State collapse and post-conflict development in Africa: the case of Somalia (1960-2001)
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Citation for published version (APA):

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Chapter One
Overview of the Study

1.1. Introduction

In this the twenty-first century, the state, the single most important political phenomenon comes under tremendous pressure in some parts of the world. Yet, it is an indispensable political system without which no modern society can exist. In fact, as the current tragic events and experiences in certain countries clearly demonstrate, the breakdown of state amounts to nothing less than doom. Nonetheless, at this historic moment, the forces challenging the state are globally pervasive, and not confined only to a particular continent or country. The factors can be external, such as the impact of global economy driven by the logic of the market and maximisation of profit, or internal, arising from sectarian and particularistic tendencies, ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural differences, or political and economic insecurities. However, the deleterious effects of these relentless pressures are more conspicuous amongst the states in the semi-periphery and periphery than those in the core regions. Acute examples of these deleterious effects are the state disintegration in the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and in certain African countries. Although the problem of failed states is historic and globally pervasive, the continent of Africa has the most examples of collapsed states among all of the continents (Zartman 1995). Since 1990s, more African states have suffered the worst of tragedies due to the strains emerging from these challenges. The effects among the different African countries have been varied. While some of them fragmented into enclaves of fiefdoms controlled by armed clan militias, ethnic groups and mercenary gangs like Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia, others like Algeria, Angola, Burundi and Congo are still in the midst of vicious power struggles that are waged according to sectarian pursuits, as well as along ethnic and religious lines.

With respect to the states in the Horn of Africa, among many dramatic events, the abrupt end of the Cold War era was the most crucial. In 1991, the two highly prized superpower client states of Ethiopia and Somalia in the Horn sub-region collapsed. Consequently, Ethiopia embarked on experimenting with an alternative power arrangement. The old and over-centralised power of the state was radically deconstructed. The new statecraft, which lays emphasis on the division of the country into ethnic-based regions, is far-reaching since it gave birth to the emergence of a new state in the 1990s - Eritrea. Perhaps, this innovation of devising a new political society in the country was what ultimately saved the Ethiopian state from falling apart. Unfortunately, however, since May 1998 Ethiopia has been embroiled in a destructive border conflict with Eritrea over a disputed piece of barren desert, which has gravely destabilised both states. As a result, the peace dividend both countries enjoyed between 1991-998 has been consigned to dust within a very short span of time. The war is now over but the political tension still remains.

Despite the deeper internal fragmentation and power crises, the superpowers have helped both states to maintain a semblance of stability in decades. In fact, the high levels of superpower military involvement in both states is what earned the sub-region the nickname the “Horn of Conflict” as it is now known globally.

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By contrast, in the case of Somalia with the termination of the Cold War the central government collapsed and the fragmentation process of the state was set on course. The combustions of this disintegration process further propelled the state of Somalia into its total demise with dire social consequences. Not one of the societies of the aforementioned states, no matter how crippled, has experienced such a total demise. The appalling situation in Somalia in the aftermath of the state collapse has been fittingly described by the Red Cross as “the worst humanitarian disaster in the world since 1945” (Gesheket 1997:81). The dire extent of the fragmentation process is what makes the situation in Somalia so exceptional. Somalia is the only country where the disintegration of the state is complete. In other words, the fragmentation of the state has totally ruined the infrastructure of the metropolis of what Migdal (1988) calls, “the state’s home base”, in this case, Mogadishu. In this respect, the case of Somalia represents an apocalyptic form of social disaster in this twenty-first century.2

In the spring of 1991, Somalia ceased to exist as a state, at least in the modern sense of a state system that functions as a mechanism for control and social organisation. After that time, the country disintegrated into fiefdoms that are controlled by clan-based rival factions led by predatory warlords. Even now after a decade, Somalia has had no effective central government, no foreign embassies, no national army or police force, no courts, no public services, no national health system and finally no schools. Everything in Somalia is now localised and extremely privatised, providing an environment in which only the fittest and the richest few can survive.

The central government of Somalia collapsed after clan-based politico-military armed groups violently unseated the long reign of the military regime of Siad Barre. The consequences of this event were dramatic as they led to total social disarray. For instance, the cohesion and collective consciousness of the Somali nation was fragmented into countless smaller units. The power contestations of these units, who identified themselves along kin and blood-related lines, further escalated to sharp political divisions. With the absence of state authority and law and order, a protracted conflict ensued from these politicised divisions, which plunged the whole of the Somali population into an unprecedented anarchy and into a deeper social catastrophe. The carnage which is unequalled in the history of Somalia, has resulted in the deaths of more than 30,000 Somalis in battlefields, while another 300,000 have died of starvation and famine-related diseases as a consequences of the civil war (Sahnoun 1994:11). The tragic disintegration of the state, along with its institutional apparatuses, has led to loss of security of life and property. The people are defenceless against external predators who cheaply plunder the country’s tropical fruits, pillage marine resources in its territorial waters and dump hazardous waste. Furthermore, the proliferation and privatisation of the means of violence, which is unprecedented in the history of Somalia has created a serious security problems all over the country. In this calamitous state of affairs, only the vicious and best armed survive. As Terrence Lyons and Ahmed Samatar (1995:7) succinctly note, “with the state collapsed, the Somali people suffered the horrible brutality of living in a Hobbesian world without law or institutions to regulate relations among groups or to protect the most vulnerable from the most vicious.”

