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Leadership and ethnicity in the making of African state models: Botswana versus Somalia

ABDI ISMAIL SAMATAR

The civil wars in Somalia, Liberia, Angola and the genocide in Burundi painfully demonstrate a continent in deep trouble. These catastrophic conflicts are said to be induced by the existence of 'ethnic communities in conflict' and traditional tribal hostilities.[1] Such narratives depict these conflicts as the logical consequences of so-called tribal social systems. Those who intimate that *social fragmentation* is a product of tribal animosity conflate the causes with the consequences of these tragedies. This paper demonstrates that such 'ethnic strife' is the outcome rather than the cause of social upheavals in the continent. The cases of Botswana and Somalia will demonstrate the validity of this contention. These two countries occupy the opposite ends of the political and development spectrum in Africa. Botswana has maintained a liberal and stable democracy since independence in 1966. It has also nurtured the fastest growing economy in the developing world for nearly 30 years[2]. Because of these achievements, Botswana has become the democratic—developmental model for Africa. By contrast, Somalia had a long and brutal dictatorship which led the country into a disastrous civil war. Moreover, it had a stagnant economy for most years since 1960. The combined effects of political oppression and economic involution led to self-destruction such that the nation-state ceased to exist. Thus, Somalia has become synonymous with national failure and the Somali syndrome is the outcome that all African societies should avoid. Finally, however, these contrasting models are not as divergent as many think.

In conventional academic circles and policy establishments the Somali disaster is thought to be a product of tribal hostilities.[3] In contrast, tribalism is not credited with such causal powers in the Botswana experience. The question that is yet to be answered is what explains the divergent experiences of these seemingly similar 'tribal' societies? This comparative study of a successful and a failed state in Africa will show that the ethnic factor is at best a contingent force whose effects are dependent on the political and accumulation strategies of contemporary political and economic actors.

Much recent research shows that the political and social maladies that bedevil many African states are *but* traditional in nature.[4] Our research has shown that the problem is the perversion of *elements* of the old communal tradition.[5] This

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paper further advances this thesis by introducing a comparative dimension to the analysis of the Somali predicament and demonstrating that the central actors responsible for the destruction of the Somali 'world order' are the dominant elite. This comparison between Botswana and Somalia demonstrates that social cohesion of the elite—the legitimacy, discipline and consciousness of its leadership—are the key factors responsible for either divisively magnifying cultural and social differences between communities, creating conditions in the public realm that exacerbate vulnerability and heighten fear, or striving to further collective interests by judiciously and fairly managing public institutions and resources. Finally, I would like to propose that colonial and subsequent postcolonial societies embody two contradictory political economic tendencies: one that entails social fragmentation and the pursuit of parochial interest, and the other that buttresses social integration and nationalist concerns. These tendencies distinguish the political and economic agenda of various elements of the postcolonial elite from that economic agenda of others. The rest of the paper is divided into three parts. Sections two and three examine the transformation of traditional authority in the two countries; the relationships between the (colonial) state and 'tribal' authority, and between state leaders and the development and management of public institutions in Botswana and Somalia. The final section will map the conceptual and political implications of the comparative case study of the two models.

Tribe and (colonial) state in Botswana

Pre-colonial Botswana society was divided into several administratively autonomous groups that shared similar cultural traditions. Each group was led by a king (Kgosi) who dominated its political affairs. He was also the wealthiest individual in Botswana society.[6] The Kgosi was usually succeeded by the oldest son of his first wife. Although the traditional Botswana Kgosi commanded a lot of authority, he was not an absolute monarch. He was assisted by two types of chief: commoners and royal ones. The Kgosi chose the former, but not the latter. The commoner chiefs headed villages and often acted as the Kgosi's allies if one of the royal chiefs decided to challenge his authority in any serious way. The villages that this commoner and royal lieutenant administered were further divided into wards that were led by headmen. The headmen were accountable to both the chiefs and the Kgosi.

The Kgosi had full authority over where one resided in the village. The Kgosi's political authority was cemented by his control over large herds of cattle. Cattle were the principal form of wealth and capital. In the semi-arid environment of Botswana, cattle were also the main source of livelihood. The Kgosi loaned his cattle to both the chiefs, headmen and members of his subjects. Those who kept the cattle of the Kgosi lived off its output but were deprived of access to it when they lost the favour of the Kgosi. Without access to cattle a person was assured of destitution. As such, this patron–client system ensured the loyalty of the subjects. The Kgosi consulted with his chiefs before he made any major decisions, despite his unchallenged authority and power. The Kgosi and his inner advisors usually aired the issues and reached an agreement before the Kgosi's proposal was 'debated' in the Kgotla.[7]

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The Kgosi had substantial but limited power. His authority and legitimacy were sometimes challenged by one of his closest royal relatives. If such a challenge to depose the reigning Kgosi was not successful, the challenger and his supporters moved away from the settlement and started their own polity, or sought refuge in the territory of a neighbouring Kgosi. These challenges were not only induced by poor governance, but also by internal intrigues and rivalries between royal houses. A third kind of fragmentation occurred when some of these polities got too large to be appropriately managed by a single Kgosi. The off-shoot community moved to a new area under the leadership of a new kgosi and re-established traditional Botswana administration and social relations. As such, traditional Botswana polities were susceptible to these types of fragmentation.

The aforementioned social dynamic was frozen by British colonial rule in at least three ways. First, by demarcating 'Tribal Reserves' for each Botswana nation, the colonial state petrified what was previously a fluid social and spatial process. Second, by recognising the 'chiefs' as the legitimate traditional rulers of the tribes, and proclaiming that they could only be removed by the colonial administration, it put an end to the aforementioned challenges. Third, the colonial state also reserved the right to recognise new chiefs. The partial remaking of Botswana society in the colonial image meant that the tribe and the colonial state became the two administrative anchors of the new order. This found spatial and social expression in the tribal reserve, the colonial administrator, and the chief (see Figure 1 overleaf).

The British colonial state recognised that it needed the consent and assistance of the chiefs to govern the territory; nevertheless, it tried to reform the chieftaincy in order to reduce the power of incumbents. The chiefs successfully resisted an intrusion that was designed to further reduce their authority over 'tribal matters' and their land.[8] While the chiefs resisted attempts to dilute their authority, they also agitated for the creation of a territorial legislative council, which the colonial authorities were not prepared to entertain. The chiefs argued that the territory had attained sufficient political maturity to be self-governing. They recommended that a united legislative council replace the African and European Councils in the territory, neither of which had law-making powers. The colonial authorities were not sympathetic to this kind of reform until the late 1950s. Consequently, the chiefs and tribal reserves remained the basic native political forum until just a few years before independence.

