



Thinking Beyond Roadmaps in Somalia

Expanding Policy Options for State Building

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Executive Summary

Hope and optimism accompanied the installation of the new Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) in September 2012, but the administration today appears to be drifting toward failure once again. Al-Shabaab is far from defeated, social fragmentation within Somalia is on the rise, and political infighting continues unabated. Despite considerable international support and the promise of a “New Deal” for donor engagement,¹ the joint efforts of the government and its international partners have been unable to translate burgeoning progress into a more sustainable trajectory away from perpetual conflict and fragility.

Although its record is hardly spotless, the self-declared independent state of Somaliland² has fared noticeably better in establishing basic levels of peace and stability. While it is inadvisable to simply transpose lessons learned from one case to another, Somaliland’s experience provides useful insights for Somalia’s state-building endeavor. International policymakers and their local partners in Somalia might benefit from taking a closer look at Somaliland’s state building, which followed an unconventional path compared with approaches in Somalia and elsewhere.

This paper traces Somaliland’s trajectory and juxtaposes it with the one presently envisioned for Somalia, arguing that there are a broad range of possible state-building avenues to follow. While Somalia’s state-building framework, the European Union- and Somalia-brokered Somali Compact, prioritizes the passage of a permanent constitution, the establishment of a federal governance system, and the holding of popular elections, Somaliland followed a different path, at least during the first decade after its unilateral declaration of independence in 1991. By proposing that state building can follow various pathways, this study encourages Somalis and their international partners to think more flexibly and creatively about the way ahead.

State building is a conflict-prone, high-risk, protracted, and haphazard process. For this reason, its engineers should be given significant latitude to experiment with new approaches if existing ones do not work. In concrete terms, Somali stakeholders and their international counterparts should consider prioritizing the creation and development of livelihoods at the “bottom” over legalistic and procedural aspects of state building at the “top.” Finally, efforts must be made to enhance social cohesion and national unity, which would boost Somalia’s state-building efforts, and start addressing the grievances that provide Al-Shabaab with its recruitment message.

¹ The “New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States,” launched by the G7+ group of countries, was endorsed at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness by a wide range of actors in Busan, South Korea, on November 30, 2011. While preceding meetings in Rome (2003), Paris (2005), and Accra (2008) had already transformed aid relationships, the “New Deal” identifies certain peace-building and state-building goals as critical to addressing conflict and fragility, and is designed to strengthen country-led efforts toward enhancing state capacity. An EU-Somalia conference held in Brussels in September 2013 endorsed a “New Deal Compact” for Somalia.

² Somaliland declared its independence from Somalia after a ferocious civil war in May 1991, but has not yet gained recognition as a sovereign state by the international community.

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Introduction

Having reached a milestone with the installation of a new federal government in September 2012, hopes were high for a “Somalia redux.”¹ Bolstered by important military gains the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) had scored against the extremist group Al-Shabaab since 2011, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud devised policy options that were both coherent and pragmatic, thus deepening confidence among international donors. In January 2013, the U.S. administration recognized the new Somali leadership, with other foreign governments and international organizations following suit. When former EU high representative for foreign affairs and security policy Catherine Ashton declared that “Somalia is no longer a failed state,”² international donors echoed her optimism by pledging billions of dollars for the reconstruction of Somalia during aid conferences in London, Yokohama, and Brussels between May and September 2013.

Yet, just over two years after Mohamud’s taking office, the outlook appears bleak. Al-Shabaab is far from defeated and continues to carry out regular attacks; the process of writing a new, permanent constitution has reached deadlock; and the federalism process has proven a source of conflict. The violence surrounding the emergence of the Interim Jubba Administration (IJA) in May 2013 was replicated in Baidoa in March 2014, when competing factions tried to establish federal member states in southern Somalia.³ Moreover, corruption continues unabated and political infighting has weakened the government. After Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon lost a vote of confidence in Parliament in December 2013, the president had to fight for his own political survival when more than 100 legislators demanded his resignation in May 2014. Consequently, donor confidence has been dented.

¹ Matt Bryden, *Somalia Redux? Assessing the New Somali Federal Government* (Washington, DC: CSIS, August 2013), http://csis.org/files/publication/130819_Bryden_SomaliaRedux_WEB.pdf.

² Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Catherine Ashton, *Joint Article*, January 31, 2013, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/somalia/documents/press_corner/31012013.pdf.