2 “The prolonged civil war and marauding warlordism that followed the collapse of the Siad Barre regime left most of the country in ruins and spawned widespread famine in the southern portion of the county. This descent into chaos was so profound that even a massive international intervention, replete with thirty thousand UN peacekeeping troops and a multibillion-dollar budget, was unable to promote national reconciliation and resuscitate the failed Somali state” (Menkhaus and Ortmayer 2000:211).
Along with the collapse of the state and the unleashing of unparalleled violence and rampant lawlessness, there have been hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees. People fled their homes on a massive scale, in search of security and protection to other parts of the country or to stay in refugee camps in neighbouring countries where conditions were appalling. Some have sought refuge in far-flung places beyond the region and become stranded as unwanted refugees in many countries in Eastern Europe like Romania and Russia. Others, especially those well-to-do ones, made it by crossing the Atlantic into places like Canada and the United States. According to the report of Refugee Policy Group, displaced Somalis, classified either in the bracket of ‘internally displaced persons’ or ‘across borders refugees’ have been estimated to amount to between one and two million. In short, the death of the state has forced the Somali people to become qaxootin or exodus, dispersed all over the world as refugees and asylum seekers.

The breakdown of political order in Somalia brought about a total disruption of production. This happened because the continuation and intensification of violence that followed the disintegration of state institutions prevented the people from working and producing for their sustenance. This is evidenced by the fact that factional fighting has taken place mostly in the fertile and productive southern region, which is the breadbasket of the country. Consequently, deaths from starvation and malnutrition rose to tens of thousands of people, mostly children.

In 1992, the international community, spearheaded by the United States, ostensibly intervened in Somalia so as to avert further tragedy, restore law and order and reconstitute a political authority in the country. Initially, the intervention saved the lives of many innocent civilians, brought temporary respite from the violence and achieved modest success. But after failing to end the political crisis, the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) was brought to an end on March 4, 1995. Regrettably, after spending more than US$4 billion, the UN left the country in a situation no better than that which had prompted its intervention (Geshekter, 1997:65).

Now nearly eleven years have passed and Somalia still remains without a state. Since 1991, in the aftermath of the collapse of the state, a post-conflict political development has been in process in Somalia. Between 1991 and 1997 twelve political reconciliation conferences have been convened but all efforts came to nil-scuttled by one warlord or another. In May 2000, the Djibouti President Ismael Omar Guelleh put forward a Somali peace plan and called a political reconciliation conference in his country. Eventually, the peace talks resulted in the formation of a Transitional National Government (TNG) in Djibouti in August 2000. Yet, the authority of the new transitional government is still challenged by local and regionally based authorities, faction leaders as well as armed warlords. In this respect, the political problem in the country is far from over. Analysing the baffling political problem in Somalia demands an innovative approach and a high level of creativity. The main purpose of this research project

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5 According to The Economist, “Somalia has broken down into districts, mostly clan-based, which have evolved their own structures and systems. Many Somalis think the best way forward is for these clans and districts to meet as autonomous politics that might gradually agree to unify in a confederate system. Better, they say, than the present attempt to establish a top-down Mogadishu-based government, which could set off another war to decide who controls it” (56). See further, Somalia: Not Yet Reborn, The Economist (October 21, 2000).
is to explore to what extent the constraints in the material environment and the predicaments in the Somali history through time have contributed to the collapse of the state. This study also considers in brief the post-conflict development and initiatives undertaken to restore a stable political order in Somalia since 1991 and the obstacles, which are making it intractable.

1.2. A Brief Historical Backdrop

Pre-colonial Somalia was a stateless state. Stateless state here means a political organisation where no formal centralised polity exists but which maintains the social order and stability through moral, material and social sanctions. This definition of stateless state concurs with what Adam and Mazrui call a society of rules without rulers or order without government (Hussein Adam 1997 and Ali Mazrui 1997). Throughout history, Somali people never developed a unified political authority and had no concept of a political order wider than kinship. They therefore existed as highly decentralised and factionised society, lacking formal centralised political institutions. Nevertheless they did develop a strong sense of cultural nationalism (Lewis 1994). Pre-colonial Somali society, as other societies in Africa, succeeded in establishing a relatively viable political system but not a formal system of government as existed in the Western world (Ellis 1999). Amongst the reasons why African societies failed to develop a formal and territorially based system of government are related to the constant migration of populations and absence of perpetual destructive wars as experienced by European societies in much of their history. In the case of Somalia, there was neither the economic means nor internal social dynamics that could have made the development of this formal system of authority possible.

