ResearchGate

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328476886

Maandeeq: The Dilemma of the Post-Colonial State in Somalia

Article · January 2016

CITATIONS
0

READS
412

1 author:



Abdirashid A. Ismail
Migration Institute of Finland
9 PUBLICATIONS **42** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:

Family Separation, Migration Status, and Everyday Security: Experiences and Strategies of Vulnerable Migrants View project

All content following this page was uploaded by Abdirashid A. Ismail on 31 January 2019.

The user has requested enhancement of the downloaded file.

Nordic Journal of African Studies 25(1): 1–22 (2016)

Maandeeq: The Dilemma of the Post-Colonial State in Somalia

Abdirashid A. ISMAIL
University of Helsinki, Finland

ABSTRACT

Since its inception in 1960, the Somali Republic has had two main missions: socio-political unification of the Somalis in the Horn of Africa and socio-economic development of the new nation and, accordingly, these were the key issues to be addressed by post-colonial state in Somalia. However, neither of the two objectives was achieved by the civilian regime in power during the first decade of post-colonial Somalia. By employing the contract theory of the state, I will investigate why the civilian regime failed to achieve meaningful national goals. Using the literature and surveying historical archives and oral traditions, I will compare the post-colonial state in Somalia with the ideal liberal democratic state developed in the social science literature. The article shows that the post-colonial state in Somalia was a distorted version of the liberal democratic state and the failure of the civilian regime could be associated with these distortions.

***Keywords**: Somalia, post-colonial state, civilian regime, social contract, election.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Following independence, the Somali Republic adopted a decade-long parliamentary democracy. A socialist state was established following a military coup led by Major General Muhammad Siad Barre in October 1969. The military coup led the country into a civil war that ultimately caused the destruction and collapse of the post-colonial state. Opposing factions overthrew Barre in 1991, after which the country had no working government and was engulfed in anarchy. However, the political and economic factors that destroyed Barre's authoritarian regime were the same sources of failure that beset the civilian regimes in the decade preceding Barre's coup. In fact, "the military intervened only after the civilian institutions collapsed" (Laitin 1977: 7). So, why has Somalia's brief liberal democracy ended in such a failure?

Using social contract theory, this article explores why the post-colonial civilian regimes in Somalia not only failed to achieve the main social, political and economic goals of the new republic but also decayed the liberal state institutions.

In this article, I will consider the first decade of Somalia's post-colonial state led by civilians. This period had particular importance for at least two reasons. First, after a long period of colonial subjugation and a struggle for independence, there was a sense of cohesiveness among the Somali populace in the republic.

There was also a growing feeling of nationalism inspired by nationalist movements in their struggle against colonialism. Secondly, the Somali political elite in this era was relatively small, shared a broad similarity in outlook with minor exceptions, and adhered to liberal-democratic institutions based on the Western model, a model that many knowledgeable observers believed fitted very well with the political tradition of Somalia (Laitin 1977). Therefore, Somali independence was considered a wonderful historic event for the consolidation of democratic institutions and state formation.

Again, and most importantly, after 22 years of civil war and 12 years of weak transitional governments, a federal parliament was inaugurated on the 20th of August 2012, marking the end of the transitional period in Somalia. In September, a president was elected and in October he appointed a prime minister who later nominated a ten-member cabinet. The formation of these widely welcomed post-transition institutions excited a lot of optimism and was considered as the beginning of new era of consolidating state institutions in the post-war history of Somalia. In any case, Somalia is at an historic juncture of another era.

The basic hypothesis of this article is that democratic political institutions only function well if citizens are able to discipline political leaders.[1] However, unless voters understand their role as citizens and behave accordingly by using their vote to sanction or hold office-holders accountable rather than using it as means of conferring honour on the most distinguished person, the leaders may pursue their personal interests even where this is detrimental to the welfare of the society.

Investigating the state-society relationship demands a fundamental conceptual distinction between the two components of the relationship, the state and society. However, there is no scholarly consensus on the meaning of these two terms and how their relationship is to be addressed (Painter 2011). Nevertheless, the literature offers, very useful analyses of these two concepts as basic elements in understanding societies and their political developments (Evans 1995; Migdal 2001; Kohli 2002). A relevant concept that has attracted the attention of many analysists, particularly in African studies, is the term civil society (Harbeson, Rothchild, and Chazan 1994; Seligman 1992; Mamdani 1996).[2] However, for simplicity, I will adopt the 'unitary notion' here, which understands the state as distinct entity from the rest of the society (Nettl 1968; 1068). Consequently, I

1 To accomplish this goal citizens must be sufficiently informed. In Somalia number of factors hamper the conventional means of communication, including illiteracy, and both media and the physical infrastructure being extremely underdeveloped. However, in the Somali way of life and their social habits, established networks surprisingly provide very effective alternative avenues of communication (Touval 1963; ADP 2002).

2 In this article, I will use society instead of civil society; however, my understanding of society concurs with the traditional broad Hegelian conceptualization of the civil society, which is seen as an intermediate realm between the family and the state. See Mary Kaldor (2003) for a useful elaboration of the development of the civil society as a concept.

assume the presence of the 'society' that is analytically distinct from the state and will thus maintain the separation of the two. [3]

I will use the contract theory of the state to investigate why the civilian regime failed to achieve meaningful national goals. The literature and historical archives and oral traditions allow a comparison between the post-colonial state in Somalia and the conventional liberal state developed in the West in two ways. Firstly, I will consider how the Somalia people's perception of the role of formal political institutions in the process of state formation was different from the potential roles ascribed to the ideal democratic institutions in the West. By the Western state and society I mean the ideal liberal democratic state developed in the literature and the people who developed that state[4], not any particular state or society in the West. The institution that I consider here is one of control, an institution structured so that citizens could hold their political leaders accountable through elections. Secondly, I will compare how the two societies perceived the state and its formal institutions. How people perceive the state is a vital determinant of their attitude towards formal state institutions. My intention is to show that the post-colonial state in Somalia was a distorted version of the liberal democratic state and these distortions could be blamed for the failure of the civilian regime. With this purpose in mind throughout the article, I will compare the *actual* post-colonial state in Somalia with the *ideal* liberal democratic state.

