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Overlapping claims by Somaliland and Puntland

The case of Sool and Sanaag

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Over the past two years, tensions over competing claims to the Sool and Sanaag regions by the self-declared entity of Somaliland and the autonomous Puntland State of Somalia have escalated. Local, regional and national contestations, combined with a failure to make progress at each level, hinders resolution. This report assesses the situation in Sool and Sanaag, focusing on the dynamics driving recent developments and options for the future.

Key findings

- The absence of a resolution on the status of Sool and Sanaag hinders the future progress of the regions and the development of Somaliland, Puntland and Somalia as a whole.
- The differing legitimacies underpinning the formation of both Somaliland and Puntland bring about divergent visions over administration of the Sool and Sanaag regions, depending on a view of whether their status should be determined by history or clan ties.
- Internal dynamics in both Somaliland and Puntland, combined with leadership visits to the region, likely played a role in hardening positions in the leadup to the January 2018 clash in Tukaraq in Sool. In 2019, the Sanaag region saw increased militarisation as a result of local dynamics and government responses.
- The Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the United Nations have been able to institute an informal ceasefire that has prevented further violence around Sool, but it is unclear if this will lead to something more permanent.
- Part of the challenge with regards to Sool and Sanaag is that the dispute plays out across a number of different layers, including local, regional and national. Each layer contains its own internal contradictions that complicate resolution efforts.

Recommendations

- In the short term, international and local efforts aimed at engaging Somaliland and Puntland must continue. A key aspect should be an agreement to pull back forces around Yube in the Sanaag region while formalising the informal ceasefire agreement around Tukaraq. Further military deployment to contested areas in either region should be avoided.
- Confidence-building measures can be drawn from positive dynamics already in place. The presence of continued social and economic links can be a starting point for further trade integration. In addition, cooperation around security should occur through the sharing of intelligence and the coordination of efforts to counter militant groups like al-Shabaab and the Islamic State, which present a threat to all involved.
- The allocation of additional resources by both sides and the international community towards the development of Sool and Sanaag regions should be augmented. The ‘disputed’ label should not mitigate against the initiation of such projects.
- In the long term, the only viable non-violent means of settling the future of Sool and Sanaag remain through the consultation and incorporation of the views of the local population.
- A central long-term challenge is to develop consensus systems that go beyond narrow identity-based power-sharing agreements. These systems should be based on enlarging the pool of resources rather than simply dividing them up. This will require creative and innovative solutions.

Search for peace in Sool and Sanaag

For the past two years, tensions over competing claims by self-declared and internationally unrecognised Somaliland and the autonomous Puntland State of Somalia to the Sool and Sanaag regions have heated up.[1] In January and May 2018, heavy fighting around the town of Tukaraq in Sool resulted in the advance of the Somaliland military and the retreat of Puntland forces. In 2019, the previously relatively peaceful Sanaag region witnessed an increased military buildup from both sides, raising concerns about future destabilisation.

The violence and military buildup are reflective of the long-standing territorial disagreement between Somaliland and Puntland, which is a legacy of both European colonialism and the collapse of the Somali state. The dispute plays out on a number of levels with significant implications for the future of Somalia. These range from local clan dynamics to the differing legitimacies underpinning the establishment of Somaliland and Puntland to the unresolved question of Somaliland's status with reference to the federal government in Mogadishu.

The contestations over Sool and Sanaag thus represent an intersection of local, regional and national level political dynamics, and the failure to make progress at each level hinders overall resolution. The residents of these regions are in some ways constrained by dynamics beyond their control, contributing to the marginalisation and underdevelopment of their region.

This report assesses the situation primarily in Sool and Sanaag and focuses on the underlying dynamics driving recent developments, while examining options for the future. The Cayn area, which is also contested, will be included in the discussion where appropriate. The focus will remain primarily on Sool and Sanaag given recent developments in these areas, and the at times distinct set of dynamics which affect Cayn as well, which may in turn require additional research.[2]

The report is based on fieldwork conducted in Hargeisa, Las Anod, Tukaraq and Garowe in February and August 2019. The views of more than 80 individuals were solicited. These included regional government representatives, security officials, traditional leaders, the diaspora, the business community and civil society members. Special emphasis was placed on obtaining the views of both Dhulbahante and Warsengeli traditional leaders, politicians and other clan representatives, given that the contestation primarily involves areas inhabited by these clans. Additional interviews with key stakeholders were conducted remotely.

The report begins by discussing the historical context underpinning the Sool and Sanaag dispute because of its importance in explaining contemporary outcomes. The focus then shifts to current dynamics and security concerns before moving on to local perceptions of the challenges associated with current options. The report concludes with recommendations for further action aimed at initiating processes that would seek durable resolutions to the status of Sool and Sanaag while minimising further violence.

> Contestations over Sool and Sanaag represent an intersection of local, regional and national dynamics

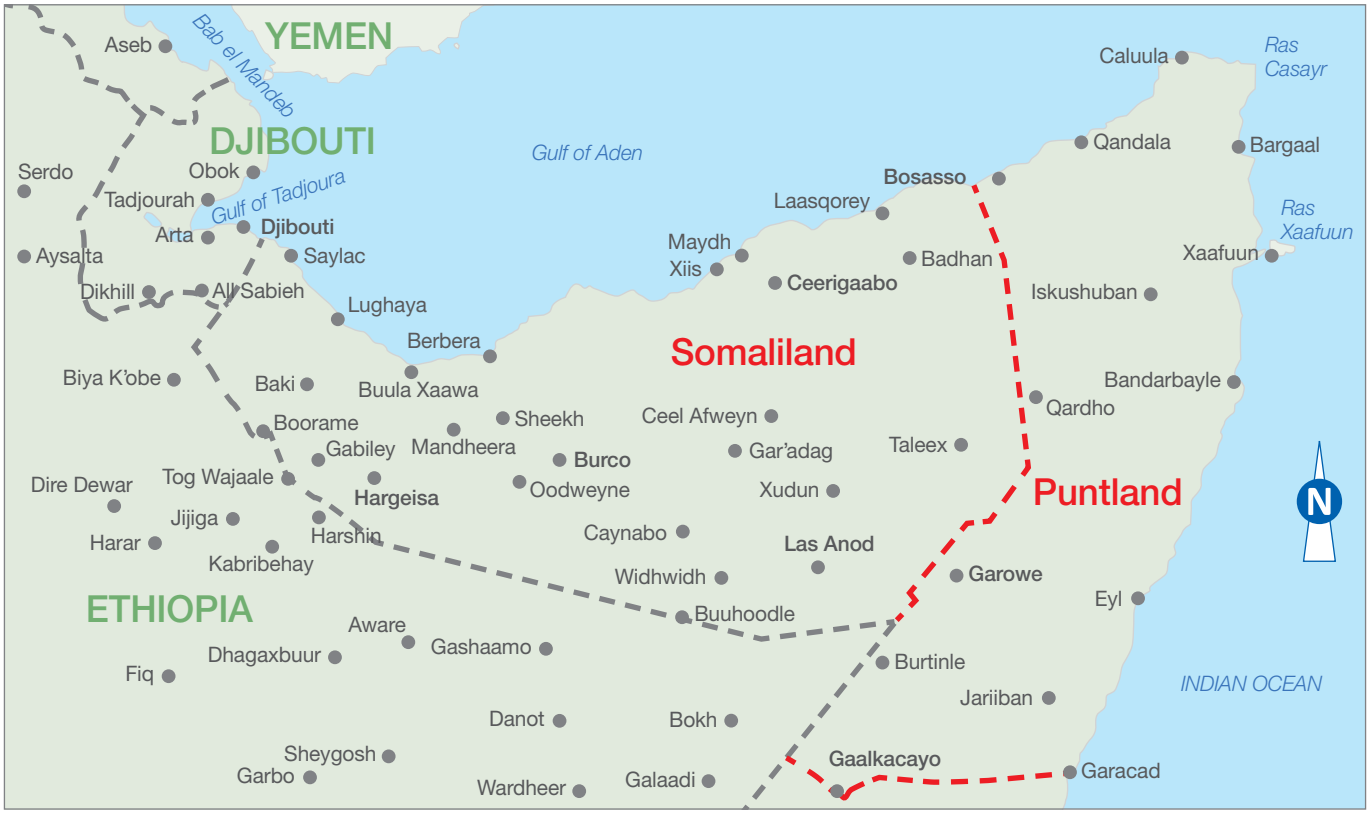
A key conclusion is that the contestation over Sool and Sanaag is unlikely to be settled in the near future, especially given the wider implications underpinning the status of the region. In the absence of clear and short-term resolutions, processes should rather be initiated which are aimed at delegitimising the use of further violence in the short term while exploring more durable and innovative solutions in the long term.

The absence of a resolution to the dispute hinders the future progress of the regions and the development of Somaliland, Puntland and Somalia as a whole. This makes it an imperative dynamic to address, all the more so given the failure of various attempts over the past 20 years to achieve a lasting solution.

Historical context

The Sool and Sanaag regions are located in the borderlands between Somaliland and Puntland. The portion of Sool in dispute is primarily inhabited by the Darod/Harti/Dhulbahante. The portions of eastern Sanaag in dispute are largely occupied by the Darod/Harti/Warsengeli, although the Dhulbahante are also present in parts of southern Sanaag.

Figure 1: Map of Somaliland and Puntland areas



The boundary between Somaliland and Puntland is contested. Somaliland has self-declared independence but this has not been recognised. Puntland is an autonomous federal member state of Somalia.

Source: Adapted from M Hoehne, Between Somaliland and Puntland, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015

Serving as a gateway region, Sool and its Dhulbahante inhabitants have played a significant role in recent Somali history despite the relative deprivation of the region. The Warsengeli in Sanaag, by contrast, are endowed with greater natural resources, including a lengthy coastline.

Clan dynamics form a major part of the contestation over Sool and Sanaag. Somaliland is dominated by the Isaaq clan family (with Dir sub-clans present in its western region) while Puntland is predominately populated by the Darod/Harti/Majerteen clan (in addition to other smaller Darod and non-Darod clans).

Emergence of competing governance mechanisms

The history of contestation lies in the legacy of colonialism, the failure to resurrect central governance in Somalia after the collapse of Siad Barre's dictatorship in 1991 and the consequent response by some regions of the former Somali state to organise themselves through local governance mechanisms. The Isaaq clan dominated the Somali National Movement (SNM) which had established control over parts of Somaliland at the time of Barre's fall. While not initially the aim of the organisation, this paved the way for the establishment of a new administration and the unilateral declaration of independence at a conference in Burco in 1991.[3]

Somaliland rooted its independence claims on the basis of a distinct colonial experience under the United Kingdom. It assumed the territorial confines of the former Somaliland Protectorate in 1991 while nullifying the union it voluntarily joined with Italian Somaliland in 1960 (present-day south and central Somalia).

Somaliland argues that the borders it inherited through the colonial process serve as the basis of an independent and multi-clan state today, as laid out in Article 2 of its Constitution.[4] This is an important point as it implies that any restructuring of those boundaries raises questions regarding the historical and legal precedent of the state itself and thus has significant implications for its independence demands.

The establishment of the Puntland State of Somalia emerged from the Garowe Constitutional Community Conference in 1998 and in many ways served as a counter-reaction to the failure of national-level processes aimed at re-establishing a central Somali government.[5] In contrast to Somaliland, Puntland has not sought independence but rather autonomy within any reconstituted Somali federal government.[6] This pro-union stance is a significant difference between Somaliland and Puntland and plays a major role in the contestation over Sool and Sanaag.

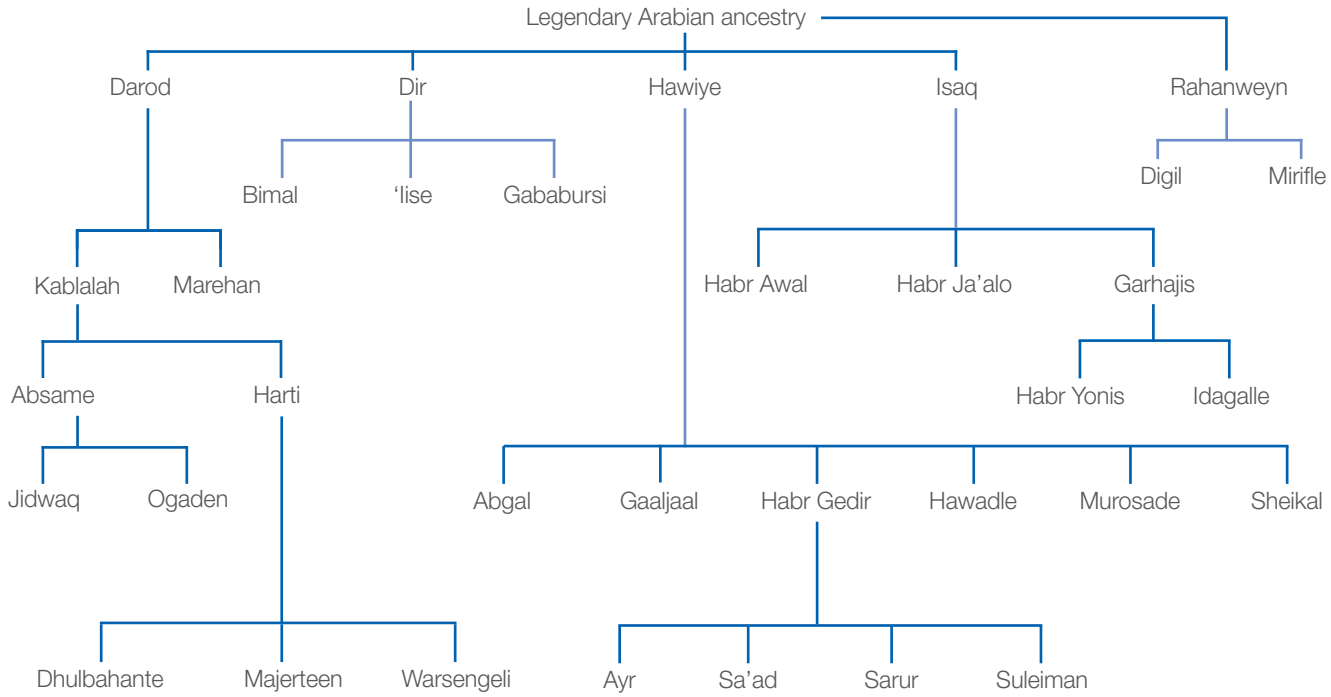
The other significant difference has been the basis of the administration. As noted above, Somaliland has adhered to a colonial legacy. Puntland has organised itself on the basis of clan. It largely serves as an administration for the Darod/Harti confederation, which includes the Majerteen, Warsengeli and Dhulbahante sub-clans.

