNA-approved lists to the district council process.[61] In many places, however, the SNA had to provide more tangible incentives and build proper alliances, not only because it did not have coercive capacity to dominate militarily, but also because it would be too costly to use violence to gain compliance.[62]

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[59] Rosengrant and Watkins, *A 'Seamless' Transition (B)*, p. 10.
[60] "The SNA and District Councils", November 7, 1993 (see document list).
[61] "SNA Obstruction of the District Councils process", November 15, 1993 (see document list).
[62] "Merka incident background", January 14, 1994 (see document list).

Although clan solidarity went a long way in securing loyalty, there were several places where the SNA failed to persuade local constituencies to distance themselves from the district councils process. In Adado, for example, clans that were broadly sympathetic to the SNA, including Haber Gedir sub-clans, participated in the UNOSOM process, despite attempts by the SNA to keep them out through the provision of money to local leaders.[63] Similarly, in Jilib and Jamaame in Middle Juba, Ogadeni communities were instructed by SPM/SNA representatives to reject the process, but they went ahead nevertheless and participated in the process. This illustrates the tendency for actors on all levels to focus on outcomes in their own arenas. Put shortly, for competing groups at the district level, UNOSOM's state-building efforts did not have the same inherent value as for the national elites.

This discrepancy between national and local priorities was recognized by UNOSOM, and it was utilized after the SNA's attack on June 5, 1993, when UNOSOM began using the district councils process as a tool for marginalizing the SNA. In short, UNIOSOM tried to drive wedges between Aideed and potential supporters, especially groups and individuals nominally associated with the SNA who could benefit from participation in the district council process, including elders, community leaders, and politicians hoping to serve on the TNC. According to UNOSOM's strategy for drawing SNA supporters into the district councils process, efforts to convince such individuals "should take place in local districts, not in Mogadishu, where SNA can more easily intimidate representatives. UNOSOM should make use of the fact that it possesses helicopters while the SNA does not".[64]

This contributed to challenges that Aideed faced in terms of keeping his alliance together. At the same time, it was an advantage to Aideed that he did not have to establish any

[63] "District Concuils in Mudug", October 3, 1993 (see document list).
[64] "Strategy Paper about District Councils", October 30, 1993 (see document list).

functioning governance structures himself – he only had to obstruct the UNOSOM process in order to not lose. This also played into alliance patterns in the sense that UNOSOM focused on "easy districts" in regions that were close to completing the process to get the TNC in place as soon as possible.[65] In contrast, the SNA tried to control districts that could block the process and at the same time could become strategically important in a military offensive if the political process did not turn out to the SNA's advantage.[66]

The shadow councils were only part of Aideed's broader efforts to establish alliances that could counter UNOSOM and his main Somali rivals. In May 1993, for example, Aideed organized a reconciliation conference for Bari, Nuugal, and Mudug – the northeastern regions where SSDF dominated – together with Abdullahi Yusuf, the SSDF founder, and Ali Ismail Abdi, the SNDU chairman, which were members of the G-12 alliance. Although the official reason for the conference was reconciliation between the rival clans around Galcayo to which Aideed and Abudlahhi Yusuf belonged, it was also an attempt by Aideed to divide the G-12 and fuel the rivalry between Abdullahi Yusuf and Mohamed Abshir over the SSDF chairmanship. For this reason, UNOSOM went from backing the initiative initially to supporting an alternative conference involving Mohamed Abshir.[67]

In the end, the partnership between Aideed and Abdullahi Yusuf that emerged "fell short of an open alliance but … strengthened the position of both leaders",[68] and it added to Mohamed Abshir's difficulties in keeping the SSDF together. Once the threat from the USC/SNA was reduced, thanks to Abdullahi Yusuf's arrangement with Aideed, and there was no longer and Islamist threat against Bosasso (see Chapter VII), the need for the SSDF

[65] "The SNA and District Councils", November 7, 1993 (see document list).
[66] Ibid.
[67] Menkhaus, "International Peacebuilding and the Dynamics of Local and National Reconciliation", p. 52.
[68] Ibid., p. 52.

as a region-wide party was not as evident anymore.[69] As a result, local chapters of the SSDF began to "convert themselves into a municipal/regional government (as in Galcayo) or disintegrate[e] into a loose band of office-seekers (Bossasso)" with eyes on local outcomes from the UNOSOM process.[70] This obviously undermined Mohamed Abshir's position as a national leader. In response to the Mudug agreement, Mohamed Abshir therefore requested support from UNOSOM to organize a regional *shiir* to reassert his position as the focal point in the northeast,[71] a move that UNOSOM responded positively to, as key figures in the mission "were aligned in opposition to Colonel Abdullahi becoming Chairman of SSDF in place of the much respected General Mohamed Abshir".[72]

In other words, the challenges were the same for the G-12 factions when it came to interaction effects between different arenas, even though, in contrast to Aideed, they supported the state-building process and used it to gain legitimacy and mobilize resources.[73] In the northeast, for example, the SSDF had to deal with intra-Majerteen competition over the distribution of district council seats. A key question was whether the districts that Siad Barre established towards the end should be recognized since this would determine the balance of power among the Majerteen sub-clans in the region. [74] On the whole, the district councils process created "an unhealthy atmosphere"[75] in the region that exacerbated the

[69] "Report from Bosasso", September 25, 1993 (see document list).
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] John Drysdalde, "Address at the RIIA", October 21, 1993.
[73] For example, General Morgan was considered by many Somalis as well as internationals as "a political pariah". Menkhaus, "Somalia: A Situation Analysis and Trend Assessment", p. 12. Nevertheless, General Morgan was able to mobilise resources from UNOSOM by playing along with the process, for example requesting logistics support and transportations to the districts for meetings. Moreover, even when General Morgan began to lose support within his own constituency, UNOSOM was slow to recognise this as he was playing along with the process. See "SPM about DC formation", November 21, 1993 (see document list); "Response to Plan", January 14, 1994 (see document list).
[74] "Main problem is that Barre's decree creating new districts in 1990 was not accepted in the region, meaning that the five new districts in Bari have never functioned and no one knows the boundaries of the new districts. The arrival of new districts without recognizing Gardo would upset the balance of power." See "Report from the northeast about District Councils", November 19, 1993 (see document list).
[75] "Ibid.

leadership dispute between Mohamed Abshir and Abdullahi Yusuf. It also underlined the differences between, on the one hand, the SSDF elites, who did not care about the exact outcome in each district as long as everything added up in the right way at the regional level, and, on the other hand, the local stakeholders, to whom outcomes at the district level were the main concern. In Mudug, for example, Abdullahi Yusuf struggled to convince members of his own clan who were delaying the process of establishing the regional council because they were "unwilling to grant the SNDU what would have been only one additional seat in two districts".[76]

In the Juba regions in the south, these interactions were even more complex given the heterogeneous clan composition of the regions. In Kismayo, where General Morgan was in control with "an impressive alliance" with many clan components,[77] the district council process highlighted the underlying tensions in the alliance. To simplify, the logic behind General Morgan's alliance was that all groups wanted a stake in Kismayo – the economic hub in the region – and viewed the numerically strongest clan in the region, the Ogaden-Mohamed Zubeir, as the main threat to their interests, especially when the clan rallied behind Ahmed Omar Jess and drew on support from Aideed.[78]

This meant that General Morgan could build an alliance based on economic incentives linked to incomes in Kismayo as well as perceptions of external threat. Apart from the Harti clans that constituted the backbone in his alliance, there were also key figures from smaller Daarod clans, like the Awratable and Leelkasse, as well as elites from smaller Absame clans such as Bartire that are obviously closer in genealogical terms to the Ogaden-Mohamed Zubeir than

[76] "Meeting with Yusuf", October 30, 1993 (see document list).
[77] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 133.
[78] Obviously, these clans were anything but monolithic and there was considerable intra-clan competition, as will be discussed below.

to the Harti, but nevertheless saw the former as the main threat to their interests. Importantly, General Morgan's coalition also included the Marehan "on whose behalf he did much of his fighting between 1991 and 1993"[79] due to his family connection with Siad Barre (see Chapter IV). On top of that, there were elites from the Galjaal and Biimaal clans that were involved in local competition with the SNA elsewhere in the region and drew on support from General Morgan's alliance as a consequence. In sum, it was an impressive yet fragile alliance, with considerable inherent tensions.[80]

These tensions were highlighted in the district councils process. Put simply, the SPM's strategy for controlling the district councils built on Siad Barre's divide and rule policy: it sought to divide the Absame through alliances with smaller sub-clans, like the Bartitre and Abaskul, as well as alliances with smaller Daarod clans, like the Awratable and Lelekasse, by drawing on resentment of the dominant Mohamed Zubeir. In practice, however, this proved to be difficult for several reasons. First of all, the main rivals in some districts were clans to which some of General Morgan's closest associates belonged. This meant that the alliance in Kismayo risked being upset by contested outcomes in the districts. Secondly, the rewarding of elites in General Morgan's alliance in Kismayo in line with their expectations would require an unrealistic distribution of positions in regional and district administrations. For example, it would require that large constituencies in key districts, for example the Biimaal and Bantu in Jamaame, be left out entirely, while elites from Kismayo who did not have a clan presence would be in charge. In turn, this would allow the SNA to draw on local resistance to external dominance.[81]

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[79] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 133.
[80] As noted by Ken Menkhaus, General Morgan exercised the most influence "when clan tensions were high (allowing him to play divide and rule and play on security fears of his core constituents) but not to the point of triggering armed conflict (at which point he was forced to choose sides within his multi-clan alliance". See Ken Menkhaus, "Protracted State Collapse in Somalia: A Rediagnosis" (online resource, see bibliography for URL).
[81] "Memo about District Councils process in Juba regions", September 27, 1993 (see document list).

Finally, the fact that the elites in General Morgan's alliance were concerned with national outcomes primarily – they approached the entire district councils process with the ambition of maximizing seats on the TNC rather than with local outcomes in mind – put them at odds with important local stakeholders. For example, even though the Harti in Kismayo rallied behind General Morgan in response to the threat from Aideed, their support faded over time as the Hawiye threat diminished and the Marehan became increasingly influential thanks to General Morgan's alliance. For this reason, many local Harti elders came to prefer an agreeable settlement with the Mohamed Zubeir, based on the analysis that continued fighting between the Harti and Mohamed Zubeir only benefitted outsiders like the Marehan.[82] However, a settlement like this would undermine the strategy for regional and national influence on which the SPM leadership focused, illustrating the trade-offs and interaction effects that political elites had to consider within the state-building process.

To summarise, the alliance patterns described in the introduction to this thesis can easily be discerned in the context of UNOSOM's state-building efforts. On all levels, the establishment of governance structures was perceived as potentially threatening, and actors on all levels tended to focus on the main threat in their own arena of competition, and draw on whatever allies they could find to balance their main rival, which resulted in the complex interactions described above.[83] In that sense, we see how perceptions of threat determined alliance choices on all levels, and how the state-building process itself shaped perceptions of threat by setting up the political playing field in a certain way.

[82] "Report from Kismayo", March 6, 1994 (see document list).
[83] Obviously, there were many districts where stakeholders agreed on a distribution that all groups found sufficiently satisfying – no group felt like it was losing out – but when this was not the case, the tendency was for rival groups to draw on whatever external allies were available to them, resulting in the kind of interaction effects described earlier.

Fast-tracking the State-Building Process: Realignments and Localization

The tensions that existed within all factions in Somalia were held in check as long as UNOSOM's state-building efforts maintained a semblance of traction. After the "Black Hawk Down" incident, however, this was no longer the case, and the final phase of the UNOSOM intervention was characterized by realignments and fractionalization. One of the reasons why the state-building process lost traction was that the UN and US began to pursue divergent strategies. For the US administration, the main objective after "Black Hawk Down" became withdrawal from Somalia without any further casualties. To achieve this, the US made a radical policy turn and went from seeing Aideed as the main obstacle to peace to promoting the idea of a transitional government in which Aideed would be the centrepiece.[84] Robert Oakley, who had dealt with Aideed during the UNITAF intervention, returned to Mogadishu to negotiate with the SNA leader, and in December 1993 – less than three months after the SNA's killing of nineteen American soldiers – Aideed was flown to Addis Ababa on a US military plane to participate in negotiations with other faction leaders in what an American senator at the time described as "one of the most schizophrenic acts in recent history".[85] Apart from upsetting the American public, this showed that Aideed's power was on the rise, not just militarily as he began to position himself for the post-UNOSOM era, but also politically, as the Americans wanted "an early movement to a transitional government".[86]

An illustration of Aideed's new status was that smaller factions within the G-12 began to make pro-SNA statements and appeared to realign themselves,[87] including the SDA and

[84] Menkhaus, "International Peacebuilding and the Dynamics of Local and National Reconciliation", p. 46.
[85] "Clinton Defends Use of U.S. Plane to Take a Somali Leader to Talks American", *New York Times*, December 7, 1993.
[86] Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, p. 142.
[87] For example, SAMO made public statements that were appeared to be pro-SNA and the SDM and SNDU gravitated towards Aideed's side as well. See "Report from Addis Ababa, December 7, 1993 (see document list).

USF, two of the marginal northern factions that had aligned themselves with the G-12 in order to mobilise resources from UNOSOM to counter the SNM in the northeast.[88] Basically, when UNOSOM was no longer a force to be reckoned with and Aideed was on the rise, it made sense for these groups to align themselves with the new dominant player in the national arena to gain leverage in the north, especially since Aideed's relationship with the SNM was in decline.

This illustrates the limitations of an approach to alliance formation based on a minimum winning coalition logic as discussed earlier (see Chapter I). According to the model suggested by Christia, the relative increase in power for Aideed should have made other factions less likely to side with him. In reality, however, it was the other way around, at least for the northern factions, because they were primarily looking for leverage against the SNM in their own subnational arena of competition. In short, Aideed may have been the most powerful faction leader, but he was not the main threat – he was rather an ideal ally.

While the Americans changed track, UNOSOM continued to work towards a government based on the Addis Ababa Agreement, discussing strategies aimed at speeding up the process with the G-12 leaders, including the possibility of expanding the TNC from 74 to 148 seats to accommodate individuals and sub-clans that had previously felt like they were losing out.[89] At the same time, UNOSOM continued to seek ways of marginalizing Aideed, but on the ground, it was only UNOSOM that was becoming marginalized, and even UN staff noted that "UNOSOM does not know what its role in Somalia is anymore, and is not sure that it has a role".[90] This did not bother the Americans: "the quiet marginalization of UNOSOM

[88] See "United Somali Front Decides to Join the SNA", *Radio Mogadishu Voice of the Great Somali People*, February 28, 1994 (accessed via FBIS).
[89] "Meeting with Ali Mahdi", January 9, 1994 (see document list).
[90] "Response to Plan", January 14, 1994 (see document list)

[became] a goal of, rather than a problem for, the United States".[91] These divisions became obvious to Somali stakeholders as well. In early 1994, for example, Ali Mahdi met a US representative who explained that the Americans knew that the G-12 was trying to establish a government with the help of UNOSOM, and emphasized that the US would not recognize any government in Somalia that excluded a particular group, i.e. the SNA.[92]

The result was that there was no longer "one game in town" with regards to the state-building process. Instead, there were several parallel initiatives, including efforts by Egypt and Ethiopia to promote their respective allies.[93] In March 1994, the G-12 leaders travelled to Cairo to discuss the formation of a government, and even though Aideed was invited, the suggested arrangement "reduced his role and the SNA's influence to minimal proportions and foreclosed the possibility of his playing a role in the provisional government.[94] In a similar way, Aideed mobilised support from other regional powers – including Ethiopia – and while the UN and US disengaged from Somalia's crisis, the influence of the regional powers became more salient (see Chapter VI).

All of this made the implementation of the Addis Ababa Agreement appear unrealistic. For this reason, efforts shifted towards having the factions establish a government without any real grassroots influence. On March 24, 1994, this became the *de facto* solution for establishing a government in preparation for UNOSOM's withdrawal. After negotiations in Nairobi between the main factions, the UN witnessed the signing of the so-called Nairobi Declaration, which made the fifteen faction leaders from the Addis Ababa Agreement responsible for organizing a national conference that would elect a president and "complete

[91] Menkhaus, "Getting Out vs. Getting Through", p. 147.
[92] "Meeting with Ali Mahdi", January 9, 1994 (see document list).
[93] Menkhaus, "International Peacebuilding and the Dynamics of Local and National Reconciliation", p. 47.
[94] Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, p. 143.

and review the formation of local authorities".[95] In other words, the bottom-up process was scrapped. However, rather than recognising this a failure, the UN described the agreement as "a major step forward",[96] and the UN representative, Lansana Kouyaté, famously welcomed the agreement by saying that "the warlords are now peacelords".[97]

But the agreement did not result in a fast-tracking of the state-building process. Instead, it lowered expectations about *any* national government being formed, since the faction leaders appeared incapable of compromise and were struggling to keep their fragile vertical alliances together. These lowered expectations were poignantly described by the SPM chairman, Mohamed Aden Gabiyow, who lamented UNOSOM's decision to hand over responsibility to the faction leaders. In a letter to the donor community, Gabiyow explained that the fifteen faction leaders would never be able to form a national government – they would not even be able to agree on a date for a national conference – and rather than being made responsible for reconciliation, the faction leaders should "be detained and abstained from being involved in the Somali reconciliation talks as a whole … a decision reached by us … is hopeless, unimaginable, and eternally of a failure".[98]

Rapid Realignments and Local Radicalization

The lowered expectations contributed to a series of realignments that began in mid-1994 and continued in the following year when UNOSOM withdrew. In the northeast, there were growing divisions within the SSDF linked to the rivalry between Mohamed Abshir and Abdullahi Yusuf as well as sub-clan competition. A congress was organised in mid-1994, but rather than uniting the organisation, it "exposed the sharp divisions within the movement

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[95] Security Council, *Further Report to the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Somalia*, May 24, 1994, S/1994/614.
[96] "Somalia's Faction Leaders Agree to Form an Interim Government", *New York Times*, March 22, 1994.
[97] International Crisis Group, "Negotiating a Blueprint for Peace in Somalia", p. 18.
[98] "Letter from Gabiyow", June 5, 1994 (see document list).

and the SSDF divided into two factions, with neither able to claim control of the northeast regions".[99] In simple terms, when the Addis Ababa Agreement and the national state-building process no longer structured political competition, the need for SSDF unity was not obvious anymore, and local chapters of the organisation began to focus on building local and regional administrations instead.

There were similar realignments on the Hawiye side as a result of the stalemated state-building process. In June 1994, for example, Hawadle elites established their own faction, USC-Peace Movement, which signalled a definitive split with Aideed and reflected the previously mentioned fighting in Hiraan and Lower Shabelle.[100] As noted earlier, various Hawadle and Murosade elites had considered establishing their own USC factions at an earlier stage, but this had not been a viable option as long as the Addis Ababa Agreement structured the political playing field.[101] When this was no longer the case, realignments began, and the USC-PM unsurprisingly realigned itself with its former opponents in the G-12 to form an alliance against Aideed after the latter attacked Beledweyne in response to the establishment of the USC-PM.[102] In September, there was a similar shift in the opposite direction as Mohamed Afrah Qanyare, a leading Murosade politician and businessman, switched from working with Ali Mahdi to supporting Aideed. [103] Again, this was linked to

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[99] Interpeace, *The Puntland Experience*, p. 21. Importantly, the divisions were not about personalities only, but also underlying intra-Majerteen competition, which began to surface when the need for unity in the national arena faded away. "The internal SSDF competitions throughout the 1990s should also be seen as a continuation of those recurrent tensions, beyond the personalities who led the various factions". Marchal, "The Puntland State of Somalia", p. 10.

[100] According to Abdullahi Osoble Siyad, the USC-PM chairman, the establishment of the movement was motivated because "sub-clans of Hawiye [i.e. Haber Gedir] practiced vicious internal assaults, robbery, and continued violence as hordes of tartars against their USC partners". See "Speech at USC-PM Conference" (see document list). As noted by Gilkes, "The Habr Gidir/Hawadle relationship worked best when under threat from the Abgal or the Darod. It weakened when this no longer appeared to apply, and they fell out over the distribution of spoils". *The Price of Peace*, p. 112.

[101] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 113.

[102] The SNA seized Beledweyene in July 1994 and also took Bulo Burti and as far as Jalalaqasi. Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 126.

[103] "SNA's Aidid, Northern Leaders Discuss National Unity", *Radio Mogadishu Voice of the Great Somali People*, August 31, 1994 (accessed via FBIS).

subnational dynamics and clashes in Mogadishu between Murosade and Abgal militias that had been going on for more than a year, but never resulted in realignments at the factional level for the reasons described above.[104]

The most significant and symbolic split occurred within the Haber Gedir-Saad in mid-1995 when Osman Ali Ato – the main financier of Aideed in the preceding years – organised a USC congress that elected him chairman after Ato's public statement that Aideed had "neither the support of the Somali people nor that of his own clan".[105] This represented the culmination of tensions within the Haber Gedir that had been held in check as long as UNOSOM openly targeted Aideed.[106] Again, this illustrates the role of perceived threats in keeping alliances together.

All of these realignments reflected the same overall trend: national politics was becoming less relevant and the factions and alliances that had functioned as useful political vehicles in the preceding years began to lose their *raison d'etre*.[107] The main faction leaders struggled to maintain their fragile vertical alliances as a result. As noted by Ken Menkhaus, even the strongest faction leader at the time, Mohamed Farah Aideed, had very little time to spend on trying to outmanoeuvre his rival in national politics, Ali Mahdi, because he was busy "trying to control and influence his fractious power base … coping with rival militia leaders within the Habar Gedir, as well as dissatisfied elders, independent-minded businessmen, and … the rapidly expanding Islamic courts in his own neighbourhood that he is having trouble controlling".[108]

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[104] Interview analyst in Nairobi (Interview #2). Musa Sudi was governor of Wadajir district in Mogadishu in 1991-1993 and fought against Mohamed Afrah Qanyare in that area.
[105] "Somalia: Divorce in the Air", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, May 13, 1995.
[106] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 119.
[107] Matt Bryden, "Report from Moqdishu", March 29, 1995 (online resource, see bibliography for URL).
[108] Menkhaus, in Haakonsen, ed., *Somalia after UNOSOM: Proceedings from a Conference Held in Oslo*, p. 33.

A lack of new externally driven state-building initiatives following UNOSOM's withdrawal from Somalia contributed to a "radical localization" of politics. In the period that followed, the locus of competition shifted to the subnational level, and there were efforts towards the establishment of regional administrations and other forms of "governance without government".[109] The first major example was the Digil-Mirifle administration that was established in March 1995, after a conference in Baidoa where it was agreed that the inter-riverine community "could not wait any longer for the Mogadishu people",[110] a move that left the rival SDM-leaders associated with the SNA and SSA stranded in Mogadishu without influence on the ground.[111] In the northeast, there were similar calls for an interregional administration, not under the leadership of the divided SSDF, but rather involving stakeholders like the council of traditional authorities for the Harti clans, the *isimadda*.[112] In the Juba regions, Absame elders planned for a regional administration and largely side-lined previously dominant SPM-figures, like Ahmed Omar Jess and Aden Gabiyow,[113] while General Morgan struggled to maintain his coalition in Kismayo in relation to local stakeholders.[114] In Gedo, "the SNF grew increasingly weak and irrelevant", [115] while the Islamist administration that had been established by al-Ittihad al-Islamiya (AIAI) in Luuq in previous years extended its influence to other areas in the region (see Chapter VII).

The SNF's decline in Gedo was in many ways symbolic of the wider trend at this time: it had been established by elites from the fallen regime concerned with national outcomes; it had paid little attention to the establishment of local administrations and paid more attention to having a stake outside the region, especially in Kismayo, where the Marehan elites worked

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[109] Menkhaus, "Governance without Government".
[110] "Degale Merefle Region Declares Sovereignty", *BBC News*, April 5, 1995 (accessed via FBIS).
[111] "SNA Official Says Autonomy Report", *Radio Mogadishu Voice of the Great Somali People*, April 6, 1995 (accessed via FBIS).
[112] See Helander, "Bari Region: Local Administrative Structures", p. 39.
[113] Menkhaus and Prendergast, "Governance and Economic Survival in Post-Intervention Somalia", p. 3.
[114] Ibid., p. 3.
[115] Menkhaus, "Studies on Governance in Gedo Region", p. 6.

with General Morgan; and it was dominated by sub-clans that were perceived to be newcomers in the region (*galti*), while the resident sub-clans in the region (*guri*) tended to support AIAI and often resented the segment of the Marehan associated with the SNF elites.[116] As a result, when state-building efforts came to an end and there was no need for national representation, these underlying tensions soon came to the fore and subsequently led to violent intra-clan competition like in many other regions in the post-UNOSOM years (see Chapter VI).