Apart from this introduction and the conclusion, the article is divided into two main parts. The next part will briefly consider the process of state formation in the West by giving particular attention to the role of societies in keeping their political leaders accountable and how people's perception of the state was instrumental to the success of liberal democratic institutions. The third part evaluates Somalia's experience of the modern liberal democratic state of the 1960s in a comparative perspective.

2. THE STATE IN THE WEST

2.1 THE CENTRALITY OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The process in which the institutions of state emerge in a given country is often called state formation. The theories that deal with how modern state emerges are divided into predation or exploitation theory, which views the state as an agent of particular groups (Tilly 1990; Olson 2000; Bates 2008) and contract theory, which

[3] Analysts of state-society relations in developing countries, such as Evans 1995; Migdal 1998; Kohli 2004, have adopted this conception of the state. For an excellent summary of this, see Sellers (2010).

[4] Here I have in mind the ideal form of democratic governance developed by social contract theorists such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Emmanuel Kant and their followers. Robert Dahl, in his book *On Democracy* provides a useful introduction to liberal democracy and its ideal form.

views the state as an agent of its citizens (North 1981; Barzel 2002). However, both theories recognise the emergence of the modern democratic state and democracy itself as a contract under which people delegate individual power to its leaders, who are consequently expected to advance the well-being of the citizen. Both the society and its leaders are expected to adhere to the dictates of that contract (Barzel 2002).

Thomas Hobbes (1999 [1651]) compared two hypothetical conditions: 1) the *state of nature*, a condition without government, where there is a 'war of every man against every man', a situation in which life, is consequently 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short' and 2) because the state of nature is obviously a bad situation, people as rational individuals reach an agreement among themselves to create an unnatural condition, which is to form a political entity. People sacrifice some of their sovereignty and endow the entity thus created with the exclusive authority to exercise coercive power. For Hobbes that entity is the '*Leviathan'* and he called it *State* or *Common-Wealth.* He argued that the state is essentially a *'social contract'* between the individual and the government.

Since then, political philosophers and theorists, such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant, have developed the social contract approach. More recently, the social contract perspective of the state-society relationship has attracted more attention from the literature dealing with state failure and situations of state fragility (EDR 2009; OECD/DAC 2008; Menocal 2009; Ghani and Lockhart 2008). For instance, for the EU (2007: 1) state fragility "refers to weak or failing structures and to situations where the social contract is broken due to the State's incapacity or unwillingness to deal with its basic functions".

The state is needed because it maintains public order, defends the lives of its citizens and property from predators, and enforces agreements among the people. In addition, citizens expect their state to deliver other public goods, including education, health services, economic opportunity, environmental surveillance, roads, communications facilities, and so on. (Rotberg 2002). This gives the state a firm legitimacy to manage the people's common weal and to impose taxes on their private wealth.

The literature calls this a delegation process; people delegate their power of making political decisions to the state authorities (Kiewiet and McCubbens 1991; Strøm 2003; Lupia and McCubbins 2000).

When a single person or a group claims such enormous amounts of political, economic and physical power however, they can become dangerous citizens, so that delegation generates new problems. The state leaders may have the incentive to maximise their personal well-being at the expense of individual welfare. In short, the dilemma of *how to guard the guardian* arises.

Throughout the history of the modern state, political theorists, philosophers, and politicians have realised the extent of the problem and tried to construct political systems which constrain the power of the state. Western societies and their leaders have successfully formulated such systems to some extent, mainly

because they recognised this, and thus strove to counteract ambition (Madison 2003 [1788]).

The West has developed the principle of leadership accountability – mechanisms to control publicly elected representatives. Constitutions have been conceived as an efficiently-designed contract between the people and the state, the logic being that the state receives its power from the citizens through formal political institutions and it devolves to the citizens. Once the constitution is designed, people elect their representatives, e.g., the parliament, to perform the rest of the job of monitoring and controlling the government on the people's behalf.[5]

Election, as an instrument for accountability, deserves particular attention. As a screening and hiring processes, election is a central tool for choosing the right leaders. In addition, citizens hold their leaders accountable by re-electing incumbent leaders when they perform well and voting against them when they fail to perform.[6]

On the other side of the equation, the centrality of taxation in state formation and the state–society relations, particularly the emergency of a viable system of accountability, is documented in the literature. Long time ago Frédéric Bastiat (1995: 146 [1848]) understood that "the state does not and cannot have one hand only. It has two hands, one to take and the other to give – in other words, the rough hand and the gentle hand. The activity of the second is necessarily subordinated to the activity of the first."

Indeed, the state has the power to take part of your wealth (taxes) and that power is a 'rough hand' in the mind of every individual. But since it is a precondition for the activities of the 'gentle hand', it was realised in the West that it is in every one's interest to accept it.

