

The Somali Civil War: Root cause, and contributing variables

Hassan Mudane

Institute of Social Science, Istanbul Ticaret University Örnektepe Mah. İmrahor Cad. No: 88/2
Beyoğlu/Istanbul

E-mail: Mudanep5@gmail.com

Abstract

Somalia, like many other African countries, has experienced a state of clan warfare which has brought to a total state collapse and a deep-rooted conflict that fragmented the country, deteriorated the physical security, and institutional deformity. The consequence of this anarchic condition, the basic social services such as education, healthcare and public security were not offered. It was also led to a catastrophic condition such as famine and drought. As a result, Somalia became synonymous with failed state, terrorists, warlords, famine, tribal wars and even pirates. This paper is based on qualitative analysis with a document review technique and critically evaluating of the Somali civil war literature. Additional sources of information on online media like websites and newspapers focusing on topics like civil wars in Africa and in Somalia are used. It aims to investigate the role played by the politicized clan identity factor together with communal content, and deterioration of basic needs, bad governance and state's repressive role and international linkages. The investigation revealed that these variables are the necessary underlying and contributing causes, proven to be a sufficient condition for the Somali civil war. Moreover, these variables shown have strong explanatory power and performed well in the outbreak of the Somali civil war.

Keywords: The Somali civil war, politicized clan identity, primordialist, instrumentalist.

1.0 Introduction

Until 2006, south-central part of Somalia has been a stadium of clan warfare which has brought to a total state collapse and a deep-rooted conflict that fragmented the country, deteriorated the physical security, institutional deformity, and increased dependency. The consequence of this anarchic condition, the basic social services such as education, healthcare and public security were not offered. It was also led to a catastrophic condition such as famine and drought. As a result, Somalia became synonymous with failed state, terrorists, warlords, famine, tribal wars and even pirates. In addition, the root and contributing causes of these catastrophes remained mystery in Somali civil war literature and their political solution has been puzzled to the international community.

The Somali civil war was often described as a conflict over struggle and competition for resources by several scholars of Somalia and some of the media reports. Contrary to these reports and arguments, this paper intends to demonstrate that the Somali civil war, which in turn became protracted conflict, is caused when clanship or clan identity is politicized by clan actors

and clan-oriented political elites. Put it another way, when they put it in the context of struggle over state power cultivates political violence.

The paper investigates the outbreak of the Somali civil war with the help of Edward Azar's four variables of protracted social conflict which understands the contributing aspects of the civil war in Somalia. It was also examined the role played by the politicized clan identity factor, argues this variable shown have strong explanatory power and performed well in the Somali civil war. In addition, the paper is less interested in attempting to discuss the immediate causes than it interested in attempting to investigate the root and contributing causes of the Somali civil war. Unless this was done, I argue we would fail to understand how the Somali catastrophe broke out in 1991 and how to prevent the one future hold.

The paper is based on qualitative analysis with a document review technique and critically evaluating of the Somali civil war literature. By this method with the help analysis of relevant books and articles; additional sources of information on online media like websites and newspapers focusing on topics like civil wars in Africa and in Somalia are used. On this basis, the paper

offers an unbiased explanation of the Somali civil. While there have been many efforts to develop theoretical explanations of the Somali civil war, no work has been done to explain it through Edward Azar's theory of Protracted Social Conflict. Therefore, the paper strives to find out how does politicized clan identity explain the Somali civil war? What are contributing aspects of Somali civil war? If successful, a better understanding of underlying and contributing causes of the Somali civil war will be investigated and discovered.

2.0 The Somali Civil War

Somalia, like many other African countries, has experienced a state of clan warfare which has brought to a total state collapse. The consequence of this anarchic condition, the basic social services such as education, healthcare and public security were not offered. It was also led to a catastrophic condition such as famine and drought. As a result, the country became synonymous with failed state, terrorists, warlords, famine, tribal wars and even pirates. In recent years there is a wide range of studies existed from as far back as the 1980s, these studies have been offered for the Somali destructive civil war explanations that attempt to contribute to our understanding of the civil war in Somalia. These explanations fall into three inter-relating categories: Cultural, Political and Economic. (Kapteijns 2008). Each of these explanations has its basic assumptions that underline the root causes of the Somali civil war.