There was a debate at the time of Puntland's founding conference on the merits of including Harti members from the Sool and Sanaag regions. Yet, the demands from their clan leaders to participate, combined with political manoeuvring amongst the conference's leadership, ensured their presence.[7] In particular, clan leaders from the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli argued they had more in common with their Darod/Harti/Majerteen cousins rather than the Isaaq clan family which predominates in Somaliland.[8] Therefore, Puntland's territorial remit has included the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli-occupied areas.[9]

This is where the overlapping claims to the Sool and Sanaag regions emerge. Demarcated as part of Somaliland through colonial legacy, a large portion of Sool is primarily occupied by the Dhulbahante, while part of Sanaag is inhabited by the Warsengeli, placing them within Puntland's clan-based area of responsibility. The differing legitimacies underpinning the formation of the two regions bring about divergent visions over their administration, depending on perceptions of whether their status is to be determined by colonialism or clan.[10]

The dispute is also reflective of divisions engendered by the colonial process. These divisions were initially overcome by the union between Somalia and Somaliland but resurfaced decades later when that political project collapsed – an indication of the continued and debilitating impacts of the colonial legacy in the region, despite attempts to overcome it.

Figure 2: Simplified genealogy of Somali clan families



Clan chart simplified for presentation purposes, and not all sub-clans levels represented
Source: Adapted from M Harper, Getting Somalia Wrong, London, Zed Books, 2012

Introduction of force

Despite the overlapping territorial claims, the situation in the Sool and Sanaag regions was not characterised by violent contestation until a visit by then Somaliland president, Dahir Rayale Kahin, to Las Anod in 2002.[11]

Rayale, from the Dir/Gadabursi clan based in the western part of Somaliland, was campaigning for re-election and sought to extend his tour to include the biggest city and capital of the Sool region, reportedly against the advice of his advisors.[12] In a resurfacing theme, the visit of a top government official to a location within the contested area was viewed as an affront by the opposing side. Despite being numerically outnumbered, Puntland forces mounted a small resistance and attacked Rayale's convoy, forcing him to retreat to the town of Aynabo.

The success of Puntland's forces in stemming the tide of Somaliland's advance in 2002 paved the way for Puntland's full takeover of Las Anod in 2003, using intervention into an intra-Dhulbahante clan dispute as a pretext.[13]

This status quo held until 2007 when the tide began to turn in Somaliland's favour. Ahmed Abdi Haabsade, who was then Puntland's Minister of Interior and a key Dhulbahante politician, collaborated with Somaliland forces to take over Las Anod after he was dismissed from the Puntland government.[14] Puntland offered little resistance, which has since been a source of Dhulbahante resentment.[15]

The takeover of Las Anod, the major urban centre and capital of the Sool region, allowed Somaliland a greater deal of legitimacy in its claims to administer territory up to the colonial border. It is a position Somaliland has not relinquished since. Many of the Dhulbahante elite, such as the majority of its clan leadership, fled to Puntland. Puntland forces also remained in the Sool region – at the outpost of Tukaraq, which is 50 km to the east and along the road to Garowe.

The major violent contestations between Somaliland and Puntland over their overlapping territorial claims primarily occurred in the Sool region around Las Anod, which is a Dhulbahante clan area. The Warsengeli inhabited portions of the Sanaag region have in turn witnessed less militarisation.

Borderland entrepreneurship and the search for alternatives

While Somaliland and Puntland have traded claims over Sool and Sanaag, a key aspect underpinning the outreach of both sides has been the co-option of local elites. While both communities suffer as victims in the contestation, there have also been opportunistic agents taking advantage of the situation to play off both sides and draw resources. Some politicians of both Dhulbahante and Warsengeli clans have shifted between Hargeisa and Garowe, becoming, in the words of one prominent academic on the subject, 'borderland entrepreneurs'.[16]

It is debatable if this process is restricted to individual decision making or is reflective of wider sub-clan dynamics (see below). It certainly serves as a means of enrichment for those involved and many interviewed for this report asserted it will continue as long as the competitive policies of Somaliland and Puntland allow for such 'entrepreneurship'.[17]

> The situation in Sool and Sanaag was not characterised by violent contestation until 2002

Nonetheless, at times the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli communities have viewed themselves as trapped between competing Somaliland and Puntland and have explored alternative approaches to their political future. Somaliland's takeover of Las Anod in 2007 changed the circumstances and many Dhulbahante became dissatisfied with both Somaliland and Puntland.[18]

Key narratives underpinning this development revolved around uneasiness with the main Dhulbahante city falling under Somaliland and, by association, Isaaq control. In addition, there were complaints that Majerteen-dominated Puntland did not demonstrate enough of a commitment to recovering Dhulbahante areas.[19] The Warsengeli were equally unhappy following a resource-based conflict with Puntland in the mid-2000s, which resulted in a similar pursuit of an alternative administration (see below).

This resulted in a meeting in Nairobi in 2009 during which the Sool, Sanaag and Cayn (SSC) administration

was established. While the name refers to the wider contested regions as a whole, the project was largely a Dhulbahante undertaking and was perceived as an elite, rather than a mass-based, organisation.[20] It also sparked divisions within the Dhulbahante as the SSC was reportedly dominated by the Faraah Garaad sub-clan.[21]

Unable to rectify these contradictions, the SCC largely fell apart by 2011. Nonetheless, its formation was indicative of an emerging perception that some Dhulbahante did not view their political future as aligned with either Somaliland or Puntland. This has been a key expression of discontent within the context of the ongoing contestation over their homelands.

The Khatumo factor

The SSC gave way to the Khatumo administration, which was established at a gathering of approximately 3 500 to 5 000 Dhulbahante in the town of Taleeh in 2011.[22] That meeting was preceded by months of local consultations and spanned both diaspora and local clan members. It was regarded as a significant development. By virtue of its establishment on Dhulbahante territory with a large number of clan members present, Khatumo warranted more legitimacy than the short-lived SSC. In addition, it gave a sense of unity to a community that had often been perceived as divided.[23]

Khatumo's goal was to avoid domination from either Somaliland or Puntland and to form a separate political entity that could eventually pursue reunification with emerging federal government structures in Mogadishu. A key objective was the liberation of Las Anod and active fighting to achieve this ensued.[24]

In 2012, after Khatumo forces had actually taken Tukaraq from Puntland, the Somaliland national army responded by attacking and forcing Khatumo supporters to flee. Somaliland forces subsequently retreated and Puntland retook control of the town. This sparked accusations of a partnership between the two ostensible adversaries.[25] For some, Puntland's perceived cooperation with Somaliland against Khatumo further signified the limited future of the Dhulbahante within that administration.[26]

During a conference in 2014, Ali Khalif Galaydh was elected as the president of Khatumo for a five-year term, signalling the end of a rotational presidential system in which Dhulbahante sub-clans shared power. As early as 2015, Galaydh began to hold discussions with Somaliland to incorporate Khatumo, while other prominent Dhulbahante gravitated towards the Puntland government.[27] Galaydh noted that similar outreach had occurred with Puntland and Mogadishu but with little success, leaving Khatumo with few other realistic options.[28] Dhulbahante leaders opposed to this move viewed Galaydh's entreaties with Somaliland as a betrayal driven by personal interest and position seeking, dismissing him as another borderland entrepreneur.[29]

Nonetheless, Somaliland under President Ahmed Mohamed Mohamud (Silanyo) made efforts to bring the Dhulbahante on board. The Isaaq/Haber Jeclo clan legacy of Silanyo gave him a degree of legitimacy in dealing with the Dhulbahante, given the historic clan relations between the two. A cabinet reshuffle in August 2016 increased Dhulbahante representation, notably by appointing Yassin Faratoon as Minister of Interior.[30]

The discussions with Khatumo also resulted in a five-point agreement signed in Aynabo on 20 October 2017, just weeks before Somaliland's presidential elections. One of the key provisions of the agreement was to formalise, within the Somaliland Constitution, an expanded power-sharing arrangement with the Dhulbahante. This would include greater representation within the executive, judicial and legislative branches of government.[31]

> Khatumo gave a sense of unity to a community that had often been perceived as divided

The agreement to integrate Khatumo into Somaliland signalled the end of the organisation. This proved unpopular with many Dhulbahante and sparked a split in its political leadership.[32]

Khatumo did not achieve many of its initial objectives and ultimately failed to unite the Dhulbahante or resolve the question over the clan's political future. Negotiations with Khatumo also allowed Somaliland to continue a policy of gradual encroachment towards its declared

border in Sool. The takeover of Tukaraq in early 2018, albeit by military means rather than diplomacy, further demonstrated this expansion at the expense of Puntland administrative control in the region.

Key developments in the Sool and Sanaag regions

1991 – Declaration of Somaliland independence at a conference in Burco

1996 – Somaliland parliament speaker Ahmed Abdi Haabsade defects to Garowe

1998 – Formation of Puntland at Garowe conference

2002 – Somaliland President Rayale visits Las Anod but is chased out by Puntland forces

2003 – Puntland takes control of Las Anod

2007 – Somaliland takes over Las Anod after the defection of Ahmed Abdi Haabsade

2007 – Maakhir state administration is proclaimed

2009 – Sool, Sanaag and Cayn (SSC) administration is formed in Nairobi

2011 – Khatumo administration is established in Taleeh

2012 – Al-Shabaab replaces Atom as the insurgent leader in Golis mountains

2017 – Khatumo and Somaliland sign a five-point agreement over integration, thereby splitting the organisation

2018 – Somaliland forces move into Tukaraq

2019 – Buildup of Somaliland and Puntland military forces around Yube in Sanaag

Concurrent developments in Sanaag

Sool vs. Sanaag

In contrast to developments in the contested Dhulbahante inhabited areas of Sool, the Warsengeli areas of Sanaag have been relatively quiet.[33] There are a number of differences between the two which help explain this dynamic. These revolve around geography, demographics, history and culture.

Geographically Sool and Sanaag are quite different, which has contributed to divergent trajectories. Sanaag enjoys a long coastline compared to landlocked Sool. This has allowed Sanaag's Warsengeli inhabitants to retain strong links across the Gulf of Aden to Yemen, and facilitates a more outward orientation.[34] Sanaag is also more isolated than Sool in part due to the presence of the Golis mountain range.

This isolation has been reinforced by other patterns. The main road passing through eastern Somaliland to Puntland runs through Sool and emphasises the area as a link between northern and central Somalia. In contrast, the Warsengeli area of Sanaag suffers from a lack of major connecting roads, although an ongoing project connects the region to the main road between Bosasso and Garowe.[35] This isolation contrasts with the greater degree of contestation in Sool along the main route linking Berbera and Garowe, while buffeting Sanaag to a degree.

Despite its isolation, Sanaag enjoys a stronger economic base than Sool. Much of this has to do with its coastline and the development of a Warsengeli culture of merchant trading, compared to the greater reliance amongst the Dhulbahante on nomadic pastoralism.[36] Sanaag also enjoys greater resources than Sool. These include frankincense and mineral prospects, although exploitation of the latter is currently limited.[37] This situation may leave the Dhulbahante more vulnerable to economic entreaties from Puntland or Somaliland given the lack of other viable resourcing outlets.[38]

The Warsengeli clan is also considered to be smaller than the Dhulbahante clan. Exact figures are difficult to come by but, as an example, the 66-member Puntland parliament, which is based on a proportional system of clan representation, allots nearly twice as many seats to the Dhulbahante compared to the Warsengeli (17 compared to 9).[39]

Historically, the Warsengeli have also taken distinctly different paths from the Dhulbahante. The Warsengeli sultanate, a local entity that demonstrated a degree of centralised rule and was led by popular historical figure Mohamud Ali Shire, collaborated with the British colonial power while retaining its independence. In contrast, the

Dhulbahante actively resisted British incursions via the revolt of the Dervish leader Mohamed Abdullah Hassan (see below).[40]

More recently, the Warsengeli did not specifically benefit during Somali dictator Siad Bare's rule in a similar manner to the Dhulbahante. The Dhulbahante enjoyed a preferential position as part of the Darod clan alliance often referred to as MOD (Marehaan-Ogaden-Dhulbahante), which Barre increasingly relied on.[41]

Cultural stereotypes also exist that characterise both clans. The Dhulbahante are seen as 'hot-headed' and 'warriors', while the Warsengeli are referred to as 'even-tempered'.[42] While these are generalised stereotypes, the frequent references made to them during the interviews indicate a degree of local resonance in terms of explaining contemporary political outcomes.

These stereotypes were reinforced by interviewees frequently referring to the Dhulbahante as 'divided' while explaining that the Warsengeli have an active policy to avoid their community being divided by competing Somaliland and Puntland claims to their territory. Many noted that the Warsengeli had established working relationships with both sides without resorting to military incursions, in comparison to the Dhulbahante (see below).[43]

The end result has been greater stability and less violence in Sanaag compared to Sool, despite a similar contestation in both regions. In addition, while Somaliland is more active in Sool given its military dominance, Puntland retains a greater presence in Sanaag although, in reality, the Warsengeli clan itself serves as the main source of administration. Nonetheless, the Warsengeli have also experimented with distancing themselves from both sides.

Warsengeli discontent

The Warsengeli areas were generally calm until the mid-2000s, when a conflict between the Warsengeli (especially the Dubays sub-clan) and Puntland (under President Adde Muse) emerged. The conflict was over the exploitation of natural resources.[44] This contributed to negative perceptions of Puntland which manifested in the short-lived Maakhir state in 2007, an attempt by Warsengeli clan members to create an autonomous administration that sought allegiance with Mogadishu.

This action demonstrated Warsengeli distrust of Puntland at the time but also a desire to remain independent of Somaliland.[45] Similar to the SSC and Khatumo projects, the initiative did not amount to much.[46]

As the dispute over resource exploitation continued, a religiously-based insurgency led by Sheikh Mohamed Atom emerged in the Golis Mountains in 2009. This went beyond pure clan dynamics. It attracted the attention of al-Shabaab, which subsumed the movement, replaced Atom as leader by 2012 and disconnected it from any particular Warsengeli-based objectives.[47]

> The end result has been greater stability and less violence in Sanaag compared to Sool

Pertinently, the SSC/Khatumo and Maakhir projects proceeded separately, despite the common situation in which the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli found themselves. The neighbouring clans have demonstrated common cause in the past – for example, the United Somali Party, revived in the aftermath of Somalia state collapse in 1991, involved members of both. Nonetheless, interlocutors alternately described failed attempts to unite the emerging administrations, or that integration would have been the next step had these organizations been more successful. Regardless, it is telling that the alternative administrations emerging from the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli communities did not demonstrate greater signs of cooperation, despite the commonalities of their situation.