As Deborah Bräutigam (2008: 1) noted "taxation may play the central role in building and sustaining the power of states, and shaping their ties to society. The state-building role of taxation can be seen in two principal areas: the rise of a social contract based on bargaining around tax, and the institution-building stimulus provided by the revenue imperative. Progress in the first area may foster representative democracy. Progress in the second area strengthens state capacity. Both have the potential to bolster the legitimacy of the state and enhance accountability between the state and its citizens." The logic that tax will contribute to accountability relies on the fact that taxation may lead citizens to make political demands on the state. As a rough hand, people dislike taxation and if they are to pay it they are to take more interest in what they have paid for and hence they are interested in ensuring that they receive valued public services and political influence in return for their contributions (Prichard 2015).

Therefore, in the ideal state in the West, proper mechanisms of control were not only in place but were practically instrumentalized to meet its end of keeping

---

5 Here I neglect the variations between the various forms of democratic governance system, presidentialism vs. parliamentarianism.

6 Elections are also vital for the other mechanisms of (horizontal) accountability.

political leaders accountable. In other words, to keep political leaders accountable through elections, people as citizens met two vital conditions: first, voters vote for the incumbent leader only when that leader acts in their best interest, and second, the incumbent leader chooses policies necessary to get re-elected (Przeworski, Stokes and Manin 1999: 40).

In short, as Dietrich Jung (2008: 33) noted, modern statehood consist of two dimensions, institutional structures and culturally defined social processes. "The institutional structure gives societies politically isomorphic forms. In this sense, the sociological definition of the national state developed into a formal blueprint for the political organization of societies … the state as social practice characterizes the actual social content of statehood as forms of permanent interaction and ephemeral social groupings. On this level, we can observe a complex and often amorphous tangle of social actions of which we make sense in reference to the ideal image of the state" and in the West, these two dimensions of statehood correspond to one another.

2.2 LEVIATHAN: SOURCE OF WELFARE BUT ALSO A DANGEROUS CREATURE

How people in the West imagined the state as a conceptual body complements their understanding of the centrality of containing it. According to Bob Jessop "[t]he core of the state apparatus comprises a distinct ensemble of *institutions and organisations* whose *socially accepted function* is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on the members of society *in the name of their common interest or general will*" (Jessop 1990: 341). Three complementary questions could be drawn from this definition: first, what is the state in fact? Secondly, what are its functions? And, thirdly, for whom does it operate?

What is the state? Here my intention is not to discuss the complex and often ambiguous interpretations of what the state is and what it is not. I intend rather to emphasise the state as a conceptual object and "ask how it has been spoken of" Neocleous (2003). Michael Walzer (1967: 194), realised that "[t]he state is invisible; it must be personified before it can be seen, symbolized before it can be loved, imagined before it can be conceived". Thus, how a given society conceives the state depends to a large extent on how people imagine it and, in addition, as JP Nettl (1968) noted, the existence of a cultural disposition that formulates the conceptual existence of the state determines the way in which societies recognise it as a significant factor in their political and social life. He emphasised the relevance of the historical, ideological, and cultural traditions in this respect, highlighting the decisiveness of the latter. My argument here is that the usefulness of the state is a factor dependent on how people identify it as a conceptual reality, and how they conceive it depends on how they mentally imagine it, and their conceptual formulation or mental imagination of a state crucially depends on the culture of that people.

Let us envision the state comparatively by summarising how it has been imagined as a fictitious man, which is '*an artificial representation of the human*' by post-feudal Europeans[7] and as *a she-camel* by the post-colonial Somalis[8]. In the early theories of the state, philosophers such as Hobbes personified the state and, as I touched upon earlier in this article, Hobbes described the state or *Leviathan* as an artificial or fictitious man.

> For by art is created that great *Leviathan* called a *Common-Wealth*, or *State*, (in Latin *civitas*) which is but an artificial man; though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defense it was intended; and in which the sovereignty is an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body … the wealth and riches of all the particular members are the strength; *salus populi* (the people's safety) its business (Hobbes 1999: 7 [1651]).

Figure 1 originally appeared on the title-page of the first edition of the *Leviathan*. The torso of a male figure with the symbols of power, justice and sovereignty appears at the top of the title-border; a crown on his head and sword and sceptre in his hands. A small hill and a city also appear in front of the figure. "The figure is formidable and imposing. He stands way above both the hill and the city. … His body is protected by what at the first glance appears to be chain-mail, but on closer inspection turns out to be a mass of human figures" Neocleous (2003: 1). This male figure is what Hobbes calls the Leviathan and this is what the peoples of the old states had in mind when they spoke of the state.

In this context, the state has two distinct qualities. First, it can be a source of welfare for all and, second, if not properly contained, the Leviathan could be a dangerous creature and the source of all evil. In that framework, social practices of statehood understandably makes it necessary for this creature to be contained (kept accountable).

---

7 Here I rely on Neocleous (2003).

8 See section 'Maandeeq: A Distorted Image of the State' on how Somalis envision the state as a milk-rich she camel.



Figure 1. *Leviathan. The picture is the upper part of an illustration published as the frontispiece to the Hobbes Leviathan, edition of 1651. By Abraham Bosse, with creative input from Thomas Hobbes.* Source/Citation: Wikimedia Commons

3. Post-Colonial State in Somalia

3.1 What Went Wrong in Somalia? Social Practices Not Corresponding to the Institutional Dimension of the State

In pre-colonial somalia, there were no such dedicated pluralistic political systems like those of western liberal democracies, in which the interests of different groups are checked and balanced by a set of rival competing claims. Instead, there was a viable set of democratic institutions, which governed the political, social and economic affairs of the contract (lewis 1965; Samatar 2001).