While the 'tribe' was getting reified, a counter process of social restructuring was unravelling. The old means of sustaining the bonds between the chiefs and the wealthy and their subjects through the circulation of cattle had been declining steadily. According to Wylie the old pattern of investing in social relations and people was replaced by investment in commodities and other capitalist forms of wealth.[9] The effect of this change has been the dissolution of old social bonds and the 'freeing' of both the elite and the indigent population. Among the major manifestation of such social restructuring was the voting out of office of the reigning chief Tshekedi Khama in favour of his nephew Seretse Khama. A second and more fundamental indication of this transformation was the restructuring of common grazing and water resources.[10]

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The implication of this transformative process has been the relative unification of modern elements of the elite and their traditional counterparts. The leading members of the chiefs, despite their seeming tribal foundation, strongly supported the movement towards Botswana's independence. Although struggles ensued between modern elements of the elite led by Seretse Khama and the traditional factions led by chief Bathoen over the role of the latter in the new republic, there was no disagreement among them regarding the adoption of a capitalist development strategy guided by the state.[11]

The modernist faction of the Botswana elite won this intra-class wrangle with the assistance of the colonial authorities. The primary source of this tension was over what role the traditionalist leaders would play in independent Botswana. The chiefs were granted their own House of Chiefs in Botswana's two-chamber parliament. The House of Chiefs plays a consultative and not a legislative role. The chiefs are also constitutionally barred from engaging in partisan politics. This nominal role frustrated the more ambitious members of the House. Bathoen, the leader of the chiefs, ultimately resigned from the House and ran as a member of the opposition party for parliament in the first post-independence election. He defeated the country's vice-president and retained his seat until his death.[12]

These challenges notwithstanding, the dominant Botswana Democratic Party has retained significant majorities in the elections since independence. Seretse Khama remained president and vice-president Masire took over the presidency when the former died in 1980. Khama's leadership was not seriously challenged either from within or outside the party. The legitimacy of the government and the party has been renewed through successive general elections. One of the first tasks of the new government was to redefine local government. Nearly all Botswana's administrative districts were renamed old tribal reserves (see Figure 2 opposite). The first act of reform was to replace the chiefs with District Commissioners selected by the national government. The chiefs were made ex-officio members of the District Council. However, most of their authority was transferred to the council, except when it came to traditional matters such as presiding over traditional courts.

There was little disagreement among the elite once the 'problem' of the chiefs was resolved. This unity of the modernist elite and the legitimacy and unchallenged authority of its leaders gave the new regime tremendous autonomy from civil society to pursue its agenda.[13] There was little debate, either in the National Assembly or in society at large, about the regime's liberal capitalist development strategy. The leadership recognised that legitimacy and autonomy were necessary for acting on their agenda, but not sufficient to translate it into reality. They were mindful of Botswana's status as a severely underdeveloped migrant labour reserve. The legacy of British colonialism in Botswana was a mere handful of university graduates, no meaningful educational infrastructure, several miles of a paved road, no vibrant private or public sector, and integration into a regional economy dominated by apartheid South Africa.

The three major tasks confronting the new state was how to reduce the negative economic influence of South Africa, become independent from British budgetary subsidies,[14] and build a market economy. The government came to the conclusion that state enterprises would play a critical role in the development of

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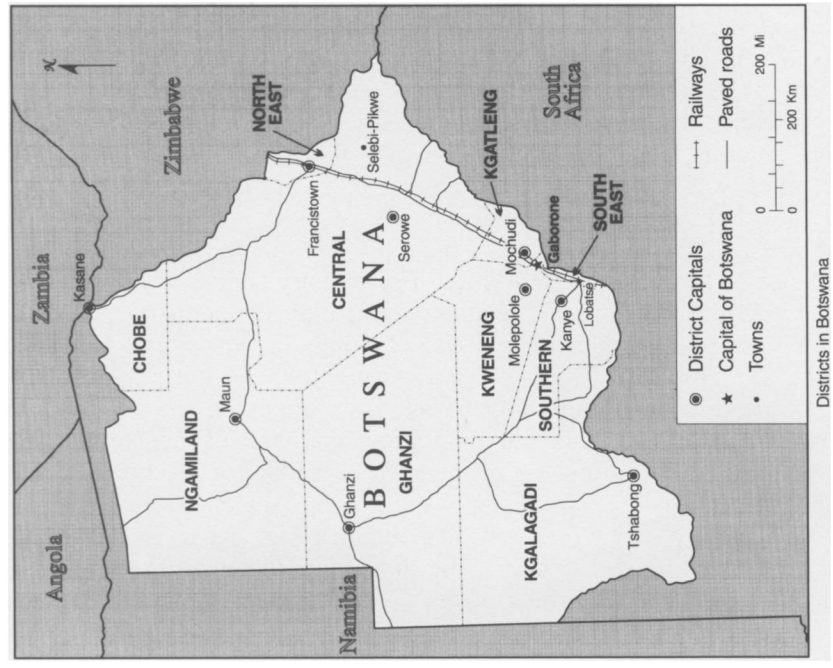


FIGURE 2
Post-independence districts in Botswana.

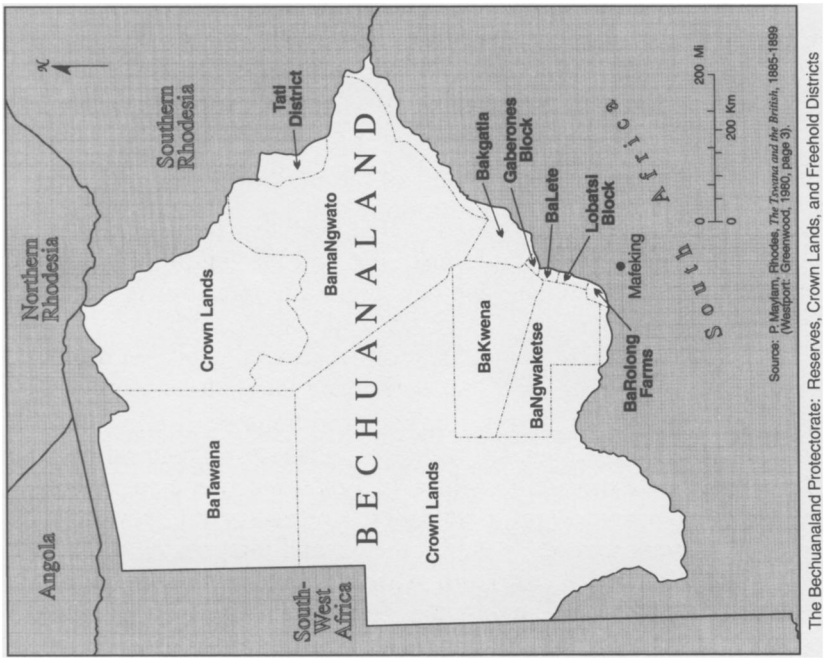


FIGURE 1
Map of Botswana (Bechuanaland) in the colonial period.