Therefore, as had been the case of other stateless societies in Africa, the predominant principle of socio-political organisation of the Somali people in the pre-colonial era was that of kinship associated with communalism. In addition to kinship, Islam was also an important element in the superstructure of the pre-colonial Somali social formation. The kinship that Somalis forged constitutes two central components. The first element is blood ties, which define the position of the individual in relation to his/her mother’s side and to his/her father’s side. The second aspect is heer which the Somali lineages and clans worked out as constituting definite legal, and social contract implemented by a council of all adult males. In addition to blood ties and heer, Islam was the third element of the superstructure, which ordered the political organisation of the Somali people in the pre-colonial social formation. Islam played a significant role in helping the Somali people transcend the narrow boundaries of lineage and clan associations and promoted a Somali-wide political consciousness. In essence, the prevalence of the principle of kinship in the political arrangement of the traditional Somalis was due to the low level of the material environment primarily dominated by subsistence-based pastoral economy. Somali people had lived in this simple organisation

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6 As Evans-Pritchard explained (1940), stateless societies do not have centralised political organisations. On the contrary, these societies that are most often pastoral and nomadic organise their social order through lineage and kinship arrangements. In the Weberian sense, segmentary social groups are characterised by a (myth of) common lineage and bound together by linear loyalties. As Khazanov notes, “the segmentation system is characterised as ‘stability-without government’ i.e. primarily as a way of employing a specific mechanism to maintain internal order in conditions where social differentiation has not developed sufficiently” (Khazanov 1983:145).
of communalism and stateless condition until around 1860 which was when the colonial powers forcefully intruded into the country.

Colonialism terminated the stateless state in Somalia. Upon highly decentralised and kinship mediated political system, the colonial powers arbitrarily imposed a centralised authority. This foreign imperial domination installed in the country alien state structures, which neither the pre-existing social organisation nor the meagre means of the pastoral production in which the Somalis subsist, could support. This brief historical outline itself shows that the formal colonial government(s) in Somalia existed as a rootless institution divorced from the traditional and the organic political system of the Somali people.

The post-colonial state of Somalia, though the product of accumulated inconsistencies between pre-colonial and colonial social formations, has acquired its own right to existence. Furthermore, that existence clearly delineates the specific dynamics and duration of the post-colonial state. Unlike its precursors, the existence of the post-colonial state of Somalia was affirmed through the juridical recognition conferred by the international community and by the domestically constituted power arrangements which made the concept of internal control a reality. For instance, as Jean-Francois Bayart asserts, “The State in Africa rests upon autochthonous foundations and a process of reappropriation of institutions of colonial origin which give it its own historicity; it can no longer be taken as a purely exogenous structure” (Bayart 1993:260). This affirmation allows us to consider the post-colonial state of Somalia not merely as an alien structure hovering above the society. Therefore, it seems appropriate to start the colonial setting as a point of a historical departure in order to understand the artificiality of the Somali state. Despite this, the causes for its current collapse must be partially sought in the modus operandi of the post-colonial political pursuits.

1.3. State and (Post)-State Literature on Somalia

During the life of the state (1960-1991), there was hardly any study which concurrently took into account the constraints in the material environment and the misfortunes in the history that have been shaping the process of the Somali social formation both across time and across space. The limited studies that did exist considered the political economy of Somalia during different historical times, and focused on specific regions. Now there exists a whole body of historically based publications on Somalia undertaken during the post-colonial period which are mainly concerned with the social, political and economic development of specific regions in the country (Hess 1966; Cussanelli 1982; Geshekter 1983; Laiti n and Samatar 1987; Lewis 1977). For a comprehensive overview on this aspect with respect to the newly created states in sub-Saharan Africa, see Robert H. Jackson, “Negative Sovereignty in Sub-Saharan Africa”, Review of International Studies 12 (October 1986): 247-64.

