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UNIVERSITY of the WITWATERSRAND

JOHANNESBURG

POPULAR ISLAM AND LIMITS OF SECULAR STATE ON THE SOMALI PENISULA

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Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts by research in Political Science

Graduate School for Humanities and Social Sciences

UNIVERSITY of the WITWATERSRAND

15th March 2019

Declaration

I do declare that this dissertation is my original research work. It has never been submitted by one for the award of other degree. Moreover, to my best of knowledge, it contains no other material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the dissertation.

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Signature

15th March 2019

Dedication

To my abti (maternal uncle), Maxamad Cabdidaahir who eighteen years ago, in his own wisdom discovered that I would be introduced to written letters instead of committing oral poetry to memory in camel kraals.

Acknowledgement

Ingratitude is perhaps the greatest fault of man, but conveying gratitude in prose is, in the words of Sayid Maxamad, a "boring task while an amateur poet inadequately belabours the point." Between the blurring lines of a "boring task and belabouring a point," let me state that I would not have registered for this dissertation if I had not received *Andrew Mellon Foundation for Postgraduate Masters Scholarship* under Professor Hlonipha Mokoena. I would not have also completed the dissertation in time if not the guiding hands of my supervisors. My principal supervisor, Professor Keith Breckenridge, the Deputy Director of Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER) has introduced me with extensive readings and academic debates that challenge conventional theories about the continent and state crisis. From his postgraduate course: *The State in Africa: Democratisation and Crisis* to the completion of the last chapter of this dissertation, his strictness on academic evidence, has enriched my knowledge. Demarcating the border between history and anthropology, Professor Hlonipha Mokoena also at WISER, has not only recommended me invaluable readings but also "pushed me into telling" an African narrative of which I have fallen short. Dr, Ayesha Omar at the Department of Political Studies in Wits has offered me inestimable advice on the navigation through the intricate contours of Islam and politics. Above all, I'm indebted to them (supervisors) for their quick and consistent feedback without which the final submission of the dissertation would have undoubtedly been much more chaotic. I cannot name all, but I'm also grateful for the direct or indirect contribution of the staff, fellows and researchers at WISER whom I attended their presentations in the weekly seminars. Finally, while I have greatly benefited from the interdisciplinary expertise of my supervisors, all flaws and inaccuracies in this dissertation are solely mine.

Preface

The primary objective of this dissertation is to explore the mismatch between Islam as a distinct, "ethnicised" Somali identity and the character of the postcolonial secular state in Somalia, a phenomenon at the heart of the prolonged political instability, but often understudied. To illustrate the role of Islam in Somali identity, and explore aspects of pre-colonial pastoral authority, city-caliphates and the traditional conceptualisation of autocracy, leadership and the Somalis general world view, I have used oral poems, a few of which are already published in English while I inadequately translated others for the first time. From the onset, all Sayid Maxamad Cabdille Xasan's "poetic polemics," used in chapter three are written in Aw Jaamac Cumar Ciise's book: "*Diiwaanka Gabayadii Sayid Maxamad Cabdille Xasan,* the most comprehensive anthology of Somalis' greatest poet of all time, but I have largely adopted Said Samatar's English translation of some of these poems. On reading names and terms written in Somali, consonants X, C, and Dh are rendered in English as following: *h* instead of *x, a* instead of *c* and *d* instead of *dh*. On oral literature, the poems used in this dissertation are issue-oriented and are not less accurate in illustrating historical events or political upheavals than the written literature. Furthermore, there are three Somali scholars who share one surname, "Samatar," so, to indicate whose work I'm quoting; I have used their first names together with the surnames. Where I have quoted from work written in Somali, I retain the authors' names in Somali, therefore, Halane is written as Xalane and Aw Jama'a is written as Aw Jaamac, otherwise I have italicised Somali terms. Where a poem has been translated, I have indicated the translator and where no translator appears in the dissertation before the verses, I have translated the poem for the first time. Given the length of Somali oral poetry, no poem is adopted in its entirety. Therefore, no translation is adequate or corresponds to the original version. I have only utilised a portion or a few stanzas of a specific poem or song to illustrate a particular event or historical rupture. Lastly, not all the oral poetry used in this dissertation is written in books, some are preserved in memory from generation to generation while others are recorded in cassettes or published online websites of which the most comprehensive is www.doollo.com, a site that collects classical genres of Somali poetry.

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Chapter One

The global misconfiguration of the Somali conflict

1. Introduction

In 1991, with the support of the neighbouring countries, rebel groups overthrew the communist government led by General Siad Barre. With him state institutions collapsed as warlords tore to pieces what was a homogenous country. Since then, Somalia has been on the top in the list of "failed states" and any external attempt to reconstitute it has failed disastrously or made the situation worse. International attempts to rebuild a Somali state have proved to be counter-productive (Mills, 2014:326). William Hague, former UK Foreign Secretary, in an unannounced visit to Mogadishu in 2012 described the Horn of Africa nation as the world's "most failed state." Grassroots and community-owned political groupings or home-grown institutions have also been consistently supplanted by foreign invasions. In this regard, several factors complicate the search for stable government, thus attracting the wrath of the regional and global superpowers. These include the fear of Islam as a political ideology, the surge of Islamic movements and Somalia's geographical proximity to Yemen and the wider volatile Middle Eastern countries. This is the "jungle of Somalia's present-day contradictions" (Farah, 1978:3).

Ideally, it would be the most stable and peaceful nation in Africa. After all, it is one of the most homogeneous countries in the world. Luling (1997:287) argued that Somalia was one of the most hopeful nations on the continent because of its ethnic, religious and language homogeneity. For Luling, the Horn of African nation was considered to be the "most unified country" in the continent, "free from ethnic division." Political observers and analysts remained optimistic about the future of Somalia in the 1960s because of its homogeneity, a predisposition for the "development of modern nationalism" (Webersik, 2004:2). Unlike the clusters of post-independence African states in which the transcendence of ethnic division posed a principal challenge to the formation of viable nationalism and state, out of the colonial enterprise, Somalia consisted of a single ethnic group, bound together "by a common language, by essentially nomadic pastoral culture and by their shared profession of Islam" (Lewis, 1965:11).

Ironically, Lewis pioneered the "notorious clan narrative" as the only obstacle to state formation in Somalia, a narrative that the Somali scholar, Abdi Samatar (1992:626) dismisses as a "staunch

myth" that persists, taking the centre stage in the scholarship on contemporary Somalia and among what I would like to describe as "NGO-oriented" academics who write for policy descriptions, either to solicit foreign aid or guide the deployment of foreign military interventions. Instead of analysing the root causes of the conflict or properly assessing the trajectory of history, these scholars including I. M. Lewis and Jon Abbink have been rhythmically singing the well-rehearsed line of the "sedimentary lineage clan" structure as being the greatest obstacle to the restoration of a functioning state in Somalia. The regurgitation of this "anthropological invention" has succeeded "to somehow re-write the whole Somali history" (Abdi Samatar, 1992: 626).

To paraphrase Farah, Somalia is the easiest place on earth for one to claim his expertise despite the complexity of its current political turmoil, for it needs no effort, but to list the names of Somali clans to justify one's claim of expertise on the Horn of Africa nation (Farah, 1978:7). These forms of anthropological studies and the listing of clan names were pioneered by I.M. Lewis and perpetuated by other scholars such as Said Samatar and David Laitin (Abdullahi, 2011: 6). They list the clan names in the following manner: Dir, Darod, Isaq, Hawiye and Rahanwayn. It is as if Lewis gave the subsequent scholars an anthropological diary on how to write about Somalia, a replica of Binyavanga's satirical piece of journalistic and literary guide on "How to Write about Africa" (2005:1). These clan-obsessed academics, however, do not fully appreciate the fluidity of the so-called Somali clan structure that changes its character and allegiance depending on the political season. For them, Somalia and the Somalis are immune to change, unaffected by the contours of history, global forces or civilization despite the centrality of Somalia's geopolitical location. Somalis have been in contact with the Eursia world "since time immemorial" (Hirsi, 1977:36). It is because of the regurgitation of colonial tropes that "Somalia is a country known to many but nobody knows anything real about it" (Farah, 2006:3). In an erroneous comparison between Sayid Maxamad and warlord-led militia groups, Jon Abbink (2013:329) is a typical example in voicing the frustration of modern Orientalists and lack of understanding of the nation's continuous political unrest, by declaring that "the Somali remains an enigma." As if speaking to Abbink's "frustration," Harper (2012:13) maintains that "outsiders have been unable to clearly understand Somalia, and until a different approach is found, it will continue to perplex, alarm and threaten the outside world."

What stands stark in Somalia's jungle of contradictions is the fact that the Somali society and its social order remain intact despite the long absence of formidable state institutions. In his book, *Economy Without State*, Peter Little, states that beyond the realm of chaos and warfare "that still shape outside perception of Somalia, an excessively open and unrestricted economy" thrives and the social order remain coherent in the midst of a political rot (Little, 2003:5). For, Little, Islam and strong dependence on nomadic pastoralism enhance the resilience of the social and the economic order of this stateless society, promoting laissez-faire, diaspora-connected and a market-oriented economy. Interestingly, the organisation of the economy and the social order is akin to that of the sixteenth century where pastoralists traded animal products and other goods to Middle Eastern markets, connecting the coastal towns to the old Eursian world (Cassaneli, 1982:3). But the political turmoil continues unabated. In other words, Somalia's state collapse in 1991 reveals both the immense vulnerability of the postcolonial state and the durability of an indigenous cultural and political identity (Abdullahi, 1997:31).

Parallel to the country's internal political turmoil, an equally chaotic international effort has been underway. The first US-led mission dubbed "Restore Hope," a humanitarian military intervention in 1993, culminated in the death of hundreds of Somalis, a Hollywood movie and the Black Hawk Down debacle. It was an operation that Wheeler and Robert (1993:1) described as a "doorway to hell." For Wheeler and Robert, it was unimaginable that an intervention in what they perceive as a "fourth-world African country," supported by the United Nations and the world's most industrialised nations could "deteriorate from a classic humanitarian achievement to a world-class disaster in a matter of months." The second major Ethiopio-American invasion of 2006 and the current African Union Mission known as AMISOM, and United States' Africa Command (AFRICOM) bore no fruits as far as the reconstruction of the Somali state was concerned. Political stability remains elusive, but annual international conferences on Somalia continue unabated, the latest being, a Somalia Partnership Forum held in Brussels on the 16th July 2018. The attendees, the pledges, the policies and the outcomes are the same with that of last year's London Conference: "defeat Islamism and Alshabaab" (Arman, 2018:3). The driving forces of this militarisation of the Somali peninsula are two-fold. First, the assumption that statelessness is equal to lawlessness and the fear that Somalia "might become a nursery for Terror International," and the Somali people's tendencies to establish sporadic sharia-based informal courts and the country's geographical proximity to Yemen exacerbate this fear. This,

coupled with the perceived idea of al-Qaeda linked jihadists lurking behind the recess of what is often defined as "rogue nations," among Western policymakers (Siad Samatar, 2010:6). The second factor that incubates the consistent military incursions into Somalia is the desire to control one of the world's busiest trade routes, the Gulf of Aden that has proved to be a global nightmare, and worsened by the birth of the "Somali highwaymen on the high seas" (Said Samatar, 2010:2). The commonality in all of these external efforts is their failure despite the veneer of legality in the international political arena to be operating under the guise of humanitarian operations. These current military and diplomatic failures, too, are similar to the Portuguese expedition against Ahmed Gurey in the sixteenth century and the British, French, Italian and Abyssinian against Sayid Mohamed at the turn of the nineteenth century.

This exaggerated threat, combined with a relentless misrepresentation of Somalia as a "hub for terrorists" in the post-September 9/11 global order generates the misguided "massive international commitment" to Somalia, equally regenerating an open-ended external mission of state-building. No wonder then, that the Horn of Africa nation attracted the attention of the superpowers more than any other country on the continent and has become the centre of the so-called efforts to re-structure global order, from the post-Cold War era to the current War on Terror. This open-ended external military mission, blended with the "massive international commitment" is tantamount to a global "madness that fits in the Chinese definition of insanity, doing the same thing in the same way and expecting a different outcome" The deployments of the foreign troops to Somalia is likened a therapeutic technique in which a mad person repeatedly empties a can of sand into a bottomless barrel with a desperate hope of over-exhausting the agitated nerves into calmness (Said Samatar, 2010:315). But in the case of Somalia's political instability, neither the fear of Islam nor the Somali resistance to what is locally known as *dawlad gacan ku rimis ah:* the imposition of "Genetically Modified Governments" (GMG) is over-exhausted into calmness. I will trace this global commitment from the medieval to the present moment.

Though the Portuguese's expedition in 1500 and the Berlin Conference of 1884, and the resistance that followed are far apart, I will show the continuity of the conflict and the tension between popular Islam and imported secularism as far as Somalia's instability and state-building is concerned. Secularism refers to the "separation of religion from the state institutions" (Mazrui,

2003:6). Going by this definition, I argue that the militarised international attempt to separate state from religion in Somalia has been so far, and might be in future a "deadly mission." In this regard, the trajectory of history in the Horn, the driving force of modern-day military deployment and the alleged threat that Somalia poses to the rest of "mankind," from its immediate neighbours to America's White House, remains the same. James Rennel Rod, a British colonial official could have been writing about the current condition of the country when he penned the following words in 1905: "Many valuable lives were lost and millions spent in thankless expeditions against the elusive enemy" Rod was writing about Sayid Maxamad, a man satirically known as the "Mad Mullah" in the British colonial books, who declared a *jihad* against the presence of European powers in Somalia. In this case, Islam has been the central pillar of political identity in Somalia and *jihad* has been the rallying call for armed movements either in the form of modern-day nationalism or the form of the caliphate. Four hundred years after the leader of Awdal caliphate, Ahmed Gurey was killed by Portuguese military operations and one hundred years after the British Air Force under Churchill defeated Sayid Maxamad, leader of Taleex caliphate, there is a sense that history is repeating itself.

Somalia is today bombed by regional and global powers in search of "elusive enemies" and Somalis take shelter from the drone missiles in a resistance grounded on political Islam as the guiding ideology. Here is where the link between Somalia's past and the current instability interestingly intersect. In this case, Mamdani's argument that Africa's current instability originates from the colonial era, and his "decentralised despotism" theory is applicable to aspects of the prolonged Somali conflict (Mamdani, 1996:39). Decentralised despotism is limited to Siad Barre's rule (1969-1990). It turns out to be inadequate for example to conceptualise the reason why Somalia "has become the African Iraq" (Harper, 2012:3). Struck by this "ruthless" repetition of history, Nuruddin Farah posed a crucial question in 1978, at the eve of Russian and Cuban invasion of Ogaden in solidarity with Ethiopia and the subsequent defeat of the Somali nation: "Is today's war significantly different from that of the 1500 and 1878 in the Somali peninsula?" This question not only lingers on my mind, but it also guides the contours of this dissertation.

In the search for answers, I turn to a distant past, a past though forgotten haunts the present of the Horn, particularly the Somali people, a past that defines their nation's relationship with the

previous global powers and the current ones. Somalia has become the crux of the regional and international conflict. I, therefore, turn to this past not for leisure or in Achebe's words, not like a "literary tourist" but like an "earnest archaeologist" in search of a piece of evidence to validate or invalidate the present condition or refute a popular assumption. Most importantly, I turn to the past not to seek a refuge to a comfortable "zone of being" but to understand the present condition of a nation unravelled by unprecedented internal political upheavals and foreign military interventions. This is because as Farah acknowledges (1978:9), "returning further and further into the womb of the mother-time, we shall find history generous." It is in this "womb of the mother-time" that I attempt to find answers to the above questions, beyond the realm of the clan narrative and the war on terror.

Nevertheless, I must point out that the Somali conflict is unique in many other ways. It is not about the domination of one sector within Islam over another like in Iraq and Syria, nor is it between ethnic groups of different faiths like the ones in the Central African Republic, Nigeria or Myanmar. But these are not the only aspects that are unique to Somalia's prolonged conflict. Though the country has a considerable amount of natural resources, the war is not centred on the control over mining enclaves and oil refineries as in the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Libya respectively. Furthermore, the conflict defies established theories: it neither fits in the framework of the "war economy" and civil war: one ethnic group versus another like the Rwandan genocide, nor is Hobbes' (1651:8) "state of nature" in which life is "short and brutish" without the "Leviathan" applicable to Somalia's condition (Menkhaus 2012:418, Harper, 2012:6). On the contrary, the indicators of living standards have improved over the years of statelessness (Powell, Ford, and Nowrasteh, 2006:1).

The following are the research questions of this dissertation

1.2. **Research questions**

a) What role has Islam played in shaping expressions of national identity and community in Somalia?

b) Is today's war in the Horn substantially different from that of Ahmed Gurey in the sixteenth century and Sayid Maxamad at the turn of the nineteenth century?

c) Where does Somalia's political loyalty lie?

Answers to these questions are an integral part of understanding the reasons why it has taken so long for the political instability to be resolved despite consistent and costly external military interventions. Security analysts of post-September 9/11 attacks on New York and George W. Bush's New World Order policies have squeezed Somalia into illegitimate "governments," often imported from the neighbouring countries, mainly Ethiopia and Kenya and the pervasive rhetoric of the war on terror. For example, in a conference on Somalia held in London in 2011, attended by 40 countries, and "invaders of Somalia," former British Prime Minister David Cameron described the Horn of Africa nation as one of the "greatest threats" facing British interests (Rawlence, 2016:183, Fergusson, 2013:8). Like his predecessors, the United States President Donald Trump too, in an executive order, declared Somalia "an area of active hostility," and included in the list of five Muslim majority countries whose citizens are banned from entering the USA (Fein, 2017: 2).

Of course, Somalia does not have a border with the United Kingdom or the United States, nor does it possess or aspire to have continental missiles and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) like Iran and North Korea. Moreover, internal postcolonial political upheavals are not confined to Somalia and there are other countries on the continent that have also been through bitter civil wars but recovered. Rwanda and Sierra Leone are good examples. The difference is that these countries, as well as the DRC which is still embroiled in a chronic state of conflict, were not seen as a threat to British interests or the global order. In a practical sense, Somalia has become "one of the main battlefields on the West's global war on terror in line with Iraq and Syria" (Terdman, 2016:6). The Horn of Africa nation literally has become "Africa's Afghanistan" (Harper, 2012:6). It is, therefore, impractical to apply normative models of governance and theories or ways of thinking that apply to sub-Saharan Africa to Somalia's situation because the political crisis in Somalia is militarised, globalised and above all, ideological. Therefore, there is a need for a paradigm shift to establish the root causes of political instability. In line with this demand for a paradigm shift, the primary argument in this dissertation is that national identity and ethnicised Islam in Somalia are inextricably bound.

1.3. **Method and limitation**

This is a single case study dissertation that analyses a series of ruptures in the history of the Somali peninsula and interconnected periods in Somalia's contemporary political history, focusing on pre-colonial Somali caliphates, tracing the political instability to the sixteenth century while showing its continuity. This qualitative research traces the changes that occurred over time. It examines the political trajectory and interprets secondary sources such as books, archival materials, academic journals and media about Somalia. It also focuses on the colonial encounter, the collapse of the state in 1991, the era of warlordism and the emergence of Islamic movements such as Al-itihad and the Islamic Courts Union as well as military interventions both regional and international. I chose this method because of its methodological suitability for intensive, cross-sectional yet interrelated phenomena, investigating "covariational patterns" in the same case (Gerring, 2007:30). In this regard, I draw empirical evidence and information from secondary sources to support the arguments, citing interventions and moments of ruptures in the country's political history. I also tend to use oral literature, particularly oral poetry as a legitimate source of history.

This is because oral poetry in Somalia is regarded as a bridge which connects not only one generation to another but also, one historical event to another. Therefore, Richard Burton observed in 1853 that "the country teems with poets, poetasters, and every man has his recognised position in literature as accurately defined as though he had been reviewed in a century of magazines." Cassanelli too, postulates that one cannot conclude a review of Somali historiography without mentioning the value of Somali oral poetry. In this case, Somali poetry is a form of popular discourse and commentary on current events and its classical genres are repositories of memories and sentiments about the past, an indigenous system of knowledge production which has preserved and transmitted history quite independently of western and Islamic narratives. To emphasise the importance of Somali oral poetry, Said Samatar insists that Somali poetic verses "contain very useful historical material whose significance to the students of Somali studies can scarcely be overestimated." However, I have discovered that despite the length and complexity of the conflict, there is little academic work written on this specific topic. In this regard, the dissertation contributes a new theoretical and analytical dimension to existing literature, identifying an important gap in the literature, particularly, on the tension between

ethnicised Islam and secular notions of state. As far as the literature review is concerned, I have reviewed some of the earliest sources and two contemporary and competing schools of thoughts in the following section. One approach attributes the extended absence of a state to clannism and the social structure of the Somali people while the other illustrates that an indigenous political Islam clashes with the globalised notion of secular state.

1.4. **Literature review**

The literature available to our analysis can be divided into three historical periods. A sizable corpus of medieval Arab chronicles on Somalia has gone largely untapped by Western scholars. These include among others, the accounts of Ibn Battuta on Somalia in 1331. But the most important chronicle is Shihab al-Dini's *Futuh Al-Habasha,* (*The Conquest of Abyssinia*). Written in the period between 1540 and 1560, it is the main source of information about the jihad of Imam Ahmed Gurey against the Abyssinian and Portuguese expeditions. In this book, the sixteenth century scholar gave an extensive account of the wars, the victories, defeats and the administrative structure of the Awdal caliphate. What these chronicles in short indicate is that religion-based conflict in Somalia and the scramble over the access to the Red Sea, Indian Ocean and the control of the Gulf of Aden date as far back as the thirteenth century, but gained a globalised momentum in the sixteenth century, culminating in the clash of Awdal caliphate on one side and Portuguese and Abyssinian armies on the other. The second corpus of literature comes from the western Orientalists, beginning with Richard Burton's *The First Footsteps in East Africa*. On arriving on the Somali coast in 1853, Burton gave a clear indication of the then prevailing political organisation and described the economy and amirs of the ancient city of Harar. He wrote: "I doubt not there are many who ignore the fact that in Eastern Africa, scarcely three hundred miles distant from Aden, there is a counterpart of ill-famed Timbuctoo in the Far West." The final part is the contemporary debate on postcolonial Somalia, and the most prominent scholarship on the country's political turmoil in this regard is the clan narrative. Since the medieval literature is mainly a historical description of events, I will only use the latter for the relevant chapters of the dissertation. In the main, I will focus on the contemporary school of thoughts in this literature review which attributes Somalia's political predicament to either Islam or clannism.

As Somalia disintegrated and militia groups overthrew the communist government led by General Siad Barre in 1991, the dream of Somalia being the most hopeful nation in postcolonial Africa was dashed, "disappearing" as a Somali poem goes "into the sand dunes of the Red Sea." With Barre, all the state institutions collapsed as rebel groups tore up what was one of Africa's most homogeneous nations. Since then, Somalia has been on top of the list of "failed states" and external attempts to reconstitute it have disastrously failed or made the situation worse (Mollor, 2009:6). In this regard, the clannism school of thought advances the argument that the clan structure of Somali society is the main source of the malady preventing the formation of a formidable government that can represent all citizens. In other words, Somalis are inherently clannish and therefore, their clan allegiance supersedes their commitment to a modern state. Ioan Lewis (1985:21), a social anthropologist and the founder of this school argues that policymakers must comprehensively understand the overlapping intricacy of clan structure in the search for solutions to the country's political upheavals. Lewis's book, *A Modern History of Somalia: A nation and state in the Horn of Africa* (1965) has been for quite some time, considered to be the bedrock of academic reference for anthropologists and other scholars interested in the study of the Somali people and their country.

Like Lewis, Said Samatar (1987:30) insists that the main centrifugal political forces in Somali societies are clans with common male ancestors. In Said Samatar's view, lineage principles divide the Somali society into small, patchwork clusters of patrilineal clans. He is of the opinion that clan segmentation bifurcates Somali society into "unstable warring factions" that pit one clan against the other, and at the core of this lineage system lies the reason there has never been a successful central state in the nation's history. For Said Samatar, the emergence of the ICU and Alshabab out of this "clannishness" is a remarkable phenomenon. Anthropological studies divide the lineage system of the Somali people into four major pastoral clan-families (Dir, Daarood, Isaaq and Hawiye) and two predominantly agricultural ones (Digil and Rahanwayn). According to Samatar's study of the Somali lineage system, these six clan-families are similar to the "Old Testament version of the tribal segmentation of the children of Israel." In this comparison, the children of Samaale are like their Old Testament Israeli counterpart "politically acephalous with minor exceptions," susceptible to internal schism and factionalism but with powerful social fabric, kinship and cultural solidarity and with no political allegiance and emotional loyalty to a modern state. This time-honoured Somali lineage order was reinforced by the colonial

administration which distributed resources through clans, and the post-colonial Somali state is a "disfigured, bastard child" of the multiple colonial powers (Said Samatar, 1987:31).

However, this scholarship has come under heavy criticism from different scholars who describe Lewis' work as a colonial approach to the study of Somalia which cannot be presented as a genuine study to apply practically in resolving the conflict that has been the motivating factor in the country since the fall of Barre's regime. Abdi Samatar (1992:629) describes Lewis' argument as an "anthropological invention." In his article *Destruction of State and Society in Somalia: Beyond the tribal convention* (1992:627), Abdi Samatar argues that the intellectual lineage that propagates that the Somali people have no commitment to the state is apparently in line with the colonial explorers' view. For Abdi Samatar, this intellectual lineage can be traced back to the 19th-century explorer, the likes of Richard Burton and British and Italian colonial administrators. The difference is that Lewis and his colleagues presented the colonial narrative as an honest academic work, leading to the misunderstanding of the present Somali catastrophe (Abdi Samatar, 1992:630).

The tendency to centralise kinship in understanding contemporary Somali politics even contradicts Lewis' observation of Somali nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s, when he noted (1965:227) that "the gross national pride was more significant than the gross national product." In fact, the Somali leaders at the time did not struggle to create a common culture and had not experienced problems unifying their subjects but focused on liberating Somali territories-Ogaden and Northern Frontier District (NFD). This cannot be said about many newly independent sub-Saharan countries with multilingual and multicultural ethnicities. Therefore, the position that clan structure is an obstacle to Somalia's re-emergence from the ashes of the war on terror and the era of warlordism goes against the country's recent political history. In this regard, I will elaborate on some of the recent historical events in the dissertation to debunk the established clan narrative.

Abdi Samatar (1992:632) holds the view that the architects of foreign combat interventions and scholars who draw their conclusions from the anthropological work of Lewis are unwilling to engage in any "hard-headed analysis," arguing that their "hostility" to a critical approach in understanding the dynamics of Somali conflict has undeniably contributed towards the collective condemnation of the very same people they "claim" to liberate from "extremists" and "bad

governance." Like Abdi Samatar, Nuruddin postulates that Lewis has little or no understanding of the Somali people, their history, culture and religious identity. In Farah's view, Lewis remains what he has always been - a colonial anthropologist, despite the fact that he studied the Somali people and their history for over fifty years. Farah poses the question: "To whom does Somalia belong?" His rhetorical question is perhaps motivated by the competing external forces that seek to shape Somalia's political identity, his quest and the call for different approaches in untangling the country's political knot (Farah, 2007:7).

In contrast to this anthropological school of thought and in line with this research, scholars such as Abdirahman Abdullahi and Hirsi Ali take the firm position that Islam is inseparable from politics, at least in the case of Somalia's turbulent political history and the post-September 9/11 foreign combat interventions. Abdirahman (1997:15) insists that Islam in Somalia is a political doctrine, "irreconcilable" with both tribalism and nationalism. In this connection, Said Samatar and Laitin (1987:17) contest that Somalia's political identity, manifesting in the form of political Islam, is "deadly ammunition" against its citizens in today's political wars. In Said Samatar and Laitin's viewpoint, perhaps the only analogy to the Somali case is that of Israel, where "biblical geography" is of paramount importance in unravelling the skein of conflict between Jews and Palestinians. In their book, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*, Laitin, and Samatar (1987:19) explain that virtually all Somalis are Muslims and are bound by religious laws, blended with local customs (*xeer*), therefore, forcing them to adopt a secular constitution is seen by the population as a threat to their identity. This, in turn, places them in opposition to the current dominant narrative of the war on terror. This war on terror is also aptly exploited by Ethiopia and Kenya, giving them not only leeway to invade Somalia at will, but also adds impetus to their long-term colonial policy of "divide and rule." They have succeeded in this to a certain degree, says Samatar, describing the African Union's mission in the country as a "fierce invasion" masked by the subtle rhetoric of African brotherhood (Abdi Samatar, 2016:5).

In agreement with Laitin and Samatar, Mary Harper, in her book *Getting Somalia Wrong: Faith, War and Hope in a Shattered State* (2012:5) argues that many of the international interventions and reactions to the Somali crisis suggest a failure to recognise the country's political Islam identity. In other words, it is naive to assume that the country would passively submit to meddling and foreign-engineered experimentations. In her words, Somalia should not be seen as

“an unwitting chess piece in the war on terror. Somalis have their own identity and history, and a powerful will.” It is this fervent will to preserve their identity that morphs into a unique form of political Islam, the same phenomenon that captured the imagination of the colonial explorers and preoccupies their current “enemies.” Richard Burton described them as “a fierce and turbulent race of republicans” when defending their identity.

From Harper’s viewpoint (2012:11), the perceived global threat and the fallacious belief by regional powers, Western diplomats, policy-makers and institutions that describe Somalia as a safe haven for terrorists, deny Somali people the opportunity to decide the modality of their own state, a state that represents their cultural, religious and political identity. For Harper (2012:13), Somalia will continue to “perplex, and alarm” the outside world as long as the genuine demand of the people continues to be perceived as a threat, making it difficult to re-establish a stable country that works for both Somalis and non-Somalis alike. This is where the research aims to demonstrate that the current conflict is not clannish, and neither is it a war over scarce resources, as some scholars might like to present it. It is rather an ideological battle and popular Islam in the Somali peninsula locks horns with the current secular order of the world. As far as the theoretical framework is concerned, virtually all Somali citizens are Muslims and the majority of them see Islam as a source of justice and a way to transcend the chronic conflict. Both Ibnu Khaldun’s fourteenth century argument that Arab nomads can only obtain peace and royal authority by colouring politics with religion and Sayyid Qutb’s call (1966:8) to politically return to Islam are relevant to the Somali case. But this very notion of colouring politics with Islam ideologically clashes with the current global order and is “deadly ammunition” against the Horn of Africa nation.

Chapter Two

2. The Intersections of History and Myth

Introduction

Metaphorically speaking, it is not an exaggeration to argue that right from its birth in the Arabian desert, Islam has been a "tree that provides" shade for collective Somali identity, largely overshadowing or assimilating the pre-Islamic African culture in the Horn of Africa's nation, shaping the debates on the populations' political loyalty and genealogy. In many respects, Islam has "become one of the mainsprings of Somali culture: and to nomad and cultivator alike the profession of the faith has the force almost of an initiation rite into their society" (Hirsi, 1977:110). While the development of trade routes and contact between the Somali coast and the Arabian Peninsula predate the birth of Islam, popular genealogical myths that derive their existence from Arab-descendents had taken root among the Somali population without fully absorbing all the aspects of pre-Islam Somali culture. To "sieve some elements of historical facts" from these intersections of history and myth, this chapter is organised into four sections.

The first section explores some of the debates on the ingredients of the Somali identity, discussing two main opposing schools of thought in tracing the genealogy of the Somali people. It has to be noted that I'm only dealing with the contemporary scholarships on Somali genealogy. Therefore, discussions on the Darwinism theory of evolution is beyond the scope of this dissertation, for the subject matter is not in a "pre-human stage," neither am I dealing with the origin of the human race. By contrast, the significance of this section is to illustrate the embedment of Islam into the cultural, social and political history of the Somali nation. In the second section, I explain the emergence of the early coastal towns along the Somali coast on the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, delineating the difference in their political organisation. The third section details the formation of a sixteenth century caliphate known as Adel (Awdal in Somali) and its leader Imam Ahmed Gurey, and subsequent wars that engulfed the Horn of Africa, while in the fourth section, I discuss traditional forms of political organisation in the hinterland. The argument of this chapter is twofold. Islam had been uniquely indigenised in the formation of the social Somali identity and became the springboard for the emergence of the ancient coastal towns, and political emirates. Second, there is a pattern of continuity between the past and the

current Somali conflict, particularly, the confrontation between the Awdal caliphate and Abyssinia, an ancient Christian kingdom in the Highlands of the present day Ethiopia

2. 1.**The Somali Identity**

Nothing is certainly known about the old and pagan genealogy of the Somal, Richard Burton

Shared cultural values, belief systems and genealogical myths impact immensely on the formation of social identity and political organisations of any given nation. Anderson (1991:20) argued that the "world's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism are cultural artefacts of a particular kind," whether imagined or real. Islam is a distinct cultural artefact of the Somali nation. In fact, the two are "in one" to borrow the Biblical phrase. Hirsi (1977:109) concedes that "it is difficult to conceive any meaning in the term Somali without at the same time implying Islamic identity." While the Somalis draw profound cultural and political legitimacy from Islam which was introduced in the Horn of Africa in 1400 AD, the debate on the genealogy of the Somalis as an ethnic homogenous group remains unresolved. But it is neither my primary focus nor is it an integral part of Somalia's recent political predicaments.

It is however no less complicated than the nation's current political history I therefore, limit myself to highlighting some of these debates on the genealogy of the people known today as the Somalis. According to Said Samatar (1992:2), the Somalis have an ancient history and the medieval Arabs described them as "Berberi," with archaeological evidence suggesting that they settled in the area known as the Horn of Africa by 100 AD and "possibly earlier." Whether the term "Berberi" is derived or indeed is the misspelling of the ancient coastal town of Berbera in northern Somalia or traces its origin to the Berber ethnic groups that are today scattered in the northern and partly western region of the continent which is from Mali to Algeria remains elusive. Others speculate that the Somalis were part of ancient Egypt, ruled by Pharaohs and Somalia was then known as the land of Punt, renowned for its frankincense and myrrh which are even to this day the export products of the eastern port of Bosaso. The current "semi-autonomous" region of Somalia derives its name from this ancient provenance and calls itself Puntland.

Modern oral Somali literature too, gives validity to this ancient history. It has to be emphasised that local poets and Islamic scholars fashioned the genealogical narrative of the Somali. While

sheikhs employ Islamic texts or use images of Sufi saints, poets embed their faith into Somali literature. Cabdullahi Macalin Axmed, nicknamed *Dhoodaan* (the well of knowledge) composed a popular poem titled *Xaawo iyo Aadan* (Eve and Adam) in 1970 in which he traces the origin of his nation to the creation of man in line with modern day religious scriptures.

When Allah erected the sky

The earth spread

With spherical shape

Bringing Xaawo and Aadan to dwell in it

With no previous ancestries

Scattered were their offspring

With our livestock

We, the Somalis settled in the Horn of Africa

And its rivers, oceans and arid plains became ours... (www.doollo.com).

As if he had this "Dhoodanic" view in mind, an elder once articulated that "we are as old as the monsoon wind in the Horn of Africa." Beneath the shadows of history and myth, however, lies the fact that the monsoon wind brought two crucial elements in the history of the Somali people, Islam and the "Arab factor," later shaping their identity and political administration, through trade and intermarriages, particularly at the coastal towns. The elder is not alone in this particular account. Shay (2008:12) postulates that the Somalis were the "pre-historic" people of the land. The difference between Dhoodaan and Shay in this account is that Dhoodaan depicts a pre-historic land furnished with abundant resources ranging from minerals, wildlife and livestock while Shay presents a barren, infertile land, drought-stricken and unfit for human settlement.

Being one of the largest ethnic blocs on the continent, Somalis are distributed from Awash Valley in the north-west, around the periphery of the Ethiopian Highland, along the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean coast to the Wasow River (Tana River) in north-eastern Kenya (Isa-Salwe, 1996:5). In establishing their homeland before they occupied of this vast territory, two modern

competing schools of thoughts trace the origin of the Somali people to opposite locations. One argues that they crossed from the Arabian Peninsula while the other locates them in the Hamitic ethnic group often described as Cushitic. The first school of thought emanates from the Somali oral literature which is often memorised from one generation to another and which traces its lineage to an Arab ancestry. Isa-Salwe (1996:5) points out that this Somali "mythology links the genesis of the Somali people to an ancient communication" between Arabs and what might be the indigenous population of the north-eastern corner of the continent. This mythology is integrated into their oral literature. Somalis foremost prolific poet, Sayid Maxamad adds validity to the narrative of Arab descendent, tracing his lineage to that of the Prophet Mohamed:

...My lineage runs through noble elders

All the companions are my great relatives

And the beloved Prophet of Islam is my pure cousin... (Aw Jaamac, 1974:58).

While the interaction between the Somalis and the Arabs through trade is as old as the monsoon wind, Sayid Maxamad's lineage association with the Arabs and the Prophet might as well be viewed from a combination of religious and ideological point view. At the time of composing the poem, Sayid Maxamad was waging a jihad against British, Italian and Abyssinian forces in the late nineteenth-century. In the *Periplus of the Erythrean Seas*, an ancient manuscript with no precise authorship, dating back to 60 AD, Greek marine records detail the first international trade activities and the connections between ancient empires of Rome, Parthia, China, India and the Arabian Peninsula with Somalis trading with the ancient Sabaeans of southern Arabia.

As far as the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean are concerned, Somalis maintained a widespread contact with what historians depict as Arab and Persian immigrants and the evidence goes back to the seventh century and later or earlier. Starting in the first century of Islam, migrants from Southwest Asian (Arab, Persian, and sometimes Indian) communities settled among the Somalis in the coastal towns, intermarrying with locals (Hirsi, 1977:75). For the medieval Arabs in particular, Somalia formed the eastern margin of what was known as *Bilad al-Sudan* or the land of the black people. Seen from this perspective, the narrative of Arab descent is feeble despite the Somalis ancient interaction with merchants from Arabia. What maintains this school of thought is the "collective clan membership that traces through the male line to a common male

ancestor from whom certain clans take their name," dating back to hundreds of generations (Isa-Salwe (1996:17).

