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“Military Clientelism and State-Building in the Horn of Africa”

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# **Military Clientelism and State-Building in the Horn of Africa**

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International discourse surrounding states like Somalia in which central governments lack the capacity or will to ensure a basic level of order in their territories tends to link sovereignty with responsibility. The domestic responsibility of states to provide basic protection and services for citizens and the right or duty to intervene when this standard is not met are widely debated. The focus of this essay concerns responsibilities of governance seen in terms of obligations to the international community. A state's failure to maintain order in its own territory harms others beyond its borders. These territories may host violent factional conflict, attract extremists and international criminals and export refugees, all of which can destabilize the domestic politics of other countries. Former US Defense Secretary Robert Gates declared that "dealing with such fractured or failing states is, in many ways, the main security challenge of our times." In 2011 US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton justified the armed intervention to prevent Libya from becoming "a giant Somalia."<sup>2</sup> In 2014, UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi urged international action,

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<sup>2</sup> Both quotes in Stewart Patrick, "Why Failed States Shouldn't Be our Biggest Security National Fear," Washington Post, 15 April 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-failed-states-shouldnt-be-our-biggest-national-security-fear/2011/04/11/AFqWmjkD\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-failed-states-shouldnt-be-our-biggest-national-security-fear/2011/04/11/AFqWmjkD_story.html).

warning that Syria “will become another Somalia... It’s going to be a failed state, with warlords all over the place.”<sup>3</sup>

International engagement with Somalia provides important insights into how various foreign actors address this underlying issue of order in failed states. There are two broad approaches to thinking about fixing failed states. The first vision focuses on international cooperation to strike a deal among the key political groups to create a coalition government. International aid and security guarantees will support a political process that leads to the construction of new state institutions and the eventual domestic capacity to provide order and security to citizens. The second vision often rejects the first as infeasible or inappropriate, and focuses instead on selective engagement of existing authority structures in failed states. Observers of Somalia recognize that some local authorities in fact do maintain order and have administrations that are able to promote a measure of economic security.<sup>4</sup>

Developments in Somalia show how international actors pursue both visions, but that direct foreign engagement with local actors on the ground in Somalia is winning out. Many security experts conclude that comprehensive international efforts to build states (often the declared policies of their own governments) are impractical on the ground in failed states and face domestic political opposition in intervening countries, particularly after US experiences in

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<sup>3</sup> “Interview with UN Peace Envoy Brahimi: ‘Syria Will Become Another Somalia,’” *Der Spiegel*, 7 June 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-former-un-peace-envoy-to-syria-lakhdar-brahimi-a-974036.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Powell, Ryan Ford & Alex Nowrasteh, Somalia after State Collapse: Chaos or Improvement? *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 67 (2008), 657-70; P Leeson, “Better Off Stateless: Somalia Before and after Government Collapse,” *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 35:4 (2007), 689-710; Tatiana Nenova & Tim Harford, “How Does Somalia’s Private Sector Cope without Government?” World Bank, 2005; Ken Menkhaus, “Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State-Building and the Politics of Coping,” *International Security* 32:3 (2007), 74-106.

Iraq and Afghanistan and European incapacities in the face of challenges in Libya and Syria. Differences about how to respond to state failure causes increasing tension among officials of intervening states, particularly between foreign ministries and security establishments. While this development merits further attention, this essay focuses on explaining how the foreign security experts interact with security experts in failed states. One important product of this reciprocal integration of local patron-client networks and foreign security networks is *military clientelism*. The Somali experience shows how each element of this interaction seeks to gain knowledge of and leverage their partners. Of particular note is the local actors' capacity to exploit outsiders' lack of detailed knowledge of the Somali situation to manipulate outsiders into supporting their continuing conflict. Therefore this essay presents an idiosyncratic analysis of intervention and state-building in the Horn of Africa. But it is largely based upon talking with people and observing them in this setting over several years in an attempt to better understand what is going on. Nor is this study conclusive: As a Somali informant who I have known since 2006 told me, "You understand us pretty well, but if you knew everything you would go crazy."

### **Contending Visions of Order**

At first it appears that broad international engagement to build a coalition government works. By late 2011, African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) soldiers forced al Shabaab militants from Mogadishu so that the Transitional Federal Government could rule from the capital. AMISOM steadily increased the territory under its control, coordinating with Ethiopian and Kenyan forces that occupied other parts of Somalia. The February 2012 London Conference drew dozens of governments and most major Somali political groups to formulate a plan to create a new national government, reconstruct security and judicial institutions and provide

social services to citizens. Foreign governments denounced “spoilers” and promised continued logistical and financial support for AMISOM and pressed Somali leaders to elect a new legislature and write a new constitution.<sup>5</sup> On 20 August 2012 a legislature was sworn in and on 10 September 2012 it elected a president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, a professor with technocratic credentials. On 17 January 2013 the US extended diplomatic recognition of what was now the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and on 6 March 2013 the UN Security Council partially lifted an arms embargo, signaling that Somalia had taken major steps in setting up a central government.<sup>6</sup> International engagement extends to elections in 2016, by which time the FGS is to have implemented new human rights legislation, administrative reforms, strengthened security institutions and improved social service provision. This record appears to indicate that the state-building project is underway in Somalia, unfolding in the context of international efforts to remove the influence of al Shabaab, elements of which have professed allegiance to al Qaeda and are implicated in terrorist attacks in Uganda and Kenya.

The ground-level reality is dramatically different. The government exercises tenuous control in its own capital city and is exposed to regular attack from its foes.<sup>7</sup> Four years after the

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<sup>5</sup> “London Conference on Somalia Communique,” UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 23 Feb. 2012; “UN and Partners Issue Warning Against Somali Peace Process Spoilers,” United Nations News Center, 1 May 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Rick Gladstone, “Security Council Loosens Somalian Arms Embargo,” *New York Times*, 6 March 2013.

<sup>7</sup> On 20 February 2015, Al-Shabaab suicide bombers and gunmen killed 28 people, including two legislators and Mogadishu’s deputy mayor in an attack on the Central Hotel in Mogadishu. On 12 March, Al-Shabaab gunmen attacked a facility in Baidoa that houses local UN and government administration offices, killing at least eight people. On 27 March, a car bomb at the Maka Al-Mukarama Hotel in Mogadishu, and Al-Shabaab gunmen killed at least fourteen people, including Somalia’s representative to the UN office in Geneva. On 14 April, a car bomb and seven Al-Shabaab gunmen attack in Mogadishu on the ministries of education and natural resources killed at least eight people. On 20 April, Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for bombing a UN vehicle in Puntland, which killed seven, including four staff members of UNICEF. The next day, an Al-Shabaab car bomb attack on a restaurant near the Central Hotel in Mogadishu killed at least ten people. On 23 May Al Shabaab gunmen in Mogadishu killed a legislator and three transportation ministry workers were killed in separate drive-by shootings.

