

## **Ideoscapes in the World Society: Framing Violence in Somalia**

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### **Abstract**

The article uses the example of the Somali war to analyse how globally travelling ideas and political concepts are adapted to local settings and translated into frames that promote collective action and feature violence. It outlines how two ideas with universal claim, nationalism and modernisation were combined with an anti-colonial rhetoric and evolved into the meta-narrative of Somali history. This meta-narrative changed little, and keywords such as (pan-Somali) nationalism, anti-colonialism, development, sovereignty structure most of the discursive repertoires of political actors in Somalia. The main difference is that politicized clan affiliations were during the war dragged out of their shadowy existence and placed in the spot-light of political practice. They alone were however not sufficient to justify claims to power, but were complemented by ‘injustice’, ‘modernisation’ and ‘territorial’ narratives that justified violent deeds as ‘liberation’, ‘defence’ or ‘(territorial) rights’. Islamists employed similar key narratives and revived the pan-Somali anti-colonialist nationalism, but rooted it in a religious rationale. Their ability to abandon culturalised frames contributed to their success

Keywords: Somalia, civil war, nationalism, modernisation, clan, religion, Islamist militias

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## **Ideoscapes in the World Society: Framing Violence in Somalia**

Political ideas and programmes travel around the globe. They structure governmental and non-governmental politics and decision-making processes, frame political activities, shape popular protest and are used to mobilise violence. As they travel, political ideas are adapted to local conditions, interact with locally predominant narratives and are thereby reproduced in multiple forms with divergent contents. They constitute what Appadurai has coined *ideoscapes*,<sup>1</sup> the narrative and epistemological side of the emergent world society. This article will draw on the Somali example to analyse how the narratives that structure these ideoscapes are locally (re)produced, become part of the political imaginary of a society and shape the way in which people make sense of their own social lives and their relationships with others. Political ideas are

publicly reproduced in the form of narratives that provide a central frame or frames – ‘schemata of interpretation’ – that condense and simplify aspects of the world and allow people to navigate the complex web of political and social relations.<sup>2</sup> Frames are usually derived from a broader idea or concept, but are (re)produced during the process of embedding and translating the (political) concept into the local setting, where the frame is injected with meaning, materialised in social practices, contested and adapted. Framing is therefore an active process that extends beyond mere rhetoric.

The article uses the Somali example to analyse narratives and frames that support collective political action and promote violence. With its long history of violence and variety of violent organisations Somalia provides an ideal case for this study. The focus on narratives is no attempt to explain the Somali crisis mainly from a discursive perspective. Causes and dynamics of violence can only be examined in the context of broader material and political conditions that facilitate the formation of violence. Frames however provide a link that enables the shift in perspective from structures that cause violence to actors that actually organise and use it. They help to identify what actors perceive as problematic conditions, how they rate the severity of their grievances, and finally if and how they translate these grievances into (collective) action. Frames do hence not cause violence, but facilitate it and give it its specific direction. The literature on framing identifies three core tasks that collective action frames must fulfil:<sup>3</sup> they identify a problem and attribute responsibility for the problem (diagnostic framing), suggest a solution (prognostic framing) and mobilise people to adhere to the suggestion (motivational framing). This article draws on these core tasks and analyses how violent organisations in different phases of the war in Somalia interpreted their reality, what they identified as the main problem(s), to whom they attributed responsibility and what solutions they offered. Though not the main focus, it also assesses the strategies they used to attract followers and supporters.

Mobilising violence is never easy, as people are usually rather unwilling to disturb an established order and to interrupt their daily routines. They are even less willing to risk their lives. To mobilise and organise violence against an actor as powerful as a state is very demanding, as the state monopolises the capacity for violence and simultaneously develops a ‘basic narrative’ or dominant discourse that underscores and legitimises its rule.<sup>4</sup> This article will therefore start with an analysis of the basic state narratives in Somalia. Firstly, it will illustrate how two narratives with universal claim – nationalism and modernisation – evolved in the particular historical

context of colonialism and postcolonial state formation in the Horn of Africa. These narratives addressed an international as much as a national or local audience. The paper's focus is on the latter.<sup>5</sup> It shows that the quest for nationalism and popular sovereignty in Somalia was enmeshed with a genealogical myth and framed as a special version of Somaliness (*Somalinimo*), which underscored postcolonial statebuilding. This ethno-nationalism was then entangled with and partly superseded by the modernisation narrative. The section ends with an analysis of the discursive strategies and framing battle between the armed opposition and the state in the 1980s. The article will then address the civil war and outline how experience of violence forced all actors to retreat from political to cultural or clan-based frames. I argue that the simplifying, reductionist and expansionist characteristics of 'culturalised' frames initiated a dynamic of violence that led to enormous destruction. In the long run, however, clan-frames alone were not sufficient in justifying claims to power and required additional narratives about 'injustice', 'modernisation' and 'territorial rights'. The last section deals with the discursive repertoires that accompanied the rise of political Islam in Somalia. It shows that Islamists used many of the former state narratives but stripped them of their association with enlightenment and instead rooted them in (their version of) a god-given order. Their ability to re-use basic state narratives and to abandon culturalised frames contributed to their success.

## **THE INVENTION OF SOMALIA**

Anti-colonial and nationalist narratives gained momentum in Africa and Asia in the 1940s and 1950s. They were in the Horn of Africa were shaped by the colonial division of the vast Somali populated territories among three European and one African power – Great Britain, Italy, France and Ethiopia. As result of the military confrontations of these powers in the context of the Second World War the Somali populated territories (except French Djibouti) were from 1941-49 placed under the rule of the British Military Administration (BMA). In 1946, a Four Power Commission was mandated to examine the future of the Italian Empire, and Great Britain proposed to transfer the BMA into an UN Trusteeship. The proposal was discussed within the BMA and contributed to the rise of an independence movement spearheaded by the Somali Youth League (SYL). Within a few years, the SYL had mobilised a national and anti-colonial mass movement.<sup>6</sup> When the Four Power Commission convened hearings in Mogadishu in 1948

to consider the opinions of the Somali population, the SYL submitted a memorandum that summarised its nationalist ambitions:

We wish our country to be amalgamated with the other Somalilands and to form one political, administrative and economic unit with them. We Somalis are one in every way. We are the same racially and geographically, we have the same culture, we have the same language and the same religion. There is no future for us except as part of a Greater Somalia. [...] By this union only can we have the opportunity to give full expression to our national spirit and wore out our destiny as a nation of normal human beings. Union with the other Somalilands is our greatest demand which must take priority over all other considerations.<sup>7</sup>

Revolving around a set of joint cultural characteristics and practices (language and religion) rather than on political motifs, the SYL built their pan-Somali nationalism on a case for collective ethnic identity ('we Somalis are one'). Nationalism was conceptualised as a natural and inevitable outcome (the 'destiny') of this shared identity, which sought, so they argued, to realise itself in an independent state comprising all Somali populated territories ('our destiny as a nation of normal human beings'). Religion was discursively integrated and became part of the ethno-nationalist narrative. Islam, and the belief in a common Arabic-Muslim ancestor, is deeply intertwined with the genealogical myth and for this reason adherence to Islam was interpreted as further affirmation of cultural homogeneity and thus the ethnic/nationalist identity of Somalis. The SYL nevertheless defined itself as secular movement and largely refrained from mobilising religious sentiments.<sup>8</sup>

However, far from being the 'natural' or 'inevitable' outcome of a common ethnic identity, the ethno-nationalist discourse and political dominance of the SYL was challenged by other Somali groups, most prominently the Hizbia Digil Mirifle (HDM), which comprised people of two southern clans (Digil and Mirifle). While testifying before the Four Power Commission, the founder of the HDM explained:

My people are those who behave themselves better than others. We always prevent other people from making trouble or robbing. [...] About conditions in our country, I wish to request three things. First we wish to have peace and security and secondly we want the country in which we live to always be regarded as belonging to us, and if the government who live with us wish anything from us we want it to be discussed with us. The other people who are not Dighil and Mirifle people think they may live and stay with us, but we want them behind us recognizing the land as belonging to us and not to them.<sup>9</sup>

The HDM founder emphasised the social and cultural differences between northern pastoralists and southern (semi-nomadic or settled) agro-pastoralists, thereby undermining the very foundation of the SYL's ethno-nationalist frame, the diagnosis of cultural homogeneity and the

existence of a joint Somali identity. The nationalist, pan-Somali narrative was seen as an attempt by pastoral groups to expand their rule in Digil and Mirifle territories and increase their power in the BMA and the future Somali state.