³ The ambiguous legal framework regarding federalism in Somalia resulted in a tug-of-war among Somali actors concerning the degree of devolution of power within the Somali state. After an international conference in Ethiopia in August 2013 granted legitimacy to Ahmed Mohamed Islam “Madobe” and his IJA, regional elites convened rival state-formation conferences in order to legitimize and protect their regional claims. This process has frequently exacerbated local and regional tensions. See Dominik Balthasar, “Somalia’s Federal Agenda: From fragility to fragmentation?,” EUISS Briefing 17 (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2014), http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Brief_17_Somalia.pdf.

Against this backdrop, there seems to be a real danger that Somalia will fail again. Although some progress has certainly been made during the tenure of President Mohamud, his government is a long way from standing on its own feet. In security, economic, and political terms, the country appears as dependent on its multiple international partners as was the case for the preceding Transitional Federal Governments. What is more, some of the progress made in the political sphere may have serious repercussions for the development of the state. While the FGS has undoubtedly advanced Somalia's federal agenda, the ad hoc nature of this process risks contributing to continued fragility, deepened fragmentation, and the reinvention of Al-Shabaab.⁴ These challenges, while frustrating, are hardly unusual in the context of state building, which history has shown to be a conflict-prone and drawn-out process.

For these reasons, neither Somali nor international policymakers should resign themselves to failure. Yet, rather than proceeding with business as usual, they should scrutinize and rethink their past and current approaches to state building. Casting a critical eye over more accomplished state-building endeavors in the region is helpful in shedding light on the broad range of possible alternatives. In this context, it is useful to refer to the case of Somaliland, long (and at times overly) praised by international observers for its state building. While Somaliland is a complicated example—it is neither an outright success story nor does it teach lessons readily applicable to Somalia—it raises some important questions for Somali policymakers and their international counterparts to consider.

These questions range from whether to prioritize constitution writing and democratization in state-building endeavors, to the elite's need for a "political budget"—discretionary funds that political elites might use to build alliances and buy off adversaries⁵—to the balance that needs to be struck between bottom-up and top-down approaches and interventions. Definitive answers to these questions are hard to come by, but the Somaliland case conveys a clear message: State building is an inherently conflictive, incrementally evolving, haphazard process, requiring tough choices to be made, setbacks to be accommodated, and risks to be taken. If Somalia is to find its own answers to some of the state-building conundrums Somaliland raises, its national and international stakeholders need a flexible attitude and a good dose of inspiration. While the New Deal framework for aid effectiveness in fragile states, embraced by the FGS in the Somali Compact, is designed to give its policymakers additional flexibility, inspiration can be sought by taking a closer look at Somaliland's approach to state building.

A Broken Record: Somalia's Struggle to Exit Fragility

With the conclusion of Somalia's eight-year transitional period in September 2012, the country seemed poised to finally exit the "vicious circle"⁶ of conflict and fragility. The

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ A term used in the context of Sudan to describe the "discretionary budgets that rulers used to pay their armies and security services and to pay off intermediate elites." See Alex deWaal, "Somalia: The Logic of a Rentier Political Marketplace?," World Peace Foundation, October 24, 2013, <http://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2013/10/24/somalia-the-logic-of-a-rentier-political-marketplace/>.

⁶ Ken Menkhaus, "Vicious Circles and the Security Development Nexus in Somalia," *Conflict, Security & Development* 4, no. 2 (August 2004): 149–65.

sense of optimism was personified in the (s)election of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as president. Together with Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon, he was the first head of state whose reputation was not tarnished by direct involvement in Somalia's civil wars. Instead, Mohamud entered politics following a distinguished career in civil society. Similarly novel was that the process to establish the new government took place in Somalia, rather than abroad. Concurrently, the security situation gradually improved, both onshore and offshore. Al-Shabaab slowly lost territory following joint operations by the Somali Armed Forces (SAF) and AMISOM. The defections of two prominent Al-Shabaab figures in 2013,⁷ and the death of the group's leader, Ahmed Abdi Godane, a.k.a. Mukhtar Abu Zubeyr, who was killed in an U.S. air strike in September 2014, further raised hopes for peace and progress.⁸

Initial developments in the political realm gave additional cause for optimism. In contrast to previous administrations, President Mohamud appointed a cabinet of respected and well-trained individuals with an agenda to tackle Somalia's most pressing issues. During his first months in office, the president devised a Six Pillar strategy for reconstruction, which in terms of pragmatism and vision was a big improvement on previous policies. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shirdon undertook a "listening tour" to the federal member states of Galmudug and Puntland—two of the FGS's key signatories—in March 2013. Somalia's international partners significantly increased their financial commitments, adding substance to their goodwill by gradually moving resources from Nairobi to Mogadishu. In tandem with these developments, the private sector revived its activities, as exemplified by Coca-Cola resuming its beverage production in Mogadishu in December 2012. All of these developments suggested that Somalia was finally getting on track to fix its broken record of violence and instability.