Finally, it is worth noting that localization of politics was reinforced by changes in donor policies following UNOSOM's withdrawal. For example, the European Commission published an influential study in 1995 with a "menu of options" for decentralized political structures in Somalia that shaped state-building discussions in the following years. [117] In paralell, the Somali Aid Coordinating Body (SACB) that channelled development funds established a "code of conduct" that made it possible for aid organizations to "circumnavigate the claims of various leaders to national leadership" and provide support directly to "responsible local authorities".[118] This altered the common assumption among Somalia's political entrepreneurs that external assistance would always flow through the capital – and some international experts even suggested that there was "a good argument for disregarding Mogadishu entirely until the security situation there improves quite substantially"[119] – and this shaped expectations of the emerging political order in Somalia.

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[116] Ibid., p. 2

[117] Ioan Lewis and James Mayall, eds., "A Study of Decentralised Political Structures for Somalia: A Menu of Options", Report prepared by consultants from the London School of Economics, August, 1995.

[118] Matt Bryden, "New Hope for Somalia? The Building Block Approach" in *Review of African Political Economy*, 26:79 (1999), p. 135.

[119] Lewis, Ioan. "Salient Features of the Somali Political Scene" in Jan Haakonsen (ed.) Somalia after UNOSOM: Proceedings from a conference held in Oslo, 9-10 March 1995 (Oslo: Norwegian Red Cross, 1995), p. 24.

In other words, there were many incentives for the establishment of local and regional administrations, but few opportunities associated with national level state-building, and what emerged in the following years largely came to resemble the regional resource systems in pre-colonial times – "a loose constellation of commercial city-states and villages separated by long stretches of pastoral statelessness"[120] – only more integrated into the global economy with a new business class that expanded in an "economy without a state"[121] and gradually challenged the previously dominant factions (see Chapter VII).

Conclusion

The lesson that most observers drew from UNOSOM's failed state-building efforts was that centralised state-building in Somalia was essentially a "fool's errand"; clannism and fluid alliances worked against the establishment of a central authority, and local and regional administrations in which traditional authorities played a more prominent role were better governance options.[122] This chapter has showed that although the fluidity of alliances in Somalia hampered and became an important variable in UNOSOM's state-building efforts during the intervention, it was also the other way around: state-building efforts became an important variable in alliance formation that generated considerable instability in some regards, especially at the subnational level, but resulted in stability in other regards as it effectively locked the political playing field in the national arena. Both of these effects illustrate the same point: state-building efforts unavoidably become a variable in alliance formation because they project an image of the emerging political order and thereby shape perceptions of threats and opportunities.

[120] Menkhaus, "Governance without government"
[121] Peter Little, *Somalia: Economy without a State* (Oxford: James Currey, 2003).
[122] Menkhaus, "State Collapse in Somalia: Second Thoughts".

The main point with regards to alliance formation is that state-building is about the establishment of a hierarchy and this easily results in feelings of "losing out". This is especially the case in a country like Somalia with a long history of a predatory state behaviour and a segmentary lineage system in which "each clan has vastly inflated notions of its relative demographic and political importance, claiming a much greater portion of the "national cake" than can be accommodated in the zero-sum world of political representation".[123] This is also where we find the key difference between state-building at the national level and subnational "governance without government".[124] While the former is characterised by uncertainties regarding a range of critical issues – who the relevant stakeholders are, what a fair distribution of the national cake entails, and what the actual size of the national cake is in the first place – the latter deals with more tangible issues in a somewhat more manageable arena of competition. Importantly, the latter also tends to be geared towards establishing and maintaining consensus among those involved through "lengthy, broadly-based consultative or 'electoral' processes".[125] Put differently, they are essentially geared towards maintaining an egalitarian relationship rather than establishing a hierarchy.

However, this does not necessarily mean that they are entirely inclusive. The establishment of regional administrations in the post-UNOSOM era was associated with considerable local competition, with local rivals drawing on external allies, especially the main regional powers, for example Egypt and Ethiopia, which resulted in complex interaction between local arenas of competition and regional competition in the Horn of Africa, as will be discussed in the chapter that follows.

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[123] Menkhaus and Prendergast, "Governance and Economic Survival in Post-Intervention Somalia", p. 2.
[124] Menkhaus, "Governance without Government".
[125] Bryden, "New Hope for Somalia?", p. 140.

Chapter VI

The Neighbours: Regional Competition in the Horn of Africa, 1995-1999

"The neighbouring countries cannot wish away the problem of Somalia even if they want to".[1]

After the UN withdrawal from Somalia, the regional powers in the Horn of Africa emerged as the main external actors in Somalia's civil war. As much as these countries had shaped the conflict in the preceding years, their roles and interests became more obvious when the UN and western powers disengaged from Somalia. For example, it was Ethiopia, Egypt, and Djibouti that took the lead in state-building efforts, all trying to establish a national government led by their respective Somali allies, while countries like Eritrea, Kenya, and Sudan provided more sporadic support to various armed groups and political entrepreneurs. As could be expected, these regional states approached the crisis in Somalia with their own geopolitical interests in mind, and this resulted in a complex web of alliances and interactions between domestic and external actors. In short, domestic rivals in Somalia drew on competing regional powers in order to come out on top in their own arenas of competition, while regional powers like Egypt and Ethiopia backed rival groups in Somalia in order to limit the influence of their regional competitors.

This chapter examines these interactions between 1995 and 1999 when the civil war in Somalia became increasingly intertwined with regional politics, not only as a result of

[1] Meles Zenawi, "Key Note" at the Informal Preparatory Meeting on Somalia, January 4, 1993, Addis Ababa, p. 6.

domestic developments, but also as a consequence of turbulence in the region, including terrorist attacks in Ethiopia and Kenya conducted by Islamist groups linked to Somalia, as well as the border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia that turned Somalia into the theatre of a proxy war between the two belligerents.

The chapter uses events in this period to show that alliance formation in Somalia can only be understood in the context of alliance formation in the wider Horn of Africa region. It argues that the region functions as an arena of political competition according to the same logic as Somalia's domestic arenas. This means that regional powers tend to seek allies against what they consider to be the main threat to their interests – usually another state in the region – and choose their Somali allies and clients based on how outcomes in Somalia are expected to shape regional outcomes, not to achieve a particular preferred outcome in Somalia.[2] By and large, this explains the fluidity of transnational alliances between Somali stakeholders and the main regional powers: they all focus on outcomes in their own arena of competition in a region where "one country's 'periphery' is its neighbour's back door – with plentiful opportunities for troublemaking",[3] and alliances reflect the classic dictum that "If your neighbour is your 'natural enemy', the power on the other side of your neighbour is your natural ally".[4]

The chapter is organised in four parts. The first part briefly explains the interests of the regional powers in Somalia in a historical perspective and in the immediate aftermath of UNOSOM's withdrawal. The second part describes the conferences in Sodere and Cairo – two efforts aimed at establishing a national Somali government – that were not state-building

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[2] As described in Chapter I, this understanding of regional dynamics corresponds to balance of threat theory with the main difference being that it brings in non-state actors and subnational dynamics as well. See Walt, *The Logic of Alliances*.
[3] Sally Healy, *Lost Opportunities in the Horn of Africa: How Conflicts Connect and Peace Agreements Unravel* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2008), p. 39.
[4] Martin Wight, *Power Politics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 159.

efforts as much as attempts by Ethiopia and Egypt to balance each other's influence in the region. The third part describes the alliances that emerged after these conferences when national state-building gave way to a focus on the establishment of regional administrations as part of a "building-block approach". Finally, the fourth part analyses the consequences of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War, how it changed the regional balance of power and paved the way for the Djiboutian initiative that resulted in the establishment of the Transitional National Government (TNG) in August 2000 (see Chapter VII). In sum, the chapter describes the main alliance patterns outlined in the introduction in relation to regional politics, highlighting the formation of vertical alliances and interactions between different arenas of competition, resulting in a complex web of alliances and alignments.

Natural Enemies: Making Sense of Regional Alignments

The historical rivalry between the states in the greater Horn of Africa region has been covered at length elsewhere and it will not be recapped in detail here.[5] In short, there is a well-established pattern of "mutual interference" in the region,[6] and this pattern has been consistent over time, despite regime changes over the past several decades.[7] This illustrates that conflicts in the region tend to be linked to fundamental issues, including contested borders and borderlands, Christianity and Islam, the relationship between highlands and lowlands in the former Ethiopian empire, and access to shared resources, especially the Nile waters that flow from the Ethiopian highlands via Sudan to Egypt.

[5] The regional dimensions of Somalia's civil war have been discussed in by several authors. For example, see Terrence Lyons, "Crises on Multiple Levels: Somalia and the Horn of Africa" in Samatar, ed., *From Catastrophe to Renewal*; Christopher Clapham, "The Political Economy of Conflict in the Horn of Africa" in *Survival*, 32:5 (1990); Berouk Mesfin and Roba Sharamo, eds., *Regional Security in the post-Cold War Horn of Africa* (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2011).
[6] Lionel Cliffe, "Regional Dimensions of Conflict in the Horn of Africa" in *Third World Quarterly*, 20:1 (1999), p. 89.
[7] Healy, *Lost Opportunities*, p. 39.

The most important regional power in the Horn of Africa in terms of influence in Somalia is neighbouring Ethiopia. As described in previous chapters, the conflict-ridden relationship between imperial Ethiopia and the Somali regions goes back to ancient times, and it continued in modern times with Somalia's claims to the Ogaden region and the Haud following the country's independence in 1960 (see Chapter II).[8] The long-term interest for Ethiopia has been "a weak, enfeebled Somali state".[9] Importantly, this did not change with the fall of Mengistu Haile Mariam's regime in May 1991, but was rather reinforced given that the new leaders in Addis Ababa from the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPFL) had benefitted from Siad Barre's patronage when overthrowing the political order in Ethiopia – "Meles knows what Somalia can do".[10] For this reason, the new government was wary of groups like the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which has close links to Somalia, as well as Islamist groups inside Ethiopia, like the Islamic Unity Party, which had links to Hassan al-Turabi in Khartoum and clashed with Ethiopian government forces in 1992.[11]

The relationship between Egypt and Somalia goes back to ancient times as well. However, Egyptian engagement in Somalia in modern times has almost entirely been linked to concerns over the Nile waters,[12] and the different leaderships in Cairo have used Somalia "as an element in … efforts to influence Ethiopia's policy on the Nile".[13] For example, Egypt provided military support to Somalia during the Ogaden War and during the conflict in 1964; it brought Somalia and Djibouti into the Arab League in the 1970s; and it provided resources to Somali insurgents opposed to Ethiopia in the same way as it backed Eritrean insurgents

[8] John Drysdale, *The Somali Dispute* (London: Pall Mall, 1964).
[9] Patrick Gilkes, "Briefing: Somalia" in *Africa Affairs*, 98:393 (1999), p. 574.
[10] Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #18).
[11] Gilkes, "From Peace-Keeping to Peace Enforcement", p. 22.
[12] According to a senior Egyptian representative, Cairo's policy towards Africa in general has always been grounded in the Nile portfolio (Interview #19).
[13] Gilkes, "Briefing: Somalia", p. 577.

fighting against Mengistu's regime.[14] By and large, the Egyptian policy towards Somalia has reflected the status of Egypt's relationship with Ethiopia. When relations between Cairo and Addis Ababa have deteriorated, Egypt has become more involved, and when relations have improved, Egypt has become less engaged.[15] For similar reasons, Egypt has maintained the position that a strong and united Somalia is preferable – a mirroring of Ethiopia's preference for a weak state – and worked towards this aim during the UNOSOM intervention as well.[16]

Importantly, there were close connections between Egypt and key figures in the Manifesto Group, including Ali Mahdi, Mohamed Abshir, and Omar Moallim in the period leading up to the fall of Siad Barre's regime (see Chapter III). These Somali stakeholders also worked hard to mobilise Arab support to balance Aideed after the collapse of the regime – "from day one they wanted a military intervention".[17] This was a major reason why the government in Addis Ababa after May, 1991 continued to support Aideed in the same way as the previous regime had done: it was not because it had a particular preference for Aideed but rather to balance the influence of Egypt and other Arab countries.

If we look at the other Arab countries in relation to Somalia, they have cooperated within the framework of the Arab League in relation to the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).[18] However, they have often backed different Somali players based on their internal divisions. For example, while Egypt and Sudan used to cooperate against Ethiopia in the past, Egypt has been wary of Islamist

[14] For an overview, see Berouk Mesfin, "The Horn of Africa Security Complex" in Mesfin and Sharamo, eds., *Regional Security in the post-Cold War Horn of Africa*.
[15] Interview with representative of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Egypt (Interview #19)
[16] Interview with Egyptian diplomat (Interview #20).
[17] Interview with Arab League representative (Interview #21).
[18] It was the AU rather than the Arab league that was given mandate to mediate in Somalia in the early 1990s even though Somalia is a member of both. Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #18).

influences and the role of Sudan following the 1989 coup.[19] At the same time, Khartoum has supported Islamist groups in Somalia, not only for ideological reasons, but also to pressure its main rival – Ethiopia – in the same way as it supported secular Eritrean groups in the past. For similar reasons, Libya backed the opposition against Siad Barre's regime in the 1980s, not because it had a direct stake in Somalia, but mainly to help "the enemy (Ethiopia) of its enemy's (Egypt's) allies, Sudan and Somalia".[20] Again, this illustrates the tendency for regional powers to focus on regional outcomes when approaching Somalia's civil war, not on any distinct preference for a particular Somali stakeholder.

The role of Djibouti in Somalia's civil war has been complex. On the one hand, Djibouti has been perceived as a neutral broker with a genuine interest in Somali reconciliation given its close connection with the country.[21] On the other hand, Djibouti has often given priority to its relations with Ethiopia, and even though these countries have different views on Somalia – the Djiboutians prefer a united Somalia – they have often "agreed to disagree" and deferred the Somali issue in order to maintain their bilateral alliance.[22] Moreover, when Ethiopia became landlocked following Eritrea's independence, relations with Djibouti became even more important, and when the border conflict with Eritrea began in May 1998, the Ethiopians became extremely dependent on Djibouti and its port (see more below).

Eritrea's role in Somalia can be described as relatively marginal when examined over time. In the early 1990s, when the country was still working towards independence and focused on national consolidation, there was limited interest in Somalia as the leadership in Asmara

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[19] For more about political Islam in Sudan, see Alex de Waal and A.H. Abdel Salam, "Islamism, State Power Jihad in Sudan" in Alex de Waal, ed., *Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa* (Addis Ababa: Shama Books, 2004).
[20] Mesfin, "The Horn of Africa Security Complex", p. 17.
[21] Interview with senior Djibouti representative (Interview #22).
[22] Ibid.

had more pressing issues to deal with.[23] To the extent that Eritrea became involved in Somalia, the country worked in close partnership with Ethiopia in the same way as it allied with Addis Ababa on other regional issues,[24] especially in opposition to the regime in Sudan, which Eritrea engaged in a series of conflicts in the mid-1990s together with Ethiopia and Uganda.[25] In 1998, however, these alignments changed drastically as a result of the border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, as described later in this chapter.

Finally, it is worth noting the role of Kenya. For a long time, Kenya played a more passive and markedly different role compared to Ethiopia, despite the fact that Kenya had similar issues with irredentist claims to the Northern Frontier District (NFD) in the past. As described in Chapter II, Ethiopia and Kenya had an alliance from the 1960s aimed at countering Mogadishu's irredentist claims,[26] but when it came to the civil war era, Kenya did not get involved to the same extent. It provided support to various groups at different times, most notably the Daarod alliance in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of Siad Barre's regime (see Chapter III), but nevertheless managed to maintain a fairly neutral positon with Nairobi functioning as a fuelling station for all Somali factions.

A number of other countries could be included here as well, like Uganda and Yemen, but the abovementioned countries are the most relevant for understanding events in this chapter. Moreover, the main point is that all countries have approached Somalia's crisis with their own interest in mind to counter perceived threats in the regional arena, not to achieve a particular outcome in Somalia. This corresponds to the predictions of Stephen Walt's balance of threat model – that states in a region choose their allies with a focus on balancing the main

[23] Interview with senior Eritrea representative (Interview #23).
[24] In 1995, for example, when Eritrea and Yemen engaged in a conflict, Addis Ababa sent military equipment to Asmara in support. See Gilkes and Plaut, "War in the Horn: The Conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia".
[25] de Waal, *The Real Politics*, p. 47.
[26] Mesfin, "The Horn of Africa Security Complex", p 17.

threat to their interests – and the same logic can be applied to alliances with non-state actors in Somalia as suggested in the analytical framework put forward in the introduction to this thesis.[27]

The First Major Regional Realignment: The Salbalaar Administration and Ethiopia

The withdrawal of UNOSOM in March 1995 did not only change assessments of threats among domestic actors in Somalia's civil war – it also resulted in reassessments of the situation in the capitals of the regional powers with interests in Somalia. As noted in the previous chapter, Egypt and Ethiopia launched competing efforts towards government formation in Somalia in the final year of the UNOSOM intervention, trying to bring together their respective allies with Egypt supporting the G-12 and Ethiopia working with Aideed. However, these partnerships between regional powers and Somali stakeholders began to change after UNOSOM's withdrawal.

This became evident in mid-1995 when Aideed tried to establish a national government after the split with Osman Ali Ato (see Chapter V). In June, 1995, three days after the USC congress that elected Osman Ali Ato to be chairman, Aideed organised a conference in Mogadishu with fifteen faction leaders to establish a broad-based (*salbalaar*) national government. According to its charter, it would be "a federal form of Government with regional autonomy"[28] with five vice-presidents from different clans and a carefully balanced cabinet. In reality, it was centred on Aideed, and the others involved were "some of Somalia's least representative and least promising political leaders, mainly representing unpopular (or even unknown) splinter groups from within their clans or factions".[29] Apart from Mohamed

[27] Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*.
[28] "Transitional Charter Somali Republic: Preamble" June 15, 1995 Mogadishu, p. 3.
[29] Matt Bryden, "Update on Situation in Muqdisho", June 19, 1995 (online resource, see bibliography for URL).

Afrah Qanyare and Ahmed Omar Jess, none of them controlled militias of significance, which meant that Aideed remained dependent on Saad and other Haber Gedir militias. At the same time, the support of these groups could not be taken for granted given the situation in Mogadishu, and most second-tier positions were therefore given to Haber Gedir clansmen in order to secure their backing.[30] In that sense, rather than becoming a symbol of Aideed's strength, the *salbalaar* administration came to represent his relative weakness in the post-UNOSOM environment.

One of the reasons why Aideed established the *salbalaar* government despite being in such a weakened position was that he counted on continued support from the regional powers that had backed him in the years before, especially Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Uganda (see Chapter V).[31] This expectation was not totally unfounded. According to a senior Ethiopian diplomat, there was a willingness in Addis Ababa to continue supporting Aideed after UNOSOM's withdrawal because he understood the Ethiopian perspective – "he told Egypt to stay away and he was never much of a Greater Somalia person".[32] However, "things went sour"[33] with the formation of the *salbalaar* government when Aideed failed to accommodate Abdullahi Yusuf as prime minister in his government, despite pressure from Addis Ababa to include their SSDF ally (or any Majerteen of significance for that matter).[34] Instead, Aideed appointed his old ally from the SNM, Abdurahman Tuur, not only because he wanted a Somalilander to make it appear like a proper national government, but also because Abdullahi Yusuf was

[30] Interview with Western academic working with Somalia (Interview #24).
[31] Ibid.
[32] Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #18).
[33] Ibid.
[34] In the end, the SSDF representative who signed the agreement was Mohamed Haji Aden, "who has the endorsement of neither of the movement's rival leaders [Abullahi Yusuf and Mohamed Abshir], and is unlikely to be able to mobilise forces or resources independently". Matt Bryden, "Update on Situation in Muqdisho".

a far more demanding ally with a genuine powerbase in his home region, while Tuur had reneged on Somaliland's secession and needed Aideed for leverage in his home region.[35]

In other words, Aideed faced a trade-off between what made sense in domestic politics and what made sense in relation to Ethiopia. According to a senior Ethiopian diplomat, Aideed asked for recognition of his government, but Meles Zenawi explained that Ethiopia could not support him because there were other allies that had to be accommodated, too.[36] In short, supporting Aideed would result in reduced Ethiopian influence in the northeast unless the Majerteen were somehow accommodated. At the same time, Aideed was not as valuable to the Ethiopians in the post-UNOSOM setting as he had been in the years before. As noted earlier in this chapter, their support for Aideed had been highly situational: it had been a way of reducing the risk of a national Somali government led by the G-12 with close links to Cairo emerging from the UNOSOM-backed state-building process. For this reason, with UNOSOM gone and the state-building process not moving forward, the Ethiopians were not desperate to support Aideed's own initiative when it risked upsetting other Somali allies.

Two important developments followed from Aideed's establishment of the *salabalaar* administration. First of all, when Aideed failed to attract domestic support, he launched a military offensive instead. On September 17, 1995, the SNA captured Baidoa, where the Digil-Mirifle authority had been established, and then seized Hudur the following month. In response, the Digil-Mirifle established the Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA), a more militarily oriented front that brought together the Digil-Mirifle against a common threat. As could be expected, the RRA aligned itself with the other anti-Aideed factions, and the SSA threatened to launch "all-out war" unless Aideed withdrew from Baidoa.[37] In practice,

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[35] Interview with senior TNG member (Interview #4).
[36] Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #25).
[37] "Ali Mahdi Threatens to Declare War on Aidid", *AFP*, September 19, 1995 (accessed via FBIS).

however, calls for a concerted anti-Aideed effort were contradicted by the localised character of the conflict, and the groups nominally aligned with the SSA often found themselves on opposite sides in local conflicts over economic interests.[38]

On the other hand, when Aideed failed to get Ethiopian support, he focused on developing his relationships with Sudan and Libya. In late 1996, these countries provided financial and military support as well as diplomatic recognition of the *salbalaar* administration.[39] From the Ethiopian horizon, this was a major concern given Khartoum's support for al-Ittihad al-Islamiya (AIAI) and other Islamist groups that were becoming increasingly active in Ethiopia (see Chapter VII). In June 1995, a group with links to the Sudanese intelligence services carried out an assassination attempt against the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, in Addis Ababa, and in the following months, AIAI conducted several attacks inside Ethiopia.[40] In Mogadishu, the AIAI spokesperson claimed responsibility for the latter attacks and stated that AIAI "would continue attacking senior Ethiopian officials and would pursue its guerrilla attacks in the Ogaden until the latter became independent".[41]

The link between AIAI and the Ogaden – and then the connection to Khartoum – was a major concern to the Ethiopian government. In 1994, the ONLF had demanded a referendum on self-determination for the Ogaden and thereby undermined the government's ethnic federalist state-building effort. This had marked the beginning of violence in the

[38] In January 1996, for example, when the SNA was fighting against General Morgan's militias in the south, they received support from Osman Ali Ato's militias in the area, despite the fact that Ato and Aideed were fighting in southern Mogadishu around the same time. Although this could be interpreted as a sign of clan solidarity, it also illustrated the discrepancy between local interests and national politics: General Morgan and Osman Ali Ato were nominal allies in national politics but had competing interests in the Juba regions that were more important than national alignments. In response to the fighting, Aden Gabiyow, the SSA chairman, argued that "Atto is a traitor and will not be accepted by out SSA as a political leader". See "Rift Reported Between Mahdi, Atto Factions", *AFP*, January 16, 1996 (accessed via FBIS).
[39] "Libya Sides with Aideed", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, October 27, 1995; "Son of Aideed Chosen to Head Somali Faction", *Washington Post*, August 5, 1996.
[40] David Shinn, "Al-Qaeda in East Africa and the Horn" in *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, 27:1 (2007), p. 53.
[41] David Shinn, "Ethiopia: Coping with Islamic Fundamentalism before and after September 11" in *CSIS Africa Notes*, 7 p. 5.

region, and when the government attacked an ONLF meeting in Wardheer, killing a group of Ogden elders, it became a springboard for cooperation between AIAI and ONLF.[42] However, it was AIAI's impact on the Ogaden issue that constituted the main concern.[43]

It is worth noting that the Ethiopians approached Aideed on at least two occasions about the possibilities of using Ethiopian troops to take out AIAI in Gedo.[44] Already in 1993, the issue was raised by Meles Zenawi in a meeting with Aideed during the negotiations in Addis Ababa.[45] In January 1996, the issue was brought up again in a meeting with a senior Ethiopian military representative in Bakol on the border with Ethiopia.[46] On both occasions, Aideed rejected the idea, arguing that Ethiopian involvement would only complicate the situation and allow his rivals to play the nationalist card.[47] For this reason, the Ethiopians stayed out, knowing that Aideed could play the national card himself if there was an Ethiopian intervention.[48]

The Death of Aideed: Domestic and Regional Reassessments

The situation in Somalia changed drastically on August 1, 1996, when Mohammed Farrah Aideed died from injuries sustained in clashes with Osman Ali Ato's militias. On the domestic side, the death of Aideed resulted in a weakening of the SNA as the chairmanship was passed on to Hussein Aideed, the 35-year-old son of the late general who was "not of the same calibre as his father".[49] When Hussein Aideed nevertheless announced that he

[42] Interview with Western researcher working with Somalia (Interview #26)
[43] In retrospect, a senior Ethiopian diplomat even argued that the Islamist groups were "only a problem when they worked with Siad Barre's expansionist agenda". (Interview #25).
[44] Interview with senior SNA member (Interview #27)
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibib.
[48] The challenge for Ethiopia was to not push Aideed closer to Khartoum. In April 1996, for example, when the Europan Union considered working with Ali Mahdi and Osman Ali Ato, the Ethiopians explained that they would not support "a diplomatic move aimed at marginalizing general Aideed for fear that this might become an instrument of Sudanese diplomacy in Somalia". See "Fresh European Strategy", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, April 27, 1996.
[49] Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #25).

would continue his father's policies and lead the national *salbalaar* government, he met with strong opposition from the other faction leaders. However, rather than resulting in an emboldened anti-Aideed alliance, the weakening of the SNA resulted in repositioning among the other factions. As noted by Bernhard Helander at the time, "with the common enemy gone, or at least replaced by the much weaker son of Aidid, the different clans in opposition to him will most likely find the time ripe to pursue their own aims which invariably will put some of them on collision track with their former allies".[50] Again, we see the role of perceived threat in maintaining alliances, as well as the concern with *not losing* as opposed to winning, reflected in the lack of unity within the SSA in response to the weakening of the SNA.