At the core of this framing competition was a struggle for power and leadership. The SYL used the ethno-nationalist frame to mobilise support for its version of a Greater Somalia (if not independent then at least under British administration) and to secure their leadership in the state. The HDM hoped that the return of Italian rule would prevent the pastoralists' territorial expansion and safeguard the interests of Somali agro-pastoralists,<sup>10</sup> particularly control over their land. While the narratives of both organisations also aimed at attracting international support, most notably from Italy (HDM) and Great Britain (SYL), they also targeted a different public within Somalia. The explicit clan base of the HDM confined its audience to members of the Digil and Mirifle clans whereas the SYL was able to spread its ideas and mobilise support among the broader Somali population. Ethnic nationalism resonated well with the lived experience of Somalis as a kinship-based society. The idea of a special *Somaliness* built on the genealogical myth of a common ancestor and marshalled the highest genealogical level of the segmentary lineage system<sup>11</sup> for the first time in Somali history.<sup>12</sup>

The organisational efficiency of the SYL further contributed to its success. Upon the arrival of the Four Power Commission in Mogadishu in 1948 they were greeted by mass demonstrations for Somali independence. The demonstrations turned violent after Italians organised a counter-demonstration. The 1949 UN decision to re-divide Somalia along the lines of its earlier colonial borders and place the former Italian colony under a ten-year UN Trusteeship equally led to a wave of demonstrations and riots throughout the Somali territories. The idea of an ethnically based nationalism was by that time already deeply embedded in the discursive and symbolic repertoires of Somalis in the Horn of Africa.<sup>13</sup> Despite the societal divisions that today characterise the war-torn Somali society, the narratives of ethnic and cultural homogeneity are still repeated and reconfirmed inside and outside Somalia, in street conversations as well as in political and academic debates and Somalia is often described as among the most culturally homogenous countries in Africa.

### *Postcolonial Formation and Basic State Stories*

The unification of the British and Italian colonies immediately after their independence in 1960, creating the Republic of Somalia, laid the foundation for pan-Somali nation building. The ethno-nationalist and anti-colonial discourses were interwoven with the historical and political imaginary of the young Somali state. They were symbolised in the Somali flag (the five points of the star represent the five territories to be united) and the anthem (Somalia, Wake Up), they were remembered with the construction of monuments honouring fallen independence fighters,<sup>14</sup> and they were (re-)narrated and performed in poems and songs. The anti-colonial pan-Somali struggle became the ‘national metanarrative of Somali history’<sup>15</sup>, repeated and used by the democratically elected governments of the first decade after independence (1960-69) and by the military regime under General Siyaad Barre (1969-91) to promote national unity and to mobilise people for the difficult task of state-building, as exemplified by Siyaad Barre:

What we are striving to create is a nationalism of oneness ... the Somali and the foreigner cannot be equated. Somalism is the inherent bond that ties the Somalis together and puts their common interest in a nutshell.<sup>16</sup>

The speech also indicates the inherent xenophobic potential of the ethno-nationalist discourse, as it promotes demarcation from and builds upon a general suspicion of foreigners or non-Somalis. Ethno-nationalism framed the irredentist ambitions of Somalia’s consecutive governments and led to a series of border clashes with neighbouring Kenya and Ethiopia. These military confrontations strained the state budget, which led to a rapprochement between Somalia and its neighbours after 1967, a move which illustrates the successive subordination of the pan-nationalist idea to development. Neither ethno-nationalist nor anti-colonial rhetoric disappeared in Somalia, but both were increasingly tied to a modernisation narrative.<sup>17</sup>

Development and modernisation became keywords in the postcolonial world. Modernisation was conceptualised as a pathway of (linear) progress leading a society from a traditional past into a modern future. Tradition was thus framed in direct opposition to modernity, and practices attributed to it denounced as backward and as obstacles that had to be overcome. Despite the continuous emphasis on ethnic homogeneity and unity, the Somali governments (like most African governments)<sup>18</sup> had to deal with a fragmented polity. Everyday life and governance in Somalia were embedded in the segmentary lineage system and structured by clan relations. The new political elites soon identified clanism or tribalism, as clan-affiliation and reference to kin-groups were now derogatively labelled, as antithetical to nationalism and progress. The SYL had already requested ‘the consequent repudiation of all harmful old prejudice (such, for example, as

tribal and clan distinctions)<sup>19</sup>, a task that was later executed by the military regime. Tribalism was now framed as a legacy of the colonial past and, in 1971, outlawed. According to Siyaad Barre:

Tribalism was the only way in which foreigners got their chance of dividing our people. We will close all roads used by colonialists to enter our country and into our affairs. We will build up a great Somali nation, strongly united and welded together to live in peace.<sup>20</sup>

A nationwide campaign to eliminate tribalism became part of the carefully orchestrated propaganda machinery of the military government.<sup>21</sup> Siyaad Barre urged ‘all Somalis to wage war against tribalism’,<sup>22</sup> and the guiding slogan ‘Tribalism divides - Socialism unites’ was continuously repeated in speeches and aired on national radio. The postcolonial elites also mandated themselves with the enlightenment of the ‘unlettered citizenry’.<sup>23</sup> The SYL had already promised ‘to educate the youth in modern civilization’,<sup>24</sup> but it was yet again the military government that took this task seriously. Siyaad Barre portrayed education as a ‘weapon to eradicate social balkanisation and fragmentation into tribes and sects’. He praised it as vehicle for national unity and against ‘negative foreign cultural influences’<sup>25</sup> and organised a comprehensive – and indeed quite successful – literacy campaign.

The postcolonial state became the prime architect of modernisation. The goal and language of development justified numerous state-led interventions; it contributed to the expansion of the state into the society and allowed the monopolisation of power in the hands of Siyaad Barre and his associates. Keywords like development, progress and modernity were used to ‘narrativize the nation’<sup>26</sup> and to mobilise the citizenry into the statebuilding project. Siyaad Barre elaborately weaved anti-colonial, ethno-nationalist and even religious narratives into his version of socialist development. Underdevelopment was framed as the outcome of colonial exploitation, the democratic governments criticised for their inability to address this problem, and eventually the whole citizenry mobilised to contribute and support the modernisation project. Although careful not to politicise Islam, Siyaad Barre conceptualised Islamic values as integral to a scientific socialist orientation:

Islam and Socialism are compatible because the Moslem religion is not against progress, development, social equality and justice, and to work for their betterment and defend their sovereignty and independence.<sup>27</sup>

Siyaad Barre’s support for religion went only so far, as religious leaders stayed out of politics and criticism was usually met with violence.<sup>28</sup> To counter the interference of religious leaders in

politics he distinguished between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ leaders, and characterised the ‘bad’ ones as being backward (‘those who want to turn the hands of the clock back’), against progress and, of course, as being manipulated by foreigners and imperialists.<sup>29</sup>

Despite all the public rhetoric, lineage affiliations continued to shape politics and everyday life in Somalia. The military government, like its civilian and colonial predecessors, acknowledged the mobilising potential of clan loyalty and used it to maintain power. Clan representation was carefully balanced in all governing and administrative bodies, but important posts were assigned primarily to people from Siyaad Barre’s own clan (Darood/Mareexaan<sup>30</sup>) and two closely related Darood clans. The same ambiguity between anti-clanist rhetoric but simultaneous reliance on clan affiliation to obtain and maintain power has characterised every government and political movement in Somalia, starting with the SYL, to the civilian governments and the military regime. Although publicly condemned, the politicisation of clan relations became an important strategy in the political repertoire of postcolonial Somalia. As in other African countries, the politicisation of communal ties was not a relic of the past, but was closely tied to ‘modern’ politics and an intrinsic part of postcolonial statebuilding.<sup>31</sup>