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its capitalist economy. Consequently, it went about developing its bureaucratic apparatus on a professional basis. Merit and professional conduct became the core features of this establishment.[15] The government was eager to use skilled expatriates while its people were gaining professional training. It was during the first five to 10 years after independence that the bureaucratic and development apparatus of the state was set up. The centre of this machine has been the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, headed by Vice-president Masire until 1980. The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning manages and controls the use of public finance and development activities. Line ministries function as implementation agencies.[16]

The capitalist development agenda led by the state institutions of Botswana have been translated into reality. Botswana has had one of the highest economic growth rates in the world, averaging nearly 10% annually for the past 30 years. Some people may think that the fantastic growth of the economy is a product of the discovery and exploitation of a huge diamond deposit since the early 1970s. It is certainly true that the enormous windfalls from the diamonds gave Botswana tremendous advantages over resource-poor countries like Somalia. What is indisputable, however, is that it is not the diamonds that induced professional management of public institutions, as well as the very low level of corruption in the public sector.[17] Vast oil reserves and revenues have not made Nigeria, Gabon, and Venezuela models of efficient and corrupt-free states. By contrast, Botswana has turned its mineral revenues in to one of the largest per capita foreign exchange reserves ($5 billion) held by any country in the Third World, while vast amounts of public revenues in Nigeria have disappeared from the books.

Two related factors have made Botswana fate's possible: conscious and disciplined political leadership and a professionally autonomous and accountable public service. The unity of the elite, their legitimacy and autonomy from other elements of civil society was a necessary but not sufficient condition for Botswana's economic take-off. The leaders of the Botswana elite were conscious of the necessity of building public institutions that ran on a professional basis and which were relatively autonomous from particularistic political interventions. Political leaders in cabinet set the broad contours of development policy and the bureaucracy then had a relatively free hand to fill in the details and deploy the mechanism for implementation.[18] The late vice-president of the republic best articulated this balance:

> A *purposeful* government that acquires the *expertise* to deal with foreign companies on its own terms need not have a fear of domination by foreign companies, however large they may be. The important word is purposeful—and I believe our government has been able to put together *strong negotiating teams*, has backed them up with *well-worked out negotiating mandates*, and has then overseen the implementation of our major agreements with *detailed care* as well.[19]

As the Vice-President's remarks indicate, political expediencies on the part of particular interest groups were not allowed to distort either the definition of the national political agenda or its professional operationalisation. The leaders of the

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Botswana state were able to keep the elite disciplined given that it had an unchallenged political mandate and popular legitimacy. With such a stable political environment, the leadership focused their attention on setting up a professionally capable state machinery. The debates surrounding the speed of localising the bureaucracy and the 'excessive' role of skilled expatriates, and the unwillingness of the government to compromise on these issues attest to the importance attached to creating the capacity of the state.[20] Developing such a state apparatus with the requisite skilled personnel and capacity was painstakingly slow, given the political pressures to indigenise the civil service in order to overcome the segregationist policies of the colonial state. The leadership was mindful of the heavy long-term cost of replacing skilled expatriates with unqualified locals, despite the leaders' intention to localise the service as quickly as possible.[21] Consequently, the government 'made brilliant use of expatriates'[22] while training its people.[23] In the process, an accountable, effective and professionally autonomous civil service was created. Botswana's accomplishments in these areas were summed up by the World Bank:

> While still a developing country, Botswana stands out in many respects—it has a functioning democratic system, the lines of authority are clearly defined, the civil servants are accountable to parliament, control over financial management is enforced, plans and planning are taken seriously, technical assistance is utilized effectively, parastatals are managed on sound commercial principles and are not a drain on the national budget and, by and large, there are order, logic, efficiency, probity and rhythm in the conduct of government business.[24]

The united, autonomous, conscious and disciplined elite crafted the institutions necessary to manage and guide Botswana's development. The combination of such a political and bureaucratic structure and agency made the sagacious use of Botswana's diamond resources possible. The 'tribal differences' among the elite and in the larger society remained innocuous, and the political and economic impact of tribal boundaries as well as identities remained inert.

Clan and (colonial) state in Somalia

The social and political organisation of pre-colonial Somali society was much less hierarchical than that of Botswana. In the main, there were no chiefly traditions where authority rested on the direct or indirect control of land or livestock. The basic social unit was the household, which had relatively unimpeded access, use and control of grazing and water resources. The elders of the community did not control these resources for their own use and could not deny other households access to such resources. Livestock was 'owned' by the household. The harsh and semi-arid environment obliged households to cooperate in herding livestock together, developing and maintaining water wells, managing and exploring the range lands, and circulating livestock to reduce the deleterious impact of ecological perturbations. The pre-colonial Somali economic order, despite its cooperative character, exhibited three major features of inequality. First, the distribution of the herd among the households in a community was determined by a family's managerial skills, luck, location in the

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networks of exchange and position in the family cycle. Second, patriarchy was a major defining feature of the cultural, economic and political life of Somali society. Women and girls had less freedom of movement as well as control of livestock resources. Third, older men occupied the pinnacle of the social ladder and had significant control over the resources of the household as well as the fortunes of their sons and daughters. Adult men constituted the elders of the community and therefore the political elite. Despite such hierarchy, the rule of the elders was democratic in nature and their edicts could only be enforced through social sanctions in the absence of established police and other coercive tools of state. The elders therefore had much less authority over the community and individuals than the monarchs of Botswana.

The pre-colonial household and network-based economic order was an integral part of the larger political and moral order. This system was bounded by the rules of Islam and the tenets of kinship.[25] Kinship had two constituent elements.[26] These were the rule of the Xeer, and the ties that were either a product of genealogy (*tol*) or marriage (*Xidid*). Xeer was a Somali-wide social contract that governed communal and individual codes of conduct. The Xeer and the teachings of Islam superseded the *potential* divisiveness of genealogy (*tol*). Furthermore, the web of relationships created by intermarriage reinforced the community-wide spirit of the Xeer and Islam and blunted the genealogical basis of difference.