The civil war in Somalia has been puzzled to many scholars of Somalia and the Somali people themselves. It was also widely seen as a result of colonial legacy, neoliberal agendas (Dirshe 2013), clan differences (Kusow 1994), competition for resources or power and availability of weapons (Elmi & Barise 2006; Osman 2007), economic crisis in the 1980s (Mubarak 1996), elite manipulation (Abdi Samatar 1997; Menkhaus 2003), the Barre's dictatorial leadership (Paul et al 2014), ancient clan rivalry and antagonism (I. M. Lewis 1961), the state building and modernization process, (Ssereo 2003). The outbreak of Somali civil war in 1991 has been explained by many scholars of Somalia through separate lenses of primordialism and instrumentalism. However, this paper will critically examine these claims indicated above as well as present further evidence in support of its new explanation about the underlying and contributing causes of the Somali civil war. The paper identified two major theoretical approaches which have

dominated the literature of the Somali civil war. These two theoretical approaches are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Comparison of the Primordialist and Instrumentalist Explanation

CHARACTERISTICS	PRIMORDIALISM	INSTRUMENTALISM
Unit of Analysis	Clan Identity	Political elites
Motivation	Grievance	Greed
Historical Roots	Old	New
The Main Claims	Ancient clan rivalry, hatreds and clan differences are the underlying causes of the Somali civil war.	Elite manipulation, economic decline in 1980s, competition for resources, the Ethio-Somali war and colonial legacy, state building and modernization process are the primary causes of the Somali civil war.

NOTE: Table 1 summarizes two main theoretical approaches to explain the Somali civil war, 1991-2006.

2.2.1 Primordialist Explanation

Primordialists believe the Somali civil war involves clanism and genealogical divisions among Somali clan families. Moreover, we heard from the Media that there has been violent conflict in Somalia because clan X has clashed with clan Y, and no adequate explanation of the causes has been offered. However, the analytical question is why Somalia went into destructive civil war? Some scholars of Somalia have argued that the answer has its root in the nature of Somali clanism. As I. M. Lewis (1961) argued, it is presumed that ancient clan rivalries will result in conflict from time to time, as Somalis are inherently clanistic and therefore act in a clanistic manner. From this perspective, clanism has been a long established as a social division generating resources competition and power within and between Somali clan families. I. M. Lewis (1961) claims that the clanism is a part of the organic defining feature of Somali society and the Somali people have been clanistic and organized in clan groups so hostile to each other. Likewise, Said Samatar and David Laitin (1987) have supported Lewis's explanation about the

relationship between the nature of the Somali political life and the civil war in Somalia. However, the logic of this explanation is flawed and unable to offer an inadequate explanation of the Somali civil war.

Conversely, clanism can be both unifying and divisive at the same time depending on how we use it. When the colonial powers have used clanism as a wedge to divide communities it became a catastrophe, but when Somalis used it in the old way of kinship and families that share a lot of things together, it brought the Somali clan families together. In a positive way, the clanism in Somalia is a wonderful form of insurance. For example, if someone from Somalia arrives in any country in Europe or Africa, he will find his clan's brothers and sisters will look after him.

Although Lewis has explained the Somali civil war through primordialist lenses, he failed to account the historic and linguistic differences among the Somali clan families. As (Kusow 1994, p. 31) claims "Historians, Anthropologists, and successive Somali governments alike have failed to recognize the cultural, socioeconomic, and the ecological differences among the people." In contrast to I. M Lewis's claim of clanism and ancient hatreds or clan rivalry among Somali clans are the responsible factors for the Somali calamities, Kusow pointed that the historical differences among Somali clans and how they have manipulated their history is the underlying causes of the Somali civil war. Kusow (1994, p. 42) argues "The civil war in Somalia is a direct result of both the long-suppressed historical, cultural, and ecological differences among the Somali clan families and how they have used history."

However, these explanations offered by Kusow and Lewis are weak because the clan differences and clan rivalry in themselves do not reflect the cause of serious conflict in Somalia. Put it another way, the cause is not the clan identity or difference itself but it is the way that clan-oriented political elites politicize the clan identity or genealogical divisions for the sake of their private interests, so the conflict arises not from the differences or antagonism but from when the clan identity or divisions get politicized and instrumentalized for somebody's agenda be that a clan actors or state elites. In this context, the destructive civil war in Somalia was in response to elite manipulation together with the politicized clan identity, deprivation of basic needs, and lack of political and economic participation which was resulted from the Siad Barre's exclusivist policy.