AMISOM offensive against Al Shabaab, Mogadishu outside the AMISOM perimeter is not safe for foreign visitors or for most government officials.<sup>8</sup> The Somali political landscape is one in which kinship [“clan”] and other networks overshadow bureaucratic codes of behavior. Shifting constellations of groups contend over these allegiances as much as over territory. Groups devote considerable energy infiltrating one another as soon as any get close to the levers of power associated with sovereign status or connections with foreign actors. In this context, conventional concepts such as “control” are difficult to define. Physical and political boundaries are hard to identify as armed groups simultaneously infiltrate one another and their members selectively collaborate with people that they fight. Concepts such as “rebel control” and “government control” apply very imperfectly. Thus theories and policies that assume that groups act in a unitary fashion and fight to control territory and the people on it require reevaluation.<sup>9</sup>

The section that follows explains how international actors adjust to address the problem of state-building in Somalia in a sort of preventative counterinsurgency to address internal disorder. Subsequent sections explore this process in three parts of the Somali space; in Somaliland, Puntland and in southern Somalia. These sections illuminate the mechanisms through which this new kind of security-based international relations is pursued.

### **The Rising Second Vision of Security**

Counterinsurgency in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is about state-building. This arises out of a fundamental mismatch of the original concept of counterinsurgency that assumed the existence

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<sup>8</sup> The author observed the security situation in visits to Mogadishu in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Stathis Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence in Civil War*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. 146-209.

of a motivated local state partner to the realities of places like Somalia. Conventional approaches to battling rebels historically rested upon two core principles: (1) there must be a government with the political will and capacity to undertake reform and effectively engage citizens, and (2) there must be an indigenous armed force with the ability to protect the government and provide security to civilians.<sup>10</sup> These principles presuppose that local political partners accept the existence of a state as appropriate and that state collapse is temporary and that its restoration is desired and feasible. The contemporary reality of places like Somalia is that politics violates these principles. Local authorities often collaborate with the groups that they fight. Armed groups, including armies built with external assistance, frequently split and join temporary coalitions with others. Personal authority, honor and vendetta become wrapped up in what observers call “subversion” and “infiltration.” This behavior blurs boundaries between licit and illicit; what observers label as “corruption.”

Scholars engage in heated debate about the importance of these characteristics and what they mean for Somali society.<sup>11</sup> Foreign policy makers and technical experts engaging with Somali politics debate this issue too, but in a different fashion. Unlike the scholars, they are constrained by the international community insistence on recognizing the supremacy of a sovereign government in Mogadishu, at least in diplomatic terms and accord it the prerogatives

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<sup>10</sup> These principles appear in classic works, i.e. David Galula’s concept of “political action” in his *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (New York: Praeger, 1964) and the combined civil-military strategy in Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam*, (New York: Praeger, 1966). Later expressions of these principles appear in David Kilcullen, “The Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency,” (Washington, DC: US Government Counterinsurgency Conference, 26 Sept 2006) and US Army & Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual [FM3-24]*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Catherine Besteman, “Representing Violence and ‘Othering’ Somalia,” *Cultural Anthropology*, 11:1 (1996), 120-33; I.M. Lewis, “Doing Violence to Ethnography: A Response to Catherine Besteman’s ‘Representing Violence and ‘Othering’ Somalia’,” *American Ethnologist*, 13:1 (1998), 100—08.

of sovereign recognition, despite the development of alternative authorities. These alternatives include the Republic of Somaliland, Puntland State of Somalia, Galmudug State, Khatumo State of Somalia, the Maakhir State of Somalia, the Jubaland Administration, Galmudug, Hiram & Heeb, and others. Groups like Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen (al Shabaab) pursue a purified Somalia and some imagine building a component of a global caliphate. The fact that many of these authorities exercise considerably greater capacity to know what is happening on the ground and command resources and people creates a dilemma for foreigners who have to take account of the norms of sovereignty, but who also want to exploit this capacity and knowledge within the context in which Somali politics really operates.

This contradiction finds a solution in a selective alternative engagement. Somali actors engage with foreign security experts on specific tasks of governance centered on building and controlling armed security forces and developing new systems for surveillance. Through task-specific cooperation, these authorities are selectively integrated into a global security network that constitutes a parallel sphere of recognition, with its own prerogatives and rules, and with concrete influences on how these authorities govern in an open-ended conflict. Integration into security networks involves mutual recognition within specific realms centered on matters related to internal and international security. The relationship is more intensive and complex than a foreign power's episodic use of localized armed groups as proxies in conflicts. Instead the relationship prescribes and shapes standards of governance within the receiving authority's realm. The relationship presupposes that the endpoint is a level of order that will guarantee the security of other states, but this second vision, the alternative mode of engagement, signals a shift in how international actors conceptualize and define effective governance.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Mandel, *Global Security Upheaval: Armed Nonstate Groups Usurping State Stability Functions*, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2013). Jean François Bayart, *Le Gouvernement du monde. Une Critique politique*



These interactions are based upon a tacit assumption that Somali security experts should be treated as valid partners in international relations. This vision of governance in Somalia accepts and builds upon the diverse local authorities in Somalia and rests upon the capacity and political will of these alternative authorities to demonstrate their effectiveness at managing violence and in conducting surveillance of territory and people. Even though the international community accords the FGS exclusive formal sovereign status, foreign officials and international organizations deal directly with Somali authorities that are not part of this recognized government in a security-defined regime of international relations. The capacity to govern in open-ended conflict legitimates these authorities' knowledge about and influence over the micro-politics of specific populations as tools to maintain order and control. Foreigners validate the private administration of force, and entrusts the monopolization of the exercise of violence to patronage and kinship networks. It tolerates and even incorporates activities on a limited basis that are defined as illicit in wider international society, so long as these contribute to the long-term goal the dependable exercise of violence and strengthened surveillance.

This alternative international relations and state-building is a product rather than a victim of globalization. Transnational non-state actors are integral to the internal capacities of Somalia's alternative authorities. These transnational networks include private security firms, information collection and risk management companies, and state and private providers and operators of surveillance technologies. This mediation of private firms facilitates mutual compatibility in relations between what would seem to be radically different kinds of authorities. These global changes also include the proliferation of armed state security services outside of the regular

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*de la globalization*, (Paris: Fayard, 2004), and Armand Mattelart, *The Globalisation of Surveillance* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010) .

armed forces, particularly in the United States, that become the instruments of this new kind of international relations. The overlapping activities of these actors strengthen these alternative authorities. Global collaboration elevates knowledge and techniques of surveillance and empowers local actors as “security technocrats” to occupy positions of local influence on the basis of their capacities to exploit their positions in these global networks of military clientelism.