Current dynamics

By 2018, the distinct political projects of both the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli had failed to achieve the change they envisioned and the future of the Sool and Sanaag regions were as contested as before. While Somaliland had made inroads into Sool through its presence in Las Anod, Sanaag remained an area where both sides retained a presence, albeit with greater linkages to Puntland.[48]

The violence in Tukaraq in January 2018 and increased tensions in Sanaag in 2019 altered the status quo

in the region. These developments occurred under fresh leadership in the region. Muse Bihi was elected President of Somaliland in November 2017, although the ruling Kulmiye party retained power. There was also a shift in Puntland from President Abdiweli Gaas to Said Abdullahi Deni in January 2019. Both dynamics in turn have influenced the current state of affairs.

Sool

Backdrop to Tukaraq

The immediate backdrop to the January 2018 clashes around Tukaraq centred around a few key political events. On 2 January 2018, the Minister of Planning in the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), Jamal Hassan, visited his hometown of Badhan in Sanaag, accompanied by Puntland officials.[49] While there, Hassan advocated for development projects in the region and reportedly sought to provide funding to an ongoing project to connect Badhan with the sealed road running south from the port of Bosasso.[50]

Following Hassan's trip, FGS President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (Farmajo) visited Garowe in Puntland on 7 January 2018, the day before the first clashes in Tukaraq. Farmajo's visit was billed as part of a 'reconciliation tour' in which he toured the Federal Member States (FMS) of both Puntland and Galmudug, in order to improve strained centre-periphery relations vis-à-vis Mogadishu. Unconfirmed reports suggested that Farmajo may have also intended to visit part of Sool.[51] Combined, the events were likely to have been deemed provocative to a new Somaliland government, which may have reacted with military manoeuvres around Tukaraq in response.[52]

In addition, political events related to electoral cycles may have also contributed to increased tensions. In Somaliland, a well-run but divisive presidential election in November 2017 resulted in the election of the ruling Kulmiye party's candidate in Muse Bihi.

The opposition articulated a range of complaints afterwards, which have yet to be fully addressed. This has stalled the parliamentary elections that had been scheduled for December 2019.[53] Some interviewees surmised that President Bihi might have sought early in his tenure to capitalise on the tensions around Tukaraq in order to distract from the electoral contest, in addition to an ongoing clan-related conflict in the El Afweyne district of Sanaag.[54]

In Puntland, President Abdiweli Gaas had come under significant internal pressure as he prepared his re-election bid. Candidates frequently invoke the Sool, Sanaag and Cayn issue during campaigning in Puntland, promising to assert control over the areas as a means of soliciting electoral support.[55] The January 2018 clash occurred a year before Puntland's next presidential elections (scheduled for January 2019), but the dynamics surrounding the process influenced responses.

> Political events related to electoral cycles may have also contributed to increased tensions

Some suspected Gaas may use the battles as an excuse to extend his term in office. His strong rhetoric in the aftermath of the incident may also have been aimed at appealing to popular sentiments in advance of the election, while dissuading perceptions that his administration had done little to counteract Somaliland advances in the region.[56]

Through these developments the internal dynamics of both Somaliland and Puntland, combined with leadership visits to the region, likely played a role in hardening positions in the leadup to the clash in Tukaraq.

Tukaraq clashes

On 8 January 2018, the first major confrontation between Somaliland and Puntland in Sool and Sanaag since 2007 occurred in the small town of Tukaraq, formerly a customs point for Puntland.[57] The fighting resulted in Somaliland's takeover of Tukaraq and the repositioning of Puntland's forces 6 km away.[58]

On 15 and 24 May 2018, a more serious and deadlier round of clashes occurred in which Puntland forces attempted to retake Tukaraq.[59] Yet, this resulted in little change on the ground. An uneasy status quo has since set in with Somaliland effectively enlarging the extent of its administrative control in the Sool region. Since then there has been no major fighting, but there have been episodes of sporadic small-scale clashes and shelling.[60]

In terms of the impact of the fighting, the casualty toll from the violence in January and May 2018 has been difficult to determine, but estimates range between 200 and 300.[61] Both sides captured and held 17 detainees for over a year (see below). The United Nations (UN) noted that as of July 2018, 2 700 households were displaced as a result of the violence.[62]

Somaliland appears to maintain the upper hand militarily as proved by its ability to have withstood the May 2018 assault from Puntland forces. Somaliland's army has been described by interlocutors as more professional and diverse, while Puntland has rather relied on various Darod clan militias to contribute to the war effort. Yet analysts have warned that neither side retains the ability to inflict a decisive victory.[63]

According to interviewees, Puntland's reliance on clan militias means it utilises a pan-Darod nationalist narrative to mobilise forces and has less control over forces fighting in its name.[64] The May 2018 clashes were described as an attempt by a Puntland-aligned clan militia to take back territory without coordinating with other units.[65] Puntland's President Gaas complained to his cabinet in July 2018 about this specific dynamic, noting that a clan militia from Qardo involved itself in Tukaraq but without taking orders from him.[66] Other Puntland units have reportedly since left the front lines to focus on activities in their clan homelands.[67]

> The detainee exchange was positive, but hasn't been matched by much progress in other areas

To overcome such hindrances, one priority of the new Deni administration which was elected in January 2019 (see below), has been to restructure the security forces in a more professional manner, so they can adequately deal with the myriad of security threats Puntland faces.[68]

Some interviewees from Somaliland alleged that Puntland may have received support from the FGS in Mogadishu during the conflict.[69] However, no concrete evidence to confirm this emerged. Instead, Puntland actually complained to Mogadishu about a lack of support in security and other realms.[70] Regardless of the real or perceived level of support, the situation remained unchanged in terms of Somaliland's assumption of control over Tukaraq, indicating the limited impact of this potential dynamic.

Resolution efforts

After the May 2018 fighting, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) began shuttle diplomacy efforts between Hargeisa and Garowe to forestall further violence.[71] This resulted in a four-point plan focused on:

- An end to hostilities
- Dialogue between military commanders
- Secure humanitarian access for the displaced
- The initiation of discussions regarding the separation of forces and the exchange of detained security personnel.

This reportedly developed from a three-point plan that had been mediated by the United States and UNSOM prior to May 2018. The fourth point about the separation of forces and the exchange of personnel was subsequently added.[72] Somaliland has acknowledged its acceptance of the plan while criticising Puntland's apparent reluctance and violation of the earlier three-point plan.[73] In August 2018, United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) António Guterres noted that the former Puntland president, Abdiweli Gaas, had accepted the four-point plan in principle. Gaas however, wanted further assurances regarding the withdrawal of Somaliland security forces from Tukaraq.[74]

The election of Said Deni in Puntland in January 2019 interrupted developments as the new administration took time to formulate its policy towards the area.[75] Nonetheless, the former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia (SRSG), Nicholas Haysom, explained to the UN Security Council in January 2019, that "as a result of the joint mediation effort, a de-facto ceasefire is holding."[76]

Few other major developments, aside from the informal ceasefire, occurred around Tukaraq until 3 June 2019, when the two sides exchanged detainees captured during the fighting in 2018. Just before Eid al-Fitr which marks the end of Ramadan, 14 detainees were released from Somaliland, while three were freed from Puntland.[77]

The event was facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and fulfilled one aspect of the four-point plan.[78] This was a positive development, but has not been matched by much progress in other areas.

In addition to the joint IGAD-UNSOM efforts, peacemaking attempts have been made through other mechanisms. A delegation of clan representatives was initially involved in peace discussions, but these have not continued since the fighting died down.[79]

External actors like Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) may have also used their leverage with both sides to pursue conflict resolution efforts. Former Ethiopian prime minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, invited Bihi and Gaas to Addis Ababa for ceasefire talks in February 2018, shortly after the eruption of conflict.[80] Ethiopia previously played a decisive role in seeking a solution to the dispute between Somaliland and Puntland. However, the country is currently experiencing a range of domestic issues, making it unclear how much attention it can pay to the current situation.[81] Both Bihi and Deni were also present in the UAE over the same period in April 2019, although rumours of a meeting between the two leaders have been denied.[82]

> While the various efforts have instituted an informal ceasefire, it is unclear if this will transition to something more permanent

While the various efforts have been able to institute an informal ceasefire that prevents further violence, it is unclear if this will transition to something more permanent as it has not been anchored in a clear agreement on behalf of both sides. The core disagreement over the status quo regarding Somaliland's advance into Tukaraq remains, and there have been no discussions on deeper issues concerning the future of the contested areas.

Sanaag

Patterns of insecurity spread to Sanaag in 2019, ultimately strengthening Puntland administrative control but also raising concerns regarding the destabilisation of the hitherto relatively peaceful region. Internal political dynamics within each side have played a significant role in these developments, which eventually impacted Sanaag itself.



THE CORE DISAGREEMENT OVER SOMALILAND'S ADVANCE INTO TUKARAQ REMAINS

Colonel Aare's rebellion and the militarisation of Sanaag

Central to this dynamic is the intersection of internal Somaliland tensions with the Somaliland-Puntland dispute. In mid-2018, a colonel from the Somaliland army, Colonel Aare, defected and fled.[83] Aare hails from the Isaaq/Garhajis/Haber Yonis sub-clan and was reportedly motivated by grievances related to clan conflicts in El Afweyne and the domination of Somaliland by a Habar Jeclo-Habar Awal political alliance.[84]

The outcome of the 2017 elections may also have played a role in Aare's discontent. The electoral victory of Muse Bihi signalled a continuation of

the aforementioned alliance, which had also brought President Silanyo to victory in 2010.[85] The consolidation of power around this dynamic proceeded at the expense of some of Somaliland's other Isaaq (and non-Isaaq) sub-clans.

Local accounts indicated that Aare was initially received by Puntland and based near the town of Qardo, but reportedly relocated to Somaliland territory around Erigabo by early 2019.[86] In response, Somaliland set up a forward operating base near the town of Yube in March 2019. This base was approximately 40 km to the east of the Sanaag capital Erigabo and was an attempt to curtail Aare's movements.[87] Low-level clashes transpired, but despite the initiation of negotiations via Garhajis clan elders with Aare around July 2019, no resolution had occurred at the time of writing.[88]

The deployment of Somaliland forces around Yube sparked a harsh reaction from the new Deni administration in Puntland. The administration condemned the move while sending its own troops to the area.[89] The reaction was one of the first public signals regarding Deni's commitment to check Somaliland advances in the contested regions and served as an indication that the potential for future conflict is not restricted just to the Sool region, but that the prospect for an escalation in less affected areas along the contested border exists as well.

The ongoing conflict between Habar Jeclo and Habar Yonis sub-clans in El Afweyne further contributes to the increased level of insecurity in Sanaag faced by the Bihi administration. It is however uncertain if there is any direct connection with Aare, beyond serving as an instigating grievance behind his rebellion.[90]

Warsengeli defections

The militarisation has affected the Warsengeli areas of Sanaag, upsetting a previous balance. As noted above, while the Warsengeli have established relations with both Somaliland and Puntland, the clan has generally resisted the deployment of armed forces in their areas. The events of 2019, interlinked with internal Somaliland dynamics, altered the previous status quo.

During the 2019 Puntland elections, some disaffected Warsengeli clan members left Puntland for Somaliland as an expression of their displeasure, temporarily giving a boost to Somaliland claims of local support.[91] Yet, the overall situation reversed following the Somaliland deployment of forces and subsequent violence in eastern Sanaag.

On 21 May 2019, competing visits by the Minister of Justice of Somaliland and Minister of Education of Puntland, both members of the Warsengeli clan, resulted in clashes around the key town of Badhan, during which seven people were killed.[92] In the days following this development, a number of Warsengeli politicians and military leaders aligned with Somaliland defected to Puntland. These included the former governor of Badhan and three military commanders with a few hundred troops.[93] The leaders were given new positions in Puntland, while the troops were welcomed in a public ceremony.[94]

Further violence occurred on 20 August 2019 when the newly appointed Somaliland governor for the region, Mohamud Hamud Omar, who replaced the previous governor after his defection, attempted to enter the town of Hadaftimo. This resulted in four casualties.[95] Another round of military defections from Somaliland to Puntland followed, led by Colonel Guray Osman Salah and his forces previously based in Badhan. This further eroded Somaliland's position in the area.[96]

> The deployment of Somaliland forces around Yube sparked a harsh reaction from Puntland

Interviewees explained the defections within the context of Warsengeli resistance to the militarisation of their area and/or resistance to conflict involving fellow clan members.[97] The Chief of Staff of the Somaliland Armed Forces, General Nuh Ismail Tani, surprisingly expressed relief. He noted that Somaliland had simply been paying these forces not to join Puntland, but this had not truly advanced Somaliland's interests in return.[98]

The clashes in May and August 2019, while small in nature compared to those around Tukaraq in 2018, signalled the worrying spread of violence to Sanaag. They also raised the possibility of intra-Warsengeli divisions and infighting as a result of the Somaliland-Puntland tensions.[99] Nonetheless, the defections by the

Warsengeli have strengthened Puntland's hand in the region. In some ways, the more 'neutral' position played by the Warsengeli with reference to the Somaliland-Puntland contestations has now been replaced with a greater association with Puntland.[100]

Thus the introduction of military forces into the area has been a key factor driving the shift in power towards Puntland, albeit in a manner opposite to what Somaliland experienced via the takeover of Tukaraq in Sool.[101]

These dynamics underline the fluid and non-linear nature of the ongoing contestation between Somaliland and Puntland in Sool and Sanaag. They are an indication of how quickly advantages can be overturned on the basis of fickle local allegiances (see section on borderland entrepreneurship). The situation also demonstrates the impact the new administrations in both Somaliland and Puntland have had in terms of altering the status quo in Sool and Sanaag, albeit thus far in a manner towards greater, rather than reduced, contestation.

Mixed signaling

The developments in the contested boundary regions over the past two years have also been marked by mixed messages, balancing both conflict resolution potential with destabilising developments. This has been especially apparent with regards to political, economic and diaspora engagement around Sool.

In Tukaraq, positive signs have been evident. A cease-fire has largely held since May 2018, while the exchange of detainees in May 2019, demonstrated the potential for engagement. In this case, two objectives from the UNSOM-IGAD plan have been fulfilled, even if the ceasefire has not been formalised.

To date, the disputed nature of the current situation remains in place with little progress made on other core facets over the past year. While aspects like the detainee exchange could have served as confidence-building measures for further engagement, they occurred around the same time as the clashes in the Sanaag region near Badhan. This demonstrates how progress in one track can be undermined by tensions in another area, and reinforces the need for holistic responses. One interviewee described the detainee exchange as a sincere development, but not that one signalled any change in heart from either side.[102]

Rhetoric surrounding the dispute from Somaliland and Puntland has also moved between strident and conciliatory tones. The leadership on both sides has emphasised the lengths they will go to, to defend claimed territorial integrity – hardline views that are likely driven by domestic political considerations. Yet at times, the possibility of compromise has been proposed.

