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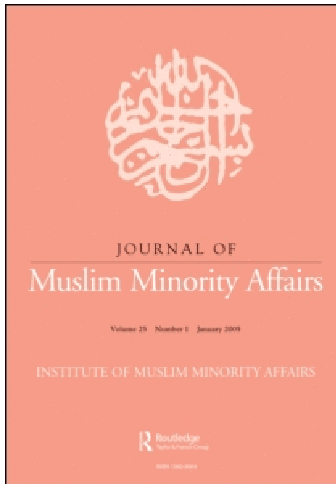

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Islam and Stability in Somaliland and the Geo-politics of the War on Terror

IQBAL JHAZBHAY

Abstract

This paper interprets the regional (geo-cultural/geo-Islamic) pressures interacting with localized Somaliland expressions of pastoral Sufi Islam and Wahhabi "Gulf Islam", and the rise of political Islam in North-East Africa. It also examines the geo-politics of the "war on terror" and the global Islamic civil war. Somaliland's culture of Islamic education, and the prognosis on Islam and stability in Somaliland, and how an Islamist ascendancy might affect Somaliland are reviewed to support this analysis. The Somaliland politics of religion dovetail into what has become the ultimate "bottom-line" of Somaliland: the achievement of international diplomatic recognition—or, at the very least, a workable contingent status that will facilitate the normalization of Somaliland's international relations.

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Gaal dil oo gaartisa sii
[You may kill an infidel but do it justly]. (Somali proverb)

Introduction

This paper, researched and prepared in 2005, is particularly relevant in placing into context the most recent 2006–2007 developments in southern Somalia, which saw the eclipsing of US-backed warlords by Somali Islamists (see Figure 1). In many ways, the implications of the scenario outlined in the body of this paper anticipated the events that actually unfolded and remain relevant to the continuing saga of developments in the Somali regions and the Horn of Africa.

This paper refers to Somaliland as the former British Protectorate, which borders Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia. Somalia refers to the former Italian Somaliland. Somalis today are also found in the neighboring countries of Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. The contentious pan-Somali aspiration of a "Greater Somalia" seeks to unite Somalis from the five territories of Somaliland, Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti.

A major factor that will have a continued bearing on the sustainability of Somaliland's stability in terms of ongoing reconciliation and reconstruction, ultimately affecting the prospect of its international recognition, is the influence of Islam: the interaction between Islam, as it has been practised in Somaliland over the centuries in its pastoral Sufi forms;[1] the more recent "political Islam", "jihadi Islamism" and "missionary activism"; and the geopolitics of the so-called "war on terror".[2]

This paper, therefore, will describe in more detail Somaliland's Islamic identity within that great swathe of geo-cultural terrain defined by Ali Mazrui as "Afrabia".[3] This entails looking at the evolution of Islam in the manner in which it has constituted the religious

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FIGURE 1. The Horn of Africa. *Source*: "Somalia, What Next?", *The Economist*, Vol. 382, No. 8512, 20 January 2007, p. 46.

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foundations of Somaliland society, interacting with Somaliland's links with the Arabian peninsula. The Arab/Islamic dimension of Somaliland society forms the historical backdrop for exploring the more recent contemporary developments associated with the rise of political Islam in North-East Africa.

The rise of political Islam, especially in the wake of the September 11, 2001 airplane hijacking and terror attacks in New York and Washington, DC, brings into view the contemporary context of Islam as a religious and political force along the Somali coast. How this impinges on Somaliland entails locating the rise of political Islam, and its links with the post-9/11 "war on terror", within a much broader context including the socio-political upheavals underway throughout the Muslim world.[4] Political Islam's impact within North-East Africa generally, and along the Somali coast in particular, may be seen as representing a theater portraying what might be defined as a Global Islamic Civil War. This larger struggle taking place within Islam, it will be argued, has shaped the geo-political terrain of the "war on terror" wherein the anti-US sentiment has become a convenient organizing prop around which to mobilize the different revolutionary tendencies at play within the Muslim world.[5] The Somali coast forms an integral part of this geo-political terrain of the Islamic civil war-cum-war on terror dynamics.[6] The localized manifestation of this larger upheaval, in turn, inevitably impinges on the influence of Islam in Somaliland, given the fertile ground for jihadi militant Islamist tendencies. These tendencies have gained a foothold in southern Somalia amid the different geo-political forces attempting to determine the current and future trajectory of the greater Somali region.[7]

A major agency for disseminating Islam as a religion and culture in Somaliland, as elsewhere throughout the Muslim world, has been education. The funding of religious and/or religious-based education by Arab/Islamic charities, which have emerged as a major vehicle for channeling what are identified as Wahhabi-Salafi expressions of Islamic fundamentalism and jihadist tendencies, is subjected to major scrutiny in terms of how the education–charities link is influencing Somaliland society. This examination relates directly to a prognosis of Somaliland's current and future stability in terms of Islam's impact on the country's political and security environment. The prospects for sustainable stability, in turn, are a constant factor in Somaliland's politics and diplomacy of gaining international recognition, which is a major passion of its elites and populace.

Somaliland's Islamic Identity in an "Afrabian" Perspective

Said S. Samatar, in a March 2005 presentation entitled "Unhappy masses and the challenge of political Islam in the Horn of Africa", labeled Somali Islam as a "frontier Islam"; an Islam "hemmed in on all sides by pagan and Christian interlopers" characterized by bellicosity and xenophobia, and "profoundly suspicious of alien influences".[8] Islam emerged in the Somali region during the ninth century. Although virtually 100% of the population are Muslim, there are many recognized interpretational differences in social practices among Somalis based on regional differences. These differences are reflected between northern and southern Somalia, and may, in fact, shed light on differences in their contemporary comparative stability. Thus, by writing in *Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa* (edited by Alex de Waal), Roland Marchal points out, when referring to Somaliland, that:

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> The former British colony of Somaliland (north-western Somalia), being the closest to Arabia, has more cultural bonds with Arab culture than other parts of the country [which] is reflected by the fact that women's public life is less developed than in the South and that up to now, fewer girls are sent to school than in the South, while the influence of the state has been weaker. The pastoral way of life, which is the main mode of production in Somaliland, does not encourage schooling and the reluctance to send children to school was certainly reinforced by the impact of the indirect rule practiced by British colonizers who, for budgetary reasons, tried to minimize any disruptions to Somaliland's social fabric.[9]

Abdi Samatar contends:

> The country's colonization and the economy's commercialization induced contradictory social processes. These processes simultaneously intensified men's control over women and their resources and created new opportunities for women's advancement. The dynamics generated by these twin processes conditioned emerging patterns pertaining to women's role and social location in northern Somalia [Somaliland].[10]

Roland Marchal's brief commentary is illuminating in terms of its implications regarding Somaliland's relative stability as compared with the anarchy in the south; the strong possibility that Somaliland's current stability is a function of its comparative conservatism due to British colonial policies that did not encourage assimilationist modernity. Hence, in a sense, southern Somalia's instability is a function of an urbanizing modernity that fragmented the southern Somali social formation under the former Italian rule.

Another view by William Reno opines that the "evidence below shows, colonial experiences were not decisive in shaping contemporary identity and political organization, though they are important for their significant influence on shaping social categories and social distribution of resources".[11]

This observation also reinforces earlier observations about the role that tradition has played in mediating modern expressions of Somali nationalism in the north-west as a contribution to the region's relative stability although, as has been clear, Somaliland's transition to its current stability has been far from smooth. To be picked up on later, the reference to the low level of schooling may also be instructive in terms of the current role of Islamic education in Somaliland, and elsewhere in North-East Africa, within the current climate of post-9/11 turbulence in the Muslim world. In the meantime, however, it is important to get a better understanding of the historical background of the Somali region's encounter with Islam. Overall, the Somali Islamic experience is depicted as unique within the North-East/Horn of Africa context. Marchal points out that, apart from the Somalia's long intimacy with Islam, "the social structures and organizations in the country, including the low level of urbanization, the co-existence of pastoral production systems in a large part of the country and agriculture in the inter-riverine area, and clanship" have combined to shape a form of Islam distinct from that in other countries in the Horn of Africa.[12]

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Hersi's Thesis on Somalia and Somaliland

In a dissertation written by Ali Abdirahman Hersi in 1977 on "The Arab Factor in Somali History: The Origins and the Development of Arab Enterprise and Cultural Influences in the Somali Peninsula", Hersi contends that "Somalis today are all Muslims largely observing the Shafi'i Sunnite school of law".[13] Moreover, Somalis "do not only constitute one of the two most thoroughly Islamized societies in tropical Africa (the other Zanzibar), but they also boast one of the highest percentages of adherence to Islam anywhere in the world. Islam as a religion and a system of values so thoroughly permeates all aspects of Somali life that it is difficult to conceive of any meaning in the term Somali itself without at the same time implying Islamic identity".[14]

According to Hersi, despite the geo-cultural presence of Somalis in Africa, including ethno-linguistic and cultural affinities with other neighboring African communities, "the Somalis identify through their religion, emotionally and culturally with Arabia and the wider world of Islam".[15] But how what he terms an "Arabico-Islamic identity" came to be in terms of the when and whom of conversion has not been well established. Given the fact that the Islamization of the Somali region was one of the least documented aspects of Somali history, one of Hersi's objectives was to attempt to reconstruct, with the help of Somali oral traditions and external written sources, a "fairly well defined outline" of this process. However, to start with, ethnographically, Hersi points to Somalis belonging to "Eastern Cushites" and that the original movement of Somalis in North-East Africa was northward and eastward into the Horn rather than southward and westward out of it. These movements placed them in close proximity to the Oromo ethno-linguistic bloc that is also heavily Islamic and constituting of a major, if not majority, population within current-day Ethiopia, Africa's second most populous country. The introduction of Islam into this region is associated with the emergence of Arab and other south-west Asian Muslim influences in the North-East African region, although it appears, from Hersi's account, that Somalis gravitated more toward Islam than an Arab-Islamic identity. The year 1974 witnessed Somalia's formal entry into

the Arab world's multi-lateral body, the Arab League, with economic advantages in mind. I. M. Lewis concluded that this move "did, however, make the Somali government's internal policies and external alignments much more directly susceptible to the powerful scrutiny of the conservative Arab states".[16]

In summary, the introduction of Islam into the Horn of Africa, according to Hersi, and its subsequent spread inland, was an essentially peaceful phenomenon; the region being spared the Arab wars of conquest when Muslims were expanding into the regions of Byzantium and the imperial realms of Persia. The explanation offered for this relative non-violence and Arab restraint is the unavailability, at the time, of a Muslim navy. Further, it is suggested that African territories across the Red Sea were less attractive to Arabs than those regions in and around their south-west Asian locus of Islamic expansion, including the Byzantine province of Levant, Egypt. Five Muslim armies are recorded to have penetrated into North-East Africa prior to the sixteenth century, according to Hersi. Of these, only the one dispatched by the Umayaad Caliph Abdulmalik Ibn Marwan (685–705) to East Africa in the closing years of the seventh century had the intention of spreading Islam. In the absence of conquering Muslim armies, the task of teaching Islam to the Somalis, at least in the initial stages of its introduction, devolved upon individual missionaries and Muslim merchants, "and the more so upon the latter since there never was a properly organized program of missionary effort in Islam during this early period".[17]