The death of Mohamed Farrah Aideed resulted in similar reassessments in the capitals of the regional powers. Only a few days after the death of the SNA leader, Ethiopia launched a military offensive together with SNF militias against AIAI in Gedo – it was the first Ethiopian military incursion since the regime's collapse – and Ethiopian troops occupied key towns like Bulo-Hawo, Luuq, and Dolow. The consequences were significant on the subnational as well as national and regional level. In Gedo, it brought the Ethiopians into a partnership with the SNF led by Omar Haji Masalah whose influence in the region had decreased in the post-UNOSOM period when AIAI had gained influence (see Chapter V). In that sense, the SNF drew on an external ally to handle its regional rival. In turn, this exacerbated the previously mentioned intra-Marehan tensions in Gedo between long-term residents (*guri*) that tended to support AIAI to counter the influence of the newcomers (*galti*) that were "better armed, politically connected and tended to monopolize the benefits of the SNF militia-faction" (see Chapter VII).[51]

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[50] "Letter to the Editor" (unpublished) by Bernhard Helander in response to John Prendergast, "Waning Days of the Warlords", in *Washington Post*, August 8, 1996 (see document list).
[51] Andre Le Sage, Somalia and the War on Terrorism: Political Islamic Movements & US Counter-Terrorism Efforts, unpublished PhD dissertation, Cambridge University (2004), p. 98.

If we turn to developments beyond Gedo, the Ethiopian incursion resulted in a closer relationship between AIAI and Hussein Aideed against the common Ethiopian enemy, and this gradually turned the SNA into Ethiopia's main opponent in Somalia. As will be discussed later, this development subsequently resulted in Ethiopian support to other anti-SNA factions when the situation escalated, including support to the RRA and General Morgan in Kismayo. Moreover, as predicted by Mohammed Farah Aideed in the preceding years, the Ethiopian intervention generated a wave of nationalist rhetoric in Somalia that was seized upon by Ethiopia's regional rivals. For example, a representative of Sudan encouraged Somalis to launch a "holy war" against the Ethiopian occupation, and the Arab League announced its willingness to host a national conference "in order to protect Somalia's unity and the sanctity and safety of its national soil".[52] However, Kenya and Ethiopia managed to seize the initiative and bring together the factions opposed to the SNA for a conference in Sodere in late 1996 by utilizing the fact that the latter was weakened after the death of Mohammed Farrah Aideed. As will be discussed in the next section, the Sodere conference marked the beginning of a new episode in Somalia's civil war – it was the first national reconciliation effort following UNOSOM's withdrawal.[53]

To summarise, we can see that realignments in Somalia between UNOSOM's withdrawal and the Sodere conference reflected considerable interactions between domestic and regional developments. On the one hand, there was fractionalization and realignments among Somalia's factions and other stakeholders, which mainly reflected a shift in the locus of political competition from the national arena to the subnational level. On the other hand,

[52] "Inter-Arab Affairs: Arab League Offers to Host Conference for Somali Factions", *MENA*, August 13, 1996 (accessed via FBIS).

[53] For more on the various peace initiatives around his time, see "Hope Springs", *Africa Confidential*, December 13, 1996; "Royal Flush of Peace Plans", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, February 1, 1997.

there was a reconfiguration of transnational alliances as the SNA no longer worked with Ethiopia and Eritrea – it received support from Libya and Sudan instead – while Egypt was beginning to view Hussein Aideed as "the best candidate to lead"[54] based on the changing relationship between the SNA and Addis Ababa as well as the fact that their former clients in the SSA were becoming increasingly friendly with Addis Ababa as a result. These realignments illustrate the flexibility of transnational alliances in the region – how reassessments of threats on different levels motivated new alignments – and the following section describes how the same alliance patterns emerged during the Sodere and Cairo conferences.

The Sodere and Cairo Conferences: National Efforts – Local Outcomes

The conferences in Sodere and Cairo have commonly been described as failed attempts to re-establish a national government in Somalia. In practice, however, the conferences were primarily about Egyptian and Ethiopian efforts to block their regional rival's influence in Somalia. In the process, these countries shaped alliances as competing Somali groups drew on the two regional powers' ambitions for their own purposes.

The conference in Sodere brought together twenty-six factions – almost twice as many as the conference in Addis Ababa in 1993 – and although some have argued that this proliferation occurred "all because factions were chosen by the UN as the basis of representation in Somali peace talks",[55] it would be more appropriate to describe it as a reflection of the localisation of politics described earlier. There were attempts by the Ethiopians to get Hussein Aideed to join the conference as well – close advisers to the SNA leader came to Addis Ababa – but Hussein Aideed wanted recognition of his *salbalaar*

[54] Interview with Egyptian diplomat (Interview #20).
[55] Menkhaus, *Somalia: State Collapse*, p. 17.

government and did not want to attend as one faction among many.[56] Once the SNA was out of the picture, there was even less incentive for the Ethiopian organisers to limit the number of participating factions. The broad line-up only signalled strong opposition to Hussein Aideed's alliance, and it made sense in relation to the idea of a "big tent" in which everyone would receive a share of the external resources that the participating groups expected a resurrected Somali government to attract.[57]

On a technical level, the conference in Sodere resulted in the formation of the National Salvation Council (NSC), a fragile anti-Aideed coalition with five rotating chairmen drawn from different factions,[58] and a 41-member council in which seats were divided on the basis of clan rather than factional representation. The rationale behind this was that it reduced the risk of fractionalization and created "an equilibrium of representation between the four large clans (Daarod, Hawiye, Rahaweyn, and Dir)".[59] Importantly, it was also agreed that the Sodere meeting was only a preparatory conference – the main National Reconciliation Conference would be organised in Bosaaso in June 1997[60] – which opened up for the possibility of Hussein Aideed's inclusion in the next round. All of this meant that Sodere was seen by donors and regional organisations alike as a genuine attempt to restart the reconciliation process in Somalia. For the Ethiopians, the agreement was a success for several reasons, not least because it included Ali Mahdi, who had worked with the Egyptians in the years before (see Chapter V).

[56] Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #25).
[57] InterAfrica Group, *After Sodere: Towards Lasting Peace in Somalia*, Addis Ababa, p. 1.
[58] The five chairmen were Osman Ali Ato and Ali Mahdi, who represented their respective USC organisations, Abdullahi Yusuf (SSDF), Abdulkaidr Zobbo (RRA), Aden Gabiyow (SPM).
[59] "No Unanimity in Cairo Deal", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, January 3, 1998.
[60] For discussion about the Bosasso conference, see Bernhard Helander, "Bari Region: Local Administrative Structures, Political Tendencies and prospects for technical support and consequences", UNDOS Studies in Local Governance (Nairobi: UNDOS, 1998).

In practical terms, the Sodere agreement impacted on national as well as subnational political dynamics. Most importantly, it made the national arena relevant again and reinvigorated the factions that had been marginalised by other stakeholders following UNOSOM's withdrawal. In Mogadishu, Ali Mahdi emerged emboldened in relation to his rivals in north Mogadishu – and there were rumours of money, ammunition, and other rewards supplied by the Ethiopians – where his militias became involved in fighting with the important sharia court led by Sheikh Ali Dhere that had challenged his authority the year before (see Chapter VII).[61] In Bay and Bakool, the RRA also benefitted from Ethiopians rewards and were able to reopen a front against Hussein Aideed's faction thanks to Ethiopian support.[62]

In the northeast, the SSDF came out rejuvenated in a similar way after having been split into four wings before the Sodere conference.[63] This unification was made possible by the Ethiopians, who hosted a reunification conference with hand-picked SSDF delegates right after the national conference in Sodere.[64] As noted by Bernhard Helander, after having "literally excommunicated any opposing voices, SSDF re-emerged extremely reinvigorated"[65] in relation to other powerbrokers in the northeast, including the traditional authorities in the *isimadda*. This was illustrated by the decision of the *boqor*, the traditional leader of the Majerteen, to expand the *isimadda* after the conference by bringing in smaller Harti chiefs who had previously been excluded – their support "became indispensable in a situation where the SSDF threatened to come up as the leading authority".[66] In that sense, even though

[61] Hope Springs", *Africa Confidential*, December 13, 1996; "Looking for Leaders", *Horn of Africa Bulletin*, Sep-Oct, 1997, p 18-19.
[62] Ibid., p. 18-19. Also, see Clint Watts, Jacob Shapiro, Vahid Brown, *Al-Qa'ida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa* (West Point: US Military Academy, Combating Terrorism Center), p. 192.
[63] Interpeace, *The Puntland Experience*, p. 24.
[64] It was the "intellectual wing" of the SSDF in Nairobi that pushed for a unification of the movement. A meeting was supposed to be held in Kenya, but when the Sodere initiative was announced, it was agreed within the SSDF to come up with a temporary arrangement before the conference: "Abdullahi Yusuf obtained the status of SSDF's international ambassador to the NSC while Mohamed Abshir was left with an undisputed chairmanship" and this was then followed by a "mini-congress" in Sodere. See Helander, "Bari Region", p. 46.
[65] Helander, "Bari Region", p. 47.
[66] Ibid., 46.

the Sodere agreement was negotiated between rivals in the national arena, it had a direct impact on the balance of power between competing groups at the subnational level as well.

In the south, the effects were more intricate, but also very revealing because they illustrated the trade-offs that Addis Ababa was forced to consider when trying to build a national anti-SNA alliance. In short, many of the factions in the coalition that Ethiopia tried to assemble were rivals at the subnational level. In Kismayo, for example, there were tensions between General Morgan and the *galti* Marehan elites linked to the SNF in Gedo. As described earlier, the Marehan had been a key component in General Morgan's alliance after the regime's collapse, but when the Hawiye threat was reduced, the influence of "outsiders" like the Marehan had come to be resented by the historically dominant clans in Kismayo, the Harti and Ogaden (see Chapter V). In 1996, these tensions led to clashes, and the Marehan were eventually expelled in early 1997, leading to efforts by Marehan militias to retake the town.[67]

These tensions made it difficult for the Ethiopians to broker an alliance between Abdullahi Yusuf (SSDF), Omar Haji Masalah (SNF), and Aden Gabiyow (SPM) that would have made sense as the backbone in an anti-SNA coalition.[68] Already before the conference in Sodere, Marehan representatives from the SNF tried to convince Addis Ababa that Kismayo had to be sorted out before a national conference could succeed.[69] However, the Ethiopians were unable or unwilling to push General Morgan and other stakeholders in Kismayo towards an intra-Daarod settlement. In Sodere, these tensions were exacerbated as Omar Haji Masalah, the SNF chairman, was excluded from the NSC leadership because there was a need for clan balancing (as always) and when two other Daarod leaders were included, Abdullahi Yusuf and Aden Gabiyow, there was no room for a third.

[67] "Fighting in Kismayo", *Horn of Africa Bulletin*, May-June, 1997, p. 20.
[68] Interview with senior Marehan diplomat (Interview #15).
[69] Ibid.

This contributed to a deterioration of the relationship between Addis Ababa and the SNF leadership. It also undermined Omar Haji Masalah's position in Gedo given the *galti* Marehan's preoccupation with Kismayo: on the one hand, the SNF were perceived by many as lackeys of Ethiopia in Gedo; on the other hand, Omar Haji Masalah was unable to use his connections with Addis Ababa to regain influence in Kismayo – "he had nothing to show, he was humiliated in front of his own people".[70] As will be described later, this contributed to a series of realignments after Cairo launched an alternative process in which Omar Haji Masalah was better accommodated, resulting in a split in the SNF with one group continuing to work with the Ethiopians in Gedo, while Omar Haji Masalah left the NSC and realigned himself with Hussein Aideed. Basically, "there was little incentive to stay in an NSC dominated by the very Darood clansmen (Gabio, Morgan, and Abdullahi Yusuf) who had overseen the Marehan eviction from Kismayo".[71]

In other words, the situation in one subnational arena (in this case Kismayo) had an impact on the situation in another (in this case Gedo), which in turn shaped coalitions at the national level. At the same time, it was the national process in Sodere that brought out these tensions, illustrating the interaction between different levels and arenas of competition in Somalia and the wider region. Importantly, these realignments illustrate that Addis Ababa had to deal with the same interaction effects and trade-offs as the faction leaders had struggled with in the years before when trying to keep together national coalitions based on fragile vertical alliances with actors in different arenas of competition (see Chapter V).[72]

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[70] Interview with NGO official working in Gedo (Interview #28).
[71] Ken Menkhaus, "Studies on Governance in Gedo region" (Nairobi: UNDOS, 1999), p. 9.
[72] This meant that military equipment was supplied to faction leaders like General Morgan in Kismayo, the SNF in Gedo, the RRA in Bay and Bakool, the USC-PM in Hiraan, and Abdullahi Yusuf in the northeast. Gilkes, "Briefing: Somalia", p. 574.

The Cairo Conference: A Watershed in Somalia's Civil War

There was an almost immediate response to the Sodere conference from Egypt and other Arab states that launched a series of competing initiatives designed to "damn the road to Ethiopian mediation".[73] In the months after the Sodere conference, while the SSDF and Addis Ababa were preparing for the Bosasso conference, Yemen and other Arab states negotiated a series of partial agreements with Hussein Aideed, Ali Mahdi, and Osman Ali Ato to secure their cooperation.[74] This was followed by an announcement from Egypt that another national conference would be held in Cairo in November 1997, a highly unexpected move that side-lined the conference planned for Bosasso around the same time.

Although the Egyptians described the conference as a continuation of the Ethiopian initiative, the main objective was to undermine the coalition from Sodere by targeting the weak links in that alliance. This meant accommodating Hussein Aideed and Ali Mahdi to draw the latter away from the Sodere alliance. It also meant focusing on the SNF chairman, Omar Haji Masalah, in order to drive a wedge between the Ethiopians and one of their main allies in a key region. This could also be seen in the agreement drafted in Cairo. In short, the agreement scrapped the relative clan balance from the Sodere process, and awarded Ali Mahdi and Hussein Aideed more delegates to the proposed national reconciliation conference based on a separate agreement between them as chairmen of the SSA and SNA.[75] Moreover, the national conference was moved from Bosasso to Baidoa – a town controlled

[73] "War around the Conference Table", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, November 7, 1997.
[74] "Agreement between Brother-Enemies", Indian Ocean Newsletter, May 24, 1997; Danish Immigration Service, "Report on the Nordic Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu, Somalia", February 1998 (Copenhagen: Danish Immigration Service), p. 11.
[75] According to the *Indian Ocean Newsletter* at the time, "… the agreement of Cairo seems to give the best share to the Hawiye, for three large clans (Darod, Digil-Mirifle, Hawiye) should each have 60 delegates at the conference of reconciliation in Baidoa, whilst ninety seats are believed to be reserved for the Issaq of Somaliland and thirty-five for other minority clans. But the two principal leaders in Mogadiscio, both Hawiye although rivals, Ali Mahdi Mohamed (Abgal/Hawiye) and Aideed (Habr Gedir/Hawiye) would have eighty delegates each". "No Unanimity in Cairo Deal", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, January 3, 1998.

by Hussein Aideed's faction – despite protests from the RRA and the SSDF, who described the town as "occupied by a foreign faction".[76]

In other words, the Cairo agreement did not appear to have been designed to establish a viable coalition and attract broad support. It rather appeared to have been designed to break the Sodere alliance, and the Ethiopians responded by almost literally pulling out its main allies from the conference in Cairo. According to a senior Ethiopian diplomat, key allies of Addis Ababa were approached towards the end of the conference, including Abdullahi Yusuf and Aden Gabiyow, to explain that "you are losing out … this will be a Hawiye government that will also definitely be anti-Ethiopia because of the Egyptian influence".[77] There were then flights booked for these leaders to travel from Cairo to Addis Ababa to discuss alternative ways forward. In that sense, even though the SSDF's executive committee in Bosasso claimed that they were the ones instructing the Daarod leaders to walk out from the conference in protest,[78] the Ethiopian willingness to offer an alternative way forward was an equally or more important factor.[79]

The agreement in Cairo was in that sense partial from the beginning – it was described by IGAD-representatives as an agreement between Hawiye clans[80] – and the most prominent Majerteen figure who supported it, Mohamed Abshir, "lost substantial support for his assent to the Cairo agreement, which was widely seen as a humiliation for the northeast regions".[81] In February 1998, less than two months after the Cairo agreement, Abdullahi Ysuuf told a

[76] "Pipes of Peace", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, December 6, 1997.
[77] Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #25).
[78] "We instructed Abdulahi Yusuf and Aden Gabyow to walk out of the conference. The Sool and Sanaag regions were also unhappy with the agreement signed at the conference". Interview with Dr Yassin Farah, member of the SSDF Central Committee, cited in Interpeace, *The Puntland Experience*, p. 25.
[79] According to Egyptian representatives, it was Ethiopia's plan from the start to allow their allies to travel to Cairo and then break it up at a later stage. (Interview #20).
[80] "IGAD Official Pour Scorn on Latest Accord", *Horn of Africa Bulletin*, Jan-Feb, 1998.
[81] Interpeace, *The Puntland Experience*, p. 34.

UN representative that his priority was no longer national reconciliation, but rather the establishment of an interregional administration in the northeast,[82] which led to the establishment of Puntland in mid-1998 as described later in this chapter.

The Cairo agreement was "a watershed in post-intervention Somali politics, not for achieving its intended goal of national reconciliation, but for the process of political realignment it set in motion within Somalia".[83] It pulled away Ali Mahdi and Omar Haji Masalah from the Sodere coalition, resulting in a loose alliance between them and Hussein Aideed, without leading to another proper national coalition or the conference that was supposed to be held in Baidoa according to the Cairo agreement.[84] According to a senior Egyptian diplomat, there were attempts to convince Hussein Aideed to accept the demands from the other factions and withdraw from Baidoa, so that the national conference could be held, but he refused – "he was like his father".[85]

However, it was no disaster to the regional powers that their respective agreements were never implemented. Put simply, the main objective for the regional powers was not to establish a friendly government in Somali: it was to make sure that their regional rival did not emerge as the main patron of a resurrected Somali government. In the end, "the Egyptians were happy, they had broken the alliance from Sodere and won Ali Mahdi over".[86] At the same time, even though the Ethiopians felt that they had been "naïve … thinking that the alliance set up in Sodere would hold",[87] the new situation allowed for an alternative approach that was more in sync with Ethiopia's long-term interest, namely the "building-block

[82] UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia*, August 16, 1999, s/1999/882, p. 4.
[83] Menkhaus, "Studies on Governance in Gedo region", p. 8.
[84] Ibid., p. 8.
[85] Interview with Egyptian diplomat (Interview #20).
[86] Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #25).
[87] Ibid.

approach", which focused on the establishment of regional administrations rather than a national government in Somalia. In the months after the Cairo conference, this strategy was drafted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Addis Ababa, and then circulated in diplomatic circles.[88] By the end of the year, it had been adapted as the new roadmap for state-building with references to the relative success of Somaliland and various subnational administrations – "regional and local governments are becoming reality, national government remains a chimera".[89]

Building Blocks: A Policy by Default Rather Than Design

There were no renewed efforts towards national reconciliation after the Sodere and Cairo conferences. For the Egyptians, the main objective became "to sort out Mogadishu"[90] together with Hussein Aideed and Ali Mahdi, while the Ethiopians openly stated that they would oppose any further Egyptian initiatives at the national level.[91] At the same time, the leadership in Addis Ababa abandoned all ambitions of establishing a friendly national government in Somalia, and focused on the establishment of a "buffer zone" along the border to deal with the threat posed by groups like AIAI, ONLF, and OLF. According to a senior Ethiopian diplomat, the idea was to work with different stakeholders along the border to establish local and regional administrations that could eventually come together as a central government – "in the meantime, we would use the warlords to address tactical concerns".[92] The main benefit of this approach was that it reduced Addis Ababa's problems with handling interaction effects between Somalia's different arenas of competition. It made

[88] Kinfe Abraham, *Somalia Calling: The Crisis of Statehood and the Quest for Peace* (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian International Institute for Peace and Development, 2002), p. 508.
[89] Matt Bryden, "New Hope for Somalia? The Building Block Approach" in *Review of African Political Economy*, 26:79 (1999), p. 135.
[90] Interview with Egyptian diplomat (Interview #20).
[91] "… Ethiopian foreign minister Seyoum Mesfin accused Egypt of sabotaging the Somali peace process and said that in future, his country would oppose the role Egypt wanted to play in Somalia". "IGAD Warns Cairo", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, March 20, 1998.
[92] Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #25).

it possible to work with actors in different subnational arenas of competition who would unavoidably become competitors when it came to establishing a national government.[93] By and large, this remains the foundation for Addis Ababa's policy towards Somalia – a policy aimed primarily at "damage-limitation".[94]

The most significant step towards the establishment of building-blocks was the establishment of Puntland in May 1998, which brought together the Harti-dominated regions in the northeast following several months of discussions.[95] The process was closely linked to the disappointment in the northeast after the national conference in Bosasso was cancelled.[96] This was followed by intra-Majerteen negotiations led by the SSDF as well as meetings with representatives from Sool and Sanaag – two regions in the northeast claimed by Somaliland as well – during which it was agreed that these Harti-inhabited regions would be included in the new autonomous state. In that regard, there was a strong grass-roots element in the establishment of Puntland, and it was well-grounded in the sense that key documents outlining the administration dated back to the early 1990s when the SSDF had similar ambitions for the region.[97]

[93] "Addis Arms Its Friends", *Indian Oceans Newsletter*, March 28, 1998.
[94] The term "damage-limitation policy" is used in official Ethiopian strategy documents. See *The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy*, p. 80.
[95] For more on the establishment of Puntland, see War-Torn Societies Project, *Rebuilding Somalia: Issues and Possibilities for Puntland* (London: Haan, 2001); Bernhard Helander, "The Puntland State of Somalia: Stratagem or Steps towards Good Governance?" (Nairobi: UNDOS, 1998); Roland Marchal, "The Puntland State of Somalia. A Tentative Social Analysis" (unpublished paper); Markus Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland: Marginalization, Militarization and Conflicting Political Visions* (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015).
[96] In February, 1998, less than two months after the Cairo conference, Abdullahi Yusuf, the SSDF chairman, told a UN representative that his priority was no longer national reconciliation – it was the establishment of an administration for the northeast. UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia*, August 16, 1999, s/1999/882.
[97] Bernhard Helander, "The Puntland State of Somalia", p. 15.