The process of post-colonial state formation in Somalia, as elsewhere in Africa, was completely different from the process of state formation in the West.

In Somalia, the one main mission of the westernised political elite who led the anti-colonial movement was to liberate their people from the yoke of colonialism. However, as rational agents they were also self-interested. Furthermore, they were the natural candidates to succeed the European administrators since they were the only ones who could run the colonially structured state institutions. Because of that, their simple assumption was that they would have every reason to enjoy the privileges created for the holders of these positions. Furthermore, this personal ambition replaced the main mission from the early 1950s, as Italian Somaliland was recognised by the United Nations General Assembly as a trust territory for

ten years in November 1949, after which it would become independent. Here the former main mission of independence was secured and those educated Somalis who opposed or at least did not participate in the liberation movements joined the nationalists who led the movements to participate in the management of the country's political destiny.

Perhaps the most urgent task for the post-colonial Somali leaders, as far as the fragility of the inherited state was concerned, was to lay down a firm foundation for state institutions. However, Somali civilian leaders put their efforts elsewhere: winning the struggle for influential positions in the state. Consequently, leadership survival became the most important task for the majority of the Somali elite. There were, however, some notable exceptions (Samatar and Samatar 2002). This was mainly for two reasons:

Firstly, as elsewhere in Africa, economic hardships led to state coffers becoming a vital source of survival for many. The state coffers not only provide legitimate remuneration for its servants but holding political office also gives its holder immense opportunities and various sources of income, therefore offering an opportunity to build a strong base for wealth and power. Jean-François Bayart (1993) calls this a 'straddling process'.

Secondly, post-colonial African rulers recognised that they could not survive by strengthening efficient formal institutions. Realising that strong formal institutions would give a competitive advantage to their enterprising rivals, African leaders sought other strategies for survival. Colonially-constructed control mechanisms were perhaps the most easily accessible strategy (Reno 2003). In Somalia, the elite were relatively few in number, shared a broadly similar outlook and were, with minor exceptions, proponents of liberal-democratic institutions based on the Western model. But for some reason, this uniformity of outlook was a liability rather than an asset for Somali national development goals after independence. Perhaps the main reason for this was that the intellectual capacity of the leaders was low.[9] They failed to project political visions,[10] initiate development programmes, or foster and propagate new ideologies.

The clan structure and differences became the prime instrument for 'the pursuit of hegemony'. Since tribal mobilisation and *playing the clan card* became the ideal rules of the game for their competition, traditional leadership was brought on board and the formation of nearly all political parties established after 1950 was a basic strategy in this competition (Castagno 1964).

In Somalia, separation of powers was not considered as a method of limiting the amount of power in one group's hands in order to make it more difficult to abuse. The formation of the different state institutions – executive, legislative and judiciary – was perceived as a distribution mechanism, a method by which a leader could weigh the share of *the national cake* he deserved, conditional on the

9 The level of schooling was extremely humble.

10 Except the *Greater Somalia* issue, on which nearly all of them, and all Somalis as well, held a similar view.

size of his clan, his personal (leadership) ability to mobilize enough resources to that end, and his level of understanding and playing with the rules of the game (both formal and informal at once).

In 1956, under the Italian trusteeship, Somalis in the south were given an opportunity to form the first Somali government. Abdullahi Issa was appointed as the first Somali Prime Minister; he insisted that, although his Party's dedication to eliminating clanism was valid, the situation forced him to consider the ethnic component in the new government. Although the Prime Minister sought the satisfaction of every group, another factor, knowledge of the Italian language, forced him to narrow his choice (Castagno 1964; Samatar and Samatar 2002).

However, no one complained of ethnic imbalance in the government and even most of those approached by the Prime Minister to accept a ministerial portfolio declined the offer, indicating that they did not have the necessary education and experience to manage the institutions effectively (Samatar and Samatar 2002).

Unfortunately, it soon became apparent that such ministerial positions were highly prized because of their material and pecuniary benefits; for instance, as senior government officials each had access to credit to build his own luxury villa and each minister was given a car with its chauffeur and other staff, including housekeepers. In addition, the Somali Youth League (SYL) supporters, realising the improved condition of the ministers and having witnessed the habit of the Italian authorities, especially during the first years of the trusteeship, which used government positions to reward their own supporters, assumed that the current administration would do the same for its supporters. Mogadishu, particularly the residences and offices of the elected officials, was crowded by the supporters of these officials from the other regions of the country coming to secure government employment or monetary reward as remuneration for their support (Samatar and Samatar 2002).

Influenced, of course, by the opportunity the ministerial portfolios provided their occupants, the SYL leaders changed their attitude towards holding these positions considerably. When the Italian Governor reappointed Abdullahi Issa as prime minister in 1959, most SYL political leaders visited the prime minister's home to secure inclusion of their names on the list of ministers in the new government (unlike in 1956). As the Samatars insist, some of them "did not fail to stress the importance of their clan in the general population as well as [its] strong representation in the legislature" (Samatar and Samatar 2002: 14).

Thus the clan card became the most important tool for the political competitors and "as soon as a leader gains national stature and prominence, his clan affiliation is exploited by his competitors, within and outside his political party, in order to reduce his appeal", and consequently, given the politicizing of the clan factor during colonialism "whatever national confidence he may have gained may be transformed into widespread mistrust based on ethnic provincialism" (Castagno 1964: 557).