The Somali political space illustrates the different ways that these local and international networks coordinate on security issues. The next section explores the easy compatibility in Somaliland, the most state-like in conventional terms, before turning to more challenging cases.

### **Somaliland Statehood and Non-state Security**

On 15 May 1991, less than five months after Somalia’s central government collapsed, community leaders and Somali National Movement (SNM) rebel group leaders declared the northwestern territories of Somalia to be the independent Republic of Somaliland. As no government formally recognizes Somaliland’s sovereignty, Somaliland authorities routinely stress the accomplishments of their administration and the obstacles to further progress that non-recognition imposes. They point to the 1933 Montevideo Convention that stresses maintenance of order and consistent control over territory as defining features of state sovereignty.<sup>13</sup>

Scholars regularly note that Somaliland’s government possesses these capabilities, and some argue that extending recognition would set the stage for greater progress in providing services

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<sup>13</sup> Republic of Somaliland, *Submission on Statehood and Recognition of the Republic of Somaliland*, Hargeisa, June 1996 [dot matrix printout]; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The case for Somaliland’s International Recognition as an Independent State*, Hargeisa: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 2002.

and protection to Somaliland's citizens.<sup>14</sup> Somaliland officials provide considerable evidence of their government's capacity and willingness to conform to contemporary global standards of behavior in the administration of justice<sup>15</sup> and advertise the conduct of democratic elections.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, Somaliland officials make ad hoc arrangements that demonstrate how non-recognition is less of an obstacle to normal international relations as first appears. Somaliland's government sends officials to represent the country's interests in Ethiopia, Britain, the US and several other countries. Ethiopia maintains a consulate in Hargeisa, the head of which holds the rank of ambassador. Somaliland officials received advice and assistance from the NGO Independent Diplomat to develop a diplomatic strategy and on technical and political aspects of dealing with international bureaucracies.<sup>17</sup> Somaliland also benefits from foreigners' willingness to deal with unrecognized governments that demonstrate capacities to maintain domestic order and engage foreigners on specific tasks. Membership in international economic bodies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) should be within Somaliland's grasp, as its charter states: "Any State or separate customs territory possessing full autonomy in the conduct of its external

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<sup>14</sup> Tobias Hagmann & M V Hoehne, "Failures of the State failure Debate: Evidence from the Somali Territories," *Journal of International Development*, 21:1 (2009), 42-57; Nicholas Eubank, "Taxation, Political Accountability and Foreign Aid: Lessons from Somaliland," *Journal of Development Studies*, 48:4 (2012), 465-80.

<sup>15</sup> War Crimes Investigation Commission, "War Crimes Investigation Commission and what it Stands for," Hargeisa, 8 May 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Somaliland Non-State Actors Forum, *Post-Election Statement: Domestic Election Observation Project, 26 June Presidential Election*, July 2010, [http://www.sonsaf.org/Files/somaliland\\_presidential\\_observation\\_mission\\_report\\_%281%29.pdf](http://www.sonsaf.org/Files/somaliland_presidential_observation_mission_report_%281%29.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Independent Diplomat, <http://www.independentdiplomat.org/>. See also Vishakha Apte, Sarwat Hameed, Christina Kiel, Leila Tayeb, "Taking the Initiative: Somaliland's Regional Opportunities for International Recognition," Graduate Program in International Affairs, New School, New York, April 2006 [prepared for Independent Diplomat].

commercial relations... may accede” to the WTO.<sup>18</sup> Taiwan, having joined in 2001 as “Chinese Taipei,” shows how the international community accommodates non-recognized states to pursue goals of mutual interest such as friendly relations and to facilitate trade and investment.<sup>19</sup>

NGOs in Hargeisa and abroad mediate Somaliland officials’ contacts with officials of other countries on security matters. These NGOs hold numerous conferences on all manner of issues related to security such as demobilization, police and judicial reform, and surveillance. These conferences serve as a tool to standardize internal administration in Somaliland along the lines of an international conception of “good governance.” Groups within Somaliland’s political establishment are closely affiliated with specific NGOs that outsiders use as contacts as an informal means of conducting relations with Somaliland officials. In this sense, Somaliland’s conduct of international relations promotes convergence toward technocratic standards and policy priorities that are widely shared among foreign officials. This Somaliland strategy is effective for engaging international actors on security matters, and gives the local government an incentive to define security as broadly as possible. For international actors Somaliland is attractive because it presents them with the conditions that match a local authority that has the capacity and political will to provide order and security with external resources and advice.

Berbera, Somaliland’s only containerized shipping port, illustrates how alternative domestic capacity and foreign assistance can converge when Somaliland officials hired Nordic Crisis Management (NCM) to implement the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code

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<sup>18</sup> Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization, [http://www.wto.org/english/docs\\_e/legal\\_e/04-wto.pdf](http://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/04-wto.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Scott Pegg, *International Society and the De Facto State*, (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008).

(ISPS).<sup>20</sup> This code was developed in response to the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington and was accelerated after the Al Qaeda attack on the French oil tanker Limburg on 6 October 2002 to standardize security measures of ships, ports and related government agencies. Berbera Port is IPIS-compliant, with a perimeter fence, guard posts and surveillance cameras; physical and procedural markers that Somaliland's as yet formally recognized government can provide security guarantees to people beyond its borders about the reliability of its management of domestic order. British security advisory teams played a role in security advising, and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) funded the project. NCM and Norad acted as intermediaries to enable foreign experts and officials to deal directly with Somaliland officials in the absence of diplomatic recognition and avoid complications of being seen to boost the security capabilities of a secessionist authority.<sup>21</sup> NCM, British security operatives and Norad adeptly took into account local clan politics, including tensions over distributions of port fees and contracts, in their pursuit of their tasks.<sup>22</sup> Though allegations of corruption and insider dealings marred later port management contracts,<sup>23</sup> the prior episode demonstrated how private intermediaries offer foreign officials flexibility to engage with local politicians outside the framework of legal sovereignty and subject to the shifts and crosscurrents of personal and kinship politics behind the façade of formal bureaucracies.

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<sup>20</sup> Ministry of National Planning and Development, *Somaliland: The Way Forward: National Development Plan (2012-2016)*, (Hargeisa: Pointe Invisible, 2012), 154.

<sup>21</sup> Stig Jarle Hansen, "Private Security Maritime Protection and Surveillance in Somaliland," Patrick Cullen & Claude Beruba, eds., *Maritime Private Security: Responses to Piracy, Terrorism, and Waterborne Security Risks in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (New York: Routledge), 113-25.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with former Somaliland security official, Hargeisa, 6 Aug 2011 and author's observations in Berbera.