However, the establishment of Puntland was also linked to Ethiopian backing of the initiative.[98] According to an Ethiopian diplomat, "we sat down after Cairo to charter the way forward … the Majerteen were relatively united and Abdullahi Yusuf was someone we knew and he had no interest in Greater Somalia".[99] This external backing gave the rejuvenated SSDF a key role in negotiations with the *isimadda* and other stakeholders, and this shaped the Puntland administration that emerged from the process. As noted by Bernhard Helander, even though outsiders described Puntland as the result of a bottom-up process, ordinary people in the northeast tended to see the administration as top-down in character: it was centralised with a strong presidency and resembled the former Somali state as well as the command lines of the SSDF.[100] In that sense, it is misleading to say that the process "mimicked Somaliland's state-formation process in many regards",[101] since the state-building process in Somaliland was relatively insulated from external influences, while the establishment of Puntland was closely linked to Ethiopian support and the building-block approach underway.

Another important difference between Puntland and Somaliland was that the former built on clan identity – it was about bringing together the Harti-dominated regions – while Somaliland made its claim of independence based on colonial borders. This motivated the inclusion of Sool and Sanaag, two Harti-inhabited regions claimed by Somaliland, even though many in the northeast criticised this move as it was likely to create conflict with Hargeisa.[102] However, it was a highly strategic move in the sense that it facilitated coalition building around the Harti identity in relation to others, and "helped focus internal attention

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[98] According to Roland Marchal, the establishment of Puntland under Abdullahi Yusuf's leadership "… was possible only because of Ethiopian support and his own military superiority to other leaders in that area". "Warlordism and Terrorism", p. 1098.
[99] Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #18).
[100] Bernhard Helander, "The Puntland State of Somalia", p. 16.
[101] Markus Hoehne, "The Rupture of Territoriality and the Diminishing Relevance of Cross-cutting Ties in Somalia after 1990" in *Development and Change*, 47:6 (2016), p. 1394.
[102] Bernhard Helander, "The Puntland State of Somalia", p. 18.

on other issues than those that [had] impeded a three-region set-up in the past".[103] Again, we see the role of outside threat in facilitating coalitions.

At the same time, the inclusion of Sool and Sanaag did not lead to clashes as feared because Somaliland had little reason to challenge Puntland's claims militarily – "it would have alienated Ethiopia and Western partners and destroyed recognition chances".[104] Instead, "the presidents of Somaliland and Puntland appear to have had an informal agreement not to confront the issue of the contested territory, enabling them to focus on stabilizing their respective centres".[105] Moreover, the communities in Sool and Sanaag were able to use the ambiguities to their advantage and "played the Somaliland or Puntland card according to the reward they were offered by Hargeysa or Garoowe",[106] meaning that the situation remained relatively stable and coalitions could be sustained as no major stakeholder felt like it was losing out.

In other words, the establishment of Puntland was possible through a combination of factors: Ethiopian support for the idea of regional administrations; negotiations between the SSDF elites and other stakeholders in the northeast based on Harti solidarity; and the possibilities for smaller Harti groups to use external sources of power, including connections across the Red Sea, to avoid being dominate by the main Majerteen clans without challenging the administration outright.[107]

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[103] Ibid., p. 20.
[104] International Crisis Group, "Somalia: The Trouble with Puntland ", *Africa Briefing* 64 (2009), p, 3.
[105] Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, p. 58-59.
[106] Roland Marchal, "The Puntland State of Somalia", p. 10. According to Hoehne, pretty soon "two different administrations existed in most major borderland settlements, and it became common to find brothers and first or second patrilineal cousins … working in the same location for rival authorities". *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, p. 59.
[107] Ibid., p. 10.

In Mogadishu, the establishment of the Benadir Administration as "the core for a possible Hawiye region"[108] was even more closely linked to regional patronage. It was essentially a way for Hussein Aideed and Ali Mahdi to use funds from Egypt and Libya to secure their own positions in Mogadishu where alternative reconciliation efforts backed by the business community, sharia courts, and civil society were building momentum (see Chapter VII). The establishment of the Benadir Administration was opposed by Musa Sudi Yalahow, who had been a deputy to Ali Mahdi and commander in Medina, and this was encouraged by the Ethiopians to undermine the Egyptian initiative.[109] According to an Ethiopian diplomat, the logic was straightforward – "Ali Mahdi had been with the Egyptians and we needed another Abgal"[110] – and the result was two blocks linked to Egypt and Ethiopia in the capital: on the one hand, Hussein Aideed and Ali Mahdi backed by Egypt and Arab countries; on the other hand, Musa Sudi Yalahow, Hussein Haji Bod, and Osman Ali Ato, who called on Egypt to stop interfering in Somalia, while drawing on support from Ethiopia.[111] The result was increased fragmentation and sub-clan competition that not only spread to other regions, including Middle Shabelle,[112] but also gave renewed energy to alternative initiatives in Mogadishu involving Islamist groups and the business community aimed at curbing the rise in criminal violence that followed from the weakening of the factions (see Chapter VII).

Finally, in Kismayo, General Morgan announced his intention of following down the same path as Puntland and establish a regional administration for "Jubbaland" that would include Lower Juba, Middle Juba, and possibly Gedo.[113] In practice, it would build on the Harti-

[108] Gilkes, "Briefing: Somalia", p. 573.
[109] "More Peace Promises", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, April 18, 1998.
[110] Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #25).
[111] "A Warning to Egypt", *AFP*, October 21, 1998, in *Horn of Africa: The Monthly Review* (Addis Ababa: UNDP-EUE); "New Alliance", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, August, 29, 1998.
[112] "Ali Mahdi Extends His Leadership", *AFP*, May 8, Horn of Africa: *The Monthly Review* (Addis Ababa: UNDP-EUE).
[113] "Problems to Create a Jubbaland", *Horn of Africa Bulletin*, Sept-Oct, 1998; "Battle for Jubbaland", Indian Ocean Newsletter, October 31, 1998.

Absame alliance in Kismayo at the expense of the Marehan elites who were still trying to regain influence. In response to attacks from Marehan militias, General Morgan drew on Harti solidarity to mobilise support and fighters from Puntland, and despite their differences in the past, Abdullahi Yusuf stated that "all military action against Kismayo was a declaration of war against Puntland".[114]

As could be expected based on the alliance patterns emphasized throughout this thesis, the prospects of a Harti-Absame dominated administration in Kismayo backed by international donors within the building-block scheme motivated closer cooperation between the Haber Gedir militias siding with Hussein Aideed and the *galti* Marehan in the SNF that had a stake in Kismayo as well as an established *xeer* with the Haber Gedir clans in the central regions.[115] This resulted in the establishment of the Allied Somali Forces (ASF) that captured Kismayo in June 1999 and later became the Jubba Valley Alliance (JVA). In essence, this represented an inversion of the alliances that had competed in the Juba regions during the UNOSOM years. At that time, the SNA had drawn on support from the Ogaden-Mohammed Zubeir and backing from Ethiopia. General Morgan had built his alliance on the Harti and Marehan, and drawn on links with the G-12 backed by Arab countries. In this new setting, however, it was essentially the other way around, illustrating the fluidity of domestic and transnational alliances.

If we look at these realignments in southern Somalia in the post-UNOSOM years, it is evident that they were the result of a series of interacting events and processes, including the Ethiopian intervention in Gedo aimed at reducing AIAI's influence in the Ogaden region; the intervention's impact on intra-Marehan relations in Gedo; the changing balance of power

[114] "Puntland to the Rescue", *Indian Oceans Newsletter*, November 21, 1998.
[115] Interview with senior Marehan diplomat (Interview #15).

in Kismayo and the reduced pressure from the Haber Gedir; the Egyptian response to the Sodere conference; the "building-block" approach; and the increasing pressure on the SNA in Baidoa. In other words, these realignments illustrate the limitations of teleological explanations that emphasize the overall balance of power, or some other variable, without fully considering the interaction between different levels of competition. In the final part of this chapter, the importance of the regional level will be described further when looking at realignments in Somalia in relation to the border war Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Proxy War: The Consequences of the Ethiopia-Eritrea Border War

The border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia that began in May 1998 added another layer of complexity to the civil war in Somalia. It turned the country into a theatre for a proxy war between the two belligerents and played into the processes describe above. As noted earlier, Eritrea and Ethiopia maintained a similar policy towards Somalia in the UNOSOM years, and cooperated against Khartoum and other perceived threats in the region.[116] This changed with the border war that resulted in a series of regional realignments: the regime in Khartoum went "from regional pariah to major regional actor, wooed by both Asmara and Addis Ababa",[117] and there was increased cooperation between Egypt and Eritrea.

These changes in regional alignments had direct as well as indirect consequences for alliance dynamics in Somalia. If we begin with the direct consequences, the most obvious was Asmara's support to armed opposition groups in Ethiopia operating from across the border with Somalia, including the ONLF and the OLF. In response, Addis Ababa stepped up its buffer zone policy by supplying arms to key allies. There were also attempts to improve

[116] For an example of cooperation a few months before the war, see "Ethiopian Initiative", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, January 3, 1998.
[117] Patrick Gilkes and Martin Plaut, "War in the Horn: The Conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia", *Discussion Paper 82* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs), p. 37.

relations with Hussein Aideed under whose protection the OLF, ONLF, and AIAI operated. In September 1998, when Ethiopia was cutting back on military operations in Somalia to focus on Eritrea, Hussein Aideed was invited to Addis Ababa, where he was asked to end his support for the ONLF and OLF militias.[118] In return, Hussein Aideed asked the Ethiopians to stop supporting those in Mogadishu opposed the Benadir administration.[119] In that sense, Addis Ababa tried to change its relationship with Hussein Aideed as a consequence of developments in the regional arena, while Hussein Aideed tried to use regional developments to his own advantage in local politics.

But the agreement did not hold.[120] Instead, Hussein Aideed travelled to Asmara and returned with weapons for himself and the OLF in planeloads and shiploads arriving in Merca. In June, 1999, Eritrean military advisers and Oromo soldiers that had been trained in Eritrea arrived as well, and this brought the proxy war between Asmara and Addis Ababa to a new level.[121] According to an Egyptian diplomat, Cairo warned Hussein Aideed that he should not be too close to the Eritreans because it would inevitably result in a reaction from Addis Ababa,[122] but according to the Ethiopian version, it was Egypt that was providing material for the training camps with Eritrea as intermediary.[123]

In any case, the Ethiopians responded in June 1999, with an attack against Baidoa, conducted together with the RRA, that resulted in Hussein Aideed losing control of the strategically important regional capital in Bay.[124] According to an RRA representative, the attack

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[118] In April, 1998, the OLF organised a congress in Mogadishu under the protection of Hussein Aideed, and this resulted in a more militant leadership. Gilkes and Plaut, "War in the Horn", p. 42.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Most likely because the Ethiopians "made the mistake of failing to offer any specific military assistance". Gilkes and Plaut, "War in the Horn", p. 42-43.
[121] Ibid., p. 42-43.
[122] Interview with Egyptian diplomat (Interview #20).
[123] Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #25).
[124] "Somalia: Africa's Balkans", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, July 3, 1999.

illustrated the different priorities of the two parties: the Ethiopians focused on the OLF militias on the northern side of town, while the RRA focused on Hussein Aideed's positions around the regional state house.[125] Apart from marking the beginning of the SNA's decline, the liberation of Baidoa marked the beginning of divisions within the RRA as there was no longer an external threat to hold the movement together. Moreover, there were differences between the RRA's priorities and the Ethiopian perspective. For example, while the RRA wanted to continue into Lower Shabelle to liberate Digil-inhabited areas from the SNA as well, Addis Ababa appeared unwilling to support such a move.[126] According to an Ethiopian diplomat, the priority in Addis Ababa was rather to consolidate positions in the border regions in order to prevent direct threats against Ethiopia – "we did not come to fight Aideed for subjugating his own people".[127]

For Hussein Aideed, the loss of Baidoa was a major defeat, and it marked the beginning of a Saad withdrawal to Haber Gedir areas.[128] However, it was compensated to some extent by the capture of Kismayo by the Marehan-Haber Gedir alliance in the same month,[129] although the ASF was dominated by the Ayr from Lower Shabelle rather than the Saad, which signalled a change in the balance of power within the Haber Gedir. In any case, the ASF takeover in Kismayo resulted in free movement along the coast for the Haber Gedir, and it pushed General Morgan into the interior, where he received Ethiopian support to take back Kismayo as Addis Ababa wanted to seal off further arms deliveries from Eritrea to Aideed.[130] However, the Ethiopians failed to mobilise other Somali allies in support for General Morgan's retake attempt. In Gedo, for example, where the Marehan were increasingly

[125] Interview with senior RRA member (Interview #16).
[126] Ibid.
[127] Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #25).
[128] Interview with analyst in Nairobi (Interview #2).
[129] Gilkes, "Briefing: Somalia", p. 576.
[130] "He has been in receipt of Ethiopian arms in the past two years and he can still expect Ethiopian support in trying to prevent any Eritrean aid arriving through Kismayo." Gilkes, "Briefing: Somalia", p. 576.

divided, even groups and political entrepreneurs who cooperated with Ethiopia were reluctant to side with General Morgan against their clansmen that had taken over in Kismayo, despite pressure from Addis Ababa to do so.[131] In other words, even though they were divided and fought over influence in Gedo, the competing wings of the SNF maintained a fairly united position towards Kismayo, which illustrates the importance of differentiating between the various subnational arenas and understanding how they interact in alliance formation.

If we examine the indirect consequences of the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, the most significant consequences were the ways in which the border war changed the regional balance of power. For example, the conflict boosted Djibouti's political leverage in relation to Ethiopia as the latter became entirely dependent on Djibouti's port after losing access to Eritrea's coastline. This allowed the Djiboutians to adopt a more confident approach on a range of issues, including the situation in Somalia. In the year before, the Djiboutian leadership had become increasingly frustrated with the new IGAD policy for handling Somalia – "we were not happy with the building-block idea"[132] – but had maintained a low prolife. In September 1999, however, the new situation in the region led Ismail Omar Guelleh, the President of Djibouti, to launch a new reconciliation initiative during his speech in the UN General Assembly. In short, the new initiative would empower civil society and downgrade the status of the faction leaders, which meant that Ethiopia's main allies risked being excluded in the process. However, Addis Ababa was in no position to oppose the initiative outright.[133] As a result, the Djiboutian initiative was endorsed by IGAD as well as

[131] Interview with SNF commander (Interview #29).
[132] Interview with senior Djiboutian representative (Interview #30).
[133] For the Ethiopians, the initiative came as a total surprise, and they were forced to rewrite their statement for the UN General Assembly in order to express their support for the idea, even though they were deeply unhappy with the explicit downgrading of the role of many Ethiopian allies. However, they did not perceive any sinister motive behind Djibouti's initiative – there was only frustration and a feeling that Djibouti's initiative reflected the fact that the country "did not feel the fire from Somalia". Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #18).

western donors,[134] which effectively put an end to the building-block approach that Addis Ababa had turned into IGAD policy a year before.[135]

The Djiboutian initiative that resulted in the Arta conference in the next year (see Chapter VII) motivated Addis Ababa to reconsider its tactical alliances in Somalia. In October, 1999, the Ethiopians sought rapprochement with Hussein Aideed – three months after ousting him from Baidoa – and although nothing changed overnight, there was a gradual improvement of the relationship as Hussein Aideed disarmed the OLF militias in the training camps and expelled the organisation's executive committee from Mogadishu.[136] In the following year, when the Arta conference resulted in the establishment of the Transitional National Government (TNG), the relationship between Hussein Aideed and Addis Ababa became even stronger, with the establishment of an Ethiopian-backed opposition alliance including Hussein Aideed, the Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC) (see Chapter VII). Once again, these realignments illustrate the fluidity of transnational alliances, the interaction between different arenas of competition, and the ways in which reassessments of threat can motivate drastic changes.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the role of regional powers in alliance formation in Somalia. As emphasized from the beginning, it is impossible to understand alliance dynamics in Somalia without considering regional dynamics, and the many examples in this chapter have illustrated the complex interactions between different arenas of competition in Somalia and

[134] UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia*, December 19, 2000, S/2000/2011, p. 2.
[135] Morten Bøås and Narve Rotwitt, *Remaking the Somali state: A Renewed Building-Block Approach* (Oslo: Norweigan Peacebuilding Centre), p. 4.
[136] "Aideed Faction Ditches OLF, *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, December 11, 1999.

the regional arena, as well as the fluidity of transnational alliances as rival groups focus on outcomes in their own arena of competition.

The reason why the influence of the regional powers was so salient in the late 1990s was that Somalia at the time "represented neither the vital interests of the great powers, nor a clear and present danger to international security".[137] After the withdrawal of UNOSOM, the United States essentially returned to the position that was taken right after the end of the Cold War – that "Somalia could go down the tubes and it would not adversely affect the U.S. strategic posture in the region"[138] – and other Western countries adopted a similar position. Obviously, this assessment changed with the September 11 attacks, but in the years between the new humanitarianism and the war on terror, Somalia was mainly a concern to the regional powers that "cannot wish away the problem of Somalia even if they want to",[139] as noted by Meles Zenawi in the speech cited in the beginning of this chapter.

In other words, the influence of the regional powers in this period was a reflection of Western disinterest and global political trends. This illustrates the point made by Stathis Kalyvas and Leia Balcells about "the need to connect the complex conflict processes taking place at the subnational, national, transnational, and international-systemic level".[140] It demonstrates how global macro-political trends – or the absence of such trends – often determine the context in which alliance formation takes place and become a variable in alliance formation.

[137] Matt Bryden, "No Quick Fixes: Coming to Terms with Terrorism, Islam, and Statelessness in Somalia" in *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 23:2 (2003), p. 25.
[138] Jeffrey Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn: U.S. Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia, 1953-1991* (Pittsburgh: University Press), p. 271.
[139] Meles Zenawi, "Key Note", p. 6.
[140] Stathis Kalyvas and Laia Balcells, "International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict" in *The American Political Science Review*, 104:3 (2010), p. 428.

It is worth emphasising two other aspects of external involvement that were highlighted in this chapter. On the one hand, it is evident that the regional powers faced the same challenges as Somalia's national elites when it came to building and maintaining national coalitions, with considerable interaction effects and trade-offs between subnational arenas of competition that made it difficult to keep things together. On the other hand, the main objective of the regional powers was not establishing a national government led by their allies – it was rather making sure that their regional rivals did not have more influence in Somalia than they did. In that sense, they focused on *not losing* in Somalia rather than winning, illustrating an underlying defensive rationale in the regional game as well. Furthermore, the ways in which the regional powers undermined each other illustrate that even though interaction effects make it difficult to maintain alliances, they make it relatively easy to undermine alliances: a skilled political entrepreneurs can "spot a move on one board that will trigger realignments on the other boards".[141] As will be discussed in the following chapters, this dimension of alliance formation has become even more salient in the post-9/11-era, when federal state-building efforts, increased external involvement, and the global war on terror have resulted in a proliferation of stakeholders and an increasing number of potential interaction effects.

[141] Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics", p. 434.

Chapter VII

The Islamist Alternative: Ideology and Framing (1999-2001)

"I am in a difficult position. I think that Islamic values are the tool I can use to save my country. But, if I use them, I will be accused of being a fundamentalist".[1]

One of the most significant changes in Somalia's political landscape in the 1990s was the rise of Islamism as a political force.[2] In 1991, when Siad Barre's regime collapsed, the Islamists were unable to compete with the clan-based factions and the only group that challenged the factions militarily, al-Ittihad al-Islamiya (AIAI), struggled with clan divisions and limited support. In the mid-1990s, well-informed observers like Patrick Gilkes described the various Islamist groups as "marginalised and localised"[3] – they appeared to lack strength as well as intention to establish an Islamic state – and when AIAI subsequently lost its main bases in Gedo following the Ethiopian invasion in August 1996, the organisation disintegrated to the point where it was considered "a spent force".[4]

However, even though AIAI failed with its military campaign, other groups succeeded by working towards gradual change, and by the end of the decade, the Islamist networks played

[1] Abdurahman Baadiyow, cited in Le Sage, *Somalia and the War on Terrorism*, p. 174.
[2] This chapter uses the terms "Islamism" and "political Islam" interchangeably. For similar use, see Afyare Abdi Elmi, *The Somali Conflagration: Identity, Political Islam and Peacebuilding* (London: Pluto Press, p. 52). The chapter defines Islamism as "the active assertion and promotion of beliefs, prescriptions, laws, or policies that are held to be Islamic in character". International Crisis Group, "Understanding Islamism" Middle East/North Africa Report, 37 (2005), p. 1.
[3] Gilkes, *The Price of Peace*, p. 180
[4] Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012* (London: Hurst), p. 22.

an unprecedentedly influential role in politics and social affairs: they were the main providers of education with groups like al-Islah – the official Muslim Brotherhood organization in Somalia – operating local *madrassa* and as well as institutes of higher education;[5] they were deeply embedded in the influential business community in Mogadishu;[6] and they were active in the establishment of sharia courts that were "embraced and supported by local communities as a means of restoring the rule of law".[7] Most importantly, they were instrumental in the establishment of the Transitional National Government (TNG) in mid-2000 – the first national government to receive international recognition since the *de facto* state collapse – and were perceived by many as a righteous counterforce to the predatory factions. In retrospect, it is clear that this was only the beginning of a new era in which Islamist groups took centre stage in Somalia.

This chapter describes this remarkable trajectory and examines Islamism as a variable in alliance formation in Somalia with a focus on the 1990s and early 2000s: how alliances were established between Islamist groups and other political actors; how the Islamist groups changed their alliance strategies over time; how political Islam became an increasingly useful frame for mobilization; and how the September 11 attacks and the war on terror provided the Islamists' opponents with an invaluable counterframe for mobilising external resources and support.[8] In doing so, it demonstrates that ideological frames are closely linked to macro-political trends and extraversion opportunities. This means that even though we may choose to sidestep the more complex discussions about how normative commitments influence

[5] Marchal, "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War", p. 126.
[6] Aisha Ahmad, "Between the Mosque and the Market: An Economic Explanation of State Failure and State Formation in the Modern Muslim World", (unpublished PhD dissertation), McGill Univesity (2012).
[7] Menkhaus: Somalia: *State Collapse*, p. 26.
[8] For the standard take on framing processes, see Robert Benford and David Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment" in *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26 (2000).

actor behaviour, we nevertheless have to consider the instrumental use of ideological frames and how it plays into alliance formation (see discussion in Chapter I).[9]

The chapter argues that Islamist groups have chosen their allies according to the same logic as any other political actor in Somalia's civil war – they have focused on the main threat to their interests. However, due to their self-professed normative commitments, they have had to consider two particular trade-offs. On the one hand, even though Islamist groups could be seen as natural allies, they have also competed over the same moral authority and consequently viewed each other as potential threats. This reflects the problems associated with what Stephen Walt has described as "divisive ideologies" in the context of alliance formation – the kind of ideologies that require one actor to emerge as the true interpreter and easily becomes "more a source of division than of unity, even though the ideology explicitly prescribes close cooperation among the adherents".[10] As demonstrated in this chapter, this partly explains the inability of the Islamist groups to come together even when they were marginalised by the clan-based factions in the early 1990s, and it definitely explains the intra-Islamist competition referred to in the concluding chapter (see Conclusion).

On the other hand, the Islamists have had to consider the risk of having their "sanctified identity"[11] tainted by tactical alliances with other groups. As noted by Hazem Kandil when describing Islamist mobilisation elsewhere, ideologies "may be stretched to fit changing situations – but to a limit".[12] When they are stretched beyond that limit, "the ideological movement loses its claim to logical and moral superiority and devolves into a network of

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[9] As mentioned in Chapter I, the approach to ideological framing in this chapter draws on the research agenda outlined by Sanin and Wood, "Ideology in Civil War: Instrumental Adoption and Beyond".
[10] Stephen Walt, *The Origin of Alliances*, p. 181.
[11] Masdar Hilmy, *Islamism and Democracy in Indonesia: Piety and Pragmatism* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010), p. 136.
[12] Hazem Kandil, *Inside the Brotherhood* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015), p. 180.

interests".[13] This was a challenge that the Islamists in Somalia struggled with in the 1990s: how to balance the need for tactical alliances against the risk of losing the moral high-ground and becoming just another faction. As will be described in this chapter, the decision by al-Islah and AIAI to support the TNG serves as an excellent illustration of the risks involved.