The household, Islam and the kinship-based political–economic and moral order of pre-colonial Somalia did not prevent conflict between communities, but certainly precluded prolonged hostilities driven by genealogical differences. This tradition went through a qualitative metamorphosis as the Somali lands came under colonial occupation. Both the British and Italian colonial states instituted clan and tribal chiefs as vassals of their administration. Their primary role was to be a hyphen between the state and the 'tribesmen'. Somali chieftainship was not an indigenous institution and therefore lacked an autonomous legitimate political base. Somali chiefs also did not possess resources of their own and consequently depended on the colonial state. In effect, the chiefs acted as the employees of the colonial state and therefore rarely challenged the dictates of their employer in any significant case. Finally, there was no figure like Tshekedi Khama among the Somali chiefs who could defend tradition while advocating the formation of national institutions. Chiefs truly acted as creatures of the colonial state.

The chiefs become a central cog of the colonial administration. Their ability to command respect and authority among the Somali population was contingent on: (a) the few favours they extracted from the administration to distribute to the community, and their usefulness as facilitators of clan members' access to the administration; and (b) their capacity to call on the coercive power of the state to discipline those who transgressed chiefly authority.

The colonial chieftainship in the Somali lands had fundamental impacts that vastly exceeded its material and moral weakness. The constellation of the colonial state, colonial chiefs and tribalisation of the moral and political order, and the slow but steady commoditisation of the pastoral and peasant economy transformed the nature of Somali social order.[27] First, the establishment of the

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colonial state as the centre of political authority created both a unifying and divisive pan-Somali bureaucratic authoritarian structure. This entailed the formation of a forum, with a somewhat colonial nature, for discussing Somali-wide issues that enabled various elements of the Somali society to overcome their relative isolation from one another. Second, this constellation significantly undermined the reach of the kinship–Islamic based moral order. The establishment of Italian and British Somali colonial systems superseded old traditional identities, but generated parochial identities and conflicts in the new world order. The 'legal' prerequisites for any individual Somali to be a legitimate subject of the new order was membership in a tribal group under the leadership of a chief. This political hierarchy of subject, tribe, chief and colonial administration created identities with a supportive incentive and authority system. Unlike the old order in which the elders did not control either a coercive machine or economic power over the community, the imposition of colonialism on Somalia removed the major social means of restraining those in position of power. Third, while engaged in the processes of reinventing tradition, the colonial state also induced commoditisation of basic resources and social restructuring. On the economic front, livestock and other sources of subsistence gained monetary value and became objects of trade. Moreover, there was a simultaneous and resultant process from which new social groups, such as merchants, other elements of the growing urban population and employees of the state emerged. These groups, particularly the merchants and state employees, were least restrained by the older tradition as they gained secure and relatively independent means of livelihood. Such social development had both positive and negative dimensions to it. Its positive aspects entailed the gradual emergence of relations between many members of this group regarding their pan-Somali interest. The greater intensity of their contact facilitated the development of a shared modern Somali national identity that challenged the clanist thrust of the colonial project.

The colonial states in the Somali lands, unlike their counterpart in Botswana did not draw administrative boundaries along clan divisions. For example, in British Somalia the five districts of Burao, Erigavo, Berbera, Hargeisa and Zeila-Borama did not reflect any established, 'tribal' division (see Figure 3 overleaf). These administrative divisions did not have any traditional moorings, as in Botswana. Instead, all the districts were named after the major towns in each unit. In Italian Somalia, the pattern was similar, even with the seeming exception of Mageertinia.

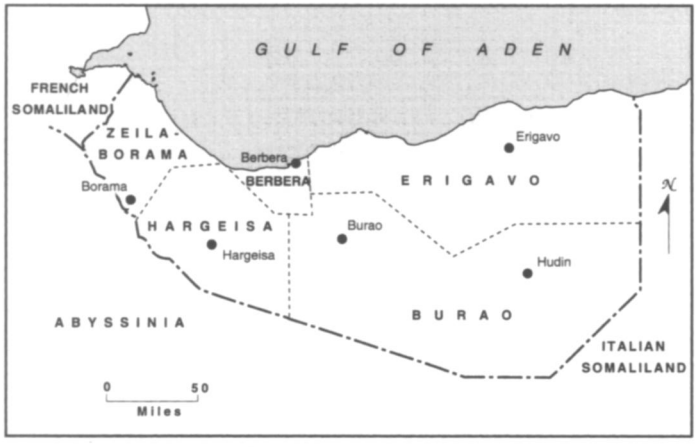
Thus, the colonial project set in motion contradictory social, economic and political forces that concurrently emphasised clanism and nationalism, and subsistence and commercialisation. It seems, in hindsight, that these forces had two competing tendencies. One of these proclivities emphasised Somali-wide ideas, identity, and systematic pursuit of national objectives. The second stressed the pursuit of insular and individualistic interests without much regard for the larger community (see Figure 4 overleaf).

The Somali-wide versus the insular and clanist trajectories were potential alternative post-colonial national strategies embedded in the fabric of the colonial society. Which scenario prevailed essentially depended on the way in which conflicts among the new Somali elite were resolved and how its leader-

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Somalia: Regional Administrative Map, 1970



Districts in British Somaliland

FIGURE 3

Maps showing comparison of colonial districts in British Somaliland with later Somali administrative regions.

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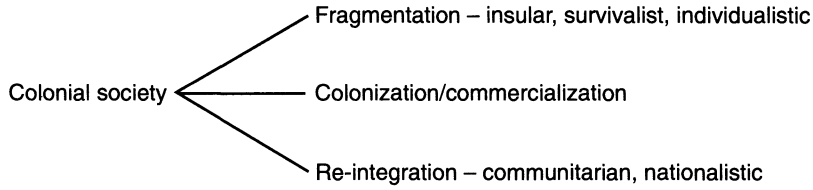


FIGURE 4 **Sociopolitical tendencies in (colonial) Somali society**

ship managed public affairs. The fault-line of future struggles could be observed in the first legislative election in British Somalia. First, although an important clanist element was present in the formation of the Somali National League (SNL), the main political party in the Protectorate, others such as the Somali Youth League (SYL) were arguing for a more inclusive organisation. This division was apparent from the results of the election. Among the individuals elected to the legislative council from Hargeisa, the centre of the SNL, were 'Ogaden and Tumal tribesmen'. If clan identity mattered the most in the election then candidates Mohamed Bihi and Omer Abdirahman had no chance of winning, as their 'clans' were at best statistically insignificant minorities. The second issue which signalled that provincial forces were not ascendant was the fact that the Protectorate Legislative Council voted to send a mission to Mogadishu with the mandate to negotiate with leaders in Italian Somalia for the unification of the two Somali lands. The Council instructed the Prime Minister to lead the delegation. Premier Egal was not an enthusiastic advocate of the idea of Somali unification.[28]

The social organisation of the elite and the quality of its leadership, as we noted in the case of Botswana, played a central role in shaping dominant scenarios in independent Somalia. The Somali elite were culturally and religiously homogeneous with differences mostly in language accent. The widely shared cultural features provided a *potential* basis for a Somali-wide agenda. The transfer of parts of Somalia lands to Ethiopia in the early 1950s breathed life into the inert nationalist movement. The anti-colonial movement which this event induced sufficiently galvanised the public and gave momentum to the communitarian propensity of the Somali body politic. This process generated sufficient nationalist energy to lead to the unification of the two Somali lands.