Most recently, on 17 August 2019, President Deni of Puntland announced he was open to talks with Somaliland.[103] The comments were Deni's first acceptance of dialogue since his election and signalled his administration's willingness to engage in a non-confrontational manner.

> On 17 August 2019, President Deni of Puntland announced he was open to talks with Somaliland

This was a positive development but the comments were quickly undermined by Puntland Vice-President Ahmed Karash's rejection of any such entreaty. The statement from Karash exposed a potential disagreement between Puntland's president and his deputy. It also carried significant weight given that Karash is the highest-ranking Dhulbahante leader in the Deni administration and thus currently serves as the key political figure for the clan.[104]

It would be unlikely for Deni to make much progress in terms of dialogue with Somaliland without having key constituencies on board. This in effect constrains potential initiatives. Rather, the divergent commentary revealed a leader potentially willing to engage, but undermined by the lack of an internally unified position. This highlights how domestic political considerations can hinder wider efforts aimed at conflict resolution.[105]

Economic linkages

One positive aspect throughout the conflict around Tukaraq has been the unimpeded continuation of traffic along the Las Anod to Garowe route, passing through Tukaraq. This positive and binding element is an indication of the strength of economic and people-to-people networks. Social and economic relations have remained intact despite the political situation. In fact, aside from periods of fighting, the border has remained open.[106]

There is an economic incentive on both sides to maintain a soft border. For Puntland, Tukaraq had been a customs post and the seizure by Somaliland threatened an economic lifeline. To counteract this Puntland reinstated the post further down the road at Falayryaale, 60 km from Garowe.[107] The continued ability to tax traffic along the road gives Puntland an incentive to avoid upsetting the status quo.

Such incentives extend towards Somaliland as well. For example, Somaliland residents travel to Puntland's capital of Garowe at times to obtain Somali passports to allow them to travel abroad, given the limited utility of the largely unrecognised Somaliland passport.[108] This generates further revenue for Puntland given the administrative fees associated with the process and the contributions to the local economy of the visits of those from Somaliland.

These economic and people-to-people ties demonstrate how the politics of the area can be divorced from daily realities, and provide hope that the situation can play a moderating role to balance out more antagonistic political outlooks.[109] Yet, some policy responses may undermine this element of connectivity. For example, in January 2018, the governor of Puntland's Nugaal region announced the suspension of public travel along the route; while in June 2018, Puntland reportedly issued a directive banning its citizens from traveling to Tukaraq.[110] Puntland also recalled its students who were studying in Somaliland in June 2018.[111]

> Economic and social ties demonstrate how politics can be divorced from daily realities

While these measures appear to have had little effect given the continuation of traffic, a directive from Puntland's parliament in July 2019 to increase a tax on goods coming from Somaliland may have a more practical impact.[112] Aimed at incentivising Puntland's business community to shift towards greater utilisation of the port of Bosasso, the directive seeks to penalise goods imported via Somaliland's Berbera port. While the tax reportedly exempts goods that Bosasso's smaller port is unable to handle, the net effect could be a reduction in traffic and business ties that bind the region together, in spite of the political dynamics.[113]

Ambiguous role of the diaspora

The diaspora has also played both a positive and negative role with regard to conflict trajectories.[114] While diaspora remittances provide a crucial lifeline, especially in the absence of other major development projects, some interviewees complained that certain diaspora communities push a harder line with regards to conflict dynamics.[115] One interviewee noted how the diaspora were divorced from the reality of the situation and viewed the Dhulbahante, in particular, through the prism of the clan's historical position of power. The Dhulbahante were dominant in both the Dervish movement and under the Barre regime, but the reality has since shifted.[116]

Other interviewees appreciated the economic support but acknowledged the tensions with regards to future outlook and blamed the diaspora for aggravating dynamics, such as by providing support to various militia movements. Many interviewees appreciated the economics of the diaspora but not necessarily the politics.

Yet, the diaspora's economic engagement itself has also demonstrated mixed messages. While many initially reduced investment in Las Anod following Somaliland's takeover of the town in 2007, a current wave of housing construction is been driven by diaspora funding. This sends a conflicting message regarding the continued rejection by many Dhulbahante diaspora of Somaliland's political control of Las Anod, but a willingness to deploy economic resources for investment within that environment.[117]

Much of the investment has been restricted to the construction of personal properties, rather than wider projects.[118] Some Dhulbahante living outside Las Anod rationalised this by explaining the struggle against Somaliland will be a long one but they cannot allow the town to remain underdeveloped.[119] Hardline views continue to exist side-by-side with the economic investments, however. Another interviewee explained that while he is constructing a house in Las Anod, he would be happy to see it destroyed if that meant the town was liberated from Somaliland control.[120]

Overall, measures ranging from political developments to local economics to diaspora engagement demonstrate

the uncertain nature of the Sool and Sanaag dispute, with seemingly positive developments undermined by more deleterious outcomes. This reveals a great deal of mixed signaling over potential cooperative entry points and prospects for sustained progress towards conflict de-escalation and resolution.

Other security concerns

In addition to the clashes between Somaliland and Puntland forces in Tukaraq in 2018 and eastern Sanaag in 2019, a number of other undercurrents point to the risk of increased insecurity in Sool and Sanaag.

Feisal Falalug militia

The engagement between Somaliland and Khatumo split the latter with various factions emerging opposed to Ali Galydh's proposals. Former Khatumo minister Feisal Falalug launched an armed faction, rejecting negotiations while Somaliland was still in control of Las Anod.[121] A low-intensity conflict ensued with attacks attributed to his militia occurring around Gambada, Tukaraq and Las Anod itself.[122]

> The dispute provides a potential risk of violent extremists infiltrating or utilising the area

It is unclear what the strength of Falalug's militia is and to what degree he enjoys outside support but the presence of an armed group in Sool, opposed to current political developments, is indicative of the patterns of insecurity stemming from the contested situation. This insecurity is not restricted solely to the prospect of conflict between Puntland and Somaliland.[123]

Clan disputes

In addition to the ongoing clan dispute in El Afweyne (see above), late 2018 saw the outbreak of serious intra-Dhulbahante clashes in Dumay. While conflict between the Qayad and Baharsame sub-clans has been a recurring issue since the early 2000s, the clashes in September and October 2018 were the most violent to date. It is estimated that over 100 people were killed.[124] The clashes became politicised as Puntland and Somaliland blamed each other for incitement, while raising questions regarding the influx of weapons.[125]

Though seemingly resolved for now, the developments brought up concerns of divisions in the Dhulbahante within the context of the Somaliland-Puntland dispute. Many commentators describe the Dhulbahante as one of the most divided clans in Somalia and note that Somaliland's entrance into Dhulbahante areas would not have been possible without local collaborators. Others countered that the Dhulbahante are no more divided than other Somali clans. They point to the current Garhajis discontent in Somaliland to demonstrate divisions within the Isaaq and that on key issues, such as Somaliland's independence, the Dhulbahante were generally united (see below).[126]

Nonetheless, the failure of the SSC and Khatumo administrations to develop a common agenda for the clan further point to this dynamic and underpin a sentiment evinced by both Dhulbahante and non-Dhulbahante alike – that the dispute over Sool has been exacerbated by internal Dhulbahante divisions, which have affected the clan in a manner the Warsengeli in Sanaag have been more able to resist.[127] In this sense, while Somaliland and Puntland policies have played the Dhulbahante off of each other, at times with violent results, sections of the wider clan have been a partner in this dynamic (see below).

Al-Shabaab

The dispute over Sool and Sanaag provides a limited but potential risk of violent extremist organisation (VEO) infiltration or utilisation of the area. The longer and more divisive a dispute between Somaliland and Puntland, the more groups outside the system may be in a position to take advantage. These include VEOs al-Shabaab and the Islamic State in Somalia, who maintain a presence in the mountainous areas to the east and west of Bosasso in Puntland respectively.

Thus far there is little evidence of this dynamic but both sides have accused the other of supporting militant groups. Puntland has been more vocal in this regard with the former information minister, Abdi Hersi Ali, claiming just after the January 2018 clashes in Tukaraq that Somaliland has been "responsible for 85% of al-Shabaab violence in Galgala."[128]

The accusations underlie the lack of cooperation over the shared risk and threaten to inflame the situation.[129]

They also demonstrate how a group like al-Shabaab could take advantage of the prolonged boundary dispute given the lack of coordination to disrupt its operational presence in the area.

In terms of visible presence, a few worrying trends have been apparent. In August 2019, four suspected al-Shabaab members were arrested near Badhan reportedly coming from Erigabo and on their way to the Galgala mountains.[130] Many commentators in Puntland expressed disquiet about al-Shabaab members traveling to Puntland from south-central Somalia via Somaliland. Despite little concrete verification, this incident served as evidence for their concerns.[131]

A string of unexplained assassinations have occurred in Las Anod, and are often blamed on al-Shabaab as well. One account included nearly 70 incidents in Buhoodle and Las Anod since Somaliland assumed control of the area in 2007.[132] Little concrete evidence of al-Shabaab culpability exists, but targets have reportedly included government officials, Dhulbahante clan leaders, the business community and al-Shabaab defectors.[133]

> Strained relations hinder cooperation to pursue militants and reduce intelligence sharing

Given the frequency and unexplained nature of the violence, many interviewees have attributed them to al-Shabaab and blame potential sleeper cells in the area. Nonetheless, larger attacks outside of targeted assassinations have not occurred, and conclusive links to al-Shabaab have not been established.[134]

A curious incident occurred in Buhoodle, a town in the Cayn region that has resisted Somaliland control, however. The town is in a unique situation in that a third of it lies across the border in Ethiopia, allowing access from its southern side. In August 2018, a suicide attack killed former Hizbul Islam finance chief Abdifatah Mohamed Ali and ex-Khatumo interior minister Ahmed Dola.[135] The targeting of a Hizbul Islam member and the use of a suicide bomber point to al-Shabaab, but the incident was not claimed by the organisation.[136]

The lack of follow-up is a similar pattern to the violence in Las Anod – the targeting of specific individuals but no widespread visible presence or other violence. Yet, the occurrence of this type of attack in the area was a new and worrying development. Its limited nature, however, has led respondents to dismiss it as an isolated incident related to internal al-Shabaab issues rather than representative of something larger regarding VEO expansion in the wake of the Somaliland-Puntland dispute.

Nonetheless, the contestation over Sool and Sanaag serves to the potential benefit of VEOs. It allows for gaps in administrative presence which VEOs can exploit for the purposes of the movement of manpower or goods. Furthermore, strained relations between Somaliland and Puntland hinder cooperation to pursue the militants and reduce coordinated efforts and intelligence sharing.[137] This in turn raises concerns regarding prospects for VEO infiltration going forward, despite the limited nature of this to date.

Local perceptions of challenges to resolution

The debate over Sool and Sanaag has been ongoing for over two decades with increased tensions over the past two years. The varying layers of involvement, in addition to the challenges with all present options, complicate efforts to achieve an enduring and non-violent resolution. Actors across the spectrum described their perceptions of the options presently available, forming the bulk of the section below on existing challenges with regards to engagement with Somaliland, Puntland and other alternatives.

Multi-layered dispute

Part of the challenge with regards to Sool and Sanaag is that the dispute plays out across a number of different layers, each with its own internal contradictions that complicate resolution efforts. In one sense, the Sool and Sanaag dispute reflects different visions regarding the reconstruction of the Somali state, enveloping the range of options from the independence demanded by Somaliland, to the autonomy preferred by Puntland, to the federal unity advocated by involved clans.

First and foremost, the contestation over Sool and Sanaag involves the local Dhulbahante and Warsengeli communities themselves. Divisions in both communities, but particularly the Dhulbahante, have been blamed for facilitating some of the developments. The presence of officials from the clans in both Somaliland and Puntland,

in addition to the back and forth nature of some allegiances (see below), is indicative of this dynamic.

Intra-clan relations within the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli form a significant part of the conflict dynamic. There is a debate as to whether these relations are an inherent aspect of these communities themselves or have been engendered and exacerbated by external actors. Some argue that clan divisions have been augmented by the array of choices available to them.[138] Yet, any true resolution of the Sool and Sanaag regions cannot occur without a greater coherence of local clan perceptions over their future.[139]

At the second layer, the contestation pits Somaliland and Puntland against each other. This has resulted in the military buildup of forces, augmented by the participation and co-option of local allies. The competing claims and state legitimacies form the basis for the contestation over Sool and Sanaag, but both are subject to internal considerations that drive policy. Developments in both Hargeisa and Garowe carry local ramifications for conflict in the region, and this layer remains a primary cause of concern for immediate violence.

The third layer involves the intersection of all of the above with the FGS and brings the dispute to the Somali national level, but with distinct complications.

For both the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli, a dominant narrative remains the desire for unity with Somalia. It is unclear, however, to what degree this sentiment is reciprocated in current federal structures in Mogadishu, but it is indicative of the interlocking connections between the various layers.[140]

For Puntland, the dispute also converges with the troubled relationship between the Somali Federal Government and its periphery. Much of this has to do with unresolved questions regarding power and resource distribution as the Somali state continues to reconstruct itself after total collapse. But relations over the past two years have hit a low point, with Garowe even suspending cooperation with Mogadishu on occasion, while also complaining about the lack of equitable resource distribution.[141]

For Somaliland, the dispute brings to the fore its unresolved status vis-à-vis Somalia which has never accepted Somaliland's independence claims. The ambiguous nature of Somaliland is therefore another complicating factor. Without addressing that dynamic, it will be difficult to achieve a lasting resolution to Sool and Sanaag, given that the nature of the border will continue to be in contention. In addition, the outcome of this development carries significant ramifications for the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli clans given their dominant preference for unity (see below).

Sool and Sanaag thus symbolise the overarching unsettled question regarding Somaliland's status, while remaining symbolically important for Somaliland's claims of effective control over its assumed boundaries.

> Any resolution cannot occur without a greater coherence of clan perceptions over their future

The communities of the region are therefore held hostage by national-level dynamics largely beyond their control and the continued lack of political resolution stemming from the collapse of the Somali state. The lack of resolution also feeds into perceptions that the Sool and Sanaag areas are 'disputed' in the sense that they are in active conflict and thus unsuitable for external investment and/or development projects. This has been a longstanding concern by interviewees across the region, who argued against using the term 'disputed,' complaining its connotations in turn leave their regions further behind and marginalised.[142]

The unresolved issues over the federal relationship between Puntland and the FGS, and the nature of Somaliland's status raise the question as to the level of discussion needed to achieve a sustainable solution and/or how the intricacies of all three layers can be incorporated into a coherent effort.