### *Countering The Basic Narratives: Unfulfilled Promises*

The following section analyses the framing competition between the state and the emergent opposition. Given the dominance and continuous re-narration of the modernisation narrative, it is hardly surprising that the government’s performance was increasingly measured by its promise to bring about development. However, the rise of the opposition in Somalia was first boosted by another failure; the realisation of the pan-Somali nation state. To some extent the regime became a victim of its own ethno-nationalist propaganda. In the mid-1970s, Ethiopia was shattered by political turbulences and the Somali military regime now came under popular pressure to realise the Greater Somalia idea. The Somali army was joined by many Somali volunteers when it invaded Ethiopia in July 1977. When the Somali military was forced to withdraw in spring 1978 Siyaad Barre’s popularity hit rock bottom. A military coup in April 1978 failed. To counter growing opposition, Siyaad Barre redirected the anti-colonial narrative towards his opponents. The initiators of the coup were publicly denounced as unpatriotic and as henchmen of the Ethiopian ‘black colonialists’. He addressed the nation shortly after the coup:



We have constantly been aware that colonialism – which has many faces, both old and new – has wanted all along to stir up chaos in the country. We knew that they had their lackeys inside the country and that [word indistinct] they were taking orders from them. [...] You must be vigilant against colonialism, whether the new or the old; be more cohesive in your unity, which the foreign nations are anxious to destroy in their own interests.<sup>32</sup>

Barre's message was simple and evocative. The crisis was attributed to the 'new' Ethiopian colonialists, which were accused of directing the Somali opposition ('Ethiopia's lackeys') from behind the scenes. Siyaad Barre then appealed to the nation, urging the public to remain vigilant and defend Somalia from the imperialists within the country. The anti-colonial discourse was simultaneously used to justify the state's actions against opposing groups and to reaffirm the unity and cohesion of its citizens.

Some of the military officers involved in the coup escaped punishment and fled to Ethiopia where they formed the first militia, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF). The SSDF published 1983 a political programme which was coloured by Marxist rhetoric and seemed to be oriented more towards its main donors - Ethiopia, Libya and potentially the Soviet Union - than towards the Somali population.<sup>33</sup> The fact that the SSDF operated from and was financially and militarily supported by Ethiopia<sup>34</sup> reinforced the government's warnings. Only a few years ago many Somalis (including the SSDF leaders) had enthusiastically supported the war against Ethiopia, and many had lost relatives and friends in the war. The anti-Ethiopian and anti-colonial rhetoric of Siyaad Barre hence resonated better with the public sentiment than the pro-Ethiopian and Marxist rhetoric of the SSDF. The organisation could not broaden its support within Somalia and became largely defunct after 1983.

Structural adjustments in the 1980s exacerbated (neo-)patrimonial and repressive state practices throughout Africa. Siyaad Barre, like many other African leaders, retreated to culturalised mechanisms of governance and monopolised leading positions by placing them in the hands of people from his own Darood/Mareexaan clan. The security services, now also in the hands of his associates, were endowed with enormous power and were frequently involved in large-scale human rights violations.<sup>35</sup> Among the newly applied technologies of governance was the clan-based prosecution of opponents. People with a Darood/Majerteen clan background, the clan to which the founder of the SSDF and the majority of SSDF members belonged, were now collectively blamed for the rebellion.<sup>36</sup> The government launched a 'scorched earth policy'

against *the* Majerteen, and initiated the first step towards the clanisation – or to use a broader term ‘culturalisation’<sup>37</sup> – of violence that would later characterise the civil war in Somalia.

When Diaspora Somalis formed the Somali National Movement (SNM) in 1981, another militia which joined the SSDF in the armed struggle, the government resorted to previously established methods, denouncing the SNM as unpatriotic, pro-Ethiopian and enemies of the Somali nation. Relying again on clan-based techniques, the government’s blame fell on *the* Isaaq, from which the SNM drew most of its supporters and recruits. The anti-Isaaq rhetoric was complemented by action: house searches, nightly curfews and mass arrests which often led to mass executions.<sup>38</sup>

The political orientation and rhetoric of the SNM remained embedded in the modernisation narrative. The government was blamed for the economic failure, which was attributed to its ‘dynastic and clan-based’ structure.<sup>39</sup> As ‘documentary evidence of the clan-base of the current regime’,<sup>40</sup> the SNM published a list of 68 high-ranking officials closely related to Siyaad Barre. The government on the other side invoked a similar narrative and equally branded the SNM as tribal, hence anti-nationalist organization. Indeed, the SNM faced the same dilemma as other political organisations in Somalia, and although it mobilised widely, mainly attracted supporters from the Isaaq clan. Partly to counter the regime’s rhetoric and partly to widen its support base, the SNM leadership continuously emphasised its national (as opposed to tribal) ambitions, as demonstrated by SNM chairman Mohammed Silanyo in 1987:

First of all, the struggle of the SNM is a people’s struggle. It is also a just struggle that most of the Somali people identify with. I would like to make it clear today that the SNM is not a tribal organization. On the contrary, SNM is a national organization with purely national strategy and objectives [...]. Every Somali person who gets convinced that SNM is an alternative to the existing system and who respects its constitution and principles is welcomed to join the national liberation. It is written in the front and foremost lines of its constitution that SNM is a political opposition organization dedicated to the total liberation of Somalia from the oppressive regime of Siyad Barre.<sup>41</sup>

Presenting the aim as national liberation placed the SNM in a direct continuum with the anti-colonial struggle. Overall, the SNM remained programmatically and politically rather vague, which provided the organisation with the necessary flexibility to attract supporters with differing and often contradicting ideologies, united mainly by the goal of ending military rule.

## **THE END OF AMBIVALENCE: CULTURALISATION OF VIOLENCE**

Siyaad Barre's increasingly clanist politics contributed to the successive replacement of ethno-nationalist narratives with discourses that emphasised differences between clans. He tried to rally people from the Darood clan family,<sup>42</sup> ignoring the fact that people with a Darood/Majerteen background had only recently been branded as national enemies. *The* Darood were now portrayed as defenders of the Somali state.<sup>43</sup> The government for example armed refugees from Darood/Ogadeen clans to fight the SNM in the North, and patronised smaller and rather powerless clan groups to maintain their support.<sup>44</sup> Clan based state repression reached its peak in 1988 with the bombardment of the two largest cities in the north-west. The indiscriminate state violence pushed people towards the SNM, transforming it into a mass movement and initiating the civil war in Somalia. The mass-mobilisation was facilitated by the close co-operation of the SNM with elders from the Isaaq clan, who now recruited men from their sub-clans, a move that transformed the SNM from an organisation with national aspirations into a decentralised network of Isaaq clan and sub-clan militias.<sup>45</sup> After the SNM refused 1987 to expand its guerrilla-war in the south, many non-Isaaq left the organisation and started to mobilise people from their own clans. By 1989, the United Somali Congress (USC) and Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), representing the Hawiye and Darood/Ogaden clans, fought in central and southern Somalia against the government. Both militias explicitly relied on clan frames to mobilise support, interpret politics and allocate responsibility for political wrongdoings. It was no longer Siyaad Barre and his associates, but the Mareexaan in general who were collectively blamed for the war, the repressions, the economic decline and any other failure of the military government.<sup>46</sup>

The power and devastating consequences culturalist frames are able to unleash could soon be experienced all over Somalia.<sup>47</sup> Already in December 1990 masses of angry people joined USC militias, and eventually ousted Siyaad Barre from the capital in January 1991. Celebrating their victory, militias, gangs and mobs were soon engaged in widespread looting. At first, their violence was directed against government institutions but, following clanist logic, soon expanded from the government to the Mareexaan and from Mareexaan to the upper genealogical segment, the Darood. Like other collective action frames, culturalist frames simplify complex social relations. They first confine people to a culturally defined group and then attribute them with a joint identity, in this case a specific '*Daroodness*'. Cultural frames then reduce the group to a few specific and historically non-changeable characteristics (often opposed to characteristics of the 'own' social group). In the case of the Mogadishu riots, the Darood were characterised as

power hungry and accused of having monopolised power since independence (or even ‘since hundred years’ as another narrative stated).<sup>48</sup> This argument was soon accompanied by rumours suggesting that Darood militias were uniting in an attempt to rebuild their former power, hence justifying violence against people with a Darood clan background as a preventive measure. The fact that two of the militias, the SSDF and the SPM were composed of people from the Darood clans Majerteen (SSDF) and Ogadeen (SPM) or that the military government had indiscriminately prosecuted people with a Darood/Majerteen clan background, was ignored. The underlying assumptions of clan-based frames that genealogical ties are inviolable and that clan affiliation automatically translates into political affiliation (as genealogical affiliation supposedly translates into nationalism) superseded real (war) experiences. Furthermore, cultural frames are expansionist; they subordinate other social markers such as age, class, social status and gender under the cultural frame. The consequences of culturalist framing were dramatic. USC units, gangs and mobs rampaged through Mogadishu, killing 4,000 people within a few days and forcing tens of thousands to flee. A person’s clan background could now mean life or death. These clan-based acts of violence further solidified boundaries between clans and the experience of collective victimisation in fact contributed to a new sense of loyalty and communality between members of the Darood clans. Thus, the rumours fulfilled their own prophecy as the Darood militia did indeed join hands to oust the USC from Mogadishu.