The civilian years

The ascendant nationalist movement that culminated in independence, the incredible fervour that accompanied it, and the social unity that it signified were real. However, the longevity of this trend was vulnerable to the divisive and sectarian tendencies also imbedded in colonial Somali society. The principal ingredients of the latter tendency were: (a) the absence of a united elite along economic and ideological lines, and unchallenged though legitimate leadership; and (b) the lack of a disciplined leadership that was fully conscious of the prerequisites of systemic accumulation and development.

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The Somali elite, which consisted of merchants, bureaucrats and politicians was an unstable social stratum. The brevity of its collective social experience, and the shallowness of its material basis both as individuals and as a group, heightened individual vulnerability and intense intra-group rivalry. The insecurity of most members of this class, particularly among the politicians and bureaucrats, immeasurably added to the internal incoherence of the group and the absence of relatively lasting consensus about a collective national project. Such conditions obviated the emergence of legitimate and stable leadership that could ensure discipline among the elite. The internal structure and dynamics of the elite generated a survivalist current that gave precedence to the individualist agenda over the collective interest of the elite. Such an individualistic programme predisposed most members of the elite to be parochial in their strategy. This narrow world view dovetailed with the clanist identity induced during the colonial period. The confluence of individualist and clanist tendencies moulded a volatile political and economic environment in which political leaders felt insecure in their tenure at the top of the hierarchy and attempted to exploit it. Consequently, their primary preoccupation was to defend their positions. This was compounded by the fact that the majority of those individuals in strategic positions of leadership were not willing or able to take a risk and stand against the survivalist stampede.[29] This survivalist fixation was bolstered as most of these leaders had neither the resources nor the skills to maintain their standard of living if and when they lost their official position.

The parochialism of clanist tendency and the insecurity of politicians reinforced each other and created a formidable but destructive alliance. This alliance, despite its seductiveness, did not ride rough shod over the nationalist and communitarian tendency of the independence movement, as indicated by the unification of the North and the South. The political and social profile of Somali society in the last 30 years displays the struggle between the forces of parochialism and individualism and those of nationalism and community. The conflicts over the development of the civil service establishment and the articulation of the national project clearly mark the distinction between the two forces. Furthermore, this struggle reveals the weaknesses and strengths of the two camps. Table 1 summarises the different phases of this struggle. The unity of the elite, economic or ideological or both, is of major importance in providing a basis for the articulation of a collective project. There were only two short periods in which a reasonable degree of consensus existed among the elite. The unity of the elite in these periods (1960–64 and 1969–77) was a product of: (a) the euphoric effect of independence, and the absence of previous conflicts among the elite at national level; and (b) the overthrow of the corrupt civilian government in 1969. The period immediately after independence coincided with the first regime of President Aden Abdullah Osman and Prime Minister Abdirashied A Sharmarke. The prime minister was the head of government and as such directed its operations. Although the regime faced some opposition with regard to some of its objectives, it enjoyed a high degree of legitimacy and popular support from the public. The war between Somalia and Ethiopia in 1964 and the patriotic current it generated sustained the legitimacy of the regime in the latter phase of this period.

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TABLE 1
Elite structure, legitimacy and state building in Somalia 1960–91

Regime	*Elite unity*	*Conscious leaders*	*Legitimacy*	*Clarity of strategy*	*Institution building*
1960–64	high	low	high	no	no
1964–67	low	high/low	high	yes/no	yes
1967–69	low	low	high/low	no	no
1969–77	high	low	high	yes/no	no
1977–91	low	low	low	no	no
1991—	none	low	none	no	no

The seeming consensus within the regime apparently concealed serious differences between President Osman and Premier Sharmarche in their approaches to nation-building. The prime minister and most members of the government were committed to devoting a great deal of the republic's meagre resources and energy to liberating the remaining three territories in French Somalia, Somali Ethiopia and Somali Kenya. The President and a few members of the government who were equally committed to the same project thought that the new republic could best help the liberation process by first consolidating the foundation of its independence. The prime minister and his agenda for the country prevailed.

The regime did not articulate a coherent development strategy or embark on building institutional capacity despite the popularity of nationalist rhetoric. Somalia inherited two contrasting civil service establishments from its Italian and British colonial masters. The former Italian Somalia had a civil service that enabled particularistic political interference. Furthermore, there were no clear and bureaucratically objective avenues for hiring, promotion, retention and dismissal. Consequently, personal relationships and particularistic predispositions determined who occupied government posts, the rewards received and the length of tenure. By contrast, the British left behind in the North a highly bureaucratic establishment where annual examinations, certificate and degree qualifications, and merit governed employment, remuneration, discipline and termination. These two systems of administration were integrated during the first few years of independence. The first signal that the more bureaucratic system of the North was losing was a reduction in the relatively high civil service salaries of senior officials from the North without any regard for the meritorious basis of the salary scale. Second, the government paid little attention to the central role that the Northern Civil Service Commission played in maintaining the professional autonomy of the services. Subsequently, many key positions in the civil service were filled with the cronies of the political bosses. The devotion of national energy and resources to the liberation project, the absence of a clear development strategy, and the de-bureaucratisation[30] of the civil service severely undermined the capacity of the state to constructively direct the affairs of the nation.

The 1964 election marked an important watershed in the political annals of the young republic. It exposed the ascendancy and strength of the individualist and

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survivalist tendency of the elite, as well as the attempt by nationalist forces to resist the onslaught of the former. The number of political parties who fielded candidates in the election grew to 24. However, only four parties won seats in parliament. President Osman's choice for prime minister was the former minister of the interior, who shared the president's agenda. Premier Hussein's first attempt to form a government was thwarted by a rebellious parliament. This created a showdown between the president and parliament. President Osman insisted on his choice of premier and instructed Mr Hussein to form another government. It has been reported that the president, who made some compromises on a few issues, threatened to dissolve parliament and order new national elections if the latter did not support the formation of the new government. Parliament reluctantly agreed with the president.