Two Troubled Years

In reality, many of these initial advances were cosmetic and the FGS has exhibited significant parallels to earlier administrations. The very process that brought the FGS to power largely followed the course of earlier, unsuccessful efforts by the Transitional National Government (TNG, 2000–2004) and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG, 2004–2012). For one, the FGS was selected by a constituent assembly of clan representatives who were no more legitimate than their predecessors. For another, the process attracted serious allegations of vote buying. Finally, the FGS continues to operate on the basis of a *provisional* constitution, and is therefore no more permanent, representative, or democratic than its predecessors.

Another parallel that can be drawn with the earlier governments, and one that casts doubt on whether the FGS had really embarked on a new path, concerns the management of public finances. While the FGS did not have to declare bankruptcy like the TNG did in 2003, and while levels of corruption have reportedly not been as bad as during the tenure of President Ahmed, when 80 percent of funds available

⁷ After Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweyes left Al-Shabaab in June 2013, Omar Shafik Hammami (a.k.a. Abu Mansour Al-Amriki) turned his back on the organization in September.

⁸ However, just as the 2008 killing of the then-chief Adan Hashi Ayro by U.S. missiles and the military offensives launched by AMISOM since 2011 have not led to the collapse of Al-Shabaab, Godane's demise is unlikely to put an end to the movement.

were allegedly looted by government officials,⁹ corruption remains omnipresent. This became obvious in November 2013, when Somalia's newly appointed Central Bank Governor Yussur Abrar resigned from her position, citing high-level interference with the bank's functions. Consequently, Somalia continues to be ranked as the most corrupt country in the world.¹⁰

On top of this, the FGS has committed numerous political mistakes. Unlike previous administrations, the government soon alienated its main supporters. After signing a historic agreement with Puntland in March 2013, President Mohamud alienated the federal entity with his choice of ministers, his attempt to undermine the Jubaland initiative, and his interpretation of the provisional constitution. This led Puntland's then-President Abdirahman Mohamud Farole to break off relations with the central government in August 2013. Similarly, the FGS increasingly neglected the Galmudug administration under Mohamed Ahmed Alin, as well as the moderate Sufi group of Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ), thus incrementally isolating itself from its allies. Instead, President Mohamud increasingly relied on members of Damul Jadiid, a moderate Somali Islamist movement that had formed in the late 1970s.¹¹

International Complications

In addition to the shortcomings of Somali actors, the international community's policies, though well meant, seem to have added to the difficulty of advancing Somalia's state-building endeavor. There have been significant alterations in personnel and functions, including the replacement of the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) with the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) in June 2013, and the ratification of the Somali Compact during the Somalia New Deal Conference in Brussels in September 2013. Yet, Somalia's international partners appear largely wedded to previous principles. Their continued focus on countering terrorism and extremist violence has distorted Somalia's state-building project.¹² Meanwhile, they have rigidly stuck to their insistence that institutional reform must precede reconstruction.

Consequently, international actors pushed President Mohamud to exchange his much-lauded Six Pillar policy for a trilogy. Rather than focusing on a comprehensive strategy to create stability, facilitate economic recovery, build peace, improve administrative capacity, strengthen diplomatic relationships, and bring about national unity, pressure was placed on the FGS to instead focus on drafting a permanent constitution—to be approved in a referendum—designing an electoral system, and conducting credible elections by August 2016. This turn from an output-oriented agenda that aimed to improve livelihoods and state capacity toward a much more procedural approach focused on forging rules and regulations, has contributed to Somalia's stalled state-building project.

⁹ Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group, "Report of the Monitoring Group in Somalia and Eritrea Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2060 (2012): Somalia," UN Security Council, S/2013/413, 2013, <http://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/report-monitoring-group-somalia-and-eritrea-pursuant-security-council-resolution-2060>.

¹⁰ Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2013," <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2013/results>.

¹¹ Bryden, *Somalia Redux?*, 8.

¹² See Life and Peace Institute, *Somalia: Alternatives for Conflict Transformation in Somalia. A snapshot and analysis of key political actors' views and strategies* (Uppsala, Sweden: Life and Peace Institute, 2014).

First, as attention shifted from practical state-building objectives toward more formal and legalistic issues of governance, deficiencies within Somali state institutions were exposed that served to aggravate political infighting. Controversy immediately arose over the provisional constitution not according the president a role in devising government policy. Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon fell out with the president, treading a familiar path in Somali politics, which has a history of tensions between the executive and first minister. Following weeks of dispute between Somalia's two political leaders over the prime minister's attempt to fire some of the president's allies from the cabinet, the former ultimately lost a vote of confidence in parliament in December 2013. Once again, the government itself seemed to have become a liability to Somalia's state-building endeavor.