#### *Adding Rims To Culturalist Frames*

The war in southern Somalia continued after the defeat of the military regime. Immediately after the victory against Siyaad Barre, Ali Mahdi, a Mogadishu-based businessman, was announced as Interim President. The announcement alienated the militia leaders and caused the USC to split, with one group loyal to Ali Mahdi and the other to the military USC leader, General Aydiid. Both USC wings immediately mobilised members of their respective Hawiye clans, but also forged alliances with other clan militias. The USC military wing built on the General’s image as a successful military leader and criticised Ali Mahdi and his supporters for the premature formation of a government. As Elmi explains:<sup>49</sup>

To the dismay of all, immediately on the removal of the dictator from power; exploiting the unforeseen rapid collapse of the regime and some differences within the USC; the Manifesto Group<sup>50</sup> [...] hastened to unilaterally take over the reins of power appointing themselves as an interim government and also claiming as being USC leadership. The group who are

composed of ex-politicians in the 1950s and 1960s, former civil servants, members of the former regime and merchants all grew rich under the regime ventured this action without consultation and regard whatsoever to USC rank and file; ardent struggle and tremendous abnegation and hardship they underwent for the sake of democracy, justice, peace and progress.

The Manifesto members who supported Ali Mahdi's interim rule were characterised as beneficiaries of the former governments, accused of clinging to power and seizing the spoils of war. People from Ali Mahdi's Hawiye/Abgaal clan were charged with being late in joining the fight (during the Mogadishu upheaval) and only when the demise of the government was already inevitable.<sup>51</sup> The injustice of the current rule was emphasised, and negative narration of the *Other* was complemented by the glorification of heroic war activities and the willingness of USC members to sacrifice their life for the greater good.

Ali Mahdi in contrast used his position as self-declared president to appeal to nationalist sentiments and asked the people to stop fighting and rebuild the country. The inclusion of high-ranking officials from the military regime in the new government was framed as the beginnings of reconciliation and a necessary step in rebuilding the unity of the Somali nation. General Aydiid was in contrast characterised as a military hardliner, unable to reconcile and lacking the political sensitivity to lead the country towards peace and state-building.<sup>52</sup>

In contrast to the 'fighter' and 'heroic war hero' image of Aydiid's camp, the group around Ali Mahdi pointed out that the final victory was not achieved by the militias but by the people in Mogadishu. They explicitly warned against the militias, which they acknowledged as good warriors, but at the same time depicted as uncontrollable and ungovernable. This view is illustrated by Osmaan Ato, a businessman who ironically supported General Aydiid's USC before he formed his own militia:

The USC was organized with people from the bush. But bush and town are too different, and nobody can control the bushman. If he steals a car, he might not give it to the USC. It was not planned by the USC to loot, but the decentralized groups have done it. After years fighting in the bush, the USC failed to stop the lootings and atrocities. The militias should have stayed out of town.<sup>53</sup>

Embedded in the wider modernisation narrative is the ontological division between nature and culture, which found in Somalia a geographical expression in the binary opposition between 'bush' and 'town',<sup>54</sup> the former the home of individualistic and ungovernable nomads (the 'people from the bush'), the latter an expression of civilisation, control and order. This division

gave rise to an ambivalent urban attitude oscillating between a romanticised adoration of the nomad's courage and freedom, amusement over their ignorance, and paternalistic demonstrations of their own (educated and rational) superiority. The town-bush binary was now added as an additional rim<sup>55</sup> to the clan-based frame and translated into absolute characteristics which represented clan segments with urban backgrounds (such as Ali Mahdi's Hawiye/Abgaal clan) and segments with rural-pastoral backgrounds (Aydiid's Hawiye/Habr Gedir clan). General Aydiid's USC militias were discredited as uncontrollable and ungovernable 'people from the bush,' and stories about their dullness<sup>56</sup> and belligerence were used to rationalise their inability to rule. To this day, the belligerent character of nomads is used as an argument for the protracted violence and instability in Somalia.<sup>57</sup>

Both USC wings managed to mobilise fighters and alliances and from November 1991 to March 1992 they entered into a devastating war against each other. In less than three months 14,000 people died and 27,000 were left severely injured.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, Siyaad Barre started to reorganise the crumbling security forces from the Mareexaan clan to form the Somali National Front (SNF) and marched twice, in April 1991 and April 1992, from southern Gedo towards Mogadishu in an attempt to recapture the capital. He was not successful, but initiated the expansion of the war from Mogadishu to southern and central Somalia.

Ongoing violence, together with a drought, led to a severe famine and to the first humanitarian intervention led by the United Nations (UN). The failure of the UN intervention is well documented.<sup>59</sup> After the withdrawal of UN forces in 1995, localised forms of authority based on rather loose arrangements between clan-militias, business people, clan elders and religious leaders emerged throughout Somalia.<sup>60</sup> Many people now fled to regions populated mainly by people from their own clan and controlled by a local clan militia. They soon referred to these regions as 'home regions' or 'areas of origin'. The entanglement of genealogical affiliation with notions of territoriality and origin resulted in the creation of new discursive repertoires in which to be 'born in' (*ku dhashay*) a region was added as another layer (or rim) to the cultural frame of being 'born to' (*u dhashay*) a clan and both were used to legitimise or contest political rights.<sup>61</sup>

Given the enormous demographic shifts caused by the expansionist movements of pastoralists, the commercialisation of agricultural, postcolonial institution-building, the in-migration of Somali refugees and of course the waves of internal displacements during the civil war, territorial claims gave rise to rather absolutist notions of 'autochthony'. In Mogadishu, for

example, the ‘Darood dictatorship’ was combined with the narration of their allochthony, in other words, the fact that they did not belong to the city.<sup>62</sup> In the discourse on ‘people from the bush’ outlined above, the Hawiye/Abgaal claimed autochthony as the ‘original’ inhabitants of Mogadishu. In talks in Mogadishu and Kismaayo in 2002-03, people often referred to colonial clan maps to legitimise or contest the ‘historic right’ of particular clans to govern a city.<sup>63</sup> In the southern Somali Gedo region, power struggles between people from the same clan were framed as a confrontation between ‘autochthonous’ (*Guuri*) people with a vested right to govern and newcomers (*Galti*) whose rights were contested or denied.<sup>64</sup> In the more recent conflicts over the establishment of a Jubbaland administration, internet forums were full of comments about historical claims to ownership by the various Darood and Hawiye clans in the three regions that were united to the Interim Juba Administration.

In the war clan affiliation provided the primary frame for assigning responsibility for recognised problems and for defining friends and foes. However, the clan frame alone was not sufficient in justifying claims to power and soon additional stories about injustice and greed, town and bush, territoriality and belonging added further narrative layers to the clan frame. These layers did not challenge the primary, clan-based claim, but added further layers to characterising clan groups and thereby adapted the clan frame to specific situations and localities. Before I outline how al-Shabaab was able to transcend the clan-frame, the example of Somaliland will show that, albeit culturalist frames tend towards expansion, violence does not necessarily escalate. Violence is not pursued by social structures but by people, and they can also deescalate and prevent it.