Having many clan groups living together within a state does not necessary mean that there must be a civil war,

though some researches has suggested that in some cases make conflicts more likely and some contextual factors that might make conflicts more likely if there has been a past historical antagonistic social relations between different clans that might create hostility but more often than not what this paper found is the involvement of clan-oriented political elites who try to use their clan identity as an instrumental means to manipulate and mobilize to channel feelings of hatred to solidify their own positions of state power.

2.2.2 Instrumentalist Explanation

The civil war in Somalia was not resulted from genealogical divisions and ancient hatred or clan rivalry among Somali clan families, but these variables have been used by political elites to draw lines, to draw allegiance in order to create political power. Abdi Samatar and Ahmed Samatar are one of the leading scholars of Somalia, both refused Lewis's explanation of the Somali civil war; instead they looked at the civil war in Somalia through instrumentalist lenses.

Ahmed Samatar published several studies about the Somali civil war. He argued that Lewis confused kinship relations with clannishness. (Ahmed Samatar 1988). Following the civil war in 1991, there are many published books and articles which attempted to explain the reasons behind the Somali civil war. The book by Ahmed Samatar and Terrence Lyons (1995, p. 100-104) claimed that the underlying factors which are responsible for the Somali civil war are "the disintegration of political institutions and the resulting chaos and insecurity." However, this explanation is opposed to the Lewis's claim.

On the other hand, it is a reasonable to argue the civil war in Somalia is often described as a result of elite manipulation. As Abdi Samatar (1997, p. 688) argued that "The central actors responsible for the destruction of the Somali world order are the dominant elites." According to him, these dominant elites have been using clannishness as a tool of exploitation to advance their private interests. Abdi Samatar maintains to blame the state elites for the destruction of Somali world order by pointing out two issues which these ruled elites have failed: The first, the ruled elites had never tried to rationalize the public sector management through what he called "the reinvention of the civil service commission." The second, President Siad Barre, the leader of the ruled elites was the only decision maker of all vital decisions in the public management. Furthermore, Abdi Samatar (1997, p. 705) argued that "...The Somali nightmare is not the result of genealogical divisions among the population

but of the narrow accumulation strategies of the elite.” However, this explanation is against Kusow’s claim.

Similarly, Menkhaus (2003, P. 414) claimed that “Somalia’s crisis of state collapse, armed conflict, and lawlessness has endured because that is the outcome key players seek.” According to him, these key players or elites are warlords, businessmen, politicians or “white colors.” In addition, they had power to obstacle any local efforts to impose rule of law and revival of the central state collapse. They were able to do it by using what Menkhaus has termed a “clever manipulation of clannism.” However, this explanation fails to give much attention or help to notice the role of politicized clan identity.

By contrast, some scholars of Somalia have explained the Somali civil war in terms of inequality and economic factors. According to these scholars, the Somali civil war was a product of three interrelated problems: Inequality, economic decline, and availability of weapons. It was also been viewed that, these three explanatory aspects are the product of the colonial legacy. (Osman A. A. 2007; Elmi and Barise 2006). However, the analytic question is how did the weapons become available to the public? According to Osman, weapons became available because when the war between Somalia and Ethiopia has ended in 1978, the country’s economy has begun to deteriorate; as a result of this, the weapons became more accessible to the general public. This explanation has nothing to do with why the civil war erupted? Nevertheless, many scholars of Somalia will agree the inequality was not the necessary cause but was widely seen one of the main variables that can explain the Somali conflict.

It should be noted, if one wants to explain the destruction of Somali world order, one should explain it from the economic perspective rather than cultural and sociological. Mubarak, (1996) argues that the regime’s financial strategy, its reactions to the economic decline in the 1980s, has been harm for the national development. Consequently, the country’s economy and the political condition have deteriorated which led the country into civil war. Despite all these factors indicated above are there, Osman and Mubarak have failed to explain why the civil war broke out in 1991 but not during the economic crisis of the 1980s?