<sup>23</sup> Details of contention over contracts appears in "No Docking in Sight in Berbera for Bolloré," *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 1 May 2015.

Somaliland officials stress their security capacities in a sensitive region between Yemen and southern Somalia. A former Foreign Minister noted upon visiting US officials in Nairobi that Somaliland was a “de facto partner of peace in the region” and deserved financial assistance for government schools to provide an alternative to Islamic schools and to boost the capacities of Somaliland’s security services to support a “viable, secular constitutional state.”<sup>24</sup> Sustained contacts, however, usually involve private firms as intermediaries. Anti-piracy efforts have been a perennial concern of the U.S. and many other states, and coastal patrols have become more of a concern as Yemen’s political scene became more violent and unstable from 2013. Somali Fishguard, Ltd, a subsidiary of the British firm Saladin Security signed a contract in 2013 to develop the Somalia Fisheries Protection Force to monitor offshore waters. The deal included a plan to have the firm issue fishing licenses on behalf of the Somaliland state in return for a 50-50 split of the revenues.<sup>25</sup> This deal became tangled in local political and business contention, but illustrates how security sector firms can perform state-like functions from positions in which the firm can address international and local partners and serve as a bridge between security specialists in both realms. The link between Ethiopian security professionals and Somaliland security agencies is more direct, but also rests upon the outsiders’ capacities to operate in the personal and kinship politics of Somaliland. The head of Somaliland Security Services (SSS) in 2012 graduated from an Ethiopian military college, as did several subordinates. Since 1997 Ethiopia’s Ministry of Defense has trained members of the SSS and other Somaliland security agencies in Ethiopian military academies.

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<sup>24</sup> US Embassy Nairobi, “Somaliland Foreign Minister Appeals for Recognition and Aid,” Wikileaks id#98185, 9 Jan 2007.

<sup>25</sup> “Somalia Fishguard in the Hot Seat,” *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 10 April 2015.

Security cooperation that focuses directly on managing populations requires international engagement with the realities of social structures such as clan and sub-clan allegiances that play overwhelming roles in people's lives. Violent radicals can call upon kinship relationships to conceal their activities, as occurred in October, 2008 when three suicide bombers successfully concealed their preparations to attack Somaliland's presidency, UNDP offices, and the Ethiopian consulate. Surveillance in this setting, he noted, calls for "security committees that reach across community divides" that have access to intensely local information that normally is beyond the capacities of democratic states to collect.<sup>26</sup> A former president of the country stresses that the collection of intelligence in Somaliland occurs on the level of personal relationships, which requires working with families to identify and track individuals who may have joined radical groups or who are suspected of travelling overseas for malevolent purposes.<sup>27</sup> This requires detailed knowledge about social practices and relationships that formally do not play any role in state politics, such as *diya* paying groups. These are contracts among members of related lineages to take collective responsibility for the behavior of individuals within the group and to pay compensation when necessary. Members of these groups thus have a personal interest in the conduct of other members, particularly when they set out to harm other people. Far from being a "weak state," Somaliland's conduct of security in many parts of the country through this mechanism exceeds the formal bureaucratic boundaries of the SSS and police.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Minister of Interior, Hargeisa, 10 Aug 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, former President Dahir Riyale Kahin, Hargeisa, 5 July 2012. [This official was the head of state security in the Berbera region in the 1980s under the Siad Barre regime.]

<sup>28</sup> This extensive network of surveillance becomes visible when informants note the author's personal movements from days earlier, collected by neighborhood watch members and reported to authorities, for example.

Foreign engagement with Somaliland officials on security issues at this ground level challenges counterinsurgency strategies. Military analysts and security officials often view violent religious extremism in the Horn of Africa in terms of decentralized networks that are embedded in complex amalgams of kinship loyalties, criminal gangs, and religious groups.<sup>29</sup> Complex bureaucratic systems such as US defense and security agencies try to respond to this situation through building contacts with intermediaries who are well situated within local networks that have access to important information about the backgrounds of individuals and their activities. This requires adaptations and violations of protocols and rules that are difficult for some security agencies to manage. Operating through contractors increases political and operational flexibility, albeit at the cost of including an intermediary that has its own interests and agendas as a proxy to help decipher the local situation and build local security capacity.

These global quasi-political / commercial partnerships strengthen and make more transparent to foreign officials the local exercise of coercion and surveillance, or at least this is the intent. The reality is that private security contractors play important roles in the strategies of local political actors in ways that incorporate overseas resources and organizations into local clientelist networks. These networks become militarized insofar as they are deployed to protect local authorities and promote foreign security agendas. They also are available for local authorities to manipulate in their domestic struggles. Through this process the integration of networks and interests can be more reciprocal than the foreign partners intend. As a former Somaliland Interior Ministry official explained of foreign security specialists who predictably lodge at the Ambassador Hotel: “everyone knows who is who.” This, the official explained, allows US agents to watch colleagues in other agencies, as fragmentation of interests among

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<sup>29</sup> Angel Rabassa, *Radical Islam in East Africa*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2009).



American agencies that produces a sort of “clan warfare” that Somaliland officials struggle to interpret and manipulate.<sup>30</sup>

Somaliland’s security elite really hold the keys to mobilizing local networks beyond the formal purview of the bureaucratic state. Many arrived at positions of power as guerrilla fighters in the SNM and helped creating the Somaliland state through intensive negotiations with local clan and religious authorities during the first half of the 1990s. These forums, in which this security elite has deep roots, manages disputes and tracks activities of local people and their complex disputes in political and commercial networks. Though this elite group remains blocked from direct benefits of sovereignty, their engagement with international actors gives them a form of exclusive recognition that provides access to foreign resources and influence that they can apply to their own agendas. Thus their power is based on their relations with security officials abroad as well as to community notables and networks inside Somaliland. Their relations with foreign security experts are reciprocal in that they recognize each other’s capabilities in that realm. Somaliland officials’ existing capacity to manage their domestic population earns it partial and ad hoc recognition in ways related to security. Other parts of Somalia exhibit considerably greater challenges to stable authority in bureaucratic and informal societal terms. Local and foreign struggles to manage this situation are the focus of the next section.

### **Puntland an the problem of complex networks**

Organized in 1998, Puntland (officially the Puntland State in Somalia) does not trying to gain international recognition of its sovereignty. Compared to Somaliland, its leadership reflects more transparently complex and shifting clan rivalries that occasionally erupt into violence.

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<sup>30</sup> Interview, former Interior Ministry official & with a manager of security investigations, Hargeisa, 7 June 2012.