The chapter proceeds in four parts. The first part provides a general background and explains the trajectory of the Islamist groups in the 1990s. The second part examines the Arta process that resulted in the establishment of the TNG. The third part describes the main alliances that emerged from the Arta process – the loose coalition around the TNG and the factions in the Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC) – and the final part shows how these alliances were reframed in response to the war on terror following the September 11 attacks. It illustrates the previously mentioned "need to connect the complex conflict processes taking place at the subnational, national, transnational, and international-systemic level",[14] and shows that ideological framing may have more to do with external audiences than domestic constituents.

Political Islam in Somalia: Out from the Shadow of Clannism

Ideology did not play a prominent role in Somalia's civil war in the early 1990s for the simple reason that none of the factions claimed to have an ideological platform. As noted by Roland Marchal, there was an abysmal lack of political agenda – "after a few sentences dedicated to democracy, human rights, and the needs of women and children, most of the military leaders had little to say beyond requesting foreign aid and military endorsement".[15] Apart from reflecting the clannishness of the factions, this lack of ideological framing reflected the end of the Cold War as there was no major international political cleavage in relation to which

[13] Ibid., p. 180
[14] Kalyvas and Balcells, "International System and Technologies of Rebellion", p. 428.
[15] Marchal, "Warlordism and Terrorism", p. 1093.

Somalia's rival groups could frame themselves in order to mobilise resources (see Chapter IV).

The various Islamist groups that offered an ideological alternative – al-Islah, al-Ittihad, and other smaller groups[16] – were unable to compete with the factions for three principle reasons. The main reason was that "defensive clannism"[17] overshadowed every other political logic at the time. It was associated with clan protection and worked as a frame for mobilization because it "fitted well into most Somalis' understanding of how the system of spoils worked in their country".[18] Although there was an upsurge in religiosity and sympathy towards Islamist ideals as politics became increasingly clannish,[19] political Islam could not compete as a frame for mobilization. In the terminology used in social movement theory, the Islamist ideology had "resonance" and worked as a frame for collective action – it identified clannism as being the main problem and offered a solution in Islam, "*al-Islam huwa al-hall*" – but it did not have the same "relative salience".[20]

This should be seen in relation to two other historical factors: the traditionally apolitical role of Islam in Somalia and the strategic choices made by the main Islamist organisations in the years before the regime's collapse. If we start with the traditionally apolitical role of Islam in Somalia, this can be traced to the ways in which Islam was adapted to the pastoralist context from the outset: the religion developed a local character with a strong Sufi tradition that allowed many pre-Islamic traditions to survive. As noted by Ken Menkhaus, "pastoral life

[16] For an overview of the Islamist groups around the time of the regime's collapse, see Marchal, "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War". This chapter focuses almost exclusively on the two main groups, al-Islah and al-Ittihad.
[17] Adam, *From Tyranny to Anarchy*, p. 124.
[18] Cassanelli, "Explaining the Somali Crisis", p 24.
[19] Marchal, "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War". For a discussion about Islamic revivalism in the late 1980s, including the Islamist wing in the SNM, see Adam, *From Tyranny to Anarchy*, Chapter 7.
[20] For more on these framing concepts, see Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements", p. 619-621. For more on framing in Somalia in the early 1990s, see Jutta Bakonyi "Ideoscapes in the World Society: Framing Violence in Somalia" in *Civil Wars*, 17:2, (2015).

imbues the [Somali] culture with a strong preference for pragmatism over ideology",[21] and the pastoralist ideal has been to separate religion from politics – Ioan Lewis repeatedly emphasized the categorization of men as either *waranleh* (spear-bearers) or *wadaads* (men of God)[22] – in a way that contradicts political Islam on a fundamental level.[23] The norm has therefore been for respected sheikhs to maintain their moral standing by not getting involved in "petty clan issues".[24] Revealingly, the nationalist movements in Somalia in the 1940s were left-leaning rather than religious in orientation,[25] and the Sufi brotherhoods maintained their apolitical position during the civilian era following independence, while stricter interpretations of Islam were often regarded as an imposition from outside.[26]

This began to change in the 1960s when a younger generation of Islamic scholars trained in Arab countries with Salafist ideas began to gain influence.[27] In 1975, when the regime's new family law sparked massive protests from these modernists as well as from the traditional Sufi brotherhoods, the regime came to view the Salafists as a major threat and subsequently used the traditional Sufi sheiks to marginalise the former.[28] Although several Islamist groups continued to operate underground, they had relatively little influence, and much like the clan-based opposition groups, the Islamist groups that dominated in the civil war era – al-Islah and al-Ittihad – were established in exile.

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[21] Menkhaus, "Political Islam in Somalia" in *Middle East Policy*, Vol 9:1, p 111.
[22] Ioan Lewis, *Saints and Somalis: Popular Islam in a Clan-Based Society* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press; 1998), Ioan Lewis, "Dualism in Somali Notions of Power" in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*", 93:1 (1963).
[23] This distinction has obviously not always been upheld. For a background about the Sufi brotherhoods (*turuq*) in Somalia and competition between them, see Said Samatar, ed., *In the Shadow of Conquest: Islam in Colonial Northeast Africa* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1992)
[24] Roland Marchal and Zakaria Sheikh Yusuf, "Ahlu Sunnah wal Jaama'ah in Somalia" (draft chapter version) for Terje Østebo, ed., *Islam in Ethiopia* (London: Palgrave, 2013), p 4.
[25] Adam, *From Tyranny to Anarchy*, p. 224.
[26] Menkhaus, "Political Islam in Somalia", p 111.
[27] Marchal and Yusuf, "Ahlu Sunnah wal Jaama'ah in Somalia", p. 5. For more on the early Salafist organisations in Somalia, see Abdurahman Abdullahi "Baadiyow", *Recovering the Somali State: The Role of Islam, Islamism and Transitional Justice* (London: Adonis, 2017).
[28] Marchal and Yusuf, "Ahlu Sunnah wal Jaama'ah in Somalia", p 6-7.

Al-Islah was established in Riyadh in 1978 as "a political and highly regime-critical organisation" with close ties to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. It developed the same organisational structure and applied similarly meticulous recruiting processes for attracting "the future leaders of Somalia … doctors, engineers, army officers and social scientists".[29] As a result, it became an elitist movement with an "outright contempt for clan-based politics".[30] The other main organisation – AIAI – was established in the early 1980s through a merger between smaller Islamist groups.[31] Although AIAI leaned more towards Saudi Arabia and Wahhabism, it accommodated a fairly broad spectrum of Islamists unwilling to cooperate with the secular factions.[32] This meant that there was considerable overlap between the two groups – they were in many ways networks rather than organisations, and members and leaders shifted between them – and this resulted in cross-cutting networks as well as competition.[33]

In 1989, when Siad Barre's regime was crumbling, there were attempts to establish an Islamist alliance – "the idea was that the two large Islamist organisations could better withstand the coming storm together".[34] However, the ideological differences and the competing ambitions were too significant, and the result was increased hostility and rivalry instead.[35] At the same time, the Islamist movements maintained their distance to the clan-based factions, and did not throw their weight behind one particular to gain influence in an opportunistic way. This illustrates the points made earlier with reference to "divisive ideologies" and "sanctified identity": on the one hand, the Islamists did not come together even though they were

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[29] Stig Jarle Hansen, "Brothers in Diaspora, the Somali Harakat Al Islax" in Stig Jarle Hansen and Atle Mesøy, eds.„ *The Muslim Brotherhood in the Wider Horn of Africa* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, 2009), p. 40.
[30] Ibid., p 40.
[31] Roland Marchal, *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War: Harakat al-Shabaab al Mujaheddin*, p. 12. See also Abdullahi, "Baadiyow", *Recovering the Somali State*, p. 202.
[32] Roland Marchal, *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War: Harakat al-Shabaab al Mujaheddin,* p. 12-13.
[33] Hansen, "Brothers in Diaspora", p. 45.
[34] Ibid., p 45.
[35] Ibid., p 45.

marginalised by the clan-based factions; on the other, they emphasized their Islamic identity and tried to maintain the moral high ground by not siding with one of the clan-based factions.

The First Half of the 1990s: Islamist Strategies for Dealing with Statelessness

The main Islamist groups in Somalia dealt with the anarchic situation after the regime's collapse in different ways. Al-Islah became depoliticised and shifted its attention to reconciliation and humanitarian efforts for ideological as well as practical reasons. As noted by Abdurahman Baadiyow, the classic Muslim Brotherhood literature described the transformation of a repressive but nevertheless functioning state – it said nothing about how to operate in an anarchic civil war environment.[36] As a result, al-Islah became an Islamic NGO first and foremost, with a major charity trust and a strong presence in the business community in Bakaara in Mogadishu.[37] However, in the nine years between the collapse of Siad Barre's regime and the Arta conference, al-Islah never took sides the war.[38]

In contrast, AIAI mobilised militarily and assembled a relatively small but well-organised militia, drawing on support from Sudan and veterans from Afghanistan that connected the group to al-Qaeda.[39] In 1991 and 1992, AIAI used its limited resources to take over various strategic assets, including the ports in Kismayo, Merca, and Bosasso,[40] but were outmanoeuvred by the dominant factions in all of these places. As tensions between Daarod and Hawiye escalated, there were divisions within AIAI as well, and after defats along the coast, AIAI retreated and established strongholds in smaller and less contested places, including Luuq in Gedo and Ras Kamboni in Lower Juba.[41]

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[36] Abdullahi "Baadiyow", *Recovering the Somali State*, p. 225-226.
[37] Roland Marchal, "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War", p. 126.
[38] Hansen, "Brothers in Diaspora", p. 47.
[39] Marchal, *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War*, p. 13.
[40] Marchal, "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War", p. 127.
[41] For more on AIAI in Gedo, see Menkhaus, "Studies on Governance in Gedo Region".

One of the consequences of AIAI's efforts to hold territory was that the group "became, willingly or unwillingly, part of clan politics".[42] Although the group openly denounced clannism, it used its members' clan connections when establishing itself in various areas, and it was when working through local cleavages that AIAI succeeded the most. In Gedo, for example, AIAI became a vehicle for the *guri* in relation to the *galti* in intra-Marehan politics (see Chapter VI). However, the conflagration of Islamic ideals and clan politics created problems. For example, when the Islamist administration in Luuq began to attract a growing number of non-Marehan followers, including Hawiye, it was accused of being a tool for outsiders, which forced AIAI to emphasise its Marehan identity in a paradoxical way.[43] In turn, this created problems in AIAI's relations to non-Marehan clans traditionally inhabiting Luuq as the group consequently appeared to be "another manifestation of Marehan hegemony over them".[44] In that sense, even though pragmatic alliances were necessary in order to avoid marginalisation, these alliances tainted the Islamist ideals that al-Ittihad claimed to represent, [45] and when AIAI allied with "warlords" like Hussein Aideed against the common Ethiopian threat, it made the movement appear like any other faction (see Chapter VI).[46]

In the same way that AIAI used clan loyalties for tactical reasons, the faction leaders used Islamic references to gain legitimacy and mobilise support.[47] In Mogadishu, Mohammed Farah Aideed cooperated with AIAI during the UNOSOM intervention, but also tried to limit the influence of the Islamist movement at other times by organising the Sufi

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[42] Marchal, "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War", p. 129.
[43] Menkhaus, "Political Islam in Somalia", p. 112.
[44] Ibid., p. 112.
[45] Clint Watts, Jacob Shapiro, Vahid Brown, *Al-Qa'ida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa* (West Point: US Military Academy, Combating Terrorism Center), p. 183.
[46] AIAI faced similar dilemmas when it came to supporting Mohammed Farrah Aideed in 1993 against "the Americans" and later when it came to supporting RRA against Aideed in Bay and Bakool: many in the Islamist movement "thought that such an involvement was unwise since it was not 'their' war". Marchal, "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War", p. 131.
[47] Afyare Abdi Elmi, *The Somali Conflagration*, p. 51.

brotherhoods under the banner of Ahlu Sunna wal Jamaa (ASWJ).[48] Similarly, Ali Mahdi supported the establishment of clan-based sharia courts in north Mogadishu in 1994 when he was weakened and faced internal challenges, but then changed track when they became too powerful and challenged his position, which resulted in intra-Abgal clashes and the collapse of the Islamic court system.[49]

This appropriation of Islamic values for tactical purposes resonates with the understanding that alignments are primarily driven by power considerations and perceptions of threat, while ideological frames are mainly used to motivate tactical alliances. However, when examined closely, these examples also demonstrate that people saw beyond these tactical appropriations. For example, the sheikhs organised by Aideed under the ASWJ banner came to be seen as politicised and unrepresentative, while the Islamic courts were accused of upholding double-standards as they handed out serious punishments to petty criminals but never held the warlords accountable.[50] This shows that even though Islamic values were used instrumentally and tactically, there was a demand for genuine representatives and proper implementation, and this paved the way for Islamist mobilisation in the second half of the 1990s, as described in the next section.

Dealing with Reality: A Change in Strategies

The growing influence of the Islamists in the second half of the 1990s reflected changes in alliance strategies as well as changes in the political context. In 1995, al-Islah adapted a new policy, appropriately named "Dealing with Reality", which allowed members "to participate actively in the existing social and political organizations and to engage assertively with all

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48 Marchal and Yusuf, "Ahlu Sunnah wal Jaama'ah in Somalia", p 8.
49 Marchal, "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War", p. 133.
50 Afyare Abdi Elmi, *The Somali Conflagration*, p. 65.

groups".[51] It also outlined a strategy towards national reconciliation and moved away from centralised charity work to a network-based model that allowed organisations affiliated with al-Islah "to gain support from institutions usually hostile to Brotherhood organisations".[52] All of this contributed to narrowing the gap between al-Islah and Somali society in general.

AIAI went through a somewhat similar process following the military setbacks in Gedo after the Ethiopian intervention in August 1996, which caused a split in the group due to "ideological differences over how Wahabbism should be promoted".[53] The result was the establishment of al-Itisaam bil-Kitaab wa al-Sunnah, which adopted a more militaristic approach, while others within AIAI abandoned the idea of holding territory and focused on "working within the clan system".[54] As a result, the AIAI network became "as decentralized as Somali society" with some clans having a stronger association with AIAI than others.[55]

Apart from these changes in Islamist strategies, there were changes in the political environment, especially in Mogadishu. First, there was growing support for Islamist ideas due to social processes rooted several decades earlier that accelerated in the post-UNOSOM period, when western organisations abandoned Somalia and Islamic charities played an increasingly important role.[56] Secondly, there was continued fragmentation among the factions and warlords. As these key actors became weaker, they became unable to provide protection from freelance militias, which impacted negatively on the increasingly influential

[51] Abdurahman Baadiyow, *Recovering the Somali State*, p 232.
[52] Hansen, "Brothers in Diaspora", p. 51
[53] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, p. 21.
[54] Andre Le Sage, "Prospects for Altihad & Islamist Radicalism in Somalia" in *Review of African Political Economy*, 28:89 (2001), p. 475. According to Menkhaus, Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys (Haber Gedir-Ayr), a key figure in AIAI, "called on the Gedo movement to reconcile with the rest of the Marehan clan, and to embark on a policy of integration with the local community. This approach, which is common for most al-Ittihad cells in the country, focuses on a long-view strategy of preparing the groundwork for eventual Islamic rule in Somalia though education and socialization". "Studies on Governance in Gedo Region", p. 15.
[55] Ken Menkhaus, "Somalia: In the Crosshairs of the War on Terrorism" in Current History, 101:655 (2002), p. 216.
[56] For an overview, see Andre Le Sage, "Islamic Charities in Somalia" in Jon Alterman and Karin von Hippel, eds., Understanding Islamic Charities (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007).

business elite in Mogadishu that emerged in the post-UNOSOM era with major companies in telecommunication, money transfers (*hawala*), and import business linked to Arab countries (see Chapter VI).[57] For this cross-clan business elite, it became evident that "the warlords' fiefdoms simply had become too small to sustain larger business activities,[58] and they therefore established their own militias and developed "joint security agreements with cooperating partners allowing one another's use of secure trade routes".[59]

Importantly, this group of business elites developed a Salafist character for instrumental reasons as much as ideological convictions. According to Aisha Ahmad, the logic was that statelessness was associated with high transaction costs, and Islamic institutions became a useful mechanism "to reduce uncertainty, build trust, develop business partnerships across tribal divisions, and gain access to lucrative markets in Gulf States".[60] This meant that a Salafist public persona was good for business, and there was "a deliberate and strategic process of Islamic identity construction" within the business community.[61] According to Roland Marchal, traders became "more religious, even militantly so, in order to build the trust necessary to get access to their counterparts on the eastern side of the Red Sea".[62]

In other words, there were a number of trends pulling in the same direction during this period: fragmentation and competition among the factions; popular antipathy towards continued warlord predation; an increasingly influential business elite with strong Salafist leanings that viewed the factions as a threat; and new Islamist strategies for operating within the institutions of Somali society. In that sense, there was a dualism to the rise of Islamism

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[57] For an overview, see Marchal, *A Survey of Mogadishu's Economy*.
[58] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, p. 23.
[59] Christian Webersik, "Bargaining for the Spoils of War: Somalia's Failing Path from War to Peace" in *African Security*, 7:4 (2014), p. 297.
[60] Ahmad, "Between the Mosque and the Market", p. 182.
[61] Ibid., p 182.
[62] Marchal, "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War, p. 115.

as a political force in this period. On the one hand, it reflected a "long-term turn toward social conservatism"[63] after decades of Salafist proselytizing in Somalia. On the other hand, it represented the instrumental adaptation of political Islam as a useful strategy for dealing with the everyday consequences of statelessness.

A series of events in 1998 illustrates this change in Mogadishu and became important for the establishment of the TNG as will be described in the following section. First of all, there was the resurrection of the Islamic court system in northern Mogadishu. The catalyst for this was competition over El Maan, a natural harbour north of Mogadishu, which was controlled by Ali Mahdi for a long time, but operated by Abukar Omar Adani, a highly influential Abgal businessman who had contracts with shipping companies and major Islamic aid organisations.[64] In 1998, when the Cairo agreement resulted in further fragmentation in northern Mogadishu as described in Chapter VI, Musa Sudi Yalahow seized the port from Ali Mahdi. However, Abukar Omar Adani managed to retake it using his own militias. This made him independent of Ali Mahdi, and it led to a process through which the business militias also took control over the road from El Maan to the main market in northern Mogadishu, Souq Bahad, dismantling checkpoints operated by freelance militias that Ali Mahdi had been unable to remove, and establishing Islamic clan courts in partnership with clans living in the neighbourhoods along the main road.[65]

There were similar changes in southern Mogadishu as key members of al-Ittihad returned to Mogadishu after the military setbacks in Gedo, including Hassan Dahir Aweys, who became instrumental in the development of the so-called *Ifka Halane* court associated with the Haber-

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[63] International Crisis Group, "Somalia: Al-Shabaab – It Will Be a Long War", *Africa Briefing 99* (2014), p. 19.
[64] "The TNG's Shady Friends", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, December 8, 2001; Interview analyst in Nairobi (Interview #2).
[65] Ibid.

Gedir Ayr sub-clan. In the years before, the Islamic courts in different parts of Mogadishu had been "eminently local in nature"[66] – they were means of restoring rule of law and operated within the area of the sub-clan – but the Ayr-court established in Merka in 1998 with Aweys as a prominent figure represented "a new type of court".[67] Moreover, as noted by Ken Menkhaus, the Ayr sub-clan had emerged as the dominant clan in Mogadishu's business class,[68] and the Islamist militias associated with the Ayr-clan became a factor in intra-Haber Gedir rivalries over Merka's port against Hussein Aideed and Osman Ali Ato.[69] In the following year, this shift in the balance of power within the Haber Gedir and southern Mogadishu culminated when "the south Mogadishu businessmen refused to pay taxes to militia leaders, and instead bought the militia out from beneath the warlords, subcontracting out control of the militia to a sharia court system … the moment which defined the top Mogadishu businessmen as perhaps the most powerful actors in the country".[70] As will be described later in this chapter, these leading businessmen as well as Abukar Omar Adani became the main financiers of the Arta conference and the TNG that emerged from it.

Finally, a major event that illustrated this change in the political landscape in Mogadishu was the Benadir Peace Process that began in 1998 and brought together a number of interest groups in opposition to predatory factions, including women organisations, traditional authorities, Islamist groups, and senior politicians.[71] According to a senior representative of al-Islah, which became the lead organisation in the process, the idea from the start was "to

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[66] Menkhaus, "Governance without Government", p. 87.
[67] Shinn, "Al-Qaeda in East Africa and the Horn", p. 59.
[68] Ken Menkhaus, "Somalia: A Situation Analysis and Trend Assessment"*, Writenet Paper No. 07* (2000), p. 11.
[69] Le Sage, "Somalia and the War on Terrorism", p. 149.
[70] Menkhaus, *Somalia: A Situation Analysis and Trend Assessment*, p. 14.
[71] Many of the senior politicians involved in the Benadir Peace Processes were Haber Gedir-Ayr, including Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, General Galaal, and others who had tried to establish an alternative leadership within the Haber Gedir since the UNOSOM intervention (see Chapter V). For more about Ayr politicians and businessmen in relation to the Arta conference, see "Somalia: Making Do and Mending", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, July 15, 2000; "Somalia: Islamist Militia Offensive", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, November 13, 1999.

sort out Mogadishu" with Puntland as a model.[72] However, the process morphed when Ismail Omar Guelleh launched his initiative for national reconciliation in September 1999, and the loose coalition of interest groups from the Benadir Peace Process subsequently became the main actors during the Arta conference, which provided Islamist groups like al-Islah and al-Ittihad unprecedented influence in the national arena.

The Arta Conference: Islamists, Businessmen, and Regional Competition

The Arta Conference that was organised between March and August 2000, was a milestone in Somalia's civil war for several reasons: it resulted in the first internationally recognised government following the state collapse; it focused on civil society participation based on clan quotas rather than factional representation; and it replaced the fancy hotels and expensive arrangements that characterised previous reconciliation conferences for Somalia with a fairly inexpensive setup; it was held in tents outside the Djiboutian capital. All of this contributed to a frame of legitimacy for the TNG that was established at the end of the conference in August 2000, when Abdiqassim Salad Hassan, a former minister under Siad Barre's regime, was elected President by a 245-member parliament in which the main Islamist groups had a significant stake.[73] As will be discussed later, this generated an almost immediate Ethiopian effort to unite the faction leaders that were opposed to the Arta process, leading to the establishment of the Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC) half a year later.

[72] Interview with senior al-Islah member (Interview #31).

[73] Approximately one quarter of the parliamentarians were linked to al-Islah. See International Crisis Group, "Somalia: Countering Terrorism in a Failed State", p. 13. A number of key posts were given to prominent representatives, for example Ibrahim Dusuqi, who became leader of the foreign relations committee in the new parliament. See Hansen, "Brothers in Diaspora", p. 53. Similarly, Hassan Dahir Aweys, a key figure in AIAI, was appointed member of the TNG's security committee in Mogadishu. See Bryden, "No Quick Fixes", p. 47.

Three things should be emphasized with regards to the alliances that emerged from the Arta process: first, the connections that existed between Djibouti's initiative and developments in Mogadishu; second, the ways in which the Arta process became a variable in other subnational arenas of competition as well; and third, the ways in which external actors, especially Ethiopia and Arab countries, shaped the coalitions that emerged.