Perhaps the single most important factor in sustaining this school of thought is the Somalis collective insistence on distancing themselves from "secular explanations" of their origin. This speaks a great deal to the Somalis collective distaste for the formation of a secular state in their soil. It is this collective distaste for a secular view of the world that has been at the centre of maintaining "fierce independence and an unwillingness to submit to secular central authority." The oral construction of these events that enormously impacted on Somali society and their history is aided by written records from both Western and Muslim sources, of which the most important book is *Futuh alhabasha, (The Conquest of Abyssinia)*. In this sense, the question of Somali origin is interwoven with the nation's "long-standing and complex relation with the Arab world" (Cassaneli, 1982:35).

However, anthropologists such as Mohamed Abdi Mohamed (Gandi) and I.M Lewis maintain that the name Somali in its modern use was first recorded in Amharic songs, celebrating a victory over and the death of Muslim Sultan (ruler) of Ifat dynasty at the Red Sea coast of northern Somalia. These wars were according to Shihabud-Din's ancient book *The Conquest of Abyssinia* taking place in the period of (1414-29), in the reign of Negus Yeshaq, a ruler of a Christian kingdom waging its war from the landlocked Abyssinian Highlands in search of a sea corridor. Ironically, the rulers of this thirteen century Muslim state of Ifat were claiming to be of Arab descents while the Amharic songs chastised and celebrated victory over the Somalis. What is clear in these ancient records is that the "Arab factor" and Islam were integrated into the Somali lineage, social and political structures as earlier as the eighth century. Nothing explains the "history of commercial and intellectual connection between the inhabitants of the Arabia and the Somali coast more than the introduction of Islam in Africa's easternmost country" (Terdman, 2006:10).

Written in the period between 1540 and 1560, Shihabud-Din details the wars, the intermarriages, the Arab dynasties and the Muslim caliphate run by Somalis on the northern coast of Somalia and what is today known as Ogaden or Western Somalia. Edward Blyden, West Indies-born African-American and Liberia's Secretary of State in 1864 wrote in 1888: "while Christian missionaries attempted to destroy local institutions, Muslims seemed to adopt them to produce

new forms. On this account, there is ample evidence that Somalis blended elements of Islam and local leadership with existing pre-historic institutions and culture. Ironically, Hirsi (1977:6) maintained that despite the spread of Islam, Arab culture made little or no impact on the Somali language, oral literature, *xeer* (customary law) and the core institutions of Somali society. In other words, Arabic language and customs imported across the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean did not succeed in submerging the distinctiveness of the Somali culture, social structure and language. Whether Islam reformed or destroyed the *jaahiliya* (pre-Islamic period) culture of the Somali people or reproduced it in a new form, "purging African customs from its grosser elements" as Blyden argued, is open to debate. What however, stands stark in this long road to the intersections of history and myth is the fact that the faith played the greatest role in the long process of constructing and reconstructing identity and administrative structures in the Somali peninsula right from its inception.

By faith, the Somali nation is completely Islamised but not at all Arabised. This is to say that Arabic language and culture did not supplant Somali language and culture but the teachings of religious orders and poetic mythologies served as the link between ethnic Somalis and the narrative of Arab descendents. Laitin (1977:20) concedes that "nearly all Somalis are of the Islamic faith and religious leaders" link their descent to prophet's lineage. Despite the early Islamisation of the Somali nation, no foreign language has ever replaced the Somali language. In fact, Islam is up to the present taught in the native language through innovative but vernacular methods devised by the ancient Somali religious scholars. One great example of these innovations is the ancient modification and the conversion of Arabic alphabets into unique Somali phonics, unrecognisable to a non-Somali Arabic-speaking student or a scholar for that matter. Seen from this respect, the Somali religious scholars indeed indigenised the method of teaching Islamic studies rather than "Arabising" the native tongue, thus preserving an independent Somali language and culture notwithstanding their claim of Arab descendent.

Contrary to this Arabised origin, often motivated by the population's strong attachment to Islam, a linguistic school of thought traces the genealogy of the Somali people to Southern Abyssinia. This school draws its authenticity from movements and displacements of one ethnic group among the peoples of the Northeast Africa by another. Its pioneers such as Herbert Lewis and Mohamed Abdi Gani link the Somali origin to other Cushitic communities, particularly, the

Oromo and the Afar, departing from the historical Arabic literature that suggests the ancestors of the Somali people migrated from the shores of Red sea into the Cushitic-speaking Oromo region, approximately from the tenth century onwards. These ancient Arab literatures depict intensive intermarriage between Arabs and the Somalis and as the population pressure built up, the Somalis moved from Gulf of Aden to the Wasow River, present day northern Kenya. The Oromo, in turn, displaced the Bantu-speaking population.

Unlike the traditional Arabic and oral literature, this linguistic school of thought argues that the Somalis migration expanded to east and northeast of the Horn. According to Ibn Sa'id, a thirteen-century Arab geographer, coastal towns in Southern Somali and the banks of Shebelle River were home to Somali-speaking groups. Based on this account, Lewis (1966:27) maintains there is good reason to presume that these coastal towns have been continuously occupied by the same Somali group and that there is little or no change in the population makeup of this region from the twelfth century. Al-Idris, a twelfth century geographer validates these assumptions and chronicles what is now believed to be the names of Somali clan-families with slight errors in the spellings of how these names are written today. For example, "Hadiye" is believed to be the name of a Somali clan-family which is today spelled as Hawiye. This is to say that the earliest written evidence insinuates the presence of the Somali people at least in Lewis words, "as far back as the twelfth century." In reference to the Somalian skin colour, Yakut, another twelfth century Arab scholar stated that the "inhabitants of Mogadishu were "Berbers" whose skin of colour is in between that of Abyssinians and the Negros." This skin of colour is known as *maariin* in the Somali poetic literature.

The crucial question though is where had indigenous Somalis come from before settling in what is today Somalia? Linguistic anthropologists demonstrate that the distributions of related languages are sufficient to produce highly probable hypothesis to trace the origins and movements of the communities. In the Somalis case, it is argued that there is enough evidence that acknowledges the linguistic relationship between Somali, Oromo, Afar and Saho Cushitic ethnic groups, and the origins of these Cushitic-speaking groups must have been southern Ethiopia. With the use of linguistic similarities, pioneers of this school maintain that the Somali language shares one single root with other Cushitic communities and Somalis are the only ethnic group found outside of their presumed "original" region.

What remains unspecified is the period in which the Somalis departed from their Cushitic "cousins" and formed a language and oral traditions of their own which scholars are in agreement become more organised and more developed than that of their Cushitic counterparts. However, a few facts can be identified from these intersections of history, linguistic anthropology and oral myths. First, Somalis overwhelmingly converted to Islam and spread it along the coast as well as the interior. Secondly, the presence of Islam threatened the traditional Christian kingdom in the Ethiopian highlands. Thirdly, the displacement of the Oromo and other Cushitic ethnic groups from southern Somalia begins the seventeenth century. I must add that the early conflicts recorded both in the oral and written history had been about religious confrontation dating back to as early as the tenth century and after. But the intricate of Somali identity and Islam can perhaps be summed up with the first stanza of a classic Dhoodanic oral poem titled *Ha midowdo* "Let there be unity" composed at the eve of Somalia's war with Ethiopia in 1977.

On the dawn of Allah's creation of all creature

Earth designed in its circular shape

Islam revealed and raised Mohammed as the prophet (scw)

Endowed to us were our collective Somali name and colour of skin

Dark or dark-brown

Purified Islam had become the lodestar of our lives

Divinely sowed into our hearts as the only political philosophy

And our destiny is neither uncertain nor is our future gloomy… (www.doollo.com).

As the poet postulates Islam, Somali origin, identity, social and political structures often intertwined not only in the poetic or mythical aspects of the oral and written traditions but in the practical organisations of the society, overshadowing the linguistic school of thought. This will be clear in the next section that explains the early forms of political organisation in the Somali peninsular.

2.2. **Traditional governance on the coastal towns**

Somalia's earliest forms of governances can be studied along two interrelated administrative structures. One developed along the coastlines, from Barawe, Afgoye, Mogadishu in the south to Saylac and Barbara in the north while the other was based on traditional nomadic lifestyle. Both forms of governance are often misrepresented in a similar fashion to Somalia's current political turmoil, and analyzed either out of context or historical background, and tainted by anthropological inventions and innovations. If Iliffe's (1995:1) proposition that Africa's history "from the origin of mankind" is invariably written with the present in mind and thereby withstands time and scholastic scrutiny, Somalia is a perfect example of an African nation whose history is often regurgitated based on a present condition. One might argue that much of the current scholarship on Somalia is generated by foreign media correspondents, consultant firms and "NGO-oriented" academics whose main objective is to provide brief policy prescription. These policy prescriptions aim at guiding foreign military interventions or soliciting foreign aid thus tainting the nation's pre-colonial political organisation and social structure.

From the onset, it is crucial to point out that the Somali traditional political structures both in the coastal towns and in the interior do not fit in the two main political frameworks of Africa's political structures in the pre-colonial period. Iliffe (1995:2) argued that at the crux of "Africa's past is a unique population history" and I argue Somalia's past is as unique as its present political instability in the sense that it defies Cheikh Anta Diop's argument that Africa's traditional political organisation was based on large-scale empires, headed by successive kingdoms and John Iliffe's counterargument that the continent's political landscape was littered with "small and stateless clusters," headed by "village Big Men." The uniqueness of the Somali traditional political structures is three fold. First, Somalia's geographical location had been a strategic and a main trade route as it is today, thus attracting traders from Persia, Arabia, Greece and ancient Egypt leading to the formation of the coastal towns. Secondly, its proximity to the Arabian Peninsula and the introduction of Islam led to the development of various administrative structures: small-scale dynasties in the north and Qadi-administered judicial system in the south. Thirdly, the spread of Islam into the interior produced an integrated political structure that amalgamated aspects of Islamic law with pre-Islamic Somali traditions, producing a unique judicial system.

In the case of the coastal towns, the indigenous commercial activities linked the Somali peninsula with wide networks of ancient maritime trade, and the nation's contact with what Iliffe describes as "Eurasian core of the old world" and introduction of Islam in Somalia had proceeded before the crossing of the faith from the North African Sahara into the vast Sahel region. Because of its adjacent to the Arabian Peninsula, Somalia is "steeped in thousands of years of history," and the ancient Egyptians talked of it as the "land of God." Chinese and Greek merchants and Arabian dhows frequented the Somali coast from the tenth century and beyond. In this regard, the past of this Horn of Africa nation does not conform to the discredited arguments suggesting that much of sub-Saharan Africa was "in limbo," isolated from the rest of the world. Alongside a continuous presence of extensive trade contacts in which leopard skin, ostrich feathers and tortoises were some of the trading commodities, the second factor in Somali history from the fifteenth century is the "emergence of centralised state systems", particularly along the coastlines (Said Samatar and Laitin, 1987:8).

Most prominent of all these development in the medieval period was the Awdal caliphate (Adel), and its capital city Saylac (Zeila.) Based on the early chronicles, Saylac is believed to have emerged in the later part of the ninth century. According to Nelson (1981:2), the city developed as "an emporium for a point of trade exchange and as a market" for slaves brought from the Abyssinian highlands and Arab outposts at Harar in the interior. Experiencing its apex of power from the fourteen century to late sixteenth century, the Awdal caliphate stretched its administrative arm to the interior through the fertile valleys of Jigjiga and Harar plateau in the present day Ogaden into the Abyssinian highlands, threatening the political organisation of what was then skeletal Christian kingdom. This medieval state drew its fame from "the prosperity and the cosmopolitanism" of its inhabitants and its marvellous architectural sophistication, its graceful mosques, and above all, its high-walled exit and entrance points (Said Samatar, 1987:23). If the ninth century geographer and historian al-Ya'qubi described Baghdad in Iraq as a city "with no equal on the earth, either in the Orient or the Occident," Saylac, the capital city of the Awdal caliphate had no "equal," certainly in eastern Africa.

Though not comparable to Baghdad's *Bayt al Hikima* (the house of wisdom), Saylac was a centre of learning, a destination for scholars and explorers from Persia, India and across the Red Sea. Its centres of learning did not produce an equivalent of Bayt al Hikima's Mohamed al-Khwarizmi,

the pioneer of algebraic mathematical equations but it certainly trained students in Islamic theology, Arabic literature, geography, the art of war and above all, Islamic jurisprudence and produced Imams (religious scholars). Hegel's depiction of Africa as a forest filled with "children, unaffected by the contours of history" fades away under the weight of this evidence as far as the development of the medieval states along the Somali coast are concerned. Based on the work of the sixteenth century scholar, Shihabud-Din, modern Somali historians, Cabdullahi Rirash and Hasan Adan suggest these small-scale dynasties were influenced by the Abbasids caliphate which reigned from the seventh to thirteen century, a period overwhelmingly known as the "Golden Age" of Islamic rule, stretching from Arabia to North Africa. At the periphery of the Islamic power, this city-state was moulded in the image of the caliphate. It drew its political structure and legitimacy therefore from the Islamic legal system and its association with the wider ummah (Muslim community): it was seen as a symbol and representative of Islam in the region.

This casts a considerable doubt on I.M. Lewis' viewpoint that there was Arab-led colonisation at Somalia's northern coast for variety of reasons. First, early geographers and Greek traders did not mention any sign of Arab-led expedition or organised military force to conquer any city but detail the indigenous people trading with merchants from the Eurasian world. Secondly, unlike, their counterpart in northern African region, the inhabitants of the Somali coast converted to Islam before the faith took root in the Arabian Peninsula. Thirdly, as Lewis himself acknowledged, despite the introduction of a more "diversified technology," particularly architectural designs and dhow-making, these administrative structures restricted their influence to coastal towns which had evolved as the result of small-scale settlements established by religious scholars and traders. However, this city-caliphate's presence was undoubtedly felt in the surrounding and far rural areas because students poured into the core learning centres and Imams were dispersed to spread the word of Allah and the holy message to the interior. So extensive and intensive was the spread and the influence of the Islamic knowledge into the interior that British explorer Richard Burton observed centuries later that "too much learning has made them mad." Nomads, too, travelled to these cities to sell their livestock and buy goods ranging from clothes to beads. In this regard, Lewis's conceptualisation of the Arabian penetration along the northern and eastern coast does not contradict the earliest sources available of our analysis but his hypothesis of Arab colonisation dissolves with closer scrutiny.

The most important factor of all, which lays Lewis' Arab colonisation argument to rest, is the coherence of the Somali language, culture and traditional customs which retain its distinctiveness despite the sustained connection between the Somali coast, Arabs and Persians which in the words of Lewis runs into "a great deal of antiquity." Take for example, Burton's remark on the Somali language in 1854: "The Somali language is no longer unknown to Europe. It is strange that a dialect which has not a written character should so abound in poetry and eloquence. Emphasising on the independence of the Somali culture of which language like any other culture is the repository, Burton stated that the Somali songs and poetry are "so idiomatic that Arabs settled for years among the Somali cannot understand them though perfectly acquainted with the conversational style."

This is not equivalent to repudiating the presence of an Indian Ocean slave trade along the east African coast, of which Arab and Persian traders were integral part. The slaves in the dynasty-administered northern cities were according to Said Samatar mainly from the Ethiopian highlands and often brought by the representatives of the Abyssinian kingdoms. I have to accentuate the fact that though the feeble presence of theses successive dynasties appeared as early as the ninth century, they had never developed into large and coercive empires. They were no-where in size or stature close to the huge and effective Muslim empires in western and northern Africa. It is also of great importance to indicate that while there were relatively well established connections between the northern cities and their counterparts in the south, there was virtually no connection between the Ethiopian highlands and the southern port cities. Saylac and its dynasty were to experience a rapid decline in the early fourteen century in a manner akin to Ibn Khaldun's circle of state formation, domination, decay and disintegration. Meanwhile, in the south, the development of different cities such as Barawe, Marka and Mogadishu gained momentum on the Benadir coast. Mogadishu was the most prominent of them all, and dates back to at least the ninth century. It was as prosperous as Saylac and later grew larger than any city in the Somali peninsula. Fourteenth century travellers frequently depicted these cities as crucial centres of "urban ease and learning," and a vital entry point into the interior of eastern and central Africa.

Though the founders of Mogadishu remain unknown, Somalis and Arabs intermingled from its inception to produce urban and distinctive hybrid culture, a culture that is still distinguishable

from the mainstream Somali one. One of the meanings of the city's name might suggest a Persian origin while another possibility that it was the "northernmost of the chains of Swahili city-states on the East African coast is equally acknowledged." Whatever its origin might be, the city was "at the zenith of its prosperity when the well-known Arab traveller appeared on the Somali coast" (Said Samatar1987:23). Perhaps no scholar gave a more vivid account of Mogadishu than the fourteenth century Moroccan-born scholar and traveller, Mohammed Ibn Battuta. Arriving in the city in 1331, Ibn Battuta described the city as "endless in its size" and detailed its administrative structures, commercial activities, market patterns and inhabitants. Despite the presence of diverse dialects and languages, Arabic was the medium of religious instruction, commerce and politics.

Unlike Ibn Sa'id, a thirteen-century scholar and traveller who identified the inhabitants by their Somali family name, Ibn Battuta studied the political structure of the city. No doubt that the majority of the population either in the interior or the city states were Somalis, because according to the modern anthropological studies, there have not been a major shift in the distribution of the population till today, but the Mogadishu that Ibn Battuta described in great detail was a thriving cosmopolitan city. In its political set-up, the city was ruled by Sheiks and Qadis (religious scholars and judges) and it had well-established civil servants and cherished scholars. For example, when a co-traveller revealed that Ibn Battuta was a lawyer and a learned man to the city merchants at the entry point, one of the residents announced that learned men were invariably hosted by the Qadi and Ibn Battuta was equally honoured. "Pointing at me, a young man declared: this man is the guest of the Qadi," wrote Ibn Battuta. On hearing about the arrival of the scholar on the shores of Mogadishu, "the Qadi came down to the beach with some of his pupils and sent one on board to fetch me," he added (Battuta, 1350:4).

This is an indication that the city was not only an administrative hub but also a centre of learning, and the young lawyer was introduced to the Sheikh, the highest ranking official of the city-state. The contradiction of a sheik being the highest official of an administration did not escape the scholarly eye of Ibn Battuta and he had to inquire and seek for a clarification. On disembarking and greeting the Qadi and his followers, Ibn Battuta was informed that he should meet the Sheik. "In the name of Allah, let us go and greet the Sheik, said the Qadi.

Ibn Battuta asked, "Who is the Sheik?"

The Sultan, replied "the Qadi," and perhaps recognising the confusion on the young scholar's face, he had to give a title that Ibn Battuta could easily recognise as a ruler. In the Muslim world, of which Ibn Battuta was familiar with, caliphate or sultan were the titles given to rulers while Sheiks were educators and Qadis were entrusted with running the judicial affairs of the state and the society in general. Therefore, the use of Sheik as a title given to a ruler was by then specific to Mogadishu and its residents. This was not the only distinct feature of the city; it was the norm to offer a special treatment to lawyers, Sharif (holy man) and any one worthy of such an honour with Damascus rosewater sprinkled on them. The Sheik was assisted by a council of ministers known as the "wazirs" and the city was highly organised with military commanders, and an equally effective and active judicial system. Like Saylac in the north, Mogadishu's governmental system was an integral part of the Muslim world, but it enjoyed more political stability than its sister on the Red Sea coast. From Ibn Battuta's account, one might sum up the political landscape of Mogadishu in the following order: the city president (Sheiks) was the top official, supported by the council of ministers (wazirs), after whom were the judges (Qadis), lawyers, and military generals (amirs). It is also important to point out that even though there was no caste system similar to that of India or a class-based society akin to that of medieval Europe or the West African empires, two groups enjoyed special treatment. First, those who claimed to trace their lineage to the Prophet Mohammed's family and secondly, those who performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. These religious-based privileges persisted among the Somalis not only in the urban centres but also in the pastoral hamlets.

Regardless of theses specific privileges, Mogadishu's residents were equal under Sharia law as Ibn Battuta illustrated "the Qadi, the Wazirs, the private secretary of the Sultan and the chief amirs sat and listened to the causes and complains of the residents" (Battuta, 1350:4). Matters arising from the practice of religion and law in general were decided by the Qadi, other disputes were dealt with by the council of ministers and the military generals. In fact, Mogadishu in its zenith of power, implemented the Sharia legal system in a manner similar to the earliest Muslim caliphates. Ibn Battuta's observation justified this claim. "If a case requires the views of the Sultan, it is put in writing for him. He sends back an immediate reply, written on the back of the paper, as his discretion might decide. This has always been the custom among these people." It is worth noting that the Sultan's discretion could not deliberately go against the Islamic judicial system and he maintained active engagement with his subjects. The business sector too, was

booming and Ibn Battuta stated: "the merchants are wealthy and manufacture a material which takes its name from the town and which is exported to Egypt and elsewhere." Every ship that arrived was immediately surrounded by young men "carrying covered dishes, containing food" and every new comer was hosted by one of the residents, probably one of the young men, whom in today's business terminology might be described as "middlemen." It was also highly regulated and it was forbidden to purchase or sell any commodity either below or above the market price. On the contrary to what was a changing political and administrative structure in the Muslim word, particularly in north and West Africa, where "the regime of the caliphate rapidly evolved into separate theocratic monarchs," Mogadishu's leadership remained intact (Diop, 1986:66). On this account, Mogadishu's political influence spread into the Benadir (Banaadir) hinterland not by devolving administrative structures but by sending a wave of religious scholars in the fifteen and sixteen centuries. The evidence of this influence was the formation of Sufi sects (Muslim mystics) in the interior and the bringing of the Islamic judicial system to temper what was according to Said Samatar "a random violence of the inhabitants." By the end of the sixteenth century, *Xeer*, the product of Islam and traditional customs became the legal framework for resolving the conflicts in the interior, but Mogadishu was the seat of power and surprisingly, resisted the Portuguese penetration of the East African coast.

2.3. **Imam Axmed Gurey and the Awdal Caliphate**

I doubt not there are many who ignore the fact that in Eastern Africa, scarcely three hundred miles distant from Aden, there is a counterpart of ill-famed Timbuctoo in the Far West. Richard Burton, 1854.

One of the graduates of Saylac's high-walled learning centres was a young man who changed the course of history in the sixteenth century by leading *jihad* against what Terdman depicts as an "expansionist" Abyssinian kingdom. It might be handy to first establish the context that led to the rise of the legendary Imam Axmed Ibrahim Alghazi, better known as Axmed Gurey, the left-handed in Somali, a man who was to be honoured by the modern day Somali nationalists, religious warriors, naming schools, mosques, regular army cogent and rebel groups after him, a man whose statue stands in the broken capital city of modern day Somalia, Mogadishu. A man whose rapid achievements in the first and the major battlefields of the Horn of Africa had necessitated the first military expedition of the Portuguese empire in solidarity with Prester John,

a Solomonic fictitious character in medieval European folklore that happen to be found in the Abyssinian highlands (Acemoglu, and Robinson, 2013:234).

From the introduction of Islam to the Somali Peninsula by a persecuted band of Prophet Mohammed's companions in 1400 AD to the fifteen century, the Horn remained largely stable and Muslims and Christians in the Abyssinian highlands peacefully co-existed (Terdman, 2006:10). This stability was attributed to the Muslims' appreciation of Nejashi hospitality towards the persecuted band of Muslims who fled from the Arab pagans. While Nejashi was a just ruler of Abyssinian kingdom in "whose realm of power, no one was wronged," this was the first meeting point of these two civilisations in Africa (Abdi, 2007:5). It is unanimously acknowledged in the Islamic traditional sources that Nejashi not only sheltered the Muslims against the Arab pagans who were largely practicing their pre-Islamic culture but also accepted the Islamic faith. Muslims avoided conducting jihad against the tiny African Christian kingdom in gratitude for the protection accorded to early companions. The evidence of this claim is the fact that the successive Muslim armies "rapidly overran the vast and more powerful empires of Persia and Byzantium, soon after the birth of Islam" while the tiny "Solomonic dynasty was left to its own devices," and neither was there a Muslim army sent to fight it nor was there a political interference in its affairs (Said Samatar, 1992:36).

Ironically, the kingdom grew restless, attacking and invading the Awdal state in the northern coast of the Somali Peninsula and in the fourteen century, the disentanglement of what Bayart (2000:241) describes as the "civilised art of living fairly peaceably" began. Northern cities and the hinterlands of the present day Ogaden region (Western Somalia) were rocked by violence and the Muslim-Christian relations deteriorated in the epoch of the aggressive Abyssinian king of Negus Yeshaq whose rule began in 1414 and came to an end in 1429. Yeshaq rapidly descended from his traditional enclave in the present day Ethiopian highlands to dislodge Muslim settlements in the fertile valley, east of the ancient city of Harer, branding Muslims as the "enemies of Lord," expanding his empire into the coastal territories, fully invading and crushing the weak defence of what was then the Ifat emirate, led by Saad ad Din. So intensive was the war that Saad ad Din had to flee to the Gulf of Tadjoura in the present day Djibouti but he neither managed to save his life, nor escaped the mayhem, let alone regain his lost glory. Yeshaq followed him to the island off the coast of Saylac where the Muslim king was murdered. What

was left of Saad ad Din's rule was his name of which the island bears till today. In the meantime, Yeshaq reconstructed the political and economic landscape, reorganising societal structure, compelling Muslims to offer tribute, holding festivals to celebrate his victory over the enemies of Lord, and ordered singers to compose "gloating hymn of thanks giving for his glory." I'm tempted to add that Ethiopia's inability to transform from dictatorship to any other form of governance can be traced to these self-gloating ancient kings (Lewis, 1965, Said Samatar, 1982, and Abdi, 2007).

The source of Yeshaq's violent attack in disentangling the "civilised art of living together" is a matter of debate, but historians suggest two possible causes. First, Islam spread at a rate that alarmed the kingdom and the new faith competed for converts in the traditional home of the Christian dynasty that mainly drew its followers from the Amhara and Tigray ethnic highlanders. Therefore, the spread of Islam threatened the very existence of the tiny kingdom tucked away in the terrains of the present day Ethiopian highlands. Faith expansion was tantamount to land acquisition and the expansion of the economic horizons as well. For example, Muslim converts quickly switched allegiance from the Christian kingdom to the Muslim dynasty, refusing to pay or collect tax or serve the king, and most importantly, started to protest against the king's interferences in the practice of their new religion (Abdi, 2007:5).

World religions have historical uniqueness in the Horn of Africa. Orthodox Christianity arrived in the Abyssinian highlands in the fourth century AD before the faith spread its catholic wing over Europe while Islam came on the shores of the Red Sea two centuries later, before any other city in its birth place save for Mecca, Muslim's holiest city. The custodians of Christianity in the Horn of Africa were the kings of Amhara ethnic group who lived in the Western regions of Abyssinia while the custodians of Islam were the Somalis who overwhelmingly accepted the new faith right from its inception in the coastal cities. Gellner (1996:83) argued that African ethnic groups that were linked to literate high culture through the conversation of world religions, Islam or Christianity were better "equipped to develop effective nationalism." Seen from this perspective, the Horn of Africa is not only one of the regions with "best examples of classical nationalism" but also became a home to the "struggles between the two faiths which had traditionally gone on without a decisive victory for either" (Gellner, 1996:83).

The attribution of "literate high culture" to religion only and the development of classical nationalism in the region is disputable, but the Somalis created what Gellner explained as "a few of those characteristic Muslim formations based on urban trade and tribal pastoral cohesion brought together by some religious personage" (Gellner, 1996:83). In the sixteenth century, this religious patronage was aided by "a militant zeal of Islamic preachers and warriors," fostering the Somali identity under the banner of Islam as an effective defence mechanism (Cassanelli, 1982:35). On the other hand, the Amhara ethnic group "created in Ethiopia the one really convincing African specimen of a feudalism, a loose empire with local territorial power-holders, linked to a national Church." For Gellner, the Somalis and the Amhara had two similarities with Boers of South Africa. They all possessed the "book" and the "gun." But unlike their Boer counterparts, the two rival Horn of African communities had different books and "neither bothered greatly with the wheel." While neither of these communities was numerically predominant, the centralising potential of the gun and the book enabled them to dominate the political history of the vast Horn of Africa region. However, the tides turned in favour of the Muslims with the rise of Axmed Gurey and the high respect for kings and gratitude of Christian hospitality was long gone in the sixteenth century. The drums of jihad being obligatory for very Muslim whenever his or her land is under attack beat faster in the northern and western Somali peninsula. The opposing sides adopted religious systems of governance and "religious thinking provided justification for the wars" (Abdi 2007:7).

What Imam Gurey achieved though was the unification of the small, ineffective and disorganised Muslim emirates in northern Somalia under one leadership. This was not only a move that would later force the withdrawal of the Abyssinian kings from their conquered territories into their initial hide outs. The young Imam also united the Somali clans in the interior taping for the first time to what Said Samar described as the "nomadic Somali warriorship" which their farming counterparts in the highlands feared. Likewise, the Abyssinian victories and the occupation of what was the symbol of the Islamic state, combined with the martyrdom of Sa'ad ad-Din provided an impetus for the Muslims to move their capital to Dakkar, east of Harer, farther from the threat of Abyssinian attacks (Lewis, 1965:25). Out of this threat was born a new onslaught against the Christian dynasty unprecedented in its scale and intensity. Unlike the leaders of the previous tiny emirates who indulged in excessive luxury and even criminal activities, Muslims

"had at last found a charismatic" young leader who established the city of Harar as his new capital.

Harar grew in size and status, becoming the largest city of the Awdal caliphate and replaced Saylac. It also became the centre of Islamic civilisation and learning and its high walls and ancient mosques remain intact to date. Gurey led military expeditions and mediated clan feuds, and established an independent judicial system and vowed to crush internal detractors, practically implementing sharia and formed *shura*, the consultative council that acted as the parliament in the traditional Islamic caliphates (Shihabud-Din, 2008:423).What is however remarkable was the effective participation of the pastoral Somali nomads, "renowned as cutters of roads" to the Muslim chronicles, indicating the greatness of the powers of the Imam's leadership. Despite the charismatic leadership of the Imam, both as a military commander and just *khalifa*, what needs to be acknowledged is the fact that Islam has functioned as a unique and intricate way of uniting nomads who have not known hierarchical government and who are not "accustomed to joining together in common cause on so wide a front." This was one of the occasions in the history of Somali people that the unity of "so many disparate and mutually hostile clans" was achieved, combining a great force that not only liberated their northern coastal cities but also penetrated into the heart land of Abyssinia (Lewis, 1965:27).

In spite of what Lewis explains as nomadic "ephemeral unity," the Abyssinians far outnumbered the Somalis both in the battlefields and in the general population. Shihabud-Din's accounts from the battlefields illustrate this claim. For example, in one famous battle that took place at Shinbirrakore in 1529, the Abyssinian forces consisted of sixteen thousand horse-riders and two hundred thousand foot soldiers while the Imam's army was composed of five-hundred and sixty horse-riders and twelve-thousand foot soldiers. At this stage, there was no superiority of weaponry but the Imam's army rode in victory and the defining factor was the warriorship of the Somali nomads, hardened by their natural environment and internal rivalry, compared to their opposing side who were drawn from farming communities in the Ethiopian highlands, and who exclusively paid their allegiance to the highly centralised and hereditary-based leadership of the feudal kings. The cutters of roads moved into the traditional territory of the peasant Christian kingdom, waging wars that are still vividly reconstructed. The Imam appointed governors for each conquered or liberated territory. Some of the liberated non-Somali Muslim emirates in 1533

included Bali, Sidama, Dawaro and Hadiya while conquering much of what used to be the centre of the tiny Christian kingdom. Though Mazrui's argument (2003:221), that Islam cemented African warriorship while Christianity "killed" it is open to debate, Abyssinian kings were certainly not "turning the other cheek" and sought military and material assistance from Europe (Shihabud-Din, 2008:43).

Lebna Dengel, the Abyssinian king who ascended the throne, at the age of seven in 1508, after his father was killed and ruled with the help of an Armenian named Mateus was to find himself defenceless in 1532, wandering in the countryside, suffering from hunger and hardship of every kind in an effort to run for his life and that of his family. Parallel to this Muslim offensive and unknown to their Imam, a diplomatic mission, spearheaded by Mateus was underway in Europe's corridors of power. The Armenian emissary who was sent to Portugal in 1508 finally reached the court of king Monoel I in Lisbon in 1514 after series of disastrous misadventure and detour through India. Mateus successfully presented the plight of the African kingdom, building a powerful image of a "Christian island in a sea of pagans," that rescued the mere monarchs not only from "loosening permanently upon their thrones" but also saved the modern day Ethiopia from European colonisation in the nineteenth century (Abdi, 2007, James, and Robinson, 2012).

In his part, Dengel offered a concession in 1535, fully accepting the jurisdiction of the Pope in Rome. Japermudez, a member of the Portuguese mission took over the task of putting a force together to rescue the enfeebled king of the peasants in the Abyssinian highlands but as fate would have it, Dengel's dream was intercepted by death and he passed away as the result of thirst and hunger. Help though was on its way from the Portuguese empire, reaching Abyssinia in 1541. If Dengel died of hunger, his son Galadewos was to dance in delight and splendour. He enthusiastically received what he considered the "righteous children of Jesus" as they landed at Massawa on the 10th of February 1541 in the present day Eritrea. It might not be their motive but Portuguese mission, led by Christovoa da Gama, was fashioned in a similar manner to the modern day so-called Humanitarian Military Operations, consisting of, over five hundred highly trained musketeers and one hundred and fifty craftsmen, highly modern canons, gunsmiths and in Abdi's words "huge number of unspecified slaves." If the ill-equipped Abyssinian king perceived his helpers as the righteous children of Jesus, the Portuguese on their part depicted him as the "Black Messiah" who the children of Israelites had arrogantly ostracised from Jerusalem.

Three centuries later, Emperor Haile Salassie was to eloquently utilise this theological myth in his appeal to the League of the Nations after he was exiled in 1936. This time, Ethiopia was under attack not from the "sea of pagans" but from the "children of Jesus." The arrival of the Portuguese army turned the tide of the war once again, against the Awdal caliphate of northern and western Somalia and with an extensive use of canons and gunpowder rapidly routed the Muslims.

The price to save the "black messiah" was high for the Portuguese crusade too, and Da Gama was murdered in the dusty plateaus of the Horn, and over two hundred of his special forces were either killed or captured in their first encounters with the Somali army. The Imam at this juncture, sought military and material assistance from the Muslim Ottoman Empire but before the arrival of any formidable force from the Anatolian plateau to the caliphate's headquarter, Axmed Gurey was wounded by a Portuguese musketeer in the fierce battlefront of Woinadeg, near the Tana Lake, and later died of the same wound, but remains immortalised by the modern day Somali nationalist and religious warriors. Gellner (1996:84) argued that pieces of cultural equipment drawn from Islam and Christianity not only "aided" the Somalis and the Amhara ethnic groups in state-formation, but also link them to other members of the religious civilisations. Despite the death of Axmed Gurey, the fall of the Awdal caliphate and the subsequent absence of national leader, the Somalis never lost their nationhood and denied Abyssinia access to the sea corridor of northern Somalia.

Consequently, successive kings in Christendom Abyssinia "painted the Cross on the foreheads of the mountains, as though it were a lighthouse," appealing to European powers' military support to gain access to the Somali Red sea. But the feudal kings regained inland power after receiving assistance from a number of European countries (Farah, 1978:3, Abokor, 1993:3).What is fascinating in these historical confrontations, are the presence of four main features of Somalia's current political turmoil: Political Islam, regional and religious rivalry, scramble over the access to the country's strategic coastline and the consistent military intervention by global powers. The tragedy though is not that Somalis remain a nation without a state or that Somalia is a nation in search of a state, but the focus on clannism as the main obstacle to the establishment of a formidable Somali state, a staunch myth invented by I.M. Lewis, a British anthropologist (Abdi Samatar, 1992:626). I will explain the interplays of these features in the subsequent chapters on

both the European partition of Somalia and the post-colonial state formation. However, having explored the affairs of the coastal towns and the Awdal caliphate, I will now turn to the traditional political organisation of the pastoral Somali in the hinterlands

2.*4.* ***Traditional Governance in the Hinterland***

No society in Africa is as deeply wedded to poetry and verse as the Somali. Ali Mazrui, 1986.

Introduction

An assumption has the potency to displace historical facts. One such is the popular premise that disorder and clan rivalry shaped the political structure of traditional and modern Somali society, an assumption presented as the single root cause of state collapse in 1991. By contrast, order existed in chaos even after the collapse of the secular postcolonial state (Gaas, 2018:28). This section explores the Somali pre-colonial political organisation in the hinterland and briefly highlights the commonalities and differences between them and other stateless clusters of communities elsewhere on the continent. In this connection, I explain the major theoretical frameworks employed to "unearth" Africa's forms of traditional authorities, ranging from Cheikh Anta Diop's "large-scale kingdoms," to Mahmood Mamdani's "decentralised despotism," John lliffe's "village big men," and Abdi Samatar's "centralised chieftaincy," with the purpose of evaluating how useful such theories are in understanding the Somalis traditional political authority. While including few similarities between the Somalis and other communities, I have largely focused on the structure of the Somali political organisation in the hinterland, explaining their organs of political administration, categories of leadership and the interplay between Islam and customary law, *xeer.* The significance of this section is twofold. To trace the political organisation of pre-colonial society and to argue that an indigenised Islam has throughout the Somalis history directly or indirectly shaped the political, legal systems and cultural components in the absence of a state or a central authority.

2.4.1. **Village egalitarianism and "order in chaos"**

Acknowledge that all men are equal and none is inferior or superior to you, goes a Somali proverb.

One of the major "obstacles" to historians in locating changes or tracing the present moment to a distance past is the dilemma that history itself presents. One is often confronted with the difficult and the frustrating choice of "settling for a specific period or in between two periods" to ascertain the beginning, the end or the influence of certain political organisation, social norms and economic activity. The difficulty in this case lies in establishing which "turning point" is more crucial than the "other" in the trajectory and turbulent nature of history. It therefore, comes as no surprise when Catherine Coquetry-Vidrovitch frustratingly asks "how far back do we have to go to find the stability alleged to be the characteristic of the pre-colonial period?" Coquetry-Vidrovitch faced the dilemma of choosing a specific period in her search for a "stable pre-colonial period." Alas! She too, ended up-stuck between the "Portuguese conquest, Islamic invasion and Bantu expansion."