3.2 A FAILED SOCIAL CONTRACT?

In the state-society relationship, voters transfer some of their resources – political, financial and social – to the control of the state leaders and invest the leaders with the power of making decisions relevant to society's common good. As Talcott Parsons noted, the "delegation of power or authority is performed as an exchange for something of value that consists of facilities for the effective implementation of collective goals … the grant of power to the collectivity is conditional and can always be withdrawn."[11] David Easton (1976), applying his well-known political support system, summarised this contractual relationship. People delegate their power, resources and authority in exchange for something of value, and for that they need to safeguard themselves from any possible failure of the contract; this is the essence of the above-mentioned political institutions, i.e., elections.

However, in every class of the society, Somalis observed that "[t]he 'modern' state was rife with corruption, and political leaders bought votes, used government cars as taxis, and hired relatives to sing their praises in the public market places and tea shops." (Laitin 1977: 6) Somalis do not understand that state affairs and political goods provided by it are rights owned by them as citizens. This is why the National Assembly became a 'sordid market place' and that is why Somalis voted for politicians who, with little interests in those who voted for them, traded their votes for personal gain (Lewis 2002: 205–6).

Indeed, Xaaji Aadan Af-qallooc, describing the society-state relationship after independence, says

> Tallaabada mid gaalkii shabbaha, tegay ma-liibaane,
> Adigoo wuxuun tabanayoo, tegay halkuu joogay,
> Markuu sida libaax raqi u taal, qoorta kor u taago,
> Uu 'tayga' luquntiisa sudhan, taabto faraqiisa,
> Oo inaad addoonkiisa tahay, taa na la ahaatay,
> Iya na waa tabaalaha adduun, taynu aragnaa.
>
> 'One who even walking imitates the departed infidel,
> May he never be blessed,
> While in need of assistance, you go where he was,
> And then as if he were a lion at his kill,
> He raises up his neck in haughtiness,
> Touches the tip of the tie around his neck,
> And behaves as if you were his slave.
> These are the misfortunes of the times that we are witnessing' (ADP 2002: 21).

Similarly, other respected Somali poets, including the great Abdullahi Suldaan Tima'adde, see for instance his '*Dawarsadaha Qaawani'* (The Naked Beggar)

11 Quoted in Easton (1976: 434).

and Aden Arab Abdi, in his poem 'the Minister', supported the case in greater detail by noting the elected politicians never served the interests of their electorates and indicating that ordinary citizens were excluded from the benefits of statehood.

"With … long tradition of democratic participation" as David Laitin (1977: 6) noted, "the Somalis adapted themselves easily to the institutional democracy 'granted' them, a rather bastard child of both English and Italian institutions." Laitin went on to say that "in this most lively environment parties proliferated, propaganda pamphlets were disseminated with only minimal censorship, parliamentary debate was vociferous, and parliamentary seats were usually available for the highest bidder." The next sub-section addresses how Somalis responded to these disappointments.

3.3 ELECTIONS

In the ideal state, election was instrumentalized and operationalized to render politicians responsive to their electorate's demands, the main reason being that the politicians should be held to account at election time, as voters control the resources they need to win the election. However, as James Fearon (1999: 57–58) noted, there are situations in which voters:

> might understand elections as means of selecting or conferring honor on … most distinguished person …with conferring or recognizing honor without any instrumental purpose …[where] the voters have no expectation what so ever that the elected officials has a responsibility to act on behalf of the electorate…. [In this case election was] understood simply as declaration of who in the group most deserves the honor of political authority.

Somali voters are perhaps the best example of those who do not understand the essentially instrumental aspect of their votes. The clan identity of the candidate or the tribe he belongs was the key factor in voting. In other words, the campaigner's merit and performance had no meaning for the Somali voter. Thus, elections were not a measure of accountability, but a process of conferring an honour on a member of one's clan. After Abdirizak H. Hussein was appointed as prime minister in 1964 to succeed Abdirashid A. Shermarke, both of whom were from the same sub-clan family, a Somali voter performed the famous *shirib*.[12]

Mugna Rashiid mugna Risaaq
Inta kale ma raashinaa

'A term for Rashiid (Abdirashid) and the other for Risaaq (Abdirizak)
Are all others edible subsistence (worth less than a human)'

12 *Shirib* is a poetic genre, quite common in some parts of Somalia.

Despite the proven personal quality and performance of Abdirizak during his previous portfolios as a political leader (Samatar and Samatar 2002), as the *shirib* shows, many Somalis demonstrated their rejection of his premiership based on his identity.

For Somali voters, to vote for a clan member was to a large extent a moral obligation and was not perceived as punishing the state for its misbehaviour. Acknowledging this, Somali leaders considered dealing with social development affairs as a privilege rather than as a responsibility. As Castagno noted, it was apparent that the Somali Youth League, the ruling party, could not 'count on major accomplishments in the field of social and economic development'. However, the main function of the opposition parties ... (was) not to oppose the government's policies or inform the electorate what they regarded as the objective needs of modern government, but rather to secure compensation for the leaders of the opposition… ethnic issues are frequently manipulated to serve this end (Castagno 1964: 552–4).

At election times, political leaders contact their fellow nomad/ peasant and urban tribesmen. Politicians mobilise their clients, i.e., local merchants, traditional leaders and their agents, to appeal to and organise clan voters. Political candidates pay all costs and pay cash to 'influential individuals' (Samatar 1989). Lidwien Kapteijns gives a good account of the situation:

> Political candidates used 'the tribal ploy' to get votes. They ran up huge debts in cajoling their clan constituencies to vote for them, only to gorge themselves on state resources (licenses of all kinds, foreign aid, and so forth) after the elections. Thus the politicians and the merchants used common clan identity to mask class differences between them and their clansmen. The only pay off for their clan was a selective clientage and a favoritism extended to a relatively arbitrarily chosen few … Thus the Somali middle class reimagined clanism in the context of its own exploitative relations with the pastoral producers and rural and urban voters (Kapteijns 1994: 228).