With particular reference to Somaliland, Hersi contends that some authorities maintain that Islam was introduced to the Zaila region of "northern Somaliland" in the early years of Prophet Muhammad's teaching by Muslim escapees who sought refuge from Meccan attacks in "Abyssinia"—although, in fact, "there is strong evidence to show that Islam was present in Somalia within the first century of its history".[18] Hersi places the period of Islamic proselytizing, and conversions on a significant scale, as only taking place after the arrival of immigrant groups into the Somali region towards the end of the seventh century. Initially, in the north-west of what is now Somaliland, the introduction of Islam is associated with the arrival of a few Arab sheikh notables. Hersi refers to there being "three Arab notables who are in northern Somali traditions most closely associated with the spread of Islam in the Horn of Africa during the first five centuries of the Islamic era". The first to arrive was Sheikh Abdurahman Ibn Ismail Jabarti, followed by Sheikh Ishaq ibn Ahmed of Alawi pedigree, having left Baghdad in 498 AH/1104–5. The third was Sharif Yusuf Aw Barkhadle, also known as Yusuf al-Ikhwan, "the single most accomplished missionary saint in Somali popular memories".[19]

It is estimated that in the vicinity of the Banaadir coast of southern Somalia, there would have been no awareness of Islam before the convergence there of the Omani Julanda refugees, who hailed from the Gulf state of Oman, and Abdulmalik's Syrian forces in the 690s. An early sectarian Sunni–Shiite divide is suggested by Hersi through his reference to the Shiite Zaidis arriving on the Banaadir coast in the year 739–740 and dominating this region for almost two centuries, although, on the basis of Ibn Battuta's reports, the influence of Shia Islam in the Somali region is generally overlooked. "These authors . . . conveniently overlook the obvious Shia elements in the contemporary Somali Islam as well as the occasional reports by mediaeval authorities of Shia presence in the Horn of Africa".[20] The Shia presence was apparently the source of no small amount of tension between the Islamic presence in greater eastern Africa and the Middle Eastern seats of Muslim authority. Hersi notes that "one cannot help but suspect that the reported antagonism between the East African coast and the Baghdad Caliphate during the eighth and ninth centuries, and the repeated East African rebellions against Abbasid suzerainty were in part at least expressions of sectarian hostilities inspired, or led, by these Zaidis".[21]

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It appears from both local oral traditions and supportive external sources that, in the first few centuries, Islam was confined to what Hersi calls "the coastal Asiatic settlements" and among neighboring Somali groups. According to contemporary Chinese reports of that period, ninth-century Berbera, in what is now Somaliland, was either non-Islamic or hardly touched by Islam. However, by the thirteenth century, Islam had become well-entrenched throughout the Somali region. Islamization appears to have occurred fairly rapidly along the coast, given its proximity to the Arabian Persian Gulf, but was slow to disseminate in the countryside. It took many more centuries of dedicated, and sometimes concerted, efforts of Arab missionary labor before anything approaching universal acceptance of Islam was reflected amongst the nomads of the interior. Arab missionary activity, which, at its initial stages concentrated on the coast, was, by the twelfth century, beginning to move inland and have an impact on the interior. This momentum was accompanied by a larger body of Arab and Persian political, and sometimes, religious, dissidents fleeing the persecution of south-west Asian Islamic Caliphates.

The movement of Islam inland was given further impetus by the fourteenth century polarization between Abyssinian Christendom, in what is now Ethiopia, and the Muslim principalities to its south-east. Contestation between Islam and Christianity for dominance in the Horn of Africa dates from the seventh-century advent of Islam in North-East Africa. This struggle was accompanied by internal "jihad" within Islam as war was waged against semi-nomadic groups as well as remnants of indigenous non-Christian and non-Islamic faith communities. These struggles were fueled by the larger struggle against the Christian Abyssinian highlands. As this sectarian war unfolded, by the sixteenth century, according to Hersi, Islam had become the "national religion" of Somalis. Somalis "bore the brunt of the struggles against Christianity on the Horn of Africa, and from that time on became culturally and, especially, emotionally tied to the Arab world".[22]

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Samatar's Account of the Islamization of Somalia and Somaliland

The irony of this account by Hersi is that Abyssinian Christendom has been depicted by some, such as Said Samatar, as an early refuge for Muslims fleeing persecution. In Samatar's account, "Islam may well have come to the Horn of Africa before the new religion flourished in Arabian soil" since, some years before the Prophet Muhammed's flight from Mecca in 622, a party of more than 70 Muslim converts fled fearful persecution in Mecca to seek refuge in the Christian court of the Abyssinian king in Axum (Axum is today in the province of Tigrai in Ethiopia). Astonishingly—and mysteriously—the king promptly gave sanctuary to the fleeing Muslims. The pagan chiefs of Mecca chased the fleeing Muslims and demanded the immediate surrender of the Muslim refugees, but the king adamantly refused to hand them over, risking "irreparable damage to the cordial relations in trade and goodwill between the two Red Sea neighbors".[23] This prompted a later Hadith—a canonical prophetic statement—that "Abyssinia is a land of justice in which nobody is oppressed" conveying the unmistakable point: "no jihad against Abyssinia".[24] In Samatar's view "the Hadith injunction of no jihad against Abyssinia does more to explain the survival of Abyssinian Christianity in the age of Islamic eruption on the global scene" during that period.[25] Of course, the Christian–Islamic contestation referred to by Hersi erupted centuries later, especially during the sixteenth century, after the fourteenth-century polarization between the faiths, referred to earlier by Hersi, and, as Samatar describes, characterized by "the devastating invasions" carried out by Ahmad al-Ghazi in an outbreak of hostilities between Muslims and Ethiopian Christians that Samatar attributes to "the

threat felt by the Muslims of an expansionist, re-energized Christian empire steadily—and inexorably—pushing eastwards towards the Muslim lowlands".[26]

The above account by Samatar may be instructive in terms of explaining the relative inter-faith détente that has existed between Christian and Islamic spheres of influence in the Horn of Africa. This tolerance has coincided with something of a natural geo-cultural co-existence between the Abyssinian Christian highlands of alternating Amhara–Tigrinia dominance and the coastal Red Sea Muslim lowlands stretching from Eritrea to the Somali coast. Attempts, which may be of a conscious or subconscious nature, have been made by the Saudi version of Wahhabi Islam to upset this religious ecology.[27] Some analysts[28] are of the view that Samatar and others overlook the simple fact that Somali xenophobia does not extend to other fellow Muslims, thus Muslims foreigners (including Arabs, Pakistanis and others) are welcomed easily into Somali society, which would mean that Somalis are open to their influences. The interaction of Sufi Islam with East Africa and Iraq, including political Islam's interaction with Egypt and Sudan, Wahhabism and other forms espoused by them, is a case in point. Islam is a profound cohesive factor in Somali society, more so than in other non-frontier Muslim countries that are not surrounded by non-Muslims.

This baseline historically rooted cultural geography may account for the relative stability that has existed in the Horn of Africa as far as religious rivalries are concerned. With respect to Somali Islam, however, this tolerance is reinforced by other attributes that, in Samatar's view, militate against the emergence of a militant political Islam in the region. Apart from the frontier quality of the Somali region's Islamic identity, bringing with it a bellicose xenophobia and aversion to external influences,[29] the underlying social disorganization endemic to the "segmentary lineage system" of Somali culture and what Samatar asserts to be its individualistic self-preservation tendency, further inhibits sectarian political mass mobilization and agency. The political potential of militant Islamism will be discussed at greater length later in this paper. Suffice it to stress here, however, that Somaliland's Islamic identity, within the broader context of Somali Islam, appears to be solidly located within a tradition of regional, geo-cultural, peaceful co-existence between Christianity, Islam and indigenous animistic tendencies. This tradition is defined by adherence to "the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence" and what Samatar describes as a tenuous affiliation to Sufi brotherhoods.[30]

Such brotherhoods, or "religious orders", have played a significant role in Somali Islam following Islam's initial expansion into the region. Furthermore, they appear to reinforce a pattern of Islamization of the Somali coast that starts in the north and penetrates into the Ethiopian Ogaden before disseminating south. The three Sufi orders in the order of their introduction into the region are the Qadiriyah, the Idrisiyah and the Salihiyah; the Qadiriyah being the oldest order in Islam with its introduction into Harar (Ethiopia) in the fifteenth century. Northern Somali *sheikhs* were the agents who spread the order amongst Oromos and Somalis in Ethiopia and later into the southern Somali interior. The Salihiyah also spread initially in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia following its emergence among the Arab founders of the Idrisiyah movement. Membership in a brotherhood is theoretically a voluntary matter unrelated to kinship, although, in reality, "lineages are often affiliated with a specific brotherhood and a man usually joins his father's order".[31]

The State of Islam in Somalia and Somaliland in the Twentieth Century

During the Somali military regime of Mohammed Siad Barre, this historically rooted and avowedly Islamic social and cultural infrastructure was largely suppressed. An example

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many human rights activists recall is Siad Barre's order to execute by a firing squad 11 clerics or *imams* who opposed the reform of women's family laws on inheritance and branded it as un-Islamic. This ghastly execution led to an uproar and, expressed by the then Syrian ambassador and dean of the Arab diplomatic corps, led to his expulsion from Mogadishu.[32]

As a result, charting the evolution of Somali Islam into the more contemporary phase of its expression in the region is difficult. As Roland Marchal points out, "there is very little information on modern Islamist groupings during the Siyaad Barre regime", although before the end of the 1980s there seemed to be a number of mostly underground formations that began taking shape.[33] Based mostly on conjecture, what was to become Somaliland again figures importantly in these developments. A movement called "Waxda" was launched in August 1969 in Hargeisa according to Marchal. It was established as an "Islamic institution whose teaching referred increasingly to Islamists such as Sayyid Qutb, Mawdudi, Nadawi and other new Islamist thinkers. When the secularist trend became prominent in the regime, they went underground and started publishing leaflets against the 'socialist' state".[34] By the late 1970s, they had spread south.

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After the Barre regime wreaked devastation on Hargeisa and Burco in 1988, Waxda resurfaced in Ethiopian refugee camps as a supporter of the Somali National Movement, as Somaliland's premier liberation organization. A counter-perspective contends that most of the young Waxda adherents emigrated to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, and many traveled for further studies in the West. They did not figure at all in the Somali National Movement movement.[35] Waxda has not been revived as an institution, but many of its members remain together informally engaged in trade, non-governmental organization (NGO) work, and so forth. Existing evidence suggests that the Waxda movement has adopted a long-term strategy of developing a Muslim society through influencing by example, much in the same way as that of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, via schools, charitable work, trade, and so on. They have given up any radical appearance and have even adopted Western clothing such as suits and ties.