If we start with the links between Ismail Omar Guelleh's initiative and developments in Mogadishu, there were several connections between the leadership in Djibouti and key figures involved in the Benadir Peace Process. According to Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, the most senior politician involved in the process in Mogadishu, there was communication from an early stage, and he personally encouraged Ismail Omar Guelleh to launch an initiative as Mogadishu was "getting ready".[74] There were also links between the influential businessmen who financed the Benadir process (who also backed the Islamic clan courts) and key figures in Djibouti, including Abdurahman Boreh, a close adviser of Ismail Omar Guelleh, who subsequently became one of the main financiers of the Arta process together with the abovementioned businessmen.[75]

In that sense, when Ismail Omar Guelleh announced his reconciliation initiative in September 1999 and emphasized that civil society should take centre stage – the warlords would receive no special status, he argued, and they should be charged with crimes against humanity instead[76]– it reflected a process that was already underway in Mogadishu. It also reflected Djibouti's own interests, for example the ambition to abandon the building-block approach that Ethiopia had managed to turn into IGAD-policy in the preceding year, as well

[74] Interview with Abdiqasim Salad Hassan (Interview #32).
[75] Andre Le Sage, "Somalia: Sovereign Disguise for a Mogadishu Mafia" in *Review of African Political Economy*, 29:91 (2002), p. 135. See also "Somalia: Making do and mending", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, July 15, 2000.
[76] Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia,* S/2000/12/11, December 19, 2000, p. 1.

as mutual economic interests that linked key figures in Djibouti and the business elite in Mogadishu. For critics of the process, these business connections made the TNG that emerged from the conference little more than "a sovereign disguise for a Mogadishu mafia".[77]

This connects with the second point worth emphasizing: how the initiative became a variable in subnational arenas of competition and created coalitions that reflected these rivalries as much as concerns about national politics. Although this was most obvious in Mogadishu, it could be seen in other subnational arenas as well. In Somaliland, for example, Ismail Omar Guelleh tried to win over the President, Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, by suggesting that the conference should be organised in Somaliland rather than in the south or in a neighbouring country. However, even though Egal initially endorsed the initiative, he later made a 180-degree policy turn when it became clear that he did not have the backing necessary in Somaliland, where popular opinion was strongly in favour of secession.[78] Instead, the Arta process became a vehicle for Somaliland's opposition. In response, Egal adopted a strong anti-Arta position and closed the border to Djibouti to hinder civil society groups from attending,[79] while Somaliland's parliament passed a law saying that anyone who attended the conference "would be considered a traitor and liable to the death penalty".[80] In that sense, the response from Egal was as much about Somaliland's internal politics as about its relationship to Mogadishu, and he used the boom in Somaliland nationalism that followed

[77] Andre Le Sage, "Somalia: Sovereign Disguise for a Mogadishu Mafia".
[78] According to senior Djiboutian representatives, Ismail Omar Guelleh outlined two options for Egal. The first was to organise a conference in Somaliland with the aim of establishing a national government for a united Somalia with Hargeisa as interim capital in which Egal would be a strong presidential candidate. Another option was to organise a conference to establish a government for the south that would give Egal a counterpart to negotiate Somaliland's secession with. This would improve the possibilities of international recognition, since donors constantly avoided the issue by referring to it as an internal matter for Somalis to agree on (Interview #33).
[79]"Warlords at the Gate", *Africa Confidential*, March 31, 2000; "Raised Voices with Djibouti", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, May 13, 2000.
[80] Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia,* S/2000/12/11, December 19, 2000, p. 4.

the Arta conference to consolidate his own position, for example by suspending *habeas corpus* and banning public demonstrations.[81]

In Puntland, there was a similar pattern. The administration led by Abdullahi Yusuf supported the process initially, and participated in the early stages with a delegation led by the vice-president, Mohamed Abdi Hashi.[82] However, when it became clear that representation in Arta would be based on clan quotas – i.e. the administration would not be able to decide who the Majerteen representatives from the region would be – the Puntland administration withdrew its official representation. Although the decision was framed as being about respect for Puntland's semi-autonomous status, it was equally about intra-Majerteen politics and the risk that the conference would upset the regional balance of power – "all the opposition groups have made their pilgrimage to Djibouti, which is seen as a threat by the President's dominant Majerteen sub-clan, the Omar/Mahmoud".[83] After the decision to withdraw, there were protests in several towns in Puntland,[84] and several prominent Majerteen politicians remained in Arta and later became ministers in the TNG, like Boqor Abdullahi Boqor Muse "King Kong" and Hassan Abshir, which once again illustrates the role of individual positioning and subnational competition in alliance formation.

The pattern was the same in the south where the Marehan and Haber Gedir militias in control of Kismayo sided with the TNG to mobilise support against General Morgan's militias that were regrouping to retake Kismayo with Ethiopian support. For the RRA that had captured Baidoa from Hussein Aideed and no longer faced an external threat, the Arta conference

[81] For further discussion, see Renders, *Consider Somaliland*, p. 198. For a discussion about Egal's ambiguous position towards a possible reunification between Somaliland and the south, see Matt Bryden, "The "Banana Test": Is Somaliland Ready for Recognition?" in *Annales d'Ethiopie*, 19 (2003).
[82] "Puntland Dictates Its Terms", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, April 22, 2000; Renders, *Consider Somaliland*, p. 189.
[83] "Hope from the North", *Africa Confidential*, March 17, 2000, p. 7.
[84] Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia,* S/2000/12/11, December 19, 2000, p. 1.

became a catalyst for divisions and individual positioning. After participating in Arta with a high-level delegation that made way for considerable Rahaneweyn influence in the TNG administration,[85] the RRA leaders that had supported the Arta process and accepted positions in the TNG backed out as Ethiopia initiated parallel discussion with other RRA commanders, illustrating the rivalries that existed within the organisation's leadership and later resulted in clashes between sub-groups.[86]

This leads to the third point about the role of external actors in shaping alliances around the Arta conference. As noted in the previous chapter, Addis Ababa disliked the initiative from the outset because it abandoned the building-block approach, but Ethiopia could not oppose it due to dependence on Djibouti's port following the war with Eritrea (see Chapter VII). For this reason, Addis Ababa expressed support initially to avoid risking the bilateral alliance with Djibouti. However, when Abdiqasim Salad Hassan emerged as the forerunner in the presidential race, it was a major concern in Addis Ababa since he was seen as "a man of Egypt".[87] If he became president in Somalia, an Ethiopian diplomat noted, "it would be like having Egypt next door".[88] In that sense, even though the Ethiopians framed their concerns about the TNG as being about Islamist involvement when talking to Western donors, they were equally about long-standing regional competition as discussed in the previous chapter, and already during the high-level dinner after the election of Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, began "sowing distrust" instead of lending support and endorsing the outcome.[89]

[85] The RRA was represented by its chairman, Hassan Mohamed Nur "Shatigadud", as well as the RRA's Secretary General, Abdalla Deerow, who co-chaired the Arta conference. See "Time to Talk", *Africa Confidential*, June 23, 2000.
[86] Interview with senior RRA member (Interview #16).
[87] Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #25).
[88] Ibid.
[89] Interview with senior UN representative (Interview #33).

It is worth emphasizing that few other external actors were seriously concerned about Islamist influences in the TNG. According to a senior UN representative, the US administration was still disengaged from Somalia – "the Americans did not do anything around the time of Arta"[90] – and there were no major fears that the TNG would come under Islamist influence because the leadership was "well-known to external observers and understood to be committed to secular politics".[91] A number of other issues appeared far more important, including the involvement of Siad Barre loyalists in the administration and the extent to which "civil society" was little more than a façade used by politicians and faction leaders.[92] Nevertheless, there was "cautious optimism"[93] about the TNG among the western donors as the TNG became the first administration in Somalia to take up the country's seat in the UN since the state collapse nine years earlier.

In summary, the alliances that emerged from the Arta process reflected more than competition between Mogadishu and the peripheries – it was not only about whether building-blocks or a centralised state should be established as has often been suggested – and they could not be reduced to "warlords vs. civil society". Instead, these alliances reflected a number of patterns discussed in the previous chapters, including the positioning of individuals within a system based on clan representation, local rivalries in subnational arenas of competition, and competition between the regional powers in the Horn of Africa. For the Islamist groups, the TNG was an unprecedented opportunity, but rather than resulting in more influence and a boosted position, the Islamists' involvement with the TNG resulted in marginalisation. The reasons for this will be discussed in the following section.

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[90] Ibid. This impression is confirmed by Abdiqasim Salad Hassan: "they were not against but they were not supporting either". When Abdiqasim asked to meet with a representative of the US government during a visit to the UN in New York, there was no response and there seemed to be little interest in Somalia. (Interview #32).
[91] Menkhaus, "Political Islam in Somalia", p. 117.
[92] Approximately 60 percent of the parliamentarians were former members of Siad Barre's parliament. See Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland*, p. 8.
[93] Menkhaus, "Somalia: In the Crosshairs of the War on Terrorism", p. 210.

TNG and SRRC: Power Politics and the Islamist Agenda

In October 2000, when Abdiqasim Salad Hasan arrived in Mogadishu, more than 100,000 people greeted him along the streets and in Mogadishu stadium.[94] Although the capital largely remained under the control of faction leaders opposed to the new government, there was a sense of political change. In a conversation with a Djiboutian diplomat, one of the faction leaders suggested that the strongmen in Mogadishu were disarmed by the public's massive support for the government – "we were like fish left by the tide" – and even members of the faction leaders' own families went out to greet the president.[95]

Apart from this frame of legitimacy, the TNG did not have any resources. According to Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, it had "funds like zero" and no capacity to raise taxes, and therefore depended entirely on the businessmen who had sponsored the Arta conference and provided housing and security as the government established itself in a few blocks in the capital.[96] The main challenge for the TNG was therefore to extend its area of influence. However, this involved a number of strategic trade-offs. On the one hand, the TNG had to find ways to accommodate the factions backed by Ethiopia, not only to reduce the threat that these groups posed, but also to sway western donors that were reluctant to kick-start the administration without first seeing progress on the ground.[97] On the other hand, the TNG had to maintain the backing of its main supporters in the business community, the Islamist groups, and countries in the Arab region, and this worked at cross-purposes with the ambition of building new alliances. The result was that the TNG became trapped in a struggle

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[94] Interpeace, *A History of Mediation in Somalia since 1988* (Mogadishu: The Center for Research and Dialogue), p. 47.
[95] Interview with senior Djiboutian representative (Interview #30).
[96] Interview with Abdiqasim Salad Hassan (Interview #32). According to Menkhaus, the core group behind the TNG was relatively small: "perhaps as few as three wealthy individuals … appear to have been wholly committed to the TNG, for political, business, and clan reasons". *Somalia: State Collapse*, p. 90.
[97] Interpeace, *A History of Mediation*, p. 47.

for political survival that undermined its legitimacy as well as the position of the Islamist groups that supported the administration. The following pages provides a summary of how this happened.

The main achievement of the TNG in terms of expanding its influence in Mogadishu was to make arrangements with two of the five "warlords" in the capital. In December 2000, Hussein Haji Bod reached an agreement with the government,[98] and in February 2001, Mohamed Afrah Qanayre accepted a cabinet position after having been ambivalent about the government in the first months – "he was not really with us but not against either".[99] However, there was continued opposition from the other main actors in the capital, including Hussein Aideed, Musa Sudi, and Osman Ali Ato. In March, 2001, these "warlords" established the SRRC in Awasa, Ethiopia, together with five groups from other regions – RRA, SPM, SNF, and SSNM/BIREM, and the Puntland administration – all of which had close ties to Ethiopia from before. As the stated aim of the SRRC was to hold "an all-inclusive national reconciliation conference within six months in order to form a 'representative Transitional Government of National Unity'",[100] it did not come across as an attempt to bargain with the TNG, but rather as an Ethiopian-backed attempt to establish a parallel government.

The result was that the TNG played the anti-Ethiopia card in order to mobilise domestic support, generate funding from Arab countries, and pressure western donors by arguing that Ethiopia was "determined to destroy our chance to restore peace, stability, democratic governance and political independence to Somalia".[101] Although this partly reflected genuine

[98] Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia,* S/2001/963, October 11, 2001, p. 1.
[99] Interview with Abdiqasim Salad Hassan (Interview #32).
[100] Interpeace, *A History of Mediation*, p. 49.
[101] Security Council, "Letter dated 21 March 2001 from the Prime Minister of Somalia addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2001/263, p. 1.

sentiments, it was equally a framing strategy as the TNG called for an "Arab Marshall Plan" to mobilise support from the only source that was forthcoming.[102] As noted by Ken Menkhaus at the time, the leadership of the TNG was "so chronically desperate for external patronage and funding that they will sign on to almost any patron's political or social agenda if it brings the TNG money".[103] Nevertheless, the money coming from Arab countries in combination with the Islamist presence in the TNG reinforced the Ethiopian understanding of what was at stake. In turn, this reduced the possibilities of increased support to the TNG from western donors, illustrating the trade-offs involved when adopting frames for instrumental purposes.

An equally important factor undermining the legitimacy of the TNG was the corruption that the administration's relationship with the business community brought about. As described earlier, the rationale behind the business community's support for the TNG was that they considered the "warlords" a threat to their interests. At the same time, the TNG was also an investment from the viewpoint of the business elite – it gave them an opportunity to recoup their money through government contracts and possible access to donor funding.[104] In that sense, the TNG served as "a piece of paper on a fish hook, thrown into international waters to lure foreign aid which could then be diverted into appropriate pockets".[105] This was also reflected in the oversized budget for the first year that was tabled by the Prime Minister, Ali Khalif Galaydh, where almost everything was covered by donors.[106] As noted by Andre Le Sage, the backing of the TNG may have been a high-risk investment, but it was still a better option than paying protection money to the warlords, and the amounts that the main

[102] Menkhaus, "Political Islam in Somalia", p. 117.
[103] Ibid., p 118.
[104] For a more detailed discussion, see Andre Le Sage, "Somalia: Sovereign Disguise for a Mogadishu Mafia" in *Review of African Political Economy*, 29:91 (2002).
[105] Ken Menkhaus, "State Collapse in Somalia: Second Thoughts" in *Review of African Political Economy*, 30:97 (2003), p. 418.
[106] International Crisis Group, "Negotiating a Blueprint for Peace in Somalia", Africa Report 59 (2003), p. 8.

business backers received after the first instalments from Libya and Saudi Arabia to the TNG were "more money than businessmen ever received from the likes of Hussein Aideed or Osman Atto".[107]

The perceived corruption within the TNG undermined its legitimacy rapidly. According to a senior member of the administration, "the businessmen were recouping left and right",[108] and when some businessmen associated with the government imported counterfeit Somali shillings that were distributed in Mogadishu, it resulted in hyperinflation and massive street protests against the government.[109] At the same time, the priorities of the businessmen began to change as the conflict became increasingly expensive – it was estimated that the three main financiers of the TNG were putting up nearly a million dollars a month, and the business militias were also doing most of the fighting against the "warlords" – which meant that they began to see the need for a settlement with the SRRC in order to have peace and "attract the profits expected from rehabilitation, development and aid agencies".[110] As a result, the feeling that Arta marked the beginning of a new era gradually faded away.

The Islamist agenda disappeared in the process. The leadership of the TNG continued to draw on the Islamists' connections and depended on the militias from the Islamic courts that had been incorporated into the TNG's own security apparatus.[111] However, they were "concerned with personal political survival [and] worked to undermine the independent authority of the shari'a courts, and replaced most radical clerics from Al Itihad with secular

[107] Le Sage, Somalia and the War on Terrorism, p. 125.
[108] Interview with senior TNG member (Interview #4).
[109] Menkhaus, "Somalia: In the Crosshairs", p. 211. For further discussion, see Ahmed Yusuf Farah, "Assessing the Reconciliation Initiatives by the Transitional National Government (TNG) After the Arta Peace Process" in Richard Ford, Hussein Adam and Edna Adan Ismail, eds., *War Destroys, Peace Nurtures: Somali Reconciliation and Development* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press).
[110] "Somalia: Transition to Where?", *Africa Confidential*, July 27, 2001.
[111] "Somalia: Possible President", *Africa Confidential*, September 1, 2000.

jurists from the Siad Barre era".[112] In the end, there was no pro-Islamist legislation introduced by the TNG.[113] The result was instead that AIAI became drawn into the old political game and "bargained shamelessly for positions in the administration, leading many to conclude that AIAI members were simply opportunists using the movement to earn a valuable ministerial seat".[114]

In other words, they lost the moral high-ground – "AIAI was accused of acting like any other faction, and lost a great deal of credibility"[115] – which illustrates the argument in the introduction about the risks of having a "sanctified identity" tainted through tactical alliances. It also meant that those in Islamist circles who had argued against an "unconditional rallying"[116] behind the TNG were proven right as al-Islah and al-Ittihad came out from their involvement with the government "in a worse position than when they went into it".[117] As noted by Roland Marchal, the Islamists "lost everything" when the leaders of the Islamic courts were co-opted into the TNG as representatives of their clans, while the sharia courts' military equipment that had been provided by the businessmen was transferred to the TNG in a similar way.[118] This experience shaped Islamist alliance strategies in the following years when there was a focus on building an autonomous military force – "history should not repeat itself"[119] – which contributed to the emergence of a more uncompromising and militaristic group, al-Shabaab (see Conclusion).

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112 Le Sage, *Somalia and the War on Terrorism*, p. 148.
113 Ibid., p. 149.
114 Menkhaus, *Somalia: State Collapse*, p. 63.
115 Ibid., p. 63.
116 "Hassan Daher Aweys", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, November 10, 2001.
117 Le Sage, *Somalia and the War on Terrorism*, p. 150.
118 Marchal, *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War*, p. 15.
119 Ibid., p. 15.

The Beginning of a New Era: The Consequences of 9/11

After the September 11 attacks, the conflict between the TNG and SRRC was transformed from a regional issue to "a high stakes international security concern".[120] This transformation was partly driven by Somali stakeholders who reframed themselves and their country's crisis based on the narrative around the war on terror. For example, after George W. Bush's speech in which he told countries around the world that "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists", the TNG's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ismail Mahmoud "Buuba", wrote a letter to the US government to emphasize that the TNG was with the Americans and "as much concerned with the possibility of Al Qaeda moving into [Somalia] as you are".[121] In an obvious attempt to attract anti-terrorism funding, the TNG established an anti-terrorism taskforce, while the opposition in the SRRC accused the TNG itself of harbouring radical Islamists,[122] and Meles Zenawi stated that the real force behind the TNG was AIAI.[123] In short, the war on terror provided the kind of global "master cleavage"[124] that had been conspicuously absent in Somalia's civil war in the 1990s when the Cold War was over and the country had little strategic importance to the global powers.[125]

The reframing of the conflict was straightforward for the SRRC. It emphasized the connections between the TNG and AIAI, and when the latter was listed by the US government as a terrorist group on September 23, 2001, the SRRC could easily frame itself as an equivalent to the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan that was capable of dealing with

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120 International Crisis Group, "Somalia: Countering Terrorism in a Failed State", *Africa Report 45* (2002), p. 21.
121 Jeremy Scahill, *Dirty Wars: The World is a Battlefield* (London: Serpent's Tail), p. 121.
122 Menkhaus, "Political Islam in Somalia", p. 115.
123 David Shinn, "Ethiopia: Coping with Islamic Fundamentalism", p. 6.
124 Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence*, p. 384.
125 In the early 1990s, a representative of the US State Department assessed that "there are no geopolitical stakes in Ethiopia or the Horn of Africa anymore", Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn*, p. 272.

AIAI militarily.[126] In September, this option was on the table – the US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, talked about what might have to be done in Somalia,[127] and concrete potential targets were discussed when TNG representatives visited Washington, DC[128] – and even though the initial reports about al-Qaeda bases in Somalia proved incorrect, the SRRC continued to emphasize the connections.

The reframing process was more complicated for the TNG as it was associated with considerable strategic trade-offs. On the one hand, the TNG tried to distance itself from al-Ittihad in order to establish "an independent character not connected to 'fundamentalist' elements that will endanger relations with Ethiopia and Western donors".[129] On the other hand, even though the TNG leadership probably would have liked to "purge itself of al-Ittihad members", it remained dependent on al-Ittihad's support and connections in Arab countries.[130] As a result, many key figures associated with AIAI remained within government circles, and this made the TNG's efforts appear half-hearted in contrast to the SRRC's.[131]

These strategic considerations became even more obvious when the US government listed two organisations with close connections to the TNG – al-Barakat and al-Haramein – as linked to terrorism.[132] As noted earlier, al-Barakat was chaired by Ahmed Nur Jima'le, a key financier of the TNG, whose company was described by the Americans as "a principal source of funding, intelligence and money transfers for Osama bin Laden".[133] As members of the

[126] "This was a scenario under serious consideration in November-December 2001, when U.S. military officers visited Baidoa to look into the Council as a potential ally". International Crisis Group, *Countering Terrorism in a Failed State*, p. 18.
[127] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (Washington, D.C.: National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States), p. 366.
[128] Interview with senior TNG member (Interview #4).
[129] Le Sage, "Prospects for Al Ittihad", p 476.
[130] Menkhaus, "Somalia in the Crosshairs", p. 217.
[131] International Crisis Group, "Somalia: Countering Terrorism in a Failed State", p. 18.
[132] For more, see "Somalia: Washington Versus Al Barakat", November 10, 2001.
[133] Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia, (S/2002/189), February 21, 2002, p. 8.

government were living in hotels owned by Ahmed Nur Jim'ale and Abukar Omar Adani – one of the other main backers of the TNG who had links to other organisations listed by the Americans[134] – this obviously fed into the SRRC's framing of the TNG as closely associated with Islamist groups. There was also a public relations aspect on the domestic level. For example, al-Barakat was the main money transfer company and provided services that were essential for many Somalis dependent on remittances from family members in the diaspora. Similarly, al-Haramein was well-respected, ran orphanages in Mogadishu and other places, and had remained in Somalia in the post-UNOSOM years when western organisations had abandoned Somalia. For this reason, the TNG refused to close down its operations initially,[135] reducing the credibility of the TNG as an anti-terror force even further.

The blacklisting of al-Barakat and al-Haramein became the most consequential move that the US government made with regards to Somalia following the September 11 attacks. It had a direct impact on the daily lives of many Somalis, and dealing with the consequences of the listing of al-Barakat became one of the most time consuming issues in the UN office.[136] It also created a backlash against the US government as there was little evidence presented to motivate the decision. Similarly, when al-Hamarein's operations were finally closed down in 2003, following pressures via Saudi Arabia, thousands of orphans ended up in the streets, which had an "immediate impact on Somali public opinion—it was "a public relations disaster for the United States".[137] In other words, the listing of individuals and companies associated with terrorism was not "a remarkably efficient tool"[138] for limiting Islamist influence. The main consequence was rather a widening of the gap between domestic perceptions of what constituted a legitimate actor in Somalia and western ideas.

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[134] "The TNG's Shady Friends", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, December 8, 2001.
[135] Le Sage, "Islamic Charities in Somalia", p. 158.
[136] Interview with senior UN representative (Interview #33).
[137] Le Sage, "Islamic Charities in Somalia", p. 159.
[138] de Waal, *The Real Politics*, p. 123. Other authors have argued the opposite: "these actions had a limited and temporary impact". See Le Sage, *Somalia and the War on Terrorism*, p. 127.

This discrepancy was also manifested in new efforts to mediate between the TNG and SRRC in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. In November 2001, the main factions and alliances were invited to Kenya for discussions, but rather than leading to dialogue and consolidation, these efforts contributed to fragmentation as groups positioned themselves for stakes in the new government that would replace the TNG. In December 2001, for example, there were heavy clashes in Mogadishu between Musa Sudi and his deputy Omar Finish – two close relatives from the same Abgal-Wacbuudhan-Daud sub-clan – related to participation in the negotiations. Similarly, there were defections from the TNG with Mohamed Afrah Qanyare leaving his position in the TNG, and when negotiations continued in 2002, fighting escalated in Puntland and Bay as "rival political leaders [tried] to assert primacy over territory and leadership positions in order to ensure a place at the table in Eldoret".[139] As noted by Ken Menkhaus, the renewed initiatives towards state-building in Somalia that were led by IGAD following the September 11 attacks were "partly responsible for a spate of armed clashes that rendered south-central Somalia more insecure and inaccessible than at any time in the previous ten years".[140] Again, we see the patterns discussed in previous chapters, including the positioning of individuals within a system based on clan representation, the role of state-building as a variable in alliance formation, the importance of subnational rivalries in structuring alliances, the influence of regional powers, and the ways in which expectations of the emerging political order shaped perceptions of threat.