Second, the emphasis put on constitution writing and the establishment of a federal framework gave rise to several crises that deflected the attention of the FGS away from providing services to the Somali population. Instead, the government became preoccupied with managing burgeoning federal member states and trying to assert its own political dominance. One example of this was the process that established the IJA, which was approved by the FGS in August 2013. The IJA's lead was followed by regional elites who convened federal state-formation conferences in order to legitimize, protect, and/or establish their claims. Throughout March 2014, competing state-building projects at the federal level sparked violence, increased local tensions, and exacerbated clan rivalries.

In summary, Somalia appears a long way from reestablishing a functioning state. Yet, rather than adopting a problem-oriented view that focuses on identifying and overcoming stumbling blocks to state building, it would be more constructive to adopt a solution-oriented perspective. In this regard, actors inside and outside Somalia would be well advised to consider the case of Somaliland, the self-styled republic in Somalia's northwest. Even though the insights gleaned from Somaliland do not lend themselves to copying and pasting, but instead require careful assessment and adaptation, they might inspire Somalia with new ways to move its state-building endeavor forward.

The Case of Somaliland¹³

Soon after its unilateral declaration of independence in May 1991, Somaliland was being praised as "Africa's Best Kept Secret."¹⁴ International observers ascribed the alleged uniqueness and apparent success of its state-building project to processes of traditional reconciliation, grassroots democracy, the blending of traditional and modern forms of governance into so-called hybrid political orders, and the polity's overall peaceful nature.¹⁵ To its admirers, Somaliland's approach closely aligned with current notions of development, whereby peace, pluralism, and democracy are the

¹³ For a more detailed account, see Dominik Balthasar, "Somaliland's Best Kept Secret: Shrewd Politics and War Projects as Means of State-Making," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7, no. 2 (2013): 218–38.

¹⁴ Iqbal Jhazbhay, "Somaliland: Africa's best kept secret, a challenge to the international community?," *African Security Review* 12, no. 4 (2003): 77–82.

¹⁵ See, for example, Seth Kaplan, "The Remarkable Story of Somaliland," *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008): 143–57; Steven Kibble and Michael Walls, "Beyond Polarity: Negotiating a Hybrid State in Somaliland," *Africa Spectrum* 45, no. 1 (2010): 31–56; and Timothy Othieno, "A New Donor Approach to Fragile Societies: The Case of Somaliland," *Overseas Development Institute Opinions* 103 (July 2008).

lynchpins of social progress and state resilience. While Somaliland's journey was complicated and contested, it nevertheless developed from little more than a political idea in 1991 into a *de facto*, if not *de jure*, state that has continued to inspire many observers.

Policymakers seeking inspiration for reconstructing Somalia could benefit from examining Somaliland's state-building trajectory, which appears to have charted unconventional territory. While Somaliland has yet to complete the task of erecting a functioning state throughout the territory it claims for itself, and has still not been successful in gaining international recognition, important insights can be taken from the process it underwent. This is particularly true for the decade between 1991 and 2001, which many international observers acknowledge was the most formative period of its state-building endeavor. Consequently, the subsequent section sketches out Somaliland's development in the 1990s, before distilling and discussing the questions the Somaliland case raises with regards to Somalia's state-building project.

Somaliland's Interim Period (1991–1993)

Shortly after the overthrow of Somalia's dictator Mohamed Siyad Barre in January 1991, the Isaaq-based Somali National Movement (SNM) that was dominant in northwestern Somalia, expanded its control. This left the militias of the Gadabursi, Dhulbahante, and Warsangeli clans, who had generally sided with Barre during the 1988–1991 civil war, with little alternative than to enter into peace negotiations. Bilateral truce and reconciliation meetings were followed by a "national" conference in Burco, which culminated in the declaration of an independent Republic of Somaliland in May 1991. While this announcement sparked a wave of enthusiasm, the SNM leadership had no ready-made plans for postwar administration, leading the movement to replicate its internal governance structures when erecting a transitional national government. In June 1991, interim president Abdirahman Ahmed Ali Tuur presented a cabinet through which he aimed to forge an all-inclusive elite bargain.