Importantly, after Somaliland's declaration of independence in 1991, Waxda had become "deeply involved in educational institutions, (while) keeping close links with Kuwait".[36] Apart from Waxda, other proto-Islamist groupings in the Somali region appeared to have their origins and locus of influence in southern Somalia in and around Mogadishu. This pre-September 11, 2001 evolution of Islamist precursor groups, before and after the demise of the Barre regime, sets the stage for examining the rise of political Islam in the greater North-East African sub-region amid the emergence of Somaliland as an independent, although unrecognized, state.

Somaliland and the Rise of Political Islam in North-East Africa

The rise of political Islam in North-East Africa, the Middle East and south-west Asia is intimately linked to the legacies of Cold War destabilization resulting from proxy wars that raged throughout these regions, fuelled by US–Soviet competitive militarization. Somalia is an exemplary case in point. Mamdani contends, although this view remains contentious, that "under the presidency of Ronald Reagan, who was eager to use the Saudis as foils for the Soviet Union, Wahhabism was elevated to the status of a liberation theology—one that would free the region of communism".[37]

Under Siad Barre, "scientific socialism" was imposed as the official ideology that, combined with the suppression of clan-based affiliations, was a basis for political mobilization. This fueled resentment amongst Somalis, generally as a result of their continued

adherence to more relaxed traditional forms of "eclectic, Sufi Islam", according to a recent conference presentation on "Strategic Security Challenges: The Special Case of the Horn of Africa" by Ruth Iyob and Edmund Keller.[38] Similar "scientific socialist" and/or military-nationalist suppressions of traditional culture and Islamic observance in the Muslim world, in Algeria and Afghanistan for example, helped stoke even more intense backlashes of resentment.[39] These ultimately fueled Islamist political mobilization in opposition to such regimes. This was especially the case in countries like Somalia and Afghanistan that had been closely aligned with the Soviet Union; more so in the case of Afghanistan than in the case of Somalia. However, the politicization of Islam in Somalia occurred in a larger sub-regional North-East African context that saw Sudan emerge as the epicenter of Islamic militancy in the run-up to 9/11.

Iyob and Keller make reference to the *coup d'état* that occurred in 1989 in Sudan, leading to the establishment of a theocratic Islamist state. In their view, this was "a culmination of the long struggle of Islamists against local communists and liberal capitalists", while "indicating the opening of a new chapter of open animosity against the West in general and the United States in particular".[40]

Meanwhile, the unraveling of the Barre regime in Somalia and the escalating warfare in the north generated an exodus of Somalis to the Middle East and to Italy and throughout the rest of the world. Thus, the rise of political Islam in the Middle East and North-East Africa coincided and interacted with repression and conflict-generated social upheaval throughout the Somali coast.[41] This resulted in the growth of a globalized Somali diaspora community, with increasing exposure to the outside world, and in the creation of expanded links between Somalis in the homeland and the rest of the world.[42] This process reflected a growing integration of all Somalis into the escalating process of globalization through remittances of foreign currency, along with leading to the Somalis' adaptation of modern communications technologies and receptivity to new ideologies and concepts of political alignment.[43] In fact, "the large-scale migration of Somali workers to the Middle East and elsewhere from the 1970s until the early 1980s led to the growth of a remittance economy (much like that of the Sudan during the same period) and the emergence of a diasporic community with political clout as has already been demonstrated in Somaliland's politics".[44]

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Wahabbism and the Sufi Orders

One of the socio-ideological spin-offs of this diaspora phenomenon among Somali migrants in the Middle East was conversions to Saudi-based Wahhabism.[45] According to Iyob and Keller, this resulted in clashes with the Somali region's indigenous brotherhoods. The interesting twist here is that, in the north-west region that has emerged as Somaliland, the comparative stabilizing influence of the Qadariyyah has been a positive development. "The north, historically linked to the Wahabbists because of the preponderance of adherents of the Salihiyya ... proved more amenable to the gradual Islamization of its society" compared with southern Somalia. There, southerners, according to Iyob and Keller, tended to view the revival of Islam as part of a "faith-cantered conflict" in a continuing proliferation of fragmenting internal differences among Somalis.[46]

This serious tension between the Wahhabi inclined Salihiyya order (*tariqah*) and the Qadariyyah *tariqah*, emerged in 1909 when Sayyid Muhammad 'Abd Allah Hasan and his followers killed the Qadariyyah Sufi leader Sheikh Uways bin Muhammad, and his followers.[47] Sayyid Muhammad was head of the Salihiyya order and was influenced by the most conservative reformist voices in the Arabian Peninsula, including the teachings

of Muhammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhab (d.1787). Much has been written on Sayyid Muhammad’s credentials as a nationalist leader[48] who opposed British colonialism, but little has been written on the Somali *sheikhs* and *‘ulama* who opposed Sayyid’s austere interpretation of Islam.[49] As the case of Sheikh Uways demonstrates, many opposed the pro-Wahhabi approach of Sayyid Muhammad’s teachings.[50]

Clearly, the Qadariyyah *tariqah* of Uways as a pan-Muslim order far outstripped Sayyid Muhammad’s Salihiyya order in membership and territorial scope. Under the Qadariyyah banner, the *tariqah* spread throughout southern and central Somalia and along the east coast of Africa, as far south as Mozambique. Of particular note is the fact that Qadariyyah leaders permitted the practice of *xee*r (Somali customary law) in local communities as long as it did not violate the sprit of Islam too seriously. On the regional front, the Qadariyyah *tariqah* developed active links in regional towns such as Harar and Jigjiga in Ethiopia. The Qadariyyah were popularized in the Horn of Africa by many *sheikhs*, notably by Sheikh ‘Abd al-Rahman bin Ahmed al-Zayla’i (c.1820–1880), who hailed from the Somaliland northern coastal town of Zayla’. Sheikh Zayla’i is credited with the foundation of a new sub-order of the Qadariyyah *tariqah*, known as Zayl’iyya.[51]

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A closer examination of Qadariyyah sources not only reveals the existence of early Somaliland *‘ulama* who were vehemently opposed to the spread of pro-Wahhabi ideology, but also shows that they were also in touch with the intellectual currents of the wider Muslim world. Qadariyyah sources introduced their followers to the writings of classic Sufi scholars such Ibn Al’Arabi and Sahl Tustari. Sheikh Uways’ poetry was a strong medium of literacy, and in one of his noted poems he defamed the followers of Sayyid Muhammad, referring to them as:

> They make a clamour, a wailing and groaning
> And howling like mournful dogs.
> [*lahum zajij wa ineenun wa janeenun wa fahihun kal kilab al-nahiya*][52]

Often, in popular trading circles in the 1950s and early 1960s, Somaliland traders who had been to Saudi Arabia referred to all poorly trained religious teachers as “Wahhabis who did not know much about Islam”.[53]

This regional difference between north and south Somaliland is additionally ironic in as much as the progressive collapse of the state in southern Somalia would come to be viewed as a facilitative breeding ground for the very Wahabbi-aligned Islamist terrorism that was reasonably absent in an increasingly stable and autonomous north-west with closer historical ties to Saudi Arabia. This is suggestive of differing social impacts linked to comparably different political outcomes between the north and the south. The fact that this distinctly Islamist revival associated with new Somali converts to Wahhabism carried with it a growth in Islamic charities established by the local brotherhoods, which, according to Iyob and Keller, “loosened the hold of state institutions on both urban and rural communities” throughout the Somali region.[54] Although Iyob and Keller do not carry their analysis into how the migratory-rooted influence of Wahhabism impacted on the state’s hold on Somali society leading to the growth of regional autonomies in Puntland and Somaliland, what is suggestive from their account is a situation whereby a comparatively less urbanized and centralized north was better able to cope with these new influences that, in the southern context, only reinforced the south’s centrifugal tendencies toward a state collapse amidst the privatizing balkanization of southern Somali’s warlord political economy in the post-Barre period.

What emerged then, with the rise of political Islam in North-East Africa with respect to the different Somali regions, are differential impacts of external forces: in this case, Wahhabism. In the north and south, these influences interacted with local brotherhoods (or *tariqas*) that, in turn, were interlinked with clans. In the north-west, which became Somaliland, the centrifugal tendencies of such developments did not materialize and/or were contained. In the south, things were different. As Iyob and Keller describe:

> In an environment where the boundaries of the Somali body politic had been shattered by violence, chaos, famine, and the ineffective yet disturbing presence of foreign troops, Somalis divided along clan lines, ideologies, and religious *tariqas* throughout the 1990s. They were plunged into a Hobbesian world, where communities were turned against each other in the pursuit of power, resources, and legitimacy. Submerged historical conflicts, which had been subordinated to the larger goals of Pan-Somalism and nationalism, re-emerged with the collapse of state institutions and superpower patronage . . . The north-south divide—between the former British Somaliland and Italian Somalia—exploded into full force, bringing with it the religious-cum-clan cleavages that had characterised the two regions' relationship in the colonial and postcolonial period.[55]

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Esa believes that the above conclusion is not entirely correct. The North–South cleavage was already in place from the very beginning of the Union. It did not re-emerge. It only found expression in the collapse of the state. Islamic sectarianism did not figure in this and had no influence at all.[56]

In Iyob and Keller's view, UN-sponsored and US-led humanitarian intervention in 1992 accelerated what they depict as the "globalization" of Somali political and ethno-regional conflicts, of which Somaliland is seen as an outcome.[57] This evolution of the interaction between religion and politics in a disintegrating Somali environment coincided with the evolution of political Islam in the crucible of anti-Soviet conflict in south-west Asia, centering on Afghanistan. This Cold War struggle facilitated a convergence between the US and Pakistan under the Islamist-oriented military regime of Zia-ul-Haq, and between the US and Saudi Arabia in nurturing the jihadist tendencies within political Islam that would blossom into the insurgent force currently challenging the *status quo* throughout the Arab/Muslim world, and challenging international stability in general.[58]

In terms of setting the stage for a more religiously charged political environment in the North-Eastern Horn of Africa, the jihadist momentum emanating from the anti-Soviet victory in Afghanistan was further fuelled by the growing US military presence in the Persian Gulf following the first US-led war against Iraq in 1990. This brought about a shift in focus from a jihadist challenge to the eventually defeated Soviet occupation in Afghanistan to a new focus. It challenged the growing US strategic presence in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East in general, combined with mounting frustrations over US-backed Israeli occupation of the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza.

East Africa emerged as the initial battleground in the rise of the anti-US jihadist challenge with the 1996 US embassy bombings that occurred in Kenya and Tanzania, followed by retaliatory US bombing raids in Sudan and in Afghanistan. This explosion of anti-US jihadist attacks helped contribute to a growing militarization of North-East Africa in the encirclement of Islamist Sudan by Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda in an anti-Khartoum coalition bolstered by US military aid. At the same time, the Islamist bombings in Kenya and Tanzania that ushered in the international awareness of al-Qaeda placed the spotlight on greater east Africa and the Horn as an emerging base of operations for jihadists; a development seen as facilitated by the destabilizing influence of state collapse in Somalia.[59]

According to some observers, the rise of political Islam in North-East Africa appears to be part of a growing sectarian trend that includes Ethiopia as well.