Challenges with Somaliland

The approach of Somaliland with regards to Sool and Sanaag appears to have shifted from the administrations of Silanyo to Bihi. The outreach to the Dhulbahante by Silanyo, based on the power-sharing agreement with Khatumo leader Ali Galaydh, appears to have given way to a more military-themed outlook under Bihi. The accord with Ali Galaydh has stalled and there has been limited implementation of the core tenets such as

formalising an expanded power-sharing model within Somaliland's constitution. With the takeover of Tukaraq and the military deployment in Sanaag, it appears military over diplomatic action is currently prevailing.

The two central issues of Somaliland's claims to Sool and Sanaag, as consistently expressed in interviews with Dhulbahante and Warsengeli alike, are i) the lack of clan family ties between those communities and Somaliland's dominant Isaaq, and ii) Somaliland's pursuit of secession. While some admitted they may be able to get over the former, the latter was non-negotiable.

With regards to the clan family ties, a question revolves around the ability of effective outreach to serve as a draw for communities in Sool and Sanaag, and to take precedence over family stipulations. Clan family ties are just one dynamic but not necessarily an immutable one. Part of Somaliland's approach has been to deploy effective administration, governance and development projects for its eastern fringes in an attempt to inculcate a positive future outlook with regards to inclusion.

Las Anod serves as an important case study as it has been under the control of both Puntland (2003–2007) and Somaliland (2007–present). Tukaraq is another emerging example, given the change in control since 2018.

Some respondents in Las Anod who lived through both administrations noted that there has been a general increase in services and governance since the takeover of the town by Somaliland, albeit over a longer time period.[143] Somaliland reserves 2% of its annual budget for developing the eastern areas. This is a key strategic component to win the hearts and minds battle through development projects.[144] Examples of these include support for the development of Nugaal University and constructing a general hospital in Las Anod.[145] Others countered that any Somaliland developments in the area are due to its ability to draw on international support in a greater way than Puntland can.[146]

In Tukaraq, clan chiefs noted similar sentiments and complained that Puntland did little more than set up a tax checkpoint in the town during their control. They also noted relations with the Somaliland armed forces were generally good. The major development project over the past year had been the expansion of a community centre in the town which includes a health centre and an educational facility.[147] Yet at the same time, the chiefs remarked that they felt freer before, and it is as if they are now in occupied territory.

Respondents from Las Anod mentioned similar feelings when Somaliland took control and raised questions as to what degree the presence of effective administration and development may be able to counter questions of identity. In this sense, the hearts and minds strategy of Somaliland may encounter some limitations.

Another limitation could lie in the practical application of the approach, which has also been undermined by the recent focus on military maneuvers. The takeover of Tukaraq was widely derided by Dhulbahante interviewees. Others complained that Somaliland's hearts and minds outreach has in reality been limited compared to the emphasis on co-opting local elites.

> Somaliland's approach appears to have shifted from the administrations of Silanyo to Bihi

Many complained that the main focus has really been on offering positions to entice certain politicians to join Somaliland and wider outreach to local populations has been more restricted.[148] A common complaint was that politicians, especially those based outside Sool and Sanaag, carry little weight locally and are essentially figureheads. Clan members argued that this emphasis on the elite has been a misplaced attempt to garner and gauge clan support.[149]

Another prevailing narrative centred around complaints that Somaliland did not do enough to entice wider participation through the sharing of political power regardless of the level of humanitarian and development projects.[150] The failure of the Khatumo integration project, combined with comparisons of ministerial and other positions in Somaliland versus Puntland, served as evidence for such thinking.

While many complained about the fickle allegiances of politicians from both clans and their lack of local resonance, the key measurement of representation remained the number of allotted positions for those politicians. This reflects a failure to conceive of

governance systems beyond a narrow identity-based power-sharing dynamic and one intimately tied to the allocation of community resources.

A direct comparison between the two as provided in Table 1 is not wholly appropriate given that proportionally the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli comprise a greater percentage of Puntland compared to Somaliland. Thus in any power-sharing dynamic they will likely always have a greater share of overall positions.[151] Yet the consistent refrains against participation in Somaliland revolve around this dynamic and perceptions of Isaaq dominance. This ties into concerns about minority status and gravitation towards entities that can offer a greater share.

The other dominant narrative against Somaliland control revolves around the contradiction between its independence ambitions and the dominant pro-union narratives of the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli. It is often noted that while politicians have switched between both Somaliland and Puntland at times, traditional elders have been resolute in their views. Of the 13 major Dhulbahante elders, only one has been based in Somaliland areas of control since the 2007 takeover of Las Anod. This situation is often interpreted as more representative of clan views as a whole and driven in large part by Somaliland's secessionist demands.[152]

As currently structured, Somaliland's policy seems unlikely to achieve major diplomatic success. The hearts and minds aspect has been one part of Somaliland's approach but it has some limitations. It has been less favoured over the co-option of local leaders and undermined by recent military manoeuvres. Policies that focus on leaders with narrow and questionable legitimacies and do not target the wider population are unlikely to enjoy long-term success in shifting the tide of overall opinions.

Somaliland's long-term prospects in the Sool and Sanaag region might be better served through a process of wider not narrower outreach. Even then serious questions remain about the ability to engender lasting loyalty, especially in the context of Somaliland's continued pursuit of independence.

Challenges with Puntland

With regards to Sool and Sanaag, Puntland has the inherent advantage of its common Darod/Harti clan family ties with both the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli. While this is useful, it has not always been enough to ensure unwavering allegiance. Respondents described a situation whereby given the common family ties, Puntland will always be there for the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli. This allows them to explore other options and return when things do not work out.[154]

Others noted that family ties are not the final determinant. If Puntland decided to pursue a secessionist path from Mogadishu like Somaliland, they would also exit – demonstrating the predominance of a pro-union stance over calculations of familial linkages.[155]

Sentiments against Puntland administrative control exist as well.[156] The role Puntland played in suppressing Khatumo was frequently mentioned by interviewees. This

Table 1: Political representation of the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli in Somaliland and Puntland[153]

Clan	Measure	Somaliland	Puntland
Dhulbahante	Highest political position	Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament	Vice President
	Ministers	3/23 (13%)	5/18 (28%)
	Parliament seats	7/82 (9%)	17/66 (26%)
Warsengeli	Highest political position	Deputy Chairman of *Guurti*	Speaker of Parliament
	Ministers	1/23 (4%)	2/18 (11%)
	Parliament seats	4/82 (5%)	9/66 (14%)

Source: Compilation based on interviews in Hargeisa and Garowe, February and August 2019

incident and the inability of Puntland forces to take back Las Anod, led some Dhulbahante to question Puntland's commitment to their cause. Both events are still clear in the memory of the clan.

These events have also been seen as linked to the domination of the Majerteen within Puntland and the clan's larger ambitions vis-à-vis Somalia. Some Dhulbahante have expressed the view that they were still a minority within Puntland with little chance of ever capturing the Presidency.[157] Some went so far as to say the Majerteen were using the Dhulbahante and the Warsengeli to present a unified Darod front. Puntland's political elite could then utilise this as a means of demanding greater power in the federal government.

Leadership from Puntland has played a key role at a national level – Abdullahi Yusuf served as president of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) from 2004–2008 while Abdiweli Gaas was prime minister of Somali from 2011–2012. These appointments support the idea of Puntland's larger ambitions and the need to have a unified front internally to achieve greater influence.

The question regarding commitment to recovering Dhulbahante territory is not always clear, with some in Puntland even questioning the Dhulbahante's commitment to the cause amidst divisions within the clan (see below).[158] While the Dhulbahante and Majerteen are aligned through both family ties and working relationships within Puntland, there remains an underlying sense of distrust for some, given the outcome of recent events.

So while Puntland retains an inherent identity advantage in addition to a greater proportion of positions allocated, this has not necessarily translated into long-term confidence from the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli that their political future lies within the federal member state. These dynamics are fluid, however, and recent developments indicate a more successful relationship with the Warsengeli. But many interviewees admitted that while they were currently realistically aligned with Puntland, they continue to entertain alternative long-term options.[159]

Challenges with alternative options

Given the issues stated above, both the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli have experimented with governance options beyond Somaliland and Puntland, for example, the SSC, Khatumo and Maakhir projects. A common thread has been the pro-union stance indicative of a clear overarching political demand to remain part of the Federal Government of Somalia on behalf of both clans. These projects failed for a number of reasons and complicated the exploration of political solutions for Sool and Sanaag that do not involve Somaliland or Puntland. This is all the more so given the ambivalent enthusiasm demonstrated from Mogadishu in support of such alternatives.[160]

The unity of the Dhulbahante has been an important theme throughout the duration of the dispute over Sool. The failure of the SSC and Khatumo can be traced back in part to internal dissonance. While Khatumo may have succeeded for a time in delivering a degree of clan unity, it ultimately fell apart in a manner that led to additional divisions.

These events lead one to consider whether the lack of unity demonstrated by the Dhulbahante is inherent to the clan or has been exacerbated by the policies of Somaliland and Puntland to win over adherents. It is likely a combination of both. Clan members have been both victims of the competing claims over their territory but also willing participants at times.

> Some clans have been victims of competing claims, but also willing participants at times

The contestation offers an opportunity for some to benefit, which has led to the development of borderland entrepreneurs chasing positions in various entities. Many noted that as long as this situation remains in which Somaliland and Puntland offer such enticements, this double game will persist and reduce prospects for unity.

The divisions in the Dhulbahante have been blamed for the developments in Sool. For example, Las Anod is primarily inhabited by the Farah Garad/Baharsame, Mahamud Garad/Jama Siycad and Ugaadhyahan sub-clans of the Dhulbahante.[161] Sections of the first two have often been perceived as more pro-Somaliland compared to the others.[162] Somaliland's advance in the region would likely not have been possible without local allies within the clan.

Clan divisions, predicated by the co-option policies of Somaliland and Puntland and the willingness of some to

capture resources through borderland entrepreneurship, has resulted in a situation whereby clan unity has been difficult to achieve and maintain. This has affected the Dhulbahante more strongly than the Warsengeli but assumptions of the latter's unity have also come under question.[163] While many Somali clans experience internal divisions, the contest between Somaliland and Puntland has also provided an outlet for sub-clan divisions to take on a greater importance. This dynamic shows little sign of abating given the continuing status quo.

Respondents also noted other challenges with the development of alternatives to Puntland and Somaliland based on past experience. The first lies with the opposition of both sides themselves and the fact that they remain in a stronger position than any emergent entity. While there was a debate about whether Puntland could accept an alternative administration for Sool and Sanaag within the Somali federal structure, recent history does not suggest such an outcome, given the lack of support towards Khatumo.[164]

> Past experiments showed how difficult it is for the region to stand on its own economically

Other respondents noted that the past experiments demonstrated the difficulty for the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli to stand on their own, especially from an economic point of view.[165] While the Warsengeli have a stronger financial basis given the presence of the coastline and natural resources, Sool suffers from a more limited economic outlook.

Former Khatumo leaders on both sides of the debate admitted that they could not simply rely on diaspora support forever. This led to divergent visions for the future, but there was coherence on this point of analysis regarding past failure.[166] Thus many felt constrained through this experience and saw little option in the immediate future but to join forces with one of the administrations competing over their area.

Finally, the provisional Somali constitution states that a new federal state can be formed through the merger of two or more regions. A natural inclination would be to consider the combination of Sool and Sanaag, but a challenge to this combination would be internal coherence between the Warsengeli and Dhulbahante.[167] As noted above, previous attempts at coordination between the two were not widely successful and some interviewees privately expressed scepticism about working together.[168] This related to concerns over differences in approach, the historical record and domination by one or the other. Thus assumptions of a constructive working relationship between the aggrieved communities of Sool and Sanaag, despite their common predicament, should therefore not be taken for granted.

Ironically, another part of the issue with alternatives remains the level of support from Mogadishu. This is relevant at a time when Puntland itself is asserting a greater deal of autonomy vis-à-vis the federal government, while some of the biggest proponents of a federal state in Sool and Sanaag have not received much attention. Nonetheless, this has not stopped Sool and Sanaag residents from privately considering a future relationship directly with Mogadishu, rather than one dependent on Hargeisa or Garowe.[169] Such prospects appear to be more long-term thinking, rather than providing a short-term solution.

Conclusion and recommendations

Ultimately, the only viable means of settling the future of Sool and Sanaag remains through the consultation and incorporation of the views of the local population. At the same time, given the numerous parties involved in the dispute, there is also a need to integrate holistic responses across the interlocking layers of the dispute. Without a meaningful shift from current thinking, it will be difficult to avert future violence as few viable alternative resolution paths exist.[170]

The situation is far from static. Sool and Sanaag have demonstrated fluid developments over the past 20 years and will continue to do so. Unfortunately, to date, this has occurred without providing a clear path to resolution. Future efforts will have to demonstrate flexible, creative and innovative approaches to move past the current impasse.[171] With that in mind, this report offers the following recommendations:

Short term

- International and local efforts aimed at engaging Somaliland and Puntland should continue and aim to eventually move past the shuttle diplomacy stage.

Such discussions are unlikely to bring about a lasting resolution to the status of Sool and Sanaag but should rather be directed towards preventing violence as a means to address the dispute. Traditional means of conflict resolution, such as initiatives involving sub-clan leadership, should be given greater weight, in addition to a continuation of efforts via the more political UNSOM/IGAD umbrella.

- A key part of these discussions should be an agreement to pull back the forces around Yube in the Sanaag region and formalise the current informal ceasefire agreement around Tukaraq, ahead of further discussion on its status. The deployment of further troops to contested areas in either region should be avoided.
- Confidence-building measures can draw from positive dynamics already in place. For example, the presence of continued social and economic links across the contested areas can be a starting point for further trade integration. This would require refraining from enacting policies that would deter such measures. The exchange of detainees also showed the ability of both sides to engage and cooperate over certain issues – confidence could be built through such a development and extended to other areas. Permitting the greater presence of civil society organisations to conduct peacebuilding programming would be another small initiative that could lead to greater positive and binding effects down the road.
- Common cause could also be demonstrated in the security arena through the sharing of intelligence and coordination of efforts to counter militant groups like al-Shabaab and the Islamic State. These organisations present a threat to all involved, regardless of stance over Sool and Sanaag.