Kinship networks likewise play important roles in the security, governance and economic activities of communities. This political environment creates opportunities for entrepreneurs who take control of bargaining and coercion for personal interests and become patrons of their kin. These loose, decentralized networks have included people who control paramilitary forces that engage in piracy and other illicit activities, and who are intermingled with people who occupy more conventional positions of power. Foreign security experts who deal with Puntland's authorities are thus forced to rely upon local partners who the foreigners suspect are familiar with, if not closely linked to people who the foreign experts see as direct security threats.

Puntland's security agencies include the Puntland Intelligence Agency (PIA),<sup>31</sup> the Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) and the Puntland Dervish Force. The reality of Puntland politics is that the government's leadership is dominated by members of what many local people perceive as the Majeerteen sub-clan of the Darood. This group has struggled with the Warsangeli sub-clan, for many years over the distribution of commercial opportunities at the port city of Bosaaso. Warsangeli and other clan leaders complain that the PIA is used as a tool to assert the leadership's Majeerteen clan interests. The personalization of security forces appeared in the move of about 1,500 members of the Darawiish paramilitary force in 2007 to southern Somalia to follow Adullahi Yusuf, Puntland's first president, after he became the head of the Transitional federal Government in Mogadishu from 2004 to 2008.<sup>32</sup>

Foreign security experts realize that helping Puntland's officials to control coercion and surveillance in their society to address foreign concerns drags them into a complex constellation

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<sup>31</sup> Known as the Puntland Intelligence Service before 2010.

<sup>32</sup> United Nations security Council, *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia pursuant to Paragraph 3 of Security Council Resolution 1811 (2008)*, (New York: United Nations, 20 Nov 2008), 14.

of kinship rivalries. Others have faced this dilemma. Ethiopia's extensive connections in this region—Ethiopia hosted the Somali Salvation Democratic Front in the 1980s under Abdullah Yusuf's leadership—provide its government with a lever for gathering information and influencing developments on its eastern border. But the danger remains that one group will use foreign assistance to marginalize or oppress others who will then turn to violent religious extremists for protection. Leaders in al Shabaab understand this clan politics, protecting smaller clans that have been targets of others who want to appropriate their lands and subordinate them in political negotiations. Some Warsangali squeezed in disputes over territory and business networks, had accepted protection from the Shabaab-aligned militia commander Mohamed Said Atom.<sup>33</sup> He was alleged to have been involved in targeting government officials for assassination.<sup>34</sup> Yet anyone, including foreign security experts must contend with local interlocutors whose loyalties are subject to complex obligations of kinship. In practical terms, this means that people are more prone to side switching when seen from the perspective of state institutions and commercial contracts. As an illustration, a military offensive against Atom resulted in the defection of several hundred Shabaab-aligned fighters to the ranks of the PIA.<sup>35</sup> Agencies in this context simply serve as facades behind which the much more important personal and kinship networks operate.

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<sup>33</sup> United Nations Security Council, "Security Council Committee on Somalia and Eritrea Issues List of Individuals Identified Pursuant to Paragraph 8 of Resolution 1844 (2008)," 12 April 2010, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9904.doc.htm>.

<sup>34</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1853 (2008)*, (New York: United Nations, 10 March 2010), 44-45.

<sup>35</sup> Somalia Report, "Galaga Militia Prepares to Fight Puntland," 2 April 2012, <http://www.somaliareport.com/index.php/post/2640>. Author's discussions with Puntland's Minister of Security, July 8 2012 indicated that Puntland security forces are abundantly aware of the importance of kinship relations in shifting political allegiances.

Networked authority and shifting alliances provide scant foundation for constructing stable relations between international actors and local authorities, particularly when these shifts expose intelligence agencies to infiltration and cause partners to renege on deals.<sup>36</sup> This drives international actors to use private security contractors to aid Puntland's authorities, much like practice in Somaliland. The problem with this approach is that foreign assistance in the weaker institutional environment tends to be more destabilizing as local strongmen incorporate newly trained fighters into their power struggles with political and commercial rivals.<sup>37</sup> Personal authority and command of networks is paramount in deciding with whom to partner. Ideally (from the foreign security expert's point of view), partners are well situated in these networks to collect intelligence and conduct surveillance on behalf of their foreign patron. This engagement forces the foreign actor to wade into this politics on its own terms, which leads the foreigner to increased risk of manipulation. The alternative is for foreigners to take a more active role as local patrons in their own rights, and build security forces that are beholden to them. But this is a more intense form of engagement that is reserved for the even weaker institutional environment, as examined below in the discussion about this military clientelism centered on Mogadishu.

Stable relationships are possible, and most likely when centered on tasks that are not necessarily central to resources that affect power relations. An example of this cooperation

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<sup>36</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to the Security Council Resolution 2002 (2011)*, (New York: United Nations, 13 July 2012), 21-25.

<sup>37</sup> Author's observations in Bossaso and Garowe; discussions with TFG officials and others in Mogadishu, 2012; "Somalia: New guns on the Block," *Africa Confidential*, 51:25 (17 Dec 2010), 3; Mark Mazzetti, "Private Army Formed to Fight Somali Pirates Leaves Troubled Legacy," *New York Times*, 4 Oct 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/05/world/africa/private-army-leaves-troubled-legacy-in-somalia.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>. See also Christopher Kinsey, Stig Jarle Hansen, George Franklin, "The Impact of Private Security Companies on Somalia's Governance Networks," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 22 (2009), 147-61.

appears in the operation of surveillance equipment and maintaining the inter-connected surveillance systems at the region's main airport. Immigration controls at Boosaaso's Bender-Qassim International Airport The new airport (built with UAE's financial support) features standardized technologies of surveillance of travelers. Immigration formalities include the use of facial recognition technology and passport scanners linked to sophisticated telecommunications equipment that transmits information beyond the airport's confines. This technology is a standard feature of airport arrivals throughout Somalia and operates at land borders such as Tog Wachale (between Ethiopia and Somaliland) and knits together well trained technical experts in an operating system that is largely independent of the institutional environment around it.<sup>38</sup>

International assistance is more significant in terms of local politics with private security company assistance to the PMPF to boost local anti-piracy efforts. Through the use of company-supplied aircraft the PMPF also reportedly provided aerial surveillance and fire support to ground operations engaging al Shabaab fighters in the Galgala region of Puntland in repeated occasions in early 2013.<sup>39</sup> This assistance involves a privately constructed base that UN observers report is the "best equipped military facility in Somalia after AMISOM," with space for 1,500 trainees, a control tower, an airstrip and a helicopter deck.<sup>40</sup> The PMPF answers directly to the president and also has been used to distribute humanitarian aid. This relationship also draws in other global networks, as it involves firms and governments in a variety of

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<sup>38</sup> Author's observations and a Bender Qassim International Airport official's demonstration of the technology to the author, 2012 & 2013. The author did not ask who pays them & to whom these workers report, but he is interested to know.