The Somalia case clearly rejects the thesis that African politicians defend and further the interest of their communities (Chabal and Daloz 1999).

Indeed, for a Somali, voting is not primarily a strategic action for maximising his own welfare, it is rather a kind of conferring or recognizing an honour to fellow tribesman, and thus, without any instrumental purpose. Therefore, in the Somali context, elections were without any expectation of accountability (Fearon 1999). This is why the "[t]he democratic parliamentary process which has seemed to blend so well with the traditional Somali political institutions and had begun with such verve and promise, had turned distinctly sour", and the National Assembly became "a sordid market place" and that is why Somalis voted for those who "with little concern for the interests of those who voted for them … traded their votes for personal gain" (Lewis 2002: 205–6).

3.4 MAANDEEQ: A DISTORTED IMAGE OF THE STATE

In Somalia, the state is imagined as *Maandeeq*, a milk-rich she-camel.[13] Abdullahi Suldaan Timacadde is among those who symbolised sovereignty as a she-camel. In his well-known poem, *Maandeeq*, he notes:

> Gumaysigu hashuu naga dhacay,een gurayey raadkeeda
> gu'yaal iyo gu'yaal badan hashii gama'a noo diidey
> goobtay istaagtaba hashaan, joogay garabkeeda
> …
> Allaa noo gargaaree xornimo, noo gumay garane
>
> 'The she-camel that was roped by the Colonials from us,
> in whose footsteps I was following
> The one for whom we were not able to sleep for so many years
> Wherever she rested, I was not far from her side
> …
> The one we gained with the help of Allah (God),
> not with the good faith of the Colonials'

Stating the reason for and the origin of the concept, Mohamed D. Afrax asserted that

> "[t]he imagination of Somali poets and playwrights created *maandeeq* as a symbol of the country, the state, and sovereignty. The reason for choosing a she-camel to embody the most valued ideal lies in the nomadic cultural background of most of the authors. In this context, the she-camel is the most valued of all property." (Afrax 1994: 241)

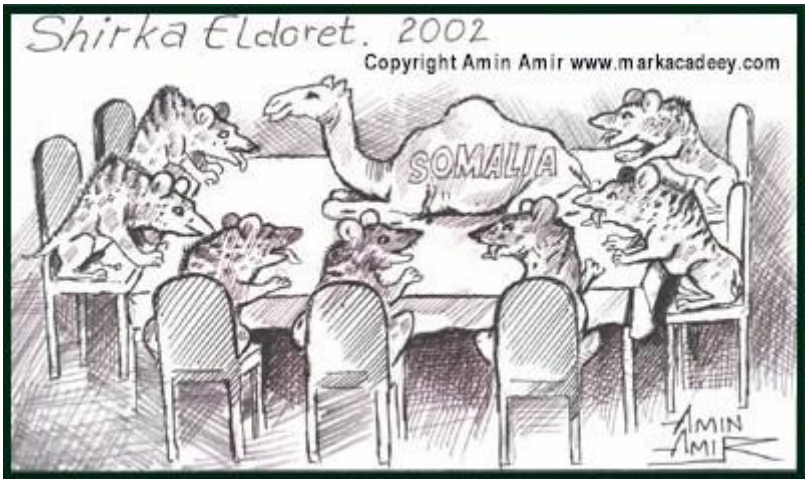


Figure 2. *Maandeeq*. Source: Amin Arts

[13] Note, here, I concentrate on *Maandeeq* mainly as the state, not its image as the sovereignty, autonomy, independence and country.

If you have a man to serve for you, you have to give him enough authority, in other words to delegate some of your 'wealth and riches', and you must be able to control him. But what does a she-camel need to serve your interest? The most obvious duties are to find for her a suitable place for pasture and protect from rustlers.

Through that logic, Afrax (1994: 241) noted "[t]he man whose she-camel is stolen does not rest, and the one whose she-camel has just given birth misses no prosperity but has to protect it from the beasts." That mind-set corresponds with Somali image of *Maaandeeq* as sovereignty. While Somalia was still under colonial authority, Yusuf H. Aden articulated "Hadhuub nin sitoo hashiisa irmaan, ha maalin la leeyahaan ahay [I am a man with a milking vessel and a diary camel, but told not to milk it for himself]". Somalis never rested during the colonial era, as *Maandeeq* was in the hands of rustlers.

But unlike the Leviathan, *Maandeeq* is there to be milked. The contractual and exchange aspects of the state-society relationship is absent from the image of the state as *Maandeeq.* In other words, having the image of *Maandeeq* in mind, the people expected prompt delivery and soon, following independence, celebrated that:

Maantay curatoo
Caanihii badisee
Aan maallo hasheena maandeeq

'Today is its first delivery
Her production increases
Let's milk our she-camel, Maandeeq' (The words are for Abdillahi Qarshe, see Afrax 1994)

All these expectations were, however, based on the fact that Somalis struggled and suffered for the sake of the independence, not that they have paid their taxes and thus expect their state to provide public goods. Speaking for the ordinary Somali, disappointed by the performance of the state after independence, again Abdillahi Qarshe, angrily portraying the people's concern by questioning the misallocation of the supposedly increased spring milk of the suckling *Maandeeq*, noted that:

Hashaan toban sano u heesaayey
Hadhuubkiyo Heeryadiiba cuntee
Lixdankaan haybin jirey maxaa helay?