To begin with, the Somalis had never developed large-scale kingdom akin to that of the West African societies illustrated by Cheikh Anta Diop and there had never been "constitutional monarchies, governed by councils of ministers." This is not the only difference as far as the traditional political organisation of the Somalis is concerned. Mamdani's description of African societies in East, central and Southern Africa in which chiefs were prominent political figures who were utilised for effective administrations and tax collection in the colonial period did not feature in the traditional pastoral political landscape of the Somali peninsula. In short, Mamdani's theoretical framework of a chieftaincy that degenerated into "decentralised despotism," and Iliffe's "village big men" in which power rested in the traditional patriarchs cannot be deployed in understanding the social and the political structure of the Somali nation.

Although there were often leaders or elders and decision-makers, around whom political and social power coalesced, central authority was absent among Africa's nomadic communities. There were "no office-bearers with coercive power of any kind." Kinship and group representation not only "governed their system of law and order" but was also the dominant political organisation. These types of societies included the Igbo and Fulani of Nigeria, the Kru

of Liberia, the Tallensi of Ghana and the Somalis (Ayittey, 1992:39). Burton, one of the first Europeans to establish contact with the pastoral Somali community described them as "a fierce and turbulent race of Republicans" in resisting outside influences. However, what Burton described as "turbulent" is not equal to Hobbs' "state of nature" in which chaos and disorder is the order of the day in a stateless society.

Contrary to today's insecurity-driven assumptions, the traditional Somali political organisation was democratic in the sense that consensus was sought in all matters and violence was mitigated by *xeer*, a well-elaborated customary law, conflated with Islam (Abdi Samatar, 1997:631). All major decisions were taken in *shir*, assembly of all adult males, "often in consultation with religious specialists" (Cassanelli, 1982:85). So democratic was their state of affairs that it was visible to I.M. Lewis, a British colonial anthropologist who described the political organisation in the hinterland as "pastoral democracy." Wiilwaal, a famous sixteenth century *garaad* (leader), poet-warrior, an ideal leader in the traditional Somali society was reported to have said that "I have done everything possible to man, but I cannot think of any act that pacifies him or pleases his heart more than a brotherly hand." In his comparison between pre-colonial societies in Botswana and Somalia, Abdi Samatar (1997:693) argued that the "social and political organisation of pre-colonial Somali society was much less hierarchical than that of Botswana," but there was a distinct ways of organising the society and resolving conflicts. Unlike Botswana's "centralised chieftaincy," there were more decentralised political organs in the Somali society: *gudi* (village elders), *guurti* (village council), and *xeer-beegti* (lawmakers).

The village committee, *gudi* were in charge of the smallest settlement known as *jees*, and functioned to solve disputes, oversee initiation, marriage ceremonies, and safeguarded the safety of their community and scouted around for pasture and water for livestock. The harsh and semi-arid environment necessitated these types of settlements. The *gudi* in this connection guided the households to cooperate in herding livestock, developing and maintaining water wells, managing and exploring the range lands and circulating livestock to "reduce the deleterious impact of ecological perturbations" (Abdi Samatar, 1997:694). Nevertheless, if the household was the basic social unit in pre-colonial Somali society as Abdi Samatar explained, the *gudi* or village elders was the basic administrative organ and drew their economic, social and political identity from the combination of Islam, camels and poetic lyrics. The village council *guurti* had more members

than *gudi* consisting of elders and a few *wadaado*, who "boasted with knowledge of Arabic and sacred laws," and resolved issues that the *gudi* could not deal with (Said Samatar, 1982:24). Contrary to Lewis' "anthropological diary," settlements did not correspond to genealogy and clan membership and households who might or might not belong to a same "family tree" could establish a settlement. The *xeer-beegti* (lawmakers) consisted of the finest poets and the most sagacious elders, and the most learned *wadaads*. One's natural poetic endowments, knowledge in the customary laws, Islam and oral history were the crucial "requirements" for one to secure membership in this highly coveted assembly. This was the organ "orally amended" the *xeer* and interpretations of Islamic laws were sought from the wadaads. Known as *jilib-carro (*heavyweight jury), the *xeer-beegti* was the highest decision-making body in the traditional pastoral Somali society. Its quorums and sittings were interrupted by nature and the unreliable rainfall and serious matters could wait until the land was green and the environment was conducive hence, Cabdullahi Macali Dhoodan articulated in the following poetic verses:

Beneficial to the heavyweight jury is a closer venue

An issue not deliberated in its backyard

Might ever remain unresolved… (www.doollo.com).

An event that generated a political storm and to borrow from Sayid Maxamad's metaphor "poetic thunderbolt" in the early nineteenth century, can be used to illustrate the effectiveness of the above political set-up. Xaashi Farax-cadde, who was a pastoral *Ugaas,* (leader), displayed unprecedented autocratic tendencies. Titles such as *Ugaas*, *Garaad*, S*uldan*, and *Aaqil* were given to the Somali traditional leaders and Xaashi was *Ugaas* for large provinces in western Somalia (Ogaden). These titles did not "evoke something of the pomp and splendour" of Arab Sultans (Lewis, 1965:23). However, Ugaas Xaashi Faarax-cadde defied both the social norms and the political establishment and marginalised the *guurti*, and the *xeex-beegti*, dismissing all the consultative processes and the collective decision-making standards, and sought to singlehandedly assert his rule. Furthermore, Faarax-cadde unceremoniously plotted against his opponents, and colluded with the Somalis traditional rival, the Abyssinian kingdom (Xalane, 2003, Aw Jaamac, 1974). The *guurti* and the *xeex-beegti* headed by the best known warrior-poets turned to oral poetry, the most persuasive medium of communication and potent political weapon

in the traditional Somali society as elaborated by Xalane, Aw Jaamac, Axmad Faarax (Idajaa), and Said Samatar. The objective was to subject the Ugaas, to a "vote of no-confidence" in a political proceeding known as *faydid* (embarrassing exposure) and mobilise the masses against the errant and now illegitimate leader. This particular *faydid* endured in the oral history because of the heated poetic debate it generated in rebelling against what Nuruddin Farah was to describe a century later as "variation of African dictatorship." The poems quoted below are written by (Xalane, 2003, and Aw Jaamac, 1974), but they are quite long in their original Somali, and I translated a few verses for the first time to explain the political uproar and the traditional Somalis view on autocratic leadership. Therefore, the short and the "rough" translations do not correspond to the original Somali at all. Farah Muxumed, member of the *xeer-beegti* struck the Ugaas with the first poetic attack:

Had I not taken part in his inauguration

Had I been out of his reach

Had I remained at the periphery of power

I wouldn't have been made a puppet

I wouldn't have fallen into the dubious trap of the monster

Now, I warn you

Xaashi is a cannibalist!

And no one might live longer than he..!

For Muxumed, autocracy was akin to cannibalism and Xaashi's misrule had to be brought to an end before he "eradicated" the masses. Dubbad Hiirad endorsed Muxumed's call to overthrow the *Ugaas* before his power degenerate into what Frimpong-Ansah (1991:1) described as "Africa's vampire state," and hit the *Ugaas* with more metaphoric poetic sword.

Power is seasonal like clouds

And if a man is murdered, his widow remarries

You can be in a deserted homestead tonight

And tomorrow in a prosperous dwelling

The kraal of one man's camels

Can be re-possessed by another

Winter and spring simultaneously come

With contradictory gale of wind

And let me add

Xaashi is a cannibalist!

And no one might live longer than he...!

In Hiirad's view, "power is seasonal," implying that no one enjoys it permanently and that the leadership of the society rotates from one individual to another, metaphorically depicting Xaashi's rule as a "violent winter that engulfed" the land. For Hiirad, the seat of power could be re-possessed by the poor masses, steering the political boat back to the democratic order and collective leadership. The *Ugaas* though, was still adamant and even threatened his political detractors, while the opposition to his rule grew and the poetic combat against his autocratic tendencies mounted. Gurraase Xaaji struck the agitated ruler with more poetic stones.

Oh Ugaas, suspicion belongs to he who consults with the infidel

You missed the point

When you arrogantly struck the weak

With the full strength of your sword

Now, you planted the seeds of your own downfall

And it is unlikely for a man trampled upon

By an elephant to rise again...!

Xaaji accused the ruler of developing a paranoiac attitude because of his relationship with Christian king of Abyssinia, (Menelik) and articulated the *Ugaas*' intent to commit injustice against the weak members of the society, but likened the collective power of the masses to that of an elephant that would trample upon the unjust ruler to a "point of no return." However, the last and the most famous "poetic missile" that saw the demise of Xaashi as a leader came from Saahid Qamaan in a more philosophical and fiery thunderbolt.

By gone, that I serve other man from a stream of honey

While I'm not allowed to even taste the residue

By gone, that I stand-still to salute him

By gone, that I mistake superficial leadership for intrinsic power

By Allah, I consent to none of these!

Now, let me speak on behalf of myself

As bequeathed to me by my father and great grandfathers

A Muslim is not domesticated by threats to sever his head off

Equality is my lodestar

And I'm at par with all men

I welcome no contemptuous rule

And if a man ignores my presence

I reject his existence

And if he can live without me

I prosper in his absence!

Saahid Qamaan's thunderbolt did not only overthrow the autocratic ruler, averting "decentralised despotism," but it also "took a historical tour" into the past and gave an insightful summary of

the Somalis democratic order, and the role of Islam in shaping the social, political structure and the world view of the Somali society. As predicted *Ugaas* Xaashi, found himself in a "deserted homestead." So popular was/is Saahid Qamaan's poem that it was even, ironically taught in schools by Somalia's post-independence Marxist leadership despite its explicit attack on autocracy. Perhaps they had not understood its content and context but drew pride from the poet's self-esteem and found a "comfortable zone" in Qamaan's poetic missile against what they described in their communist terminologies as *dib u socod* (reactionaries).

Poetic thunderbolts were not the only means of overthrowing an unjust ruler. As observed by Axmad Faraax (Idaajaa) Aw Jaamac and I.M, Lewis, there were other three major elements of an individual's natural character trait that could "loosen a Suldan upon his mere power" in the traditional Somali society. Biased judgement in settling disputes, meanness in giving and dithering in reaching a decision could have a greater negative impact on an elder or *Ugaas* than merely losing a "political seat." If these elements became apparent, he was subjected to *faydid,* exposure or shaming in public, often precipitating "poetic ostracism to document the incident," and religious condemnations. This was the state of the political affairs before the "Berlin winter and the curse of political secularism," descended upon the Somali peninsula. Lewis (1961:205) was to write that "this practice is to some extent exercised today," and indeed, the colonial officers half-heartedly encouraged it." Few Sultans and elders of today though, "have the influence with which their traditional predecessors are credited."

However, equality itself and the lack of central authority was as well, a source of anarchy. Conflict often broke out over water wells and camels were raided. The killing of a member of certain clan-family could quickly spread communal violence causing "clan-vendetta," calling for revenge. Oral poetry was in this case traditional "missile carrier" delivering slanderous attack on a rival group, rejoicing victory or lamenting about a defeat. It was also a means for warrior-poets to boast their bravery, detail battlefield, describe the camels raided or incite political turmoil. Take for example, the following verses in which a pastoral poet, Iley Dhagajarco argued in the nineteenth century that peace "worsens" his material condition as translated by Said Samatar:

Peace worsens the condition of my homestead

I live by Allah's bounty and by raiding camels

And my happiness is where the dust of war rises!

In another prominent incident, a pastoral warrior-poet, Nuur Faarax (Nuur-jiir) spoke to a horse named *Caynab*, personifying it in the following verses to the point of "informing the beast" about an impending ambush and the warrior's intension to kindle unprecedented havoc, readying his stallion for an arduous ride to battlefields. Nuur-jiir vowed to revenge on a death of his brother, Cali, who was killed in feud among members of his close family-clan:

If you *Caynab* does not live in perpetual violence

If you don't dwell in militaristic expeditions

Growing scrawny

If the sturdy neck of yours does not emaciate to stick-size

If milk does not become rare commodity let alone meat

If corpse does not cover your hooves like grass

If my revenge on Cali's death does not exceed the realm of human imagination

If I do not throw peace into a bottomless well, becoming irretrievable forever

If the bones of the fallen warriors do not shatter one another

Then, I'm of the faint-hearted, if imbalance does not become the world's only pillar...! (Aw Jaamac, 2005:149).

Given the absence of central authority in traditional Somali pastoral society, it is clear that nobody had the "monopoly of violence." Therefore, camel-raiding and revenge were not rare scenes in the hinterland. But there existed indigenous mechanisms to reverse even the most threatening political upheaval and clan-vendettas known as *godob,* creating order in anarchy, never developing into Hobbs' "state of nature." For example, there were people who were known as *birmagaydo*: forbidden from the spear of the warrior regardless of the cause and the intensity of the internal conflict. They included women, children, Islamic scholars, elders and famous poets. Excluded in the camel raiding too, were the (*Gurgursha)*-he-camel used for transportation

and the (*Hal*)-melch-she camel milked for the family. In one of the most provocative poetic combats in which internal violence of opposing clan-families reached at its peak in the early twentieth century, a pastoral poet, Maxamad Fiin advised his opponent:

If everything comes to an end

You raid neither the *Gurgursha* nor slaughter him for food

And you spare the melch-she camel... (Recorded on cassette tape).

Despite what might seem "apparent reign of anarchical egalitarianism," the traditional system maintained a "remarkable degree of political and social cohesiveness" (Hirsi, 1977:110). In common to the traditional concept of justice among the stateless cluster on the continent, there were four forms of assembles known as *shir*, under four specific trees, drawing "the terminologies" from the issues under discussion (Said Samatar, 1982:29). Only two are political and therefore relevant to this discussion while the other two forms of assembles are social and economical in nature. *Geedka xeerka,* the tree of justice and jurisprudence, under which, the *xeer-beegti* or the men of law, often elders, interpreted and debated customary laws to arbitrate matters of dispute. The second political legal assembly was known as *geedka xaqa iyo xukunka,* the tree of truth and just verdict, under which, learned religious scholars and sheiks administered religious matters, often basing their rulings and judgements on sharia. Unlike the *xeer,* "secular notions" had no role in arriving a ruling, and "religious sanctions were the basis of law of conflict and resolution," under this tree. It was a process distinct from the secular sanctions and open, only to men who acquired knowledge in Islamic jurisprudence, invariably assumed to be morally upright and therefore, enjoyed good reputation in the society (Said Samatar, 1982:27).

Ideally, these religious literate-men (*wadaado)* were supposed to disperse justice in accordance with Islamic laws, outside the circle of "lineage politics" but it might not invariably be the case so the proverb goes: a "*wadaad* may not choose heaven over his kinsman." Marriage relation was another extensive institution of formidable importance in creating order in anarchy. Take for example, the proverb: "pour the fluid from the womb over where the blood was spilled." What the proverb implies is that giving a lady in marriage to a man whose brother or father was killed washes the family-vendetta like the rain washes the blood of the slain. The practice is known as *godob-reeb,* ending future hostilities or grievances since the man who the lady is married to,

won't revenge on his in-laws and his sons won't revenge on their maternal uncles, therefore Muuse Cali (Faruur), a poet and cultural historian describes women's role in the Somali traditional political setup as "ambassadors of peace." The most durable traditional institution in regulating violence among the Somalis, whether they were urban dwellers or pastoral communities was the *diya*-paying group, a group who collectively paid *diya* (blood-wealth) or compensation to a victim or the victim's family. While the payment was often measured in numbers of animals, the basic unit of the diya-paying groups could or could not correspond to patrilineal lineage. Like the establishment of clan-families, membership in the diya-paying group was pragmatic and fluid in nature but "reduced the incidence of open conflict in Somali society" (Cassanelli, 1982, Ahmed Samatar, 1994).

With regard to legal aspect, Islam and the *xeer* were the main source of the Somalis traditional judicial system. Indeed, theoretically, the customary law drew its legitimacy from Islam but in practice, the absence of central authority and pre-Islamic cultural elements of the Somalis impeded its complete implementation. Selective application though, was the order of the day. It is in this connection, sharia was a "significant influence on the development" of the customary laws (Helander, 2005:16). Any form of opposition to sharia was indirect, for any elder or an individual who openly resisted the establishment of divine rules, was seen to be "evoking Allah's curse" or challenging to borrow from Sayid Qutb, "Allah's sovereignty." It is important to note that though widely practiced up to date, *xeer* has never been codified, it remains "oral law," passed down from one generation to another, and it has according to Somalia's most known anthropologist, Ahmed Abdi (Gandi), civil, environmental, delict and criminal sections and other sub-sections.

This might sound quite weird to non-African anthropologists who are unfamiliar with the concept of "oral justice" in the traditional societies. After all, paradoxes are not in short supply in the Somali peninsula. Economically, the pre-colonial household economy was self-oriented yet a "network-based," but an integral part of larger political and moral order. Kinship was either a product of genealogy, *tol* or through marriage, *xidid*, and blended with the *xeer* and Islam, mediated or precluded prolonged conflicts over resources (Ahmed Samatar, 1994:109, Abdi Samatar, 1997). It is because of these interpolations between Islam, lineage and customary laws that Le Sage (2005:8), hesitatingly acknowledges, "Somalia's judicial history provides the option

to include elements of sharia," in secular courts of laws. Ironically as I will illustrate in the next chapters, Somalia's "political miscarriage" began with the introduction of secularism of which, the nation does not identify with its justice system and the structure of the postcolonial state.

In conclusion, Islam was integrated into the Somali identity right from its birth, shaping the genealogical and the cultural makeup of the Horn of Africa nation. Given the Somalis strong attachment to Islam and its social and cultural influence, the narrative of Arab descendent gained popularity through two main channels: Ancient Somali scholars "ethnicised" the faith despite its universal ingredients through local Sufi saints and the adaptation of indigenous methods of teaching, methods that are invented and often innovated and still evident in the Qur'anic schools. More importantly, oral literatures of which poems are its carrier invariably link the Somali genealogy to the family of the prophet of Islam. Though the evidence for the blood relations to the prophet's family is weak, the combination of the poetic allusions to Arab descendents, the sanctifications of religious scholars and the collective avoidance of secular explanations of the Somali identity overshadowed the linguistic argument. Therefore, myth and history still intermingle in tracing the original homeland of the Somal nation either to Southern Ethiopia or to the Arabian Desert. Trade and the emergence of pocket emirates, moulded in the image of the Islamic caliphates, along the Somali coast both on the Red sea and the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth and anti-colonial Islamic revival in the nineteenth century, cemented the Somali link with the Muslim world.

The classical religious conflict between the Islamised Somali and the Abyssinian Christendom in the Horn of Africa which culminated in the Portuguese intervention in the sixteenth century fostered the Somali identity as a custodian of Islam. On the other hand, these ancient religious wars presented the successive feudal kingdoms in the Abyssinian Highlands as the sole defenders of a "Christian Island in a sea of pagans." While the leadership at coastal towns emulated the Islamic global caliphate, Islam was uniquely and selectively employed in the hinterland. The traditional pastoral Somali society was more prone to internal strife which rotated around camel raiding and water wells but there was order in anarchy. Decentralised authority and village democracy were the basic political structure. Village elders, councils and marriage relations and diya-paying groups regulated internal political upheaval. The customary law, *xeer*, uniquely blended with legal aspects of Islam mediated conflicts. Local sheiks, poets

and *xeer-beegti* presided over its implementation and sought consensus in assembles known as *shir* under the tree and insulated pastoral communities from degenerating into Hobbs' "state of nature."

Chapter Three

3. European rivalry over the Somali coast and the expansion of Abyssinia: 1830s-1920s

…I will react against the malice and oppression unleashed upon me

Yes, I'm justified to smite, to sweep through the land with terror and fury… Sayid Maxamad, translated by Said Samatar.

Introduction

Perhaps no period in the history of the Somali nation was more turbulent than the late nineteen-century. Farah Nur, a Somali poet depicted the arrival of the European powers, the geographical partition of the Somali peninsula and Ethiopia's territorial expansion in 1897 as "doomsday." This period gave birth to two features of the current Somali conflict: violent introduction of secular colonial state and the territorial division of the Somali land among foreign powers, Britain, France, Italy and Ethiopia in 1897. In an attempt to shed light on this eventful period, this chapter is divided into five sections. The first section reviews the nineteenth-century European scramble and rivalry over the Somali coast, which in turn paved the way for a disastrous partition of the Somali peninsula, and the role of Ethiopia as a beneficiary of European conquest under the reign of Menelik. This section also provides a brief account of the Egyptian-Turkish presence which existed on the coast of northern Somalia, and the Omani dynasty which extended a feeble authority from Zanzibar to the southern Banaadir coast of Somaliland.

In the second section, I explore the early stage of a pan-Somali religious storm, led by Sayid Maxamad Cabdille Xasan from 1895-1921, against foreign invasion and, a few factors that influenced his cause. Sayid Maxamad Cabdille Xasan was and still is the most important religious and political figure in the history of the Somali nation after the prominent sixteenth century leader, Axmad Gurey, who waged a holy war against Portuguese Empire and Christian Abyssinia. Sayid Maxamad became known to the Europeans as the "Mad Mullah" and a Saint to his Somali followers. If Axmad Gurey established the Harar caliphate in the sixteen-century, Sayid Maxamad built what became known as the Dervish or Taleex (Taleh) caliphate, laying the political foundation of modern-day pan-Somali and pan-Islamic sentiments across the Somali peninsula, sentiments around which today's conflict in the Horn of Africa's nation rotates.

The third section explores a period of "pan-expeditionary forces" and the establishment of a "mobile" Dervish caliphate in the interior of northern and partly southern Somali peninsula, while the fourth section discusses the failures of foreign forces in subduing the religious storm, a "tossing out" of the British Empire from the interior, after a brief period of political stalemate, an acceptance of defeat from the British Empire's point of view. Lastly, the fifth section explains the destruction of the Taleex caliphate and Africa's first aerial bombardment. Apart from giving sense of the historical complexity of the Somali conflict beyond the redundant anthropological myths of clan narratives, the purpose is to trace the tension between ethnicised Islam and the secular notions of a European state in the Somali peninsula.

Drawing on Said Samatar's study on "*Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The case of Sayid Mahammad 'Abdille Hassan*," this chapter delineates one of Africa's least known and the longest armed resistance in the twentieth century. While Said Samatar's seminal scholarship focuses on the significance of poetic polemics as potent political instrument in the traditional Somali society and in Sayid Maxamad's campaign against foreign invasion, it is written from a combination of nationalistic and literary perspective, depicting Sayid Maxamad as the "father of modern-day Somali nationalism." By contrast, I argue that religious sentiment and the introduction of missionary schools sparked the holy war against the presence of multiple colonial forces in the Somali peninsula. Islam is in this historical trajectory inseparable from ethnic nationalism and it might be more fitting to present Sayid Maxamad as "revivalist" of modern-day jihad. While Gellner's assertion that "Islamic society was ever ideally prepared, by an accident of history, for this development,' is not wide of the mark, the contradictory in Said Samatar's argument is self-evident. Modern nationalism and the Westphalian state invariably relegate religion on the back seat of politics, but Sayid Maxamad sought a free Somali territory under uncompromising sharia law. To drive the point home, the national agenda is uniquely intertwined with Islam in locations where "the entire nation is identified with the faith and surrounded by non-Muslim neighbours" like the Somalis and Malays (Gellner, 1992:77).

3.1. **The partition of the Somali peninsula from 1830s - 1897**.

O Lord, we are endangered on all sides,

Threatened we are, for the nations have joined in alliance against us,

*Lo, even the Greeks would point their lethal arrows at us…*Sayid Maxamad, 1906, translated by Said Samatar

From the Ottoman Empire to the European scramble of Africa, global powers often sought the domination of the Somali coast. The nineteenth-century ushered in two profound political developments in north-eastern Africa: the expansion of Abyssinian feudal kingdom in which diverse nationalities were conquered under the reign of Menelik, creating a "coercive unity" and a violent dismembering of Somalia into five territories. Both developments are an integral part to the region's endless political crisis. On the part of the Somali nation, the partition is one of the most salient ingredients of the prolonged conflict, while the coercive unity of Ethiopia remains an active agent for ethnic-based political upheavals. Reid (2011:57) describes this continuation of the crisis as the "past in the present." Economically driven, the seed of the partition of Somalia was first planted in the Suez Canal before the Berlin Conference. Britain celebrated the opening of a steamer service from India to the Suez Canal in 1839. The launch of the steamer precipitated the need for a cooling station, and the English stumbled upon Aden, a medieval coastal city in the northern Arabian Peninsula. Described as a "useless rock with good harbour," Aden's occupation and the establishment of military garrisons set the stage for further British imperial adventure on the northern Somali coast, securing a lifeline supply of meat from the Somali peninsula with the aim to control the trade route (Lewis, 1965:40). If the architects of Britain's colonial ambition found Aden a valueless rock, they also had discovered that the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden were vital to the defence of British India and their wider imperial adventure into Eastern and Southern Africa, and feared possible occupation of the Somali coast by another hostile European power, such as Germany or France.

Fuelled by its interest to link the Red Sea to its possessions in Madagascar and Indochina, France too, discovered the geopolitical importance of the Somali peninsula in 1862 (Said Samatar and Laitin, 1987:49). Paris was an active competitor, more interested in exploring Abyssinia to establish trade routes, seizing the Danakil coast (Djibouti) and described it a "valley

of hell, whose landscape is a nightmare," but with indispensable trade route, a counter balance to British expansion on the Red Sea (Thompson and Adloff, 1969:5). The collapse of the Anglo-French condominium in Egypt in 1884 and the diminished influence of France in the affairs of the Suez Canal made the valley of hell, France's most valuable asset in the north-eastern tip of the continent.

While Britain and France vied for domination on the Red Sea, Italy appeared on the scene in 1889. Gabriele Annunzio, Italian poet and politician proclaimed: "Africa is the only whetstone on which we Italians shall sharpen our sword for a supreme conquest" (Laitin, 1977:57). Rome was in this case tantalised by France's feast on the Red Sea, growing more ambitious with the aim of connecting the Somali coast to what one Italian, in the fascist era, described as Mussolini's "desert collections" in North Africa. Because of its internal division, and the disastrous revolt in Algeria against French rule, Italy was initially uncertain to "set out upon the road to imperialism," but the French rule from Algeria to Tunisia united the divided European nation (Hess, 1966:2). Maybe, Mazrui's assertion that Africa has a peculiar way of uniting a divided European nation has merit. If Bismarck united Germany with the clamour for the colonisation of the continent, Italy was brought together by the beat of the political drum for overseas colonies. Preoccupied with the Red Sea, Rome registered its presence in Eritrea in 1884. But disappointed by the loss of Tunisia to its opponent, Italy geared its military and diplomatic efforts towards the southern coast, better known as Banaadir, landing on a "valley of paradise" on the Indian Ocean. Ancient coastal cities such as Kismayo, Barawe and most importantly Mogadishu - a city which three hundred years previously had repulsed the Portuguese invasion became Italy's dreamt of whetstone in Africa. Rome now sharpened its blunt imperial sword not with stones but with Somalia's most productive land, watered by Juba and Shabbele, the two major rivers in the southern Somali peninsula (Thompson and Adloff, 1969:13).

On the continent, lurking behind the curtain of the European scramble over the Somali lands was Abyssinia, Somalia's traditional foe. The "imperial partition of Somalia can scarcely be reconstructed even in a bare outline" without shedding light on the role that Ethiopia played, a role that Addis Ababa occupies in today's political instability in the Somali peninsula (Laitin and Said Samatar, 1987:52). Menelik ascended the throne in 1889, and awarded himself with the title

"the king of the kings," growing bold and more ambitious than his predecessors. If it accidently dawned on the Europeans that a port on the Red Sea was vital for their material wellbeing, and defence, the Abyssinians from the thirteenth century believed that a corridor on the Red Sea could strengthen their contact with the outside world and mitigate their material inadequacy, and associated it with religious rituals. Therefore, the Highlanders sought European allies to open the "road to Jerusalem," or else provide them with arms.

By 1897, London, Paris and Rome heeded the call and provided arms to the fledgling feudal African king. The "civilised Europeans" upset the political equilibrium in the Horn of Africa by "flooding Abyssinia with modern arms, while starving the Somalis for the last thirteen years" (Swayne, 1903:9). For Major, Carlos Swayne, a colonial British officer who headed the first expedition against Sayid Maxamad, it was "difficult to avoid what was practically inevitable: the entanglement of two sets of interest. Those of the "civilised European states" and that of the "primitive African," but the provision of arms to Menelik, simply tipped the balance of power in the Horn of Africa. Modern weaponry "poured" from the French-controlled Danakil coast, from Italy-administered Eritrean ports and from the British garrisons into the interior of the landlocked Abyssinia. Italy had no idea that Menelik was to militarily thwart its imperial ambition by using these European arsenals in 1896. "No leader had such a large stockpile of weapons anywhere in the nineteenth-century Africa" (Reid, 2011:84).

It has to be noted that it was in Menelik's reign that most nationalities in today's Ethiopia including the Oromo, the largest ethnic group were conquered, from 1887 to 1913. The seizure of fertile Oromo land didn't halt Menelik's new adventure. Harar, the ancient city and the seat of the Awdal caliphate became his next target. Strategically located in the eastern end of the Ethiopian Highlands and on the road to the Red Sea, Harar was still a fortified symbol of both the past wars and a possible Muslim political threat to Menelik's advancement. Swayne (1903:9) half-heartedly articulated that "Harar was a valuable buffer-state," and if it was strengthened and supported "might have kept apart the well-armed Abyssinians, who are Christians, from the badly-armed Somalis, who are Mahommedans." If it was unbeknown to the Italians that they would be defeated in a fierce fight by Menelik in Adwa in 1896, Swayne too, had no idea that he was to lead the first British expedition in conjunction with Menelik against Somali liberation movement in 1901.

Given this brief historical overview of the European rivalries over the Somali peninsula, and the role of Ethiopia, it might be handy to give a sense of the political situation at the time before the actual partition and the rise of the liberation movement led by Sayid Mohamed. Coastal cities in the north such as Barbara and Saylac fell under the influence of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire from 1870-1874. There was no opposition to Turkish-Egypt occupation because the local population associated the Egyptian and Turkish authorities with the global caliphate. Islamic "universalism," *Qadis* and mosque *Ismams* facilitated the establishment of these loose administrations. This was a period in which the "loose gild of *ulama*, of scholars – lawyers - theologians" provided unique political proof for the entire Muslim ummah (Gellner, 1992:76). Secondly, the political notables at these coastal towns were from the local communities. In the interior, traditional leadership remained intact, Muslim orders settled in small clusters and acted as a link between pastoral communities and the coastal rulers (Abdi, 2007, Hirsi, 1977). Though Egypt under Mohamed Ali was established as modern state, out of a decaying Arab empire in the nineteenth century, its leaders were unable to "contend adequately with concurrent emergence of European colonial designs." Ironically, Cairo maintained a "*de jure* control of northern Somalia coast at the pleasure of Britain." It has to be noted that Egypt's presence was, to repeat the cliché, a blessing in disguise. Governor, Radwan Pasha, undertook considerable development. Schools, hospitals and police stations were built and salaries were paid to local sheiks in the coastal cities. These activities were undertaken to win the local support and to administratively and politically link the Somali peninsula to Cairo and Khartoum, extending the horizons of what was a disintegrating Ottoman rule. More importantly, Barbara's "ancient fresh-water aqueduct was restored by Egyptian engineers," and celebrations were held both in Cairo and in Barbara (Laitin, 1977:45). Admitting the achievement of Egyptians, Douglas Jardine, a long term British colonial administrator in the northern Somali peninsula wrote: "We owe the flow of the fresh water to Cairo."

Islam in this case was the centre of Somalis hospitality towards the advancement of the Arab and Turkish dynasties. For example, when the British mission sent a medical team as part of its efforts to unseat the Arab rulers, local Somalis shunned the European facilities and could not consult with "non-Muslim doctors." But as Egypt was reconstructing Barbara's ancient water aqueduct, Britain was on its imperial bandwagon to Cairo and internal revolt was underway in Sudan. As if acting on the Somali proverb "sacrifice the calf, so that the bull gives up," Britain

occupied Egypt in 1882, and Cairo's "imperialist design was abandoned even before an adequate foundation could be built." The last Egyptian troops left the Somali coast and the city of Harar in 1884 (Laitin, 1977:49). While the political influence of the Ottoman Empire and its autonomous tributary state in Egypt were dwindling, the rise and spread of "revivalist" Muslim fraternities, *tariqa*, across the Somali peninsula deepened the Arab - Somali connections from the eighteenth to nineteenth century (Hirsi, 1977:244). As evacuations of the Egyptians got underway, the governor recorded: "the sorrow of the people, the fear in them, and they come in groups to say their farewells, and they walked one to three days to do it." Harar though located inland was the Horn of Africa's Timbuktu and European powers had their eyes on the ancient city after Richard Burton's visit in the 1850s (Hess (1966:14). The competition between European powers to commercially penetrate and control inland trade routes intensified, but securing a strategic coastal strait was deemed more important than occupying the interior. While northern Somalia was under the nominal rule of Turkish-Egyptian dynasties before the British occupation the Sultan of Zanzibar exercised a shadow authority over the Banaadir coast. Italy after long imperial strategising tossed out the Arab dynasty from Mogadishu and Barawe.

On the other hand, Menelik rode on successive victories with the objective to open his way to the Red Sea, and captured the commercial emporium of Harar in 1887, boasting: "I hoisted my flag in (Amir Abdullah's) capital and my troops occupied his city. Gragne (Ahmed Gurey) died. Amir Abdullahi in our day was his successor. This is not a Muslim country, as everyone knows." With the fall of the buffer city - caliphate of Harar, the interior of western Somalia (Ogaden) became an "open field" to Menelik's incursion and the partition of the Somalia peninsula was "virtually complete" in 1897. Britain annexed the coastal strip in the north (British Somaliland), the Danakil was dubbed French Somaliland and Italy took the Banaadir coast as Italian Somaliland. Under Menelik, Ethiopia occupied western Somalia (Ogaden), without administering it, while the south - western edge of the Somali peninsula came to be known as Northern Frontier District (NFD) under British rule and later, Kenyan Somaliland. Beginning at this point, one certainty in the Somali peninsula's political history, was that in the midst of the global geopolitical competition, the disastrous partition and then the current militarised conflict, the wishes of inhabitants were disregarded or lip-service was paid to their political aspiration: united Somali territories in which Islam is the supreme rule (Lewis, 1965:40).

3.2. **Rebellion and religious storm 1895-1900**

The Somali might neglect the practice of Islam but it is his duty to safeguard the faith from external invasion, goes a Somali adage

Given the role of Islam in the construction of "Somaliness," the above satirical saying might not seem out of place in the nation's political history. (Holzer, 2014: 23) argues that the faith in Somalia is "seen as ethnic identity" by the Islamists and it is used as a potent tool for mass mobilisation when threatened by secular or Christian regimes. In another words, an invasion of Somalia is equated to an attack on Islam itself. Therefore, the population perceived the partition of their land among the three European powers, and "an African bedfellow," (Ethiopia) through religious lens (Ahmed Samatar, 1994:112). Unlike in Kenya where for example, Africans competed between 1895 and 1905 to "appropriate colonial rule," Sayid Maxamad rose against European and Abyssinian intrusion (Lonsdale, 1992:13). The Somali resistance was an "inevitable climax of entertainment to roast the infidels over a slow fire" (Jardine 1923:6). The Mullah explained his intent in the following poetic polemics as translated by Said Samatar:

If the blaze of the fire I kindled does not consume them…

If the English dogs do not flee in headlong panic…

Then, let it be said that I am not a true Muslim!

The poem was composed in 1904 in a bid to mount an attack on the British administration, and Sayid Maxamad vowed that he would not have been a "true Muslim," if he had not waged jihad against foreign Christian domination. Before I delve into the explanation of the holy war led by Sayid Mohamed against multiple foreign invasions, let me shed a bit of light on what was happening in the Muslim world, for the Somali resistance was an integral part of a wider Muslim revival. Ever since "Napoleon routed the last Mamluks," a medieval Muslim dynasty, at the battle of the pyramids in the 1790s, European influence and invasion grew with a slow pace (Said Samatar, 1987:90). It was however reinvigorated in the late nineteenth century and culminated in the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire and the total seizure of Egypt in 1884 by Britain. Turkey, the last symbol of Islamic rule was mocked as the "sick man of Europe." In the continent, sporadic resistance rotated around religion. To the disappointment of Marx and Engels

who "hailed the French conquest of Algeria in the mid nineteenth century as a victory of civilisation over barbarism," Abdulkadir of Algeria revolted against the introduction of "French enlightenment" while Shiek Muktar of Libya, the "lion of the desert" resisted Italian conquest and thwarted Rome's search of an African whetstone from 1911-1930 (Ahmida, 2009:1229). Closer to home, Mahamad Ahmad (Mahdi) waged a holy war against alien rule in Sudan. In this sense "fanaticism" in the Muslim world was not a "cause of war, but a means to fight" (Churchill, 1899:15). More importantly, the Somalis saw the introduction of Christianity and secular governance as a "catastrophe." Muslims viewed their political condition in 1900s "not merely as one in which sovereignty has been lost or the body-politics put in chains, but rather as one in which history itself has gone wrong and the governance of the universe has been upset" (Smith, 1957: 9).

Indeed, both history and governance in the Somali peninsula had not only been upset but had devastatingly "gone wrong." The encounter with the European administrations and Ethiopia's territorial incursion into the traditional Somali grazing land awakened the Somalis by jarring them enough "to think about cultural pride and masterlessness, as well as Islamic holiness" (Ahmad Samatar, 1994:112). Sayid Maxamad put an army together to reverse the situation, as if acting on the Somali proverb that "history itself is the raw material from which the present is manufactured." Sayid Maxamad's biography has already been written. I will therefore limit myself to his political vision, the factors that influenced him and the movement he established. Coming back to Somali city of Barbara from a pilgrimage in 1895, Sayid Maxamad found the land occupied. It was in Barbara that the young Sayid Maxamad encountered the first hand of European oppression. A colonial officer demanded the payment of tax for his imports. Maxamad rejected the order, and physically engaged in a struggle, till the colonial officer fell from a cliff into the Red Sea. To the fury of the officer, Sayid Maxamad questioned whether the British officer himself paid tax to the Somalis who owned the port. A challenge of this sort, verbal or physical was unheard, unseen, and unknown to British officers, after the establishment of their skeletal administration at Barbara in 1884. Drenched with the Red Sea water and fuming at Maxamad, the tax-collector called for reinforcement, for the "trespasser" of the British law to be jailed. A Somali interpreter intervened, convincing the colonial officers that the sheikh was perhaps "blind" to the political reality, and the power of the British Empire, an empire on which the sun "never set" (Aw Jaamac, 1974, Hess, 1968).