The exception is the seminal study undertaken by Ahmed I. Samatar before the state collapsed. Samatar, challenging the continuity and the uncritical endorsement of the clan-based analysis that dominated the scholarly literature on Somalia, embarked on a study which focused on the transformation of Somali society and its political economy both across time and across space. For a more elaborate account on this topic, see Ahmed I. Samatar, Socialist Somalia: Rhetoric and Reality (London: Zed Press, 1988). Another study, which to lesser extent also considers the process of the Somali social formation through time and space, is the recent dissertation by Alice Bettis Hashim, The Fallen State: Dictatorship, Social Cleavage and Dissonance in Somalia, University of Virginia (UMI Dissertation Services, 1995). Hashim attempts to explain the collapse of the state in Somalia as the result of cumulative tensions or what she calls “viruses” to which Somalia was exposed at different historical times.
These historical writings have greatly contributed to scant knowledge in the field of Somali studies, but they remain isolated, regional studies. The weakness of regional studies is that they fail to account for the coherence of the distinct historical processes of the diverse regions in the country. And, particularly as the current situation in Somalia makes clear, it is not possible to understand the problem of the collapse of the state through a specific regional analysis. In fact, considering the present situation in which the whole Somalia irrespective of regions is in a deep political turmoil, focusing on a countrywide historical approach is more appropriate in terms of explanatory power.

This study will consider the underlying causes for the breakdown of the state across both time and space. Time here is used in the sense of across the different triple history - pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial processes. Space is used in the sense of taking the whole of Somalia as a unit of analysis. The point is that this approach enables us to unearth different structural crises over a period of time and also examine their cumulative effects on the current upheavals in Somalia. It is within this setting that this study considers how the constraints in the harsh material environment, subsistence pastoral mode of existence, and the predicament in the Somali history - colonial intervention and its division of the land into five parts, Cold War geopolitics, decades of armed struggles and the post-colonial crisis of governance - have all set in motion the fragmentation process of the state in Somalia.

Since 1991, after the state collapsed in Somalia, a growing body of post-state literature appeared: personal memoirs, autobiographies, journalistic, and academic publications. Each work presents and narrates its own version of why the state fragmented. Some of the publications present polemic and blame narration of the past while others record experiences and personal reminiscence or attempts to break new grounds (Ahmed 1995, 1996; Dualeh 1994, Ghalib 1995, Omar 1992, Issa-Salwe 1994). There exists, however, a scholarly literature on Somalia which critically analyses the disintegration of the state and the contemporary predicament of the Somali society. This literature is represented by two rival academic traditions - traditionalist versus transformationist. My focus here is to discuss the disintegration of the state within the debates between these two major schools of Somali studies since they advance historical lines and intelligible interpretations regarding the causes of the current crisis in Somalia. They also engage in fierce intellectual battles, which significantly advance the production of knowledge in the field of Somali studies.

The first school takes a traditionalist line of approach in explaining the implosion of the state. Scholars of this traditionalist paradigm argue that the continuity of clan politics has destroyed the state. They therefore presume that 'the causes’ which have led to the demise of the state in Somalia are internal and lodged in the persistence of the primordial clan divisiveness and Somali cultural praxis (See, e.g., Lewis 1993, 1994; Said Samatar 1991; and Simons 1995). The second school presents an alternative transformationist line in accounting for the breakdown of the political system in Somalia. Scholars of this transformationist perspective offer external explanations and structural changes as the primary causes for the collapse of the state.

See further an excellent overview by Alex de Waal on some of these publications. After critically assessing their shortcomings, de Waal then concludes that, “factual accounts have proved so inadequate, perhaps it should come as no surprise that the outstanding recent book on Somalia comes from an intermediate genre, of fictionalised contemporary history” (de Waal 1995:12). Here, de Waal refers to the novel of Ahmed Omar Askar, Sharks and Soldiers (1992). de Waal reviewed publications that are all produced by Somalis. With respect to non-Somali authors, see the comprehensive overview by Ahmed Samatar (2001). The Somali Catastrophe: Explanations and Implications. In Lilius, Mudduz Suzanne (ed.) Variations of the Theme of Somaliness (Proceedings of the EASS/SSIA International Congress of Somali Studies). Turku: Centre for Continuing Education, Åbo Akademi University: 7-30.
state. They contend that the transformation of the political economy which gave rise to internal elite rivalries and clanised the national politics, was what ultimately fragmented the state (See, e.g., Abdi Samatar 1992, 1993; and Ahmed I. Samatar 1993, 1994). In a nutshell, while the traditionalist emphasises continuity, the transformationist focuses on change as the underlying cause of fragmentation of the state in Somalia. Both approaches and their intellectual lineages will be elaborated in detail in the next chapter.

I owe a great deal of intellectual debts to the scholars of both traditions since this study draws heavily on their work. For instance, it is their pioneering work in the field of Somali studies and their continuing heated academic debates, which steadily widens our horizons in understanding the past and present historical context of the Somali people and their polity. By tailoring the substantive analyses that both schools advance, this study examines to what extent the combined effects of the dynamics of continuity and change contributed to the disintegration of the state. Continuity and change bring together internal and external processes, which have been shaping the Somali social formation over a period of time. These processes are structural, historical, and momentary episodes. More concretely, they are the constraints in the material environment; perennial struggles against foreign aggressions and conquests; and series of external interventions and influences such as the colonial occupation and the impact of the Cold War geopolitics.