'The she-camel I've been singing about for ten years
Has eaten both the milking vessel and the saddle
What happened to the [year of] sixty I so much longed for?'(Afrax 1994)

According to Charles Geshekter "Italian and British colonialism integrated Somalis into the world economy and installed government systems whose

operations largely depended on external aid, not internally generated revenue" (cited in Mohamoud 2006) and the nation state was poorly grounded in the sentiments of the general population (Geshekter 1997). Accordingly, scholarly analysis indicates that it was clear that dependence on external revenues generated misgovernance, such as corruption; however, the role of tax on the state's underperformance has never been part of the political discourse among Somalis and Somalis in general did not see that tax revenues are badly needed to pay for essential public services (Karp 1960).

Therefore, the Somali governments never generated a reasonable amount of tax from the society and Somalis usually considered taxes as confiscation of their properties by the state authorities, not as a 'rough' but necessary hand. Successive Somali governments generated their revenues by mobilising common goods and foreign assistance rather than the financial contributions of the domestic taxpayers.[14] More than 85% of Somali development expenditure was based on foreign aid and in the nation's current budget the role of aid is considerable. The former colonial masters alone, Italy and Britain, funded almost about one third of Somalia's civilian regime current budget (Laitin 1976).

However, in Somalia, imagining the state as a milk-rich she-camel distorts the entire logic that taxation is central in state–society relations and detrimental to the emergence of democratic and responsive state, and thus discounts the merely contractual aspect of the state society relationship. In that context, elections, and other institutions of accountability, became inconsequential in the state society-relationship.

4. CONCLUSION

Since its inception, the Somali Republic has had two main missions; socio-political unification and socio-economic development and, accordingly, these were the key issues to be addressed by every Somali government. However, neither was achieved by the civilian regime that ruled Somalia in the first decade of post-colonial Somalia. This article has tried to address some of the main constraints and their implications for the civilian regime.

As noted in the introduction, in 2012 a majority of the Somali society and many informed observers have shown their optimism over the country's fate, representing it as a 'new era for Somalia', 'the rebirth of a state', 'Somalia rising', 'Somalia's own Arab spring', etc. However, as the first term of these state institutions is to end soon, in August 2016, many faithful optimists now believe that their optimism will be disappointed. In the north, both Somaliland and Puntland, similar optimism appeared during elections in recent years and few were happy with the performance of any outgoing regime.

14 See the literature on *fiscal sociology*, Moore (2004) for instance, on the impact of taxes on accountability and state formation, and good governance.

Good governance is a key prerequisite for societies to achieve their developmental objectives. Accountability, on the other hand, is an essential requirement of good governance. Accordingly, societies in pursuit of their common interests need to construct a political system in which the power of the state is constrained.

Although a democratic system of governance was formally structured in Somalia, Somalis failed to utilise elections, the basic instrumental objective of the institutions of accountability. I considered people's perception of the state and linked that to their attitude towards the formal state institutions. This article argues unless the right conditions are created for democratic governance, under which political leaders are held accountable for their actions, current initiatives may follow suit and be in vain.

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere appreciation goes to Dr. Marja Tiilikainen, Suzanne Muddle Lilius, anonymous reviewers and NJAS editors for their insightful suggestions.

REFERENCES

ADP (Academy for Peace and Development). 2002.
The Role of the Media in Political Reconstruction, Unpublished manuscript, Hargeysa, Somaliland.

Afrax, M. D. 1994.
The Mirror of Culture: Somali Dissolution Seen Through Oral Literature. In: Ahmed I. Samatar (ed.), *The Somali Challenge: From Catastrophe to Renewal*? pp. 233–52. Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Barzel, Y. 2002.
A Theory of the State: economic rights, legal rights and the scope of the state. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bastiat, F. 1995[1848].
Selected Essays on Political Economy, trans. by Seymour Cain; George B. de Huszar, (ed.), with introduction by Friedrich Hayek. New York: Foundation for Economic Education.

Bates R. H. 2008.
When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bayart, J-F. 1993.
The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly. London: Longman.

Bräutigam, D. A. 2008.
Introduction: taxation and state-building in developing countries. In: Deborah A. Brautigam, Odd-Helge Fjeldstad and Mick Moore (eds.), *Taxation and State-Building in Developing Countries: Capacity and Consent*, pp. 1–10. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Castagno, A. A. 1964.
Somali Republic. In: James S. Coleman and Carl G. Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa*, pp. 512–559. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Chabal, P. and Daloz, J-P. 1999.
Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument. Oxford: James Currey

Dahl, R. 1998.
On Democracy. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Easton, D. 1976.
Theoretical approaches to political systems. **Canadian Journal of Science** 9(3): 431–448.

EDR (European Report on Development). 2009.
Overcoming fragility in Africa: Forging a new European approach. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, San Domenico di Fiesole.

EU. 2007.
Council Conclusions on an EU Response to Situations of Fragility. 1st External Relations Council meeting, November 19–20, Brussels.

Evans, P. 1995.
Embedded Autonomy. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Fearon, J. 1999.
Electoral Accountability and the Control of Politicians: Selecting Good Types versus Sanctioning Poor Performance. In: Adam Przeworski, Susan Stokes, and Bernard Manin (eds.), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, pp.55–97. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Geshekter, C. 1997.
The Death of Somalia in Historical Perspective. In: Hussein M. Adam, and Richard Ford (eds.), *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for Somali Communities in the 21st Century*, pp. 65–98. Lawrenceville, N.J.: The Red Sea Press.