#### *Reducing dynamics of violence and creating new state stories in Somaliland*

The northwest was not excluded from clanist dynamics of violence. After the SNM controlled most cities populated by people from the Isaaq clan by the end of 1990, it aimed at advancing into territories inhabited by clans of which many people had fought against the SNM. Thousands of people now fled in fear of reprisals from advancing SNM units. Others remained behind to protect their properties and ‘territories’, and hundreds were killed in continuing fights. In this situation prominent SNM supporters from non-Isaaq clans acted as mediators between the SNM and people from their clans. Due to their skillful mediation and due to continuous efforts of elders to facilitate reconciliation,<sup>65</sup> the northern regions escaped the level of bloodshed that soon characterized the southern parts of the country. Building on the segmentary lineage system elders

organized a series of local as well as regional reconciliation meetings and conferences.<sup>66</sup> During a ‘conference of the Northern clan elders’ in May 1991 in Burco SNM combatants and civilians gathered in front of the conference location and requested independence. Albeit not in favor of secession, SNM leaders gave in to the ‘pressure of the street’ and together with elders and clan representatives declared on 18 May 1991 the independence of the Republic of Somaliland in the territorial borders of the former British protectorate.<sup>67</sup>

The quest for independence and henceforth also national unity in Somaliland was embedded in a narrative that emphasised the years of marginalisation and repression of the ‘whole’ north (and not only the Isaaq populated territories) by the Mogadishu government. Beyond the collective experiences of violence and repression,<sup>68</sup> the ‘new’ Somaliland narrative also claimed a cultural distinctiveness of the northern clans. Accordingly, different colonial experiences created a common bond and a ‘cultural closeness’ among the people from the former British Protectorate,<sup>69</sup> while the failure of state penetration left ‘traditional’ values intact among the northern clans,<sup>70</sup> and both used to explain the progress towards peace in comparison to the destruction of the south. Reviving memories of the colonial history served an additional goal. Rather than framing independence as secession from the south, Somaliland asserted to the restoration of independence it held for five days after the end of British rule on 26 June 1960, before it united with the former Italian Somalia on 1 July 1960 to the Somali Republic.

### **AL-SHABAAB’S RISE FROM THE ASHES: RELIGIOUS FRAMING**

The following section analyses the (so far) last phase of the Somali war, the Islamist insurgency against the (Transitional) Federal Government and their allied international forces. It will briefly outline the rise and triumph of Islamist movements in Somalia and then use the militant organisation Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen (al-Shabaab) as an example to assess their main narratives and mobilisation strategies.

The roots of the current religious political movements in Somalia, here rather simplistically labelled as Islamists, go back to the 1960s. Although Somalis are predominantly Sunni Muslims and practice Sufism,<sup>71</sup> Islam did not feature prominently in Somali politics. Some Sufi brotherhoods were actively involved in the early anti-colonial resistance but later retracted from politics.<sup>72</sup> Adherence to Islam was integrated into the ethnic Somali identity as illustrated by this



speech by a prominent politician in the 1960s advocating the adoption of Arabic as the Somali script:

How can you differentiate between the Muslim identity from the Somali identity? To me, being a Somali and being Islamic are one and the same thing. The terms ‘Somali’ and ‘Muslim’ are synonymous in my mind. Islam provides our code of life. It is our state religion. Hence, the question of a script for our language puts our basic cultural and spiritual values at stake<sup>73</sup>

The speech shows how deeply Islam is woven into the social fabric of Somali society but also provides an early example of religious framing. Being Somali was first equated with being Muslim and the equation then used to take the selection of a script out of the political realm of decision making. The application of Arabic was instead portrayed as affirmation of the ethnic-religious identity, a decision against it as defiance of the very foundation of social order. Common to both clanist and religious frames is an ability to naturalise identities and devise rules for behaviours and (political) action from them.

Although Islam was constitutionally defined as Somalia’s state religion, the Somali governments followed a rather flexible approach towards Islam and Islamic laws. Facilitated by migrant workers and students in Egypt and Arab countries, Salafist revival movements gained popularity in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>74</sup> After the collapse of the government 1991 and in the context of an enduring political crisis, Islamic organisations grew rapidly. While most of these organisations propagated the establishment of an Islamic state, they didn’t follow a unitary ideology.<sup>75</sup> Only a few organisations, most notably al-Itixaad al-Islami (al-Itixaad) advocated militancy.<sup>76</sup>

Sharia Courts, Islamic charities and Islamic education facilities, however, provided an Islamist infrastructure that reached out to an ever growing number of people and linked the war-torn Somali regions to a global network of Islamists. The deep anchorage of political Islam in the Somali society and the improved organisational abilities of Islamists became apparent after 2005, when the newly created Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP) and Government (TFG) relocated from Kenya to Somalia. Islamic Courts in Mogadishu had meanwhile created the Islamic Court Union (ICU), which took in June 2006 control over Mogadishu and soon extended its power to south-central Somalia. In late December 2006 Ethiopia intervened on the side of the TFG, dislodged the ICU and helped the TFG to install itself in Mogadishu. Since February 2007, the TFG has been supported by the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) which expanded its forces over the following years from 2,000 to nearly 20,000 soldiers. In 2012 a Federal

Parliament was selected in Mogadishu, which elected a President who then appointed the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS).

The TFG and the international intervention forces were soon involved in a broad-based Islamist insurgency, spearheaded by al-Shabaab. Originally established as a court militia, al-Shabaab now operated autonomously and managed to rally broad support throughout Somalia, even recruiting large numbers of ‘foreign’ fighters.<sup>77</sup> Al-Shabaab had political support from exiled ICU leaders and their hastily formed Alliance for the Restoration of Somalia (ARS). The TFG managed to co-opt one wing of the exiled ARS, but neither the nomination of a former ICU/ARS leader as the new Somali president in 2009, nor the subsequent withdrawal of the Ethiopian military weakened the Islamist insurgency. On the contrary, al-Shabaab filled the positions left by Ethiopian forces and were in control of most of south-central Somalia by the end of 2008, acting as de-facto government in that region. Meanwhile, the TFG and its international supporters were confined to certain districts of Mogadishu. Two failed military attempts by al-Shabaab to take full control of the capital in 2010 and 2011 led to a joint counter-offensive by AMISOM/TFG forces, which now had additional support from Kenya and Ethiopia. Al-Shabaab retreated from Mogadishu in August 2011 and lost control of the majority of towns in south-central Somalia until the end of 2012. The organisation returned to its guerilla style insurgency and has since carried out a number of attacks, including suicide missions and targeted killings against TFG/AMISOM and allied forces, civil society leaders and aid workers. Al-Shabaab still controls areas of the rural hinterland in south-central Somalia and is able to muster considerable support. Al-Shabaab’s rise from a small cell of militants to a well organised militia comprising several thousand recruits by 2009 and able to govern vast territories by 2011 drew on wide support structures from within and outside Somalia. Given the low profile and lack of visibility of Islamist movements at the beginning of the war, their triumph needs further explanation. Today, all the important political actors, including the FGS, profess allegiance to Islam and propagate the application of Sharia law in their areas of control.<sup>78</sup> The expansion of religious practices and their rapid transgression into politics in Somalia has many reasons. On a personal level, recourse to religion may have helped people to endure the endless violence and insecurity. On a political level, Islamist organisations, among them al-Shabaab, diagnosed the crisis in Somalia as an outcome of its deviation from Islam – a god-given order, in fact – and advocated a return to

‘pure’ and ‘authentic’ religious practices as a solution to the ongoing misery, as explained by a member of al-Shabaab:

The problems began in the time when the Somali people refused to practice Shari’a, when women went outside uncovered, when injustice and corruption became something normal, and individual rights were not respected. Some people say other states [America, Ethiopia] bring us the problem. I do not believe this. I think God brings us these problems because we do not believe. Clans kill each other, some people plunder, many women are raped, houses are taken and grabbed, and farms have been taken and so on. Where is the administration? The bad things that we did brought the colonizers to us who used that [our weaknesses], they took advantage of the situation. The Somali problem comes from Somalis themselves. If we return to God this will be resolved.<sup>79</sup>

The crisis is framed as the ‘punishment of God’. The suggestion of building an Islamic state based on the strict implementation of the Koran and Sunna seemed especially attractive after people experienced that Islamic courts and later also the ICU contributed to security. Unlike the clan-militias or the TFG, the Islamists were able to present and to establish an alternative political order. They denounced Western political models for Somalia and the Muslim world in general as inept and advocated the establishment of an Islamic state. The Emir of Al-Shabaab, Ahmed Abdi Godane (Abu Zubeir)<sup>80</sup> promoted this view in an audio statement (9 March 2014):

I hereby send a message to all Somalis everywhere: you have been fought [in order] to deny you your right to live by your religion; your land has been partitioned; your civilians have been killed and forced to flee; and your resources have been stolen. Every political system has been tested on our people: direct colonialism, communism, pseudo-democracy, and tribalism. Today we have to turn to God for real; our salvation is in implementing shariah... Our life is in jihad, our honour is in jihad, our victory is in jihad, and in jihad is our well-being in this world and the hereafter.<sup>81</sup>