The secondary substantive premise that supports the central proposition of this dissertation that I have already advanced is how unresolved cumulative tensions of the triple history - pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial processes - have led to the collapse of the Somali state. This study uncovers two reinforcing and yet contradictory tendencies, which have been shaping the Somali society in much of its history. Both the manifestations are the making of the constraints in the material environment and the predicament in the Somali history across time. The first is given rise to by the extreme poverty of the pastoral economy in the country and the second developed as a reaction against foreign threats, aggressions and conquests. Due to want of better terms, I refer to these perennial historical manifestations as private and public pursuits. Throughout the recorded history of Somalia, the persistent tendency towards private pursuit has pushed the Somali people towards narrow and parochial interests, internal social cleavages and political fragmentation. By contrast, public pursuit has manifested as a tendency, in pulling the Somali people towards feelings of commonality, of unity and of a deep sense of nationhood. The contradictory tendencies of both pursuits have been pushing and pulling the Somali society into opposing and irreconcilable directions. It is this push and pull effect that precisely explains how an unresolved structural problem of a duration can still have an immense impact on the next period, forming the bases of new tensions or crises. Indeed, as Putnam eloquently put it, “what comes first conditions what comes later” (Putnam 1993:8). This is the hypothesis that this dissertation advances in order to explain the material environment and historical causes for the collapse of the state in Somalia.

Placing the contradictory tendencies towards private and public pursuits in concrete historical processes will reveal more of their centrality in the dynamics of the Somali social formation across historical time. For instance, in the pre-colonial era, because of the meagre economic existence on the land, the tendency towards private pursuit is what pushed the Somali people to struggle fiercely along sectarian lines, primarily for subsistence and sheer survival. During that period the struggle for the private pursuit was waged as an enterprise of collective

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10 In a normal English usage private pursuit is understood as a pursuit for private gains and public pursuit as a pursuit for the common good. However, in this study the manner I will use both terms is more complex, broader and time specific as the subsequent three chapters demonstrate.
endeavour. The family and blood-related groups used to band together (in order to reduce individual liability) in search of bare livelihood. However, during the colonial and the post-colonial periods when the domestic production expanded due to the commercialisation of the livestock and the introduction of cash economy, the tendency towards private pursuit became altered as an enterprise of individualised private appropriation and aggrandisement. It cannot be overstated how important the persistence of the tendency of private pursuit across the triple history has to a large extent nurtured the post-colonial Somali elite to view the state as an instrument of private appropriation instead of an institution of collective polity.

The tendency towards private pursuit also affects the nature of the social and the political organisation of the Somali people as it causes the society to fragment into groupings or small nomadic bands. In the anthropological lexicon, these groupings are labelled as clans, primary lineage groups and sub-clans. However, the segmentation of the Somali society along those lines has an important economic function. It is the best rational strategy that any pastoral society can adopt to survive in a harsh material environment, which demands constant mobility in search of grazing land and water. Furthermore, the tendency towards private pursuit is what retards the Somali people from developing a political consciousness beyond that of the clan. This is due to the frequent mobility that the Somali pastoral nomads undertake, their dispersal in small groupings over a large area in search of livelihood and the scarcity of their livestock economy. The meagre existence of the pastoral economy is hardly sufficient for bare subsistence let alone generating a surplus to raise a political authority. The specific working of the tendency towards private pursuit on the economy, as well as the social and the political dynamics of the Somali society across time will be discussed in detail in the subsequent chapters.

By contrast, the tendency towards public pursuit has been nurturing the idea of Somali-wide identity, political unity and nationalism across historical time. Since the sixteenth century, as the written chronicles of the Somali history clearly indicate, the tendency towards public pursuit is what inspired the Somali-wide struggles against foreign aggressions and conquests. For instance, from 1540 to 1560, Somalis fought as a united cultural group against the invasion and expansion of the Coptic Christian Ethiopian kingdom, to defend their Somali oneness, religion and the integrity of their value system. Similarly, from 1900 to 1920, Somalis, as a united front, fought under the charismatic leader Sayyid Mohamed Abdulle Hassan against colonial occupation in order to liberate the country. Furthermore, since the 1960s onwards, after independence, the Republic of Somalia was created from the unification of the British Somaliland and Italian Somalia, the paramount struggle of the Somali-wide public pursuit had been to unite all Somalis under one flag.

In the late nineteenth century, rival colonial powers partitioned the country into five imperial zones for their imperial designs. This unscrupulous division of the country fragmented and consigned the Somali population to demarcated frontiers and this unresolved colonial legacy has been the basis of persistent political problems since Somalia achieved statehood. In fact it is this bequeathed predicament that forced the successive post-colonial Somali political elite to embark on a policy of aggressive irredentism in order to regain the missing Somali inhabited territories. It is for this reason that the Somali-wide public pursuit has constantly retained the highest priority in the political and the economic decision-making processes of the government from 1960 until the debacle of the Ogaden war with Ethiopia in 1978.