Nevertheless, Sayid Maxamad was released (some sources say a fortnight later, others say immediately) but not before he was dubbed the "Mad Mullah." In this hasty judgement by external players and the portrayal of Islam as an "agent of madness" lies the source of the political instability in today's Somali peninsula. On his part, Sayid Maxamad depicted the European powers as "savages" living in the pre-Islamic period (paganism state) in need of "enlightenment or the sword of jihad to curtail their gluttonous mission," consistently "discharging gruesome poetic" declarations from the inland:

I roar like the distant lion

Decorated with the garland of jihad

I will hack off the heads of the savage English...! (Aw Jaamac, 1974:47).

It is hard to classify Maxamad as a "religious or "nationalist" leader but it is obvious that he was primarily motivated by religious "fanaticism with the ultimate goal of preserving sharia as the only precept and way of life in Somalia" (Touval, 1963:53). The central message was that the Europeans were "infidels" in *jaahiliya*, the (pre-Islamic and paganism period), ignorant and intent on destroying his people's cultural, religious and political identity. He thus proclaimed a holy war against the invading forces. His description of the European rulers as an "ignorant lot in the jaahiliya era" was used as a proof for what Sheik-Abdi (1993:3) terms Sayid Maxamad's "divine madness."

The presence of Christian missionary schools infuriated Sayid Maxamad more than the British officer who demanded the payment of a duty from the sheikh's import, triggering his political and religious nerves, causing him to "accuse the Lazarist fathers of deliberately stealing children," with the aim of converting the Somali orphans from Islam (AW Jaamac, 1974, Hess, 1968). This encounter was a turning point for the "lonely man" who earned paradoxical titles in his campaign against colonialism. Hess (1964:413) described him as a "poor man of God." He was a "mad Mullah" to the colonisers and Sayid, (the Saint) to his Somali followers, while Jardine, secretary to the British administration of Somaliland termed him an "elusive adventurer." Above all, Said Samatar (1982:46) portrayed him as "the master of poetic polemists." If indeed, the Europeans and Menelik over-awed the Somalis with superior weaponry in their resistance against the initial division of their land, Sayid Maxamad overwhelmed them

with his poetic prowess. His religious *fatwa* (a ruling derived from Islamic jurisprudence), combined with his polemical rhetoric, an art that the Somali nation is more susceptible to than anything else, propelled his mission forward. The Mullah for example warned his countrymen against aiding his enemies:

It is forbidden in your religion to aid the unbelieving invader

Ignore my warnings and the sharia

And regret might not be of help

When I sweep the land like the plague... (Aw Jaamac, 1974:222).

While the aim of the above poem was to dispel rumours that the Dervishes were disorganised, the contact with Catholic missionaries and British colonial officers convinced Sayid Maxamad that Christian colonisation "sought to destroy the Islamic faith" of the Somali people (Terdman, 2006:14). Preaching against the cooperation of Christian powers, the Mullah "caused considerable unease among the local elite and British administrators" (Hoehne, 2017:1). But he did not immediately declare the holy war. The poor man of God embarked on a religious campaign in Barbara, engaging in heated debates with a mystical Sufi order known as *Qadiriya*. The Somalis are to date "100% Sunni Muslims," generally adhering to *Shaafici Madhab*, one of the main schools of Islamic jurisprudence, but Sayid Maxamad depicted the *Qadiriya* Sufi brotherhood as uninformed collaborators, chastising them for indulging in the luxury of the age, while the Christian missionaries changed the names of the Somali children (Holzer, 2006:23). On the other hand, foreign powers accused his movement (*Salihiya*) of being puritanical in their preaching in 1900s. In fact, labelling of liberation movements across the Somali peninsula as "fanatic terrorists" has been an enduring feature in the justification of foreign incursions (Aw Jaamac, 2005, Said Samatar, 1982). While the turuq *(*Muslim orders) championed "transclanal loyalties derived from the commonality of the shared Muslim faith in preference to the divisive kinship-based traditional structure," the Salihiya to which Sayid Maxamad belonged, assumed a militant organisation (Hirsi, 1977, Hoehne, 2017:2).

At this stage, it dawned neither on the Somali Sufi order nor the administration that the "Mullah had any intention to lead a political movement with the object of driving the British forces from

his country" (Jardine, 1923:41). For Jardine, the Mullah seemed more concerned with morality, an "earnest seeker after the truth, and a staunch believer in the Qur'an, possessed of a special aptitude for learning." Ironically, one truth that Sayid Maxamad found and Jardine did not was the presence of colonial powers on the Somali peninsula, the partition of the land and the need for a resistance movement. From Jardine's viewpoint, the presence of the European powers signified a new enlightenment, but for Sayid Maxamad, it ushered in a new darkness, foregrounding Islam as a political ideology that accepts no other system of governance "superior to it" (Qutb, 1964:36). If Islam's "divine legal and political system" cannot be subordinated to secular ideologies, living under British, Italian, French legal systems was a disbelief in Allah from Sayid Maxamad's point of view. He declared: "I will go out to make the country free from infidel influence..." (Swayne, 1903:1).

Gaining a few adherents from what the secretary of the British administration depicted as "comparatively sophisticated inhabitants of Barbara," the Mullah moved to the interior in 1897 (Hess, 1964:420, Aw Jaamac, 1974:22). It has to be pointed out that the acceptance of British rule and the inactivity of the Sufi order were equated to sophistication. With no political administration, a favourable condition for Sayid Maxamad, he established his fame through mediating conflicts and preached against the presence of foreign powers. Settling at Caynaba (Aynaba), a place in northern Somalia, known for its watering wells and good pasture, the young Mullah named his followers *Daraawiish*, Dervishes. Dervishism and a unique dress code distinguished his followers from the rest of the population. They wore white sheets and white turbans and Sayid Maxamad's influence as gifted warrior - poet and religious scholar grew rapidly, bringing "many locals to his sway" and his puritanical message attracted his pastoral countrymen and women (Hoehne, 2016, Aw Jaamac, 2005).

The British administration at the Aden "butcher shop" mistakenly thought that the Mullah was "on the side of the law and at first, appeared to have been friendly to the British Government." The possibility to lure him into the colonial trap of indirect rule seemed a plausible reality (McNeill, 1902:3). This political ambiguity came to an end in March 29, 1899 when the vice-consul at Barbara, Harry Cordeaux sent a "peremptory letter" and demanded a return of a rifle allegedly stolen by one of the sheik's adherents (Said Samatar 1987:109). In a response, the Mullah wrote: "There is no god but God and Maxamad is his apostle. Man, nothing have I stolen

from you or from anyone else, and nothing I will return. Seek your wishes from him who has defrauded you," (Jardine, 1923, Said Samatar, 1982). In retrospect, Ismacil Mire, a Dervish national warrior-poet and Sayid Maxamad's right hand lieutenant composed in 1923:

... In the previous years

Enmity drew distinct borders between infidels and Muslims

The Mullah beat the drum of jihad

And thousands of men with white turbans

Flooded the land… (Xalane, 2003:201).

Unlike other parts of the continent, there was no loss of land to the British nor was there a forced labour, therefore, Sayid Maxamad formulated the resistance on the basis of religious protection. It is as if the faith was more endangered than the divided land and its people. The Christian religion "largely subordinated to European secular authority irked the Somalis most" (Iron, 2013:25). On September 1899, Sayid Maxamad sent the following explicitly worded and famous letter to the British authority from the hinterland. The letter served two purposes, that is, to make his intentions clear and perhaps to capitalise on his new found power. "...This is to inform you, you have done whatever you have desired, and you have oppressed our ancient religion without cause... Now choose for yourselves. If you want war, we accept it, if you want peace, pay the protective tax..."

The protective tax is what is known as *jizya* in the Islamic jurisprudence often paid by non-Muslims under an Islamic state for the protection of their lives, dignity and property, since they are not obligated to pay *zakat.* As the content of the letter spread and merchants panicked in Barbara, Sayid Maxamad had to contain a more threatening menace. Buoyed by the victory at Adwa in 1889, Menelik, an inland power, raided the interior, harassing the Somalis under the cover of the European powers. The "greatest humiliation for the Somalis came not from the advanced Europeans but from the hated Christian Abyssinian kings" who, not only occupied the sacred city of Harar but also had been confirmed by the "Christian Europe as the rulers of their vast grazing land in Ogaden" (Iron, 2013:26). Vitto Bottego, an Italian soldier reported in 1893 that he met religious leaders in Ogaden whose "belongs were looted by Amhara and found

nothing but abandoned sites, sacked by the Ethiopians" (Hess, 1968:79). A pro-Ethiopian British historian, Margery Perham, echoed the same observation that "by the sanction of custom, Menelik's soldiers on the march ruthlessly took all they could from the inhabitants" (Said Samatar, 1982:103). Aw Muxumad Guure, a bard and religious scholar who witnessed the first hand of Ethiopia's raid in the hinterland detailed the state of the Somalis in the following poem:

Our people in Western Somalia are in a sorrowful state

Unendurably thrown into the taunting victory of the nemesis

And I'm in search of a fighting army to reverse the condition

The unbelieving Amxaar outrageously burdens us with unrivalled levy on anything edible

Neither cent nor centime is secure from their vile scrutiny

The aged and the infants are unfed

The ghee, the meat and the milk are loaded for the Amxaar

Living off our livestock like the tick

Not with our own discretion but by extortion

We have witnessed the vagaries of global injustice

And distress resides our hearts

The Amxaar takes a sadistic pleasure in molesting our ladies in every dawn

Loading us up with crates of sludge and alcohol

Squashing the spacious earth against us

And the soldiers forage to raid the livestock, slaying the remaining kinsmen

We are deprived of the power to mount a counter-attack

Enslavement is in the offering

And we might even be forced to renounce our religion…! (Axmad Faarax, VOA Somali).

As if taking heed of Gure's plight, Sayid Maxamad while generally declaring *jihad* on the invaders, directed his first attack on the Ethiopians. Perhaps he thought that the Europeans were "temporary enemies." Sadler, the British consul wrote: "The Mullah's ultimate aim was to head a religious expedition against Abyssinia." There might be an element of historical fact in Sadler's observation that the Dervish movement was first directed against Menelik forces, but it was "one of the curiosities of history" that the British in the northern Somali peninsula "had to bear the brunt of a war not meant for them in the first place" (Said Samatar, 1987:109). In his first address to his inland countrymen, the Mullah wrapped his political vision with religious garments, declaring: "Infidels have come to surround us... to corrupt our ancient religion, to settle our land, to seize our herds... to burn our villages and to make our children their children..." In this regard, "Islam provided coherence and relative unity of purpose" for the Somalis "as far as resistance to infidel colonial rule is concerned" (Reid 2011:84). Sayid Maxamad launched the first attack on Ethiopian garrison at Jigjiga, Ogaden, on March, 1900, recovering looted stock. As a "defence mechanism," Islam in the history of the Somali peninsula did not only provide the framework for resisting foreign domination, but it has been and still is, a means to express the population's political loyalty against the formation of a state moulded in the image of Europe.

3.3. **The era of pan-expeditionary forces and the Dervish state 1901-1905**

False hope belongs to the Somalis who have gone astray

Words of wisdom belong to saintly Dervishes… Sayid Maxamad, 1904: translated by Said Samatar.

While raising a formidable liberation movement, the "poor man of God" established a "mobile state," with fluctuating population, and kept on changing headquarters until the movement permanently settled at Taleex, a city in north-eastern Somalia in 1910. Propagating his cause, the Mullah equated Dervishism to "valiant holiness," to which "the fury of the battle and the forward charge belong" and castigated those who ignore his "call for jihad or sided" with the foreign powers as "craven cowards who have gone astray," and to whom "the backward flight from the battlefield belongs" (Abdullahi, 2011:68). The roving religious man "earnestly set out to create a

political structure with governmental institutions" under Islamic law. This state was organised into four categories. A ministerial council known as *khusuusi* was in charge of the affairs of the state while Sayid Maxamad was "surrounded by a group of trusted commanders and advisors." Parts of the council were members of "Islamic judges" who attended judicial matters (Siad Samatar, 1987, Hoehne, 2016, and Aw Jaamac, 2005). One unique feature of the Dervish caliphate was that the names of prominent opponents, the trusted commanders, advisors and the judges were adequately "recorded and preserved" in Sayid Maxamad's poetry. Some of these trusted members of *khusuusi* included Xaaji Sudi (judge), Ismacil Mire (military commander), Cabdallah Shixiri, (former British naval interpreter and Dervish representative in the Ilig negotiations) and Xuseen Maxamud (Dhiqle), a man whose role in the movement could correspond to today's minister of information, committing the entire anthology of the Mullah's poetry to memory and disseminated to the wider public.

The Dervish state is in this case, Africa's practical example where "war drove the formation of the state," while at the same time, discrediting the argument that inefficiency of state formation in Africa, emanates from absence of serious wars (Tilly, 1990:20). While classic inter-state religious wars between Christendom Abyssinia and Muslim Somali existed from the tenth century, Sayid Maxamad created an autonomous caliphate beyond the reach of the foreign powers and developed an "alternative politico-religious order with contours of strict Islamic theocracy" (Abbink, 2003:341). The council members of the Dervish caliphate were selected on the basis of varying criteria. Religious orthodoxy, prowess in the battlefield, generosity, allegiance to Sayid Mohammad, eloquence and other qualities deemed important by the pastoral Somalis were the most crucial criterion. Ideally, one had to be a man of integrity with impeccable character to be selected into this honoured *khusuusi*. Although the call for *jihad* and politics overlapped, the term dervish for the Mullah's followers meant a "Muslim believer who has taken vows of poverty and life of authority in the service of God" (Teutsch, 1999:34). For example, Ismacil Mire, one of the most famous warrior-poets and a dervish commander who hardly stayed at home with Faduma Dhoore, his newly-wed, explained why he had "forsaken the good life" in the following poem:

..Candid conversation is indispensable nobility

Let me explain my long absence from you, Fadumo

I scout from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean

On the lookout for the French, the British, the Italians and Abyssinian expeditions

I neither loosen my garments nor do I dismount the stallion

The Saint recites the holy verses on me

And I stride in elation

For bankruptcy befalls not on a man who safeguards the sharia..! (Axmad Faraax, VOA Somali).

The last verse of the poem lends validity to the observation of the second president of postcolonial Somalia that poetic lyrics and Islam historically mitigated the suffering of wars and pain of material inadequacy in the Somali peninsula. In certain cases, the ideal criterion to select a member into the *khusuusi* could be ignored. If one influential traditional leader's whole lineage joined the movement, the Sayid could singlehandedly select him into the *khusuusi* as a sign to express his gratitude. For example, the Mullah sanctified individuals and clan-families that overwhelmingly supported his mission, a practice he perfected as a political tool: "Integrity and heroism belongs to *Shirshoore* men who sheltered the religion," he composed (Aw Jaamac, 1974:372). Shirshoore is the name of a clan-family that overwhelmingly supported the Dervish movement with fighters and wealth. Guards known as *gaadhhaye-yaal* were the second institution in the nascent Dervish state. They took charge of security in the capital, whether temporarily or permanently, and order in general. Particularly, the guards ensured the safety of the Saint and his inner circle and the Mullah adopted them as "sons and endowed them with lavish riches" (Said Samatar, 1987:136).

Whether this represented Sayid Maxamad's political acumen or was purely from his personal generosity as Aw Jamac, Axmad Faarax and Said Samatar articulated is open to debate, but the *gaadhhaye-yaal* largely enjoyed a considerable wealth. The regular army known as *Marra-wayn* was the third principal branch of the Dervish state. It was organised "into seven regiments, each regiment consisting of one thousand to four thousand, with two thousand men being the average." Tightly controlled, each regiment was led by a military commander known as *muqadim*, and appointed by the Mullah. The army stayed a distance away from the capital in different military camps, often close to a strategic watering well. The military men were not only

in charge of the defence but also of the well-being of livestock, particularly camels, the most valuable of all their assets, their only means of transport, and the backbone of their struggle, lives and their state. The mobility of the state depended on two factors: the availability of pasture for the camels, and the tactics of guerrilla warfare. In trade, Dervish's dhows sailed from the Somali coast to Aden, soliciting sympathy from the Muslim world, linking their cause to the remnant of the Ottoman Empire, and often secretly imported firearms. A large proportion of the residents and traders of Somalis across the Gulf of Aden, particularly in Yemen, facilitated this movement of goods (Hirsi, 1977:244). For example, Xaaji Axmad Samatar dispatched poetic epistle from Aden in support of the Mullah and his movement when attacking Cali Jaamac Haabiil. Haabiil was an influential poet, an opponent of the dervish movement who resided in Barbara, and berated Sayid Maxamad as "delusional" Mullah. Xaaji Axmad wondered and rhetorically asked Haabiil "if Menelik and the infidels are of value to him," and like Sayid Maxamad presented the war as one between Muslims and crusaders. A few verses of the oral epistle as translated by Said Samatar read:

Is Menelik your kindred that you should sing praise to him...?

Or do you think that the cruising ships of the infidels are yours?

Speak ill of the Sayid...

The ways of the saint is hidden from you...

For unattainable is Sayid Maxamad's likeliness..!

While the Somali opponents and the supporters of the dervish movement were exchanging poetic rhetoric across the Gulf of Aden, the fear of an Islamic revival instigated a joint Anglo-Ethiopian expedition. Menelik raised a 15,000 strong infantry while Britain put together a "medley of men" under the commander of General Swayne in 1901. The British authority and their Ethiopian counterparts were "thoroughly alarmed by the revival of zealous Islam" (Hess, 1966:79). The call to arms and the massive jihad that Sayid Maxamad orchestrated was the incarnation of Ahmed Gurey's sixteenth century for Ethiopians. Due to the classical religious-conflicts in the Horn, the Abyssinians in particular, "made no attempt to conceal their anti-Muslim sentiments" (Lewis, 1965:109). Underpinning the portrayal of the Dervish *mujaahidin* as "zealous

revivalists" is the tension between the genuine desires of the Somali population to live under an Islamic rule and the introduction of secularism. Imperialism-oriented assertion that the "Mohammadan religion has, it is true, potent fascination for the Somalis" might not be wide of the mark (Jardine, 1903:43).

This "potent fascination" might as well be interpreted as the nation's collective will to rebuff the vaunted European-owned secular system of governance. Akin to today's war in Somalia, colonial administrators ruled out the right to self-governance, and erroneously assumed that Sayid Maxamad was only fighting for an "invisible paradise in the hereafter." On the contrary, the "poor man of God" asserted: "I want to rule my country and protect my religion," and ignited the first fires of "religious-nationalism" by turning the ordinarily loose and relaxed spirit of the ummah into a new and zealous identity" (Axmad Samatar, 1994:112). While Sayid Maxamd is popular among the secular Somalis as a nationalist and anti-colonial hero, the Mullah throughout the campaign, unambiguously expressed the Islamic revivalists' view that the "state should adhere to and enforce sharia, as reflecting the will of Allah" (Zimmerman, 2005:425). In other words, religion in the Somali peninsula, paradoxically planted the "nationalist seed" or awakens the ummah's "sleeping spirit," therefore, the missionary activities to convert Somali orphans into Christianity was an attack on Somali identity and fired Sayid Maxamad's patriotism campaign (Lewis, 1965:67).

Expanding the scope of his holy war, Sayid Maxamad warned that he would "weed out" the Somali collaborators after "driving the British infidels into the Red Sea." Needless to say the Anglo-Ethiopian expeditions brought the British protectorate "to a standstill." Expedition after expedition to defeat the liberation movement failed, but the interior of the Somali peninsula was subjected to pan-colonial horrors that surpassed the "exuberant callousness" of King Leopold's brutality in Congo. One English man was to write: "It is surely time that the Englishmen should know that for three years an English Government made itself responsible, by breaking its sacred pledges, for the flaying and burning alive of men, women and children, and mutilations too fiendish to be mentioned" (Battersby, 1923:16). The Mullah too, narrated:

The unbelievers dismantled our world

And the blaze consumed my people

The indescribable rape and loot

The livestock corpse left in the open

The slaying of every nose-breather...! (Aw Jaamac, 1974:164).

While violently attempting, albeit unsuccessful, to model a secular state, the focus of the wars was "terrorism." Addressing English people and as part of his propaganda warfare, the Mullah famously wrote: "...I have no forts, no houses... I have no cultivated fields, no silver or gold for you to take... You gained no benefit by killing my men and my country is of no good use for you" (Said Samatar, 1987:138). There is an element of an absolute relevance in this Sayid Maxamad's statement. Despite its strategic geographical location, the war in Somalia has never been a resource-centred one, like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It has been ideologically-driven and religion is a potent political ideology in the Somali peninsula.

In quelling the religious-based rebellion, Britain amassed "strange medleys of men," drawn from "the British Isles, from South Africa, from the frontier of India, from Kenya, from the Nile, from the upland of central Africa; Boers and Sikhs and Sudanese: their race had battled against the Empire not so many years before but had since found contentment and prosperity under British rule" (Jardine, 1923:101). Unlike these medleys of men, the Somali had found neither contentment nor prosperity under any European rule. The massive deployment of troops was counterproductive. Perhaps Sir John Chard might have been describing today's Somalia when he wrote: "It's because the Somali is a warrior and the troops rouse him, they don't cow him. He reckons he's as good a man as we are and so far we haven't been able to destroy that belief." Periodically manifesting itself as potent political force, this belief in Islam supersedes Somalis respect for a secular rule of law.

By 1903, the Dervish like Ahmed Gurey and Alshabab of today became an international problem and the movement "presented a Muslim threat." European powers and their African bedfellow (Menelik) launched a coordinated expedition to either "kill or capture" Sayid Maxamad. British and Italian warships landed at Ilig, Sayid Maxamad's first built forts in central Somalia (Hess, 1966:92). April, 1904, seamen and marines attacked the *mujaahidin* with mounted Maxim guns. The ships fired "upon any of the enemy seen near the cliffs," while adopting scorched-earth military tactics. Major Kennedy, an eyewitness wrote: "The natural strength of the enemy's work

was surprising, but the village of Ilig as fortified place was entirely demolished, together with adjacent caves, as it was considered too formidable a stronghold to be held by natives" (Jardine, 1923:156). The invading army suffered losses but it was in no way comparable to that of the Somali Dervishes and their followers. From the first expedition that began in 1901 to the destruction of Ilig in 1904, the British Empire unexpectedly lost more than five million sterling and in blood, the lives of many valuable British officers whom the invading professional army could ill-afford (Jardine, 1923:153). On the other hand, Sayid Maxamad reaffirmed his position and vowed that he would not surrender despite the fire unleashed upon his movement. The following poem exemplified the Mullah's determination as translated by Said Samatar:

No matter how infinitely terrible

The fire which the Englishmen brings upon me

By Allah, I will not quit...

The writings of the British military commanders elucidated the above oral testimony. Although defeated in a number of strategic and important battlefronts, Sayid Maxamad appeared "not to have lost much, neither in prestige nor in his followers," and attributed dervish forces' misfortunes to a negligence to "conform to certain of his religious injunctions" (McNeil, 1903:6). A window of opportunity presented itself on March, 1905. A peace deal known as Ilig Agreement was proposed by the three colonial powers, Italy, Britain and Ethiopia. It came as the result of their unpredictability of the Mullah's movement. But realising that he could not "drive the infidels" into the Red Sea, Sayid Maxamad signed the "peace deal." For the colonial powers, the aim was to recognise the authority of the Dervish state in the interior, preventing the war to spread to their coastal enclaves. Britain was preoccupied by the possibility of the jihad making headways in its southern province of Jubaland and the Northern Frontier District (NFD). Italy feared the revival of another uprising in its Banaadir colony, "the valley of paradise" where the repression of fierce Biyamaal *mujaahidin* unfolded from 1896-1908. Though short-lived, the Somali peninsula was in this era riddled with other "pockets of holy wars" because the Italian interfered with the teachings and the affairs of religious order and the Biyamaal *Mujaahidin* were led by students and their *macalimiin* (Islamic teachers). Through letters and oral epistles, Sayid Maxamad was in contact with the *mujahidin* in the Italian sphere of influence and their leaders

"ultimately networked the resistance with the northern one of Daraawiish movement, demonstrating the unity of purpose and the nationhood," under the banner of Islam beyond the anthropological narratives of "clanism" (Abdullahi, 2011:80).

So intense was the local uprising in the Banaadir coast that the Italian authority was from 1904 to 1907 confined to "feeble beachheads in the ports," just like their British counterparts, and hoped that "by buying off Sayid Maxamad they could cut off" the Biyamaal *mujaahidin* from their supply of arms and inspirations (Hess, 1966:85). Underneath this hope was Rome's reluctance to militarily aid the British against Sayid Maxamad. The objectives for the two African signatories to the Ilig Treaty were different. Menelik of Ethiopia was playing the game of extraversion, soliciting funds and weapons in exchange for foot soldiers for the European powers, a game perfected and repeated by leaders of ancient and modern Ethiopia. For Sayid Maxamad, the treaty was a means to regroup his scattered forces.

The incentive for Sayid Maxamad was to "give the new approach a chance to work and to refrain from further suicidal confrontations" (Said Samatar, 1987:143). Therefore, the Mullah had no intention of entering into fixed truce with the colonial powers. His immediate objectives were twofold. To first reorganise his defence and think about new strategies to "initiate a new campaign of verbal barrage," and the "provision of peace," offered both opportunities. All the records of the Treaty indicate that three concessions were offered to Sayid Maxamad. A territory of his own, unrestricted access to the traditional grazing land and his authority over his followers was unanimously recognised, and the freedom to trade except in firearms. A clause in the treaty reads: "Sayid Maxamad is authorised to establish himself and his people a fixed residence at point most convenient for communication with the sea." The truce gave the Mullah "too little and too much" in the sense that his followers "coveted the lush grazing of the Nugal valley beyond his new borders" and too much because Sayid Maxamad used the unexpected "new international recognition to realise some of his state-building ambitions, including a blue water policy, and the development of small merchant fleet" (Kapteinjs, 1995:2). In this regard, the trend of Somalia's political history and conflict indicate that Islamic movements of any time tend to rely on local support while postcolonial governments heavily depend on the "international community" ideologically, financially and militarily. For example, both the Union of Islamic Courts that emerged in 2006 and Al-Shabaab, the current Islamist group, put forward the

withdrawal of the foreign forces as a condition before talks on ending the political mayhem could begin.

3.4. **The tossing out of the Empire from the interior and the stalemate 1906-1910**

When the din of battle was heard a hundred times

*The princes of the unbelieving infidel lay dead in dust...*Sayid Maxamad: translated by Said Samatar.

Beneath the embargo on the importation of arms, lay Sayid Maxamad's suspicion and lack of commitment to the deal, and the truce received "casual respect," from all sides but it was beneficial to the Dervishes in general, recreating the movement "almost entirely by his gift as a poet and propagandist" (Abdi, 2007, Aw Jamac, 2005). The British too, structured "clan-based" politics in search of indirect rule, warning certain communities not to assist or join the resistance while subjugating those who expressed support for the Mullah. This colonially structured policy gave birth to today's "clannism theory" which has been propagated by anthropologist as evidence that Somalis are inherently clannish. Sayid Maxamad on his part resorted to "poetic diatribes," blended with religious *fatwa* and fiercely attacked both the "colonial infidels and the Somali collaborators" (Said Samatar, 1987:52). The respite was used as a means of propaganda. I.M. Lewis and B.W. Andrzejewski wrote: "By any literary standards he must be judged to be a master of invective, ridicule and scorn." Ridiculing Somali collaborators, the Mullah for example composed: "Were you noblemen, you would have loathed the invaders..." Save for Islam as the political ideology, poetry held the dervish movement together, playing five distinct roles: first means of recruitment, a formal internal and external channel of communication and carried details of state policy and military strategies in place of writing.

In short, the oral verses fulfilled the role of mass media in the sense of propagating the dervish cause and in "recording" the events. For example, while radios and newspapers in Europe wired the happenings about the war, Sayid Maxamad captured the period in poetry (Aw Jaamac: 2005:315). Seen from this historical trajectory, Somali nationalism was a "fusion of three forces: nomadism as a way of life and culture, the Somali language and Islam." So intrinsic was the nomadic lifestyle among the dervishes that their leader scolded city-dwellers as "absent-minded people," partly because of their tolerance for the colonial administrations. While camel herding

and the language supplied the economic and the cultural material of the Somali nation, poetry and Islam formulated the political agenda (Mazrui, 1986:69). The Sayid was not only the Somalis' greatest hero of the twentieth century, fighting the British and the Italians and the Ethiopians "with great cunning and dexterity" but he also stands out as the "greatest user of the Somali language, and the greatest Somali poet of all time in a land where almost every third person was a poet." For Mazrui, "the so-called Mad Mullah was in fact an inspired Muse," whose faith, poetry and patriotism "were married to each other, resounding among the hills and sand-dunes of the Horn of Africa" (Mazrui, 1986:70).

One ought to emphasise the community that the British authority had warned against associating with the resistance movement and Sayid Maxamad belonged to the same clan-family in the Somali traditional lineage system. But he made his intention clear to the British authority that those who chose to collaborate with the colonisers, regardless of how close they were to him, would not be spared by the sword of the *mujaahidin*. The struggle in this period of the "loose treaty" changed "from a war of arms to a war of words." Sayid Maxamad's aim was to undermine the loyalty of the so-called "British tribes," to the colonial administration (Said Samatar, 1987, Kapteinjs, 1995). While growing in strength and in arms by using the coastal outlet, the Mullah rebuilt his *xarun* in Ilig and embarked on a new drive to construct a permanent state, erecting formidable forts in Taleex, and expanded his influence. Nevertheless, the permanent settlements and the abandonment of both the tactical guerrilla warfare and the mobile state were to cost him dearly.

It was one of the Mullah's disastrous political miscalculations. For the first time in 1910, he had a fixed headquarters, urging his countrymen to rise up against foreign domination. While the Mullah was the "symbol of revolt, the embodiment" of the Somali "nomadic concept of freedom and liberty," he was to the Italians a "little African Napoleon, equal to the great Corsican perhaps only in his hatred of the English" (Hess, 1966:91). Sayid Maxamad's abhorrence against the presence of the colonial forces was unquestionable. In a visit to the British protectorate in 1907, Winston Churchill, then under the secretary of the state for the colonies recommended the "abandonment of the interior." In a long "confidential" letter, Churchill insisted on policy revision and asserted: "There are only two secure alternatives: To occupy the country effectively by holding all the important wells in consort with the Italians to rush the Mullah or to withdraw

to the coast, as the Italians have done since, as we did before, the rise of the Mullah's power." For Churchill though, the military might of the Empire was rendered useless by what he viewed as "fanatical inhabitants" of the Somali peninsula.

The politicisation of Islam and the opposition to the introduction of secular state was equated to fanaticism. Perturbed by Sayid Maxamad's use of religion as a mechanism of defence, Gerald Hanley, an Irish writer and colonial officer in Somalia wrote: "Islam does wonders for the self-respect of the non-white people here and Christianity is right to worry about the spread" of politicised Islam in Africa (Hanley, 1971:49). As if confirming, Hanley's suspicion, and Churchill's imputation of the dervishes being "fanatical inhabitants," the Mullah composed as translated by Lidwien Kapteinjs:

Even if I fail to have my flag flown from here to Nairobi

Did I not gain religious honour and paradise, victory and defeat in the war...?

In the above verses, Sayid Maxamad revealed that religion was his primary motivation in resisting foreign domination and his ultimate goals were to establish an Islamic state beyond the borders of the Somali peninsula or in his own words "attain martyrdom," therefore, secular patriotism is undoubtedly, a recent creation in the history of the dervish movement (Kapteinjs, 1996, 25). On 15 March 1909, a British parliamentary committee debated on the merit to remain in Somalia. Arthur Balfour, the then opposition leader and former Prime Minister stated that during his term in government: "There was no more difficulty and more ungrateful task thrust" upon the Empire than "dealing with the Mullah." However, with no appetite for another costly expedition and to "save its face," the Empire opted out to initiate another peace deal in 1909. Sir Reginald Wingate and Slatin Pasha were brought in from Sudan to persuade Sayid Maxamad to "come to terms" with the colonial administration. Lord Crewe gave Wingate a "lengthy and curious instructions" to formulate a clear alternative to that of "catching and killing the Mullah." The options were complete evacuation or partial withdrawal provided that "pros and cons" were taken into consideration (Irons, 2012:124). Wingate and Slatin were colonial officers chosen for their so-called "first-hand" experience in repressing the Sudanese uprising that inspired Sayid Maxamad in the first place. This much-vaunted experience amounted to "nothing in dealing with

the intransigent" poor man of God and their mission dismally failed. The Illig Treaty too, fell apart (Hess, 1966:425).

October, 1909, the colonial authority completely withdrew from the interior giving the religious cleric the opportunity to consolidate his authority and expand the Dervish state. On the background of the withdrawal, the British "decided to concentrate their forces in the coastal areas in order not to lose resources and men in fruitless fray into the interior," partly because of the "mobility of the warfare and the depth of their retreat lines into the Ogaden plateau, the Dervishes were hard to pin down and defeat" (Abbink, 2003:342). The following remarks summed up the abrupt withdrawal, the weakness of the colonial authority and the growth of Sayid Maxamad, from a lonely religious scholar to a diehard warrior and national leader: "One must surely count the man who in little more than ten years, poor, alone, and unassisted, and with, for his material, ill-armed tribesmen who had never recognised a common aim, turned the greatest world-power out of one of its possessions. How he did it no man can say." But in no uncertain terms, Battersby demystified his own puzzlement by stating that the "power of Islam was behind the Mullah; he stood for the faith, and the might of faith doubtless worked the miracle" (Battersby, 1914:33).

There is another element of a great significance in Battersby's assertion. Save for the suffocated pan-Somali sentiments, the (reunification of Somali territories), ethnicised Islam is the only force that has throughout history given the Somali nation a common aim. Whether this common aim manifests itself in the form of religious uprising or disguises itself under the pretext of modern day nationalism is another debate. But it is not difficult to establish that Sayid Maxamad was motivated by religious inspiration and "his twin goals of reviving the religious spirit in Somaliland and driving the non-Muslim invaders of his country cannot be construed as madness" Sheik-Abdi (1993:103). While secularism has no ideological and legal roots in the Somali peninsula, Somalis "deposited their mourning for and grief over the loss of the Islamic caliphate through oral story and myth," creating a sense of belonging and political legitimacy (Shank, 2007:5). Therefore, I make the claim that reconstructing a Somali-owned state outside of the confines of sharia might turned out to be a fruitless and expensive exercise both for the Somalis and the international players.

This Islamic heritage empowered Axmad Gurey in the sixteen century and Sayid Maxamad in the twentieth century to successfully rally pastoral Somalis against what "they perceived to be external threats to their independence and culture" (Hirsi, 1977:109). For Hirsi, Islam "determines the nation's external cultural and emotional affiliations," and secular state institutions and judicial systems directly undermine the role of sharia in politics. If time has beyond any doubt proven Ibn Khaldun's proposition that "Arab unity" either as an individual country or as a race outside the Islamic rule is impossible, I'm not hesitant to propose that there has never been a common Somali cause without incorporating elements of Islam in the process (Abdullahi, 2011:81). Their collective identity in physical appearance, in culture and language is secondary to their faith. For history, to paraphrase Irons is an ancient window through which "we stare at the world, reading and watching as images flicker across our mental screens." Its faded photographs might as well be the cause of a present condition. Sayid Maxamad waged unrelenting war against "both the Europeans and their imitators in the name of Islam" (Irons, 2013:3). Today's war is also waged against the Somali nation in the name of fighting Islamic extremists and Somali imitators of the European system of governance are seen as "foreigners with Somali skin," in the eyes of ordinary men and women, thus failing to earn political legitimacy, while greater loyalty has been paid to Islamists at any given era in the history of Somalia (Beech, 1996:5).

3.5. **Sayid Maxamad's political legacy and Africa's first aerial bombardment 1911-1920**

A beating we took, forced to flee, to swim in haste across the river,

Stripped of stock, we reel, reduced to destitution

Rejoice, then, you lackeys who remained behind… Sayid Maxamad, 1920: translated by Said Samatar.

After an extensive military strikes on Somalia, on January 17, 2007, Jendayi Frazer, then, US State Department's Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, stated in a conference that her government "will allow for a dialogue with organic court systems throughout Somalia but dismissed engagement with politically-inclined Islamic court systems" (Shank, 2007:2). Frazer's militaristic remark reveals the paradox in the global misconfiguration of the Somali predicament, for there is no organic institution, legal or political in Somalia without the element of an

indigenised Islam, and there is little or no chance for the growth of secular institutions moulded in the image of the US State Department. It is the irreconcilability between indigenised and often politicised Islam that confronted colonial powers. Sayid Maxamad's prestige and power grew in the interior. Ironically, while the Empire was hastily withdrawing on 12 November 1909, it widely distributed arms to its so-called "friendly clans" (Hess, 1964:425). This tragedy lay in the hope that "they would hold their own against the Mullah's forces" (Jardine, 1923: 103).

This has been a recurring pattern in today's conflict in the Horn of Africa nation. Outside forces often arm secular warlords and militia men in the hope of defeating Islamists. Like the postcolonial warlords, the "government clans" turned the guns on each other, raiding one another's stock. Paradoxically, scholars such as John Drysdale acknowledged that "Somali history has demonstrated serious disorders have often been traced, not to any malfunction of the Somali system of authority, but to the unimaginative application of alien systems of government which have inadvertently undermine it" (Drysdale,1964:21). For Drysdale, the "mistakenly issued arms" resulted in a catastrophic breakdown of the local system of maintaining peace and order, and "was a help rather than a hindrance" to the Dervishes and instigated unprecedented political rupture in the Somali peninsula. On the other hand, Dervishes rolled out a comprehensive and strategic campaign, creating more anarchy and rendering the territory ungovernable. Sayid Maxamad struck, verbally and militarily on the Somali collaborators, rejoicing in victory over his countrymen whom he considered betrayers. For example, the Mullah ridiculed the Somali collaborators in the following verses as translated by Said Samatar:

You have mistaken the hell-ordained unbelievers for the Prophet

You have shamelessly grovelled after the accursed...