Three qualities distinguished the new government from its predecessor. First, members of the new cabinet were appointed mainly on the basis of their 'professional' skills. Second, a significant number of key portfolios, such as Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Education and Information, went to northerners. Second, the government adopted the northern civil service system as the national institutional development format. It resuscitated and strengthened the role of the Civil Service Commission. The Commission, with the technical assistance of United Nations experts, was given a mandate to professionalise the service. It started reevaluating all major posts in the civil service and the qualifications of their occupants. It found out that many of the senior officials were unqualified and ill-equipped to perform their duties. Consequently, it recommended that such individuals be relieved of their responsibilities. The prime minister heeded its advice and dismissed nearly 200 senior civil servants over the next year. These dismissals were dubbed the 'posta Rosa' after the red envelope containing the discharge notes. Most of those discharged were from the southern region. They were also some of the leading elements of the southern elite. The premier also introduced administrative directives, as part of the government's attempt to professionalise public services, that barred the use of government transport and resources for private use. Third, the prime minister attempted to shift the debate on liberation by arguing for ways of helping other Somali lands such as French Somali lands gain their independence without diverting the meagre resources of the young country away from development. This attempt never succeeded thanks to the powerful emotions that the liberation of the missing territories evoked in the public.

In spite of the strong agreement between the president, the prime minister and the cabinet, the elite, and particularly those in parliament, were not united. The survivalist instincts of the elite regained momentum as the independence fervour receded. The 1967 presidential election (by members of parliament) provided a fertile opportunity for those who opposed the agenda of government. President Osman and former Premier Sharmarche became the two candidates for the presidency. President Osman's candidacy faced not only a popular former prime minister, but all those who were alienated from his current government. These included many of the allies of the senior civil servants who were sacked for incompetence. It has been reported also that candidate Sharmarchie and his deputies started luring members of parliament with promises of big posts in the

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future government, as well as immediate cash rewards. These rewards and promises were too tempting for the parochial and survivalist member of parliament. President Osman's dignified attempt to win re-election failed by a narrow margin.

President Sharmarche and the new prime minister, Egal, understood the volatility of the political and electoral process. Consequently, they started planning for the 1969 parliamentary election. The elite, and especially those in parliament, failed to be united by anything except their own willingness to trade off any public resource for private gain. The leaders of the government, having fuelled this tendency during the presidential election, knew the only way that they could maintain some control was to appeal to the material interest of each individual MP and tantalise them with rewards and promises. It quickly became apparent to the public that the Sharmarche–Egal government was increasingly and conspicuously becoming corrupt. The government gradually but precipitously lost popular legitimacy. Furthermore, its hold on power was dependent on attending to the 'welfare' of the MP. This exercise so thoroughly absorbed the government's attention that little else was done during the period between the presidential and parliamentary election. There was no attempt to redefine the country's development strategy, nor to build on the preliminary steps taken by the former government to bureaucratise government operations. The new regime did not dismantle the Civil Service Commission but simply let it wither on the vine. The systematic and gradually institutionalised campaign against corruption and incompetence also became a thing of the past.

The competition for parliamentary seats in the 1969 election fully proved that the survivalist and clanist faction of the elite had gained the upper hand. The strategy of the nationalist wing of the political elite was battered and lay in ruins. The electoral process was in a shambles as 62 political parties competed for 123 seats. All but one of the 'opposition' parties that won 50 seats voluntarily joined the governing party. Only former Prime Minister Hussein and his party retained the status of opposition.[31] Somalia not only became the first contemporary African country in which a peaceful and constitutional transfer of presidential power took place (from President Osman to his successor), but also the first in which the first democratically elected opposition decided to unite with the ruling party to create a 'one'-party state.

The military era

The new regime lost power to a military coup seven months after the elections and before the full impact of the change on public institutions could be observed. The public enthusiastically welcomed the change of government and hoped for a revival of communal spirit and corruption-free government. The leaders of the military regime seemed representative of a cross-section of the national population. They articulated nationalist and communitarian ideas in their first communiqué, emphasised self-reliance as a national development strategy and adopted a script for the Somali language. The establishment of more schools in all parts of the country and of the Somali National University added to the credentials of

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the regime. These ideas and accomplishments received enormous support from the public. The junta's legitimacy was further enhanced by the effective and honest way it dealt with the terrible drought of 1974–75.

In spite of some conflicts within the junta during the first two years of its rule, it seemed united in its principles and agenda for the first eight years. The popularity of the regime and the unity of its leaders was reminiscent of the early days of independence. The military government, with the help of Soviet advisors, identified 'socialism' as its development strategy. It embarked on the establishment of parastatals and other similar public organisations to stimulate economic growth and development. Moreover, it started initiating and sponsoring various types of community organisations, e.g. youth, women, etc, to mobilise resources for self-help schemes.

The public supported many of the government's initiatives. The cooperative spirit that such initiatives embodied seemed to rekindle the nationalist and communitarian tendency in the Somali body politic and held the promise that it might triumph over the sectarianism of the previous decade. However, the tremendous positive social climate of the early 1970s did not marginalise the survivalist and sectarian inclinations of members of the elite. There were early signs that the military leaders failed to: (a) clearly articulate the power relationship between state authorities and ordinary citizens; (b) streamline professional relationships between civilian managers of the state and their military bosses; and (c) professionalise the bureaucracy and develop a clear and accountable public management system that restrained the exploitation of public authority for personal gain. Two issues marked the leaders' failure. First, the ruling Military Council, and its president in particular, never took up the issues of rationalising public sector management through the reinvention of the Civil Service Commission or a similar body and it ignored the need for professional autonomy of the service. Consequently, the promotion, appointment, demotion and dismissal decisions of public sector employees were made in the Council, and increasingly by the president alone, without due professional process. This matter came up for brief debate only once in the Council, when one of the civilian cabinet members argued with the president over the legitimacy of the latter's authority to promote military officers while cabinet members could not do the same for their civilian employees. Second, the Council, and often the president alone, made strategic decisions about all major public management and development issues without any significant expert advice.

The arbitrary way that the public service was managed and the uninformed and unsystematic nature of the decision-making process undermined the legitimacy of the regime. The promotion of unqualified individuals, who had connections in high places, into senior posts displacing more seasoned and skilled employees dealt a death blow to the morale of public servants. Furthermore, the occupants of senior posts subverted the bureaucratic process as their bosses protected them. Such impunity from the rule of law and the constraints of the bureaucratic process generated a dynamic in which the overwhelming majority of public employees saw their offices as fiefdoms to be milked for individual gain. This system of managing the affairs of the nation, which had its roots in the

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early years of the regime, began to expand slowly in the mid-1970s. As the public realised the deliberate distortion of public service, its enthusiasm for the political change turned into indifference, cynicism and disregard for the law.