The initially large support for al-Shabaab was, however, mainly provoked by the joint Ethiopian and US counter-terrorist measures. In particular, the US-backed Ethiopian intervention against the ICU provided Islamists with an oppositional narrative that resonated with experiences and feelings of many Somalis and Muslims worldwide and contributed to the radicalisation of many people, not just in Somalia. It replaced the ICU, which, in the eyes of many Somalis, was a legitimate administration, with a government that comprised many former militia leaders and which could only survive as a result of massive Western support, hence shattering the first real prospects for peace. To cite another member of al-Shabaab:

It is ironic for them [the Westerners] to stress that democracy is guaranteeing people freedom of religion and providing them with the liberty to take their own political decisions. But when we started practicing our own religion [under the ICU in 2006] they invaded us,

they want to stop us from that. So what is the democracy they want? Are they not contradicting themselves?<sup>82</sup>

Al-Shabaab framed the war against the ICU as war against Islam, embedding within it a more general rhetoric of a ‘civilisational conflict between the forces of Islam and non-Islam’<sup>83</sup> and fuelling the suspicion of a Western conspiracy against Somalia and the Muslim world. The organisation could now present itself as the last bastion against Western anti-Islamic intervention.<sup>84</sup> Al-Shabaab additionally rallied deep-seated anti-colonial and anti-Ethiopian sentiments and portrayed Ethiopia yet again as a neo-colonial power. It used religious terms to describe the intervention as an attack by ‘Christian Crusaders’ or, with reference to Ethiopia, ‘African Crusaders’ and then appealed to the *Ummah*, the imagined community of Muslim believers, to call for a Jihad against infidels (*Kufaar*), a term also applied to Somalis who supported the intervention. The latter, especially members of the TFG/TFP were regularly denounced as ‘apostates’ or as greedy and power hungry ‘puppets’ of the West<sup>85</sup> and ‘a religious duty to kill them when possible’ was declared.<sup>86</sup> The label ‘foreigner’ was in contrast not accepted for Muslim fighters from other countries. Accordingly such labels refer to “Western-fabricated nationalities” while “Muslims are one ummah”.<sup>87</sup> While mobilizing nationalist sentiments, al-Shabaab carefully orchestrated the religious roots of this fight. Ahmed Godane for example drew on the anti-colonial and religiously inspired poetry of the Sufi leader Muhammad Abdullah Hassan who had led an anti-colonial resistance movement in Somalia.<sup>88</sup> Al-Shabaab also outlawed the Somali flag which was condemned because it became a God-like symbol. The Islamist fighters instead carried a black flag with the Shahaada (the declaration of the faith).<sup>89</sup> With the anti-colonial narrative and the grounding of a pan-Somali nationalism in religion, al-Shabaab mustered many people who mainly opposed the international intervention.<sup>90</sup> Ethiopia’s withdrawal in 2009 was widely perceived as a victory for al-Shabaab and contributed to its popularity. In a state of war, successful violent campaigns and military victories can develop their own appeal and attract followers. Al-Shabaab thus circulated images of combat and military formations of fighters in photos and videos that were widely disseminated through websites and social media. It also published daily reports of its military activities during its insurgency before 2008 and again after its ‘strategic withdrawal’ from major towns in 2011-12.<sup>91</sup>

To reach out to potential followers in Somalia and around the globe, al-Shabaab developed a sophisticated media strategy and used print media, radio, television, the internet and social media

to publish their images and messages in Somali, English, Arabic and, most recently, Ki-Swahili. Recruits and followers received ideological training.<sup>92</sup> While this does not necessarily mean that their ideology was fully understood or shared, as Roland Marchal has rightly argued, it most likely influenced and shaped the way in which people framed their own reality.

Al-Shabaab abandoned the clan-based structure of previous regimes and integrated Somalis regardless of their genealogical background in all levels of the organisation, including the central leadership. The organisation thereby broadened political participation and provided career opportunities for previously excluded groups, which made it especially attractive for young people (excluded by the Somali gerontocracy) and for people from the so-called minority groups (excluded by birth).<sup>93</sup> In order to maintain their power and administer the large territories under their rule, al-Shabaab had to compromise by negotiating with elders and, to some extent, accommodating clan structures by establishing elder committees (*Shuras*) as consultative bodies. Some al-Shabaab leaders were more willing to compromise than others, also depending on whether they ruled in a region with the same clan background or not, or whether they follow a more nationalist, pan-Somali agenda or a global Jihad. However, these differences were more strategic than ideological.

After their military defeat, al-Shabaab released videos in which they highlighted their past successes.<sup>94</sup> Security did indeed improve under al-Shabaab, but the organisation ruled with an iron fist, implementing a strict version of Sharia law and regularly enforcing corporal punishments for offences and breaches of their rules. Their interference in private life and the targeting of what they perceived as immoral and Western amenities (music, dancing, or cinema) estranged many former supporters from the organisation. Coercion was also used against ‘un-Islamic’ religious practices. When members of al-Shabaab started to destroy Sufi shrines, they were confronted with violent resistance by Ahlu Sunnah wal Jaama’ah (ASWJ), a Sufi alliance that took up arms in 2008 to defend their religious practices.

Al-Shabaab lost much of its credibility during a famine that devastated southern Somalia in 2010-11 when they expelled Western organisations and closed humanitarian access. Although the US strategy of subordinating humanitarian aid to counter-terrorist licensing may have contributed to al-Shabaab’s decisions,<sup>95</sup> the indifference it demonstrated towards human suffering cost al-Shabaab a great deal of sympathy. Generally however, political Islam has gained a foothold in Somalia and today a large number of people support the establishment of an

Islamic State, the implementation of Sharia law and modes of governance that are guided by Islam. A new basic narrative, which may well underscore current attempts at state building, has already evolved.

## **CONCLUSION**

This article has analysed how political ideas with universal claim, nationalism and modernisation, were translated into the particular context of Somalia and gave rise to political frames, simplified ‘interpretative patterns’ that structured Somali politics after independence. The amalgamation of nationalism with the genealogical Somali myth underscored the ethno-nationalist formation of the postcolonial state and steered its irredentist ambitions. The combination of anti-colonial and ethno-nationalist rhetoric also conveyed a deep suspicion towards neighbouring states and foreigners more generally, a suspicion that was fostered by the anti-imperialist rhetoric of the Somali military government. As in other postcolonial settings, however, the nationalist idea was soon overshadowed by the demand for modernisation and development, accompanied by measures to abandon or surpass ‘traditional’ communal attachments. Clanism was portrayed as antithetical to nationalism and development, but each political actor simultaneously used clan relations to maintain power and gain support. The politicisation of communal ties was therefore intimately interwoven with modern politics.

Interestingly, the meta-narratives of the (violent) political actors in Somalia changed little and keywords such as (pan-Somali) nationalism, anti-colonialism, development and sovereignty still structure most of their discursive repertoires. The main difference is that the politicised clan affiliations were dragged out of their shadowy existence during the war and placed in the spotlight of political practice. Clan-frames were now openly used to articulate grievances and to place responsibility with the imagined collective of a genealogically defined group. Culturalised frames are inherently conflictual and display a tendency to simplify, reduce and expand by subordinating other identity markers to the cultural frame and by naturalising differences and characteristics of the genealogically enclosed group to an extent that even intersects real experience. However, although clan quota were conceptualised as a major tool for political representation, clan frames alone were not sufficient to justify claims to power. Instead, claimants added additional layers to the primary, genealogical frame, among them ‘injustice’,

‘modernisation’ and ‘territorial’ frames that justified violent deeds as ‘liberation’, ‘defence’ or ‘(territorial) rights’.