Islam was the stick that the "poor man of God" beat his countrymen with. In his usual habit, he posed rhetorical questions in the following poetic attack:

If the country is yours

Why are you not its government?

And if Islam is your religion

Why are you submitting yourself to the infidels...? (Aw Jaamac, 1974:141).

Demoralisation and disunity replaced the British hope. Where a line of defence was expected, the fear of the Dervishes became predominant. In a memorandum written in April, 1912, Byatt, Commissioner and Commander-in chief in the British protectorate summarised the state of affairs as follows: "The present condition is profoundly unsatisfactory, and the future holds out a prospect of development for the worse rather than for the better." For the Commander-in chief, it was necessary for the British government to once more revise its policy, described in the memo as "non-intervention and inactivity," which was in operation since the withdrawal (Iron, 2013:61). From 1911 to 1920, Dervishes concentrated on re-structuring state apparatus, building large forts with walled enclosure in all their territories. Taleex was to remain the seat of the caliphate until its downfall. The fortification of the Dervish locations proved the Mullah's military genius and adaptability that he would plan and construct "so powerful a stronghold" (Jardine, 1923:213). Unlike northern Nigeria where Islamic institutions "inspired" the British conqueror, Lord Lugard to "develop a new doctrine of indirect rule through native authorities," the Dervish leader equated the acceptance of the European rule to "apostasy" (Mazrui, 1986:96). As if drawing on Sayid Maxamad's poetic polemics, Mazrui contends that "the most important threat to Islam in Africa is not a revival of indigenous culture but the triumph of western secularism" (Mazrui, 1986:19). While the Islamic political structures of the Hausa-Fulani in northern Nigeria and Muslim Senegal were utilised for the establishment of the colonial rule, making it more popular and uniform across colonial West Africa, the Somali Dervishes violently repelled against the secular elements of the colonial state.

Alongside the massive and ambitious state-building efforts, the leader of the Dervish movement "organised punitive poetic expeditions" littered with derision reserved for non-Dervish Somalis (Said Samatar, 1987:166). The following is an example of such verbal expeditions in which the Mullah attacked the Somalis who he deemed clients of the colonial government, accusing them of "being houseboys and eaters of *haram* food," a derision that no Somali could bear with. His mission was to humiliate them by expressing contempt for their tendencies to side with the invaders. As was his tradition, Sayid Maxamad raised many issues, ranging from morality, justice and governance but the target was the Somali collaborators and as translated by Said Samatar, the Mullah composed his usual proverbial triplets:

A liar I despise

A miser I despise

And I despise he who eats polluted food.

A tobacco-chewer I despise,

I despise compulsiveness in men

And fat without strength...

An infidel's peon I despise

And houseboys I despise...

An unjust king I despise

A flag without an army I despise

A city without rule I despise

The Dervish "dislike" for a city without rule was not a poetic coincident. It was political, for the Mullah "sought to apply Islamic law, enforcing the law of talion." A striking innovation of the Dervishes was the training of women as warriors and "a few were mounted on horseback" (Lewis, 1965:83). But like today's Islamic movements in the Somali peninsula, those who gave a helping hand of whatever nature to the Christian pan-colonial occupiers and soldiers, were taunted as the "infidels' children." Whether they performed menial jobs, acted as guides or load the camels for soldiers, Sayid Maxamad equated them to a "misguided sheep who begs shelter from a hyena which had come to feast on its flesh." In his interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence, colonial forces and their Somali clients were painted with the same brush. The Mullah categorically stated: "Neither Allah nor I, accept superficial faith from those who scout, load camels for the French, now and then" (Kapteinjs, 1996:5). Periodically, the Dervish leader offered an opportunity for the "colonially-inclined," Somalis to reconsider their relationship with the invaders and observed casual peace, and employed a "mixture of violent denunciation and vituperation, alternating with soft words of reconciliation and encouragement, a conjunction of extremes which often bewildered and sometimes bemused those to whom these varied

exhortations were addressed" (Lewis, 1965, Aw Jaamac, 1974). Straddling *Dhoodi*, his favourite stallion in a military parade, staring at the young men whose fathers were killed in the initial battles but who came of fighting age, Sayid Maxamad for example chanted in his usual manner of alliterating rhetorical questions, organised in triplets, a poetic style that the Mullah perfected and no Somali poet before him achieved, and none after him despite their consistent imitations as translated by Said Samatar:

Must I from time everlasting

Maintain servile politeness

Abstain from evil words

And observe contemptuous peace?

Must I from time everlasting

Coax myself into false calmness

Must I from time everlasting watch widows and orphans..?

The Dervishes dictated the terms and their periodic avoidance from raid could equally be translated as a tactical warfare with the aim to regroup or strengthened forces. But when irked beyond patience, the Mullah sent a "poetic missile" before a military force, justified an impending attack or disowned a peaceful respite, remorsefully and artistically mourning his fallen warriors. Five years from the Ilig Agreement, the poor man of God "fought a literary war" (Said Samatar (1987:175). The colonial administrators attempted in practical terms and in their treaties to divide the population in accordance with Somali clan names. On the other hand, Sayid Maxamad grouped them as either "holy Dervishes or houseboys." Therefore, a defeat of pro-British or Italian section of the population was seen as a blow on the oppressors. Sayid boasted his victory over them, regardless of their clan lineage. So aggressive were Dervishes that a poet, Shire Idaad, portrayed their attacks as a "black spell that had swept the earth," and from which "nobody managed to escape." Take for example the following verses in which the Mullah reviled in victory over a pro-Italian Somali chieftain as translated by Said Samatar:

I decimated the low-caste Majeerteen

Behold, the hyena feasts on the flesh of their fallen dead..."

It has to be highlighted that this particular section of the Somali population forms part of Sayid Maxamad's clan-family, therefore, his portrayal of the *Majeerteen* as "low-caste" is in line with his political ideology. In Sayid Maxamad's judgement, they became an inferior lot because of their association with the oppressors and the betrayal of their faith. This standard applied to all who opposed the Dervish cause to liberate and rule their land. In this connection, colonial and anthropological "utterances" that erroneously attempt to confine Sayid Maxamad within the flimsy "web of clannism," cannot withstand historical evidence. In fact, a military defeat of one section of the Somali collaborators was celebrated as a victory for the Muslim world. For example, in an encounter where the Dervishes launched a successful attack on Somali soldiers loyal to the British, Sayid Maxamad presented the booties as "Herald of Good Tidings," for the ummah, across the globe, addressing a long poetic epistle to Egypt as translated by Said Samatar:

These glad tidings, my songs, I will send to Egypt

I will send it in ship; a ship which will tear through the rolling waves...

Let it take affection to him who is not a servile servant to the heathen infidels...

This particular poem underscored Sayid Maxamad's political awareness about the international dimension of the war. Perhaps nobody defined Sayid Maxamad's political ideology and desire more adequately than himself when he wrote in response to a letter written by a British colonial governor. Distancing himself from colonially-engineered clan narratives, the poet-warrior categorically stated. "I'm a Dervish, hoping for God's mercy and consent and forgiveness and guidance. I desire that all the country and Muslims maybe victorious by Allah's grace." No doubt that the Mullah succinctly disassociated his movement from any possible clannish inclinations and his followers were "bound by solemn oath of secrecy." If Ahmad Guray "is for the Somalis a symbol of their past conquest, Sayid Maxamad has become for the modern Somali a symbol of national unity transcending tribal lines but true to Islam and the Somali's love of independence" (Hess, 1964:415). On the other hand, the "vain hope" and the "mistaken appreciation" of the political condition from the British policymakers' point of view were based on the assumptions that Sayid Maxamad was a "regular but rather outstanding tribal leader" The "truth of course, was on the contrary" and the Mullah occupied a unique position as a national

figure who appealed to the "patriotic sentiments of Somali as Muslims irrespective of their clan or lineage allegiance" (Lewis, 1965:77). If the British assumption on Sayid Maxamad was indeed a remarkable irony, Lewis's later articulations that politics and conflicts in the Somali peninsula can only be analysed through the lens of clan allegiance, is indeed an erroneous judgement at best and Orientalist invention at worst. Islamic movements of any given time attract foreign powers to the shores of the Somali peninsula more than any other armed groups or secular nationalists. Sayid Maxamad led an indigenous religious uprising.

However, Dervishes resumed the old threat to drive the British forces into the Red Sea and the Empire was once more caught in panic in 1912. The political circumstance had the "most deplorable effects to the British prestige in the country and in the future relations of the rulers and the ruled" (Battersby 1914:121). Out of the desire to restore the imperial prestige, a motley of men had to be once more, put together in defence of its territory, under the British commander Richard Corfield, a man who worked in Nigeria and South Africa. He was according to his biographer, Battersby (1914:123) impatient and anxious to break the Somali resistance. On the 9 August 1913, the commander who anxiously wanted to restore British pride lay dead in the dusty battlefield of Dulmadoobe hill in northern Somalia. Both parts suffered heavy losses. But the Dervishes danced in delight at the end. In London, newspapers carried the unexpected demise of Corfield, screaming, "Horrible disaster to our troops in Somaliland." His death was preserved in Somali poetry more than it was in British archives (Aw Jaamac, 1973:103). Corfield is immortalised in what Lewis described as "savagely brilliant" poetic combat, offering an alternative account to the secular narratives of European anthropologists or the modern "causal historian." Ismacil Mire, the Dervish warrior-poet, a man who was said to have "severed the hand of Corfield" and presented a "war trophy" to Mullah composed:

From our seat in Taleex

The clamour for jihad echoed

And seven thousand Dervishes straddled their ponies

Their swords blessed by the Sayid

We roared like hungry lion

Holding onto the pillar of our religion

I won't waste time, counting the fallen miserable houseboys

But Koofil (Corfield) and his subservient translators have been killed

And by sunset, I made away with all the infidels' wealth

Loading as many dazzling guns as is the sand on my shoulder

Leaving the dead spread for the crow to harvest... (Aw Jaamac, 1974:102).

This marked the beginning of a first series of poetic thunderbolts. While detailing the casualties in the battlefield, Mire presented his work as "amateurish enthusiasm," and "implored the Sayid" to compose a *gabay* (poem) worthy of the occasion and the Mullah named his lengthy "eulogised valedictory," after Corfield as translated by Said Samar:

You have died, Corfield, and no longer in this world

A merciless journey was your portion

When, hell-destined, you have set out for the Here After

Those who have gone to Heaven will question you, if God is willing

When you see the companions of the faithful and the jewels of heaven,

Tell them: the Dervishes never ceased their assaults upon us

The British were broken and the voices of the battle engulfed us

With fervour and faith, the Dervishes attacked us...

In the holy war, bullets struck me

Beasts fed on your flesh

Tell: how the crows plucked out your sinews...

And say: if stubborn denials were to be abandoned, then my clansmen were defeated...

Nevertheless, the conflict gained a new momentum in 1913. Beyond the walls of Westminster and the forts of Taleex, a more menacing development for the British unfolded in the Ethiopian Highlands. Menelik, the architect of modern Ethiopia passed away in December 1913. Lij Yasu, a grandson of the long-serving emperor (son of Menelik's daughter) was confirmed as the heir apparent, a "curse upon all those who would not obey Menelik's wish in this matter" (Marcus 1968:61). But he was deemed an unexpected blessing by Sayid Maxamad. Lij Yasu's father was a Muslim, forcefully "converted" (Abdi, 2007:38). Because of this background, the establishment of Christian Ethiopia viewed him with a great deal of suspicion. This mistrust was exacerbated when the young Prince "sought his own power base among his Muslim subjects," adopting a pro-Muslim attitude. Sayid Maxamad quickly established diplomatic ties with the young Ethiopian leader. In return, the Prince proposed to a daughter of the Dervish leader (Aw Jaamac, 1974:31, Irons, 2012:15).

Fearing the implication of the "Muslim alignment" and that Sayid Maxamad's ambition to fly his flag from Nugaal to Nairobi might be a "bitter reality," the British and the Italians intercepted Dervish messengers and accused their leader of being desperate, for he was seeking a strange alliance. Debunking the charges levelled against him, Sayid Maxamad replied with a lengthy and "scornful" letter, written in Arabic and received by the British authority in Barbara in March 1917. With the internationality of the war in mind, it was the Mullah's political acumen that he knew and named the nations and the nationalities from which Britain's motley forces were recruited:

"It was suggested that we were in communication with Lij Yasu and had dealings with the Germans and the sultan of Turkey. The feeling that we required assistance is weak. .. It is you who have joined with all the peoples of the world, with harlots, with wastrels, and with slaves, just because you are so weak. But if you were strong, you would have stood by yourself as we do, independent and free. It is a sign of your weakness, this alliance of yours with Somalis and perverts, and Arabs and Nubis, and Indians and Baluchis, and French and Russians, and Americans, and Italians, and Serbians, and Portuguese, and Japanese, and Greeks and Cannibals, and Sikhs and Banias, and Moors and Afghans and Egyptians. They are strong and it is because of your weakness that you have had to solicit as does a prostitute. So much, my answer to you..." (Hess, 1968, Jardine, 1923).

While Sayid Maxamad indiscriminately extended the use of the term "infidel" to his personal and political enemies, Yasu expressed support for the German-Turkish alliance in the Great War. It has to be pointed out the Turkish government has long recognised Sayid Maxamad as the Amir of the Somali nation but it was "in no position to give effect to this belated attempt to revive" its old claims to the Somali coast (Lewis, 1965:78). This possible alliance alarmed the British and the Italian authorities. With no time, a brutal campaign was rolled out. A "wholesale massacre of Somalis and other Mohammadans was carried out" at Harar in 1916 and Ethiopia's young Muslim Prince was deposed, replaced by his aunt (Hess, 1964, Jardine, 1923). Parallel to the operation in Harar, the British Empire accelerated its military offence and the tide of the war turned against the Taleex caliphate. A new and less costly, but more effective instrument of war was discovered. Airpower was deployed and the powerful machine which Sayid Maxamad described as a "monster" tipped the balance of the war.

In October 1919, the British government sanctioned aerial, sea and ground operation against the Dervish state. Churchill, now the Minister for War and Air, chaired a meeting at the War office, enthusiastically circulating the following letter: "The proposal of the colonial office to use aircraft in Somaliland has been carefully considered.... It is understood the whole wealthy of the Mullah is in camels and livestock, and that very considerable damage could be inflicted on him, apart from actual offensive operations, by stampeding his livestock and keeping them from wells." This campaign did not only bring the Dervish state to an end, but it also marked an important historical moment, for it was first time that this modern invention of war was put in use in the African continent. Indeed, military generals and the War Office were initially sceptical of its effectiveness and Somalia served as the experimental ground. If France tested its atomic bomb in the Algerian Sahara desert in 1960, Britain tried out its new arsenal on the Taleex forts in 1920. "No counter measure could prevail" against this new "flying monster" (Jardine, 1923:278). This historical rupture is vividly captured by the Mullah's own poem:

Because of the furious thunder

And the lightning they had generated

The sky could not be told from the earth!

The English infidels have brought with them

Flying monsters from Aden!

What else was a person to do, but to make a run for his life? (Abdi, 2007:39).

Though the Dervish movement "represented one of the most successful anti-colonial rebellions of its time," the war devastated northern and central Somalia extending to Ogaden (Reid 2011:111). Materially, the only self-supporting territory in eastern Africa before the religious storm became a bleak landscape. Camels, the backbone of livelihood and the most important commodity in the Somali peninsula were completely depleted, for the pan-colonial forces deployed them as the only means of transport into the interior. If the observation of Churchill was right that no war would have ever started, none would have ever continued and no soldier would have ever returned from Sudan without the river Nile, no pan-colonial invasions, resistance or counter-resistance, no victory or defeat, either from the occupiers' side or from the Dervishes, would have ever materialised without camels. If Churchill summed up the Sudanese *jihad* against foreign invasion and the British crackdown as *The River War*, the Somali one can equally be depicted as "the camel war" and it was not coincident for the colonial powers, particularly, the British to name their expeditions as "Camel Corps." The depletion of camels would have meant the "drying up" of the Nile for the Sudanese, and for the Somalis, the destruction of livestock was more disastrous than the demise of the Teleex caliphate, for their cultural pride, mobility and wealth depended on the availability of camels. Presented as a "miracle creature" the pastoralists considered a "major sin" to even call the camel an "animal," and its milk and the meat mitigate poverty like the water of the Nile. Their twentieth century hero, and the greatest user of their tongue, Sayid Maxamad captured the significance of camels, and categorised the value of livestock in the following stanza as translated by Said Samatar:

He who has goats has a garment full of corn

A milch-cow is a temporary vanity

A he-camel is the muscle that sustains life

A she-camel-whoever may have her- is the mother of men!

The Somalis glorification of camels is not only from the economic point of view, but also of their crucial "links with social relations: a man's station in society is measured by the size of his

heard, he pays in camels for the wife; physical damages and homicides as well as redress for slander are calculated on a standard of measurement based on camels" (Said Samatar, 1987:19). But the "muscle and the mother of men" were devastated. Destitution was beyond any measure and the era became to be known in the Somali history *xaaramacuna*, the period of eating "anything forbidden, filthy or clean." In other words, anything which was culturally unacceptable became the norm, and all that was forbidden in Islamic jurisprudence became "lawful." Though the camel is to the Somali nation what the river Nile is to Sudan, the defeat of the Sudanese Dervish marked the beginning of the Cordon College in Khartoum, the ideal of what Churchill depicted as "the greatest civilising" tool in "primitive" countries. But in Somalia, no sort of European educational system, a metre of infrastructure, an agricultural tool, let alone an industry was introduced in the British territory. The piers and the lighthouse built by the Egyptians at Barbara port crumbled.

After the war, the only visible material development from the British Crown or symbol of a European civilisation were a "few ramshackle Ford cars that had seen better days" in Britain, and with no use for the Somalis, and none other means of communication" was contemplated. If the material devastation could be measured, the cost of human life is currently inestimable. All the sources indicate that more than one-third of the population in the vast territory, from north-central, stretching to the Ogaden plateau perished. This estimate excludes all the massacres committed in the Italian Somaliland, Ethiopian Somaliland (Ogaden), French Somaliland and those in the Northern Frontier District (NFD) sporadic or consistent. Writing a decade before the Nazis came to power in Germany, Jardine with crocodile tears termed the indiscriminate killings and the air bombardments as Africa's modern "holocaust" (Simpson, 2015:92). From the political front, the Somali society became completely leaderless and the traditional systems of conflict resolution were politically discarded in practical terms. The partition and the imposition of alien rule hold, to date, the aspiration of the Somali nation in a forceful captivity, and from there on, the land belonged "neither to clan families nor to the faith of Islam" and all who profess it, but the powers that overran the Mullah's base in Taleex (Farah, 2007:24). Sayid Maxamad personally escaped from the horrors unleashed by Churchill, and died of pneumonia in 1921, in the occupied Ogaden while attempting to re-start another force against pan-colonial forces, but not before he composed *Dardaaran*, the last will for his nation as translated by Abdulkadir

...O, you people! Listen to these words of wisdom

The parting words are warning to the wise

Let fools forever ignore

There is no prosperity or peace

That can come from entering into treaties

And agreements with the infidels

For he cannot be trusted!

He is merely laying traps for you

When you let your guard down...

He will prove a poison in disguise!

At first, he will disarm you and render you

Defenceless like women and children...

Then dispose you from the land!

Ah, what is the use of this warning to you now...?

If I, your only defender have gone, past Harar and Iimeey

Beyond the confines of our common patrimony...! (Abdi, 2007:41).

The Europeans did not dispose the Somalis from much of their land like the case of Southern tip of the continent or the Kikuyu in the Kenyan Highlands, but as I will discuss in the next chapter, they definitely disarmed them, rendering them defenceless as Sayid Maxamad prophesised in the above poetic revelation. In short, if Britain tested the power of its flying monster on the forts of Taleex in 1920, the Somali soil is subjected to America's drone attacks in 2019, a testing ground for military technology. Almost after a hundred years since the fall of Taleex state, one might argue that the Somali peninsula is in the same political condition. A motley crew of men are

assembled to fight elusive fundamentalists, and foreign powers drop bombs to "formulate a state." But Sayid Maxamad undoubtedly remains as "influential" as he lived, bequeathing a pan-Somali political agenda, rich and unmatched anthology of poetry, and ironically keeps inspiring both the secular Somali nationalists and their adversaries: Islamic movements which have consistently invited regional and international incursions into the Horn of Africa nation. Thus the nation is today pressed between a triangular wall: a globalised ideological war, "happily unparalleled elsewhere," in the continent, the erroneous partition of the nineteenth-century and the violent obtruding of secularism.

In conclusion, the scramble over the Red sea and Somalia's strategic geographical location, astride crossroads of trade routes linking Africa, the Middle East, and the Far East with Europe culminated in the partition of the Somali peninsula in 1897. Both Britain and the France initially sought cooling stations but later discovered the economic importance of the Horn of Africa, replacing the feeble Egyptian authority under the shadow of the Ottoman Empire in northern and the Danakil coast. Italy though late tossed the Omani dynasty out of the Banaadir coast and secured the "valley of paradise" in the southern Indian Ocean. While Abyssinia, an inland power and an ancient Christendom adversary of the Muslim Somali was recognised as an independent state, militarily and economically benefiting from the European powers, it was denied its "long held dream," a permanent access to the Red Sea corridors. But Menelik captured Harar; East Africa's Timbuktu and caused havoc in the interior of Western Somalia (Ogaden). It was the introduction of Christian missionary schools and Abyssinia's consistent raids in the interior that sparked the religious storm. As part of the wider Islamic revival, Sayid Maxamad formed the Dervish movement and turned it into a militant pan-Somali and pan-Muslim forces and a mobile state that resulted in the establishment of the Taleex caliphate in 1910, but not before the British dubbed him the "Mad Mullah." For the Mullah, Islam as an indigenised Somali identity was under threat, and he therefore, presented the conflict as one between Christian powers and Muslim Somalis.

The fear of an Islamic revival and the Dervishes' quick success in the battlefront, in turn, instigated pan-expeditionary forces in which motley of men participated to repress the religious rebellion. These military expeditions from 1900-1904 failed to pacify the Somali peninsula and the foreign powers opted for diplomatic manoeuvres, completely withdrawing their forces from

the interior and signed the Ilig Treaty in 1905. Sayid Maxamad utilised this window of opportunity to regroup his scattered *mujaahidin* and embarked on an ambitious project of state-building, permanently moving his headquarters to Taleex in the north, while constructing fortresses at Ilig and Beledwayne in south-central Somalia, and Doollo, on the Ogaden plateau. Despite the peace deal signed at Ilig, colonial powers restricted Dervishes' importation of firearms and intercepted their dhows on the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. On his part, Sayid Maxamad threatened to attack the coastal beachheads which the British and the Italians ruled. Responding to this threat, the British Camel Corps, headed by Richard Corfield was dispatched to halt the advancement of the Dervishes.

Corfield was killed in 1913 and his forces were defeated. While Sayid Maxamad and his right hand lieutenant, Ismacil Mire, sarcastically "immortalised" Corfield in poetry, the British forces took pride in the discovery of airpower and bombed Taleex fortresses to none-existence in 1920, ultimately defeating the Somali Dervishes. The war economically devastated the Somali peninsula and the death toll remains inestimable, described as "Africa's holocaust." Ideologically, Islam offered an alternative to the formation of the secular colonial state for Dervishes, while poetry served as potent political recruitment. Therefore, neither secular nationalism nor clannism theories have a room in the history of the Taleex caliphate. As for Sayid Maxamad, it would be best in Hess' words "to evaluate him in the light of the criteria that he established himself," in his poetry, a criteria in which the Mullah argued that he was crowned with the crest of flowers for the clamour of jihad against "infidels" as a "true Muslim!"

Chapter Four

4. *The "curse" of secularism on the Somali peninsula*

Africa's postcolonial disposition is the result of people who have lost the habit of ruling themselves. Chinua Achebe, 2012.

Introduction

If Sayid Maxamad "despised a city without rule," a Somali proverb equates a society without leadership to a lost sheep. Perhaps the proverb has a biblical connotation, but the Somali peninsula stranded between cities without rule, and ideological and political disorientation in the immediate aftermath of the Mullah's death. This chapter is therefore, organised into four sections to explore an era (1927-1942), characterised by political disorientation and a collective loss of leadership, illustrating events that were global in nature with a corpus of oral poetry in the first section. Defining what I mean by the "curse of secularism" on the Somali peninsula, in the second section, I discuss the political status of the Somali peninsula in the period (1943-1969), the road to independence, the formation of the postcolonial state, "democratic disorder." The third section shed light on "Marxist disaster" (1969-1990), and the imposition of a "strange" state on the Somali society. The principal argument in this section is that the values associated with a modern nation secular state are at odds with the nation's indigenous political Islam identity. Though the confrontation between secularism and Islam in Somalia traces its genesis to Sayyid Mohammed's Dervish liberation movement against the colonial powers, it culminated in the formation of the postcolonial state and reached its peak during the rule of General Siad Barre with the adoption of socialism as a new system of governance in the years 1969-1990. Therefore, I argue that the collapse of the state was as the result of forced secularisation which clashed with a popular Islam. The fourth section analyses the collapse of the state and the subsequent events that followed. It details the nature of the political upheavals that enveloped the nation after the demise of dictatorship, discrediting the notion that attributes the nation's political instability to the social structure and the lineage of the Somali society. The principal argument in the last section is that the outbreak of the 1991 violence does not fit in the framework and the definitions of civil war, but rather it was amorphous, with ever shifting, loose alliances of militia groups. The significance of this chapter is twofold: First, it traces the root causes of the conflict to the

forceful introduction of secularism, right from the colonial era to the collapse of the state. Second, it questions the dominant school of thought that mischaracterises the prolonged conflict as clan warfare.

4.1. **Political disorientation 1927-1943**

A disoriented person thinks that every path leads to his homestead. Somali proverb

In the first encounter with foreign powers (1897-1927), a violent pronouncement of the "Christian invaders of Muslim land," characterised the political landscape in the Somali peninsula. Traditional leaders and Islamic scholars mobilised the people under the banner of Islam, portraying the conflict as "Christian crusaders versus Muslims" (Abdullahi, 2011:79). By 1927, this resistance was largely broken and as Sayid Maxamad predicted, European powers accelerated their repression in a bid to disarm the population, targeting Muslim orders and jailing their leaders, leaving the population virtually leaderless or without *madax* to deploy a Somali metaphor for leadership. The crackdown ushered in the introduction of forced secularisation, described by Said Samatar and Laitin (1987:59) as the "consolidation of the colonial rule." While Somalia's current predicament might be traced to the imposition of different external systems of governance, the period (1927-1943) is known as the "years of disorientation" (Abdullahi, 2011:80).

As I will shortly illustrate this political disorientation with a few corpus of oral poetry, this historical rupture, might as well be described as a "period of political despair." Both the disorientation and the political despair resulted from two major occurrences: the dismantling of organised clusters of Muslim orders, and a fast moving and violent clouds of Italian-Ethiopian war which began in 1935 and World War Two cascaded over the Somali peninsula. The absence of organised Muslim orders created an ideological vacuum, and an indiscriminate use of airpower in both wars demoralised the Somalis, preventing any possible resistance. Ironically, they fought on both sides of the war as soldiers. The following are two poems, composed in the period 1936-1943 that illustrate the impact of the bombardments and Somalis collective despair in mounting any resistance against foreign powers. Maxamad Cali (Beenaleey), a well known pastoral poet marvelled at the aeroplane as a new, unmatched means of warfare:

An object suspended on the sky

With no pillar holding it

And does not cruise on earth

But its thunder frightens eagles and men to death

This tragedy hovers over

Hissing and gliding in the air while dispiriting the heart

Assembled by the unbeliever

It is lifeless, breathless, because it is not Allah's creation...

But this tragic eagle-like creature

Sweeps the land with poison and burns you with fiery flames

Challenging it, is impossible, regardless of how fierce you fight in the battlefields

And acceptance of defeat becomes the only plausible alternative...

We have forsaken the land and its plenty pasture

Even if we trek for three hundred days and more

It is still hovering on our heads every dawn

Whether it is a product of human genius or is simply a magic...

The inventor can definitely brag about having the upper hand

Now, you Somalis, surrender like the Axmaar...!(Xalane, 2003:26).

Despite the great inadequacy in the above translation, Maxamad Cali not only gave a sense of the political situation in the Somali peninsula but also that of Ethiopia. In the Somali case, elements of despair, defeat, frustration and displacement are evident in the poem. For Ethiopia, "surrender like the Axmaar," refers to Haile Selassie's exile in 1936 after Italy invaded Ethiopia. But the wars were instrumental "in awakening Somali national consciousness" (Touval, 164:71). Exacerbated by global events, their common plight and cultural homogeneity, the political

awakening took regional and global dimension and spread from the Indian Ocean to the Ogaden plateau, from Bulaxaar, on the Red Sea to Paris. For example, in poem riddled with rhetorical questions, Khaliif Xarbi Ismacil narrated the fall of Paris in 1940, and links the French "despair" to that of the Somalis and informs his countrymen about the "impossibility of achieving peace!:

What seems erroneous to a man might be the right thing to do for another

But mankind often standby wrongdoers

That erroneous decision has destroyed the universe

Nay! Aren't nations unable to coexist?

Doesn't one man's arrogance despise another's pride?

Doesn't this breed deadly misfortune?

When one doesn't receive the dignity he deserves

Doesn't the news reveal the open secret?

Don't warplanes circle from an ocean to ocean, over the camel kraals?

The destruction of nations and clans lost in the wars

The gunshots, the going for each other's throats and the fiery explosions

The charred tanks and the universe lost in the wars

The deafening screams from towns and seas are devoid of any possible peace

The predicaments lie in the Suez Canal and the Somali peninsula

If the fighting nations are not mediated

Even the greediest among them would not have a breakfast

Let alone sipping the camel milk, peace has become a rare commodity

The Indians no longer guard the army depots

And not a meagre resource is left for its owner

My obsession with fertile and green valleys

And the rearing of chubby camels in the lush forest remains unrealistic dream

For the French has given up Paris!

And neither a nation nor a family lives in peace!

The pastoral poet delineated not only the ultra nationalism of the European nations which he described as the "arrogance which despises other men's pride" as the main cause of the war, but he also illustrated both the military defeat of France and the political despair in his backyard. While summing up the international dynamics of the war and its tragic consequence, the strategic importance of the Suez cannel and the Somali peninsula did not escape the curious mind of the warrior-poet. More importantly, Ismacil revealed the urban-rural relationship of the Somali life, the interdependence between the coastal towns and the nomads and how camel herding had become an impossible task due to the absence of peace in the land. It has to be pointed out that the two pastoral poets whose work I translated to illustrate the occurrences of 1927-1942, were also traditional leaders, therefore, their "desperate mourning" about the past epitomises the collective ideological disorientation and the loss of Somali leadership. Written sources lend validity to the claim that the poets conceptualised what was a turbulent era through regional and global lens. Poetry which lay "at the heart" of cultural and political life of the Somali "were regional rather than strictly local in scope, and the Somali social universe was an expansive one, and that fact suggests that a regional framework may most accurately reflect the Somalis' own conceptualisation of their world" (Cassenelli, 1982:83). In the absence of any form of formidable leadership and ideological stand until 1943, the conflict and common experience created a distinct Somali political consciousness and pronouncement of ethnic nationalism become wide spread in the contiguous but partitioned Somali land.

4.2. **The Road to Independence and Democratic Disorder 1943-1969**

In oblivion, you might be delighted at a change from the jaws of a python to a more poisonous snake: Guhaad Abdi-gahaydh, 1960.

World War Two ushered in another violent scramble over the Somali peninsula, interrupting the formation of the colonial state and meaningful economic development in the partitioned Horn of Africa nation. Italy, under Benito Mussolini captured the British Somaliland and the Ogaden region while unseating Emperor Haile Selassie in 1936. Paradoxically, the Italian invasion brought the Somali territories together, uniting the Somalis who "had been arbitrarily separated by the Anglo-Italo-Ethiopian boundaries for the first time in forty years" (Terdman, 2006:15). This Italian military occupation lasted for about five years. In March 1941, Britain launched the "lightning campaign" defeating Mussolini's army while retaining the territorial unity of the Somali peninsula with the exception of Northern Frontier District (NFD) and the French Somaliland till 1949. For the Somalis, neither the Italian defeat nor the British victory immediately bore a political roadmap. But the British counter-attack proved more tragic, for it brought Selassie back to power in the same year, endorsing his grand rhetoric that the Somalis in the Ogaden region were his subjects (Furlaw, 2013:71).

By 1941, Somalia was placed under the rule of British Military Administration (BMA). In spite of the leadership vacuum, small religious organisation spearheaded sporadic and armed anti-colonial revolts. In the Italian Somaliland, the last armed Dervish revolt, led by Sheekh Xassan Barsana came to an end in 1926, while in the north, British officials displayed a mutilated body of Sheekh Bashiir for public viewing in 1945, "blowing off" the last glowing coal in the fire ignited by Sayid Maxamad fifty years ago. In a bid to incite armed resistance, Xaaji Aadan (Af-qalooc), a prominent poet and a member of what European anthropologists termed as "roving holy men," who frequented visiting Muslim holy places, narrated the execution of the last armed Dervish. In addition, Af-qalooc detailed incarcerations of other anti-colonialists. Faarax Oomaar in the north, Cali Bahdoon in French Somaliland (Djibouti), Xaaji Telefon's attempt to create awareness about colonial repression and indicted his compatriots for "abandoning Islam." For Af-qalooc, the Somalis hesitant to revolt and the unwillingness to revenge for Sheekh Bashiir's gruesome execution resulted from laxity in religious practise, therefore they had to "harvest new methods of humiliation:"

Sheekh Bashiir has been lynched at your watch

They have uprooted the green tree from which we freedom lovers' draw inspiration

The British pockmarked his chest with bullets

Smeared with blood clots and wrapped with a cloth

His adversaries and the infidels viewed his corpse with sadistic pleasure

Additional humiliation and shoe-throwing at his holy face have become part of the tour

His body dragged in front of you

Some of you bragged about his slaying and even sought reward from the unbeliever

And the infidel has forbidden Sheekh Bashiir's body to be buried

You felt neither remorse nor anger

You wouldn't have left him lay in the open if you are from a noble lineage!

You have not even broken a stick for the revenge of the valiant fighter

The octogenarian Faarax Oomaar too, is rotting in jail

And the elderly Cali Bahdoon is in despair

And Xaaji Telefon is unconscious because of your insensibility!

Neither his eloquence nor his persuasion has moved you

You scorn at the evidence of oppression and my summons

And the infidel has discerned that you have abandoned your faith

Therefore, harvest the new methods of humiliation....! (Recorded on cassette tape).

While "eliminating or containing" the leaders of religious movements, the British military administrators, ironically and clandestinely initiated the formation of the first "nationalist" movement, Somali Youth Club (SYC) in the country's seaside capital, Mogadishu. Xaaji Cabdi

Warabe, one of the most well-known living elders in the northern Somali peninsula who participated in military organised meetings stated in an interview with a local television that SYL was initially a product of the British political manoeuvre. Written sources lend validity to Warabe's historical recollection and "a pan-Somali youth organisation was formed on 15 May 1943 in Mogadishu with the encouragement of the BMA" (Abdullahi, 2011:82).

The British political aim was to keep the recently united Somali territories as one of its colonies, behind the smoke of pan-Somali nationalism. Nevertheless, the SYC metamorphosed into a formidable political platform for the Somalis and national awareness grew rapidly. Drawing inspiration from Sayid Maxamad, prominent religious figures among the youth's members called for a "return to Islam" as the guiding and unifying political ideology. While the aim of returning to Islam had always been present in the Somali peninsula, the youth's political agenda married to a "modern consciousness of nationhood" (Lewis 1965:112). Changing its name from Somali Youth Club to Somali Youth League (SYL) in 1945, the movement galvanised the Somali population, opening branches in all the partitioned land, in Ogaden, in British Somaliland and in NFD. It quickly gained prominence across the Somali peninsula and became the only vehicle for political mobilisation with an ambitious plan to reunite the Somali people beyond the artificial colonial borders.

The league's central agenda was the "unification of all Somali within a single nation" (Reid, 2011:113). Both independence and the desired unification were repressed. Like today, Somalia's fate was left in the hands of foreign powers and the political aspirations of its inhabitants attracted no sympathy. The Allied Council of Foreign Ministers established a so-called four-power commission consisting of Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States. The mission was to decide the Horn of Africa's political future. Contrary to Somali expectation, these global powers placed southern Somalia under Italian Trusteeship for ten-years (1950-1960) in 1949 at the pretext of preparing the nation for independence ((Touval, 1964:62)

On the other hand, as if giving impetus to Somalis political dream of unifying their territories, Britain's foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin, half-heartedly proposed in 1946 that the Somali-speaking areas "should be lumped together as one trust territory" under one political administration. Ethiopia and Italy with help of the United States of America "successfully thwarted British schemes," and accused the Empire of "fabricating" a pan-Somali agendas for its

"own neo-imperialistic ends" (Cassenelli, 1982:34). Whether Bevin genuinely "felt sorry" as he stated in the proposal for the nomads whose traditional grazing land was shared among the colonial powers or wanted to further British interest, is open to debate, but he undoubtedly raised the Somali hope. The Youth League escalated its activities, conducting a widespread political education and even attempted to introduce a written Somali script known as *Osmaniya* (Lewis (1964:122).