This trend was briefly blunted by the tremendous patriotic euphoria unleashed by the success of the Somali army and the Western Somali Liberation Front in routing the Ethiopian army in 1977–78. General Siyad Barre was seen as the national hero for the duration of the war. The injection of Soviet and Cuban troops and arsenal into the war turned the tide against Somalia. A national debate ensued, particularly among the armed forces, regarding a change of government. Unfortunately, there was no democratic mechanism to remove the regime. Once Siyad and his cohorts sensed this undertow, they decided to fight the challenge with all means at their disposal and without any regard for the interest of the nation. In other words, unlike President Osman and Prime Minister Hussein, who left office with tremendous dignity when they were democratically defeated, Siyad and his allies dug in their heels. Their survivalist and sectarian instincts took over. They unleashed the wrath of the national army on the people of the northeast. The rationale for such an unprecedented act was that one colonel, Abdillahi Yusuf, who had led an unsuccessful coup, was from the region. The collective punishment of the people in the region included destruction and poisoning of nomadic water wells, killing of livestock and the dismissal or imprisonment of any prominent person from the region who was suspected of being sympathetic to the coup. Such a brutal, self-serving and sectarian use of the national military and the rest of the state apparatus removed the last shred of legitimacy the state had. The opposition elements of the elite both inside and outside the state failed to unite to dislodge the regime and salvage the nationalist project. Many people left the country, mainly for Ethiopia, since it was very dangerous to oppose the regime politically within the country. The armed opposition based in Ethiopia and unarmed groups elsewhere organised themselves along sectarian lines. This gave some credibility to the regime's claim that these were not nationalist but disgruntled tribalist gangs whose only purpose was to destroy the country. That many of the leaders of these movements were former senior public officials who partook in the personal exploitation of their offices added weight to the credibility of this claim.

The next region that incited the venom of the regime was the northwest. The authorities persecuted nearly all the prominent individuals in the region who did not become its supplicants. Those who showed any independence of thought or action were considered supporters of the armed opposition in Ethiopia. Many of these individuals disappeared, were imprisoned or murdered. In addition the administration of the region was handed over to military officers hand-picked by the president for their loyalty to him and brutality to the population. Nearly all the economically or militarily strategic positions in the northwest were in the hands of Siyad's close lieutenants. Such was also the fate of many regions in the country in the 1980s. The northwest resembled a region occupied by a foreign army for most of the decade.

Contrary to the claims of all opposition movements the scope of their membership and the thrust of their programme was not pan-Somali. They failed

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to craft a collective strategy to remove the regime, and never contemplated the business of governance. Rather, they remained mired in sectarian politics that prolonged the lifespan of the regime. As these sectarian groups proliferated and as the regime and its troops exacted more tribute from communities and meted out barbaric punishment, the state's bureaucratic machinery withered away, and with it the sense of collective security and national identity. The communitarian spirit receded into the distant past. That spirit was maimed in Hargeisa and Burao in 1988 when one of the armed opposition groups based in Ethiopia crossed the border and stormed these cities. The regime used all of its fire power to 'regain' control of the region. It used heavy air and ground weaponry to dislodge the guerrillas without any regard for the civilian population. The population was devastated and the two cities thoroughly destroyed. Thousands of people perished in this hell and hundreds of thousands fled across the border to Ethiopia.

The regime won a hollow but temporary and inconclusive victory in the North. However, the brush fire set by all the sectarian movements, particularly those from the Benader region, swiftly overwhelmed the combative capacity of the enfeebled and demoralised national army. The military, as a national force, was defunct by the time the civil war engulfed the capital in late 1990. The regime collapsed in the early days of 1991 and the Somali state disintegrated.

The 21-year Somali saga that began with national jubilation and a sense of hope crashed and ended in brutish nightmare. The relief and reunion that the public expected with the demise of the dictatorship never materialised. A scramble for leadership and dominance continued once the old regime was chased out of town. As the civil war between the two competing factions in the capital Mogadishu, intensified, the rest of the country fell into the hands of 'regional' warlords. One of these declared its independence from a non-existent state. In the place of one dictator appeared many self-appointed individuals whose objective was not national reconstruction but the presidency of a country that no longer exists. Their unwillingness to strike a compromise that will allow for national rehabilitation and reconstruction clearly demonstrates that their cause was sectarian and survivalist in nature. Finally, the sectarian tendency of Somali politics has triumphed.

Conclusion

The sharp contrast in the recent experience of the two seemingly tribal/clan based societies of Botswana and Somalia repudiates the tribalist explanation of civil wars and political fragmentation in Africa. The purpose of this comparative work on Botswana and Somalia is to situate the effects of parochial forms of association in the context of dynamic social conditions which have led to national consolidation in one and political fragmentation and civil war in the other. That independent Botswana was able to override the divisive potential of pre-colonial (national) and colonial (tribal) identities, build a viable liberal democratic polity, the most effective state, and nurture the fastest growing

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economy in the continent supports the argument that the causes of political fragmentation in Africa are social rather than cultural or ethnic in nature. The unity of the elite, the legitimacy, consciousness and discipline of its leadership play a vital role in creating social conditions which foster positive political and economic environments in Botswana.

The complete disintegration of state institutions in Somalia created conditions which exacerbated mismanagement of collective resources and misuse of social power. This reversed voluntary trends of national integration. Under these conditions, the elite individuals who were instrumental in the destruction of national institutions seized the spoils of the civil war. This resulted in the political fragmentation of the nation-state and generated grave risks for hundreds of thousands of people who instantly found themselves in the 'wrong' territories.[32] The exposure of innocent people to lawlessness and consequent violence precipitated a frenetic exodus from all the major urban areas and regions. This forced migration took hundreds of thousands of people 'back' to disintegrating communities from which their grandparents originated. Such large scale movements of people reversed established voluntary patterns of migration and national integration that have been in process for several decades. Furthermore, forced migrants lost property and investments voluntarily acquired and made over the previous period. Finally, such displaced people arrived at their 'homelands' only to find the very personalities who had benefited from and destroyed the old order with unlimited authority. Facing such lawlessness and chaos, people had to find protection in the shadowy structures set up by the new lords of Somalia's Bantustan-like homelands, thus falling prey to various 'tribal' traps set up by the victorious factions of the elite.

The new lords of Somalia's Bantustans, having succeeded in destroying both communal and state institutions, are beginning to reap the bitter harvest of the dialectic. The communal animosities which members of the elite manufactured and stoked in order to advance their personal interests are now undermining their legitimacy as well as their hold on power. Consequently, the country becomes ever more fragmented and chaotic with little prospect for peace and reconstruction.