Medium to long term

- Discussions between Somaliland and Puntland over Sool and Sanaag should eventually be linked to the FGS. The achievement of short-term agreements can lead to discussions over a long-term process for the border. A tri-partite mechanism may be necessary to facilitate progress across the three entities. Such discussions need not explicitly link to questions of Somaliland's independence, but consideration should occur as to how future discussions between Somaliland and Somalia can integrate the Somaliland-Puntland dialogue, given the interconnected nature of the issues.
- In line with preventing any further deployment of force, the international community should make it clear that Somaliland's ability to maintain control up to its claimed borders by using military force will not result in a favourable outlook towards recognition. Recognition can only be achieved through local negotiations. Similar considerations against the use of force by Puntland should also be emphasised.
- The allocation of additional resources by both sides and the international community towards the development of Sool and Sanaag regions should be increased. The 'disputed' label should not mitigate against the initiation of such projects but should serve as a means of binding the area together through collaborative outputs. The international community should seek to initiate projects in the region that require a degree of cooperation between Somaliland and Puntland. Examples of such programmes include extending road linkages across contested areas, and educational and peace-building programmes targeting the youth. Somaliland and Puntland can continue to contribute portions of their budget to such developments and redirect some security funding as tensions in the area ease.
- The Dhulbahante and Warsengeli communities should be consulted to a greater extent to determine the future of the region. This will be a complex process that could result in a number of different outcomes. The first step would be for both clans to come to an internally unified position. This may require community consultations similar to those in the lead up to the establishment of Khatumo. Neither Somaliland nor Puntland should hinder such efforts because, for any enduring solution, the views of the local community must be respected.
- Ideally, the future would involve some sort of popular consultation or referendum process in the contested regions. This would require an agreement

between Somaliland, Puntland and Somalia, and the presence of an internationally-mediated body. To ensure buy-in by all parties, the results should not be linked to considerations regarding Somaliland independence. It should be viewed as a unique situation requiring flexible responses rather than a precedent-setting occurrence.

- One of the key dynamics underpinning the dispute is the inability of the locally-developed entities of Somaliland and Puntland and their communities to enact governance systems beyond those that rely on identity-based power-sharing agreements. This results in constant contestation and a re-evaluation of status both as a community and relative to others. It is necessary to build consensus systems beyond this narrow dynamic, and that are based on enlarging the pool of resources rather than simply dividing them up. This is a central long-term challenge that will require creative and innovative solutions.

The peaceful resolution of the status of Sool and Sanaag will benefit all involved. The Dhulbahante and Warsengeli communities would benefit through the reduced militarisation of their home areas, and the opening up of these areas for potential external development.

Somaliland and Puntland would benefit by resolving a key means of dispute, permitting the reallocation of sorely-needed resources elsewhere, while resolving a lingering conflict that hinders progress and external relations. Somalia as a whole would also benefit through its resolution and a focus on the collaborative development of the region, especially as a key economic corridor linking north and south.

The benefits of cooperation outweigh the political dynamics driving further conflict and stalled progress. It remains a question of internal coherence over positioning, coordination and the political will to consider and implement flexible and innovative solutions that advance the region, rather than hold it back.

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Endnotes

1 Somaliland unilaterally declared its independence in 1991, withdrawing from a union with Somalia, but this has not been recognised internationally nor accepted by Somalia. Puntland is an autonomous federal member state within the Federal Government of Somalia (even though its establishment pre-dates it). The official nomenclature used in their respective constitutions is the Republic of Somaliland and the Puntland State of Somalia. For shorthand throughout this paper, the terms Somaliland and Puntland will be used.

2 Though not lying directly along the colonial boundary separating Somaliland and Puntland, the town of Buhoodle and its environs (Buhoodle district) are another area of contestation inhabited primarily by the Dhulbahante. It is referred to by Puntland as Cayn and by Somaliland as part of the Togdheer region; M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 60. The 'c' here corresponds to the Arabic letter 'ayn.'

3 The SNM was a group established in the 1980s to oppose Siad Barre's rule. It succeeded in liberating substantial areas of territory from Barre's grip in the north, prior to the collapse of his government in 1991; M Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2008, 80.

4 Constitution of the Republic of Somaliland; the perception by the Isaaq of marginalisation during the union with Somalia, combined with the destruction unleashed by the Barre regime during the SNM's struggle in the north, contributed to the desire for independence.

5 Prior to the establishment of Puntland, the Sodere conference in 1997 adopted the 'building block' approach in which local administrations would be established as a means of resurrecting the Somali state but a subsequent conference in Cairo undermined some of these developments, providing greater impetus for the establishment of an administration in Puntland; *The search for peace in Puntland*, Nairobi: Interpeace, 2007, 24 and 45.

6 This difference is probably due to Puntland's closer ties to the rest of Somalia, both historically and through clan connections. Puntland was part of the Italian colonial administration with the rest of southern and central Somalia, while the Darod are the main clan family found in Puntland but are also present in southern Somalia.

7 Abdullahi Yusuf, who would go on to become Puntland's first leader, sought the inclusion of Sool and Sanaag regions as a means of gaining support over his rival Mohamed Abshir; *The search for peace in Puntland*, Nairobi: Interpeace, 2007, 39 and 50.

8 The record of Dhulbahante and Warsengeli participation in Somaliland's founding is mixed and subject to historical debate. While both the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli were represented at the Burco conference, some have explained that they had no choice given the military domination of the Isaaq at the time; M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 43. Others argue they found a more appropriate outlet in Puntland later on or fell out with Somaliland. For example, Dhulbahante leaders Ahmed Abdi Haabsade, one-time speaker of Somaliland's parliament, and traditional elder Garad Abdi Qani both attended the Puntland formation conference in 1998 despite expressing previous support for Somaliland; *The search for peace in Puntland*, Nairobi: Interpeace, 2007, 36; M Renders, *Consider Somaliland: state-building with traditional leaders and institutions*, Leiden: Brill, 2012.

9 Article 3 of Puntland's provisional 2001 constitution defined its territory to include the Dhulbahante inhabited Sool region and south Togdher (Budhole district), in addition to parts of Sanaag (excluding the non-Warsengeli areas of El Afweyn and the northeast portion of Erigabo districts).

10 The issue is further complicated by history. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) at the time of independence accepted colonial boundaries as the basis of the emerging new states, but Somalia disagreed and sought instead to unite all Somali inhabited areas (which would include portions of eastern Ethiopia, northeastern Kenya and Djibouti) into 'Greater Somalia.' The union between Somaliland and Somalia was thus seen as the first step in this objective. The project suffered significant setbacks when Djibouti opted for independence rather than union with Somalia in 1977 and the failure to hold the Ogaden region of Ethiopia during the 1977–1978 war. In this sense, Somaliland's arguments adhere more closely to the OAU position on colonial boundaries, while Puntland's are more in line with Somalia's dissenting opinion at the time of independence.

11 The following sections draw heavily on the work of Markus Hoehne, including *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, which provides an excellent and detailed historical overview; M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015.

12 Some have surmised that because Rayale has served in the National Security Services (NSS), he felt overly confident of his reception in the town; M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 63.

13 Skype interview, academic, 7 March 2019.

14 Haabsade is now back in Puntland, living in Garowe; M Hoehne, Puntland and Somaliland clashing in Northern Somalia: who cuts the Gordian Knot, *Insights from the Social Sciences*, 2007, http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/Hoehne/.

15 Part of the reasoning behind Puntland's weakening hold in Sool was the fact that the administration became more orientated towards Mogadishu after Abdullahi Yusuf became president there, distracting attention away from Sool in a more southward direction; M Hoehne, Puntland and Somaliland clashing in Northern Somalia: who cuts the Gordian Knot, *Insights from the Social Sciences*, 2007, http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/Hoehne/. It has also been suggested that Ethiopia, which served as a regional power and maintained good relations with both Puntland and Somaliland, supported the Somaliland takeover of Las Anod hoping they would be more effective in preventing the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) from utilising the area as a means of infiltrating Ethiopian territory; Interview with academic, 7 March 2019; International Crisis Group, The trouble with Puntland, *Crisis Group Africa Briefing*, 64, 2009, 10.

16 M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015.

17 Interviews with Dhulbahante and Warsengeli politicians, elders and civil society representatives, Hargeisa and Garowe, February and August 2019; M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 51.

18 M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 38 and 68.

19 Interview with researcher, Garowe, August 2019.

20 Interview with academic, March 2019.

21 M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 89.

22 Estimates provide by Khatumo officials present at the conference; Interview with Khatumo official, Hargeisa, 22 February 2019; Interview with former Khatumo official, Addis Ababa, March 2019; M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 100.

23 M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 103.

24 For details on this, see M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 107; Interviews with Dhulbahante members in Las Anod, February 2019.

25 Interviews in Las Anod, February 2019. Puntland also wanted to avoid directly confronting the Dhulbahante, to minimise a public relations fall out; M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 107–108; Communication with local academic, October 2019.

26 Interviews in Las Anod, February 2019.

27 This included former Khatumo president Ahmed Karash; M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 113–114; International Crisis Group, Somalia: Puntland's punted polls, *Crisis Group Africa Briefing*, 97, 2013, 14.

28 Interview with Ali Galaydh, Hargeisa, 22 February 2019.

29 Interviews with Dhulbahante politicians and clan elders, Garowe, August 2019.

30 Somalia: Somaliland reshuffles cabinet to appease Sool, *Garowe Online*, 18 August 2016, www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somaliland/somalia-somaliland-reshuffles-cabinet-to-appease-sool.

31 Somaliland and Khatumo agree on five articles, *Goobjoog News*, 17 June 2017, http://goobjoog.com/english/somaliland-and-khatumo-agree-on-five-articles/.

32 Interviews with Dhulbahante clan chiefs, Garowe, August 2019.

33 Note that the Dhulbahante are also present in Sanaag, especially in the southern portion. The reference to Sanaag in this case will be predominately on the Warsengeli inhabited areas of the region.

34 R Marchal, The Puntland State of Somalia: a tentative social analysis, 2010, 18, http://hal-sciencespo.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01044642.

35 The intersection with the main road is much closer to Bosasso (approximately 70 km); Communication with local academic, October 2019.

36 Interviews with Warsengeli clan members, Garowe, August 2019.

37 Interviews with Warsengeli clan members, Garowe, August 2019.

38 Interviews with Warsengeli clan members, Garowe, August 2019.

39 R Marchal, The Puntland State of Somalia: a tentative social analysis, 2010, 13, http://hal-sciencespo.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01044642.

40 Neither of these positions were absolute and various realignments of allegiances occurred during this period. Yet the dominant historical narrative, and one which carries ramifications for contemporary developments, adheres to this general dynamic; M Walls, *A Somali Nation-State*, Pisa: Ponte Invisible, 2014, 98–99.

41 Abdulrahman Abdullahi, *Making sense of Somali history*, Volume 1, London: Adonis & Abbey, 2017, 150; NIS leader.

42 Interviews in Hargeisa, Las Anod and Garowe, February and August 2019; M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 119.

43 Interview with diaspora Warsengeli member, Garowe, August 2019; A humanitarian worker described a visit to Badhan and how after a meeting with the Somaliland-appointed official in the town, the official walked his visitors over to the office of the Puntland-appointed official, demonstrating the level of mutual acceptance; Interview with humanitarian worker, Hargeisa, February 2019.

44 For more, see M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 124–130.

45 R Marchal, The Puntland State of Somalia: a tentative social analysis, 2010, 26, http://hal-sciencespo.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01044642.

46 One seasoned observer theorised that the Warsengeli were unwilling to pursue the Maakhir state project further for fear of adverse consequences, such as the militarisation of the Sanaag region; M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 132.

47 M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 140.

48 One indication of Puntland's greater administrative control came through the 2017 Somaliland presidential elections in which no registration or voting occurred in the Warsengeli inhabited areas of Las Qoray, Dhahar and Badhan (although some voting did take place around Badhan); Somaliland Non-State Actors Forum, Somaliland pre-election report, 2017; M Hoehne, *Elections in Somaliland 2017 and their aftermath*, Paris: L'Observatoire de l'Afrique de l'Est, 2018. This should not be taken as a static situation as some Warsengeli leaders left Puntland for Somaliland after discontent stemming from the January 2019 presidential election; Interview with Warsengeli clan member, Garowe, August 2019.

49 Communication with local official, September 2019; Twitter, @HarunMaruf, 7 January 2018, https://twitter.com/HarunMaruf/status/950035136887783425; Twitter, @AmbGamal, 3 January 2018, https://twitter.com/AmbGamal/status/948433251827412993/photo/1.

50 Interview with government official, Garowe, August 2019. It is unclear where the funding came from and whether Hassan himself added to finances already allocated by the federal government; Communication with local academic, October 2019.

51 One researcher in Somaliland claimed that Farmajo may have intended to visit the town of Boc'ame in Sool, though this remains uncertain; Interview with researcher, Hargeisa, February 2019.

52 Interview with regional officials, Hargeisa and Garowe, February and August 2019.

53 OS Mahmood, Somaliland's fragile democracy faces more election delays, *ISS Today*, 19 March 2019, https://issafrica.org/iss-today/somalilands-fragile-democracy-faces-more-election-delays.

54 An ongoing conflict in El Afweyne between the Habar Jeclo/Biide and Habar Yonis/Saad Yonis preceded the election but was aggravated by it; International Crisis Group, Averting a war in northern Somalia, *Crisis Group Africa Briefing*, 141, 2018, 3. Bihi's pedigree was more military than political, having served as a commander in the Somali National Movement (SNM) in the 1980s and briefly as the minister of interior in the mid-1990s.

55 Rather than a universal suffrage process as in Somaliland, Puntland's 66-member parliament selects the president; parliament in turn is selected on the basis of clan representation, which in turn relies on the input from clan elders. In this system, appealing to the leadership of certain clan constituencies is important to electoral victory and the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli together have 25 seats. Gaas had also come under internal pressure during the 2017 Somaliland Presidential election for not doing enough to disrupt the process in the contested regions; In Puntland, Somaliland's vote in disputed regions erode public confidence, *Garowe Online*, 15 November 2017, www.garoweonline.com/en/news/puntland/in-puntland-somalilands-vote-in-disputed-regions-erode-public-confidence.

56 Interviews in Hargeisa and Garowe, February and August 2019.

57 The Kalshaale conflict in 2010–2011 was another major episode of violence mainly between Somaliland and Dhulbahante forces with Puntland playing a limited role; M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 96.

58 Communication with local official, September 2019.

59 Interviews in Hargeisa and Garowe, February and August 2019.

60 Mortar shelling of each other's positions had occurred but was described as not deliberately targeting at each other but rather a warning tactic to make each other's presence known; Interview with humanitarian actors that travel frequently in the region, Hargeisa, February 2019.

61 Interview with former security official, Garowe, August 2019; Interview with former Puntland official, September 2019.