Al-Itihaad al Islaami

In a 2004 assessment of the state of federalism in Ethiopia, a report by Tom Patz in *Federations*[60] referred to the growing sectarian dimension due to ethnic clashes in Ethiopia associated with a lack of clear border demarcations between the country's provinces: "In sharp contrast to the past, conflicts based on religion are rising. Aggressive campaigns by Protestants and *Wahhabis*—a fundamentalist Muslim group—have led to violent clashes".[61] This observation set the stage for one of Ethiopia's major terrorist-related preoccupations emerging from Somalia's state collapse: the emergence of the Somali Islamist insurgent group, Al-Itihaad al Islaami (hereafter Al-Ittihaad). In 1992, according to Marchal, Al-Ittihaad emerged as the most visible of several Somali Islamist movements located in and around Mogadishu (the others being Ahlus Sunna wa Jama'a, a loose gathering of prominent Islamic traditionalists in the south; Ansar-e Sunna, a Wahhabist organization; and Al-Majma al-Islami, which tried to play the role of a Supreme Islamic Council in the wake of the collapse of the Siad Barre regime).

Al-Ittihaad was the only Somali Islamist grouping that became armed and, according to Marchal, "established organizational rules to differentiate between sympathizers and full members and thereby exercise effective organizational discipline, including keeping the confidentiality of its internal discussions". Marchal continues:

> Its strategy of taking power by violence was one major point of difference with the others. There is also another striking difference: it was recruiting urban and semi-educated youth while other armed groups were giving priority to nomads. To a large extent it is the only group that set up a national or at least regional strategy and tried to organize its activities all over Somalia and in the Ethiopian Ogaden. Since very little is known on its internal coordination and membership, it is difficult to describe the conditions in which it developed. What is sure is that it obtained support and training from Sudan and invited "Afghans" to help establish training centers for its new members. Since some of its cadres were senior officers from the former national army, it had informants in all factions and was seen by them in a very ambivalent way. At certain times, it was instrumental in challenging a contested leader or weakening his political discourse but, despite all its connections, Al-Ittihaad was never accepted among the factions because this would have allowed it to monopolize the Islamic reference.[62]

In summarizing the Islamist identity of Al-Ittihaad and other such groups, Marchal saw difficulty in establishing their ideological profile; Al-Ittihaad had never spelled out an international terrorist agenda, except for expressing solidarity with other radical Islamist groupings. Its involvement in Ethiopia was linked to a 20-year history in which many Ogaden Somalis found refuge in Somalia and later played a role in connecting Somali armed factions with Ethiopian ethnic insurgent nationalist movements such as the Ogaden Liberation Front and the Ogaden National Liberation Front. The Ethiopian government's vested interest in portraying Al-Ittihaad as a terrorist-driven movement inhibited an independent assessment of its influence and of alleged threat level within Ethiopia.[63] Otherwise, according to Marchal, closely associating Al-Ittihaad with al-Qaeda is debatable.[64]

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In as much as Al-Ittihaad and similarly inclined groups appeared to all have the same Islamic reference points, there has been no clear-cut doctrinal or ideological boundaries between them and their sympathizers, many of whom have shifted from one group to another. This seemed to be attributed to the fact that, as compared with Sudan, religious education was not impressive in Somalia for lay people. On the other hand, Al-Ittihaad and an Islamist NGO called al-Islaah further distinguished themselves by establishing social welfare support infrastructures that helped fill gaps left by the collapse of the government. This included the managing of orphanages, schools and health centers manned by recruited staff who had no future in the context of a civil war and state-collapse environment. In terms of security, the instability of Mogadishu encouraged Al-Ittihaad, as early as 1991, to redeploy its militias elsewhere in southern Somalia and even more northerly in Puntland's Boosaaso community. This latter proximity is what has presented the potential of Al-Ittihaad as a destabilizing security threat to Somaliland. The idea behind the redeployments from Mogadishu was to establish coastal strongholds that would allow the movement to take over the ports and get resources from them to underwrite other activities, at first "military reinforcement and then other socially-oriented projects including control of mosques, schools and the like".[65]

The emergence of Al-Ittihaad and other Islamist formations in the Somali region during the 1990s coincided with the early stages of the Somaliland national experiment in the north-west. The emergence of these groups reflected what has been described as an "Islamist revival" in Somaliland.[66] During the first decade of Somaliland independence when the new republic, isolated by non-recognition by the rest of the world, was struggling internally to establish itself as a credible state alongside the neighboring regional autonomy experiment in Puntland, the existence of an Islamist threat to Somaliland's integrity does not seem to have emerged as a major factor. In any case, the region's historic geo-cultural affinity with the Arabian Persian Gulf and its conservative Islamic influences may have obscured the impact that such tendencies could have had on its local politics, relative to a more urbanized south dominated by Mogadishu where the polarization between modernity and tradition within the Somali national project appeared more pronounced. John Drysdale observed that there was more aversion to tradition in the south than in the north-west, where the brand of post-colonial Somali nationalism embodied in the Somali National Movement made allowances for an accommodation between tradition and modernity that would, no doubt, have reinforced the conservatism of Somaliland's Islamic identity as an integral part of the society's new republican identity *vis-à-vis* the rest of the Somali region.[67] A case in point is the Islamic creed in Arabic that appears on the new Somaliland national flag (*La ilaha illa Allah Muhammad Rasool lul-Allah*).

The Islamic groups in Somaliland often have tried to influence state building and reconstruction. Compromises were made. Often their efforts were curbed and kept in check. The late President Egal was wary of the Islamic movement and did not allow any intrusions from Islamic leaders. During the 2001 constitutional referendum, when a religious elder denounced the referendum as non-Islamic, Egal went on to Radio Hargeisa to publicly taunt him to participate in a debate on the subject. Later, when the Wahhabist inclined self-proclaimed Authority for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (*al-Hay'ah bil amri bil mahruf wan nahyi an al-mukar*) tried to influence legislation in Parliament, Egal put their chief in prison for almost a full month.[68]

But then, throughout this period, the politicization of Islam within a broader geopolitical context had yet to become the phenomenon that it was to become later in the 1990s, beginning with the al-Qaeda US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania

and reaching its international flash-point as a result of the jihadist suicide attacks in New York and Washington, DC on September 11, 2001. The September 11, 2001 attacks transformed the global environment as well as the regional security situation in the Afrabian Red Sea and Persian Gulf regions embracing North-East Africa and the Middle East.[69]

The close association that began to be made between state failure and collapse as a breeding ground and safe-haven for terrorism placed the turbulent politics of successive state rebuilding initiatives in the Somali coast in a new light. Within this context, Somali brands of militant Islamism and their international links in the Arab/Islamic world began to take on more of a sense of urgency that, in turn, has, over time, heightened the political and security risk factors impinging on Somaliland's lone governing experiment as well. For as the geo-political stakes surrounding the reconstitution of a Somali government have escalated in terms of the Arab stake running up against the security interests of Ethiopia, the political role of Islam within this mix has come to take on a greater importance and, in the process, has emerged as a factor in Somaliland's survival prospects.

Thus, it becomes necessary to take a closer look at the nature of the international and regional dynamics at play surrounding the rise of political Islam in North-East Africa in the new post-9/11 environment as they affect Somaliland. This new environment has come to be billed as one characterized by what in the West is considered the "war on terror", being led by the US but which may reflect something much more profound in terms of how this preoccupation with "terrorism" relates to the international upheaval unfolding within the Muslim world, which, necessarily, engulfs the Somali coast as well, including Somaliland.

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The Geo-politics of the War on Terror

This thesis holds that the so-called "war on terror", as it affects the Somali coast in general and Somaliland in particular, relates to a more seminal conflict within the Islamic branch of the Abrahamic inter-faith complex (which also includes Judaism and Christianity, hence belying notions of a civilizational clash between Islam and the West). This in effect involves the emergence of a "global Islamic civil war" in which the West emerges as a convenient and unwittingly willing accomplice through its predictable militarist responses to jihadist provocations—which may not be aimed mainly at the West, but may be aimed more at mobilizing support throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds for a thorough-going internal transformation within the *ummah*.

While this concept has emerged as only a tentative interpretation of a contemporary "call and response" in the dynamics of conflict between Western (primarily Anglo-American-led) militarist interventions in the Muslim world, and that world's jihadist vanguard, it requires substantial fleshing out in the light of the actual conflicted internal dynamics unfolding within Islam. Somaliland and the Somali coast generally are caught up in the eye of the storm of this conflict. The Somali coast provides a proving ground for this strategy, and supplies an opportunity that is not yet available in the Middle East.

One commentator, Francis Kornegay, in analyzing the post-9/11 backdrop to the ongoing war in Iraq and efforts by the US to extricate itself from this conflict, contended that "what the Bush administration and allies have not grasped is that they transformed Iraq into a major theatre in an essentially 'global Islamic civil war', one featuring a transnational guerrilla 'terror war' against the US, though America, arguably, is not the main target".[70] Kornegay continues:

> September 11 has been misdiagnosed as an attack against America as a beacon of freedom and prosperity. More probably it was a means of baiting the world's lone superpower into assuming the kind of militarist patsy role it is currently performing; of unwittingly helping the jihadist coalition associated with al-Qaeda in mobilizing a world revolution within Muslim lands against incumbent regimes and elites. In the process, it aims to decouple these regions from western-led globalization while realigning them into a neo-traditionalist Islamist version of world federalism through a network of local and regional caliphates. This revolution would target moderate Islamic democratic alternatives to jihadism such as pro-western, secular Turkey as well as more authoritarian regimes such as Saudi Arabia. It has the potential to fracture into a many-sided intra-Islamic upheaval among different Sunni and Shi'ite tendencies interacting with an array of ethnic, tribal, class, inter-generational and regional rivalries throughout the Muslim world ...[71]

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The political geography of this conflict tracks the militarization of the entire "Afrabian" expanse, with the US-supported activities and/or basing presences and operations from the north-west African trans-Sahara to Djibouti, which has served as a major backstop to US military activities in the Persian Gulf and south-west Asia. The Djiboutian Horn of Africa US military presence, in turn, extends across the Indian Ocean into America's Asia–Pacific theater of operations supporting the Philippines in its counter-insurgency against Islamic guerrillas and terrorists.[72] It is therefore against this backdrop of the US-led "war on terror", centered on its occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, that this broad upheaval within the Muslim world interacts locally with the geopolitics of political Islam in North-East Africa; North-East Africa having been very much caught up in this "war on terror"-cum-Islamic civil war as witnessed in the alignments of both Ethiopia and Eritrea on the side of the US and Israel in waging the anti-terrorist war against jihadism in North-East Africa, even as these two African countries confront one another in their stalemated border war.