Contrary to Elmi and Barise (2006), both have seen the Somali civil war as a result of resource competition or state power, the long-term brutality of the former military regime and the colonial legacy. According to Elmi and Barise, the most important motivational factor which explains the Somali conflict is the competition for resources. This argument is often

referred to the Somali’s pastoral life; the nomadic clans always fight each other over the struggle of grazing, water and livestock long time before the country got independence. Conflict among Somali clan families have been relatively peaceful until particularly notable in the pastoral life, where competition for graze and water has resulted in violence and antagonism. However, Elmi and Barise have failed to address why civilians or ordinary people armed up against the regime? Elmi and Barise, both also argued that state repression by the military regime is the second cause of the Somali conflict. However, they fail to give a detailed description of how state repression explains the Somali civil war. According to the theory of state repression the state’s existence depends on nations giving their legitimacy. Therefore, repression is one of the instrumental means that the regime used to protect itself from political challenges. Moreover, it is a method of preserving stability and peace.

The civil war in Somalia has multiple explanations and it has been drawn from political science, economics, anthropology, theology and more. In addition, Somalia has been a stadium of clan warfare and it has experienced a catastrophic conflict which ultimately led into disastrous and anarchy. Abdi Dirshe (2013) argues the conflict in Somalia has primarily resulted from the “colonial institutional legacy” and the presence of “neoliberal economic agenda.” However, this explanation fails to account the role played by the other factors such as politicized clan identity, deterioration of basic needs, state’s repressive role and external linkages. The state under Siad Barre’s rule was an authoritarian, and during his reign was characterized by politicized clan identity, clan manipulation, and deterioration of basic needs, state’s repressive role, and external linkages. Consequently, several clan rebel organizations were armed up against his dictatorial regime. Thus, some scholars of Somalia believe the outbreak of the Somali civil war primarily resulted from the Barre’s dictatorial leadership. (Paul et al, 2014).

The Somali people were living under their own governmental system called Somali traditional system before the colonial powers came into Somali lands and introducing its modern political system. What happened when the colonial powers came into Somali lands? They destroyed the indigenous system and substituted into the modern administration which is totally incompatible with the local cultural realities. This transformation has created a confusion and frustration among Somali clans. The consequence, led the country into catastrophic civil war. As Ssereo

(2003) argued that, the Westphalia model of the state which Somali has adopted after independence in 1960, the process of state building and the modernization of Somalia as the underlying causes of Somali civil war. According to Ssereo, if we want to understand the current political crisis in Somalia we need to look back at the process of decolonization and the formation of the first and second republic of Somalia. However, these variables which are relevant to the Somali problem in the past are subject to debate.

This paper does not stand on the position of the classical clan readings and instrumentalism, but it stands on the middle. In other words, it will use some elements from the Primordialism and Instrumentalism to come up with a combined explanation of the Somali civil war. It should be noted that instead of siding in either of these two dominant schools of thoughts in the Somali civil war literature, the paper argues the Somali civil war was stemmed from a combination of five factors: Politicization of clan identity or politicized clan identity factor together with deprivation of basic needs, communal content, bad governance and state's depressive role and International linkages. The latter four variables represent the contributing aspects of the Somali civil war. These factors indicated above, not only caused Somalis against the regime under Siad Barre rule but also Somalis against Somalis, which latter ended in a destructive civil war. These variables are summarized in Table 2.

TABLE 2

The Contributing Variables of the Somali Civil War

PRECONDITIONS	CORRELATES
Communal content	Politicized clan identity
Human needs	Basic need deprivation
State's role	Scales of political repression
International linkage	Military and economic aid

Many scholars have been putting much effort on the explanation of the civil war in Somalia by focusing only on the causes, but they overlooked these contributing aspects of the civil war in Somalia. The Somali civil war literature showed that scholars of Somalia love to debate how the civil war started, but what really matters about the civil war in Somalia was the root and contributing aspects, particularly the role played by the overlooked politicized clan identity factor.

3.0 The Somali Civil War: The Contributing Variables

This section will concentrate on what the author of this paper identified as the preconditions of the Somali civil war. The Somali civil war is in line with what Edward Azar claimed as preconditions of protracted social conflict. According to Edward Azar's PSC theory, these preconditions are communal content, deprivation of basic needs, the bad governance and state's role and International Linkage.

In the context of the Somali civil war, the paper argues there are five variables which are critical to the genesis of the Somali conflict in general and in a specific to the outbreak of the Somali civil war. The underlying cause of the Somali civil war is the one which revolves around the politicization of clan identity or clanship and the other four contributing variables are communal content, deprivation of basic needs, bad governance and State's repressive role and International Linkage. These factors indicated above are supported by reports in the findings section.