As I illustrated here in brief, the workings of the contradictory tendencies towards private and public pursuits enable us to systematically unearth and explain concrete trajectories and

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deeper historical struggles that have been shaping the Somali society over a period of time. Both manifestations also advance better and fuller alternative explanations for the collapse of the state than those currently on offer. It is this explanatory power therefore that makes both frameworks paramount to this study because of their centrality for the purpose of clarifying the narratives of fragmentation of the state in Somalia.

The key questions addressed in this work are:

- What are the decisive historical tendencies that set the state on the collapsing course?
- How did the constraints in the material environment and the extreme poverty of the pastoral economy engender parochial interests, social schisms and political fragmentation in Somalia?
- How did the pitfalls of the colonial dismemberment of the country determine irredentism after Somalia achieved statehood?
- To what extent does the interplay of the critical episodes of the Cold War geopolitical imperatives, the military rule, the Ogaden war and the dissident challenges eventually disintegrate the state?
- Why did the intervention of the international community fail to resolve the political crisis in Somalia?

The rationale of this research study is to contribute to the understanding of why the Somali state collapsed, to contribute to the search for ways of rebuilding a viable political order in Somalia, to expand on the meagre scholarly publications in the field of Somali studies and, finally, to add to the debate which focuses on the nature, construction, collapse and reconstitution of the contemporary states in Africa. This study is different from other studies undertaken since the Somali state collapsed. It not only retraces the historical process of state fragmentation retrospectively but also attempts to break a new ground by identifying decisive historical tendencies (that have generated cumulative tensions across historical time) in the hope of advancing new insights into the present political predicament in Somalia.

1.4. Methods of Inquiry

The approach of this study is to explore the political economy of the collapsed state in Somalia through a long historical approach. This *longue durée* historical approach, as suggested by the French historian Fernand Braudel, equips us with the ability to cover different problems and their impacts over a period of time. In this research study I will seek to explore how cumulative structural crises of the triple history - pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial processes - have led to the collapse of the state. In this study I shall particularly focus on a set of critical episodes in the Somali history since 1886, namely: the colonial incursions, the Cold War overlay, the military coup, the Ogaden war, the dissident challenges, and the fragmentation of the central authority in 1991.

In Africa, the significance of this *longue durée* concept in understanding the specific historical experiences and trajectories of African societies was recently introduced by Jean-Francois Bayart in his book: *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (1993). In that

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11 According to Braudel (1980), the *long durée* time span is a history which flows slowly and changes only very slowly as it is different from that of the *histoire événementielle*, or the history of short events.
book, Bayart argues that both modernisation and dependency approaches, which dominated the academic literature on the state in Africa from the early 1960s until the late 1970s, have either ignored or misread the true historicity of the continent. And now, since both perspectives have run their course, they are of little assistance in understanding the historical specificity of African states. Mahmood Mamdani, in a similar line of thinking, argues that the debates of both schools present the reality of African society not as a historical process, but rather as "a history by analogy". Accordingly, Mamdani suggests that instead of mirroring the historical experience of African states to an earlier history elsewhere, the historical legitimacy of African society must be taken as a unit of analysis (Mamdani 1996:8-13).

Bayart proposes that the trajectories of African states must be grounded and discussed in their social and historical roots since politics in Africa, as elsewhere, is largely produced internally. He further emphasises that in the present social reality of African society "the continuity of political movements from the beginning of the century to those of the 1950s or 1960s is widely acknowledged" (ibid: 33). On this point, Bayart concurs with Georges Balandier who affirms that "the present situation of African societies was the result of a triple history which has drawn together its constituent parts - precolonial, colonial and post-colonial history" (cited in Bayart 1993:33). Although Bayart presents his alternative historicity of the post-colonial state of Africa as it explains all the existing political trajectories of African states, he mainly deals with a few states like Cameroon, Nigeria, Togo and Zaire. Thus, more case studies on other African states are what is now indeed needed. This study on the Somali state therefore is one of the case studies.

This study relies upon three sources of data: historical sources, archival work and elite-specialised interviewing. I will comment on each one of them very briefly.

(a) Historical Research: this is collected as secondary historical data. For instance, in Somalia, it was during the colonial period that the first serious historical research was conducted (Burton 1894; Lewis 1955). Afterwards, more historical studies on Somalia have been undertaken since the country achieved statehood; these are now available in the public libraries. In this study, both the colonial and the post-colonial historical writings are very important to: (i) provide a historical background; and (ii) to understand the underlying historical trajectories which have been shaping the Somali society across time.