The apparatus of jihadism's geo-political dissemination into the Horn of Africa, as elsewhere in the Muslim world, took shape during the anti-Soviet collaboration, principally between Pakistan and the US, under the "Reagan Doctrine" of supporting anti-communist "Vietnams" in the Third-World regional conflicts in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In Afghanistan, this was in support of Islamic fundamentalist *mujahideen*; a project that also involved the emergence of a strategic Sunni Pakistan–Saudi Arabia funding and recruitment nexus, with Islamabad's Inter-Services Intelligence and Riyadh's Islamic charities–education infrastructure at the coalface. This collaboration became instrumental in disseminating what has come to be widely identified as the most intolerant strands of Wahhabist ideology throughout the Muslim world. In a review by Max Rodenbeck of *The Economist*, of a new book entitled *No God but God: The War Within Islam* by Reza Aslan, the author argues that what Kornegay terms a global civil war within Islam "is nothing less than a struggle over who will ultimately define the sweeping 'Islamic Reformation' that he believes is already well under way across much of the Muslim world".[73] In support of an Islamic global civil war thesis, Rodenbeck goes on to report that, in Aslan's view, "The West ... is 'merely a bystander—an unwary yet complicit casualty of a rivalry that is raging in Islam over who will write the next chapter in its story'".[74] Hence, the strategic importance of the Islamabad–Riyadh axis in nurturing a world that produced Osama bin Laden, with the covert connivance and funding of the US Central Intelligence Agency, combined

with the anti-Soviet alchemy of such intellectual gurus as Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was hell-bent on defeating the Soviets and, beyond that, balkanizing the Russian successor federation, all helped lead to the present global Islamic civil war.[75]

Post-9/11, the umbrella of global jihad associated with bin Laden and al-Qaeda was to be identified as the so-called International Islamic Front, operating through such fund-raising entities as the Lashkar-e-Toiba, which is linked to several *madrassas* in Pakistan. The extent of the reach of this network into Africa (as well as Asia) was described in a 2003 *Asia Times Online* article by B. Raman:

> A report carried by the News, the largest circulated English daily of Pakistan, on September 23, said that 147 foreign students were studying in the madrassa Jamia Abu Bakar of Karachi and that they have come from Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Uganda, Djibouti, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, the Philippines, Maldives, Australia, Ghana, *Somalia*, Cambodia, Cameroon, Kenya, Senegal and Afghanistan. (Emphasis added)[76]

This birds' eye view provides a context for honing in on the functioning of the Islamic charities–education connection in Somaliland. However, before focusing on this institutional ensemble, it is important to further recapitulate the geo-political environment impinging on the Somali region, within the context of this global Islamic civil war. To some degree, it could be argued that the climate generated by this internal upheaval in Islam provided a convenient tool for maintaining a destabilized region by external powers, principally Egypt and Saudi Arabia, allegedly under the guise of the Arab world desiring a regime of Arab/Islamic unity along the Somali coast as a countervailing force for containing Ethiopia. To be sure, none of the governments in this region have an interest in stoking jihadist momentum, which could conceivably mutate into a threat to these very governments. But geo-political pragmatism might also dictate (or could have dictated in the past) the encouragement of such extremist tendencies as a means of disrupting the consolidation of any political experiments that counter their geo-political and geo-cultural interests of these governments, and as a means of ensuring the containment of Ethiopia. In short, this could discourage developments that might strengthen Ethiopia's regional position.

This is where the threat of an insurgent movement like Al-Ittihaad becomes relevant to Somaliland's stability, although this movement was dismantled during the mid-1990s.[77] Such concerns would also extend to jihadist infiltrators who might, as a result of statelessness in the south, extend regional terror networks into Somaliland and threaten the foreign expatriate presence that has come to make that country the base of its operations. Heightened concern about Somaliland's vulnerability in this regard was generated by the murder of two British nationals outside Hargeisa on October 21, 2003. The deaths of Richard and Enid Eyeington followed closely on the heels of the killing of an Italian nurse, Annalena Tonelli, at a hospital in Boroma. Then, in April 2004, a GTZ (German NGO) vehicle was attacked on the road between Hargeisa and Berbera, killing a Kenyan woman and injuring a German project manager. Noteworthy about these murders and attacks, at the time, was that these developments coincided with the perceived interest of Somaliland's detractors in its destabilization, which would put it on par with Somalia in the south and deflect from its eventual—although elusive—recognition prospects.

Somaliland's former Foreign Minister, Edna Adan Ismail, claimed that the murders were carried out by al-Qaeda-linked terrorists.[78] This possibility appeared to foreshadow the unbalancing of North-East Africa's finely tuned co-existence between Islam,

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Christianity and indigenous faiths throughout a region characterized by stable religious pluralism. More specifically, if the murders were harbinger to more sinister trends, Somaliland's pastoral-Sufi.[79] The religious, cultural and social ecology could be placed under threat amid the expanding influence of extremist Saudi Wahhabism. In the wake of 9/11, the Saudis had come under increasing pressure from Washington to rein in their tendency toward exporting Wahhabist extremism. The prospect was that, under the circumstances of war and occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with the growing US military presence in Central Asia, plus anti-terrorist pressures in this region from Russia and China, Saudi Wahhabism could be shifting its export focus to the Horn of Africa.

According to Bashir Goth, at the time the British murders occurred "anyone who followed recent press reports from Somaliland would have read that a group of Saudi-oriented clerics calling themselves 'the Authority for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice' (*Hay'at al- amri bil mahruf wa al-nahyi an al-munkar*), an offshoot of its Saudi counterpart, has been demanding the enforcement of draconian rules on what Somalilanders wear, say and do in their private lives, compared with the historically relaxed harmony between Islam and Somali culture".[80] Goth's observation and the al-Qaeda claim made by former Foreign Minister Edna Ismail signaled, at the time, the possibility that a growing al-Qaeda presence might reflect a growing Wahhabist influence. Such a trend would converge with the interests of those regional actors in frustrating the Somaliland experiment. These possibilities were seen as ample indications of the need for an escalated and intensified peace diplomacy in the region to defuse conflicts in Sudan and tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as to reinforce the stabilization of the Somali coast.

Particularly unsettling were the results of an investigation into the 2003–2004 killings, indicating the establishment of a Somaliland jihadi network, which was linked to jihadist influences in Mogadishu. One suspect suggested the existence of a highly organized network headed by a self-styled Jihadist from Mogadishu who had earlier been linked to Al-Ittihaad. These links also reportedly included contacts to al-Qaeda. At least two of the Somaliland assassins connected to these crimes had trained in al-Qaeda's Afghan camps. According to the International Crisis Group's research, while al-Qaeda never adopted the Somali region as a major base area, it has apparently maintained a "close association" with the region since the early 1990s. "Somalia's lack of a functioning central government, unpatrolled borders, and unregulated arms markets make it a useful platform for actions aimed at foreign interests elsewhere in the region".[81]

The International Crisis Group (ICG), however, also points out that the fortunes of Somali militants and/or those with jihadist tendencies had been in decline, although the 2003–2004 incidents are indicative of the extent to which such influences could penetrate into Somaliland. In fact, regardless of whether Al-Ittihaad is considered, the ICG report contends that an al-Qaeda cell is still considered a "regional" security threat.[82] More recently, the arrival of a new Somali settlement in Kenya, ushering forth the formation of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), appeared to re-energize Somali jihadists, who were quick to denounce the settlement and any external peacekeeping intervention to help re-establish the TFG as a new government in Mogadishu. The ICG references the pronouncements of prominent Somali jihadist Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, who denounced the proposed deployment of an African Union (AU) peacekeeping force; especially the prospect of such a force containing Ethiopian contingents.[83]

Even without Ethiopian forces in such a deployment, the very prospect of external intervention—even if it is an African peacekeeping force under AU auspices—generated

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warnings and forebodings that popular opposition to such a development would, in effect, galvanize southern Somalia into a transition from stateless warlordism to an incipient theocracy. Many feared that popular resistance would propel Islamists into leadership roles, with intervention tilting the balance toward the jihadists as opposed to more moderate Islamists. To head off such a development, the US came out against such a deployment, with the European Union, the Horn of Africa's Intergovernmental Authority for Development Partners Forum and the United Nations Security Council, following suit.

Fear of sparking a "jihadist movement" effectively retarded peacekeeping progress, accompanied by an expeditious transfer of the TFG from Kenya to Somali soil. This and more general threats of endemic violence and instability generated further complications, surrounding whether or not the UN should exempt prospective AU peacekeeping forces from a 1992 arms embargo on Somalia, in order for such a force to bring weapons into the country as a means of reinforcing its ability to protect the TFG's transitional institutions. Apart from the fact that the embargo has reportedly "had no practical effect—with the exception of barring the deployment of the AU-backed peacekeeping mission that would initially draw troops from Uganda and Sudan", this issue and the matter of external intervention and where the TFG should be located have split the new transitional regime down the middle, threatening to result in yet another failed Somali peace process.[84]

It is not clear, however, how the disintegration of the TFG, amid the contradictions inherent in the transition process, which involves interacting with the threat of a militantly Islamist insurgence in the south, will resonate within Somaliland itself. Based on past developments becoming seemingly militant, if not jihadist, in Mogadishu, infiltration into Somaliland from the south, which is a particularly dangerous prospect, may in turn create a situation in which the TFG fails to fill the governing vacuum. This vacuum would then be filled by a more avowedly Islamist presence; a presence that could, in Taliban fashion, bring order out of the chaos of warlord statelessness while assuming the mantle of uniting all of the Somali coast, possibly even rekindling the irredentist dynamic of the old, under the motivation of an expansionist Islamist militancy.

Such a scenario could conceivably rebound to Somaliland's benefit politically, in terms of its quest for recognition being forthcoming; to strengthen it as a bulwark against a militantly Islamist southern Somalia that, in turn, would represent a clear and present danger to the more moderately Islamist order in Somaliland. Alternatively, the historic cultural roots of co-existence between Islam and the clan system in Somaliland could well serve as something of an indigenous inoculation of Somaliland society from a militant political Islam. Somaliland, given its history of closer geo-cultural proximity to the Arab/Islamic Middle East, represents a comparatively "soft" Islamism underpinning an increasingly secularized polity. Secularization of the social order in Somaliland appears to organically emerge from what Marleen Renders identifies as the co-existence of Islam and the indigenous clan system in the north-western Somali region, emanating from the very beginning of Islam's introduction into the region.[85] According to some sources, "during the very first century of the Islamic calendar, Islam immediately blended with the emerging Somali clan system" in the north-west coastal region of what is now Somaliland.[86] The emergence of the clan system in the Somali north-west is believed, according to Renders, to have occurred with "the advent of Islam to the Somali lands: thus, Somali clans take pride in never having known 'paganism'".[87] This organic integration between religion, society and polity in Somaliland forms the context within which one can look more closely at the Islamic-based system of charity and education.

As is the case with the more militant Islamist tendencies within and external to Somali society, Somaliland's Islamic—as opposed to Islamist, in the sense of an avowedly political

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Islam, whether militant or moderate—social order embraces the same network of charitable and educational institutions and services as is characteristic in differing variations throughout the Muslim world. Given the importance of education as a vehicle for Islamist dissemination, a discussion of educational institutional arrangements in Somaliland may be instructive in assessing the country's susceptibility to a more general Islamist ascendancy.