3.3.1 The Politicization of Clan Identity

The politicization of clan identity reading takes us to the under-researched literature which was overlooked by scholars of Somalia. Thus, this section discuss how clan identity politicized in Somalia? At this point, it may be helpful not to confuse the term politicized clan identity with clan identity. Politicized clan identity or politicization of clanship in this paper means when political elites politicized it or put it in the context of struggle over resource and state power produces negative consequence, in other words, breeds clan based civil strife. On the other hand, clan identity is an identity shared by a group of people which claim to have a common ancestor or fate in terms of history. More precisely, it is a concept related to a clan group that shares some kind of distinct group name and identity boundaries which separate us from them and link members together. It is a very slipper concept in some ways and a matter of debate.

Clan identity factor as a social formation has been politically used under the Siad Barre rule (1969-1990). The consequence of this, led to the outbreak of the Somali civil war in 1991. It must be noted that clan identity itself was not the necessary cause of the civil war, but when it gets politicized by the clan-oriented political elites cultivates negative competition for economic resources, zero-sum attitude, security dilemma and clan based civil strife, as we have seen in Somalia case. Politicization of clanship was fed into

Said Barre's regime politics and became even more dangerous. Consequently, the opposition groups organized along politicized clan identity lines armed up against Siad Barre's dictatorial regime. Moreover, they actively manipulated the emotions and feeling of anger to mobilize their clan groups.

The paper argues clan-oriented political elites under Siad Barre's rule played role in defining an opportunity or a threat in the politicized environment and frustrating conflict by blocking any possible solutions. These political elites used their clan identity as an instrumental means to stay in state power. For example, President Siad Barre (1969-1990) particularly strengthened his own clan by giving the key political positions in the government, military and public services. The president sought his clan (Marehan) refuge to protect his presidency against any clan opposition group. The consequence, the country went into a destructive civil war, which later became a deep-rooted conflict.

3.3.2 Communal content

In his book, *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases*, Edward Azar identified four variables as preconditions for the prolonged social conflict. The first variable is related to the issue of clan identity or clanship in the communal content, this paper considered it as the most critical factor in Africa's civil wars. According to PSC theory, the state is usually dominated by a single clan or a coalition of few clans that are unresponsive to the needs of the other clans in the society cultivates [clan based civil war]. This confirmed by the case of the Somali civil war in 1991. Somalia has experienced 21-years history of dictatorial leadership, clan favoritism and clan dominance rule during the reign of President Siad Barre (1969-1990). It resulted from when Marehan (Siad Barre's clan) became the only clan that was able to steer the wheel of the state resources and power for their favor at the expense of other clans. (Ingiriis 2016). The ruled clans, known by the code-name MOD (Marehan, Ogaden and Dulbahante) controlled the key executive positions and the security forces, which in turn cultivated anger and grievances of the oppressed clans and have fuelled a clan based civil war that was persisted until 2006. Somalia is a country characterized by a multi-clan composition. The identity profile of the country is complex. According to data in the World FactBook, the main ethnic divisions are: "Somali 85%, Bantu and other non-Somali 15% (including 30,000 Arabs)." (WorldFactbook 2018). The country also has genealogical divisions with a deep historical

root that goes back before colonial era. Pre-colonial Somali society was divided into several autonomous clan groups that shared similar cultural traditions. Nevertheless, this paper recognizes clan identity groups in the communal content are crucial factor shaping the Somali society, thus argues clanship is not necessarily the cause of the Somali problem in general, particularly the outbreak of Somali civil war in 1991.

According to PSC theory, people in the multi-communal countries give primarily loyalty to their clans rather than to the whole nation living in the country. Multi-communal groups means "A generic reference" to politicized clan identity groups whose members share common ancestor, religion, linguistic and other cultural features. However, the core problem comes when the relationship between the state and clan groups become distrustful, in other words, what Azar called "the articulation between the states and society as a whole." As Edward Azar (E. Azar 1990, p. 7). noted that:

Multi-communal societies are characterized by disarticulation between the state and society as a whole, with the state usually dominated by a single communal group or a coalition of a few communal groups that are unresponsive to the needs of other clan groups.