Protracted violence and the inability of political actors to provide viable solutions for peace and statebuilding contributed to the rise of political Islam. Today, Islamism is deeply entrenched in the discursive repertoire of all (violent) political actors. The radicalisation of Islamist groups, at least in terms of its pace, was mainly facilitated by the hurried shift from international disregard for the Somali crisis to the application of counter-terrorist measures. Islamists employed key political narratives, blamed the crisis on foreign interference and revived pan-Somali, anti-Ethiopian and nationalist sentiments to rally people behind them, but also rooted anti-colonialism and nationalism within a religious discourse. Al-Shabaab mostly refrained from mobilising genealogical ties (although people may have joined the organisation along clan lines) but referred to the solidarity and community of believers and indeed abandoned clanism within their organisation and as model of governance. Al-Shabaab is so far the only political actor with a viable political vision and able to provide an alternative model of governance and social order. Their success lies, among other things, in their ability to use the classic political frames to mobilise people, and yet strip those narratives from their original grounding in the concept of enlightenment and instead anchor them in a god-given order. Al-Shabaab therefore represents the Somali expression of globally rising Islamist movements that are operating in religiously ideoscapes where they are creating their own version of modernity, stripped from Western dominance. The potentially totalitarian dimension of religious frames was demonstrated by the authoritarian leadership of al-Shabaab and even more so by their indifference towards widespread human suffering. However, this indifference again does not significantly distinguish al-Shabaab from other political actors in Somalia. The main consistency in Somali politics seems to be the neglect of all political parties – clan-militias, warlords, governments, Islamist insurgents – towards the needs of the people.

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<sup>1</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis. An Essay on the Organisation of Experience* (Boston: Northeastern University 1974).

<sup>3</sup> Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000), pp.611–39, pp.615 ff.

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<sup>4</sup> Trutz von Trotha, 'In Search of Peace. History, Basic Narrative, the Future of War, and the Rise of the Local. An Introduction with a Short Overview of the Contributions' in *Healing the Wounds. Essays on the Reconstruction of Societies after War*, ed. Marie-Claire Foblets and Trutz von Trotha (Oxford: Hart Publishing 2004, pp.1-12).

<sup>5</sup> Narratives that emerge in the context of dependency often aim at attracting financial and other support and thus are also directed towards an international audience.

<sup>6</sup> Cedric Barnes, 'The Somali Youth League, Ethiopian Somalis and the Greater Somalia Idea, c.1946-48', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 1/2 (2007), pp.277-91.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Saadia Touval, *Somali Nationalism. International Politics and the Drive for Unity* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press 1963), p.95.

<sup>8</sup> Some SYL branches relied on religious framing by for example requesting Somalis to unite against the infidel colonialists, cf. Barnes (note 6) p.287.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in Mohammed Haji Mukhtar, 'The Emergence and Role of Political Parties in the Inter-River Region of Somalia from 1947-1960', *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 17/2 (1989), pp.75-95, p.78.

<sup>10</sup> See also I. M. Lewis, *A modern history of the Somali: nation and state in the Horn of Africa* (Oxford: James Currey 2002), pp.125f.

<sup>11</sup> The segmentary lineage system is based on the belief in a common ancestor and the further pyramidal division of agnatic groups in clan families, clans, sub-clans, lineages etc.

<sup>12</sup> Previous attempts to 'unite' Somali clans against a common enemy, among it in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the fight of the religious leader Ahmed Ibrahim Gran against the expansion of the Ethiopian empire and the fight of the Dervishes under Mohammed Abdullah Hassan against colonial rule in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century are well remembered in songs and poems, which were now used to mobilise people for the nationalist project. Cf Said Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism, the Case of Sayyid Mahammad Abdille Hasan*, Cambridge University Press (1982).

<sup>13</sup> Although the discourse shaped a sense of ethnic nationalism among Somalis throughout the Horn of Africa, it remained contested and did not affect the Somali social body uniformly, was for example more pronounced in the urban centres and among the urban elites.

<sup>14</sup> A monument honoured the anti colonial fight of the Dervishes (see note 2), another the riots against the repartition of the country 1948 and 49.

<sup>15</sup> Safia Aidid, 'Haweenku Wa Garab (Women are a Force): Women and the Somali Nationalist Movement, 1943–1960', *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies* 10/Article 10 (2010), pp.103-24, p.104.

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Ahmed I. Samatar, *Socialist Somalia. Rhetoric and Reality* (London: Zed Books 1988), p.87.

<sup>17</sup> The postcolonial shift from nationalism to modernisation in analysed in Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press 2004).

<sup>18</sup> See Crawford Young, 'The end of the post-colonial state in Africa? Reflections on changing African political dynamics', *African Affairs* 103/410 (2004), pp.23-49, p.13

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Lewis, *Modern History of Somalia* (note 10) p.123

<sup>20</sup> Siyaad Barre, 24 October 1969 cit. in Somali Democratic Republic, *Selected Speeches of the SRSP Secretary General and the Somali Republic President, Jaale Mohamed Siad Barre* (Mogadishu: Ministry of Information and National Guidance 1979), p.2f.

<sup>21</sup> See I. M. Lewis, 'Kim Il-Sung in Somalia: The End of Tribalism?' in *Politics in Leadership. A Comparative Perspective*, ed. William A. Shack and Percy S. Cohen (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1979, pp.13-44).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Young, 'End of post-colonial state?' (note 18) p.28.

<sup>24</sup> Cited in Lewis, *Modern History of Somalia* (note 10) p.121.

<sup>25</sup> Siyaad Barre, on Women Day 1974, cited in Lewis 'Il-Sung in Somalia' (note 21) p.28

<sup>26</sup> Chatterjee (note 17) p.8.

<sup>27</sup> Siyaad Barre Selected Speeches (note 20) p.121.

<sup>28</sup> In 1975 for example the military regime executed ten prominent Sheikhs and detained others because they had criticised the reform of the Family law. This event marked the beginning of an Islamist underground movement in Somalia.

<sup>29</sup> Siyaad Barre Selected Speeches (note 20) p.106.

<sup>30</sup> Darood refers to the clan family, Mareexaan to the clan.

<sup>31</sup> Crawford Young, 'Revisiting Nationalism and Ethnicity in Africa', <http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/28h0r4sr>, accessed 20 June 2014, p.6f.

<sup>32</sup> Mogadishu Domestic Service in Somalia 9. April 1978, retrieved and translated by [http://www.biyokulule.com/1978\\_coup.htm](http://www.biyokulule.com/1978_coup.htm), accessed 04 June 2014.