Somaliland's Islamic Culture of Education

From an historical perspective, the organization of education, according to Renders,[88] was a prerogative that Somaliland's "religious men" were said to guard jealously during Britain's "indirect rule" colonial administration between 1890 and 1960 in north-west Somalia. Quite a few British officers were chased away or stoned when trying to set up schools in Somaliland. This seems to have constituted mainly an expression of local cultural nationalist resistance to colonialism rather than an overtly political challenge. Renders contends that the Qadiriyah leaders seemed "politically quietist".[89] Within their indirect rule arrangement with the British, the brotherhood's leaders would have presumably had no need to challenge British authority in as much as this authority refrained from intervening in the social and cultural affairs of Somaliland society. The prime Qadiriyah concern was the introduction of Christianity into Somaliland. Once this was ironed out, it was the Qadiriyah leaders who welcomed the establishment of schools, especially into the Sahil area of Sheikh.[90] In fact, according to Renders, the Qadiriyah leaders cultivated excellent relations with some among the colonial regime.[91]

Fast forward to the contemporary period of north-west Somalia's "second coming" as Somaliland, where education, along with other social services such as health, are enshrined in the constitution. The problem, however, is that the state has had little in the way of resources to oversee the provision of education: "... there is hardly any money to keep existing schools more or less running, let alone to prop up the quality of teaching or to extend the state school network".[92] This is where Islamic charities enter the picture, in what amounts to something akin to an Islamic version of the "public–private partnership". A substantial part of the private initiative in the education, health and welfare sectors is deployed by Islamic charity initiatives. These are usually funded by *zakaat*, the religious tax on income. Renders explains:

> The concept of *zakaat* is profoundly connected with the idea of social justice in Islamist ideology: an Islamic welfare system driven by *zakaat* would guarantee the collective welfare of the *ummah* through social and distributive justice ... The alms tax is collected and re-distributed by private actors, to such an extent that it is of course difficult to trace origins as well as destination. Moreover, money moves freely and unregistered in Somaliland and Somalia: there is no official banking system, though this may be changing or about to change in Somaliland.[93]

A portion of the *zakaat* that funds Islamic charities in Somaliland is likely to come from the Persian Gulf, although, according to Renders, "this is vehemently denied by people concerned with these charities".[94] One study devoted to the Arab funding of education in Somaliland, which may shed more light on this sensitive issue, is carried out by Oxfam Netherlands and the World Association of Muslim Youth, and is supported by European Commission (Somalia Operations. In a report issued in September 2004 entitled "Arab Donor Policies and Practices on Education in Somalia/land",[95] Arab assistance to Somalia and Somaliland was said to take several forms:

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- official government donors;
- international NGOs (or Islamic charities) registered in one of the member states of the Arab League;
- Arab-based multilateral institutions; and
- local Somali NGOs that receive support from organizations based in Arab countries.

Among the Arab donors in the education sector are some "governments that maintain consular presence in Somalia/land. These include Egypt, Libya and, on a temporary basis, Sudan."[96] Although this report tends to refer to "Somalia/land", much of the Arab funding sources concentrate on Somalia rather than on Somaliland, in keeping with the political bias that Arab governments and most non-governmental entities have against Somaliland and for Somalia. As such, the study's conflation of Somalia and Somaliland in one terminology is somewhat less than edifying in terms of pinpointing Arab donor involvement and educational links with Somaliland. Nevertheless, the organizations from different Arab countries in Somalia/land are enumerated as:

- Africa Muslims Agency, Kuwait;
- African Relief Committee, Kuwait;
- World Assembly of Muslim Youth, Saudi Arabia;
- International Islamic Relief Organisation, Saudi Arabia;
- Red Crescent Society, United Arab Emirates; and
- Munazzama Al-Dawa, Sudan.

According to the study, there is no uniform policy for funding projects in Somalia/land among Arab/Islamic donor organizations. Among the organizations interviewed for the study, older organizations and international organizations tend to understand the policies of their donors more than younger or local organizations. Some donors provide a list of criteria for funding, and policies are varied according to the kind of funding; conditions for dispersal of *zakaat* funds are different than those provided for program support. The predominant reasons for Arab donors (both individuals and organizations) funding projects in Somalia/land are humanitarian and socio-cultural. An important source of funds for charities, which has been omitted in many studies but included herein, is the voluntary out-of-pocket collections at mosques and other religious locations.[97]

In an attempt to gauge the anti-Western potential of Arab-linked organizations in the Somali region, the research findings indicated that "it was apparent that there is a huge interest on the part of Somali-based Islamic and Arab charities to co-operate with Western donors". Citing the observations of a recent article at the time of the study, it was noted that "[c]ontrary to what one would expect of organizations rumored to be preaching against the West, Somalia's Islamic charities are generally open to relations with Western governments, non-governmental organizations and international institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union".[98] In another study by Andre Le Sage and Ken Menkhaus, it was observed that "probably the most important distinction of Islamic charities is the widespread public perception in the West that their activities are inherently political",[99] when, according to an ICG study, the majority of Islamic social welfare organizations around the world are politically unaffiliated. Nonetheless, the studies cited thus far do not shed much light on the Islamic charities funding situation inside Somaliland with regard to the education and other social sectors.

The picture that emerges is not one that would suggest considerable Islamic donor funding flowing into Somaliland's social sectors. Thus, in a study of "Old institutions,

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new opportunities: the emerging nature of Koranic Schools in Somaliland in the 1990s", Erasmus U. Morah found that Somaliland's 15% enrolment in upper primary school (Grades 5–8) was almost double that of "Greater Somalia". This was seen as "all the more impressive in view of the fact that no primary schools in Somaliland were operated by international NGOs, compared to Greater Somalia where 23% of the schools were managed and financed by NGOs and aid agencies".[100] Instead, "more schools are managed and supported by local authorities (48%) and parents (27%) in Somaliland compared to 39% and 22% Somalia-wide respectively".[101] Perhaps this is why there was vehement denial of Gulf donor support in the form of *zakaat*. Nevertheless, Renders refers to Islamic charities as a major source of educational funding in filling the gap that the government cannot address,[102] while key individuals also help fund schools in Somaliland.[103]

In a summary of Renders and Morah, the provision of education in Somaliland can be pieced together as a pragmatic combination of religious and secular education relying on heavy doses of self-help initiatives combined with private funding. What follows is a condensation of Renders and Morah's accounts.

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Education in Somaliland has, for centuries, been primarily Qur'anic, wherein religious education is traditionally viewed as a moral and religious obligation. This was the only kind of education available until 1945 and such education continues to play a major role today. This, in combination with the fall of the military regime, the collapse of all state institutions in the whole of Somalia, and the incapacity of the Somaliland successor government in the north-west to kick-start a new state-sponsored education system, together provided Islamic charities with the opportunity to fill the gap.[104] Through a combination of self-help schemes and support from international aid agencies, the Somaliland Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEOYS) had 159 primary schools in operation by 1995–1996 with 27,178 pupils (25.3% girls). Some public funding was provided, although in 2000 this was reportedly equivalent to only 3% of recurring costs.[105]

Teachers are paid US$8 per month, with parents paying an equal amount in monthly fees. The total of US$16 covers 10–20% of the living costs of teachers, who are forced to double-up by taking on other jobs and/or entrepreneurial activities to survive. Renders contends that education in Somaliland receives very little donor funding (about 10% or US$11 million per year for the whole of Somalia/land).[106] This, according to the UNDP, sharply contrasts with what it calls "non-traditional" donors, such as Islamic charities, for whom long-term educational investment is a priority. Given the cultural importance of religious education in Somaliland, such funding dovetails conveniently with the need to fill the educational funding vacuum. Such charities are said to have established educational institutions similar to the Ecoles Franco-Arabes in the West African Sahelian region. These institutions offer a broad curriculum but with what Renders calls a "sometimes strong religious orientation". They teach Arabic and Islamic sciences, as well as courses in mathematics, English and geography.[107] There are estimated to be some 65 such schools in Hargeisa.

The Somaliland government does not aim to curtail these private initiatives, nor do such initiatives seek a high profile or confrontations with the Somaliland authorities. Moreover, this type of Islamic education is seen as commendable in the eyes of Somalilanders. The schools appear to be of better quality than state schools and sometimes belong to a formalized and internationally recognized system, which gives direct access to further education at Arab or Islamic universities worldwide.[108] Perhaps because of the importance of such "non-traditional" donor support, the Somaliland

MEOYS, as a means of compensating for the limited opportunities of acquiring formal education, established its own Department of Non-Formal Education. As a result of both pressure and support from aid agencies and women's groups, it has managed to open 12 family life centers for women since 1995, with more than 1300 students, many of them women. Furthermore, new types of business schools have emerged in major urban areas providing training in management, computers and secretarial skills. But beyond such initiatives, the Department of Non-Formal Education and the handful of non-formal education programs in Somaliland are seen as weak and lacking in effective coordination.

According to Morah, the non-formal Qur'anic school education in Somaliland has not been properly studied since 1988.[109] A UN survey in 1996 showed only 17% of Somaliland children were enrolled in primary schools, of which 60% were enrolled in the Qur'anic schools, and these schools are not closely linked to mosques or places of worship, as stated by Morah. They are administered by single private teachers who set up such schools in each neighborhood. In Somaliland, Qur'anic schools are pre-schools, not part of the governmental or private post-kindergarten school system.

As a result of the affordable tuition of Qur'anic schools, which is carefully keyed to the means of the population, and due to the simplicity of learning materials used in these schools, no interested parent is ever turned away because of costs. This practice, apart from the current concern about intolerant, pro-jihadist content, is sustained by the fact that learning Qur'anic recitation is universally considered a responsibility of every good Muslim.

In a survey of 58 Qur'anic schools conducted by Morah, it was found that they were 100% financed by parents. This financial support, contrary to old beliefs, took the form of cash payments made directly to the teacher by the parents. Some 32% of teachers state that they received less than US$40 per month in fees, whereas 60% reported receiving between US$40 and US$80 per month.[110] Contrary to popular belief among Somalilanders and foreigners alike, there was hardly any evidence of community involvement in the management of the Qur'anic schools beyond the payment of the fees by parents. What pupils learn and how they progress is entirely the prerogative of the teacher and possibly the student. Morah concluded his study with some of the following observations:[111]

- Many of the Qur'anic schools in the survey have begun transforming themselves by acquiring some of the characteristics of formal schools, such as permanent physical structures and the introduction of the components of a basic education.
- Virtually all the Qur'anic schools surveyed offered more than the memorization of the Koran: 87% taught at least two subjects in addition to the Qur'an; 43% offered up to three courses—namely Arabic, arithmetic and the Somali language.
- The Qur'anic schools are undergoing transformations completely on their own, using self-help and *ad hoc* methods with no coordination or formal guidance; a process that might be bridged via the Department of Non-Formal Education as the interface between such schools and the formal system.
- These new, mutated forms of Qur'anic schools seem to have gained substantial maturity and popularity since the early 1990s, as the state-sponsored public schools reeled and tried to recover from years of wartime devastation and pre-war neglect.
- Qur'anic schools have certain advantages such as their high coverage, low cost and willingness of parents to pay—but unless an effective bridge can

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be built to formally link Qur'anic schools and primary schools, Somaliland may never be able to achieve the global objective of education for all.