This author visited the self-proclaimed republic in northern Somalia and its capital Hargeisa during the summers of 1996 and 1997. This Bantustan-like creation is under the leadership of Mr Egal, who was the last civilian prime minister of the Somali Republic. Seven years after the collapse of the military regime and the declaration of the 'independence' of the former northern region, neither Egal's government nor that of his predecessor has done much to build the institutional capacity of the region. My observations in several 'ministries' and the 'presidency' clearly demonstrate that little has changed in terms of public management. The ministers and others run public affairs as their fiefdoms with the approval of Mr Egal. This pattern permeates the management of all public affairs in the region. These new lords of Somalia's fragments are not *ethnic* exploiters from another region, as some claimed about the political management of the Barre regime, but the *sons* of the same soil. That such a public management style persists even in these supposedly ethnic-based regions supports the analysis that the Somali nightmare is not the result of genealogical

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divisions among the population but of the narrow accumulation strategies of the elite.

The struggle to liberate the region and the country from the old regime and the sacrificial loss of hundreds of thousands of Somali lives in the process were in vain. It seems that a growing proportion of the Somali population in the country have sensed the great deceit and are asking painful questions about the similarity between Siyad's public management style and those of the reigning warlords. Among their questions are 'why are (were) we fighting one another, and what are the issues at stake?' They often rhetorically answer their own questions by noting the absence of public services and an economy worse off today than under the old regime. These troubling queries are symptomatic of the mood of a significant proportion of the population. They also reflect an emerging consensus on the need for a radical departure from the sectarian and survivalist politics of the last 36 years.

There is still ample energy and fire power left in the fortress of sectarianism, but these questions are beginning to reawaken the communitarian spirit from its long dormancy. Whether these yearnings will become the first tentative steps to successively rebuilding the spirit of a pan-Somali polity will greatly depend on a large number of committed and skilled Somalis returning from overseas. This will inject new energy into what is currently a disorientated population who desperately need socially responsible leadership. The people involved in this effort must be willing and ready to brave the hellish and potent forces of sectarianism. This is a daunting task but one which others elsewhere have successfully undertaken. Such a movement can only succeed if it is able to develop and nurture core public institutions that will have autonomy from particularistic interventions and capacity based on knowledge and skills. The Botswana experience points the way.

Notes

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[3] Even Ambassador Sahnoun's celebrated thesis about reconciliation is rooted in the tribalist origins of the Somali calamity. See Mohamed Sahnoun, *Somalia: The Missed Opportunity*, Washington DC: United States Peace Institute, 1994.

[4] Ahmed Samatar (ed), *The Somali Challenge: From Crisis to Renewal*?, Boulder, co: Lynne Rienner, 1994; René Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994; Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*, New York: Longman, 1993; and Vail Leroy, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

[5] Samatar Ahmed, *The Somali Challenge*; Lidwien Kapteiin, 'Women and the crisis of communal identity: the cultural construction of gender in Somali history' in Samatar, *The Somali Challenge*, pp 211–232. Abdi Samatar, 'The destruction of state and society in Somalia: beyond the tribal convention', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 30(4), 1992, pp 625–641.

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[6] This description of traditional Botswana social structure is based on Thmoas Tlou, 'The nature of Botswana states: towards a theory of Botswana traditional government—The Batwana case', *Botswana Notes and Records*, 5, 1972, pp 63–79.

[7] The Kgotla was the traditional venue where the affairs of the nation were publically discussed.

[8] For a discussion of the landmark case where the chiefs, under the leadership of Tshekedi Khama, challenged the creation of an advisory, body see Michael Crowder, *The Flogging of Phineas McIntosh: A Tale of Colonial Folly, Bechuanaland 1993*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988.

[9] Diane Wylie, *A Little God: The Twilight of Patriarchy in a Southern African Chiefdom*, Johannesburg: Witswatersrand University Press, 1990.

[10] Pauline Peters, *Dividing the Commons: Politics, Policy, and Culture in Botswana*, Charlottesville, VA: Virginia University Press, 1994.

[11] Abdi Samatar, *An African Miracle: State and Class Leadership and Colonial Legacy in Botswana* (forthcoming).

[12] The vice-president was brought into parliament as a specially-elected (selected) member and retained his post until he was elected from another constituency in the next general election.

[13] P Molutsi & J Holm, 'Developing democracy when civil society is weak: the Botswana case', *African Affairs*, 89 (356), 1990, pp 323–340.

[14] For the history of Botswana's precarious budgetary situation before 1974 see Quill Hermans, 'Towards budgetary independence: a review of Botswana's financial history, 1900–1973', *Botswana Notes and Records*, 6, 1974, pp 89–115.

[15] David Finlay, interview, Ramotswa, 22 November 1993. Mr Finlay was the Director of Public Personnel under President Khama.

[16] For more details on the development and professional operations of this apparatus see Samatar, *An African Miracle*, ch. 4.

[17] Kenneth Good, 'Corruption and mismanagement in Botswana: a best-case example?', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 32 (3), 1994, pp 499–52.

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[19] Quoted in Charles Harvey & Steven Lewis, Jr *Policy Choice and Development Performance in Botswana*, London: Macmillan, 1990, p 119.

[20] Samatar, *An African Miracle*, ch. 4. See also Charles Gossett, 'The civil services in Botswana: personnel policies in comparative perspective', PhD dissertation, Stanford: Stanford University, 1986.

[21] See President Khama's speech to the civil servants.

[22] H C L Hermans, Governor of the Bank of Botswana, interview, Gaborone, 6 July 1994.

[23] As of 1994, only one student out of the hundreds sponsored to study overseas had not returned to the country after completing his training. Thus Botswana has not suffered from brain drain.

[24] Nimrod Raphaeli, Jacques Roumani & A C Mackellar, *Public Sector Management in Botswana: Lessons in Pragmatism*, Washington DC: World Bank, Staff Working Paper No 709, 1984, p 10.

[25] Samatar Ahmed, 'The curse of Allah: civic disembowelment and the collapse of the state, in Samatar, *The Somali Challenge*.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] For the commercialisation of livestock, see Abdi I Samatar, *The State and Rural Transformation in Northern Somalia 1884–1986*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.

[28] Hashi Abib, interview, Ottawa, 11–12 October 1996. Mr Abib was Secretary of the Somali Cabinet from 1967–1976.

[29] Two exceptions in this regard were former President Osman and Prime Minister Hussein.

[30] For the institutional importance of bureaucratisation see Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

[31] Former President Osman, a life-time member of parliament, was the other individual MP who did not cross party lines.

[32] The worst case may be that of Rwanda, where settlement patterns were thoroughly integrated. Consequently, neighbours informed on or murdered neighbours. Major cities of most civil war-torn countries suffered from the same tragedies. For an analysis of the Rwanda conflict see Mahmood Mamdani, 'From conquest to consent as the basis of state formation: reflections on Rwanda', *New Left Review*, 216, 1996, pp 3–36. In Somalia, the killing of tens of thousands of unarmed civilians in cities like Mogadishu are etched in the annals of Somali oral history.

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