Unsurprisingly, Ethiopia's circle of support grew and the United States, the Soviet Union and France vehemently opposed the Somali unification. Ogaden was transferred to Ethiopia in 1954, Britain retained its territory and the Somali peninsula was once more fragmented, and a pursuit of conflicting diplomatic interest played out in the Horn of Africa. British colonial officer, Rennel of Rodd wrote in 1952: "The world was not sensible enough, and we were not interested enough... so the only part of Africa which is radically homogeneous has been split into such parts as made Caesar's Gaul the problem and cockpit of Europe for the last two thousand years. And Somaliland will probably become a cock-pit of east Africa" (Earl of Lytton, 1966:104). If the world did not know what do with Somalia in 1952, the global powers of today are unable to fathom the dynamics of its prolonged conflict beyond the tedious argument of clannism and terrorism. For the Earl of Lytton "one Somali nation with one Islamic law was given a variety of overlay, an overlay of English law in the extreme north and the extreme south, of French law in the extreme north-west, of Italian law in the middle-east and of Ethiopian lawlessness in the middle-west."

This led to an "incomprehensible de-composition" of one of the most homogeneous people in Africa. Thus Somalia's political and legal predicaments are "undoubtedly rooted in the errors made during the successive colonial administrations and in the short history of the postcolonial state" (Garibo-Payro, 2012:113). It is in line with Garibo-Payro's observation that I defined secularism in Somalia as the decomposition of traditional methods of conflict resolution, the errors of colonialism, the alien legal system inherited by the postcolonial state, combined with the horrors of the War on Terror and consistent destruction and the replacement of home-grown solutions with invasions. Indeed, religious scholars (1950-1967) equated the formation of the secular and fragile state, moulded in the image of the colonial state in Somalia to the *jaahiliya* period, a pre-Islamic period in which anarchy and bloodshed dominated in the political life of the

Arabian Peninsula (Abdullahi, 2011:86). Islam, as an alternative form of governance for Somalia is often thwarted by the global powers of the day. Italy capitalised on its ten year trusteeship, infiltrating into the ranks of the Youth League, purging those who expressed strong anti-Italian, anti-colonial tendencies and replaced them with pro-Italian members.

In the process of establishing European legal systems, "Islam was perceived by the colonial powers as a menace to the colonisers' so-called "civilising mission" and cultural hegemony, and therefore, had to be sidelined" (Abdullahi, 2011:80). This infiltration culminated in two profound political consequences. Islam, as an alternative and indigenous system of governance to the secular model imposed on the nation was relegated to the back seat of the political vehicle. Customary law, the (xeer), too, was completely excluded from the legal and the process of the postcolonial state formation. The colonial administrations demoted the role of Muslim magistrates (Kadis) to "matters of personal status" (Lewis 1964:156). The aim was in Lewis' viewpoint, to separate Islam from the judicial system. On the other hand, Britain propped up the Somaliland National League (SNL) in its protectorate in 1951. In short, these unarmed political movements, both in the British Somaliland and in the Italian Somaliland were incubated in the ideological machine of the colonial governors.

Unlike religious leaders who saw the foreign powers as infidels in the *jaahiliya* period, the colonially-educated members of SYL and SNL presented the European system of governance as a model to be emulated and adopted an unrecognisable legal framework as the only means to "kick-start" a functioning Somali state. In other words, the first generation of Somali political leaders laid the foundation for a self-administered colonial entity, for "there is no Somali nationalism without Islam, and there is no Somali resistance without faith" (Furlow, 2013:67). While individuals with political Islam orientation were consistently repressed, pro-western SYL and SNL leaders were known among the circles of colonial officials as "children under the guidance of their European fathers" but fashioning western-style of governance "lies at the heart of Somalia's problems" (Furlow, 2013: 67). In July 1960, British protectorate and Italian colony gained independence forming the Somali Republic with Aden Osman, former domestic worker for an Italian colonial officer as the first president. Like any other country in the continent, independence was received with enthusiasm and high expectations and pan-Somalism permeated across the Somali territories.

The mood of the nation was expressed in oral poetry and patriotic songs, composed in the very night that the blue Somali flag with the star in the middle was first raised and the British one lowered in Hargaysa, under Cabdullahi Suldaan's (Timacadde) famous lyrics: "pull down the British sorcery, and hold up the everlasting flag of ours!" The five-point star on the Somali flag symbolises the five regions into which the Somali nation had been partitioned in the colonial era (Cassanelli, 1982:257). Cabdi Iidaan Faarax equated the independence to a "she-camel that would be milked for every thirsty Somali" while Axmad Ismacil Diriye (Qaasim) simply wished that he would have "resurrected" Sayid Maxamad and the Dervishes from their grave sites, informing them that "infidels have gone!" But to Guhaad Cabdi-gahaydh, the adaptation of the European form of state was tantamount to "rebelling against a wild python but rearing its poisonous eggs." By contrast, Cabdi Iidan Farax articulated:

The independence and orders has become ours

Africa is free and Allah's mercy spread across the globe

Looking at the flag from all angles

Whether it is evening, midnight or daybreak

It is as if I'm the only free man on earth!

The she-camel has given birth

And its four teats gush out milk like springs

And every Somali would quench the thirsty..! (Recorded on cassette).

It turned out that "quenching the Somalis' collective thirst" for independence was to wait, until their territories were to be "reunited" but one of their poets, Qaasim, wished to send a celebratory message to Sayid Maxamad:

If only this gracious message would have reached the Dervishes

If only we could recall them from their dull slumber in the cemeteries

If only we would have saddled Sayid Maxamad for his favourite stallion

Handing the reins over to him

If only we would have conducted an honour of guard for him on the outskirts of Taleex!

If only we would have informed him with honest and ease

That the fire he ignited has never died down and Islam is alive...! (Recorded on cassette).

While Qaasim "gratefully informed the Dervishes that Islam was still alive," Guhad Cabdi-gahaydh argued that neither the British nor the Italians had gone, and Carlo De Simone, one of the British colonial administrators, has only disguised himself in black skin. For Cabdi-gahaydh, the postcolonial Somali leaders were "European colonial eggs, hatched into Somali hens," and the political marginalisation of Islam would forever haunt the nation. In a Somali poetic genre known as *sarbeeb,* veiled metaphors, Cabdi-gahaydh composed:

The change is from the jaws of the European python to that of the native poisonous snake

But you know not!

The white ostrich cock hatched black hens

Who roost ticks and has buried bacterial fungi deep into our soil

And their germination will be regretted by the future generations

Carlo is not gone but has disguised himself in black skin!

"Disguised in black skin," the adoptation of liberal democracy, a mixture of British and Italian parliamentarian systems ushered in an epoch of a competitive and multiparty-dominated political landscape. For the leaders of independent Somalia, modernisation was westernisation. But unifying the nation was not a major challenge, for the postcolonial Somali leadership had the "luxury of a ready-made country-wide local foundation for nationalism." The Somalis "appeared, in this respect, unusually fortunate" (Lewis, 2004:490). While most countries in the continent "are colonially created states in search of a sense of nationhood, the Somali, by contrast, are a pre-colonial nation in search of a unified post-colonial state" (Mazrui, 1982:71). For Mazrui, most African countries with diverse populations "are in search of a shared national identity" but the Somali "are already a people with national identity in search of territorial

unity." Pan-Somalism (reunification of Somali territories) and the "geographical dilemma," put the new state in a collision cause with Ethiopia and Kenya. Cabdirashiid Cali Sharmarke, the new nation's Prime Minister stated: "...Our misfortune is that our neighbouring countries, with whom, like the rest of Africa, we seek to promote constructive and harmonious relations, are not our neighbours. Our neighbours are our Somali kinsmen whose citizenship has been falsified by indiscriminate boundary arrangements" (Drysdale, 1964:8).

Somalia regarded Ethiopia as an imperial power while Ethiopia framed the tension in Ogaden as an international border dispute, accusing Somalia of being "Africa's problem child." In 1964, then the King Haile Selassie unleashed a military campaign and imposed a livestock tax on the pastoral population, giving weight to Somalia's long-held view of Ethiopia being a dark-skinned coloniser (Hagmann and Korf, 2012:208). On the other hand, Kenya "took drastic security measures and ordered that whoever was found sympathetic to pan-Somalism and to the *shifta*, a name given to the liberation movements in NFD and Western Somalia (Ogaden), should be killed, imprisoned and his property confiscated" (Issa-Salwe, 1994:60). The confrontations led to an outbreak of war between Ethiopia and Somalia over Ogaden in 1964, and Selassie and Joma Kenyatta signed a common defence pact against Somalia.

While Somalis "see Ethiopia as a natural enemy, not only because it includes much land which rightfully, in terms of self-determination, belongs to Somalia, but because of a "natural" enmity between a Christian and an Islamic state," the transfer of NFD to Kenya in 1963 generated hostility between Mogadishu and Nairobi. Paradoxically, when Kwame Nkrumah declared in 1957 that Ghana's independence was meaningless unless the rest of the continent was freed, Somalia's first generation of leaders in postcolonial Africa saw their African neighbours as "colonial entities." Nkrumah directed his anti-colonial rhetoric at European powers while his Somali counterpart accused Ethiopia and Kenya of ruling the Somali population in Ogaden and in NFD against their will. Pan-Somalism clashed with post independence pan-Africanism. Refusing to recognise the colonial borders which the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) rectified (1964) in Cairo, the Somali Republic became "Caesar's Gaul, the cockpit of East Africa, a political pariah, the odd-man-out in the African Affairs" and was for seven years "isolated in the arena of pan-African politics" (Hirsi, 1977:297).

However, while the state structure was not decolonised, the Somali population was culturally, religiously and linguistically intact. The multiple colonial powers did not break up or penetrate into the core elements of Somali identity and the practice of Islam, therefore, the state's secular legal system was not at ease with the society it claimed to represent. Indeed, the "most important leaders at independence were not the founding members" of the initial league (Abdi Samatar, 2017:40). Despite the political euphoria generated by the dream of Greater Somalia and the search of the missing territories, the end product was not self-determination. From the legal and leadership point of view, the situation was akin to what Mbembe (2017:76) describes as a "loss of familiarity" in two senses: the elder and the Islamic scholar were alienated from the political leadership and secular elite inherited the postcolonial state.

From the dawn of independence to 1969, two opposing forces were internally at play. Islamic scholars and elders who constituted the traditional leadership fiercely advocated for the complete Islamisation of the state and the secular elite who insisted on westernisation but declared Islam as the religion of the state to give a sense of legitimacy to their otherwise "strange cause" (Abdullahi, 2011:135). In this connection, secularism as a political ideology alienated the Somali masses and the so-called decolonisation process was a lifeless exercise or a "celebration of decay," to borrow from Mazrui (1982:11). The only connection between the people and the democratic postcolonial state was the possible liberation of the rest of Somali-speaking territories. Though the initial stage of Osman's administration registered a degree of success, it was thwarted by a variety of political entrepreneurs whose aim was to enrich themselves. Democratic disorder based on personal gain then became a prominent feature of the young nation's political culture (Abdi Samatar, 2017:105).

Six years into this democratic disorder, cracks appeared in the wall of the postcolonial state and the proclamation that "capitalism is embedded in its own elements of destruction" turned out to be a political reality in Somalia as the new state became completely detached from the masses (Marx and Engels, 1884:137). Dissolution replaced the democratic disorder. Qaasim, the poet who in 1960 "wished to resurrect the Dervishes from their grave sites and informed Sayid Maxamad that the Europeans have gone," came to terms with Guhaad Cabdi-gahaydh in 1967 that the political class was the offspring of Carlo De Simone, camouflaged in Somali skin by composing:

The colonial structure I rejected gave birth to an empty shell of Somaliness

And an apostate that hides behind my skin

The same snake enters the same castle

This time, black in colour and brings more misery to the heart

Only the appearance is ours, everything else is the offspring of Carlo... (Recorded on cassette).

With the hybrid of the colonial system in bad shape, Osman left office, gracefully retiring from politics and handing over power to Italian educated Dr Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke in what is described as Africa's first democratic election in 1967 (Abdi Samatar, 2017:80). Though peaceful, the election process was "in a shambles as sixty two political parties vied for one hundred and twenty one seats" (Abdi Samatar, 2010: 701). Sharmarke was not an outsider. He was part of the democratic disorder and acknowledged the disillusionment of the wider public and proclaimed that "the teachings of Islam on one hand and the lyric poetry on the other compensates for Somalia's lack of material wealth." For Sharmarke, Islam and Somalis' creative talent in oral poetry were assets of inestimable value that had to be utilised for political unity, for spiritual and cultural prosperity to revive public enthusiasm and cover the nakedness of the postcolonial state with cultural fibres. But the absence of this cultural and spiritual prosperity in the colonially inherited order and institutions was to be the source of the conflict that bedevils the Horn of Africa nation today. By 1969, the postcolonial parliamentary liberal democracy "had become a travesty, an elaborate, rarefied game with little relevance" to the Somali identity and daily challenges that faced the population (Ahmad Samatar, and Lyons, 1995:14). In other words, the legal effigies of the colonial state "whose patent lack of correspondence with the values of the colonised" stifled the establishment of the postcolonial state not only in Somalia but also elsewhere in the continent (Appiah, 1992:8). The democratic disorder paved the way for a Marxism disaster.

4.3. **Marxism Disaster**

The political wrangling and internal hostilities led to the assassination of Sharmarke on October 15, 1969. The features of liberal democracy, an independent judiciary, electoral commission, the British-Italian legal system and the whole notion of the separation of powers were laid to rest together with Somalia's elected president. No tear was shed for the demise of the liberal democracy; after all, it was alien in its totality (Ahmad Samatar, 1994:115). In fact, Cabdullahi Suldan, (Timacade), the poet who on the "celebration of decay" lowered the British flag and the spokesman of the masses in the "decolonisation" period, rejoiced the demise of the democratic disorder, criticising the first generation of leaders for their irrational adoption of the secular legal system in place of Islamic sharia and summed up the public feeling in the following scathing poetic verses:

They have sowed disunity among us

They have disowned Islam

Bewitching us with Western ideologies, they devoured our strength... (Recorded on cassette).

In the midst of the mayhem that ensued, Major General Siad Barre, a former native colonial soldier, staged a bloodless coup, on October 15, 1969. Seen as "heroes from the barracks" who wanted to save the nation, the military men received "tumultuous welcome" (Ahmad Samatar, and Lyons, 1995:15). With the Somali nationalistic agenda at its zenith in the immediate aftermath of the coup, the revolutionary government mobilised the society in pursuit of modernising and Somalia "appeared set on the path of state-building" in the 1970s (de Walaal, 2011:109). Although the military "injected new impetus" into the body politics, Somali nationalism "is not the result of the influence of western ideology," rather it "springs from the very nature of Somali culture and is nurtured by a feeling of national consciousness which focuses on the shared heritage of Islam and belief in common ancestor, both of which make for a strong sense of pan-Somali political and cultural nationalism" (Issa-Salwe, 1994:46). But the Major General and the military elite, under the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) formulated crude Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, presenting it as scientific socialism. Emphasising self-reliance and national development strategy, the military regime rode on unprecedented wave of public support and enthusiasm, reminiscent of the independence days. The hope for a

"corruption-free government" permeated the land. For the first eight years, the state not only "seemed a representative of a cross-section of the national population" but also its elites appeared united and principled in delivering their promises under the banner of pan-Somali nationalism and socialism (Abdi Samatar, 2010:702).

On the "self-reliance front," the military junta made two significant "breakthroughs." The men from the barracks effectively and successfully dealt with a terrible drought 1974-1975, airlifting pastoralists and transporting their animals from the famine-stricken remote villages to river banks or on the shores of the Indian Ocean, rolling out programmes to "turn them" from livestock herders to fishermen. Most importantly, and Siad Barre's greatest achievement was the final establishment of orthography for the Somali language in 1972, a process that began in 1940s and made little or no progress in the years of the democratic disorder. The use of the European languages (English and Italian) which only a few Somalis spoke in the first place, were discarded and Somali became the official working language of the state. This was followed by an equally unprecedented and coordinated, all out urban and rural literacy campaigns with the slogan *bar ama baro* (teach or learn). Over thirty thousand secondary students and teachers were "dispatched into the interior in triumphant truckloads," sharing the "fruits of the revolution with their neglected nomadic comrades" (Lewis, 1965:216).

The regime sent teachers to the most rural places of the country and in the capital; the first formal academic fraternity and research institutions took shape (Issa-Salwe, 1994:72). While teachers and students conducted educational programmes aimed at furthering the revolution's goals in village hamlets, academics travelled to camel kraals in search of Somali phraseologies, compatible to the socialism vocabularies in a process known as *eray-bixin*, word-hunt. Revolution was replaced by *kacaan*, *Jaalle* took in the place of comrade and *hantiwadaag* displaced communism. Ideologically disoriented, the military junta virtually decolonised the language arena. The contradiction in the ideological and the linguistic arena can be summarised with the following rhetoric exchange between, then exiled Somali novelist, Nuruddin Farah and a senior diplomat in the military regime. The diplomat asks: "Is it not true that African writers writing in European languages tend to pander to a world audience not a local one?" The exiled writer retorts: "Do African politicians who embrace socialist, Marxist-Leninist, Maoism or even capitalist ideologies pander to foreign ideologies?" (Nuruddin, 1988:1598).

Both questions illustrated Africa's dilemma in the decolonisation period, but a continental fame accompanied Barre's domestic success with avenues, streets and military barracks named after him in Kampala, Maputo and in Lagos. Bringing Somalia from its previous diplomatic isolation, mediating a border dispute between Tanzania and Uganda, Barre not only became the head of OAU, but also chaired its annual conference, held in Mogadishu for the first time in 1974. Somalia also joined the Arab League in the same year (Abdullahi, 2011:183). While pan-African oral literature prominently featured in all public platforms and governmental media outlets, the revolutionary elites "militantly prioritised pan-Africanism and the support for the African nationalist movements took the reins of state in Mogadishu." Somalia played an active role in the African affairs and that of the Third World politics, "looming large in stature than either of her pro-western neighbours" (Hirsi, 1977:297). In a bid to drum up a united continental solidarity for the liberation movements across the continent, Maxamud Cabdullahi Ciise (Sangub), a poet and Somalia's most prolific playwright composed the following song:

O, slumbering Africa!

Your adversaries burden you with endless enslavement

And vultures feed on your lionhearted ones

O, slumbering Africa

Your heroes carry loads of humiliation

Pulled by the chain

Like a tamed he-camel

You would not have donned indignity

Where are your warriors...? (Recorded on cassette).

While the then African leaders delivered charged anti-colonial rhetoric in their annual gathering at the seaside capital of Somalia, Sangub articulated that leadership disunity kept the continent in the colonial shackles. Mogadishu's stadium vibrated with his famous Pan-African song "reject the colour of colonialism," expressing solidarity with Southern African liberation movements,

soliciting for a unified African front against Ion Smith's Rhodesia, apartheid South Africa, and Portuguese rule in Mozambique and Anglo:

Ian Smith would not have been visible

Neither would he have been milking Rhodesia

If you do not clandestinely offer a helping hand to him

Portugal would have not committed massacres

Neither would it have considered Mozambique and Anglo as its territories

If not your disunity

We are not oblivious of the midnight assassinations

And the hidden knives in South Africa

In words and wisdom

Africa must listen to its own echoes

And reject the colour of colonialism... (Abubukar, 2015:84).

Perhaps the continent had not taken heed of Sangub's words, or listened to "its own echoes," but General Barre pulled Somalia from the "isolationist trap it was relegated in the 1960s" without abandoning pan-Somalism (Hirsi, 1977:297). On the economic front, large swathes of Italian-owned agricultural land and financial institutions were nationalised, and the Soviet-built, highly trained and well-equipped national army became the source of the young nation's pride. The revolutionaries had no idea that the same modernising "marxist tools" were to lead to not only their downfall but also to an unprecedented disintegration of one of the most homogeneous societies in the world. The Arab League offered another platform to strengthen Somali-Egyptian relations. Interestingly, while Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and Barre deepen ties under the auspices of communism, repressed Islamic movements in both countries stood by each other, under the banner of Muslim brotherhood. Though Barre engineered large-scale developmental projects, offered free education of all levels, established orthography for the Somali language

and made it the official means of instruction in state institutions, the regime had transformed itself into a cult, owing its survival to Chinese, North Korean and Nasserite support as well as the Soviet Union (Lewis, 1965:211). Islamic scholars who initially supported the revolutionary vanguards emotively politicised the adoption of the Roman alphabet as official script for the Somali language, interpreting the regimes choosing of the Roman alphabet over Arabic as the ultimate evidence for the government's determination to disown Islam and secularise the society. The "custodians of Islam" in the Horn of Africa collided with *aabayaashii kacaanka* (fathers of communism) in Somalia.

Barre, unlike Sharmarke, presented Islam as a "liability and backwardness" but successfully combined the socialist rhetoric with poetic lyrics and pan-Somalism: the liberation of Ogaden, Djibouti and Northern Frontier District. Despite the initial public enthusiasm, the Marxist-Leninist scientific socialism quickly declined as Barre's regime embarked on a wide-spread campaign to establish communism as the official state ideology. This leadership cult and the ideology itself were alien to the egalitarian, freedom-oriented Somali traditions and clashed with the tenets of Islam. In the Supreme Revolutionary Council's well-framed propaganda-oriented efforts to instil communism and sustain revolutionary vigour, brutal methods were employed. Religious institutions were closed down, local Muslim scholars were incarcerated and mosque attendance monitored (Lewis 985:51). The relation between the fathers of communism and the custodians of Islam can be summarised in three stages: "mutual confidence (1969-1972), mutual mistrust (1972-1974) and overt confrontations." Mutual confidence because the orchestrators of the bloodless coup first used the Qur'an as a symbol of their political inclination and mutual distrust because members of the military elite who expressed dissident were executed while overt confrontation happened as the result of the regime directly interfering in the practice of religion. For example, the regime tightly regulated Friday summons and banned "unauthorised" Islamic education circles (Abdullahi, 2011: 172).

Furthermore, the recruitment of civilians to spy on dissidents, particularly religious institutions increased sharply. Revolutionary vanguards frequently raided mosques and the regime built more prison cells than roads or any other social amenities outside Mogadishu. Communism as an ideology was once more foreign, but its drivers this time were local, and Barre wrapped it around superficial rhetoric about social welfare, his definition of Somali culture and his own image. In

their desperate attempt to separate the Somali population from Islam, the National Security Services (NSS) intruded on the privacy of everyone and citizens lost their "de facto right to free expression" (Laitin and Samatar, 1987:88). Farax Galoolle, a Somali politician and a wise elder known for his both hilarious and satirical political remarks, advised his compatriot to choose from three options: To obey Barre, remain silent or languish in a notorious jail in Afgoye, on the outskirts of Mogadishu. As the result, the Marxist ideologues lost lustre but the regime kept on using contrasting images to revive them. With Barre insisting that his scientific socialism was perfectly compatible with Islam, the regime displayed portraits of Sayid Maxamad, Marx, Lenin and Mao.

While the SRC was beating the drum of communism, the ideologue of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Sayid Qutb inspired Islamic movements in Somalia and a call to politically return to Islam reverberated across the land, sealing some of the social and political fissures that had been created by the communist elites as an underground religious movement penetrated the revolution's stronghold. Scholars preached, interpreted and dissipated two influential writings of the Egyptian ideologue: *Milestone* and *In the Shadow of the Qur'an,* in which Sayyid Qutb equated the secular leaders in the Muslim world to "pre-Islamic idol worshipers who rejected Allah's sovereignty" (Qutb, 1966:31). Unlike Julius Nyerere who attempted to Africanise Marxism under his *Ujamaa* social and economic development, Somalia's junta declared that "our socialism is not Islam, it is not African, it Marxist-Leninist" and the gulf between the state and the general public widened (Abdullahi, 2011:175)

The military junta's interpretation of Islam and communism now came under threat in 1980s and the SRC's use of Sayid Maxamad's poetry, image and statue to advance scientific socialism was contemptuously ridiculed and presented as the proverbial sinful prostitute who on her way to pilgrimage missed her clients. Like Nasser of Egypt, Barre led a witch hunt for religious scholars who denounced his interpretation of Islam, and the secularisation project culminated in the execution of ten prominent religious scholars in 1975. He presented them as terrorists, foreign agents and subversives and anti-development. "I, one, who has lived as a faithful Muslim and will die so, became an atheist according to them and they threatened to murder me" decried Barre, proclaiming that the scholars were an integral part of global jihadists intent on toppling his regime under the guise of religion (Abdi, 2012:13). For Barre and the Marxist Somali elites, the

religious scholars were reactionaries, supported by imperialists-they were the enemies of the progressive scientific socialism revolution, but for the Somali public, this was an attack on their religion and identity and Barre was an "apostate" living in the *Jaahiliya* period. This was a turning point in the deterioration of the Somali state and Barre's scientific socialism as an ideology. Economic growth declined, tilting the country towards disastrous political and social disorder, but the insistence on liberating Ogaden kept the regime going (Harper, 2012:12).

Buoyed by the strength of the Soviet-built army and to disguise the diminishing popularity of the revolution, Barre declared a full-scale conventional war on Ethiopia and in support of the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF). The war unfolded in Ogaden, and a seismic shift in superpower alignments took place in the Horn Africa. The United States of America (US), Ethiopia's "traditional superpower protector" withheld military supplies to Addis Abba and Mengistu responded by closing US installations in Asmara, declaring that his revolution was socialist. The Soviets arrived as the Americans departed but help did not reach Mengistu's hands until the Somalis fully liberated Ogaden from Ethiopia, in a period of six months in 1977. The dream of united Somali territories became a temporary reality (Lewis, 1965:233).

This victory did not last as over 18000 Cuban and Soviet troops, along with Yemeni and East German military advisors and technicians poured into the Ogaden valleys with superior arms to aid Mengistu, ultimately defeating the Somalis in 1978 (Issa-Salwe, 1994:85). The Soviet switched sides for three reasons. Experiences elsewhere in the world indicated that socialism might have taken root in countries with long histories of oppressive feudalism and large peasant farmers-ingredients for socialist revolutions, and Ethiopia, unlike Somalia was a potential candidate. Therefore, the Soviet and Cuban officials interpreted Mengistu's overthrow of the old-order as a means to spread socialist economic and political ideologies in the continent (Tilly, 2008:39). Secondly, military leaders in Somalia proved to be "unreliable allies or indiscipline children" often ignoring suggestions from the Cuban and Soviet advisors. For example, Fidel Castro attempted in March 1977, to manoeuvre General Barre into "accepting a loose socialist federation with Mengistu under Soviet patronage, which would allow the Ogaden Somalis an unspecified measure of local autonomy" (Lewis, 1965: 233).

Most importantly, Soviet officials saw Islam as an obstacle to an effective communism development in the Somali peninsula, and the spread of Soviet-socialism was more important

than a free Ogaden or the unification of the Somali peninsula. For instance, in an interview with the Somali branch of the Voice of America (VOA), Cabdi Warsame Isaaq, then a high ranking official in the military regime, narrated that the Soviet party and military leaders told their Somali counterparts: "history proved that a military regime cannot establish socialism, but the change must come from the society and your society is still predominantly Muslim." Thus, the realisation, on the Soviet part, that "Godless" communism could not replace Islam in Somalia led to its "back-stabbing policies," which Lewis described as "one of the most breathtaking acts of treachery in history."

For the Somali nation, the Cold War frustrated their collective desire to dismantle the arbitrarily drawn colonial borders and the unexpected defeat demoralised them. Their poet, Cali Sugulle captured the essence of their tremendous disappointment in the following verses, metaphorically illustrating that the "moon would not be full" until the nation recovers and missing territories are fully-liberated:

So long as the moon is not full

Nor the star complete

So long as fate lingers on her travels

I will neither exalt my culture

Nor seek worldly goods..! (Issa-Salwe, 1994:63).

The fullness of the moon metaphorically represents the map of the Somali peninsula while the "incomplete star" symbolises the Somali flag. Though Sugulle is not living, "fate" and the war on terror now linger on Somalia's travels. Barre expelled his former patrons and Soviet advisers from Mogadishu, seeking help from the United States of America (de Waal, 2011:110). This time, Somalia was caught between a Soviet betrayal and a reluctant America on one side and on the other, economic devastation, army mutiny and internal strife. While Barre sought assistance from the US, his prospective Western patrons lost trust in him and couldn't predict his next move. In reference to the US cutback in armies and in financial assistance to Barre, former US Ambassador to Somalia, Frank Crigler stated: "We took away one of his most important tools and his repressive abilities. We did much the same on the economic side. We pulled both those

two legs from under him." Unbeknown to Crigler was the fact that Barre had skilfully diversified his supplies by including munitions from Italy, Libya, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Paradoxically, Somalia was "officially bankrupt" but the informal economy thrived. This was partly because of Barre's diversification of supplies, and partly because of the remittances from Somalis working in the oil-rich countries who numbered over 150, 000, earning six times more than the average wage in Somalia (de Waal, 2011:11). For de Waal, Somalia was "far richer than the official data showed, especially in hard currency." While "official figures in 1979 put the GDP per capita at less than half the income one estimated necessary for bare essentials, yet all evidence indicated people were well-fed, shops were full of goods, tailors were making stylish clothes and a housing boom was in full swing, Toyota-Truck taxes had more than doubled in the previous years and all kinds of imports were arriving through various channels" (Jamal, 1988:17). For Jamal, this was "unconventional economy." Evidently, Barre's fall was not as the result of economic bankruptcy. In fact, Somalia had more GPD per capita than Kenya but neither foreign economists nor the World Bank had understood this economic puzzle at the time (de Wall, 2011:112).

If Somalia's political instability doesn't fit in the theoretical analysis of Africa's conflicts, the evidence shows that the Horn of Africa's nation defied the economic trend of the continent, for the late 1970s-1980s were the crashing period and bankruptcy in most countries, an era of economic despondency. Economists describe this period as the "lost decades" and independence in Africa was equated to the proverbial goat that sucked herself. Nevertheless, a thriving informal economy without a state is not a surprising phenomenon to keen observer of Somalia's political and economic history. Barre's cult regime lost both the monopoly of violence and the control of the hard currency. This spelt the beginning of the end for the rhetoric of socialism in Somalia. The mismatch between the ingredients of secularism of the postcolonial state and the popularity of Islam in Somalia, and above all, Barre's bombardment of his own cities in the north and east of the country in a desperate effort to quell new waves of revolt in the 1980s, paved the way for the actual disintegration in 1991 (Mills, 2014:328).

In a recorded Friday sermon, one of the Islamic scholars executed in 1975, summarised the fissure between the state and the Somali nation as following: "There are no commonalities between the Soviet and Somalia. The Soviet is a Christian nation while Somalis are Muslims.

The Soviet citizens are whites and the Somalis are Africans. The Soviet is in Europe while Somalia is in Africa. Hence, there is neither a cultural bridge nor a political ideology that binds us." What collapsed therefore was not a Somali state. Save for the extensive use of Somali poetry, the regime was an imported project in a Marxist form with no elements of Somali identity and its legal and structural foundation could not be recognised by the Somali people. By 1991, a new kind of secularism, but in a different form unfolded in the streets of Mogadishu. This time, secularism gradually transformed itself into "warlordism."

4.4. **The staunch myth of clan Narrative**

In a review of South Africa's military victory in East Africa in 1940-1941, Conrad Norton and Uys Krige wrote of the "white city of Mogadiscio, capital of the Italian Somaliland, a town won by man from the desert" (Mills, 2014:325). But in 1991, warlords "won" the seaside capital of the Somali Republic after the fall of the communist regime. Like many postcolonial states in Africa, the collapse of the state has been erroneously characterised as tribal warfare, and "journalists, politicians, aided by academics constructed common explanations from grossly oversimplified anthropological models" (Besteman, 1996:120). But it might be useful to define warlordism, a term widely associated with the outbreak of the war. Warlordism is an "act or acts aimed fundamentally at undermining attempts at state consolidation for individual gain" (Marten, 2006:47). More broadly, a "warlord is an individual who exercises autonomous political authority and monopoly on the use of physical force over sub-state territorial, but who is not legally recognised by the international community as a legitimate governing actor" (Ahmed, 2013:316). While there was no single warlord in Somalia who had the monopoly of violence because of the rivalry between the architects of the war, each one of the prominent actors exercised an autonomous violent authority, and undermined any form or attempt at state reconstruction. For fear of the Islamists taking power, regional and international actors often aided the warlords in subverting the rebirth of the Somali state under the banner of Islam.

Nevertheless, the rationale for the clan narrative has become a "hegemonic" concept that reduced the Somali conflict to mere clan antagonism. The Bedouin folklore: "Myself against my brother, my brother and I against my cousin, my cousin, clan and I against the world" is often used to ground the clan narrative argument. Needless to say that, the folklore as the only paramount explanatory factor to understand the protracted conflict has been proven to be a source of

"analytical stagnation, and is tediously superficial," and above all, repetitive and dangerously stereotypical. It presents the Somali disaster as the ultimate piece of evidence that independence for Africa was a "seductive farce" and that neo-colonialism and military interventions ought to be seen as a positive alternative to a failed African state (Ahmed Samatar, 1994:6). Synonymous with anarchy "becoming another Somalia is the fate to be avoided by every African state," and yet this is the same country which was "previously hailed as the most unified state" in the continent, free from ethnic divisions that plagued the continent (Luling, 2010: 286).

Forced secularisation of the state and members of military elite as the underlining cause of the Somali conflict is two dimensional: Islamic movements and the wider public on one side, and secular politicians and the international community on the other. This however does not mean one should blindly mistrust the established approach or dismiss the role of clan-based politics in averting the re-construction of the Somali state; rather, it is the centralisation of the clan-antagonism that has obscured the main source of the "civil war", namely, the imposition of secularism in the country. No doubt kinship and common ancestors were factors exploited by the colonial powers and the communist regime and the generals that turned into criminal warlords, but neither blood ties nor a scarcity of resources instigated the immense destruction of Somalia.

On the contrary, Marxist-Leninist generals from various clans fell out with Barre and found an easy alliance in Somalia's regional and traditional arch rival: Ethiopia. It is important to note that these generals had long lost the last modicum of faith in religion and replaced the Somali culture with crude communism and Karl Marx's rhetoric that "religion is the opium of the masses," advocating for the annihilation of opponents to their own interpretation of scientific socialism. But they were not endowed with the nationalist vigour of their former patron (Abdi, 2012:45). Barre too, was adamant to hang onto power; he was not in a position to rekindle the weary population and his long-chanted nationalistic slogans fell on deaf ears. His stance was clear. Barre vowed to dismantle what he had built, no matter the cost, setting the stage for the subsequent catastrophe and political collapse:

"I, Mohamed Siad Barre, am singularly responsible for the transformation of Somalia and Mogadishu from a bush country and scruffy hamlet into a modern state and commodious city, respectfully. Consequently, I will not allow anyone to destroy me or run me out of here, and if they try, I will take the whole country with me" (Ahmad Samatar, 1994:119).

Clearly, the conflict was not clan-based and the armed groups against Somalia's then strong man were organised regionally; the target was Barre and his supporters regardless of their clan. As if to prove Barre's pronouncement right, the three main rebel groups, United Somali Congress (USC), led by General Maxamad Farax (Caydiid), Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), led by Cornel Axamad Omar Jees and Somali National Movement (SNM), led by Abdirahman Ahmed Ali (Tuur) could not formulate a common agenda or find a national objective in filling the political vacuum. While Jees and Caydiid went on a killing spree in the south, Tuur was embroiled in functional fighting among his own clan in the north. Purposeless violence unfolded in the streets of Mogadishu, leading to the total unravelling of the traditional norms and values that had mediated the rules of conflict for centuries. The role of Islam, the Islamic scholar, the *xeer* and the elder were denied a political space. While traditional warriors excluded *birmagaydo* from their enemies, the secular warlords made no distinction in their targets. This breakdown of the societal norms and time-tested regulators of conflict was brought about by the communist inclined military generals: the wholesale tragedy and the traumatisation of the population were partly due to the curse of secularism and partly the entire collapse of the national institutions and the state (Ahmad Samatar, 1992:626). Disregarding any reasonable voice, the warlords not only attacked state institutions but also traditional bond that held the Somali population together, and armed youth took over the streets of all cities (Holzer, 2005:26).

This demands a different approach to better explain and understand the political reality, acknowledging that there were other discrete factors at work, because this type of calamity has never happened in the recorded history of the Somali people. Never before the "cannibalism era" had nearly one-third to one-half of the population died; therefore, the calamity surpassed all the previous ones and viewing it through the lens of clannism, not because of a hard-headed analysis, but because it is the only readily available narrative is to be academically dishonest or politically naive at best (Ahmad Samatar, 1992:626). Likewise, "no clan ever fought against the other" on a large scale in Somalia, but there were invariably warlords who insatiably craved for power and the only way to get it was to claim to be fighting on behalf of certain clans. The warlords were fighting "on their own behalf" and for their own interests and no clan has ever chosen representatives in the battlefields (Farah, 2007:9).

In this regard, sharper scrutiny of the Somali conflict reveals glaring limitations in the clannism argument. For example, General Caydiid, Somalia's fiercest warlord and Colonel Jees belonged to two different clans, but they were united in the "killing spree." The former was Hawiye and the leading figure of (USC) while the latter was Daarood and the head of (SPM). Political commentators and social anthropologists ironically and misleadingly characterised the above examples as Hawiye versus Daarood. Ion Lewis used the breakdown of the "alien" state as an internal evidence for his staunch myth clanism theory, characterising even Axmad Gurey's war with Ethiopia and the Portuguese in the sixteenth century as "clan war fare" (Besteman, 1998:109). Financed by the European Union (EU), Lewis embarked on a large scale project titled "Menu Options for Somalia," in which the British colonial anthropologist concluded that Somalia would have to be, once more partitioned into "clan enclaves."

This recommendation was forcefully implemented in the country under the guise of "federalism," by introducing a formula known as 4.5 in which the Somali people are externally stratified into four so-called "majority clans" and minority groups in 2004, a system that is also unable to take off (Gaas, 2018:25). While Islam in Somalia does not recognise a majority or a minority rule, the impact of secularism culminated in 4.5, as the best alternative for peace and state building, a system which is not even popular with the secular elite and the warlords who rectified its adoption outside of Somalia in the first place. Therefore, the predicament of Somalia lies in the importation of strange system of governance versus the indigenous elements of Somali identity, of which Islam is its heartbeat. But ironies are not in short supply in the horn of Africa nation. Artists and music fraternities "missed" the relative peace under Barre as the following song, composed perhaps in a refugee camp, and translated by Ahmad Samatar strikingly mourns the collapse of communist state:

...The flag that belonged to me

The earth that belonged to me

The defence forces that belonged to me

The strength that belonged to me

These protected me from adversity

Oh, Allah, they are all gone and I am miserably alone...