- Somaliland will therefore also not be able to meaningfully aspire to any future developmental objectives that are based on a large educated labor force.
- On the other hand, the introduction of basic education in Qur'anic schools will contribute both immensely and instantly to the goal of education for all, by targeting the large number of in-Qur'anic-school but out-of-primary school children.
- The Qur'anic system learned its first major lesson from the public schools by introducing co-education.
- In the 1990s, the Qur'anic schools learned their second major lesson by beginning to integrate elements of basic education on their own, with the added emphasis that this trend and consequent transformation deserves to be encouraged deliberately and without delay—something that would seem to imply a more proactive role for the MEOYS Department of Non-Formal Education.
- Qur'anic education has remained remarkably strong since its introduction in Somaliland about 700 years ago, demonstrating continuing longevity and resilience. However, parents were found to be agreeable to the systematic introduction of formal basic education in Qur'anic schools, provided that cultural/religious sensitivities are respected and there is no interference with the existing provision of Islamic education.
- The challenge of upgrading the intellectual knowledge base and class-teaching skills of the Qur'anic teachers will prove the biggest threat to success. With training and learning materials costs being borne by the government and donors, the teachers should not have a problem charging parents a marginal cost for the basic education component, thereby facilitating basic education-Qur'anic schooling integration.

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From a political and security perspective, the Qur'anic school system in Somaliland has warranted attention because of the growing international awareness of the role that the Islamic charities–education nexus has played in disseminating militant brands of political Islam in general, and jihadist tendencies in particular.[112] The apparent lack of control that the government exerts over this sector, amid some of the violence that occurred during 2003–2004, has suggested that the Qur'anic school system being linked to Islamic charities might pose a threat of destabilization.

Such anxiety has been heightened by the fact that Somaliland remains dependent on the Qur'anic school system as a means of ensuring that education is accessible to Somalilanders, in spite of the government's lack of capacity and resources. However, the decline of overt Islamist movements, such as Al-Ittihaad; the dismantling of their militia capacity; the adoption by their members of non-violent modes of proselytizing; along with the more recent turn-around of Somaliland's relations with its neighbors, principally Djibouti; may combine to defuse these concerns about Islamic charities and religious education in Somaliland. The TFG settlement in the south has contributed to this less-threatening environment, irrespective of the stability of the settlement.

The fact that there has been an unfolding trend toward integrating Qur'anic schooling with formal basic education, within the context of an already entrenched Islamic social order, may also bode well, for the role of religious education, as a factor for stability, rather than destabilization, in Somaliland. This may hold for other aspects of interaction

between religion and society and polity within Somaliland. Here, the role of the *shariah*, within the context of Somaliland's legal system, may reinforce this profile of what could be termed a modernizing co-existence and pragmatic accommodation between Islam and more secular tendencies in the social order.

Although Somaliland has a conventional court system in place, *shariah* law is recognized officially as having precedence in Somaliland society. In Renders' account, "in principle, this is a situation that seems to be endorsed by the large majority of the country's population".[113] This is said to especially be the case since the Islamic revival challenged Somaliland policy-makers after Somaliland's inception as a state independent from the rest of the Somali coast. In fact, this sentiment seemed to coincide with a similar Islamic revival in the south, which, for a while, saw the flourishing of Islamic courts. However, the *shariah* is not codified law and it is not the only law that applies. John Drysdale has enumerated the existence of three concurrent legal systems: English-language secular law, Islamic law in Arabic, which would refer to the *shariah*, and Somali traditional law.[114]

Apart from the *shariah*, Somaliland relies on a codex of laws dating from various periods in the society's history. In criminal cases, according to Renders, Somaliland uses the Somali Penal Code of 1962,[115] together with the *shariah*. Customary law is supposed to be the lowest in this eclectic hierarchy, after *shariah* and positive law. However, Renders reports that the reality on the ground proves to be different in as much as many of the country's judges are barely trained in either *shariah* or positive law. The judges who do have legal training acquired it under the military regime of Siad Barre. This has heavily influenced the post-war rule of law in Somaliland, as the system obtained under Barre is that with which they are most familiar. Thus, the unified civil code and procedure enacted in the mid-1970s is used rather than the pre-1969 law.

Courts, police and legal professionals in Somaliland all tend to use positive law. The reason given is that, in this way, the penal system and the law enforcement system are complementary and adapted to one another. Furthermore, as a practical consideration according to Renders, legal professionals are "profoundly unfamiliar" with the interpretation and application of *shariah* law.[116] Thus, the *shariah* is actually hardly used in legal proceedings at all. On the other hand, positive law, while applied in some instances, often gives way to judges applying or taking into account customary law. And here, there is the view that customary law "effectively undermines the application of other legal codes".[117] Whether or not this is indeed the case, Drysdale's account of the Xeer system, as cited earlier, stresses the exclusive role that Somaliland's clan elders played in the application of customary law under the British colonial administrative system, which deferred to indirect rule.[118]

Given the central role played by these elders in the political development of the Somaliland Republic, this would seem to guarantee a central role for customary law, hence leading to the strategic role played by Somali culture and tradition in mediating religion and modernity. Within this context, Somaliland society has evolved its own approach to dealing with the application and interaction of the different codes. This is illustrated by an example that Renders provides on how "the law" applies to criminals. A Commander of the Custodian Corps in Burco explained as follows:

> . . . the police catches him and puts him in prison after which he is tried before a district or regional court. Meanwhile his relatives negotiate with the victim's relatives about a settlement. If they agree, the case is solved. When a settlement is reached, the sentence is reduced, but police will hold him in prison for some more time to have him re-educated in Islamic faith. When he comes after some time, he will be a changed virtuous man.[119]

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Such is the pragmatism in the action of drawing upon an eclectic mix of religion, tradition and modernity in adapting Somaliland's Islamic conservatism to current-day realities. The episode cited by Renders illustrates how something of a division of labor has been arrived at that, in effect, is mediated by tradition. Renders concludes by referring back to how Somali Islamists, at their inception in the context of secular military rule under Barre, wanted to establish an Islamic public order in the course of establishing an Islamic state based on the *shariah*. The fact that, as she points out, their top-down strategies of attempting to forcibly impose Islamist rule were compelled to give way to a grassroots approach, attests to the apparent power and resilience of the Somali traditional sphere presided over by clan leaders. As Renders makes clear, "Islamist personnel turned to the traditional roles of 'religious men' (*wadaads*) in the traditional Somali clan-system".[120] What she describes, in effect, amounts to a defusing process of assimilation and co-optation of the Islamist challenge into the already existing Somaliland traditionalist-Islamic public order. An Islamic order did not have to be established—it already existed, *albeit* on Somali terms.

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Thus, while at the same time challenging traditional Sufi beliefs as well as religious and societal practices, the Islamists took on "very similar socio-political roles. Like the *wadaads*, they engaged themselves in peace-making and social service provision, caring for the sick, handicapped and orphaned, providing religious (added with marketable) knowledge, mediating in conflicts and clan fights. They are part and parcel of their own clans ... but have a horizontal solidarity with 'religious men' in other clans because of their common role".[121] This absorptive capacity of Somaliland's culture to adapt Islam to Somaliland's traditions again reflects on the niche role played by the *shariah*. As Renders observes:

> *Shari'a* is an important notion in the political context of Somaliland. People insist that it be used. Yet, the importance of *Shari'a* does not lay in its official status as source of all laws and all legal dealings in Somaliland, but in its role as a part of customary law as interpreted and administered by clan elders and "religious people" of various denominations. The application of codified law based on the *Shari'a* is an ideal which is duly professed by politicians, sheikhs and the population, but it is not applied in reality. Because of the lack of a strong central government authority that is able to enforce the law, this is not likely to change any time soon. The various actors: government, judges, citizens and "new" as well as "old" *wadaads* know this and act accordingly, dealing pragmatically with any given situation that arises.[122]

This, in Renders' view, interacts with a security situation associated with the lack of strong enough government institutions (not in the least the judiciary branch), to preclude any initiative that would give priority to any law other than customary law; hence, the ascendancy, indeed hegemony, of the traditional customary sphere over the religious realm of Islam in dictating the terms of Somaliland's social order. The conclusion that Renders arrives at is worth exploring at some length as it may well provide the clue to Somaliland's stability over the long term, and its capacity to cope with the destabilizing pressures that could emanate from yet another conflicted attempt to reconstitute the Somali state in Mogadishu.

Renders astutely makes the following observation:

> One could contend that the Islamists who wanted to introduce the Shari'a and the Islamic state, have now in fact become "new" *wadaads* in a clan-based

> polity. The Islamists now seem (like the Sufi brotherhoods) to be perceived as just a particular doctrinal affiliation a *wadaad* could have. As "new" *wadaads*, they keep the community together, morally upright and cared for. This does not mean that these religious actors are a-political. They are political actors as individuals and as a collective: religious affiliations can just as well as clan affiliations be used in the power game ... What does seem new, however, is perhaps the economic status of the new *wadaads*. The old *wadaads* were (in theory at least) to an important extent economically dependent on their clansmen ... The "new" *wadaads*, showing outright contempt for this practice, emphasize their ability to make their own money by doing business. They do not want to be dependent on their clansmen. The question whether and how their presumed economic independence makes for enhanced political independence in a polity which is to an important extent still determined by clan-driven politics is a matter for further research.[123]

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Somaliland's Stability Prognosis

What projections can be made about the implications of post-9/11 Islamism for Somaliland's stability during the current period of upheaval within the Muslim world?

Renders' account of the pragmatic interplay between tradition, Islam and modernity in Somaliland amplifies Drysdale's[124] observations about the stabilizing influence that nationalism's accommodation of traditional culture has had, in comparison with the lack of equivalent accommodation in the south. The allowing of "Xeer Soomaali" to exert an apparently culturally stabilizing influence on Somaliland's politics, and the observance of the role of religion in society may, based on the conclusions Renders has drawn from the country's heterodox legal order, prove decisive for Somaliland. Jama Gabush argues that "if the democratization process is to be accelerated, the careful integration of Islamization and democratization is indispensable in Somaliland politics".[125]

The Somaliland system of clan elders has served as something of a mediating force in managing pragmatic interaction between custom and tradition; Islam and the secular realm of modern nationalism. During an age of upheaval within the Muslim world, where political Islam has emerged to challenge the Islamic authenticity of incumbent regimes and social orders, Somaliland may be unique as an organically Islamic society; one in which the intimate interplay between the clan-state. As Somaliland transitions into a modern polity, Islam may be pre-empting and/or containing Islamism's impact in it.

The organic relationship between Somali culture and tradition on the one hand, and Islam on the other, appears to guarantee a stabilizing role for religion in the society as a whole and, by extension, in the fledgling political system. Because of this integration, Somaliland society appears to have an inherent resiliency that allows it to absorb and co-opt change in meeting the challenge of political Islam. The taming of the Islamism of the "new" *wadaads* would appear to be a fitting case in point alongside the manner in which the "public–private partnership" between Somaliland's resource and capacity-starved public education system and the Qur'anic schools have allowed the two spheres of education to find one another in pragmatic compromises. In fact, these two instances of system resiliency and adaptability may be instructive in terms of the potential for Somaliland to withstand the challenges of the global Islamic civil war.