3.3.3 Human needs

This variable is revolving around the issue of deprivation of basic needs such as food, water, shelter, and security we need to take up. For those needs, people are willing to kill or be killed. In the late 1980s, the underlying problems in Somalia were food shortage, state's repressive role, lack of acceptance, security, fair access to political and economic institutions. In short, it is the deprivation of people's needs.

PSC theory views deprivation of basic needs as a subjective characteristic that occurs when a [clan] group does not receive what they think they have the right to receive, this leads to frustration that motivates the oppressed clan to political violence. This is happened in the case of clan opposition organizations during the reign of the President Siad Barre. As a result, grieved clan rebel organizations with frustration over basic needs were armed up against the regime.

According to Thomas and Mazrui (1992), people tend to arm up themselves when their rights are violated and their basic needs are not fulfilled by the government. Such unfulfilled basic needs are experienced by Somalia in the late 1980s. In his memoir, *The Road to Zero*, Mohamed Osman Omar, who served under the regime in various ambassadorial posts, provided his

reflections on the deprivation of basic needs in Somalia:

While the masses were suffering greatly, the ruling elite and the members of the upper stratum of the population were leading an extravagant, luxurious life. They had everything in abundance. Water and diesel were scarce commodities for the common man but the tanks of the rich were always full. The women in high society competed with each other to acquire the newest model of car to add to the collection in their garages. Possession of a Landcruiser was a special status symbol for those families who were members of the ruling clan. It is well-known that ...Siad Barre played one clan against the other in order to rule over all.

Regime's repression against its people disrupted food production and distribution. Between 1980s and 1989, food shortages appeared and local food prices doubled. Moreover, late 1989, hundreds of Somalis were at risk for malnutrition and Starvation. By 1990s, the situation had become hopeless and Somalis were suffering. It can be argued that the regime under President Siad Barre developed a state-centric security rather than a human centric-security policy led the country into deprivation of human needs. Frustration over basic needs often breeds social unrest, this lead to a civil war. As Edward Azar (1990, p. 9) stated that "Grievances resulting from need deprivation are usually expressed collectively; failure to redress these grievances by the State cultivates a niche for social conflict."

According to PSC theory, accesses to political and social institutions are the key determinant factor for satisfying clan group's needs. Furthermore, it claims "Such denial fosters greater cohesion within victimized communal groups, and may work to promote collective violence...if no other means of satisfaction is available." (E. Azar 1990, p. 9-10). If these needs are denied by the state or the ruling clan cultivates collective grievances for future civil war. Consider the example of Somalia in 1980s and in 1990s, the majority clans in the country are denied access to political institutions on the basis of their clan identities. Somalia was created out of the colonial nightmares, however in most cases the country is not positioned to supply for those basic needs. It is that the governance in which the country became corrupt and not the provider but the key frustration of the basic needs. This is primarily what we have seen in Somalia before the civil war in 1991. Thus, it is safe to argue one of the reasons for the escalations of the armed clan-backed opposition groups against the military regime in post-ogaden war was frustration over basic needs coupled

with insecurity and injustice. As Ssereo (2003, P. 28) noted that:

Children could not go to school because education was not free; the sick could not be cared for sufficiently because there were no facilities; populations from famine affected areas could not be fed because there was not enough food in spite of the provisions made by International humanitarian [organizations]; ...social and political aspirations could not be achieved because the political framework was not democratic.

3.3.4 State's repressive role:

According to PSC theory, political authority is usually controlled by a hegemonic clan groups or a dominant clan. These hegemonic clan groups or dominant clan limited access to social institutions by other [clans]... created crisis of legitimacy. (E. Azar 1990, P. 10-11). Nevertheless, this variable is related to the role plays by the state in the game of bad governance and repression. Edward Azar argues "Most states which experience protracted social conflict tend to be characterized by incompetent, parochial, fragile and authoritarian government that fails to satisfy basic human needs." Between 1969 and 1990s, Somalia was ruled by an authoritarian government characterized by incompetent leadership, clanistic in nature and fragile. As the following statement by Ingiriis (2016, P. 2) indicated that:

Siad Barre's seizure of power followed by an 'absolutist authoritarian rule'-led the unified Somali State-as we knew it-to a state of statelessness. ...The [regime] was preoccupied from the beginning with promulgating draconian legislations to impose new authoritarian rules and regulations.