Importantly, we also see the importance of ideological framing in relation to macro-political trends, since the Islamist groups were conspicuously absent during negotiations in Eldoret

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[139] Menkhaus, *Somalia: State Collapse*, p. 19.
[140] Ibid., p 18.

in 2002. At the time, the absence of representatives of al-Islah and AIAI was described as a consequence of the Islamists having been marginalised under the TNG.[141] In retrospect, however, it is clear that the competition between Somalia's factions around the negotiations created the same conducive environment for Islamist mobilisation that had resulted in the establishment of Islamic clan courts in the late 1990s. In short, renewed efforts to establish a national government with faction leaders resulted in competition and fragmentation. This fragmentation resulted in renewed lawlessness with freelance militias from different clans operating in Mogadishu, more insecurity for ordinary people, and higher transaction costs for the business community. In turn, this led to the establishment of another generation of sharia courts that became the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) backed by the same business figures who had financed the previous generation. In that sense, there was "a path dependent process that led to the creation of ICU institutions".[142] At the same time, the establishment of the ICU and emergence of al-Shabaab also reflected new circumstances and revised Islamist alliance strategies based on having been compromised during the TNG administration. In that sense, the ways in which al-Shabaab emerged to become the most resilient Islamist group, with a strategy that limited clan divisions, established a strict bureaucracy, and involved a hard-line position when forming alliances with other groups, suggests that the group was not only the symptom of the global war on terror – it was equally or more "an outcome of a radicalisation process that can be explained by local dynamics".[143]

Conclusion

This chapter has emphasized that there was a dualism in the rise of political Islam in Somalia in the 1990s. On the one hand, it reflected social changes that had been underway for several decades, especially the growing influence of Salafism at the expense of traditional Sufi

[141] International Crisis Group, "Salvaging Somalia's Chance for Peace", *Africa Briefing* 11 (2002), p. 6.
[142] Ahmad, Between the Mosque and the Market , p. 30.
[143] Marchal, *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War*, p. 11.

practices, which accelerated after the collapse of Siad Barre's regime. This illustrates that "religious discourse often functions as social discourse, where individuals look to the sacred for solutions to what they know all too well are the problems of the profane world",[144] and adherence to stricter interpretations of Islam became a way of dealing with the insecurity and violence associated with clannism. On the other hand, there was a less ideational dimension as political Islam was often embraced for instrumental as much as ideological reasons – it became a useful frame for dealing with the consequences of statelessness, a way of mobilizing resources, and a strategy for establishing networks on the domestic level as well as in Arab countries – as demonstrated in this chapter with reference to the business class in Mogadishu.

This instrumental adoption of political Islam is particularly important when trying to understand the changing ways in which alliances and groups in Somalia's civil war have framed themselves over the years. As demonstrated in this chapter, the suggestion that ideological frames can be seen as afterthoughts to power considerations underestimates the extent to which they are associated with tangible resources. Although this could be seen in the years discussed in this chapter as well, it became far more obvious after the September 11 attacks when framing in relation to the emerging counterterrorism narrative and political Islam became associated with considerable extraversion opportunities and strategic considerations. In short, political Islam gained legitimacy on the domestic level, but became increasingly incompatible with backing from western donors, which instead appeared willing to bankroll *any* government in Somalia that could counter the perceived Islamist threat. This resulted in a series of nominal administrations that relied entirely on "counter-terror rents" and their ability to frame themselves as "sufficiently reliable to deserve support, and sufficiently fragile to need it".[145] Again, this illustrates that framing strategies are closely

[144] Scott Reese, "Shaykh Abdullahi al-Qutbi and the Pious Believer's Dilemma: Local Moral Guidance in an Age of Global Islamic Reform" in *Journal of Eastern African Studies* (2015), p. 489.
[145] Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics*, p. 183.

linked to power considerations, and it is only from that perspective that we can begin to understand the "extreme makeovers" that political entrepreneurs in Somalia have pulled off over the years – "from general to chairman to governor to sheikh" – to maintain their relevance and mobilise resources in a constantly evolving political environment.[146]

Two other aspects of the role of ideology in alliance formation have been described in this chapter, and they will also be picked up in the concluding chapter when relating alliance patterns in the 1990s to the post-9/11 era. First, the need for groups with self-professed normative commitments to consider the negative implications of tactical alliances. As demonstrated in this chapter, the Islamist groups in Somalia in the 1990s were no strangers to tactical alliances with groups that did not share their ideological commitments. However, such alliances often came at a price, which illustrates that principled behaviour is not only about upholding principles for sentimental reasons – it is also about making sure that no other group can emerge as the true defender of the cause. This connects with the second point about the tendency for Islamist groups to see each other as potential threats rather than natural allies as they compete for the same moral authority. As noted by Stephen Walt when discussing divisive ideologies, "each faction can defend their own actions only by portraying rivals as traitors or heretics".[147] Although this tendency was less pronounced in the 1990s when the Islamist groups were still relatively marginalised, it became a major factor when political Islam took centre stage in Somalia, illustrated by splits in al-Shabaab, the Islamic courts, and al-Islah, as well as in the Sufi mobilisation around Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a (ASWJ) against al-Shabaab (see Conclusion). As noted by Stig-Jarle Hansen, this development represented the opposite of what groups like al-Islah had expected – "rather

[146] Ken Menkhaus, "Non-State Actors and the Role of Violence in Stateless Somalia" in Kledja Mulaj, ed., *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics* (London: Hurst, 2009), p. 353.
[147] Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, p. 36.

than religion being the glue of society … it became a source of division".[148] The intra-Islamist rivalries and the ways in which Islamist groups allied with non-Islamist groups to marginalise the main threat to their interests demonstrate two of the main arguments of this thesis: how alliance choices are based on perceived threats, and how perceptions of threat must be understood from the vantage points of different actors, rather than assumed to be the same for all political actors, irrespective of whether they are local clan militias, faction leaders, or Islamist groups.

[148] Hansen, "Brothers in Diaspora", p. 58.

Conclusion

> *"… for some governments, state failure is not a problem to be solved but a condition to be exploited".*[1]

It may seem like the events and characters described in this thesis belong to a different era in which Somalia's civil war revolved around other issues and was characterised by fundamentally different dynamics. This is true to some extent. In the years since the September 11 attacks, the political landscape in Somalia has changed dramatically and many of the key players in Somalia today were marginal or unheard of sixteen years ago: there was no al-Shabaab, no African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and no Somali Federal Government (SFG). Most importantly, there was no global interest in Somalia and relatively few extraversion opportunities available to the country's political elites – "Cold War security rents had gone, and the global War on Terror security rents had yet to begin".[2]

In contrast, the current crisis in Somalia offers an unprecedented range of "crisis rents",[3] and everything from state-building and famine relief to counterterrorism and anti-piracy operations provides lucrative opportunities for Somalia's political entrepreneurs. There are also an increasing number of foreign powers involved, including Qatar, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which did not play significant roles in the pre-9/11 years. In combination with a state-building process that is geared towards the establishment of federal

[1] Ken Menkhaus, "State-Fragility as a Wicked Problem" in *Prism*, 1:2 (2010), p. 97.
[2] de Waal, *The Real Politics*, p. 46.
[3] Matt Bryden, "Somalia Redux? Assessing the New Somali Federal Government", *Report of the CSIS Africa Program*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield), p. 14 (with unspecified reference to Aisha Ahmad).

units and has resulted in a proliferation of Somali stakeholders, this increased external involvement has created a complex web of alliances between local militias, federal member states, national leadership, and foreign powers, including neighbouring Kenya and Ethiopia that operate militarily on the ground: "the shifting patchwork of alliances between armed groups is bewildering: some militias are ostensibly aligned with the Federal Government; some are distinctly hostile; while others are concerned primarily with local turf battles and self-defense".[4]

But it only takes some scratching on the surface to find patterns in Somalia's current crisis that resemble those described in this thesis. For example, we see the same interaction between subnational and national politics, with local rivals in many places aligning with different sides in national politics – one group backing al-Shabaab and the other supporting the SFG – not opportunistically to maximize their short-term gains, but rather to balance the main threat in their own arena of competition, suggesting a defensive logic to alignments. Similarly, external actors support different sides in Somalia to undermine each other in the geopolitics of the Horn of Africa, while perceptions of threat – the key variable behind alliance choices – continue to generate counterintuitive alignments. As Ken Menkhaus has put it, "sometimes at high levels, the government will see Shabaab as less threatening than a local rival and will tactically collude with them".[5] This illustrates the main point emphasized in this thesis: that alignments are determined by perceptions of threat primarily and that these perceptions must be understood in relation to the context.

[4] Paul Williams, "One Somalia, One Army? Building an Effective Somali National Security Force (online resource, see bibliography for URL).
[5] Ken Menkhaus, "State-Building & Non-State Armed Actors in Somalia", Lecture at Syracuse University, 2015 (online resource, see bibliography for URL).

It is in relation to these familiar alliance patterns that this concluding chapter returns to the main question posed in the introduction – how can we best make sense of alliances in Somalia's civil war? – not only to recap the main argument, but also to briefly relate patterns described in this thesis to developments in the post-9/11 era. This is not to suggest that alliance dynamics have remained unchanged – nor to explain in detail how and why alliance dynamics *have* changed – but rather to highlight some important continuities beneath the surface of what may appear to be a different conflict altogether.

This is important for several reasons, not least because there is a tendency among academics, diplomats, and journalists, to focus on change rather than continuity. On the academic side, for example, leading scholars have suggested that Somalia's crisis in the years since the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) takeover in 2006 belongs to a unique category of "new new civil wars" characterised by different dynamics than all previous civil wars.[6] On the diplomatic side, there has been similar emphasis on change rather than continuity when praising the federalist state-building process, with "buoyant judgments … based on highly selective appraisals of the situation"[7] that disregard (or fail to recognise) similarities with previous state-building processes. For this reason, even though there are indeed positive signs of "Somalia Rising"[8] with stability and optimism returning to many parts of the country, it is important to consider the continuities beneath the surface, and try to understand the rationales behind the alliances that keep things together for the time being.

Before we turn to the discussion about similarities and differences between the past and the present, the first part of this conclusion recaps the main arguments from previous chapters.

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[6] Barbara Walter, "The New New Civil Wars" in *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20 (2017).
[7] Matt Bryden, "Somalia Redux?", p. 1.
[8] Laura Hammond, "Somalia Rising: Things Are Starting to Change for the World's Longest Failed State" in *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 7:1 (2013).

The second part then returns to the themes highlighted in the empirical chapters, and relates them to developments in recent years: the role of individual positioning in alliance formation; the limitations to elite manipulation; the role of state-building as a variable in alliance formation; the role of regional powers and other external actors; and the role of ideology and framing in alliance formation with a focus on Islamist alliance strategies. Finally, the third part points to issues and questions worth considering in future studies of alliance formation in Somalia and beyond.

Summary of the Argument: Three Patterns in Alliance Formation

The starting point for this thesis was the observation that alliance formation in Somalia has often bewildered external observers. Most explanations of the fluidity of alliances have emphasized clan solidarity and the inherent instability of the Somali segmentary lineage system. However, as demonstrated in previous chapters, even though clan solidarity has been the foundation for mobilisation in Somalia's civil war, it is impossible to make sense of alliance choices based on the principles of lineage segmentation alone. For this reason, it also makes sense to look beyond the culturally specific explanations of alliance choices that have dominated Somali studies in the past, bringing in alternative approaches to alliance formation developed in studies of other civil wars characterised by similarly fluid alliances.

It was against this background that the thesis outlined a relatively straightforward framework for understanding alliance choices with concepts and insights borrowed from three strands in the literature: the classic Somali studies literature that describes clan solidarity as the main variable in alliance formation; the realist literature that emphasizes the balance of power and downplays the role of identity in alliance formation; and third, the literature that examines the political economy of civil wars that focuses on short-term gains and opportunism from a non-Clausewitzian perspective, emphasising that civil wars are usually about more than

defeating the enemy and winning. After briefly evaluating these approaches and the history of alliance formation in Somalia, the chapters about alliances in Somalia between 1988 and 2001 focused on two main arguments and three alliance patterns.

The first argument was that Somalia's civil war has not been about winning as much as it has been about not losing. For all the apparent opportunism in Somalia's civil war, there has been a defensiveness to alliance choices, and it was showed in the empirical chapters that the dominant tendency in alliance formation has not been for political actors to try to establish minimum winning coalitions or maximize their short-term gains. Instead, they have focused on managing threats, and drawn on whatever allies available to help them do so. In the chapters that followed, it was showed how this understanding of alliance dynamics resonates with classic defensive realism as well as the particularities of the Somali case.

The second argument that was traced in the empirical chapters was that rival groups in Somalia have not been fighting the same war – *the* war – over the past thirty years. It was demonstrated that Somalia's crisis is better understood as an aggregation of "multiple, more or less overlapping, smaller, diverse, and localized civil wars":[9] local conflicts over land and pasture have played out in the midst of the overall conflict; regional strongmen have focused on subnational dominance rather than national politics; and the priorities of political entrepreneurs in elite politics have often been different from the priorities of their nominal clan constituents. This multilevel character has shaped alliance formation, and it was showed in the empirical chapters that political actors have tended to focus on outcomes in their own arena of competition. For this reason, it makes little sense to focus on the overall balance of power or similar variables that prioritize national dynamics when trying to understand alliances. Instead, alliance choices have to be understood as based on perceptions of threats,

[9] Kalyvas, "The Ontology of "Political Violence", p. 479.

and these perceptions have to be understood in relation to the relevant arena of competition. As showed in the theoretical discussion, this approach resonates with defensive realism and balance of threat theory, which travels surprisingly well from the international system to the civil war context.

The chapters about the period between 1988 and 2001 showed that these general characteristics of Somalia's civil war – the multilevel character and the underlying defensiveness – have generated three alliance patterns. The first pattern was that alliances have been formed horizontally as well as vertically between local, regional, and national players. It was showed how the colonial administrations as well as Siad Barre's relied on vertical alliances when managing the Somali peripheries – they utilized the fact that local rivals tended to see each other as the main threat – and the same interaction between local and national politics could be discerned in the struggle against the regime and in the years after the *de facto* state collapse. The alliances that emerged through this interaction often contradicted the ideal of clan solidarity based on genealogical proximity: the main rivals at the subnational level were in many cases from the same clan-family, clan, or even sub-clan, and they formed alliances with actors involved in similar intra-clan competition elsewhere. This resulted in national coalitions structured around subnational cleavages as well as elite politics – a complex web of alignments between different arenas of competition in which outcomes in one arena were often closely linked to outcomes in another.

The interaction between different arenas of competition was the second pattern traced throughout the empirical chapters. The chapters demonstrated how alliance formation in Somalia has taken on the character of a multi-level game: although political actors have focused on outcomes in their own arena of competition, they have been forced to pay attention to developments in elsewhere as well, since outcomes in other arenas of

competition have been closely linked to outcomes and possibilities in their own arena. To complicate things further, these interactions have taken place within a regional arena of competition in the Horn of Africa that functions according to the same logic: regional powers have engaged in Somalia to manage threats in their own arena. For this reason, regional powers like Egypt and Ethiopia have not sought allies and clients to achieve a particular preferred outcome in Somalia, but rather have focused on limiting the influence of their regional rival. This has resulted in highly fluid transnational alignments as demonstrated in the previous chapters.

Finally, the third alliance pattern that the empirical chapters highlighted was the role of expectations in shaping perceptions of threat. From the struggle against Siad Barre to the establishment of the TNG following the Arta conference, the chapters showed how expectations of what the future political order in Somalia will look like have shaped alignments. These expectations have been fairly stable in some regards, for example with regards to the issue of clan balancing at the national level and the need for different components in a ruling coalition. However, they have also changed as a result of various factors, including state-building initiatives, which have projected an image of what the new political order in Somalia will look like with regards to elite politics, as well as the relationships between rival groups in subnational arenas of competition and the links between Mogadishu and the peripheries. As demonstrated in the empirical chapters, these expectations have shaped perceptions of threat, which in turn have informed alliance choices. The following section will discuss how these evolving expectations have continued to shape alignments in Somalia in the post-9/11 era.

Parallels and Divergences: Alliance Dynamics in the Post-9/11 Era

It would be a challenge to provide a detailed account of alliance formation in Somalia since the September 11 attacks within the remits of this concluding chapter. However, the purpose of this chapter is not to examine this period in detail, but rather to highlight a number of important continuities and reconnect with the alliance patterns described in previous chapters. But before turning to the continuities, it is worth pointing out the main differences: how alliance dynamics in Somalia in the post-9/11 era has diverged from dynamics in the years examined in the previous chapters.

The most obvious difference is that alliance formation has taken place within the overarching framework of the global war on terror. It was the war on terror that motivated Western re-engagement with Somalia in the early 2000s, and it was the perception that "ungoverned spaces" could be used by terrorists that motivated support for the establishment of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2004: "folks realized … that failed states [like Somalia] can create a danger to themselves, to their neighbors, and to us".[10] In the years since then, the war on terror has allowed Somali stakeholders to mobilise considerable resources by aligning themselves with the Western counterterrorism agenda, or by tapping into the networks associated with global jihadism. In short, this change in the international political environment has affected alliance dynamics in Somalia in the post-9/11 era more than anything else.

It has also meant that state-building in Somalia has become an element in the overarching counterterrorism strategy. Put differently, the resurrection of a decently functioning state has not been an objective as much as a strategy – one of several strategies – for dealing with the

[10] Jim Fisher-Thompson and Lindsey Brooks, "Eldoret Conference Could Mean Peace for Somalia, U.S. Official Says", U.S. Department of State (online resource, see bibliography for URL).

perceived terrorist threat. For this reason, many external actors (the United States in particular) have hedged their bets and provided support to various non-state coalitions as well as the government, most famously the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT), the group of "warlords" in Mogadishu that received CIA-backing to target alleged al-Qaeda operatives in the mid-2000s.[11] In 2006, when these "warlords" were defeated by the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), it resulted in an Ethiopian military intervention that first shattered the ICU, and then generated a national resistance against the Ethiopian occupation that allowed al-Shabaab "to appear as the best defender of the Somali nationalism".[12]

In the years that followed, when al-Shabaab controlled large parts of southern Somalia, external actors maintained a "dual track policy" that shaped alliance dynamics: on the one hand, they continued to work with subnational stakeholders to deal with the perceived terrorist threat; on the other hand, they provided support to AMISOM – the principle provider of security to the TFG in Mogadishu – and supported renewed efforts to cobble together a government coalition with "moderate" Islamists from the ICU that had been marginalised following al-Shabaab's takeover. In 2012, when the mandate of the ineffective TFG had expired, another federal government was established – the SFG – under the presidency of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, while the process of establishing federal member state continued in parallel, resulting in Jubaland, Galgudud, Southwestern State, and Hirshabelle.

The main point is that these governments and federal member states have all been coalitions depending on external support and counterterror rents for their survival; they have survived

[11] For more about the ARPCT, see Scahill, *Dirty Wars*, Chapter 10 and Chapter 19.
[12] Marchal, *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War*, p. 4.

by framing themselves as "sufficiently reliable to deserve support, and sufficiently fragile to need it".[13] To borrow from David Keen's reasoning about "useful enemies",[14] this has reduced the incentives for actually defeating al-Shabaab.[15] In short, the main objective has not been winning against al-Shabaab but rather *not losing*, while maximizing short-term gains through participation in the state-building process. As noted earlier with reference to Ken Menkhaus, this has meant that the most immediate threat to those aligned with government has not always been al-Shabaab, but rather some rival political entrepreneur or group nominally aligned with the Somali government side.[16]

The same defensive rationale has underpinned Western support to the state-building process in Somalia. The overarching objective for donors has not been "winning" in terms of establishing a well-functioning state but rather not losing against al-Shabaab. As a result, there has been continued support to Somali governments and regional administrations, despite massive corruption and little progress towards the main tasks – reviewing the provisional constitution and preparing for national elections – because "counter-terrorism priorities have meant that donors cannot afford to allow the Somali state-building project to fail".[17]

This has resulted in a strange dualism to the relationship between donors and their allies in Somalia. On the one hand, it has allowed those in government to engage in a "chicken race" with donors, knowing that they can count on their support. On the other hand, it has allowed the Somali government to pursue strategies towards other Somali stakeholders that would have been unviable if they had depended on domestic support rather than AMISOM,

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[13] de Waal, *The Real Politics*, p 183.
[14] Keen, *Useful Enemies*.
[15] Menkhaus, "State-Fragility as a Wicked Problem", p. 97.
[16] Menkhaus, "State-Building & Non-State Armed Actors in Somalia".
[17] Ken Menkhaus, "If Mayors Ruled Somalia: Beyond the State-Building Impasse", Policy Note 2 (Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, 2014).

Western donors, and neighbouring countries. In 2012, for example, when Hassan Sheikh came into office, his Prime Minister, Abdi Farah Shirdoon, appointed a cabinet with only ten ministers.[18] This move was applauded by foreigners who considered it as a sign that things were indeed changing – the days of oversized cabinets and patronage politics were finally over[19] – even though a soberer assessment would have been that the undersized cabinet illustrated the extent to which the international community had actually become the government's main constituency: the government did not have to engage in clan balancing because it was kept in office by foreign backers rather than domestic supporters.

In other words, the war on terror has changed the overall context in which alliance formation in Somalia takes place. However, there are many continuities beneath the surface, and the following pages provide a few examples that illustrate how alliance patterns and themes highlighted in the empirical chapters have remained important.

The Role of Individual Positioning in Alliance Formation

If we start with the role of individual positioning and sub-clan competition in alliance formation – the theme in Chapter III – it is worth noting that developments in the post-9/11 years have been contradictory. On the one hand, clan representation has become institutionalised in externally driven state-building efforts: the "4.5 formula" for clan balancing has become the standard tool for allocating seats in parliament; an unwritten rule has developed saying that the President, the Prime Minister, and the Speaker of Parliament, must belong to different clan families; and debates about the new constitution and federalism

[18] Bryden, "Somalia Redux?", p. 4.
[19] For example, see Hammond, "Somalia Rising", p. 187.

have largely been "framed as though clans are the primary rights holders".[20] In that sense, politics has become increasingly centred on clan representation and collective rights.

On the other hand, the role of cross-cutting networks has become increasingly evident, and the consociational system described above has not resulted in clan polarization as critics of such arrangements would have predicted. Instead, it has simply shaped expectations of what a ruling coalition at the national level must look like, and these expectations have played into alliance strategies and individual positioning.[21] In parallel, there has been a growing perception that power in Somalia lies in networks beyond clan solidarity. For example, during the presidencies of Hassan Sheikh and Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, it was widely believed that the inner circles of their governments were dominated by members of different Islamist networks. In the case of Hassan Sheikh, it was Damul Jadiid, an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, that first "quietly propelled Hassan Sheikh to the presidency"[22] and then took up "key positions in the administration, from where they appear to be driving government policy".[23] In the case of Sheikh Sharif, it was Aala Sheikh, a network with "no defined membership or organization … united more by its unprecedented capacity to pilfer state coffers than by any cogent ideological orientation".[24] As suggested by these characterisations, the nature of these networks is rather vague, to say the least, and the extent to which they have actually steered politics is debatable. Nevertheless, the *perception* that these networks have played major roles in politics has been enough – "If men define situations as real, they

[20] Afyare Abdi Elmi, "Developing an Inclusive Citizenship in Somalia: Challenges and Opportunities" in *Bildhaan*, 16 (2016), p. 15-16.
[21] For example, in the 2012 presidential elections, Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud tried to build an alliance with the aim of having the speaker of parliament, Mohamed Osman Jawari, re-elected before the presidential elections. The reason was to undermine one of his main rivals in the presidential race, Sharif Hassan, who belongs to the same clan family as the speaker. If the latter was re-elected before the presidential race, it would effectively remove the threat from Sharif Hassan. See "Somali MPs choose Mohamed Osman Jawari as speaker", *BBC News*, August 28, 2012.
[22] Bryden, "Somalia Redux?", p. 3.
[23] Ibid., p. 3
[24] Ibid., p 14.

are real in their consequences"[25] – and it has contributed to processes of positioning similar to those described in Chapter III when discussing the final years of Siad Barre's regime: "the more successful some were at operating lucrative networks, the more this led everyone to defensively better their own".[26]

This illustrates the limitations of teleological explanations of political alignments based on clan solidarity or the overall balance of power. It resonates with the point made in Chapter III about alliances before the collapse of Siad Barre's regime, which reflected interpersonal relationships and long-established networks, as well as the perceived need for different clan components in a national coalition. The same appears to be true today. As noted by Roland Marchal, "personal ties are more powerful than any others",[27] and networks and social bonds are critical not only in terms of facilitating alliances, but also in terms of shaping perceptions of threat among those on the outside.