62 This equated to approximately 12 500 individuals; OCHA, Somalia: Humanitarian Snapshot, 5 July 2018, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Somalia%20Humanitarian%20Snapshot%20-%20July%202018.pdf; Somali Observatory for Humanitarian Action, UN: 12 500 people have been displaced by conflict in Tukaraq, 4 July 2018, http://sooha.org/en/2018/07/04/un-12500-people-have-been-displaced-by-conflict-in-tukaraq/. A reputable international humanitarian organisation considered the UN numbers to be a bit exaggerated; Interview, Hargeisa, February 2019. By November 2018, this figure had been revised downwards to 2 500 displaced civilians; Letter dated 7 November 2018

from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council United Nations, 9 November 2018, 35, www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2018_1002.pdf.

63 International Crisis Group, Averting a war in Northern Somalia, *Crisis Group Africa Briefing*, 141, 2018, 3.

64 Interview with researchers, Hargeisa, February 2019; Interview with NGO official, Garowe, August 2019.

65 Interview with local NGO, Hargeisa, February 2019; International Crisis Group, Averting a war in Northern Somalia, *Crisis Group Africa Briefing*, 141, 2018, 2.

66 Puntland President complains that tribal militia is out of control and taking order from adversaries, *Somaliland Sun*, 2 July 2018, www.somalilandsun.com/somalilandpuntland-president-complains-that-tribal-militia-is-out-of-control-and-taking-order-from-adversaries/.

67 Interview with local NGO, Hargeisa, February; Interview with former security official, Garowe, August 2019.

68 This includes the presence of both al-Shabaab and the Islamic State on Puntland territory; Interview with Puntland government official, Garowe, August 2019.

69 Interviews in Hargeisa, February 2019.

70 Twitter, @yGabbobe, 18 May 2018, https://twitter.com/yGabobe/status/997279869917687809; Communiqué, Council of Interstate Cooperation (CIC), 13-16 May 2018, Baidoa.

71 Report of the Secretary General, United Nations, 30 August 2018, www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2018_800.pdf; Joint IGAD-UNSOM Mission completes visit aimed at helping resolve Tukaraq conflict, 30 July 2018, https://unsom.unmissions.org/joint-igad-unsom-mission-completes-visit-aimed-helping-resolve-tukaraq-conflict; Twitter, @UNSomalia, 8 August 2018, https://twitter.com/UNSomalia/status/1027153351354576896.

72 President of Somaliland shows journalists a three point memorandum that America and the UN had tried to prevail Somaliland and Puntland to stop the Tukaraq war, *Somaliland Sun*, 28 May 2018, www.somalilandsun.com/somalilandpresident-of-somaliland-shows-journalists-a-three-point-memorandum-that-america-and-un-had-tried-to-prevail-somaliland-and-puntland-to-stop-the-tukaraq-war/.

73 Somaliland authorities emphasised that they have respected the international community's wishes not to go further to the colonial boundary, despite its capacity. This would in turn be a significant threat to Garowe as it lies less than 20 km from the boundary; Interview with government official, Hargeisa, February 2019; A Puntland attack will result in deadly consequences Somaliland government warns, *Somaliland Sun*, 22 August 2018, www.somalilandsun.com/a-puntland-attack-will-result-in-deadly-consequences-somaliland-government-warns/.

74 Report of the Secretary General, United Nations, 30 August 2018, www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2018_800.pdf.

75 Interview with IGAD representative, Addis Ababa, June 2019.

76 Statement of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, to the UN Security Council on 3 January 2019, UNSOM, 3 January 2019, https://unsom.unmissions.org/statement-special-representative-un-secretary-general-somalia-mr-nicholas-haysom-un-security-council.

77 One interviewee familiar with the process claimed that the lower number of Puntland detainees was due to the fact that the government had privately released those captured from the Dhulbahante clan and held onto those with Isaaq origins; Interview with NGO official, Garowe, August 2019.

78 The ICRC stressed it was not involved in the negotiations prior to the release of the detainees but just facilitated their return; Somaliland/Puntland: 17 detainees released and returned home, ICRC, 3 June 2019, https://blogs.icrc.org/somalia/2019/06/03/somaliland-puntland-17-detainees-released-and-returned-home/; Interview with regional official, Garowe, August 2019; Interview with regional official, Addis Ababa, May 2019.

79 Government confirms Somaliland traditional elders visit to Puntland, *Somaliland Informer*, 17 July 2018, https://somalilandinformer.net/2018/07/17/government-confirms-somaliland-traditional-elders-visit-to-puntland/; Interviews with regional official, Garowe, August 2019; Interview with researcher, Nairobi, August 2018.

80 *Garowe Online*, 21 April 2019, www.garoweonline.com/so/news/somaliland/somaliland-oo-beenisay-in-muuse-biixi-iyo-deni-ay-ku-kulmeen-imaaraadka; International Crisis Group, Averting a war in Northern Somalia, *Crisis Group Africa Briefing*, 141, 2018, 5.

81 The administration of Abiy Ahmed has set about redesigning Ethiopia's policy towards Somalia by placing a greater focus on Mogadishu rather than with other Somali actors. Nevertheless, Somaliland President Muse Bihi travelled to Addis Ababa to meet President Abiy in February 2019. Another factor has been Ethiopia's reconciliation with groups previously categorised as terrorist organisations, such as the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). Ethiopia had previously been concerned that conflict between Somaliland and Puntland could provide an opening for such movements to infiltrate Ethiopia. Given the reconciliation, that concern is theoretically no longer relevant. In addition, Ethiopia's recent foreign policy has also been more focused on larger conflict resolution issues in the Horn of Africa, such as outreach to Eritrea, the negotiations between the military and protest movement in Sudan, and the Kenya-Somalia maritime dispute. Puntland President Deni has, however, travelled to Addis Ababa twice (June and August 2019) since his election; interview with government official, Addis Ababa, October 2019.

82 Communication with researcher, July 2019.

83 It is estimated that Colonel Aare left with approximately 300 to 400 troops and was initially stationed in parts of Sanaag before relocating to Puntland; Interview with businessman from Sanaag region, Addis Ababa, January 2019; Interview in Hargeisa with Somaliland official, February 2019; Communication with regional official, September 2019.

84 Communication with regional official, September 2019; Communication with local researcher, September 2019.

85 The Isaaq/Habar Jeclo and Isaaq/Habar Awal connection is referred to in Somaliland as the 'rainbow' alliance; Communication with regional official, September 2019.

86 Somaliland's war with Puntland, *Somaliland Standard*, 23 March 2019, http://somalilandstandard.com/somalilands-war-with-puntland/; Twitter, @Puntlandmirror, 27 July 2019, https://twitter.com/Puntlandmirror/status/1155151003488006144; Somaliland troops clash with Aare's rebel soldiers in Erigabo, *Somaliland Standard*, 10 July 2019, http://somalilandstandard.com/somaliland-troops-clash-with-aares-rebel-soldiers-in-erigavo/; YouTube, Caarre oo u hanjabay Somaliland iyo xiisad horleh oo ka taagan Ceerigaabo, 11 July 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=y86Q3WUw5u8.

87 Puntland President calls Puntlanders to take up arms against Somaliland, *SomTribune*, 12 March 2019, www.somtribune.com/2019/03/12/puntland-president-calls-puntlanders-to-take-up-arms-against-somaliland/. Somaliland was likely hoping to prevent Colonel Aare from crossing to the mountains north of Erigabo but failed in that objective. Colonel Aare has since fancifully boasted that he is in control of the coastal areas between Xiis and Las Qoray; Twitter, @TerraAbdirizak, 28 July 2019, https://twitter.com/TerraAbdirizak/status/1155229422951096322; Interview with researcher, Garowe, August 2019.

88 In fact elders had suspended negotiations in August 2019, upset by comments from Somaliland's army commander that Colonel Aare deserves

the death penalty; Elders announce the suspension of talks with Col Aare, *Somaliland Standard*, 25 August 2019, http://somalilandstandard.com/somaliland-elders-announce-the-suspension-of-talks-with-colonel-aare/.

89 Puntland Oo War-Saxaafadeed Ka Soo Saartay Duullanka Somaliland Ee Gobolka Sanaag, *Puntland Post*, 12 March 2019, https://puntlandpost.net/2019/03/12/puntland-oo-war-saxaafadeed-ka-soo-saartay-duullanka-somaliland-ee-gobolka-sanaag/.

90 The El Afweyne conflict remains a serious issue for the Bihi administration with national level repercussions. Despite several rounds of mediation, the dispute has lingered. On 30 April 2019, Bihi declared a three-month state of emergency in the districts of El Afweyne, Garadag and Erigavo; Somaliland President declares State of Emergency on Sanaag Region, *Horn Diplomat*, 30 April 2019, www.horndiplomat.com/2019/04/30/somaliland-president-declares-state-of-emergency-on-sanaag-region/; Communication with local researcher, September 2019.

91 Interview with civil society representative, Garowe, August 2019.

92 Security report seen by the author.

93 Estimates have ranged from as few as 200 to as many as 800 troops that defected; Interviews with local researchers, Garowe, August 2019.

94 For example, Ali Hussein Mohamed became the new Puntland Governor for the region while General Aideed Ahmed Nur Said became a Deputy Commander of the Puntland police; Interviews with local researcher and government official, Garowe, August 2019.

95 Interview with researcher, Garowe, August 2019.

96 There was a third round of defections of an unknown number of troops from Somaliland's 93rd division based in Ceelbuh, reported in mid-October 2019; Soldiers defect from Somaliland, *Somaliland Standard*, 13 October 2019, http://somalilandstandard.com/soldiers-defect-from-somaliland/; Communication with local journalist, October 2019.

97 Interview with Warsengeli civil society representatives, youth and politicians, Garowe, August 2019.

98 General Tani argued Somaliland was better off not continuing with the practice; Gen Taani stands for Somaliland, *Somaliland Standard*, 27 August 2019, http://somalilandstandard.com/gen-taani-stands-for-somaliland/.

99 Interviews in Garowe, August 2019.

100 Interviews in Garowe, August 2019.

101 On 28 August 2019, Somaliland Governor Omar was able to enter Badhan. This signalled the prevailing preference amongst Warsengeli sub-clans to avoid violently dividing themselves over the issue despite the previous clashes. Just a few days later on 11 September 2019, however, the Deputy Somaliland Governor of Sanaag was arrested in Badhan, reflective of the spike in tensions and fluctuating dynamics; Communication with local researcher, September 2019; Badhan Deputy Governor refutes reports of his arrest, *Somaliland Standard*, 18 September 2019, http://somalilandstandard.com/somaliland-badhan-deputy-governor-refutes-reports-of-arrest/.

102 Interview with individual involved in the detainee exchange, 2019.

103 Deni made the announcement at a book launch hosted by a local think tank. The book was about peacebuilding in Somalia and was written by the wife of Dhulbahante leader Abdi Ahmed Haabsade. He has been associated with both Somaliland and Puntland at various stages over the past three decades.

104 Regarding the potential for a rift between the Puntland President and Vice President, Karash also rejected Deni's appointment of a nine-member electoral commission the same day, saying he was not consulted. Some surmised the underlying reason was concern regarding the Dhulbahante's representation on the commission. Yet after this series of events, little else has publicly emerged to denote a fractured relationship between the two leaders; Puntland's VP disagrees with Deni to open unconditional talks with Somaliland over disputed regions, *Somaliland Standard*, 20 August 2019, http://somalilandstandard.com/puntlands-vp-disagrees-with-deni-to-open-unconditional-talks-with-somaliland-over-disputed-regions/; Puntland deputy leader rejects poll body appointed by state's President, *Somali Affairs*, 19 August 2019, www.somaliaffairs.com/news/puntland-deputy-leader-rejects-poll-body-appointed-by-states-president/; Puntland parliament seeks mediation of President and his deputy, *Puntland Mirror*, 24 August 2019, http://puntlandmirror.net/puntland-parliament-seeks-mediation-of-president-and-his-deputy/. Interview with researcher, Garowe, August 2019. Communication with researcher, November 2019. As noted previously, Karash was also the first President of Khatumo from January to July 2012; Markus Hoehne, Between Somaliland and Puntland, Rift Valley Institute, 163.

105 President Muse Bihi has come under pressure in Somaliland with respect to the ongoing security challenges related to Colonel Aare's rebellion and the complications in holding overdue Parliamentary elections which had been scheduled for December 2019. While the complaints of the opposition Waddani party are a key stumbling block, another is the call for increased representation from Somaliland's non-Isaaq clans in the Awdal, Sool and Sanaag regions. Any resolution on this latter point would have ramifications for Somaliland's status in Sool and Sanaag but at the time of writing, little indication of a compromise solution had emerged.

106 For example, the border was not shut down during the May 2018 fighting as the Hajj season was approaching and many Somalilanders needed to travel to Puntland to secure passports to travel abroad for their pilgrimage. This demonstrates incentives on both sides; Interview with local NGO, Hargeisa, February 2019. Estimates range from approximately 150–200 vehicles passing along the main road per day; Interview with government official, Las Anod, February 2019. Trade networks between Puntland and Somaliland are strong and often more important than political disputes or administrative divides; F Abdulsamed, Somali investment in Kenya, *Chatham House Briefing Paper*, AFP BP 2011/02, March 2011, chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Africa/bp0311_abdulsamed.pdf.

107 Communication with Puntland government official, October 2019.

108 Currently, only a handful of countries recognise the Somaliland passport. This dynamic may be undermined by the ability to obtain Somali passports on the black market in Hargeisa; Communication with local researcher, September 2019; Communication with local academic, October 2019.

109 In comparison to a different context in the Horn, the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea was closed for nearly twenty years due to a politicized dispute, despite the presence of common groups living on both sides of it.

110 Puntland recalls students, residents staying in Somaliland, latter calls it warmonger's cry, *Som Tribune*, 9 June 2018, www.somtribune.com/2018/06/09/puntland-recalls-students-residents-staying-in-somaliland-latter-calls-it-warmongers-cry/.

111 Troop build-up creates tension in Sool region, *Garowe Online*, 9 January 2018, www.garoweonline.com/en/news/puntland/somalia-troop-build-up-creates-tension-in-sool-region; Puntland authorities ban civilians traveling to Tukaraq, *Hiiraan Online*, 22 May 2018, www.hiiraan.com/news4/2018/May/158223/puntland_authorities_ban_civilians_from_travelling_to_tukaraq.aspx; Puntland recalls students, residents staying in Somaliland, latter calls it warmonger's cry, *Som Tribune*, 9 June 2018, www.somtribune.com/2018/06/09/puntland-recalls-students-residents-staying-in-somaliland-latter-calls-it-warmongers-cry/.

112 A visit to Tukaraq by the author in February 2019 revealed continued traffic along the route. Puntland's parliament initially called for a 500% tax but this may have been reduced to 200%; Interview with researcher, Garowe, August 2019.