(b) Archival Work: This is largely primary material. The archival data that I used in this study are mainly the recordings of the British and the Italian colonial Administration as well as the subsequent post-colonial publications. The colonial period is a central concern to this study as both Britain and Italy had each colonised part of Somalia. The British established colonial rule in northern Somaliland in 1885 and Italy carved up southern Somalia in 1889. Finally, the post-colonial state of Somalia came into being as the result of the unification of British Somaliland in the north and Italian Somalia in the south on the 1st July 1960.

12 For a well-elaborated critique against this generalised presentation by Bayart, see Chris Allen, ‘Understanding African Politics’, Review of African Political Economy 65 (1995): 301-320. Allen argues that the study of Bayart on the state in Africa “in the end tells us much more about states like Cameroon or Togo, and relatively little about Ghana before 1980 (or after), or Somalia, or indeed Angola and Mozambique. It is not therefore properly to be considered a general study on African politics, but instead a study of one crucial political process within African politics” (ibid: 316-317).
The archives both in Britain and Italy store annual colonial reports, pamphlets and other documentation, which shed light on the modus operandi of the colonial state consolidation in Somalia. The publications also cover diverse areas extending from politics, economics and trade to other administrative and social issues. In England, the places I found most published literature on Somalia are the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), the British library, the Commonwealth and Foreign Office library, the London School of Economics Library. I also found some unpublished reports in the Public Record Office at Kew Gardens in London. In Italy, the places where most of the published materials on Somalia can be found are the Historical Archive of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Office (ASMAE), and the library of Institute Italo-Africano, which are in Rome. In the region, the two main archives where I found most of the published materials on Somalia are the Institute of Ethiopian studies, and the Institute of Nationalities in Addis Ababa. Both institutes store considerable historical and political records on Somalia before and during the colonial and post-colonial periods.

(c) Elite and specialised interviewing: this technique is essentially very useful for collecting data for this work. The method is specially used for interviewing the well-informed and key individuals in higher portfolios of state administration rather than with low ranking employees (Dexter 1970). Elite interviewing can be usefully combined with an informant technique. Elite interviewing is very different from standardised interviewing. In standardised interviewing, "the investigator defines the question and the problem" and then searches for "answers within the bounds set by his presuppositions" (ibid: 5). By contrast, in elite interviewing, "the investigator is willing, and often eager to let the interviewee teach him what the problem, the question, the situation, is to the limits, of course, of the interviewer's ability to perceive relationships to his basic problems, whatever these may be" (ibid).

Mostly, interviewing takes the form of elite interviewing. The significance of elite interviewing is that it recognises the position and the importance of the well-informed interviewee by granting him a VIP treatment. This enables the interviewee to narrate how he recollects the situation and state what he regards to be relevant. Furthermore, the procedure of elite interviewing means selectively identifying and choosing beforehand those individuals who can give not only insightful answers to the investigator but, more importantly, have the aptitude to articulate how important state policies and decisions are formulated and implemented.

Elite interviewing and informant technique can be usefully combined. The difference between the two methods is that the informants are often persons who have not participated in the decision-making of a government policy but because of their special knowledge become perceptive and well informed on the subject matter of the investigator. Thus, informants because of their erudition and scholarly knowledge on the situation are useful in helping to formulate latent assumptions about the development of political attitudes, and who else is to be interviewed. In this work, I utilised both the techniques as required by the central issues of the study, rather than the reverse. For instance, the persons who have a good deal of information both in depth and in detail about the critical episodes this work addresses are usually those who have held key government offices of the state as well as perceptive

13 "An informant is distinguished from an elite interviewee by two factors: participation and time. The informant is regarded to some, often to a considerable extent as a sub-professional colleague or co-worker of the research of the research investigator" (Dexter 1970:8).
informants. In fact, each of the critical episodes raises different questions. These questions can be adequately answered by persons who have been involved practically in the decision-making process of one or other particular policy or are intimately knowledgeable on the political development in Somalia.

With respect to perceptive informants, I conducted first exploratory investigations by interviewing an academic expert such as Professor Ahmed Ashkir Bootaan, who now lives in The Netherlands. Professor Bootaan was once a Minister of Education and later became a professor of law and the Rector of the Somali National University, a position he held until the central authority in Somalia broke down in 1991. Professor Bootaan was also a spokesperson and speech advisor for the former President of Somalia, Mohamed Siad Barre, for a long time. In Addis Ababa, I consulted with Dr. Omar Macalim Mohamed, a well-informed informant on the political development in the country since the 1950s. Dr. Mohamed was the first Ambassador of Somalia to America in 1961. Furthermore, in Ethiopia, I sought the ideas and recollections of another perceptive informant, Mohamed Mohamed Sheikh, the Director of the Somali Community Literacy Centre in Addis Ababa. The suggestions and the insights of these perceptive informants helped me to acquire a better picture of the subject matter of this study. It also allowed me to identify and choose certain key political figures that I have subsequently interviewed. Afterwards, using the elite interviewing technique, I interviewed such personalities like General Mohamed Abshir Muse, Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf and Major-General Abdullahi Ali Omar among others. I conducted most of the interviews in Addis Ababa and in London between 1996 and 1998.