The Limitations to Elite Manipulation

The discussion in the previous section connects with the theme highlighted in Chapter IV – the limitations to elite manipulation – which is even more relevant today. Although Somalia's political elites have always spent considerable energies managing their alliances, the challenges have become greater for a number of reasons, not least increased connectivity.[28] In short, when information travels faster, the multilevel character of alliance formation becomes more obvious. Alliance strategies that are pursued in one arena are soon known to actors in other arenas, and the trade-offs and synergies between different arenas of competition become more difficult to handle. In this context, it seems inappropriate to think

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[25] William Thomas and Dorothy Swaine Thomas, *The Child in America: Behavior Problems and Programs* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1928), p. 572.
[26] Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, p. 179.
[27] Marchal, *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War*, p. 26.
[28] For an interesting perspective on this, see Alex de Waal, "Is Darfur the First Thuraya War?", November 8, 2009 (online resource, see bibliography for URL).

of political elites making power driven alliance choices and then inventing narratives to legitimise them to their constituents – it is not even useful as a figure of thought – and more useful to think of alliance formation as continuous bargaining between political actors on different levels along the lines of the multilevel game approach as suggested in this thesis.

Another reason why there are obvious limits to elite manipulation in alliance formation is that the political landscape in Somalia is more fragmented today than in the past. Few (if any) political entrepreneurs have the same coercive capacity as the "warlords" in the 1990s. This means that bargaining is the norm. For example, even in Mogadishu, the federal government has to deal with district commissioners who operate their own fiefdoms inside the capital;[29] the power of national elites lies in their association with external powers rather than in their direct influence over such political actors. Moreover, as noted by Roland Marchal, it is often overlooked that "warlords" in the 1990s had serious backing from their constituencies, and "some had substantial support beyond their evident constituency".[30] Although the election of Mohamed Farmaajo in 2017 illustrates that some political entrepreneurs can build cross-clan coalitions, the rapidly decreasing public support for Farmaajo in the first year also illustrates the situational character of leadership in Somalia, where authority remains "based on successful performance".[31] Again, this suggests that elite adaptation to circumstances plays an equally (or more) important role than elite manipulation in alliance formation in Somalia.

State-Building as a Variable in Alliance Formation

If we move away from elite politics and look at the role of state-building as a variable in alliance formation, we can see a number of similarities between the current federalisation

[29] Menkhaus, "State-Building & Non-State Armed Actors in Somalia", 21.00.
[30] Marchal, "Warlordism and Terrorism", p. 1098.
[31] Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 86.

process and UNOSOM's state-building efforts in the early 1990s (see Chapter V). In a similar way, the process has projected an image of what "the coming hierarchy" in Somalia will look like with a national government, federal member states, and district administrations brought together in a hierarchical structure. This has shaped perceptions of threats and opportunities on all levels, and resulted in alliances being formed vertically as well as horizontally between political actors in different arenas of competition.

The state-building process has been conflict-generating in the same way as during the UNOSOM interventions. First of all, it has resulted in fighting between rival political actors within the same federal state competing over influence and positions. Secondly, it has resulted in fighting between federal states over borders and land issues. Thirdly, it has caused tensions between the SFG and the federal states over their respective powers. Finally, it has resulted in fighting between stakeholders participating in the process and groups outside the process, including al-Shabaab and Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a (ASWJ).

There is no room for a detailed discussion about these different conflicts, but a few examples can illustrate the alliances and tactical alignments that have emerged from them. In mid-2013, for example, the establishment of Jubaland under the leadership of Ahmed Madobe, leader of the Ras Kamboni Brigade and a key ally of Kenya and Ethiopia, was opposed by Colonel Barre Hiiraale, the former JVA leader, who claimed the leadership position in Jubaland as well.[32] This resulted in fighting between Ahmed Madobe's predominantly Ogaden miltiias, and Barre Hiiraale's coalition of clan militias from the region. In that regard, it was a conflict between stakeholders in the same arena of competition concerned with subnational outcomes. At the same time, Barre Hiiraale mobilised support from the national government

[32] Jason Mosley, *Somalia's Federal Future: Layered Agendas, Risks and Opportunities* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2015), p. 9.

– the Minister of Defence even travelled to Kismayo to mobilise pro-SFG militias – as the government in Mogadishu opposed Ahmed Madobe's administration as being unconstitutional.[33] However, Barre Hiiraale also cooperated with al-Shabaab militias that opposed Ahmed Madobe for their own reasons,[34] and in the fighting that ensued, al-Shabaab "even allowed pro-SFG forces to move troops and weapons unmolested through their territory (and even their roadblocks) as they converged on Kismayo to challenge Madoobe".[35] As noted by Matt Bryden, the government "appeared to be dangerously close to finding itself in a tacit "understanding" with Al-Shabaab as they confronted a common adversary".[36]

The example illustrates a number of points emphasised throughout this thesis, for example the interaction between different arenas of competition and the underlying defensive rationale to alignments. In essence, it demonstrates how political actors on all levels tend to focus on the main threat to their interests for the time being, and then draw on whatever alliances they can find to counter this threat. It also underlines the context-dependent character of perceptions of threat: how Ahmed Madobe's background as a commander in al-Shabaab made him a target after capturing Kismayo from them together with Kenyan troops; how the JVA was essentially remobilised against the "Ogadeni takeover" in Kismayo; and how the SFG saw the process through which Ahmed Madobe established his administration as setting a dangerous example that Somalia's other federal member states could follow. Most importantly, it shows how perceptions of threats are dependent on expectations of the emerging order, which means that state-building efforts unavoidably become a variable in alliance formation.

[33] Bryden, "Somalia Redux?", p. 18.
[34] Ahmed Madobe is a former commander of al-Shabaab. Ibid. p. 18.
[35] Ibid., p. 22.
[36] Ibid., p. 22.

The Role of Regional Competition in Alliance Formation

The regional dimension of Somalia's civil war was obvious in the 1990s (see Chapter VI) and it has become even more significant in later years. One the one hand, this is because of political developments in the region itself: the increasingly regional character of al-Shabaab; the military interventions launched by Ethiopia and Kenya in response to the Islamist threat stemming from Somalia;[37] and the role of Burundi, Djibouti, and Uganda as troop contributing countries in AMISOM, which holds the Somali government under its arms – "were it not for AMISOM's presence, this state would probably be on boats out to sea".[38] On the other hand, the regional dimension has become more salient because of increased geopolitical competition in the Horn of Africa between countries like Turkey, Qatar, and UAE, which have emerged as important stakeholders next to established powerbrokers like Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Apart from launching large-scale investment projects aimed at building ports, military infrastructure, and other development programs,[39] these countries have backed rival political entrepreneurs in Somalia's fragmented political landscape. For example, ahead of elections in Somalia in January 2017, regional backing for different candidates turned into "a multi-million dollar war of influence … between Gulf states, Ethiopia, Egypt and Turkey".[40] Similarly, when the Qatar crisis erupted in mid-2017, the Somali government tried to maintain a neutral position and maintain its close relationship to Qatar, despite intense pressure from Saudi Arabia, while the federal member states supported

[37] Although Ethiopia and Kenya have been financed and emboldened by counterterrorism funds from Western donors, they have pursued their own priorities first and foremost. For example, see David Anderson and Jacob McKnight, "Kenya at War: Al-Shabaab and Its Enemies in Eastern Africa" in *African Affairs*, 114:454 (2015).
[38] Menkhaus, "State-Building & Non-State Armed Actors in Somalia".
[39] For example, see "Military bases a token of UAE-Turkish rivalry for clout", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, April 28, 2017.
[40] "Presidential race prompts costly foreign meddling", *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, December 23, 2016.

the opposite side for economic support and political leverage vis-à-vis the government in Mogadishu.[41]

In other words, the patterns described in Chapter VI with regards to transnational alignments have remained the same: regional powers have focused on outcomes in their own arena of competition, and they have supported rival Somali political actors to limit the influence of their regional competitors rather than to achieve a particular preferred outcome in Somalia. Importantly, even though it may seem like external involvement has often been offensive and involved aggressive spending, the regional powers have often seemed primarily concerned with not losing rather than winning: they have hedged their bets and supported different Somali stakeholders rather than one main candidate.[42] If the ambition was winning or achieving a particular outcome, these strategies would make little sense, but they are rational from the defensive perspective as strategies for maintaining a stake in Somalia and offsetting the influence of their rivals in the regional arena of competition.

The regional rivalry and support to different stakeholders should also be seen in relation to the previously discussed political order in Somalia: the order that Alex de Waal has described as "a contemporary hybrid of protectorate and native administration",[43] and others have described as a "neotrusteeship" characterised by lack of coordination among the numerous foreign powers involved, including the regional powers.[44] Although this may appear to be a uniquely contemporary political order, it is worth noting that Ioan Lewis described (and warned about) this kind of arrangement in 1992 when there were discussions about

[41] "Somalia chides its regions for cutting ties with Qatar", *Al Jazeera*, September 22, 2017.
[42] For discussion, Ahmed Soliman, "Gulf Crisis Is Leading to Difficult Choices in the Horn of Africa", Chatham House, Expert Comment (online resource, see bibliography for ULR).
[43] de Waal, *The Real Politics*, p. 124.
[44] Afyare Abdi Elmi, "Somalia: Manifestation of stealth trusteeship", *Al Jazeera*, April 4, 2011 (online resource, see bibliography for URL). For more on "neotrusteeship", see James Fearon and David Laitin, "Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States" in *International Security*, 28:4 (2004).

establishing a trusteeship to rebuild the Somali state (see Chapter IV). According to Lewis, it would most likely create problems if too many external actors were involved in managing the trusteeship: "the best solution might be to subcontract the task to an appropriately qualified single country (for historical reasons *not* Italy), rather than entrusting it to an *ad hoc* multinational administration whose divisions and differences competing Somali interest-groups will mercilessly exploit".[45] The parallels to Somalia's current political order should be obvious.

Ideology and Framing in Alliance Formation

The discussion above has indicated the extent to which political Islam has been at the centre of Somalia's crisis since the September 11 attacks, not in the sense that it has determined political alignments, but as the vaguely defined issue in relation to which political actors have framed themselves (see Chapter VII). This framing process has provided counterterror rents to those in government who have positioned themselves as "moderate Islamists", while al-Shabaab has benefitted from the resources associated with being a direct al-Qaeda affiliate. In that regard, the two main groups in Somalia's conflict have been "moderates" and "radicals" – and the differences between these under-specified and constantly evolving categories have constituted the "master cleavage" around which Somalia's many local cleavages have been arrayed.[46]

Popular support for al-Shabaab has largely been understood in instrumental-rational terms as the group has been perceived as a vehicle for local actors to whom ideological concerns have been secondary – "Al-Shabaab's resilience lies in the exploitation of political and social dissent, appropriating local grievances and aspirations in order to obtain support".[47] This

[45] Ioan Lewis, "Misunderstanding the Somali" in *Anthropology Today*, 9.4 (1993), p. 2-3.
[46] Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence*, p. 384.
[47] Bryden, "Somalia Redux?", p. 2.

function has not abated with the state-building process. When local administrations have been established in "liberated" areas taken over by AMISOM and clan militias aligned with the government, they have often been dominated by one clan, "which has led other local clans to conclude alliances [and] turn to Al Shabaab if they feel unfairly treated".[48]

However, the ideological dimension is equally important for understanding al-Shabaab's resilience. After decades of Salafist proselytization in Somalia, "social conservatism is already strongly entrenched",[49] which makes it possible for al-Shabaab to draw on "deep reservoirs of fiscal and ideological support, even without the intimidation it routinely employs".[50] It was also the uncompromising ideological standpoint that made al-Shabaab the dominant group in the resistance against the Ethiopian occupation. While other groups associated with the Islamic courts began to negotiate with the TFG and mobilise along clan lines, "al-Shabaab maintained its radical stance, which eventually appeared the only correct one to many people".[51] In the following years, al-Shabaab "outgoverned" the transitional government with harsh but predictable rules that were applied on equal terms.[52] In a sense, everyone and no one was losing out. At the same time, even though al-Shabaab has utilized and been restrained by clan solidarity like previous Islamist organisations in Somalia (see Chapter VI), it has maintained an unidentified *shura* to avoid discussions about clan biases, and managed clan divisions relatively well.[53] By and large, the divisive Islamist ideology and centralisation of power within the organisation have proven to be more significant reasons for divisions.

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[48] Migrationsverket, "Government and Clan System in Somalia: Report from Fact Finding Mission to Nairobi,
Kenya, and Mogadishu, Hargeisa and Boosaaso in Somalia", March 5, 2013 (online resource, see bibliography for URL), p. 10.
[49] International Crisis Group, "Somalia: Al-Shabaab – It Will Be a Long War", p. 1
[50] Ibid. p. 1
[51] Marchal, *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War*, p. 17.
[52] Ibid. p. 6
[53] Ibid. p. 6.

In other words, when looking at the current era, we find the same dualism as described in Chapter VII: a combination of normative and instrumental motives for adopting the Islamist frame. The same dualism can be discerned in the rise and fall of the militarily strongest anti-Shabaab group – ASWJ – which emerged as a major military force when Sufi brotherhoods mobilised in response to the existential threat posed by al-Shabaab to protect their sacred values.[54] But it soon devolved into a loose alliance of militias motivated by a variety of issues with backing from Ethiopia.[55] However, when the federalist state-building process began, the loose ASWJ alliance fell apart as the usefulness of the Sufi narrative diminished: groups that had adopted the Sufi frame for instrumental reasons found new platforms. Nevertheless, the dualism behind the rise of ASWJ is evident, and it illustrates the limitations of explanations that solely emphasize instrumental-rational calculations, like the suggestion that "competition between Sufis and Islamists takes place on a religious level, but the real stakes are probably political and economic".[56] Put differently, the reason why al-Shabaab and ASWJ did not establish an alliance to remove the TFG was not that such an alliance did not constitute a minimum winning coalition.

The animosities between al-Shabaab and ASWJ also highlight the role of divisive ideologies as described in Chapter VII. As noted by Roland Marchal, there has been a competition over "the monopoly of the salvation goods",[57] and there have been numerous splits among the Islamist movements as a result.[58] These divisions have sometimes resulted in counterintuitive

[54] For more on ASWJ mobilisation, see "The Battle Dossier: Anatomy of Frustration" (unknown author) published November, 2010 (see document list). For more on sacred values, see Atran and Axelrod, "Reframing Sacred Values".
[55] For further discussion, see Marchal and Yusuf, "Ahlu Sunnah wal Jaama'ah in Somalia".
[56] Marleen Renders, "Global Concerns, Local Realities: Islam and Islamism in a Somali State under Construction" in Benjamin Soares and René Otayek, eds., *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa* (New York: Palgrave), p. 55.
[57] Marchal, *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War*, p. 25.
[58] For a discussion about splits and challenges from Islamic State, see Christopher Anzalone, "Al-Shabab in Somalia: The Resilience of al-Qaeda's East African Affiliate" in Aaron Zelin, ed., *How al-Qaeda Survived Drones,*

forms of cooperation between Islamists and non-Islamist groups, and even Ethiopian representatives have pointed out the need to sometimes support "the good al-Qa`ida against the bad al-Qa`ida".[59] Again, this illustrates role of threat in determining alignments, and highlights the importance of trying to understand perceptions of threat from the viewpoint of those involved.

Future Research: Alliances in Somalia and Beyond

There are several ways in which the findings in this thesis can be applied and refined in future research. First of all, there is an obvious need for studies that focus on alliance dynamics as understood from the local perspective in Somalia. The chapters in this thesis have emphasised the constant interaction between national politics, and they have placed equal weight on national and local factors. However, they have privileged one set of views in the sense that most interviewees have been male elite members involved in national politics, while the voices of local stakeholders in general and women in particular have been conspicuously absent. A major contribution to Somali studies would therefore be detailed local histories of alignment that examine the complex interaction between local and national politics: how and when local actors have drawn on external allies to balance their local rivals; how and when neighbouring groups have cooperated and established mutually beneficial coalitions and governance structures; and how external initiatives towards state-building have been perceived locally and played into alliance dynamics. Oral histories and political ethnographies that describe local perspectives on these issues would add tremendous value to discussions about political dynamics in Somalia. However, such research would require considerable fieldwork on the local level – a kind of fieldwork that was not feasible at the time of this study due to the security situation in Somalia – but if the situation in southern

Uprisings, and the Islamic State: The Nature of the Current Threat (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2017).

[59] William Reno, "Rethinking Counterinsurgency in Somalia" in *CTC Sentinel*, 6:4 (2013), p. 19.

Somalia continues to improve in the coming years, it should be possible to conduct proper fieldwork in the south as well as in other regions.

Another aspect of alliance formation worth exploring is coalition politics in Somalia's national parliament and in the federal member states as the resurrection of government institutions in Somalia continues. Again, researching this issue would require detailed case studies and considerable fieldwork, but it would be important for a number of reasons. For example, such studies could help us understand if and how alliance formation in "normal" politics in Somalia differs from alliance formation in times of violent competition. Although the argument in this thesis has been that a clear-cut distinction between the two is unhelpful and misleading, it is definitely worth examining the differences more clearly in future research.

Thirdly, even though the main purpose of this study has not been the development of a general model of alliance formation in civil wars, the main arguments and patterns emphasized in this thesis are worth taking into consideration when trying to understand alliance formation in other civil. This includes the key argument that alliance choices in Somalia have primarily been determined by perceptions of threat and the related argument that political actors on all levels have focused on outcomes in their own arena of competition. As suggested in the introduction, it seems reasonable when making use of these findings from Somalia to first and foremost draw comparisons to civil wars with similar overall dynamics (i.e. clan based societies where the state is "weak" or *de facto* collapsed) such as the contemporary conflict in Libya where "there are few truly national actors"[60] and the role of

[60] Mattia Toaldo and Mary Fitzgerald, "A Quick Guide to Libya's Main Players", *European Council of Foreign Relations* (online resource, see bibliography for URL).

local elites is critical in the formation of national coalitions.[61] Moreover, the civil war in Libya seems to be characterised by similar interactions between local, national, and international arenas of competition with alliances bringing together domestic and external political actors with different objectives, illustrating the ways in which alliance formation is being affected by increased connectivity and the so-called war on terror (a process that should be examined more closely in Somalia as well). As with the previously mentioned avenues for future research, such research on the interaction between different arenas of competition should involve in-depth case studies and considerable fieldwork to understand how competing political actors on different levels of the conflict perceive threats and form alliances to manage these threats.

The discussion about increased connectivity leads to a fourth issue worth exploring in future research: the ways in which alliance dynamics change over time in Somalia and elsewhere. As demonstrated in this thesis, there are several important continuities in alliance formation in Somalia. At the same time, there are important elements of change, including the rise in connectivity and the emergence of a multipolar international system, which play into domestic political dynamics. A major challenge is to determine whether such changes alter the underlying logic of alliance formation in a more or less fundamental way, or whether broad historical patterns and tendencies in alliance formation maintain their relevance nevertheless. Again, the best way to asses and understand these changes appears to be through in-depth studies of local politics and interviews with individuals who have lived through the changes. In any case, when trying to make sense of these changes, it is essential to have a nuanced understanding of the complex history of alliance formation in Somalia. If we fail to recognise the many nuances in political dynamics in the past, including the period

[61] Wolfram Lacher, "Libya's Local Elites and the Politics of Alliance Building" in *Mediterranean Politics* 21:1 (2016)

of the civil war discussed in this thesis, the risk is that we fail to see these nuances in the present. Similarly, if our understanding of alliance dynamics in the past is relatively limited and somewhat simplistic, there is an obvious risk that recent events come across as unique and linked to the particularities of the present rather than as examples of historical continuities.

These suggested avenues for future research illustrate the merits and limitations of this thesis – they underline what the thesis *has* done and what it has *not* done. It has provided a fairly detailed historical narrative about alliances in Somalia between 1988 and 2001 that has sometimes challenged established views and often added important nuances based on interviews with key actors. It has also linked the academic debate about alliance formation in civil wars to the Somali case and established a middle ground between the culturally specific explanations of alliance formation that have dominated Somali studies in the past and the theoretically oriented comparative literature. However, the thesis has not suggested any general model of alliance formation in civil wars, but rather focused on explaining the logic of alliance formation in Somalia.

In doing so, the aim has been to make use of the Somali studies literature and outline a framework for understanding alliance formation in Somalia that makes sense in relation to that literature as well as the theoretically oriented comparative literature. If readers who are familiar with Somali studies think that the arguments in this thesis resonate with their prior understanding – if they feel that the suggested framework "only" spells out and structures what they more or less already knew about alliance formation in Somalia – then that is a positive sign. Put differently, the originality of this thesis does not stem from any radical departure from what has been said in the past in Somali studies but from the ways in which

the thesis combines and balances insights from a wide range of works in a simple but nevertheless useful analytical framework for understanding alliance formation.

Obviously, this is not to suggest that there is consensus in Somali studies when it comes to understanding political dynamics in Somalia (see discussion in Chapter II). However, with the exception of the previously mentioned (and somewhat misconstrued) debate between "primordialists" and "constructivists",[62] there has been relatively little rivalry between different "schools of thought" adhering to completely different understandings of political dynamics in Somalia. For this reason, the thesis has not sided with any particular school of thought (as if there was a "Menkhausian" or "Samatarian" school of thought for understanding politics in Somalia) and it has certainly not tried to establish an alternative school of thought. Nevertheless, it is the hope of the author that the arguments and findings in this thesis will serve as useful reference points and building-blocks in future research on political dynamics in Somalia.

[62] The most prominent example of this debate is the exchange between Catherine Besteman and Ioan Lewis. See Catherine Bestseman, "Representing Violence and "Othering" Somalia" in *Cultural Anthropology* 11:1 (1996); Ioan M. Lewis, "Doing Violence to Ethnography: A Response to Catherine Besteman's "Representing Violence and 'Othering' Somalia"in *Cultural Anthropology* 13:1 (1998); Catherine Besteman, "Primordialist Blinders: A Reply to I. M. Lewis" in *Cultural Anthropology* 13:1 (1998).

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List of Interviews

The interviews listed below are only the ones cited in the thesis. A longer list of interviews conducted as part of the research process can be provided upon request.

- Interview with Western diplomat working in the Horn of Africa (Interview #1) in January 2014.
- Interview with analyst working with Somalia (Interview #2) in August 2012.
- Interview with senior SSDF member (Interview #3) in October 2015.
- Interview with senior TNG member (Interview #4) in November 2016.
- Interview with senior SNM member (Interview #5) in January 2015.
- Interview with Ali Mahdi Mohammed (Interview #6) in December 2012.
- Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #7) in March 2015.
- Interview with Ahmed Omar Jess (Interview #8) in December 2012.
- Interview with senior SPM member (Interview #9) in November 2016.

- Interview with senior SNM member (Interview #10) in December 2014.
- Interview with senior SSDF member (Interview #11) in April 2016.
- Interview with Manifesto signatory (Interview #12) in March 2015.
- Interview with policy analyst working with Somalia (Interview #13) in November 2016.
- Interview with Abdi Hassan Awale "Queybdid" (Interview #14) in September 2013.
- Interview with senior Marehan diplomat (Interview #15) in March 2015.
- Interview with senior RRA member (Interview #16) in January 2014.
- Interview with senior SPM representative (Interview #17) in January 2014.
- Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #18) in May 2013.
- Interview with representative of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Egypt (Interview #19) in November 2016.
- Interview with Egyptian diplomat (Interview #20) in November 2016.

- Interview with Arab League representative (Interview #21) in November 2016.
- Interview with senior Djibouti representative (Interview #22) in November 2016.
- Interview with senior Eritrea representative (Interview #23) in July 2016.
- Interview with Western academic working with Somalia (Interview #24) in July 2014.
- Interview with Ethiopian diplomat (Interview #25) in January 2014.
- Interview with Western researcher working with Somalia (Interview #26) in august 2012.
- Interview with senior SNA member (Interview #27) in February 2014.
- Interview with NGO official working in Gedo (Interview #28) in February 2014.
- Interview with SNF commander (Interview #29) in December 2012.
- Interview with senior Djiboutian representative (Interview #30) in November 2016.
- Interview with senior al-Islah member (Interview #31) in January 2014.

- Interview with Abdiqasim Salad Hassan (Interview #32) in November 2016.
- Interview with senior UN representative (Interview #33) in May 2017.
- Interview with senior Djiboutian representative (Interview #33) in November 2016.
- Interview with Somali ambassador (Interview #34) in January 2014.
- Interview with UNSOM representative (Interview #35) in November 2015.
- Interview with UNDP representative (Interview #36) in August 2012.
- Interview with Manifesto signatory (Interview #37) in August 2012