Despite the popularity of the clan narrative, one of the fiercest battles that Somalia has ever seen was between General Caydiid and his rival, Cali Mahdi in Mogadishu. Both warlords were from the same clan. This is not the only fallacy in the clan narrative: the leader of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front, Cornel Cabdullahi Yusuf and Cornel Jees were of the same clan, but could not see eye-to-eye, let alone form an alliance. Instead, Jees fought alongside the supposedly rival clan against his "own" (Farah, 2007, Ahmad, 2017). Another bitter war took place between leaders of the same clan in the Somali National Movement (SNM) in the former British Somaliland: now the breakaway enclave. It is this complexity of the conflict that outsiders did not fathom and to borrow from Edward Said, resorted to "creating an image outside of history," presenting the clan narrative as fitting and only possible analysis in deconstructing the genesis of the political and social disorder in the Horn of Africa nation (Edward Said, 1983:17). Given the above examples, it is evident that unlike the Rwandan civil war where Hutus and Tutsis hacked at each, the Somali one was amorphous with warlords fighting among themselves when there was no Barre to unite against, massacring members of their own community. When Islamic movements and scholars were instrumental in shaping the political and social affairs in the Somali history, clan identity and allegiance is fluid, flexible and does not correspond to family lineages and territorial ownership. It has to be understood as a system in a constant change within which alliances break up like political parts. But it is also a system, prone to elite manipulation as a source of power. Even when mobilisation and politicisation of "clan identity" was at its peak from 1990-1994, the pattern of warlordism did not conform to Ion Lewis's "primordial and static" narrative, neither is it "inflexible or eternal" in its use and meaning for the Somalis. In fact, when applied as a political tool in an environment, where Islam and the *xeer* are the legal instruments and *wadaad*o and elders are the actors, clan mobilisation is a potent agent for peace as demonstrated in the breakaway northern region (Somaliland), and the eastern part of the country, Puntland (Abdi Samatar, 1997, Gaas, 2018).

The killing of Caydiid by Cismaan Caato, a junior warlord who belonged to the same sub-clan epitomises the inaccuracies in the "clannism canon" as the only indisputable source of the protracted conflict and the Somali tragedy in general. Therefore, a close reflection of the Somali disaster raises many questions and cries out for more in-depth analysis in elucidating as to why

the Somali society descended into unprecedented anarchy (Mirreh, 1994:21). From Mirreh's viewpoint, secularisation played a major role in the abrupt and unprecedented disintegration of all forms of authority, religious, traditional and moral values and the glaring loss of direction and political disorder. In a similar version to that of 1921-1943, the Somali society virtually became leaderless after the collapse of the communism state in 1991. Therefore, the protracted conflict requires comprehensive and thoughtful assessment beyond the realm of the clan narrative and the apparent fragmentation of the Somali population into isolated kin and sub-kin groups. For Mirreh, the Marxism-Leninist utopia, the failure of the secularisation process, the pent-up frustrations and the imposition of the alien systems of governance in postcolonial Somalia exploded into an "awful" rise of anarchy, massacre and the wilful devastation of human life as well as public and private properties. In this respect, the postcolonial state and its secular elite are responsible for the destruction of the Somali "world order" (Abdi Samatar, 1997:688). Maxamud Cabdullahi (Sangub) explained the warlords' political authorities in the following verses:

They act as if trained to maim their own

Neither the faith of Islam

Nor traditions or kinships prevent them from going on a killing spree!

For Allah misguided them, they are neither conscious or unconscious

Even lawlessness is more orderly than their law..! (Recorded on cassette).

In conclusion, the forced secularisation of the Somali state from the colonial era to post-independence is the root cause of the state collapse and the current political turmoil. Sayid Maxamad's disastrous encounter with European colonisers was the first clash between Somalia's indigenous political Islam and the West's supposedly universal secular values. If Sayid Maxamad had succeeded, Somalia would have perhaps taken a different, more peaceful political path because the structures of Taleex state would have provided institutions that the Somali people would have related to and identify with their history and legal sources. But with the dawn of independence and the introduction of alien systems of governance ranging from liberal democracy to the adoptation of crude Marxist-Leninism, came the decomposition and the destruction of the traditional methods of conflict resolution. Barre's iron-fist rule and the

socialism rhetoric detached the wider population from the apparatus of the state leading to a wide-spread dissatisfaction among the population and the military generals. As for the eruption of the nation into political disorder, it is evident that the conflict was not clan-based but rather was instigated by militia groups and former military generals who fell with their former patron. Therefore, the dominant clan narrative in analysing Somalia's prolonged conflict does not hold water.

Chapter Five

*5. **Political Islam post-Siad Barre 1991-2006***

Introduction

If history is at all helpful in creating a national narrative, nothing defines or shapes the collective memory of the Somali nation, their position in the Horn of Africa and their countries relations with the outside world, more than their faith. With the fall and the flight of Somalia's "big man" in 1991, religious movements which had been banned with their scholars exiled rejuvenated the social fabric and revived political Islam, promoting the wider sentiments of Muslim Brotherhoods against secularism. Thus, they presented Islam as the only solution for political disorder in the Muslim world and Somalia in particular. Islamists perceived the fall of Barre as an opportunity to restore the Somalis "perceived entitlement to regional Islamic identity," the notion that their ethnic, cultural and religious homogeneity represents Islam in the Horn of Africa against their Christian neighbours. Al-itihad became the first organised and armed political movement to emerge out of the 1991 turmoil, vowing to steer the Horn of Africa's nation away from the curse of secularism to the "promised land," and getting rid of the militia groups and the warlords. But their rise to power caught the hostile eyes of Somalia's regional rival, Ethiopia. Although Al-itihad was militarily defeated in 1996 by a Western-backed Ethiopia incursion, the "awakening" gave birth to the Islamic Courts Union and the Somali Spring in 2006. It is in order to explain the interconnectedness between these two movements that the following chapter is organised into two sections. In the first section, I explain the events that led to the revival of armed political Islam in Somalia (1991-2006), focusing on Al-itihad as the main organised movement that emerged from the political mayhem that followed the collapse of Siad Barre. I explore Al-itihad's ideology and their link to what was known as the *Sahwa* (the awakening) in the Muslim world which took shape from the 1980s to the late 1990s. The principal argument of this section is that the Somali nation, in the 1990s, perceived, political Islam to be the only solution to the prevailing disorder. The second section explores the rise, in 2006, of what used to be loosely organised sharia courts as a formidable political force, bringing warlordism and factionalism to an end in the midst of the war on terror. The principal argument of this section is that the Somali people have not failed to reconstitute their state but their effort has been often thwarted by external forces.

5.1. **The Revival Period (Al-itihad)**

Ernest Gellner argued that Islam is "ever reformation-prone" while Ali Mazrui described revivalism as a "matter of history and nostalgia." For Gellner, politicised Islam in the Muslim world can only "with great difficulty be disentangled from modern nationalism" while for Mazrui, the "revival of Islam is often an angry process of rediscovered fundamentalism" (Gellner, 1983, Mazrui, 1988). Both the "permanent reformation" and the "angry revival" are born out of collective displeasure with the impositions of alien forms of European notions of state on largely Muslim societies. The failure of secular nationalism and the fall of communism in the 1980s awakened to political Islam in Somalia and indeed in the Middle East. In important respects, while the revival of political Islam in Somalia shared similarities with the rest of the Muslim world, it has "roots in the Somali history and the very particular local context of Somalia and its peoples" (Abdullahi, 2011:27). Compared for example to the Muridiya of Senegal who mostly enjoyed the hospitality of both the colonial and postcolonial states, Islamic movements in Somalia received no state recognition and their popularity stemmed from grassroots support and the maintaining of political confrontation with the state (Babou, 2007, Launay and Soares, 1999). The Muridiya developed its own social, economic and less confrontational sphere of influence outside the state apparatus, while successive Islamic movements in Somalia, continuously sought to wrestle power from secular weak establishment, contesting for a political space and denouncing the government of the day. The post-Said Barre Somali secular elite owe their political life and economic survival to the West and regional powers, particularly, Ethiopia, Islamists on the other hand, localise their powerbase but express global Muslim solidarity.

When repressed, or militarily defeated, movements in Somalia, adjust to different political pressure and social conditions. Islam too, does not subordinate itself to the secular state and it is used as an effective and powerful grassroots "expression of Somali nationalism and Somali pride," and often finds its way into the track of social and political transformation. Islam in Somalia is never personal nor is it idle. In fact, the faith engineered the historical ruptures in the country. From Axmad Gurey's sixteenth century war with Abyssinia and Portuguese army, Sayid Maxamad's Taleex caliphate in the twentieth century to current war on terror, religious identity is the most consistent generator of conflict in the Somali peninsula, often resonating more with the masses than the secular political figures of the day. The Somali Islamic movements, unlike

the Muridiya of Senegal, often disintegrate at certain times in their history or split into two functions and rarely maintain cohesion and continuity, but keep re-emerging as an alternative to the democratic disorder of 1960s, the Marxism disaster of 1969-1990 and the warlordism of 1991-2006. Therefore, Islam has never been a mere interstitial force in the political history of the Horn of Africa nation. Indeed, the faith is inseparably tied to Somali nationalism, for there has never been Somali anti-colonial struggle without Islam (Furlow, 2013, Shank, 2007).

Like Mustafa Kamal of Turkey or Gamel Abdinassir of Egypt, Siad Barre did not establish himself as a revered historical figure in post-independence Somalia; nor did he succeed in creating a secular society, a loyal military, and a deep-state in the case of Egypt, where the police and intelligent agents keep the Islamist at bay. There were no political institutions that outlasted him either. The man was the state and the state was the man but underground Islamic movements, ironically even recruited from the military members. Seen in these terms, the scientific socialism project not only hit a dead-end in the late 1980s, but it also created fertile ground for unprecedented anarchy. The movements inspired by political Islam hibernated and were hardly noticeable during the communist regime, so the outside world was familiar only with the secular illusion, arising from the rhetoric of scientific socialism (Marchal, 2007:12). Additionally, the unfamiliarity of socialism, in the sense of separating Islam from the state institutions, exposed the mismatch between the values and the belief system of the Somali society, thus nurtured communal hostility towards the intrinsic ingredients of the secular state. In fact, the notion of citizenry that is loyal to a secular nation-state has never "gained sufficient ground in the minds of the majority of the population" (Abdullahi, 2011:29). More crucially, unlike the Marxism-Leninist ideological farce, modern religious movements in Somalia has a solid political history to draw on, appealing to "those who see submission to Islamic law in its fullness, as an alternative solution to lawlessness of secular warlords." Axmad Gurey and Sayid Maxamad are their main historical references and act as potent instrument for recruitment (Luling, 1996:295).

On the eve of the civil war in 1991, a large number of Somali students and exiled religious scholars arrived from the Middle East with the aim of "saving" Somalia from the warlords through the adoptation of Islam as the only viable political bandwagon. When the military regime in Somalia cooperated with its counterpart in Egypt to promote communism as a

modernising tool, repressed Muslim Brotherhoods in Cairo, in Khartoum and in Mogadishu strengthened their ties. Somalia's membership of the Arab League facilitated access to wide variety of scholarships in the Gulf countries, Egypt and Sudan in 1974-1980s. Somali students who studied in Saudi Arabia's Islamic universities, particularly in Mecca and Medina and those who attended Egypt's Al-Azhar University popularised ideas of Sayyid Qutb, Mawdudi, Hassan al-Turabi and Hasan al-Banna (Marchal, 2001, Abdullahi, 2011, and Mesoy, 2009). It has to be pointed out, that decades of internal repression; the marginalisation of Islam and the impact of external invasions bred militant Islamists in Somalia. But these movements skilfully blended localised Islam with peculiar Somali nationalism that cross-pollinated other movements, particularly, Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONFL) in the Somali-speaking territories of the Horn of Africa. It is an irony of the Horn of Africa's political history that Islamists adopt nationalistic tendencies masked by religious *fatwa*. Regional and international incursions into Somalia give currency to this paradoxical marriage between Islam and nationalism, a model that traces its origin to the sixteenth century Awdal caliphate and its leader.

Al-itihad, together with its sister organisation, Islah were the first organised, and potentially powerful religious groups to emerge out of the disorder of the early 1990s. It was in this period, that a substantial number of Muslims turned towards Islam for identity, dignity, safety and security, and above all, for political legitimacy (Huntington, 1996:109). The distinction between Al-itihad and Islah was that the first combined the militaristic campaign from 1993-1996, with political Islam as an ideology against the warlords and the latter focused on reconstructing social institutions by building schools and hospitals and providing social assistance to the population. In practical terms, both Al-itihad and Isla registered a remarkable growth in the years 1992-1995, filling the vacuum and became the only organizations that appealed to ordinary Somalis. For example, a degree of stability was established in pockets of Somalia which fall under their sphere of influence and they competed "exceptionally well in the conflict" and tossed warlords out of certain small towns and pockets of Mogadishu (Ahmad, 2015:89). Social and religious institutions were swiftly re-established and faith-based welfare branches re-opened, for the first time, in the midst of the militia wars from 1991-1996. Al-itihad, like the ninetieth century Dervish caliphate, set up sharia courts in northern Mogadishu, and "there is no dispute that, where the courts rule, there is a measure of peace and security, hence they enjoy much public support." Implementing sharia to the letter and punishing perpetrators by, for example

amputating a hand of a thief might be considered in the West as an "outrageous act," but is not "unpopular with the Somali public" (Luling, 1997:296).

It is crucial to point out that Al-itihad was an integral part of *Sahwa,* the Islamic awakening, adopting the philosophy of the global Ikhanu Muslimun (the Muslim Brotherhood) inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, one of the oldest modern-day Islamic movements with a political foothold in the Muslim world. This global Muslim Brotherhood was less political in the oil-rich Gulf states and fundraised for social projects declaring that "all Muslims are equal and that economics cannot be separated from the principle social justice" (Mesoy, 2009: 22). But Hassan al Turabi, the Sudanese religious and the Islamist leader aptly summed up the objectives of this awakening as not "just an individual piety, ideological, cultural, intellectual advancement nor was it just political rhetoric, rather, it was aimed at the comprehensive reconstruction of the ummah (Muslim society) from top to bottom" (Huntington, 1996:111). With a large number of Muslim foreign NGOs pouring into Somalia in 1992-1996, mobilising resources and embarking on projects under the shadow of local Islamic movements, Hassan al Turabi advocated for a "pan-Islamic organisation in Africa" but none of the Somali groups joined al Turabi's Islamic movement in Sudan (Mesoy, 2009:43).

In the midst of civil strife and political upheavals, where the warlords and their militia roamed in all cities and ran checkpoints, the Somali population increasingly turned towards religious practices. The religious veil for women and circles of formal and informal Islamic studies which had been dishonoured in Barre's time were adopted for physical and social security. On the other hand, Islamic groups expressed unmonitored anti-West, anti-secularism and even anti-non-Muslim foreign NGOs sentiments. Unsurprisingly, Al-itihad borrowed the popular slogan from the Muslim Brotherhood that "Islam is the only solution" to Somalia's disaster and a tool to cleanse the country from the curse of secularism. Like the twentieth century anti-colonial Dervish movement, Al-itihad adopted faith as the only defence mechanism for Somalia and the Somalis. As a consequence of this new found religious re-dedication, people filled mosques and other religious centres, and veil became the dominant dress for women. Somalis, it was observed, "read the Qur'an more often in the quest for spiritual support" and identified with Islam as a means to achieve physical security (Marchal, 2007:17).

Islamic education and awareness campaigns in which fundamentalists and traditional scholars preached in public places gained momentum. Their target this time was non-Muslim NGOs whom the scholars accused of Christianising Somali children through education. Seen from this perspective, religious movements present themselves, throughout the Horn of Africa nation's political history as the defenders of Somali identity and align themselves with the rest of the ummah. From a global perspective, while the East Asian periphery had become assertive as the result of economic growth and a wave of democratisation swept across former communist regimes in southern and central Europe and Latin America, Islamist movements gained strength in the Muslim countries in the early 1990s. The call to modernise without westernising picked up steam in the streets of Mogadishu. A more useful analogy to gauge the influence of this awakening and the resurgence of political Islam and its impact in the 1980s and 1990s is the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation in Europe. Both advocated a purer form of religion. But unlike the Protestant Reformation that was limited to northern Europe and made little or no impact in Spain, Italy and Eastern Europe, the *Sahwa* movement touched every corner of the Muslim society in the Muslim world and beyond. The call was heeded from Bosnia to Chechnya, from Baghdad to Kashmir and from Kabul to Casablanca (Huntington, 1996:110).

In the case of Somalia, the resurgence was animated by a rejection of secularism, warlordism, corruption and a moral decay that Al-itihad attributed to the absence of Islamic practices in society in post-independence Somalia. Interestingly, Al-itihad and its sister organisation Islah wrapped nationalism with a religious mantle and, echoed some of the central tenets of Barre's scientific socialism. They demonstrated an outright contempt for clan-based politics from the start and relentlessly maintained that Islam transcends tribal, racial and regional borders. While Barre vowed to dismantle clannism by adopting communism, Islamists' common denominator was the desire for an authentic form of Islamic governance and building the caliphate in the Somali peninsula (Harper, 2012:77). Islah was seen as elitist organisation which drew its membership from the Gulf-states-educated intellectuals who were unable to attract the working class and rural Somalis, but it focused on the provision of social amenities. The movement's clandestine affairs or what was described as "decent relation" with Somalia's traditional enemy, Ethiopia, "did not also endear to many Somalis." Islah mainly operated as an interface between the Somalis and international Islamic and nongovernmental organisations (Furlow, 2013, Marchal, 2007). From the beginning, they demonstrated real social commitment to building

strong networks across various social groups and adopted peaceful methods and social welfare-oriented policies. For example, Islah built major learning institutions including the Mogadishu and Benadir universities, thus refusing the opportunity to take up arms against Ethiopia or the warlords. Al-itihad, however, continued its militaristic attitude coupled with the ambition to bring the country under the rules of Allah. The organisation's endeavour to violently assume power distinguished it from other religious groups and they were determined to defeat the warlords who according to them were "slow-witted pagans and poor models for humanity."

Al-itihad's jihad was two pronged: the first strategy was to get rid of the former military generals who were now "slow-witted" warlords, and the other was to fight the Ethiopian "infidels" on Somali soil, including the occupied Ogaden in Ethiopia. It is important to point out that some of these objectives are achieved: order was restored in the areas that Al-itihad captured from the warlords because the movement enjoyed strong support from the local population. They established sharia-based court systems and military bases in Bosaso in the north-east, Gedo in the south and Luq, a strategic border town. It is this ambition and the defeat of some of the warlords in 1996 that caught the attention of Somalia's regional enemy (Marchal, 2007, Harper, 2012). In Luuq, courts administered justice based on Islamic law and offered free Islamic education, established a police force and health centres, all linked to the principles of sharia law (Malito, 2015:1871). Like Sayid Maxamad, Al-itihad "banned *qaad*," a stimulant leafy drug and was much stricter about maintaining Islamic practices to establish the first form of city-caliphate since the fall of Taleex in 1920 (Furlow, 2013:93). The implementation of sharia puts Islamists in a collision cause with the secular state in Somalia. Sayid Maxamad fought against the introduction of the colonial state, while postcolonial Islamic movements fight against the restoration of a secular state in Somalia after the collapse of the communist regime in 1991. Islam as an ethnicised Somali identity remains the means of resistance against regional and international interventions.

However, the establishment of "pocket-sized" emirates in the Somali peninsula from 1992 to 1996, the possibility of overrunning the warlords, and the fear of Al-itihad's ideological influence beyond Somalia, alarmed Ethiopia and the Western policymakers, and fresh clouds of war gathered in the Somali sky. Ethiopia invaded Somalia to stop Al-itihad's advances and to aid the factional leaders, who had now lost militarily and moral grounds to regain their former

territories. Ethiopia "rejoiced in the continuation of the conflict in Somalia, embarking on fanning the flames of inter-wars among the armed functional warlords" but Al-itihad was the only organised group, save for Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) that posed a threat to Addis Ababa (Ingiriis, 2018:5). In collaboration with Somali functional warlords, Ethiopian began a military campaign against Al-itihad bases in Gedo region in 1996 and it took Addis Ababa more than a year to militarily defeat Al-itihad while incurring heavy casualties and hundreds of lives were lost in another "thankless expedition." While defeated, Al-itihad remained popular both in Gedo and in Mogadishu because of the peace and the security they have established in the areas that the movement ruled (Ingiriis, 2018, Harper, 2012). Warlords were brought back to power and Somalia's political Islam identity and the prospect for peace under sharia lay once more in ruins. Al-itihad's caliphate in Gedo region effectively came to an end in 1997, and this outcome was a precursor of what was to come (Harper, 2012:77).

5.2. **The Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) and the Somali Spring**

Though Al-itihad was militarily defeated in 1996, sharia-based courts had thrived in southern and central Somalia, filling the vacuum left by the collapse of the state. These courts were the source of what Menkhaus describes as "stateless justice," since they adjudicated cases from criminal to civil. The range of cases for example included divorce, inheritance, murder and, land and property restitution. This was largely in response to the prolonged absence of a central government, and this stateless justice evolved from the grassroots level and steadily rose to prominence, offering extensive organic forms of public order and establishing the rule of law in the areas that came under its jurisdiction (Menkhaus, 2006:74). At the onset, the courts emerged as a loosely defined group with no discrete ideology and visible leadership. They had no clear political vision at the beginning and did not propagate political Islam but that they were groups of independent units, each administering and establishing a degree of order in its limited area of "influence," with each cultivating the existing and deeply ingrained traditional legal system among the population, and blending it with Islamic laws (Harper, 2012:79). Axmad Cali (Heelaale), a poet, equated the ICU's rise in 2006, to "Allah's mercy" while denouncing the warlords as evil-minded creatures:

Successive seasonal storms come with new challenges or new glad tidings

And this time the Islamic Courts Union is God's mercy on us

But the warlords whose consciousness has been stolen by Ethiopia and the West

Are now gearing up to initiate us into another circle of lawlessness

With their rusted intelligence they will only envisioned the devil's image

In denial of Allah's laws, and the new prosperity

The warlords ring the bell of tragedy

And ally themselves to those who have come to annihilate them...! (Recorded on cassette).

While Heelaale accused warlord of being "devil-minded creatures," the existence of these legal traditions provided an amicable environment for the courts to "blossom," enabling the wider population to cope with the progressive collapse of the state, the "madness and the myopia" of the factional warlords. Islam in this case "offers a number of practical solutions" to costly social and political fragmentation by generating and nurturing a feeling of common identity and loyalties, while sharia "provides ready-made religious legal systems that can be used as an informal mechanism to govern and regulate," social, economic and political crisis (Ahmad, 2015:96). Welcomed by a population weary of warlordism, banditry and with the absence of a formidable power to substitute them, the courts extended their authority and opened the doors of stateless justice in many different regions, including the southern region and Somalia's most populated cities of Mogadishu, Kismayo and Beledwayne.

Save for the distribution of "justice" in the war-torn nation, the courts were militarily inactive in the mid and late 1990s. Their emergence was informal, mosaic and a bottom-up approach of nascent state building, but slowly they transformed themselves into a messianic authority reviving the hope of peace and the recreation of the Somali state. This is a clear indication that local communities were not passive in the face of state collapse and were constantly attempting to re-assemble the state in a "remodelled" fashion of their own by adopting a variety of ways that fit the image of their own "imagined" state, an Islamic state for that matter (Menkhaus, 2006:71). The "rise of the ICU in 2006 underlined the desire of many Somalis for predictability and order, after more than a decade of near anarchy" and can be seen as a model of governance that gained

popular acceptance (Mills, 2014:330). The courts' appeal "rested less on its military capability than on its Islamic authority and, thus, its association in the minds of many Somalis with a cleaner, less corrupt, less abusive, more consistent form of governance."

More importantly, the "desire for rule of law, public order and predictability was a key element here" (Mills, 2014:331). But the image of community-based state and the courts' "messianic authority" coincided with September 9/11 and the remaking of the global order. A group of warlords grew apprehensive about the steady rise of the courts' popularity and the effectiveness of stateless justice in 2005 (Abdi, 2007:65). Paradoxically, when this movement emerged as a "grassroots response to the predatory behaviour" of the very same warlords, regional and global powers, particularly, Ethiopia and the US presented the courts as a "security threat to the region" (Ahmad, 2017:122). As if proving right the Somali proverb that a "provocateur who relies on the shoulder of an outside power disowns all the means of reconciliation," the warlords formed an alliance of what came to be known as the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT) in 2006. The most notorious warlords were now interested in restoring peace. They were emboldened by the support of the regional powers: Ethiopia, Kenya and with large funds as well as moral and political commitment from the US. Washington, together with its "willing African bedfellows," had already launched the strategy "building states when fighting terror" in 2003, and undertook sporadic violent campaign of intervention against assumed terrorist groups in Somalia (Malito, 2015:1867).

On the other hand, the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) report published in 2007 by the Netherlands, explained that the CIA made secret payments in 2006 to the factional warlords and supplied them with modern weapons to defeat and drive the UIC out of Mogadishu. This marked the moment that Somalia came back on the political radar of Western policymakers (FFM, 2007:32). The US-backing of the warlords "was the most unexpected and unnecessary" and the political outcome pushed the Horn of Africa nation "into an entirely new, unwelcomed political trajectory" (Menkhaus, 2007:368). While America generously bankrolled the warlords in line with its "pre-emptive doctrine of the war on terror," to contain the courts' popularity, the Somali public and the leaders of Islamic movements framed the war as one between Muslim Somalis and Christian alliances (Malito, 2015:1874). With these events, the Somali conflict entered into a new era of the post September 9/11 political wars and the Horn of Africa nation was caught in

the violent remaking of the global order as the counter-terrorism alliance waged a brutal war. The courts were however not submitting, instead they now united against a common enemy, and took a hard-line stance. Perhaps it was impractical for the courts to unite had they not presented as a looming threat to the US and its allies and fertile ground for "Islamist extremists" and if the alliance for counter-terrorism had not been formed in the first place. They could have remained largely unrelated small groups, each offering stateless justice to a discrete section of the Somali population (Harper, 2012:80).

However, this order and the stateless justice came under attack from the newly formed alliance of warlords, and Mogadishu's streets turned into a battlefield in May and June 2006 (FFM, 2007:33). In retaliation, the courts declared jihad against the "infidels," including the secular warlords and publicly asserted that they would "give a helping hand" and provide weapons to the Ogaden National Liberation Front, a rebel group that has been fighting for the independence of ethnic Somalis in Ethiopia. Islam intertwined with Somali nationalism became the political rallying point in 2006 and with an enormous grassroots uprising, and to the surprise of the outside world, the warlords were not only defeated but humiliated. By July 2006, the ICU expelled all of the heavily entrenched warlords to the "point of no return" (Ahmad, 2017: 123). The remnant of the (ARPCT) took refuge in Kampala, Addis Ababa and Nairobi, giving interviews to the international media, claiming that Al-Qaeda had taken over Somalia (Menkhaus, 2007:369). While the Somali public rejoiced in the streets of the liberated cities and suburbs, America and its regional allies framed the humiliation of the warlords as a "sign of the need to re-formulate the counter-terrorism strategy" in Somalia (Malito, 2015: 1874). But "harsh peace" broke out in Somalia "beneath the common flag" of sharia. Ethiopia and the US grew nervous about an Islamic government in Somalia (Rawlence, 2016:13).

In Mogadishu, the courts were riding on a wave of popular uprising in 2006, taking advantage of anti-American and anti-Ethiopian sentiments and a new Somali nationalism. In the six months that the courts were in power from June to November 2006, roadblocks were removed, streets cleaned, national airports and harbours reopened for the first time in sixteen years and above all, sharia law was applied to full effect (Menkhaus, 2007:371). At the same token, "education and health care remained top priority," while environmental regulations such as "ban on

deforestation, charcoal burning, and killing rare animals and plants were re-instated" (Shank, 2007:10). Heelaale composed:

The warlords' irrationality that they would be empowered by injustice

Has come to end with Allah's help

And neither the sun nor the moon might forever eclipse!

The courts' victory brought factional politics in Mogadishu to an end and signalled the arrival of a new generation of political figures, neither sensed nor expected by the outside world, and "no other faction or coalition had come close to mobilising and uniting so many Somalis" since the fall of Barre (Menkhaus, 200:371). So popular were the courts that Marchal dubbed this new era the "Somali Spring." For Marchal, there had never been an organisation, political or otherwise that was as revered, as legitimate in the eyes of the most Somalis as the courts, because they performed some of the key functions of government in an otherwise stateless nation (Marchal, 2007:13). In short, the courts' ruling authority demarcates this historical juncture in the nation's protracted conflict as "the period of governance without government" (Menkhaus, 2009:2). While drawing on the country's long history of political Islam, the "very strictness and severity of the courts' judgements was reassuring for local business and community leaders who expected greater consistency and certainty, creating more predictable environment for them to protect their families, homes and business interests" (Mills, 2014, Ahmad, 2017).

The courts achieved the unthinkable, just like Sayyid Maxamad did a hundred years previously, by catching the so-called Somalia "observers and experts" off guard. Mogadishu was united for the first time in seventeen years under sharia. Sporadic protests broke out in the breakaway northern region in support of the courts and the authority feared losing control of the fragile, but relatively peaceful region, if courts were to stay in power. Refugees and the diaspora streamed into the country (Harper, 2012:81). In less than seven months, the courts "accomplished what more than a dozen internationally sponsored peace processes" and military intervention could not (Ahmad, 2015, 93). The peace and the nostalgia for the lost nation as well as the rare oasis of peace created by the courts lured them back. Mogadishu, with glamorous sandy beaches regained its lost glory, ironically under sharia. For example, the country's most revered and prolific writer, Nuruddin Farah, came "home" for the first time in thirty-six years after he was exiled by the

Barre regime (Farah, 2012:19). The rise of the courts and the waves of nationalism dressed in religious chants and slogans, and the whole new phenomenon, was beyond the comprehension of the "veteran orientalists" whose claim of expertise on Somalia was limited to "regurgitations" of the major clan names and the narrow and stubborn view that the country's prolonged conflict was clan-based. In other words, the new political reality could not be squeezed into the clan narrative. The "clannism rhetoric" was in this brief period of governance without government supplanted with the exclamatory phrase that Somalia is a "difficult nation to understand" (Farah, 2007:9).

With this collapse of the clannism theory, the courts embarked on an extensive reconstruction of the social fabric, torn apart by the years of warlordism. The task of rebuilding the broken state got underway and illegal land grabbing was halted; special courts were established to deal with property restitution (Abdi, 2007:172). State institutions were rehabilitated and the Islamic Courts Union leadership adopted similar slogans as Barre's philosophy "*Iskaa wax u qabso*" (Rely only on yourself). Life under the courts became safer than it had ever been post-Siad Barre. People walked in the streets of Mogadishu without fear for the first time in many years and the whole nation was in a "joyous" mood, as if it had just recently gained its independence (Harper, 2017:83). In short, the Somali people felt that they were in control of their country and its political destiny. Ironically, what the Somalis overwhelmingly saw as an "open window to a brighter future" and the end of the chronic political instability in their country was, inexplicably interpreted as a "serious threat" to global order. With the local warlords long defeated, external military interventions, spearheaded by the United States and Somalia's traditional foe, Ethiopia, apparently became necessary to dislodge the caliphate, depriving the Horn of Africa nation of a brighter future and its vernacular Islamic identity.

In conclusion, both Al-itihad and the Islamic courts were indigenous movements inspired by a political Islam that presented an alternative to a secular system of governance in Somalia. Both movements enjoyed wide-spread support from a population weary of warlordism and established peace and security in the areas that came under their jurisdiction, dispensing stateless justice through the implementation of sharia. It is also evident in the case of these movements that Somali society viewed Islam not just as a set of spiritual rituals but also as predictable political ideology that could bind them together beyond the realm of the supposedly insurmountable clan

rivalry. This was illustrated by wide support for the courts' ascendance to power, including the breakaway northern region (Somaliland) and the semi-autonomous eastern region, now called Puntland. The defeat of the veteran warlords in 2006, and the re-establishment of formal political structures; the return of civil society, the return of refugees plus the rehabilitation of national airports, roads and harbours after sixteen years of disrepair was a clear indication that the Somalis did not fail at the task of reconstructing their state. However, the manifestation of political Islam was the ammunition used against their will in the contemporary political "anti-terrorism" warfare and their efforts to overcome the prolonged conflict were therefore often misrepresented as a threat to regional and global peace.

Chapter Six

*6. **Foreign intervention***

..I wonder if my years of exile have been futile, now that there is no 'country' to return to. Nuruddin Farah, 2000.

Introduction

In the wake of the state disintegration in 1991, Somalia descended into a humanitarian crisis, exacerbated by militia wars and famine. Images of malnourished children and young men dangling AK-47 rifles became the predominant representation of the Horn of Africa nation. Life became almost impossible as warlords closed off national airports and harbours. The militia groups blocked the delivery of aid and relief agencies were evacuated by their countries of origin. This obliged the world leaders, spearheaded by the then United States President, George Bush Snr and the United Nations (UN) to act. An America-led Military Humanitarian Intervention (MHI) was unanimously approved, the first of its kind in the history of UN. The aim was to secure safe passage zones for the delivery of food aid, and a mission dubbed "Restore Hope" unfolded in the chaotic streets of Mogadishu on Christmas Day of 1992.

If the United States of America under the leadership of George Bush Snr, led the international operation to "restore hope" in 1992, America, under the presidency of George Bush Jnr arrived on shores of the Somali coast to "dismantle a new found hope." Mogadishu was to experience a more severe humanitarian crisis fourteen years after the Black Hawk Down. This time round, the target was not to deliver food aid or save malnourished children but to dislodge the popular Islamic Courts Union under the pretext of the war on terror. US-backed Ethiopian troops invaded Somalia and Mogadishu became not only a frontline in the US-led war but also Africa's Fallujah. While the world saw the humanitarian intervention of 1992 as a response to one of Africa's first state failures, the 2006 invasion undermined indigenous state formation in Somalia. It is because of these similar yet different interventions that this chapter is organised into two sections. In the first section, I explore the Restore Hope Mission (1992-1995) and its impact in further destabilising Somalia, with the principal argument being that no foreign intervention can pacify Somalia, however well-intentioned it might be. As I illustrate in this chapter, such interventions will always be treated as a threat to an indigenous political Islam identity. In the second section, I

elucidate the reasons Somalia was presented as a security threat to regional and international order, necessitating the US-backed Ethiopian invasion of 2006 and in brief, Kenyan invasion of 2011, and the African Union mission. The principal argument in this second section is that the constant replacement of indigenous political movements with Western models of governance has proven disastrous in terms of human and material cost.

6.1. **The Restore Hope Mission and Black Hawk Down**

With the implosion of Mogadishu and the departure of Siad Barre from the nation's political scene in 1991 came the unprecedented "civil war" which divided the country into enclaves, riddled with militia groups and warlords. The fighting for control of the capital city made life impossible and with the national airports and harbours closed, imports and exports of any kind were out of the question (Ahmed Samatar, 2010:112). As if lending validity to the words of Sir John Chard, a British colonial governor, that "there is no formula for handling the Somali," global conventional diplomacy and mediation failed to nudge the functional warlords into any sort of political settlement (Loubser and Solomon, 2014:4). While John Chard's remark was directed at the twentieth century Dervish liberation movement, the post-Siad Barre warlords were neither fighting a colonial power nor were they defending Islam or national sovereignty like Sayid Maxamad. Instead, they were uncontrollably at each other's throat over the seat that Somalia's strongman hurriedly vacated in January 1991 (Pham, 2011:133). Weapons and ammunition were the only commodities in abundance. Agricultural production was destroyed and Somalia's most arable land along its two rivers-became to borrow from the Zimbabwean novelist, Dambudzo Marechera, a "House of Hunger"- and as one farmer lamented: "they turned our arable land into inhabitable desert plains" (Marechera, 1978, Menkhaus, 2009).

With the disaster unfolding, the media were awash with images of starving Somalis and malnourished children. Drought and severe famine, coupled with political disorder precipitated a serious humanitarian crisis as the rival factions fought over the "leftovers," including the dwindling food supplies. NGOs and relief agencies were evacuated by their countries of origin or their efforts to help were greatly hampered and hijacked by the warlords' militiamen. Eighteen months after the collapse of the state, over 350,000 Somalis starved to death and one in every four children under the age of five was malnourished (Haulman, 2010, Loubser and Solomon, 2014). This devastating humanitarian crisis and the senseless anarchy motivated the first military

intervention in post-independent Somalia. No chapter of Somali history has ever received more media coverage and attention from political analysts in the developed nations than this humanitarian catastrophe (Kapteinjs, 2017:422). The consistent editorial columns in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, coupled with the "CNN effect" "rightly" presented Somalia as a "hell on the earth," exposing the plight of the civilian population, accusing the UN of failing to play its role and blaming the US for not taking the lead in post-Cold War global politics. While the media "uncovered an African disaster," academics "craved for simplicity" and propagated popular twofold assumptions: to "boost the American self-image" as saviour and uncivilised African tribesmen at each others' throats (Besteman, 1996:120). International political scepticism towards military intervention in the affairs of a sovereign state and the fear expressed by some US policymakers that sending troops to Somalia might turn out to be more disastrous than the operation in Lebanon in 1983, delayed the deployment of US-led forces to Somalia. It was out of this scepticism that ambassador Smith Hempstone sent to the State Department a cable titled the "Somali Tarbaby," expressing that "if you like Beirut, you will love Mogadishu and it will take five years to get Somalia not on its feet but on its knees" (Poole, 2005:69).