Ghani, A. and Lockhart, C. 2008.
Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harbeson, J. W., Rothchild, D. and Chazan, N. 1994.
Civil Society and the State in Africa. Boulder and London, Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Hobbes, T. 1999 [1651].
Leviathan or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Common-wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil. Hamilton, Ontario, Canada: McMaster University Archive of the History of Economic Thought. (An electronic version).

Jessop, B. 1990.
State Theory: Putting the Capitalist State in its Place. Cambridge: Polity.

Jung, D. 2008.
State formation and State-Building: Is there a lesson to learn from Sociology? DIIS Report.

Kaldor, M. 2003.
Global Civil Society: An Answer to War. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kapteijns, L. 1994.
Women and the crisis of communal identity: the cultural construction of gender in Somali history. In: Ahmed I. Samatar (ed.), *The Somali Challenge: From Catastrophe to Renewal*? pp. 211–232. Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Karp, M. 1960.
The Economics of Trusteeship in Somalia. Boston: Boston University Press.

Kiewiet, R. D. and McCubbens, M. D. 1991.
The Logic of Delegation: Congressional Parties and the Appropriations Process. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kohli, A. 2002.
State, Society and Development. In: Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner (eds.), *Political Science: The State of the Discipline,* pp. 84–117. New York: Norton.

Laitin, D. D. 1976.
The Political Economy of Military Rule in Somalia. **Journal of Modem African Studies** 14(3): 449–468.

1977 *Revolutionary Change in Somalia*. **MERIP Report** 62: 6–18. Middle East Research and Information Project, Inc.

Lewis, I. M. 1965.
The Modern History of Somaliland. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

2002 *A Modern History of the Somali: Nation and the State in the Horn of Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Lupia, A. and McCubbins, M. D. 2000.
Representation or Abdication? How Citizens Use Institutions to Help Delegation Succeed. **European Journal of Political Research** 37(3): 291–307.

Madison, J. 2003[1788].
The Federalist No. 51. In: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay, (eds.), *The Federalist papers;* with an introduction and commentary by Garry Wills. New York: Bantam Books.

Mamdani, M. 1996.
Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Menocal, A. R. 2009.
'State-Building for Peace': A New Paradigm for International Engagement in Post-Conflict Fragile States? European Report on Development.

Migdal, J. 2001.
State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute Each Other. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Mohamoud, A. A. 2006.
State collapse and post-conflict development in Africa: the case of Somalia (1960–2001). West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press.

Moore, M. 2004.
Revenues, State Formation, and the Quality of Governance in Developing Countries. **International Political Science Review** 25(3): 297–319.

Neocleous, M. 2003.
Imagining the State. Maidenhead & Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Nettl, J. P. 1968.
The state as a conceptual variable. **World Politics** 20(4): 559–592.

North, D.C. 1981.
Structure and change in economic history. New York: Norton.

OECD/DAC. 2008.
Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations: From Fragility to Resilience. Paris: **OECD Journal on Development** 9(3).

Olson, M. 2000.
Power and Prosperity: Outgrowing Communist and Capitalist Dictatorships. New York: Basic Books.

Painter, J. 2011.
Conceptualizing 'society' and 'state'. In: Beth A. Mitchneck (ed.), *State, society, and transformation*, pp. 20–49. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Prichard, W. 2015.
Taxation, Responsiveness and Accountability in Sub-Saharan Africa the Dynamics of Tax Bargaining. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Przeworski, A., S. Stokes and B. Manin. 1999.
Democracy, Accountability and Representation. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Reno, W. 2003.
Sierra Leone: Warfare in a Post-State Society. In: Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, pp. 71–100. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.

Rotberg, R. 2002.
The New Nature of Nation-State Failure. **The Washington Quarterly** 25(3): 85–96.

Samatar, A. I. 2001.
The Somali Catastrophe: Explanations and Implications. In: Suzanne L. Muddle (ed.), *Variations on the Theme of Somaliness*, pp. 7–30. Turku: Åbo Akademi Unversity.

1989 *The State and Rural Transformation in Northern Somalia*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.

Samatar, Abdi I. and Ahmed I. Samatar, 2002.
Somalis as Africa's first Democrats: Premier Abdirazak H. Hussein and President Aden A. Osman. **Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies** 2: 1–64.

Seligman, A. B. I992.
The Idea of Civil Society. New York, Toronto, and London, the Free Press/Maxwell Macmillan.

Sellers, J. M. 2010.
State-Society Relations beyond the Weberian State. In: Mark Bevir (ed.), *Sage Handbook of Governance*, pp. 124–141. London: Sage Publications.

2003 Parliamentary Democracy and Delegation. In: Kaare Strøm, Wolfgang C. Müller, Torbjörn Bergman (eds.), *Delegation and Accountability in Parliamentary Democracies*, pp. 55–107. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tilly, C. 1990.
Coercion, Capital and European States: AD 990–1992. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Touval, S. 1963.
Somali Nationalism: International Politics and the Drive for Unity in the Horn of Africa. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Walzer, M. 1967.
On the Role of Symbolism in Political Thought. **Political Science Quarterly** 82(2): 191–204.

About the author: *Abdirashid Ismail* obtained his D.Sc. in economics from Hanken School of Economics in 2010 and then joined the Department of Social Research of the University of Helsinki as a postdoctoral researcher. Dr Ismail is also an economics policy fellow with the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies.

View publication stats