3.3.5 International Linkage

The fourth variable is the complicated external linkages. Edward Azar states "The role of the state in preventing PSC by... Satisfying basic needs is not determined solely by endogenous factors." He added that "the role playing by the state authority is greatly influenced by the linkage of the international actors." The economic and military relations of Somalia with international powers, namely with Russia, thus this relationship played its role as one of the contributing causes for the Somali civil war in 1991.

Russia sponsored economic and military aid to Somalia which in turn made the regime more dependent on external patronage. Moreover, there is a Somali proverb which draws the Siad Barre regime's linkage with external actors, "Either be a mountain or have a mountain to lean on." Obviously, "Russia was the

mountain for the regime to lean on for its survival.” (Ingiriis, 2016, p. 169). However, when Siad Barre came to power in 1969 through military coup, he cut off political relations with USA, and took steps to strengthen relations with Russia. Since the coup, there has been a patron-client relationship between Somalia and Russia. This relation deepened in the 1974, when Somalia signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Russia. As a result, Russia provided massive military aid to its new comrade Somalia. As Ingiriis (2016, p. 85) noted that:

The Soviet Union sent massive arsenal and hardware as military assistance to the military regime, providing 150 T-35 and 100 T-54 tanks, fitted with 105mm guns, 50 MiG 16 (later added MiG 16 and 21) fighter jets, 200 coastal batteries, Il-28 bombers, 300 armed carriers and SA-2 ground-to-air missiles. The military aid increased each subsequent year and cemented a strong client-patron relationship to such an extent that Somalia was supposed to be ever dependent on the Soviet Union for generations to come.

An important point of the international linkage is when the relationship between Somalia and Russia became weak. As a result, the country was both economically and militarily ruined. Put it another way, there was a chance for clan rebellion movements to arms up against the regime. I M Lewis (1988, p. 260) observed that “Following the Ogaden war, as we have seen Somalia’s primarily arms dependence on the [Russia] had been replaced by more generalised aid dependence on the United States, the EEC and OPEC countries.” By regarding this, military aid mainly from the named sources had played a key role as one of the contributing variables of the demise of the Siad Barre’s legitimacy rule and the outbreak of the civil war in 1991.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

The previous sections examined the role played by the politicization of clanship, communal content, deterioration of basic needs, bad governance and state’s role and international linkages in the case of the Somali civil war, argued that these variables shown have strong explanatory power and performed well in the outbreak of the Somali civil war. This section will address the research question: How does politicized clan identity explain the Somali civil war? The discussion of the Somali civil war will be carried out by using document reviews which was conducted in the period from 1991 to 2006. Moreover, the findings for this section were reflected the reports and

arguments of the scholarly articles, reports from international institutions and media press.

It must be noted that clan identity or clanship itself is not the cause or the problem but it could be politicized and manipulated for various reasons, mainly for state power and resources in the case of Siad Barre’s Marehan identity and its dominance rule in Somalia. As I M Lewis (1988: 256) observed “[The] expansion of Marehan power was particularly striking in the army, where by the middle of 1987 it was estimated that as much as half the senior officer corps belonged to the president’s clan.” What president Siad Barre did was to take an existing artificially clan differences and politicizes them through injustice means and power politics approach. The consequence was a catastrophic clan based civil strife. Ssereo (2003: 34) came out with similar observation, he noted that:

From 1979 president [Siad] Barre increased his allegiance to the Marehan clan as a political strategy to prevent a coup d’état. To ensure this policy he appointed individuals from [his] clan to important government posts. Several years later, in January 1991, the other clans mobilized against his government.

Although the regime under Siad Barre rule tried to weaken the clan identity solidarity among Somalis by establishing formal institutions during the first phase of his rule (Between 1969 and 1975), however, some clan identity-related aspects which are rooted in the legacy of the Somali traditional life were politicized by the clan-oriented political elites. As a result, a grieved clan based rebel groups were armed up against his clan dominance rule. As Kusow (1994: 41) argued that:

The Darood clan has been dominated political power in the country since independence. That is also why Hawiye and Ree-win [clans] have deeply resented the Darood clan. It was mainly this deep resentment between the Hawiye and the Darood that has culminated into this savage civil war.