Hempstone was not wrong. Mogadishu proved more complicated than Beirut, and Somalia was to stubbornly resist not fewer than twenty attempts and international conferences, all held in foreign capitals. These attempts culminated in the formation of "fourteen governments in exile" (Pham, 2011, Stevenson, 2010). The political jigsaw of the Horn of Africa nation bewildered even America's senior diplomat, Henry Kissinger, who stated that a "central authority cannot be set up in Somalia" because of the nation's "lack of common colonial history and collections of warring tribes" (Mills, 2014:335). Kissinger ironically considered a "common colonial history" would have been more helpful in formulating a solution than the Somalis religious, cultural and linguistic homogeneity and common history. While falling into the trap of colonial anthropologists by ruling out the role of ethnicised Islam as one of the main obstacles to the reconstruction of a secular state in Somalia, the much-vaunted diplomat was right that the adoption of conflicting Italian and British system of governance at independence did not lay even a weak foundation for the postcolonial Somali state. Despite the diplomatic chaos in the UN and the dilemmas expressed by the US State department, the combination of the famine, the total

governmental collapse in Somalia, public opinion in America and personal conviction paved the way for the then US president to take a more active role.

On Christmas Eve in 1992, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 794, allowing the US to spearhead military humanitarian intervention. To the "delight" of the starving Somali population, the international media and NGOs, George Bush Snr, in a televised address, told the American marine division at Camp Pendleton, California, that "they would be doing God's work in Somalia by saving thousands of innocents from death" (Oakley and Hirsch, 1993:44). But rather than exemplifying leadership, Bush was by then a "lame duck" president who seized the occasion and saw the intervention as a move towards his publicly expressed vision of a "peaceful new world order." Somalia was to be the poster child of this re-organisation of post-Cold War American foreign policy (Kapteinjs, 2017:424). What Bush needed in this case, was the perfunctory UN approval and the broken Horn of Africa nation was to be the firing test. At stake was also the UN's international credibility as an international peace-making and civilian protector (Morales, 1994:78). Expressing his support for the intervention, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the first United Nations (UN) Secretary-General of African descent drafted a landmark report, "An agenda for peace," and forcefully advocated for a humanitarian intervention in Somalia, "lashing out at the international community for its preoccupation with the rich man's war in Bosnia while thousands starved in Africa" (Adebajo, 2016, Morales, 1994). While Boutros-Ghali "boldly reasserted the role of the UN in the maintenance of international peace and security" the agenda for peace turned out to be a "budget for war" (Ahmad, 2012:312).

Unlike the recently won Gulf War of 1990-1991, there was no real strategic and oil-related American interest at stake. But, as Bush's national security advisor put it, "If you look at Somalia, it's Third World, it's black, it's Muslim, it had everything going for it in terms of making a judgement" (Hirsch, and Oakley, 1995: 35). Buoyed by the Gulf War victory, the Pentagon declared the mission not only "doable" but also acted on the presidential decree that no conflict could be solved without the involvement of the US (Robert Oakley, 1993:45). Although Operation Desert Storm and the defeat of Sadam Hussein's forces in Kuwait "reinforced Washington's basic predilection to stay clear of civil wars, rely on air superiority and fight land wars with maximum mobility, the danger in Somalia was underestimate." The aim was to win the war with "minimum cost and much glory" (Morales, 1994:78). Whatever the real motivation

for the intervention, the initial operation was successful in ensuring the unimpeded flow of humanitarian relief by securing major sea ports, airports, key installations and food distribution centres (Beech, 1996:12). At this initial stage, no political, disarmament or nation building plan was drafted or hinted at; therefore the warlords did not express any opposition to the peaceful landing of the 28,000 highly-equipped American marines in Somalia. While the establishment of law and order and the recreation of the political institutions were viewed by Boutros-Ghali as imperative to the long-term goals of stabilising the war-ravaged Horn of Africa nation, General Joseph Hoar, the head of the operation, unambiguously rebuffed any operation outside the scope of the humanitarian assistance and the warlords felt no political or military threat.

Massive psychological warfare was used: leaflets were dropped; radio broadcasts and ground-based public address systems were used to psychologically prepare the population for the superpowers arrival (Beech, 1996:13). This was accompanied by an intensive diplomatic arrangement with the warlords and particularly General Farax Caydiid and his main rival of the same clan, Cali Mahdi in Mogadishu, cautioning them against America's military might. US special representative to Somalia Robert Oakley boasted "I reminded them of the massive firepower that had been used effectively during Desert Storm" (Valladares, 1993:631). While the circumstances surrounding the Gulf War and the risk of the Desert Storm descending into guerrilla warfare was assessed, the challenge in Somalia was reduced to a containment of warring clans who would be intimidated by the first sight of America's superior airpower (Morales, 1994:87).

Oakley pointed to the marines' technological advancement, capabilities, professionalism and the lethal weapons displayed in the Gulf War. The warlords were therefore not in a rush to provoke an embarrassing defeat or lose the loyalty of their militiamen. No doubt that the US and the UN forces temporarily beat their designated enemy-starvation. Oakley's intimidation and the modicum of peace initiated by the UN-sanctioned, US-led multilateral Unified Task Force (UNITAF) was brought to an end in May 1993, when the UN assumed control of the peacekeeping mission and the mandate was shifted from humanitarian to complete disarmament of the warlords to restore government institutions (Beech, 1996:17). The then US ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright, declared that the aim of the mission was "nothing less than the restoration of the entire country as a proud functioning, viable member of the community of

nations." Now, the UN Operation in Somalia was to cover the entire country, including the northern region (Somaliland) which had already announced its secession from the rest of the country (Harned, 2016:41).

The hastily organised disarmament operation began on June 5, 1993, with the inspection of weapons storage sites and a warlord-run radio station in Mogadishu. In the melee that followed, 24 Pakistani soldiers were gunned down. General Caydiid, Mogadishu's most powerful warlord, was accused of carrying out the attack and he was to be captured. Admiral Jonathan Howe, the head of the mission, exacerbated the situation by offering a $25,000 reward for Caydiid's head, branding him a thug. In the Gulf War, Sadam Hussein was demonised while in Somalia Caydiid was the personalised enemy (Morales, 1994:87). On his part, Somalia's veteran warlord declared in a press conference: "I'm with my people and I'm stronger than any." In retaliation, Caydiid's' militiamen increased attacks on the UN troops, rendering the city ungovernable. They branded Admiral Howe "Animal Howe" and Caydiid offered $250, 000 for his head. Bill Clinton, now the US president, sent Special Forces to take part in the operation to capture the warlord and escalated the violence (Ahmad, 2012, Harned, 2016).

Paradoxically, Caydiid beat the UN in propaganda and psychological warfare. He pronounced that the UN was imposing a government of its own model on Somalia, and that the operation was meant to turn Somalia into a Christian nation by either killing all Somalis or replacing them with Ethiopians and Kenyans. He quickly gained popularity and support from not only his immediate clansmen but a diverse population including Islamist groups. The warlord knew that there is "nothing that unites the Somalis more than invading outsiders and Islam" and "skilfully" exploited both, turning the people against the mission (Beech, 1996:11). Given the history of Somalia, it did not come as a surprise that a large number of people rose up in an armed resistance to an outside power perceived to be imposing an alien system of governance on them and an existential threat to their identity. On the other hand, the UN and the Clinton administration urged the generals on the ground to use "all the necessary measures" to bring the Somali warlord to book (Beech, 1996:38).

The use of "all the necessary measures" backfired in October 1993 with the launch of what came to be known as the "Battle of Mogadishu," with the downing of two American helicopters in the streets of heavily populated neighbourhood. What followed was even more disastrous: eighteen

US soldiers were killed and their bodies dragged through the streets of Mogadishu while hundreds of Somalis lost their lives in the massive military operation. This incident brought back the painful memories of the Vietnam War, digging a hole in the superpower's pride over the Gulf War (Haulman, 2010, Harper, 2012). Neither the minimum cost nor the much glory materialised, for the UN spent a "total of $1.68 billion and the US $2.2 billion" in the operation while "international aid agencies invested billions more" (Ahmad, 2012:315). Militarily, the final disappointment of the multilateral forces and the Somalis defiance against the superpower equalled to that of a British colonial officer who after the bombardment of Taleex in 1920 remarked: "It is wonderful how little we have managed to impress the Somalis with our superior power" (Mills, 2014:334).

This was a clear indication that no amount of dollar or foreign force could pacify the Horn of Africa nation, let alone rebuilding a state. But it all seems that like the proverbial "insane man" who fills the bottomless barrel with water, no lesson has been learnt from this intervention, for Somalia's political predicament is ever more militarised and even coerced peace remains elusive. America was now less able to ride on the wave of victory. Bush's initial vision for a peaceful new world order and the missions to "restore hope" were buried in the streets of Mogadishu. The UN and US-led mission withdrew from Somalia in March 1995, with a dented image and "devastated pride," defeated by the people they had come to save, leaving behind a trail of destruction and hastily abandoning Somalia, as Hempstone predicted "on its knees" (Bradbury, 1996:12). Above all, this failed mission was a dramatic example of "getting Somalia wrong" and it had damning consequences for the US and UN's future operations to rescue lives in other war-ravaged parts of the world: the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and the Bosnian one in 1995. The international community became more reluctant to intervene as a result of the Restore Hope operation (Mekuriyaw, 2016: 135). As for Somalia, the mission was partly a blessing in disguise since the Horn of Africa's nation was left to its own devices from 1994-2001. The September 9/11 attacks, however, put Somalia on the spot in the US-led war on terror.

6.2. **Africa's Fallujah and the War on Terror**

After the Black Hawk Down debacle, the world abandoned Somalia and external military operations were limited to the towns bordering Ethiopia. Although the Horn of Africa nation was rightly regarded as a failed state, it attracted little or no attention from the West and international assistance was largely symbolic from 1994 until September 2001. Following the UN departure, "plush aid contracts had shrunk and foreign resources dwindled" (Ahmad, 2017:119). Even piracy which appeared in 2000 did not warrant much attention until it was linked with terrorism in the post September 9/11 wars. While piracy in the Horn of Africa was unknown before 1986, it remained modest in scale until 2000 and started "a downward slide from 2006" (Abdi Samatar, Lindberg and Mahayni, 2010:1379). The Islamic Courts Union successfully campaigned against piracy, declaring it *haram* and against sharia, and "virtually eliminated" from the Somali coast in 2006 while the "Somali parliament" that the international community supports refused to criminalise it 2011 (Harper, 2012:158). It seems that Islamists in Somalia are punished for taking the right action. However, pirates in Somalia are known as unofficial "coast guards" who protect the Somali resources in the sea from foreign trawlers. A South African poet, Lebohang Nova Masango, lends validity to the Somali sentiment:

...I'm begging with all of my browness

Unlearn the word "pirate"

When speaking of poor Somali people

Actively defending their seas

Against European greed

They are protectors... (Masango, 2015).

Whether the Somali seamen were protectors of resources or ship-robbers on the Gulf of Aden, pirates "were largely out of business by 2014, partly as the result of international patrols on the high seas," which poorly armed Somali "coast guards" could not withstand (Mills, 2014:327). The World Bank reported in 2013 that the "number of piracy incidents has been falling since 2012, thanks in part to mobilisation of international naval forces and the adoption by the

shipping industry of best practices to fend off pirate attack" (World Bank, 2013:1). Therefore, as a new phenomenon, piracy has never been a major contributor to Somalia's political crisis, neither has it been an instigator of regional and international incursions into Somalia. But if the international shipment avoided Somali pirates on the high sea, Islamic movements in the inland attracted a global suspicion. Security concerns over Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Sudan overshadowed Somalia, with some observers indicating that the country might be the next significant front after Iraq and Afghanistan. Western threat perceptions loomed large on the Horn of Africa since the defeat of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in late 2001, and Somalia "has been viewed as a potential exporter of terrorism "because of its "Sunni Muslim population, absence of state enforcement mechanism and proximity to the Persian Gulf" (Stevenson, 2010:28). America sponsored East African Counter-terrorism Initiative (EACTI), "announced and launched by President Bush in June 2003, and the stated purpose was to root out the manifestation of Islamic terror groups" (Haynes, 2005:1326). Seen from this perspective, the Horn of Africa nation had been on the "hit list" from September 9/11 onwards but the Islamic Courts Union's ascendance to power and the war on terror came with one of Somalia's worst military invasion in 2006 (Taarnby and Hallundbaek, 2010:3).

The road to the catastrophe began with Ethiopia's US-backed invasion and the futile attempt to instil an ineffective, puppet Transitional Federal Government (TFG), after the capture of Mogadishu on December 28, 2006 (Menkhaus, 2009:226). The Islamic courts, unable to withstand the air bombardment and ground firepower, quickly retreated to Kismayo, the seaside city in southern Somalia, but on the first day of 2007, Kismayo, the last stronghold of the courts fell to Ethiopia and its TFG alliance. This invasion was in many ways worse than the initial civil war. First, it produced an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, internally displacing 1.3 million Somalis while causing an exodus much greater in numbers and more disastrous than the 1991 militia wars and the Black Hawk Down operation combined. In less than a month after the incursion, over 500 000 people fled from the ill-fated seaside capital city, Mogadishu. While those who sponsored the invasion looked away, the Ethiopian army, "with astonishing speed, force and cruelty" pounded Mogadishu "to rubble and blazing a trail of looted homes, massacred civilians and raped women across the country" (Rawlence, 2016:13). If Black Hawk Down reminded the Americans of the Vietnam War, Ethiopia's brutal force was reminiscent of

Menelik's raid in Western Somalia (Ogaden) and British Bombardment of Taleex in 1920 for the Somalis.

This incursion might go down in history as one of the most daring and imprudent strategic decisions an African state ever made regarding its neighbours (Bamfo, 2010:56). For Bamfo, the incursion was unnecessary and perplexed "objective" observers of Somalia's protracted conflict not because it was unexpected but because it was unprovoked. The fear of the Islamic courts' ambition to restore peace and stability, the subtle revival of *Soomaaliwayn* (The Dream of Greater Somalia), historical mistrust and territorial disputes between the two countries motivated Ethiopia to invade its broken neighbour. America's willingness to bankroll the war and provide air-cover and superior weapons also nudged Ethiopia, one of Africa's poorest countries, into a bloody war. Ironically, Meles Zenawi, Ethiopia's then prime minister claimed that his country had no choice but to defend itself from imminent Islamist, and Al Qaeda-led aggression. Contrary to Zenawi's proclamation, Ethiopia was the benefactor of the war on terror sponsored by the US, doing the "dirty work" on behalf of the superpower since America did not want a repeat of another embarrassing Black Hawk Down deflation (Mwangi, 2012, Bamfo, 2010).

Though Somalia had no air and sea defence systems, American warships and defence system, combined with heavily armed Ethiopian ground troops, were deployed in southern Somalia to allegedly "wipe out Al Qaeda cells." Bruton (2010:7) explains that Somalia came under fire from sea, air and ground. Ethiopia's ability to score a decisive victory against a nation with no defence system and regular military was certain, but crushing a historical enemy at a vulnerable stage was not out of the realist's view of global politics. Condoleezza Rice, then US secretary of state defended the incursion, citing "mutual threats" as the massacre unfolded in the streets of Mogadishu. To borrow from the Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish, "the earth was squeezing" against the Somali population and their country plunged into deeper anarchy. "I don't know, it is as if the global events are deliberately designed against us," said a fleeing Mogadishu resident. Members of diasporic community that arrived in Mogadishu in the short period of ICU rule fled to the neighbouring countries. Many were intercepted since the borders were tightly closed and ended up in Ethiopian prisons or in Guantanamo Bay as "potential terrorists" after the Kenyan government handed them over to US and Ethiopian security agents (Rawlence, 2016:13). Bashiir Makhatal, Canadian citizen of Somali descent who was for example arrested at the border, taken

from Joma Kenyatta International Airport to Addis Ababa, and was only released from an Ethiopian prison on April 2018.

Salim Lone, former UN spokesman in Iraq described Mogadishu as Africa's Fallujah in a brazen US-sponsored war to topple the popular courts, thus opening another battlefront in the Muslim world, with Ethiopia doing the dirty work in a proxy war or perhaps taking advantage of the available US funds to "annihilate" its staunch traditional rival in the region (Lone, 2006:2). For Lone, the invasion was one of "the most lawless wars of our generation with mounting layers of illegality, similar to America's occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, one in three structures in Mogadishu was either completely destroyed or damaged beyond repair, producing daily civil casualties estimated to be in their thousands. In other words, the complete impunity, the indiscriminate use of air strikes and heavy artillery in Mogadishu's densely populated areas were reminiscent of Fallujah in the infamous 2003 Iraq War, an epitome of "international lawlessness." The military tactics used to terrify the population into surrender ranged from rape to looting to the bombardment of hospitals and schools, as well as the blocking of urgently needed food aid from designated areas of the city (Elliot and Holzer, 2009:221).

Despite the intense and inaccurate media reports fabricated by Ethiopia and US policymakers, there was no clear evidence linking the courts with Al Qaeda or showing that Somalia posed a threat to US interests in the region, yet calls for Somalia to be the next target in the war on terror finally became a reality (Menkhaus, 2009:224). The Bush administration's policy and actions characterised the Somali conflict and recast what was a local uprising into an ideological war between secular democracy and Islam, and the 2006 invasion of Somalia was no less bloody than the 2003 Iraq war. The difference was that in Iraq, the ground troops were mainly from the US and its European allies while in Somalia, the ground troops were Ethiopian, with the war being spearheaded by the US (Bruton, 2010:9). Historical evidence suggests that what happens in Mesopotamia has more drastic consequence on Mogadishu. It is as if the destiny of Baghdad is tied to that of Mogadishu, for Somalia was in the words of Isa Shivji, "next Afghanistan, plus Iraq" in America's securitised foreign policy in the post 9/11 world order (Shivji, 2007).

In disguising the aggression and legitimising its support, the US Department of State described Ethiopia as "an African front-line state in the war on terrorism." On the other hand, the internationally supported Transitional Federal Government, led by a veteran warlord, Abdullahi

Yusuf, repeatedly issued statements presenting the unmasked military aggression as legal and "brotherly" help from a "loving" neighbour willing to dislodge Al-Qaeda fighters from Mogadishu. "I can tell you our Ethiopian brothers came under request of the legitimate government of Somalia and it was allowed under international law," said Idd Bedel Mohamed, a Somali ambassador (Verhoeven, 2009:409). Zenawi too, regurgitated these kinds of statements as a cover up for his illegitimate incursion, declaring that he was "invited by the duly constituted and internationally recognised government of Somalia," feeding the international media with an image of Somalia infested with foreign terrorists (Verhoeven, 2009:409). What Zenawi was referring to as "legitimate government" was known in Somalia as "*Gacan kurimis*" literally translated as "genetically modified government."

One thing that was right in Zenawi's statement was the fact that the international community in 2004, constituted the TFG at a guest house in Nairobi, and it was "airlifted" like the food aid into Somalia. It was a "government" owned and run by the international community and its sole existence depended on the invading forces (Frenlik, 2015:10). Made up of former warlords who kept "the murderous killings alive" in Somalia for the past sixteen years, Isa Shivji described the airlifted administration as a "cruel joke," more façade than Barre's Marxist fiasco. For Shivji, "no government with even little roots could have ever allied with Ethiopia which was essentially an occupying force and has become "on the scene agent, doing the dirty work of the American warmonger" (Shivji, 2007).

Like the Black Hawk Down operation, the initial victory of the invading forces over the Islamic Courts did not last, and the unpredicted stability that emerged in Mogadishu "after sixteen years of utter lawlessness was gone" (Leone, 2006). A home-grown insurgency rose up to resist and once again Somali nationalism manifested itself in the form of political Islam. Led by Al-Shabaab (the youth), a more militant group and the military wing of the Islamic courts presented the Ethiopian and the US incursions as crusades determined to destroy Islam in Somalia with history brutally repeating itself. Roadside bombs, improvised devices and Iraq-style urban warfare, which the Somalis had perfected in the chaotic years were quickly adopted against Ethiopian forces and TFG militias, and it was "their turn to die," as one Al-Shabaab commander put it (Rawlence, 2016:14). Spreading the message, circulating newsletters and cassettes and video tapes among the Somalis who resented the US-sponsored Ethiopian invasion, Al-Shabaab

presented Islam as the only reason why Somalia's hard-won peace had been smashed. Their message was explicit: "The United States cannot abide a situation in which Islam is the solution," to Somalia's political predicament (Rawlence, 2016:15). The replacement of ICU with collections of warlords as national leaders attested to Al-Shabaab's argument. Al-Shabaab was the most committed militia, the best armed and best trained. It was led by Aadan Xaashi Cayro, a young man described by US intelligence as a "renowned, revered and charismatic leader who fought against Russia in the Afghanistan war," but his militant group were not more than four hundred fighters at the time of the invasion (Taarnby and Hallundbaek, 2010:3).

Conversely, the brutal intrusion of the foreign forces legitimised Al-Shabaab as a nationalist movement and hence galvanised patriotic fervour in support of them from the Somali masses. It is indeed a daunting task for an outsider to distinguish the blurred lines between Islam and Somali nationalism; therefore Somalia was at this time caught in George W Bush's rhetoric of "You're either with us or against us." But the Somalis were neither with the US nor with Al-Qaeda, as the regional and global powers propagated. The "terror threat" was overstated, alienating the masses whose interest, agenda and allegiance did not coincide with Al-Qaeda's (Siad Samatar, 2012:318). Islamist in Somalia cannot be equated with terrorism *per se*, and the joint Ethiopia and US "counter-terrorism strategy after 9/11 provided the basis for the emergence of extremism in the country" (Mwangi, 2012:519).

Analytically imprisoned by the orthodox narrative of the top-down state-building and when giving impetus to Ethiopia's regional ambition, Washington "perceived the Courts as neo-Taliban," and blocked a bottom-up re-emergence of legitimate authority in Somalia (Verhoeven, 2009:405). Based on the "concoction of sharia-justice and tangible improvements in livelihoods through the provision of security and welfare, the Courts resembled a national liberation movement but the reductionist stance of the America backed-invasion in search of terrorists "led to a self-fulfilling prophesy" (Verhoeven, 2009:406). The product of Washington's "build states when fighting terrorism," launched by the Department of State in 2003, turned to be "build terror when fighting a perceived enemies" in Somalia, for Al-Shabaab was one of the outcomes of the 2006 invasion (Malito, 2015:1867). While the "external perception of the Somali crisis reloaded the post-Cold War narrative of state-building as counter-terrorism" the US policy towards

Somalia and roots of the invasion lie in an "Anglo-Saxon intellectual edifice, detached from the Somali context" (Elliot and Holzer, 2009:215).

What both the invading forces and policymakers ignored, was that political Islam has invariably been most powerful in Somalia when set against a non-Muslim European-threat, Abyssinian imperialism and the Black Hawk Down operation (Menkhaus to (2002:110). In this sense, Menkhaus insists that even non-observant or secular Somalis use Islam or its misuse as a short-term mobilisation and Al-Shabaab in this case was not a new phenomenon. Ethiopia pulled out of Somalia in 2009, learning the harsh reality of invading a foreign territory with dubious objectives and above all, leaving Somalia more debilitated and with a more militant Al-Shabaab (Bamfo, 2010:65). Willing to perpetuate the war but "unwilling to risk their own forces, Western governments paid" for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The peacekeeping forces, mainly from Uganda and Burundi, supplanted the Ethiopians. But another complexity was added to the conflict (Solomon, 2015:220). In 2011, Kenya, Somalia's south-west neighbour, launched an operation known as *Linda Nchi* (protect the county) which was a military offence against Somalia, and like Ethiopia, presented the incursion as "self-defence." But the occupying Kenyan forces became part of the AU "peacekeeping" forces. Linda Nchi operation has "turned into an occupation of attrition-while blowback from the invasion consolidated in a series of deadly attacks within Kenya" (Anderson and McKnight, 2014:1).

Kenya and Ethiopia often justify their incursions with the narratives of national security while Ugandan's long-term dictator, Yoweri Museveni has been using Somalia as shield against criticisms from Western donors for his inability to open the political space for genuine multiparty democracy and his regime's poor human rights record. If pressed, "I will withdraw my troops from Somalia" has become his preferred statement to silence the critics of his rule. Notwithstanding the billions of dollars received from the donor countries, Zenawi and Museveni played the West's fear of political Islam through the "game of extraversion," a political game akin to General Idi Amin's "heroic foreign policy and repressive domestic regimes" (Mazrui, 1986:186). Somalia has provided a perfect cover for Zenawi and Museveni's heroic foreign policy and internal repression of political dissidents. Despite the narrative of the Linda Nchi, one might argue that Kenya too, found it hard to resist the urge of feasting on its neighbour's predicament, occupying the strategic port of Kismayo and casting its extraversion net on the

Indian Ocean, securing a lucrative enclave in the wide game of extraversion. But far from "sweeping the Somali terrorists into the sea, the intervention has fuelled political dissidents in Kenya" as Al-Shabaab exploits grievances of the Muslim population in Kenya's coastal towns and the North Eastern Province (Anderson and McKnight, 2014:2). "Tit-for-tat terror tactics" in which Kenyan security forces round-up ethnic Somalis, "herding them into soccer fields, concentration camps by another name," lend validity to Al-Shabaab's rhetoric that the war is directed at the Muslim community (Ngugi, 2019).

The "UK Foreign Office acknowledged in private that Ethiopia and Kenya are pursuing their interest in Somalia and are disinterested in peace" (Rawlence 2016:183). On the other hand, Al-Shabaab extended its jihad to Kampala in 2010, carried out two attacks and killed seventy four people in a restaurant while dramatically launching another attack on September, 2013 in Nairobi, seizing Westgate Shopping Mall and killing over seventy people. It was tragic that Kenya too, was "duped" into the war on terror, but both Ethiopia and Kenya's military victory over the courts deprived Somalia of its nascent political stability under sharia (Mamdani, 2013:2). Al-Shabaab is now more globalised and militant than ever and Somalia continuous to be seen through the lens of "other" nations' security and as a threat to international peace. Kenya "accomplished its first aim" to capture the port city of Kismayo "after more than a year of slow progress" but the possibility of defeating Al-Shabaab is "as remote as ever" and the war has entered its eighth year for Nairobi (Anderson and McKnight, 2014:1).

With the designation of Somalia as "an active area of hostility," airstrikes on the ill-fated Horn of Africa nation tripled under the Donald Trump presidency. The Somali population in the Lower and Middle Shebelle regions are subjected to drone attacks and the destruction of homes and livestock continue unabated while Al-Shabaab remains a major force. In 2017 alone, more than 450,000 families fled their homes (Foreign Policy report, 2019). Save for the advancement of the military technology, the pattern of the war, the "enemy and the ideology" is akin to that of the twentieth century, where the Somali Dervishes waged the holy war against European powers for twenty one years. Regional and international powers are determined to defeat ethnicised Islam in Somalia and Al-Shabaab remains undeterred. But the bombardment and the extensive use of the "unmanned" drones might "ultimately produce the opposite goals of counterinsurgency,

generating resentment rather than wining the hearts of local population" (da Mota and Barrinha, 2017:254).

Consequently, Somalia's successive political leaders since the fall of Bare have become known in the Somali literature as *dabadhlifyo*, "testicles of other men," thus implying that the current diasporic political class represent the vested interest of regional and international powers (Burgess, 2013:304). Twelve years after the defeat of the ICU, the genetically modified government in Mogadishu enjoys overwhelming recognition from the international community but its arms of governance do not stretch beyond Villa Somalia, the presidential palace in the seaside broken capital (Menkhaus, 2009:223). The *dabadhlifyo* rely solely on foreign powers for protection and fund. Cabdiwaaxid Gamadiid, a poet who hails from the northern region and advocates for the unity of Somalia explains the role of politicians in post-Barre Somali politics in the following verses of a long poem:

In the shadow of the international community

The testicles of men have assumed the realm of leadership

They are neither adults nor kids

But a political window dressing

Haven't we learnt the language to rebuff them?

Even livestock grow suspicious of hyenas posing among them

Can't we revolt against these testicles of men like the desert storm? (Recorded on video tape).

While Gamadiid agitates for an internal revolt, the international community is adamantly maintaining the unpopular political structure. These very same interventions have "arrested domestic process of state formation," while perpetuating internal armed conflicts and external invasions (Ahmad, 2012:314). Ethnicised Islam too, not only offers a "permanent shelter" from Washington's drone missiles and AMISOM's artillery, but it also remains a defence mechanism for the Somalis, and a potent means of recruitment for Al-Shabaab.

In conclusion, the Restore Hope mission was initially successful in securing safe passage and food aid delivery, but it ultimately failed because neither the US nor the UN understood Somalis' historical sensitivity to foreign troops. The warlords turned the people against the mission, exploiting religious sentiments, and propagated the idea that the UN-led disarmament initiative was the first step in a series of operations meant to turn Somalia into a Christian nation. It was this religious sentiment that transformed Caydiid, a fierce warlord into a local "hero" who humiliated the world's global power and forced the UN to completely withdraw its peacekeeping troops in 1995, thus leaving Somalia "on its knees" and in even more turbulent political disorder. In the 2006, US-backed Ethiopian invasion, Somalia was squeezed between proxy wars on one side and a puppet regime airlifted from Nairobi on the other. But despite the huge loss of life and the destruction of Mogadishu, the Ethiopian troops withdrew, and were supplanted by AU troops mainly from Uganda and Burundi. The airlifted Transitional Federal Government has been turned into a "permanent NGO" that has never moved beyond the heavily fortified presidential residence. The regional and international invasions and the deployment of AMISOM seem not to bear any fruit in stabilising Somalia and Al-Shabaab is taking the war beyond Somalia.

7. **Conclusion**

Somalia has been without a functioning central state since the collapse of the communist regime led by Siad Barre in 1991. The remoulding of the Somali state by international actors using the image of the Western definition of a modern state as secular, devoid of religious identity is in opposition to an indigenous political Islam. If Gellner's argument that "nations are the artefacts of men's convictions, loyalties and solidarities" holds true, the Somali population equate Islam with their ethnic identity, thus, faith shaped their social and political history and their interaction with the rest of the world. But this ethnicised Islam expresses solidarity and identifies itself with the ummah across the globe. As I have shown in chapter two, traditional pastoral communities have blended customary law with elements of sharia in their governance structure, and the ancient Somali caliphates adopted it as the source of their judicial system. At the same time, Somalis have used ethnicised Islam as a defence mechanism against foreign incursions. From Axmad Gurey's war with Abyssinia and the Portuguese army in the sixteenth century to today's war on terror, Islamic movements in Somalia define themselves in opposition to the formation of secular state and invasion of the country is interpreted by the public as a war against Islam.

On the arrival of the colonial powers and the subsequent partition of Somalia in the nineteenth century, Sayid Maxamad's Dervish army took up arms against what he perceived as an existential threat to the cultural make-up of the local population. Somali nationalism manifested itself in the form of political Islam, with Sayid Maxamad declaring the holy war in 1900 against what he described in his poems as "infidels," determined to corrupt his people's religion, culture and way of life. With the introduction of modern warplanes, which strengthened Britain's colonial hubris, Sayid Moxamad's vision for a united Somalia under sharia was brought to an end and the seeds of the conflict that today bedevils the Horn of Africa nation were sown. Somalia was partitioned into five enclaves. Two gained their independence in 1960 and formed what is today known as the Somali Republic, adopting liberal democracy and a mixture of Italian and British legal systems. While creating a competitive political climate, the blend of the European legal system relegated the traditional systems of which Islam was an integral to the fringes of the state formation process. Nevertheless, the fervent nationalism and desire to liberate the rest of the Somali territories - Ogaden and Northern Frontier District - undercut the initial glaring political fissures: the mismatch between the postcolonial state, its judicial system, bureaucracy and the Somali society: their faith and culture.

The amalgamation of the Italian and the British models of governance and the imposition of Western democracy's main features which advocated for separation of powers, an independent judicial system and a national assembly-became an "open wound" that paralysed the new nation's body politic. Elections were marred by fraud and bribery and corruption became a springboard for ministerial posts. The rot and rivalry culminated in the assassination of Africa's first democratically elected head of state, ushering in a new era of military rule. In 1969, General Siad Barre overthrew the government, burying the "crudely-assembled effigies" of democracy in the hot sands, supplanting it with another crude form of imported governance. Yet again, the desire of the Somali people to liberate Ogaden, and Barre's impressive success in building a strong and modern national army, with the support of the Soviet Union partly provided a platform for socialism to thrive from 1969 to the late 1970s. The Somali population endured Barre's "raw" interpretation of communism and the ideological clash with the hope of freeing their brethren in Ogaden and wrestling the Somali territories from Ethiopia and Kenya. Under the rhetoric of socialist propaganda, the military regime assaulted the essence of Somaliness by banning the manifestations of Islam in governmental institutions and criminalised religion in line

with Karl Marx's declaration that "religion is the opium of the masses." This time round, the ideology was imported but it found a receptive powerful local elite. However, the very insistence on trying to instil communism ideologies in a resistant population weakened the postcolonial state and the final stages of socialism resulted in the execution of religious scholars, setting the stage for the subsequent total collapse of the fragile state.

With the fall of Barre, communism was buried without a funeral procession, but the "curse" of secularism unfolded on the political landscape as Marxist generals and former military leaders formed militia groups, rendering the ill-fated Horn of Africa nation ungovernable, starving the population and above all, turning their guns on each other. The irony in this disaster is the stubborn myth that presented the political turmoil as a civil war, attributing the unprecedented disorder to the social and clan structure of Somali society. On the contrary, the evidence clearly indicates that the conflict defies the traditional definitions and forms of civil war; rather it was amorphous, with rebel groups forming ever - changing loose alliances across the supposedly insurmountable clan - divide without a political goal. In other words, the warlords were, in the words of Nuruddin Farah, "men without a single hair on their heads but kept on fighting over an ownership of a comb" (Farah, 2007:31). Therefore, the idea that clannism is the main obstacle to the reconstruction of the Somali state is analytically barren and superficial, demanding a paradigm shift in understanding the genesis of Somalia's protracted conflict. In their effort to find a solution to their nation's political quagmire and rid themselves of the curse of secularism, Islam has been the rallying call for indigenous political movements in the Somali peninsula. Al-itihad was born out of this political disorder in the early 1990s and registered remarkable success in establishing order and mitigating the warlords' grip on power and violence, but was destroyed by Ethiopia, Somalia's traditional regional enemy.

Though Al-itihad was militarily defeated in 1996, it led to the revival of Islam - based justice that culminated in the formation of the Islamic courts in 2006, defeating the US - backed anti-terrorism alliance. The courts union was wildly popular and Somalis, for the first time since the collapse of communism, felt that they were in charge of their nation's political destiny, an obvious example that political institutions coloured with local culture and belief can regain public confidence not only in Somalia, but also in the rest of postcolonial Africa. But the very notion of colouring politics with the local culture - Islam in the case of Somalia - has been

"deadly ammunition" against its inhabitants and invited repeated and disastrous military interventions. The first UN approved, US - led Humanitarian Military Intervention was launched in December 1992 and ended with a Hollywood movie and the Black Hawk Down fiasco. The operation albeit successful in its initial stage of creating safe corridors for relief agencies and food distribution, culminated in an utter failure, not because the warlords were militarily powerful but because they outmanoeuvred UN/US policymakers by exploiting Islam as an identity, setting the population against the mission and leading to the complete withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping forces in 1994. The ascendency of the courts to power in 2006, the invention of terrorism and Washington's orthodox view that Somalia is a breeding ground for Al - Qaeda militants not only attracted Somalia's worst invasion, but produced a death toll and destruction like the Iraqi city of Fallujah in the wake of the American invasion in 2003.

The US - backed Ethiopian incursion not only devastated the bottom - up approach to state building and the indigenous political movements but also deprived Somalia of its best opportunity to recover from the chronic disorder. Like the Restore Hope operation, Ethiopia was forced to withdraw, replaced by AU "peacekeeping" forces and Kenyan invasion, squeezing the country between highly unpopular, often imported puppet administrations known as *Gacan ku rimis* (genetically modified government) and the narratives of the war on terror in the post - 11 September political wars. Furthermore, the illegal incursion created a more militant Alshabaab, with the rhetoric around the invention of terrorism becoming a self - fulfilling prophecy. What is apparent in Somalia's recent political history is the fact that a secular state does not fit with the imagination of the nation's collective identity, values and national belonging. Therefore, foreign interventions have been counterproductive in reconstituting the state, hindering the re - emergence of legitimate authority that appeals to the wider population. It is also equally evident that the establishment and promotion of an airlifted government, wrapped in the image of the modern secular state, has been proven to be a futile exercise. Thus, I argue that the solution only to Somalia's protracted conflict but also to the crisis of postcolonial Somali states lies in the evolution of home - grown, organic and community - owned political movements that manifest indigenous culture and faith in order to incentivise mass citizen participation. This might not be "automatically" extrapolated to elsewhere in the continent. Evidence has shown that Mobutu Sese Seko's "Zairianisation" project in the 1973, paved the way in Young Turner's words, for "anatomy of a disaster" in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Kenneth Kaunda and

Leopold Senghor's "African humanism" too, did not lead to the creation of an African - owned model of state - building in postcolonial Africa. As I have illustrated in chapter five, Islamic movements in Somalia offer an alternative to warlordism and chronic disorder but colouring politics with religion has been presented a looming threat to regional security and global order.

The costly top - down approach of state building has produced consistent failure and the conflict defies the clan narrative as an analytical tool to understand the genesis of the political instability while also challenging the conventional wisdom of installing another superficial secular state. The imitations of Western models secular democracy and the experimentation with any form of imported system of governance will only pave the way for another collapse and another cycle of instability in Somalia. In addition, given Somalia's strategic geopolitical location bound by the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden to the north and the Indian Ocean to the east, it might be politically naive to expect that the regional and the global powers will leave the Horn of Africa nation to chart its own course. Therefore, the current political turmoil is likely to be escalated and the Somali people will for the time being remain trapped between imported, ineffective governments and the clash of ideologies: political Islam on the one side and the secular state embedded in the war on terror on the other. However, Somalia's contemporary history offers useful lessons for postcolonial state building in Africa. First, military interventions cannot impose legitimate state structure and imitations of imported legal and political systems might be a recipe for disaster. The second and most important implication is the fact that institutions, with indigenous identity and culture last more than the artificially engineered state apparatus, grounded on the effigies of colonial powers in post - independent Africa. For the academia, Somalia's recent political history challenges the conventional definitions of a modern state, civil war, the features of universal liberal democracy and the whole notion and indicators of a failed state. Therefore, calls for a paradigm shift from the traditional approaches of analysis in postcolonial Africa and state building.

8. **Bibliography**

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