<sup>39</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2060 (2012): Somalia*, (New York: UN, 19 June 2013), 330.

<sup>40</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2002 (2011)*, (New York: UN, 27 June 2012, 22. Pages 235-48 of this report contain more information about private military company activities in Puntland and southern Somalia.

countries that collaborate in this commercial venture that strengthens the authority of local actors who appear willing to assist in an international security agenda.

Puntland's government vigorously displays anti-terrorism credentials and advertises the threat that these groups pose to it: "According to Puntland Minister of Information Mohamud Aideed Dirir, the Al Shabaab fighters have been receiving support from elements looking for political gain and insecurity in Puntland."<sup>41</sup> Officials trade on their dominance and knowledge of networks that are able to conduct surveillance of the movement of violent religious extremists from southern Somalia and between Somalia and Yemen. These surveillance networks are organized on the terms that local authorities determine, and operate through close personal ties with important families and businesses. These ties are integral to the local conduct of politics, which entails mediation between and sometimes picking sides in personal and family business and land disputes, controversies over other resources; all seemingly parochial matters.<sup>42</sup>

Surveillance of this social rather than technical sort is integrated into intricate patronage networks and contributes to the patron's capacity to protect and provide for clients at the same time that elements of it are shared with international actors. International actors engaged in security tasks benefit selectively from this network-centric element of Puntland authority as they help to reinforce it. Conceivably this relationship could help a strongman to establish himself as an exclusive hegemon on a particular piece of territory, much like a conventional state, and this perspective emerges in discussions with foreign security experts. More likely is that leaders of

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<sup>41</sup> Garoweonline.com, "Somalia:Puntland Forces Kill 7 Al Shabaab, near Galgala," [http://www.garoweonline.com/artman2/publish/Somalia\\_27/Somalia\\_Puntland\\_forces\\_kill\\_7\\_Al\\_Shabaab\\_near\\_Galgala\\_printer.shtml](http://www.garoweonline.com/artman2/publish/Somalia_27/Somalia_Puntland_forces_kill_7_Al_Shabaab_near_Galgala_printer.shtml), accessed 6 Dec 2012.

<sup>42</sup> As explained to the author in an interview, Khalifa Isse Mudan [Minister of Security], Garowe, 8 July 2012.

minority clans and other networks conclude that armed Islamists are their only realistic protectors, further undermining conventional state-building projects.

### **Sovereign Statelessness**

Southern Somalia is a major focus of international security assistance, to absorb 38 percent of all U.S. Defense and State Department assistance to Africa, or about \$742 million for 2016. This rise reflects an intensified U.S. focus on counter-terrorism in Africa, with overall Defense Department assistance rising 775 percent from 2014 (\$161.9 million) to 2016 (\$1.4 billion).<sup>43</sup> This rapid expansion of security assistance faces serious problems engaging the Somali state, given the reality that although there is an internationally recognized sovereign government, there is no state in a conventional sense. The political scene in southern Somalia features shifting political networks that regularly include Al Shabaab rebels and other ostensibly anti-government armed groups in a process of reciprocal infiltration. State institutions are subordinate to the logic of these networks and clientelist personal authorities within them. Frustrated UN observers concluded that “the systematic misappropriation, embezzlement and outright theft of public resources have essentially become a system of governance” as private individuals, inside government and out, make personal demands on state resources that cannot be resisted for reasons related to obligations of kinship or political clientage.<sup>44</sup> In 2014 between 70 and 80 percent of Central Bank payments were to private individuals,<sup>45</sup> which is lower than the

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<sup>43</sup> Figures are from Security Assistance Monitor, <http://securityassistance.org/blog/4-charts-spike-us-military-and-police-aid-africa>.

<sup>44</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Monitoring Group*, 2012, 12

<sup>45</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2111 (2013): Somalia*, (New York: UN, 19 Sept 2014), 28-30.

88 percent that one estimate of the decade of Central Bank operations identifies through the various “transitional” governments that international actors have supported in Somalia.<sup>46</sup> A World Bank report observed that “although a Central Bank was in existence, with a main building in Mogadishu... it apparently was (and continues to be) largely circumvented by the TFG executive branch and their key staff.”<sup>47</sup>

Direct security assistance in this environment in which boundaries between state and personal and licit and illicit, is likely to support behavior and agendas that this assistance is intended to oppose. To illustrate these blurred boundaries, conventional accounts of repeated attacks on Mogadishu restaurants are that “they [al Shabaab] attack the restaurants because they hate to see people peacefully spending time together.”<sup>48</sup> A Mogadishu businessman speculated instead that bombing targets failed to pay taxes to the city’s al Shabaab commanders or that they are involved in a dispute with a business receiving al Shabaab protection in what is supposed to be government-held territory less than a kilometer from the president’s residence.<sup>49</sup> The issue of overlapping control and mutual infiltration appears in the tendency for Islamist groups, especially al Shabaab, to infiltrate agents into government security services.<sup>50</sup> These insider-rebels and their connections to the multiple personal and political agendas that make up Mogadishu’s politics translates into significant insecurity even among the highest ranking

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<sup>46</sup> Abdirazak Fartaag, “Reconstructing Somalia and the Politics of Public Sector Finance,” LSE, May 2013.

<sup>47</sup> World Bank, *World Bank Summary of Financial Diagnostic Assessment of “Audit Investigative Financial Report 2009-10*, (Washington, DC: World Bank), 30 May 2012, iv.

<sup>48</sup> Sudarsan Raghaven, “Blasts Kill at Least 15 at Mogadishu Restaurant,” *New York Times*, 7 Sept 2013. See also Xan Rice, “Letter from Somalia: Now Serving,” *New Yorker*, 30 Sept 2013.

<sup>49</sup> Discussion with a mini-warlord businessman, Mogadishu, 18 Aug 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Mohamed Mubarak, “Spying Game: Shabab’s Double Agents in Somali Intelligence,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 24:3 (March 2012), 14-17; “French Somalia Raid ‘Was a Trap,’” *Africa Confidential*, 54:2 (18 Jan 2013), 11.



members of the administration. Some officials recognize that foreign security guards protect them as much from colleague's followers as from Shabaab, but admit that the two can be difficult to distinguish.<sup>51</sup>

The 2009 kidnapping of two French operatives illustrates the limited utility of the concept of "security institutions" in the context of Somalia's networked authority, and thus the dilemma for foreign security assistance. The French operatives were seized in an operation allegedly masterminded by a relative of the Interior Minister and a deputy leader of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), a predecessor to al Shabaab that joined a December 2008 power sharing agreement with the TFG.<sup>52</sup> ICU head Sharif Sheikh Ahmed became the president of the TFG in January 2009, which provided the ICU with an opportunity to position their own operatives in the TFG security services.<sup>53</sup> This pattern of alliance and opposition appeared to facilitate this sharing of information and collaborative operations. For example, Hizbul Islam emerged among those in the ICU that rejected the 2008 power sharing deal with the TFG. Hizbul Islam then merged with al Shabaab in December 2010. In 2009 these groups fought together against the TFG in Mogadishu while fighting against each other in Kismayo.<sup>54</sup> This situation underlines the problems in applying rigid political labels to groups that collaborate in some areas and issues while fighting one another elsewhere in the service of clan or other kinship obligations.