- <sup>33</sup> The SSDF requested the liberation of Somalia from foreign capital domination, criticized imperialism and, targeting potential Arab donors, Israeli Zionism. It also propagated the recognition of Ethiopia's territorial integrity.
- <sup>34</sup> Daniel Compagnon, 'The Somali Opposition Fronts: some Comments and Questions', *Horn of Africa* 13/1-2 (1990), pp.29-54.
- <sup>35</sup> Africa Watch, 'Somalia. A Government at War with its own People. Testimonies about the Killings and the Conflict in the North', [http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/somalia\\_1990.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/somalia_1990.pdf), accessed: 06 June 2014.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid. p.29ff.
- <sup>37</sup> Culturalisation refers to the exchange of political goals with cultural claims, cf. Jean-Francois Bayart, *The Illusion of Cultural Identity* (London: C.Hurst 2005).
- <sup>38</sup> Africa Watch (note 35) pp.44ff.
- <sup>39</sup> Somali Horizon, Magazine of the Somali National Movement Oct/Nov 1987, p.16.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid. p.17
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid. p.12.
- <sup>42</sup> A detailed analysis of the clanisation of politics and violence is found in Lidwien Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia. The Ruinous Legacy of 1991* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2012).
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid. p.88.
- <sup>44</sup> An example is the mobilisation of people from the small and subordinated 'Galgale' clan, who lived under the domination and protection of people from the Hawiye/Abgal clan close to Mogadishu. Emphasising the Galgale's origin from the Darood/Majeerteen clan, Siyaad Barre armed people from this clan to harass his politically opponents, especially those among their Hawiye patrons. The Galgale were after the defeat of the government among the first victims of culturalised revenge. Cf. Virginia Luling's statement in <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/467f8d9c2.pdf>, accessed 1 April 2015.
- <sup>45</sup> Jutta Bakonyi, 'Moral Economies of Mass Violence: Somalia 1988–1991', *Civil Wars* 11/4 (2009), pp.434-54.
- <sup>46</sup> Kapteijns (note 42) p.100.
- <sup>47</sup> This specific dynamic of violence is analysed in Jutta Bakonyi, 'Between protest, revenge and material interests: a phenomenological analysis of looting in the Somali war', *Disasters* 34/2 (2010), pp.238-55.
- <sup>48</sup> Kapteijns (note 42) pp.214f.
- <sup>49</sup> Omer Salad Elmi, *The Somali Conflict and the Undercurrent Causes*, (Mogadishu: Beeldeeq 1992), pp.30f.
- <sup>50</sup> The 'Manifesto Group' comprised prominent critics of the previous government. They supported Ali Mahdi's claim to power.
- <sup>51</sup> Cf. Indian Ocean Newsletter, 1991, 14 Sept.
- <sup>52</sup> Field notes Mogadishu 2002, 2003.
- <sup>53</sup> Osmaan Ato, Interview in Mogadishu 26 August 2003.
- <sup>54</sup> Anna Simons, *Networks of Dissolution. Somalia Undone* (Boulder: Westview Press 1995), p.99ff
- <sup>55</sup> According to Goffman (note 2) the layers enable the flexible adaptation of the primary frame to new situations while leaving the primary frame intact.
- <sup>56</sup> Two examples: while looting the Central Bank USC fighters allegedly only took the familiar Somali Shilling bank notes and burnt the unknown US Dollars and other foreign currencies (fieldnotes 2002); or USC fighters while invading 'the Radio and TV station [...] started shooting television screens because that is where Barre had appeared', cited in Juha Auvinen and Timo Kivimäki, 'Somalia: The Struggle for Resources' in *War, Hunger, and Displacement. The Origins of Humanitarian Emergencies. Volume 2: Case Studies*, ed. E. Wayne Nafziger, et al. (Oxford: University Press 2000, pp.187-230), p.196.
- <sup>57</sup> For example: 'The aggressive behaviour of some individuals, mainly those from a camel culture background, is also termed in Somali as 'geeljir' [...]. This 'camel background' can involve wild aspects such as looting, kidnapping and even killing. [...] Looting and thievery has never been lawful but it has always been the code of practice in the camel herder's nomadic way of life', A. Dool, *Failed states: when governance goes wrong!* (London: Horn Heritage 1998), p.168. Or 'The ethos and patterns of life among the nomadic northern groups of Somalia are very close to those of the Arabs. They are belligerent, less law abiding, arrogant, destructive, and look down on any profession except herding' Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, 'Islam in Somali History: Fact and Fiction' in *The Invention of Somalia*, ed. Ali Jimale Ahmed (Lawrenceville: The Red Sea Press 1995, pp.1-28), p.17.
- <sup>58</sup> Human Right Watch, 'Somalia. No Mercy in Mogadishu. The Human cost of the Conflict & the Struggle for Relief,' <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1992/somalia/>, accessed 30 June 2014.
- <sup>59</sup> Terrence Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar, *Somalia. State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention, and Strategies for Political Reconstruction* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute 1995); Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, eds., *Learning from Somalia. The Lessons of Armed Humanitarian Intervention* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997).

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- <sup>60</sup> Ken Menkhaus, 'Somalia: Political Order in a Stateless Society', *Current History* 97/619 (1998), pp.220-4
- <sup>61</sup> This link between lineage and territory is outlined in Cedric Barnes, 'U dhashay—Ku dhashay: Genealogical and Territorial Discourse in Somali History', *Social Identities* 12/4 (2006), pp.487-98. To globally rising notions of 'autochthony' see Peter Geschiere and Francis Nyamnjoh, 'Capitalism and Autochthony. The Seesaw of Mobility and Belonging', *Public Culture* 12/2 (2000), pp.423-52.
- <sup>62</sup> Kapteijns (note 42) p.214f.
- <sup>63</sup> Interviews during 2002 and 2003 in Mogadishu, Kismaayo and Eldoret (Kenya).
- <sup>64</sup> Ken Menkhaus, 'Kenyan-Somalia Border Conflict Analyses', [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNADT520.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADT520.pdf), accessed 9 June 2014, p.13;
- <sup>65</sup> Elders from non-Isaaq clans and the SNM leaders already met in the last month of the 1990s to discuss reconciliation.
- <sup>66</sup> Ahmed Farah and I.M Lewis, *Somalia: The Roots of Reconciliation - Peace Making Endeavours of Contemporary Lineage Leaders: A Survey of Grassroots Peace Conferences in 'Somaliland'* (Action Aid 1993).
- <sup>67</sup> Markus Höhne, 'Political Identity, emerging state structures and conflict in northern Somalia', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 44/3 (2006) pp.397-414.
- <sup>68</sup> The red stripe in the Somaliland flag symbolises the blood of the fallen fighters and provides a constant reminder of the violent experiences. However, the flag's meaning is contested, cf. <http://www.somalilandtimes.net/sl/2012/537/41.shtml>; accessed 01 April 2015.
- <sup>69</sup> Höhne (note 67) p.409.
- <sup>70</sup> Mark Bradbury, *The Somali Conflict. Prospects for Peace* (Oxfam Working Papers, 1994).
- <sup>71</sup> Sufism enabled the inclusion of pre-Islamic spiritual elements and customs, among it the veneration of saints, many of them clan ancestor. See I. M. Lewis, *Saints and Somalis. Popular Islam in a Clan-Based Society* (Lawrenceville/Asmara: The Red Sea Press, Inc. 1998)
- <sup>72</sup> Roland Marchal, 'Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War' in Alex Waal de (ed.) *Islamism and Its Enemies in the Horn of Africa* (London: Hurst 2004) pp. 114-45, p.117.
- <sup>73</sup> Mohamed Abshir 1967, cited in Hussein M. Adam, 'Islam and Politics in Somalia', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 63 (1995), pp.189-221, p.201.
- <sup>74</sup> International Crisis Group, 'Somalia's Islamists', <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/horn-of-africa/somalia/Somalias%20Islamists.pdf>, accessed 10 June 2014.
- <sup>75</sup> Marchal 'Islamic Political Dynamics' (note 72).
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>77</sup> Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013).
- <sup>78</sup> Live and Peace Institute (LPI), 'Alternatives for Conflict Transformation in Somalia A snapshot and analysis of key political actors' views and strategies', <http://www.life-peace.org/wp-content/uploads/The-ACTS-Report.pdf>, accessed: 10 June 2014.
- <sup>79</sup> Cited in Ibid. p.18.
- <sup>80</sup> Ahmed Godane was on 1 September 2014 killed by an US drone strike.
- <sup>81</sup> Cited in <http://www.janes.com/article/35208/osint-summary-al-shabaab-leader-releases-statement-in-response-to-somali-offensive> (20 June 2014).
- <sup>82</sup> Cited in LPI (note 78) p.19.
- <sup>83</sup> Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens et al., 'Lights, Camera, Jihad: Al-Shabaab's Western Media Strategy' [http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/ICSR-Lights-Camera-Jihad-Report\\_Nov2012\\_ForWeb-2.pdf](http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/ICSR-Lights-Camera-Jihad-Report_Nov2012_ForWeb-2.pdf), accessed 11 June 2014, p.1.
- <sup>84</sup> Video message <http://shabakataljihad.blogspot.co.uk/2014/05/muslims-of-bangui-and-mombasa-tale-of.html>, accessed 20 June 2014.
- <sup>85</sup> Audio message by Godane on 9 March 2014, <http://www.janes.com/article/35208/osint-summary-al-shabaab-leader-releases-statement-in-response-to-somali-offensive>, accessed 20 June 2014.
- <sup>86</sup> Roland Marchal, 'A tentative assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 3/3 (2009), pp.381-404, p.387.
- <sup>87</sup> Al-Shabaab spokesperson cited in Abdirahman Aynte, 'The anatomy of Somalia's Al-Shabaab Jihadists', [http://www.trackingterrorism.org/sites/default/files/chatter/TheAnatomyOfAlShabaab\\_0.pdf](http://www.trackingterrorism.org/sites/default/files/chatter/TheAnatomyOfAlShabaab_0.pdf) accessed 01 April 2015, p.24.
- <sup>88</sup> Christofer Anzalone, 'Al-Shabab's Tactical and Media Strategies in the Wake of its Battlefield Setbacks', *CTC Sentinel* 6/3 (2013, March), pp.12-16.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p.22.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p.393.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Marchal 'Assessment Al-Shabaab' (note 87) p.389.

<sup>93</sup> LPI (note 78) p.23.

<sup>94</sup> Anzalone (note 88).

<sup>95</sup> Mark Bradbury, 'State-building, Counterterrorism, and Licensing Humanitarianism in Somalia', [http://www.humanitarianforum.co.uk/data/files/statebuilding\\_somalia.pdf](http://www.humanitarianforum.co.uk/data/files/statebuilding_somalia.pdf) , accessed 15 June 2014.