113 Interview with researcher, Garowe, August 2019.

114 The diaspora is also clearly not a unified group and demonstrate a wide range of differences within their approach. These differences are probably amplified by the diversity of diaspora locations that include the Middle

East, Europe and North America. Field interviews consistently centred around dividing the diaspora engagement into helpful and less constructive aspects.

115 Following Somaliland's 2007 takeover of Las Anod, many Dhulbahante diaspora reportedly stopped sending remittances because they viewed it as an occupied area and those who remained as traitors; M Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 74; Interview with researcher from Sool, Hargeisa, February 2019; Interview with academic, Addis Ababa, March 2019; Interview with Dhulbahante politicians, Garowe, August 2019.

116 One interviewee considered the diaspora to be 'prouder' than the locals and others complained that the diaspora never go back to the rural areas, despite their rhetoric; Interviews with Dhulbahante clan elders, politicians and youth, Garowe, August 2019.

117 Many noted that the economy of Las Anod in particular was in good shape. This was backed up by the considerable number of houses under construction on the eastern outskirts of the city – a reflection of diaspora investment. Business owners in Las Anod remarked that the political agreement between Somaliland and Khatumo had reduced the prospect of instability in the area and led to a more conducive and stable investment environment. While the diaspora in general may not be supportive of Somaliland's hold of Las Anod, there is currently a more favourable investment environment that leads to a contradiction between political stances and economic pursuits; Interviews with government officials, business community and local residents, in addition to author observations, Las Anod, February 2019.

118 Communication with Somaliland researcher, June 2019.

119 Interview Dhulbahante politician, Garowe, August 2019. In addition, it is possible that investment in Las Anod spurs a reaction from others, in order to ensure they are not missing out in any potential opportunities; communication with academic, October 2019.

120 Interview with Dhulbahante who left Las Anod after Somaliland's takeover, Garowe, August 2019;

121 YouTube, Afhayeenka Badbaado Khaatumo oo Qaadacay Wahadalkii Somaliland iyo Khaatumo, 22 December 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jeIKJPkpnJk&feature=youtu.be.

122 Somaliland troops clash with militia fighters, *Somaliland Standard*, 4 March 2019, http://somalilandstandard.com/somaliland-troops-clash-with-militia-fighters/; Communication with local actors, March 2019; Assailants attack Lasanod police station, *Somaliland Standard*, 6 August 2019, http://somalilandstandard.com/somaliland-assailants-attack-lasanod-police-station/; Communication with official based in Las Anod, August 2019.

123 Falalug is surmised to enjoy support from the diaspora; Communication with researcher, July 2019. One interviewee knowledgeable on Puntland policy discounted the idea of government support to Falalug given that his main aim seems to be to incite a wider conflict between Somaliland and Puntland that the former is not ready to undertake; Interview with regional official, Garowe, August 2019.

124 Inter-clan fighting kills over 50 in northern Somalia, *Hiraan Online*, 23 October 2018, www.hiiraan.com/news4/2018/Oct/160785/inter_clan_fighting_kills_over_50_in_northern_somalia.aspx; Interview with government official, Las Anod, February 2019.

125 The death toll from inter-clan fighting in northern Somalia rises to 50, *Shabelle Media Network*, 24 October 2018, https://madmimi.com/p/3f3e1d?fe=1&pact=6376716-147896604-10841823094-cd1ec3bd28a0ac67495f17a7d2f59b4d6a2f2d23; Interview with government official in Las Anod, February 2019; Interview with Dhulbahante clan elders, Garowe, August 2019. The issue was eventually resolved through mediation efforts in Jijiga after other interventions had failed; Interview with academic, Garowe, August 2019.

126 Interview with former Khatumo official, Addis Abba, March 2019; Interviews with Dhulbahante clan elders, Garowe, August 2019.

127 Interview with civil society member, Garowe, August 2019.

128 Radio Shabelle, Those captured Tukaraq were SNM militiamen says Puntland minister, 16 January 2018, http://radioshabelle.com/captured-tukaraq-snm-militiamen-says-puntland-minister/. Puntland Security Minister Ahmed Abdullahi Yusuf also accused Somaliland of working together with al-Shabaab to conduct an attack on Puntland security forces in Bari region in June 2018; *Garowe Online*, 2 June 2018, www.garoweonline.com/so/news/puntland/puntland-oo-dagaalkii-balli-khadar-ku-eedaysay-somaliland-daawo.

129 Interview with Somaliland government official, Hargeisa, February 2019; Interview with former security official, Garowe, August 2019; Interview with Puntland government official, Garowe, March 2019.

130 Rag Lagu Tuhmayo Al-Shabaab Oo Lagu Qabtay Degmada Badhan Ee Gobolka Sanaag, *Puntland Post*, 12 August 2019, https://puntlandpost.net/2019/08/12/rag-lagu-tuhmayo-al-shabaab-oo-lagu-qabtay-degmada-badhan-ee-gobolka-sanaag/.

131 Interviews in Garowe, August 2019.

132 Interview with researcher, Garowe, 2019.

133 Interview with academic, Las Anod, February 2019; Interview with researcher, Garowe, 2019.

134 Interviews in Las Anod and Garowe, February and August 2019.

135 Ten people arrested over Buhodle suicide bombing, *Halbeeg*, 5 August 2018, https://en.halbeeg.com/2018/08/05/ten-people-arrested-over-buhodle-suicide-bombing/.

136 In its 2014 report, the United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea named Abdifatah Mohamed Ali as both a Khatumo supporter but also a "liaison between the FGS and al-Shabaab networks who are considering defection". This rationale for the attack is in line with other claims that some of those assassinated in Las Anod had targeted al-Shabaab defectors; Report of the monitoring group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 2111 (2013): Somalia, United Nations, 13 October 2014, 80 https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/S/2014/726.

137 Officials in both Somaliland and Puntland noted a lack of cooperation to counter terrorist movements in the current context; Interview with government official, Hargeisa, February 2019; Interview with ex-security official, Garowe, August 2019.

138 Others have stressed that for the Dhulbahante, being divided is a position in itself, and a conscious decision to remain in between both Somaliland and Puntland for the benefits it can bring; communication with academic, October 2019.

139 It has often been argued that the ability to play off both Somaliland and Puntland has led to fluctuating support from the clans depending on which side offers most. This is a distinct dynamic given the competing options offered. A further complication to achieving a sustainable settlement is the success of the divide and rule tactics pursued; Interview with Dhulbahante traditional elder; Garowe; August 2019.

140 Prominent Dhulbahante politician and Khatumo leader Ali Galaydh was reported to be in Mogadishu in early October 2019. It was rumoured that he was attempting to solicit federal government support; Communication with local academic, October 2019; Communication with local researcher, October 2019; Khatumo leader flies to Mogadishu, *Somaliland Standard*, 6 October 2019, http://somalilandstandard.com/khatumo-leader-flies-to-mogadishu/.

141 Puntland State suspends cooperation with federal Somalia on 3 key areas, *Som Tribune*, 28 May 2019, www.somtribune.com/2019/05/28/puntland-state-suspends-cooperation-with-federal-somalia-on-3-key-areas/.

142 The claim revolves around international humanitarian and development organisations avoiding the areas due to the 'disputed' connotation;

Interview with Warsengeli youth and diaspora, Garowe, August 2019; Interview with Dhulbahante elders, Garowe, August 2019.

143 Interviews with Las Anod residents, Las Anod, February 2019. Some have also noted the donor environment has changed in recent years with greater engagement in places like Las Anod since Somaliland's takeover; Communication with local academic, October 2019.

144 Interview with Somaliland-based researcher, March 2019. A number of interviewees questioned if the reserved amount actually makes it to the region; Interview with politician, Hargeisa, February 2019.

145 Correspondence with Somaliland researcher, April 2019.

146 Interviews with government officials, Garowe, August 2019; Interview with academic, Las Anod, February 2019. For example, some brought up the Somaliland Development Fund (SDF). The SDF is a special arrangement whereby the international community can fund projects directly in Somaliland without implicit recognition. Phase II of the agreement was signed in September 2019 and involves the UK, Sweden, Norway and Denmark; UK pledges to continue its contribution to DSF, *Somaliland Standard*, 9 September 2019, http://somalilandstandard.com/somaliland-uk-pledges-to-continue-its-contribution-to-sdf/. Many in Puntland complained that large amounts of the international support towards Sool and Sanaag is actively channeled through Hargeisa rather than Garowe. A well-known example of this was the project to build a parliamentary support office in Badhan which was shelved by the UNDP. Respondents accused Somaliland of playing a role in getting it halted; Communication with regional official, August 2019. The complaints about Somaliland being in a better position to distribute international aid is ironic given that Somaliland often complains that its lack of recognition hinders further international investment and assistance.

147 The positive relations between Somaliland forces and the population in Tukaraq can be highlighted by the following two examples. A rape by a Somaliland solider of a local woman from Tukaraq in the year that Somaliland forces had been present was reported by the elders. The issue was reportedly dealt with both in a customary and legal manner to the satisfaction of the clan chiefs. During a visit by the researchers to Tukaraq, a meeting was held between the Somaliland security outfits and the local clan chiefs regarding environmental issues such as the hunting of local animals, the driving of vehicles in rural areas and the disposal of waste. The clan chiefs felt their concerns were heard by the security officials during this meeting and one key outcome was the selection of a new site for waste disposal that would less adversely affect the local population; Interviews with clan elders and author observations, Tukaraq, February 2019.

148 Interview with researcher from Sool, Hargeisa, February 2019.

149 Interviews in Hargeisa, Las Anod and Garowe, February and August 2019.

150 One interviewee highlighted the low rate of Dhulbahante in Somaliland's civil service but stressed this is being addressed; Interview with Dhulbahante politician, Hargeisa, February 2019.

151 While Puntland has some other smaller Darod and non-Darod clans, Somaliland has an Isaaq centre but with Darod and Dir clans on its fringes.

152 There are also considerations that clan chiefs have become increasingly political and through that process have lost their original legitimacy to their constituencies. For more on this concept, see M Hoehne, From pastoral to state politics: traditional authorities in northern Somalia, in L Buur and H Kyed (eds) *State recognition and democratisation in sub-Saharan Africa: a new dawn for traditional authorities*, London: Palgrave, 2007; M Renders, *Consider Somaliland: state-building with traditional leaders and institutions*, Leiden: Brill, 2012.

153 Only the lower house is represented in this table but it is important to note that Somaliland's parliament has two chambers including clan-appointed elders for the upper house or *Guurti*. There are 10 (12%) Dhulbahante and 7 Warsengeli (9%) in the 82-member *Guurti*. While in Puntland the seats in parliament are fixed by clan, in Somaliland's lower house (House of Representatives) they are distributed by region. Parliament members in Puntland are also appointed through an elder-based process, while those in Somaliland were elected in 2005 (at the time of writing, the next elections are scheduled for December 2019 but are likely to be delayed). In this sense, the number of Dhulbahante or Warsengeli in Somaliland's lower house is not necessarily fixed but can change depending on electoral outcomes. For example, immediately after the 2005 elections in Somaliland, the lower house had six Dhulbahante and four Warsengeli members, which was a drop from the previous nine and five respectively; M Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008, 213–214; Communication with former Somaliland government official, October 2019.

154 The career of some borderland entrepreneurs would support such a notion. For example, Ahmed Abdi Haabsade, who played a major role in facilitating Somaliland's takeover of Las Anod and remains a polemic figure amongst the Dhulbahante, returned to Garowe in 2014 and currently lives there. Some people who worked in Somaliland but have returned to Puntland explained that regardless of the benefits they received, they never felt fully comfortable there. This lessened any long-term prospects of association; Interview with politician formerly based in Somaliland, Garowe, August 2019.

155 Interview with Dhulbahante politician, Garowe, August 2019; Interview with former Khatumo official, Addis Ababa, March 2019.

156 One representation of this oft-described dynamic is the resistance from the Dhulbahante to having the city limits of Garowe expand in the direction of their home areas; Interview with researcher, Garowe, August 2019.

157 Interestingly, despite the claims that Somaliland is an Isaaq-dominated entity, a Dir/Gadabursi candidate won the presidential elections over an Isaaq/Habar Jeclo candidate in 2003.

158 This dynamic is often illustrated with claims of a higher casualty rate of the Majerteen compared to the Dhulbahante during the violence in Tukaraq in 2018 and the former questioning the latter's commitment to take back their own areas as a result; Interview with researcher, Garowe, August 2019; Interview with security official, Garowe, August 2019. Others noted an imbalance in the focus and attention given to the Sool and Sanaag regions at the expense of other areas of Puntland. For example, in August 2019 a fundraiser was held in Garowe to build new health facilities for the Sool region. In one night the event reportedly received pledges of nearly $180 000 which were primarily from Majerteen individuals. In comparison, some decried that health institutions in Majerteen areas of eastern Puntland are in a poor condition and could benefit from similar initiatives but are unlikely to attract support in such a public fashion; Interview with researcher, Garowe, August 2019; Interview with government official, Garowe, August 2019.

159 As an example of how short-term practical associations do not necessarily translate into long-term allegiances, a prominent former Puntland Dhulbahante politician explained that his ultimate goal was to establish a separate administration for Sool and Sanaag – despite previously serving in the Puntland government; Interview with ex-Puntland official, September 2019.

160 Interview with Khatumo official, Hargeisa, February 2019.

161 Khatumo leader Ali Khalif is Farah Garad/Baharasame, while Garaad Jama, the traditional leader of the Jama Sicyad, is the only Dhulbahante clan elder to be living under Somaliland.

162 Some sub-clans within the Jama Siycad for example, live closer to Isaaq areas and thus have more physical and economic interactions with them, underlying the flexible and practical nature of orientation at times; Interviews in Las Anod and Garowe, February and August 2019; communication with academic, October 2019.

163 Interviews, Garowe, August 2019.

164 The argument in favour is that there would be another Darod member state to balance out the power of the Hawiye at a national level. The counter-argument is that Puntland's own power within the federal structure would diminish given its reduced stature.

165 Interview with Dhulbahante politician, Garowe, August 2019.

166 Interview with Ali Khalif Galaydh, Hargeisa, February 2019.

167 Article 49 (6) of the 2012 Provisional Constitution states, "based on a voluntary decision, two or more regions may merge to form a Federal Member State." The Constitution defines Somalia's regions as the 18 administrative units that existed prior to 1991; Provisional Constitution, 1 August 2012, http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/research/Somalia-Constitution2012.pdf.

168 Interview with civil society representative, Garowe, August 2019.

169 Interviews in Las Anod and Garowe; February and August 2019.

170 Some Dhulbahante interviewees in Garowe stressed the potential for a military solution, Garowe, August 2019.

171 Some of the recommendations could also be expanded to include the Cayn area which is similarly contested but enjoys some distinct dynamics that must be considered.

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