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<sup>51</sup> Interview, Government Minister, Mogadishu, 2 July 2012.

<sup>52</sup> This perspective was expressed in author's discussions with a Somali official, 4 July 2012 and in Mareeg, "Somalia: the Abduction of French Agents Well Planned, Sources."

<sup>53</sup> Some TFG officials and militia leaders revealed in discussions with the author that they had personal concerns about security due to perceived Shabaab infiltration into security services, Mogadishu, June – July 2012.

<sup>54</sup> Jean-Pierre Filiu, "Lesson from Kismayo," *Jihadica*, 6 Oct 2009,

The January 2013 French attempt to rescue one hostage (the other escaped by one account or was ransomed by another account<sup>55</sup>) underscores the problems facing international relations with stateless authorities. French rescuers needed intelligence to locate their target. The Somali government's National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA)<sup>56</sup>, built with US Central Intelligence Agency help from 2008,<sup>57</sup> was supposed to assist, but Islamist group infiltration into the intelligence service<sup>58</sup> led the French into a trap.<sup>59</sup> Heavily armed Shabaab fighters battled the French rescuers for several hours. Al Shabaab claimed that they had killed a French soldier and captured another, while a French official announced that two French soldiers were killed in the failed operation.<sup>60</sup>

Other attacks suggest infiltration and factional agendas, such as that on the Somali intelligence chief Khalif Ahmed Ilig's vehicle on 18 March 2013 and the 20 January 2013

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<sup>55</sup> This event sheds light on yet other family and clan network considerations guiding the captors. Hizbul Islamiyya's capture of the French hostages drew al Shabaab onto the scene, leaving Hizbul Islamiyya with only one hostage to sell back to the French. This ransom activated other cleavages as the original kidnappers and the ultimate recipients of the ransom quarreled over how the seizure—involving about 40 fighters arriving at the Sahafi Hotel where the French were staying—and the distribution of the ransom would affect the power of each faction within the larger collection of Islamist groups. This was further related to the complex nature of the Islamists' selective participation in the TFG and anxieties to smooth over relations while still personally benefiting from the ransom. The situation got more complex after that! (Discussions with a mini-warlord and owner of the Sahafi Hotel, Mogadishu, Aug 2013 & Aug 2014. See also "Qaeda Linked Somali Group Takes One of French Hostages," Reuters, 16 July 2009.

<sup>56</sup> Some Somalis refer to this as variously NSA, NSS and NIIS in response to frequent previous name changes.

<sup>57</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, Mark Mazzetti, Eric Schmitt, "US Relies on Contractors in Somalia Conflict," *New York Times*, 10 Aug 2011. The author noted in visits the trademark white armored SUVs with beverage cooler between front seats that suggest at least suspicion of some continuing connection to those who occupy safe houses, etc.

<sup>58</sup> "French Somalia Raid 'Was a Trap,'" *Africa Confidential*, 54:2 (18 Jan 2013), 11.

<sup>59</sup> The French Defense Minister's alleged that Shabaab fighters were forewarned of the French attack as local residents detected the approaching French force. Agence France Presse, "France Defends Failed Somali Raid as Toll Mounts," 13 Jan 2013. See also "French Somalia Raid 'Was a Trap,'" *Africa Confidential*, 18 Jan 2013, 11.

<sup>60</sup> "Second French Soldier Dies after Somalia Raid – Rebels," BBC, 14 Jan 2013; "Soldat français tué en Somalie: publient des photos," *Le Monde*, 14 Jan 2013.

suicide bomb attack on the Prime Minister's home inside the presidential compound by a former intelligence service employee.<sup>61</sup> Suspicions of infiltration give individual political actors incentives to align with foreign security experts and their resources if this gives them personal protection and access to intelligence and other tools to apply in their own political struggles. An example of how cross-cutting allegiances can link the government and Al Shabaab rebels appears in a UN report that noted how a fellow kinsman who was an advisor to the president maintained relations with the army chief of logistics and was responsible for setting up a private security company in Mogadishu also was implicated in "leakage" of government weapons to Al Shabaab.<sup>62</sup> Local political actors integrate these assumptions of personal ties, shifting multilayered commitments and mutual infiltration into relations with foreign military experts, treating the latter as parts of these networks. American engagement in Somalia's "clan" and personal politics caused one notable figure to assume infiltration of a former NISA (intelligence agency) director: "He must be better linked to you [the Americans] than to [TNG president] Sharif" and took this as evidence of the Americans' clan politics agenda.<sup>63</sup>

The main challenge facing foreign security experts is to find reliable local partners with relatively stable and predictable political interests who will reliably use resources to accurately identify and target the armed groups that are the focus of foreign security concerns. Foreign security experts are realistic about the inability of Somalia's government to assume this role. An aide to a former defense minister reported, for example, that his boss was told that he was "not

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<sup>61</sup> The author noted that the later blast scene required attackers to pass through multiple checkpoints. See also "Suicide Blast by Offices of Somali President and PM," BBC, 19 Jan 2013.

<sup>62</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Monitoring Group*, 19 Sept 2014, 33.

<sup>63</sup> Interview, Osman Ato, Mogadishu, 1 July 2012. He stressed to the author that he "was not an enemy of the American devils" even though they held him captive in connection to the 1993 Black Hawk Down incident.

authorized” to enter a compound housing private security forces and speculated that “Americans hesitate because they aren’t confident about the Somali government’s reliability.<sup>64</sup> A high official complained that new private security and military companies simply appeared in Somalia, “a problem that started with the TFG and we inherited” and that security was “not in the hands of the state.”<sup>65</sup>

The foreigners’ alternative to the Somali state is to construct their own networks of armed groups, a form of foreign military clientelism that navigates as much as possible around the Somali government while maintaining the façade of protocol and rhetorical respect for the government’s sovereign status. From this perspective, private security companies are the institutional structures around which to mobilize local networks to gather intelligence needed to target and attack individuals. This ad hoc form of counterinsurgency dispenses with the state and its responsibility to guarantee domestic order.