The ideological apparatus of a nexus between charities and education has been political Islam's means of proselytizing jihadist sentiments. In Somaliland, however, on the basis of Renders' account, the "new" *wadaads* took on the same mediating and

peace-building role in the interest of promoting social and political stability at a grassroots level as had the "old" *wadaads*.[126] This culture of mediating tensions and contradictions in Somaliland society is what has stood the republic in good stead in overcoming its challenges. The erstwhile Islamists, in effect, appear to have been co-opted by the system at the very time when an Islamic revival was underway.

The authenticity of Somaliland's brand of Islam is reflected in its popular support among all sectors of society. The Qur'anic schools apparently enjoy popular support and society as a whole feels committed to paying tribute to the *shariah* as the system of law at the apex of Somaliland's legal system, even as customary law prevails; again with the underpinning of an apparent social and cultural consensus that this is how the system must be made to work. To reiterate Drysdale's observation about the decisive role of tradition in this pragmatic mix: "... However ancient traditional law may be, Somalis are comfortable with its judgment to this day, whether disputes coming before the elders are peacemaking in character, or the result of injuries sustained in a road accident, or compensation for injuries inflicted on a person's pride or wellbeing".[127]

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Somaliland custom, therefore, represents an "indigenous knowledge system"[128] that mediates the sacred and secular realms in the country's Islamic public order. But is such a religio-social compact sustainable over the medium to long term? This is where Renders' intriguing speculation on where the "new" *wadaads* may be heading is worth exploring.

Renders closes her analysis by observing that the new *wadaads* show outright contempt for the practice of the older *wadaads* in accepting a dependency on their clansmen; the newer generation that has emerged from the Islamic revival is emphasizing a desire and an ability to make its own money by pursuing business initiatives.[129] These are *wadaads* with an entrepreneurial spirit. They are not concerned with acquiring gifts and services, or in any other way relying on the clan system. Could this indicate the potential for the new *wadaad* generation to mutate into a "new class" among Somaliland's religious elite?

To reiterate the question posed by Renders: "... whether and how their presumed economic independence makes for enhanced political independence in a polity which is to an important extent still determined by clan-driven politics is a matter for further research".[130] Could this mean a rupture in the making in the clan system? Or, further still, could it mean a rupture in the centuries-old compact between Islam and the clan system, to the extent that the new *wadaads* remain the repository of Somaliland's spiritual guidance while, at the same time, seeking to make themselves economically independent from the clan system? Of course, such a socio-economic transformation in religious leadership, which is linked to the clan system, would not be unfolding in isolation from a wider environment of upheaval in the Muslim world and the Somali region.

Conclusion

It seems reasonable that Somaliland society, as currently constituted, is capable of dealing with the challenges of Islamist infiltration.[131] A new group of the traditional Somali Sufi orders have recently been emboldened to revive the Sufi Mawlid ceremonies in Borama, while very recently Sheikh Cabdirasaaq Yuusuf Aadan, Head of the Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamaaa of Southern Somalia, has lectured in Borama and Hargeisa, where he preached to people to return to their traditional Somali Sufi Islam and condemned Wahhabism publicly.[132]

After all, it would appear that Somaliland has already weathered the Islamist upsurge in as much as the organizational cohort of movements like Al-Ittihaad have come and

gone without traumatizing Somaliland society. But, as the entrepreneurial new *wadaads* may indicate, what would have seemed as likely insurgent challenges to Somaliland's fledgling political order may not be where the challenges lie. Rather, it may be the emergence of a new echelon of social power that becomes a "class for itself", expressing a commitment to Islam that converges with what could be a similar mutation taking place to the south. This scenario could reflect a trend where warlordism in the south is eventually overtaken by the already perceived threat of an extremist political Islam filling a new vacuum—or a continuing vacuum—that fails to be filled by the TFG.

Meanwhile, a second generation of Islamism resurfaces from the ascendancy of a new class of politically conscious and entrepreneurially aggressive *wadaads* in Somaliland, who would compete for political leadership within the country's democratic system. Whether or not this new challenge will reflect a moderate Islamism or something more militant, in line with what some fear could be looming behind a failed TFG, is unclear. Should such an eventuality emerge, this could be accompanied by a destabilization of the traditionally integrated Islamic-clan partnership, which seems predicated on an interdependency of which the new *wadaads*, according to Renders, are contemptuous.[133] For, as this new *wadaad* class becomes more economically independent and less interdependently interlinked with their clansmen, this would seem sure to cause a rupture in the social system; which would become beset by increasing social/class conflict between an "old guard" with a vested interest in such interdependence, which, after all, is centuries old, and those who want to break free from this system.

Alternatively, Somaliland may very well weather this new speculative challenge as well and deal with nascent Islamic organizations.[134] This could lead to yet another configuration of the Somali coast, should the TFG fail to gain traction in the south. In other words, this could lead to an increasingly stable Somaliland, reflecting the resilience of its Islamic-clan system compact,[135] uneasily co-existing with an increasingly Islamist southern Somalia; either reflecting the clear ascendancy of militant political Islam in the south or some combination of partnership, collaboration or co-existence between militant Islamism and faction warlord rule. This would undoubtedly heighten the dilemmas of recognition in an era of upheaval in the Muslim world, amid the "war on terror".

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NOTES

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3. See the seminal article by Ali Mazrui, "Africa and the Arabs in the New World Order", *Ufuhamu: Journal of the African Activist Association*, Vol. 20, No. 3, Fall 1992, pp. 51–62; and Abdalla Bujra, "Afrabia and African Union", lecture delivered at ACARTSOD, Tripoli, Libya, September 2002, available online at: http://www.dpmf.org/meetings/Afrabia-AU.html.
4. A number of Muslim scholars such as Yusuf Qardawi have probed the current contradictory interpretations of Islam. See Asghar Ali Engineer, "Clash of Terrors?", *Secular Perspective*, Vol. 16, No. 31, October 2001, available online at: <http://ecumene.org/IIS/csss60.htm>. See also Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. Roy explores how

neo-fundamentalism has been gaining ground among rootless Muslim youth—particularly among the second-generation and third-generation Muslims—and how this phenomenon is feeding new forms of radicalism, ranging from support for al-Qaeda to the outright rejection of integration into Western society.

5. "For Muslims in the Horn, 9/11 came at a moment when the Islamist project had been overtaken by the politics of exhaustion. By declaring his War on Terror, President Bush provided a convenient new enemy, but resisting America is so remote from the real problems faced by ordinary Muslims as to be meaningful only to a handful of misfits and criminals. Luuq was a real and courageous attempt to build an Islamic community in Somalia's ruins, though it was fatally hijacked by al-Qaida. Ayro's murders, by contrast, are utterly meaningless". See Alex de Waal, "Chasing Ghosts—Rise and Fall of Militant Islam in the Horn of Africa", *London Review of Books*, Vol. 27, No. 16, 18 August 2005, pp. 11–16.
6. "Cross-cutting the New Regionalism is the worldwide Islamist movement, which was the pretext for the Iraq intervention (the notion of Saddam Hussein giving weapons of mass destruction to terrorists). That the United States has lost credibility in the Islamic world is a platitude. Islamic militancy has not diminished since the Iraq intervention and all reports point to its increase. Rather than advancing the 'war on terrorism', the Iraq intervention has pushed it back". See Michael A. Weinstein, "The New Regionalism: Drifting Toward Multipolarity", *Power and Interest News Report*, 7 June 2004, available online at: http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_printable&report_id=178</A&language_id=1.
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11. William Reno, "Somalia and Survival in the Shadow of the Global Economy", QEH Working Paper series No. 100, Development Studies at Oxford, Queen Elizabeth House, February 2003, p. 17, available online at: http://www2.qeh.ox.ac.uk/RePEc/qeh/qehwps/qehwps100.pdf.
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13. Ali Abdirhman Hersi, "The Arab Factor in Somali History: The Origins and the Development of Arab Enterprise and Cultural Influences in the Somali Peninsula", Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, 1977, p. 109.
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18. Hersi, "The Arab Factor in Somali History", *op. cit.*, p. 110. For another perspective of Somali Islamic history in a political context, see Said S. Samatar, *In the Shadow of Conquest: Islam in Colonial Northeast Africa*, Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1992.
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27. Interview with Ethiopian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr Tekeda Alemu, Addis Ababa, 10 January 2004.
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104. Note though that Renders relies on the elusive Netherlands Oxfam/World Association of Muslim Youth report for her documentation on Islamic charities, which largely addresses Somalia rather than Somaliland. See Render, “Peace and Development in Somaliland”, *op. cit.*
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106. *Ibid.*
107. *Ibid.*
108. “My own foray into this would indicate that these schools are good in appearance but offer poor quality education, for example, student-teacher ratio is awful and the number of students per class is too high.” Personal e-mail correspondence with Dr Ahmed Esa, 12 February 2006.
109. Morah, “Old institutions, new opportunities”, *op. cit.*, p. 305.
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111. *Ibid.*, pp. 317–319.
112. *Madrasas* in Somaliland, from the 1950s, have been simple one-room or outdoor facilities where students learn to memorize the Qur’an. In Hargeisa and elsewhere, a few well-known *madrasas* (Ina Barawe, Fallaaha, Indhoole) are primary schools where pupils enroll after spending some time in Qur’anic schools. Most pupils transfer directly from Qur’anic schools or the more organized *madrasas* to primary governmental schools. The change now is that some of the more organized *madrasas* are offering parallel education to the formal governmental school system. These *madrasas*

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are quite profitable and there are doubts that they obtain much funding from Islamic charities. Some of the religious schools, however, do not follow the normal path of *madrasas*, but are starting as fully-fledged K–12 schools with their own buildings, transportation networks, etc. These latter schools clearly receive external funding.

113. Renders, "Peace and Development in Somaliland", *op. cit.*, p. 15.
114. Drysdale, "A Study of the Somali Hybrid Insurance System", *op. cit.*
115. This is a body of codified law inherited from the British and Italian colonial administrations.
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126. Renders, "Peace and Development in Somaliland", *op. cit.*, p. 18.
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128. See "Indigenous Knowledge System Project", available online at: http://www.tsa.ac.za/corp/bureaus/idset/iks.htm; and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Local and Indigenous Knowledge System (LINKS)", available online at: http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URLID=4943&URLDO=DOTOPIC&URLSECTION=201.html—which "promotes local knowledge, values and world views as tools to shape and achieve poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. It builds dialogue amongst traditional knowledge holders, natural and social scientists, resource managers and decision-makers to enhance biodiversity conservation and secure an active and equitable role for local communities in resource governance. It enhances the vitality of indigenous knowledge as a dynamic and vibrant resource within rural and indigenous communities by strengthening its continuing transmission from generation to generation".
129. Renders, "Peace and Development in Somaliland", *op. cit.*, p. 18.
130. *Ibid.*
131. *Ibid.*, Somalia's Islamists. The question of the missionary organization Jama'at Al-Tabligh in Somaliland is briefly explored, notably the case of a former Tabligh school student in Mogadishu who was arrested in September 2005 in Hargeisa after a gun battle with Somaliland security forces.
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133. Renders, "Peace and Development in Somaliland", *op. cit.*, p. 18.
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