Abdulahi Osman (2007) came out with similar findings; he argued that “The [Somali] conflict was initiated by clans who cited the existence of an inequality that preferred certain clans to others.” Some of these scholarly arguments justify drawly a correlation between the politicization of clanship or clan identity factor and the Somali civil war. The regime’s politicized policy against certain clans (Isaaq, Majeerteen and Hawiye) cultivated grievance which in turn became the legitimate excuse of the clan based opposition organizations in the country. As Amnesty International (1992) in its report states “The worst atrocities were in Mudug region between 1978 and

1982 against the Majarten clan, and in Hargeisa and the northwest in 1988, when tens of thousands of Isaaq clan-members were massacred by government soldiers.”

A study undertaken by African Watch also found that “between 50, 00 and 60,000 civilians mainly from northern clans were killed by the regime’s army forces in 1988 and 1989.” The regime’s army forces had carried out “systematic extremely violent attack on the [certain clans.]” Most of them were tortured and detained because on account of their clan identity, the report added that the consequence of this, a grieved clan groups were armed up against Siad Barre’s dictatorial regime. This report provides convincing evidence of the causal relations between the politicization of the clan identity by the state under Siad Barre’s rule and the outbreak of the Somali civil war in 1991. According to David D. Laitin and Said S. Samatar (1987), during the military regime era, inter-clan competition for state power and politicization of clanship is reported to be worse and potentially more violent than in any period of Somalia’s history. Furthermore, in his book, *Somalia: A Country Study*, Helen Chapin Metz noted that:

The regime might have lingered indefinitely but for the wholesale disaffection engendered by the genocidal policies carried out against important lineages of Somali clanship groupings. These actions were waged first against the Majeerteen clan (of the Daarood clan-family), then against the Isaaq clans of the north, and finally against the Hawiye, who occupied the strategic central area of the country, which included the capital.

A report from Somalia by Jane Perlez of NY times was also noted that:

In his 80’s and in feeble health, the President is said by American officials to have a weak grasp on power as he struggles to arrange a succession that will insure the perpetuation of his family and clan in power.

Based on the above findings, the Somali civil war was widely seen as a product a social reaction to politicization of clan identity or clanship by the regime under Siad Barre rule in response to a legitimate crisis. As Siad Barre’s legitimacy lost, he began to rely on more support from his clanship associations. As the pursuit of this politicized policy, the other oppressed clans began mobilizing war against his regime which latter ended in a negative consequence, in other words, a destructive clan warfare.

5.0 Conclusion

The main aim of this paper was to explain the underlying and contributing causes of the Somali civil war. The paper examined the civil war in Somalia with the help of Azar’s theoretical framework of ‘Protracted Social Conflict.’ The genesis of the Somali civil war was explored theoretically, based on a qualitative analysis with a document review technique. The paper was based on mainly the theoretical sections, consisting of various sections and subsections, explored the cause and the contributing aspects of the Somali civil war, argued that clan itself or genealogical divisions of the Somali clan families did not cause the destructive civil war we have witnessed in 1991, unless it politicized by clan-oriented politician elites for their political interests.

The research question explored to carry out the investigation was placed on the nature of the Somali civil war. Reflecting on the research question, the third section focused on the politicized clan identity readings in the context of the Somali civil war. According to the reviews carried out in the second section, it was identified that two theoretical explanations but competing each other for the explanation of the Somali civil war. However, it was also revealed that both are failed to capture the role played by the politicization of clanship or politicized clan identity factor. That having first examined the role of politicized clan identity together with deprivation of basic need, communal content, bad governance and state’s repressive role and international linkage, the investigation revealed that these variables are the necessary underlying and contributing causes, proven to be a sufficient condition for the Somali civil war.

The discussion of the findings was focused on the five variables which are widely seen as explanatory and contributing aspects of the outbreak of the Somali civil. Its findings were reflected the reports and arguments of the scholarly articles, reports from international institutions and media press. Reports in the discussions section revealed that the negative consequence of the abuse of power, repression, politicized policy and human rights violations under Siad Barre rule. These findings proved that the Somali civil war was erupted as a result of politicization of clanship or politicized clan identity factor, deprivation of human needs, communal content, bad governance and state’s repressive role and International Linkage.

Finally, the author of this paper admits that this research study does not cover every issue and aspects of the Somali conflict; hence suggests further field



research on this topic from a broader perspective which investigates the role of politicized clan identity factor on the Somali conflict in general. More importantly, further research would help to understand how politicization of clanship can explain both in Somalia's protracted conflict and other social conflicts in Africa.

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