1.5. Structure of the Research

The dramatic and the total collapse of the post-colonial state of Somalia is not an event that happened suddenly. But as I will argue strongly in this study, the disintegration of the state is an outcome of cumulative structural crises and incremental processes across the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods, which can only be grasped through a long historical approach.

Organisationally, the first chapters of the study, particularly 3 and 4, delineate the political economy crises of the state in the pre-colonial and post-colonial periods. Chapter 2 reviews the state debates proffered by the traditionalist and the transformationist schools of Somali studies, which are informed by the modernisation and the dependency perspectives respectively. Here emphasis is placed on the continuity and change explanations for the collapse of the state that both predominant schools of Somali studies alternatively stress. It is also in this chapter that I shall elaborate in detail on the alternative frameworks of the private and public pursuit that I use throughout this study. As I will show in the dissertation, both modes of analysis advance a more powerful explanation of collapse of the state. Chapter 3 considers the constraints in the material environment and the tendency towards private pursuit. Chapter 4 discusses the predicament of the colonial dismemberment of Somalia and the politics of the public pursuit.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 situate the political economy problems of the state in the post-colonial period. In these chapters, I will examine a set of critical episodes and explain how their destructive interplay led to the implosion of the state. Chapter 5 extends the discussion in chapter 3 and examines further how the endemic structural poverty of the domestic economy
exacerbated the tendency towards private pursuit and also condemned the post-colonial state of Somalia to subsist on foreign aid. Chapter 6 furthers the discussion in chapter 4 and probes how the politics towards public pursuit militarised the state during the Cold War era. Chapter 7 explains how the pitfalls of the politics of private and public pursuit have caused the state to collapse. Chapter 8 is an account of the events which took place in the aftermath of the state collapse in 1991. Chapter 9, in conclusion, summarises the alternative explanations that I have advanced for the collapse of the state and also briefly discusses the post-conflict development in the country.
This scheme summaries the discussion of the study. It illustrates how the constraints in the material environment and the misfortunes in the Somali history across time have set in motion the destructive turn of events that fragmented the state. Particularly, the chart powerfully depicts the cumulated structural problems that the pre-colonial and colonial pitfalls had bequeathed to the post-colonial state of Somalia. The state inherited a poor and subsistence-based pastoral economy on the one hand and a colonially divided Somali ethnic population in fragmented territories on the other hand. In response, the political leadership of the post-colonial state of Somalia has set in motion two contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, since the meagre domestic economy cannot resolve their accumulation problems, the political elites resorted to private pursuit politics that resulted in the plunder of the scarce national resources, state bankruptcy and a violent struggle for power, which led to a crisis of governance. On the other hand,
the political elite embarked on a policy of aggressive irredentism to regain the missing Somali inhabited territories, and that became the primary political occupation of the state. In fact, this struggle for a public pursuit or for a Pan-Somal i unity has retained an overriding position over the immense domestic social, economic and development problems since Somalia achieved statehood. Thanks to the Cold War geopolitics, the Somali political elite succeeded in building up a large military might and arming the nation to the teeth. Somalia launched several irredentist wars against its neighbouring countries, particularly Ethiopia, but failed to regain the missing territories. Consequently, the militarisation of the state and the society also greatly contributed to the fragmentation of the state. However, although the competition for private pursuit continues in an aggravated manner because of the accumulation crisis that the political elite endures, the struggle for a Somali-wide public pursuit has been abandoned since Somalia lost the Ogaden war against Ethiopia in 1978.

Continuity and change terms hanging outside the scheme represent the arguments advanced by the traditionalist and transformationist scholars of Somali studies in explaining the causes of the fragmentation of the state. This study thus attempts to broaden the continuity and change debates so as to transcend the limitation of the both schools of Somali studies. The continuity and change dynamics that the dominant schools of Somali studies advance have partially identified certain negative aspects which have been affecting the Somali social formation over a period of time but have left out many other decisive elements that this study attempts to address in a comprehensive manner.

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14 The Somali political elite militarised the state by diverting a significant portion of government resources from tackling the immense social and economic problems in the country to import arms and military hardware from abroad. In this respect, the Somali political elite invested heavy in the military sector without however building military industries in the country which would have created jobs and other social benefits for the nation. Eventually, the priority of this military policy bankrupted the state economically. Furthermore, the violent military culture that the Somali political elite has pursued in decades also militarised the society. For a discussion of how the militarisation of the governing apparatuses and the society resulted in the fragmentation of the state, see further in chapter 6 and 7 of the book.