UN experts who investigated arms imports in violation of UN sanctions identify some of the larger foreign security firms.<sup>66</sup> These stand at the top of a local hierarchy of firms and are joined by numerous local private security companies that operate as contractors to the larger firms. Some of these local firms benefit from skills and resources provided by formal security assistance programs, such as one run by a former police commissioner.<sup>67</sup> Proprietors of other firms include people who have significant histories of involvement in Somalia’s various

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<sup>64</sup> Lunchtime discussion with Somali informants, Mogadishu, 18 Aug 2013.

<sup>65</sup> Interview, State Minister for the Presidency, Mogadishu, 17 Aug 2013.

<sup>66</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Panel of Experts, 2013*, Annex 6.3, “Private Security Companies,” 346-61.

<sup>67</sup> For example, Ilaalo Security, <http://ilaalosecurity.com/>.

conflicts.<sup>68</sup> This hierarchy fits into the clientelist structure of local politics, and connects the foreign “patrons” to the social networks and local political deals that provide the foreign firms with an alternative channel for gaining insider knowledge that is not entirely dependent upon a relationship with the Somali government.

One local security operation illustrates one pattern of alternative links. Somalia-Fishguard was charged with ensuring maritime security of the Somali coast under the protection of Saladin Security.<sup>69</sup> The latter firm was founded in 1978 by former officers of the British army, and operates a Ugandan subsidiary, Saracen Uganda. The brother of Ugandan President Museveni and his advisor on military matters is the managing director of the Ugandan firm. Other officers of the Ugandan People’s Defense Force (AMISOM’s largest contributor, with more than 6,200 soldiers in early 2015) hold positions in private security companies that serve as sub(-sub)-contractors for European or US-based firms that provide logistics and security for AMISOM operations and for new actors such as EUCAP Nestor, the EU’s maritime security mission. This civilian mission’s office is located near the British embassy in a controlled access area adjacent to the Mogadishu airport.

The heads of local Somali security firms that serve as contractors for foreign operators come from a variety of backgrounds. Several of the larger firms consist of local militias under the control of local businessmen. Some of these businessmen were recruited by US security services in the early 2000s to serve as a counterbalance of the Islamic Courts Union and to support the return of the Transitional Federal Government to Mogadishu in 2007. These

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<sup>68</sup> List of private security companies in author’s possession; compiled from field observations and discussions, Mogadishu, Aug 2013 & Aug 2014.

<sup>69</sup> “Somalia-Fishguard Is No Longer in Mogadishu’s Good Books,” *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 2 Jan 2015.

businessmen have their own networks of kinship obligations, but their attachment to foreign operators gives outsiders an alternative channel to this social knowledge that does not require compromising with government officials or observing pretenses of formal bureaucratic hierarchies or the outsider's deference to the prerogatives that sovereign authorities conventionally claim.

[Author's note: More can be said about local security service contractors. The capacity of contractors to manipulate their patrons is an important related issue that deserves more comprehensive treatment, but here is an anecdote: Last summer while in Mogadishu a nearby kinsman of our host was attacked by a "government" force that intended to disarm them. The event stalled, and there were about four hours of persistent fighting that drew in AMISOM forces. The analysis the next morning among local interlocutors focused on two propositions. One was that the "government" force has been compromised and old scores were being settled through manipulating execution of an official disarmament program. Another theory was that the attack involved a commercial dispute that was due to the target's close association with an American security provider and the target's implication in some of the American's local business activities that excluded some groups that had the ear of local officials who would authorize the 2am "disarmament exercise".]

## **Conclusion**

This survey of international security cooperation across the three main regions of the Somali space illustrate the relationships between local state-building projects and degrees of foreign focus in clientelist networks that are involved in providing security. The ordering of personal networks around private security agencies plays a role in each of these contexts. This

arrangement facilitates the connection between foreign security experts and local security experts who are embedded in domestic networks that otherwise are opaque to outsiders and usually beyond the reach of cooperative arrangements with foreign officials. For those regions such as Somaliland that possess fairly stable bureaucratic state structure, even if it conceals considerable ongoing deal-making and negotiation between kinship networks, international private security forms can contribute to this bureaucratic state-building project. Somaliland's security cooperation shows how these agents of global commerce and power can strengthen states, even those that are very weak. As two scholars of the private realm of security provision note: "Within these assemblages, state power is certainly reconfigured, but is not necessarily weakened. Instead, the very distinctions between the public and the private, the global and the local are rearranged, producing new practices and forms of power that cannot be neatly contained within the geographical boundaries of the nation-state."<sup>70</sup>

Global concerns about the capacity of Somaliland's government to be able to control and reliably certify that its territory and people within it do not pose security threats beyond its borders fit Jean-François Bayart's general observation about how the US pursuit of security through this hybridity of state and private security assists in the territorialization of power as it concentrates coercion in the hands of dominant ruling cliques that satisfy their foreign friends of the credibility of their domestic capacity to impose order. Addressing US assistance to anti-Soviet Afghan groups and then post 9-11 counter-terrorism, Bayart observed: "This sequence of events... provides us with a striking summary of the fusion between the processes of formation of the state and those of globalization, on the basis of systematic hybridization of the private and

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<sup>70</sup> Rita Abrahamsen & Michael Williams, *Security Beyond the State: Private Security in International Politics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3.

the public.”<sup>71</sup> Ideally, from this point of view, this hybrid relationship incorporates and benefits from the local insider’s knowledge and authority in the intricate social networks that provide access to detailed information and that are the real tools of order on the ground.

Puntland and Somalia’s Mogadishu-based government illustrate the limits of this hybrid approach. The overwhelming dominance of personal and kinship networks undermine the credibility of local officials as providers of security beyond their narrow kinship or personal networks, and thus as credible guarantors of security to outsiders. The record of direct engagement of Mogadishu-based Somali officials in this project of domestic order is that greater inputs of foreign resources into domestic security through state channels fail to result in greater commitment among local officials to participate in this project and likely contribute to their incentives to pursue agendas that undermine it.

This it is not possible to pursue state-building counterinsurgency in the current Mogadishu setting, since there is no government that has the political will or capacity to directly engage the population and there is no armed force that is willing or able to protect such a government. The alternative is a counterterrorism strategy that uses connections to local armed groups through foreign construction of military clientelist networks to identify and track targets as accurately as possible. The application of this form of military clientelism to a longer-term state-building project would become feasible when a ruling clique is able to legitimate its authority among a wide group of Somalis. But that objective is no closer to realization than when AMISOM forces installed the government to Mogadishu in late 2011.

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<sup>71</sup> Jean-François Bayart [trans. Andrew Brown], *Global Subjects: A Political Critique of Globalization*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 75.