Yet, the two factions that had formed within the SNM during the struggle against the Barre regime turned increasingly antagonistic, pitching the civilian wing that supported Tuur against the more hardline, military Calan Cas. The contest over the allocation of political, military, and economic resources that followed inhibited the new government from establishing control and expanding its authority. While the state managed to establish its writ in the capital Hargeisa, Tuur's attempts to unify the diverse clan militias and transform them into national security forces under central state command aggravated existing tensions inside and outside his administration. Initial violence erupted in Burco in January 1992, leaving 300 dead. In March, conflict spread to the port city of Berbera, when the government attempted to secure the port's economic resources that had come under the control of militias opposing Tuur's reign.

Approximately 1,000 individuals lost their lives during the subsequent eight months of conflict,¹⁶ bringing Somaliland to the brink of all-out civil war. By October 1992, the situation had deteriorated to such an extent that President Tuur and UN special envoy to Somalia, Mohammed Sahnoun, agreed to deploy 350 peacekeepers to Somalia's

¹⁶ Mark Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland* (London: Progressio, 2008).

northwest. While the troops were ultimately not dispatched as Sahnoun resigned from his post and Somaliland managed to broker peace by itself, the crisis underscored the deep political fragmentation that had brought the young republic to its lowest ebb. Analysts wrote off the transitional period as “two wasted years.”¹⁷

Advancing State Building (1993–1997)

This gloomy trajectory was halted by the Boroma Conference of 1993. While the summit largely reflected Somaliland’s status quo, with its patchwork of diverse “clanistans,” the new President Muhammad Haji Ibrahim Egal effected a slow but steady domination of the central government over other actors. Ignoring criticism that he violated the 1993 National Charter by not honoring its provisions for decentralization, Egal created a national army, set up a rudimentary administration, and erected a centralized state. Part of the reason why Egal was more successful than Tuur in initiating state building lay in his being sponsored by the militarily powerful Calan Cas, and that he hailed from the Isaaq clan of Iisa Muse—rather than Habar Yonis—that not only featured some of the region’s tycoons, but also controlled significant economic assets, including the port of Berbera.

Upon taking office in the wake of the Boroma Conference, Egal prioritized resource mobilization to finance the state-building project. To this end, he drew heavily on the support of Isaaq businessmen, introduced the Somaliland shilling—the self-styled republic’s own currency that created a considerable financial windfall for the government—and established customs’ offices in order to tax the profitable *khat*¹⁸ trade at the Ethiopian border as well as imports and exports at the port of Berbera. His second priority was to gain control of the security sector, leading him to oversee demobilization and the creation of a national army. These efforts were supplemented by the establishment of a state administration. While the use of civil service positions for demobilized fighters led to a bloated bureaucracy and a clan bias in favor of the Isaaq, it boosted security and provided livelihoods.

However, Egal’s presidency was not uncontested. Aggrieved by his choice of ministers and his centralizing tendencies, some of the most prominent leaders of the Garhajis—made up of the Issaq clans of Habar Yonis and Eidagalle, including former President Tuur—declared Somaliland’s government illegitimate. In March 1994, the Eidagalle took military control of Hargeisa airport, which lay within their traditional territory. Rejecting calls for yet another national conference to resolve outstanding issues, Egal unleashed his eager military officers onto the opposition. Conflict spread to Burco, when government troops tried to take control of Habar Yonis checkpoints in the city’s vicinity in March 1995. The resulting war sparked the heaviest fighting since the anti-Barre struggle in which as many as 4,000 people lost their lives, and up to 180,000 fled to Ethiopia.¹⁹

While Somaliland was devastated by the fighting, Egal himself emerged from these wars in a strengthened position. For one, the conflicts had resulted in an annihilation of the Garhajis opposition. For another, by subtly engineering the conflicts, Egal

¹⁷ Patrick Gilkes, *Two Wasted Years: The Republic of Somaliland 1991–1993* (London: Save the Children Fund, 1993).

¹⁸ *Khat/qaat* is a mild amphetamine-like stimulant, consumed by largely male Somalis.

¹⁹ Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*.

managed to portray them as a project pursued by the *Calan Cas* officers, who arguably had their own scores to settle with the Garhajis. This not only washed his hands of responsibility, but also led to the political delegitimization of the *Calan Cas*, which allowed Egal to free himself of the tight control they had exercised over him in previous years. Incrementally, the president replaced the *Calan Cas* ministers with individuals from smaller clans, traditional leaders, and/or selected members of the Garhajis.

Transition toward Democracy (1997–2001)

In order to reestablish peace and address the conflict over the allocation and exertion of political power, another clan symposium was held. Facing stiff opposition from the “Eastern Alliance”—a political bloc made up of Isaaq and Harti clans residing in eastern Somaliland—Egal shrewdly manipulated the summit in order to maintain power. First, he had the conference largely financed by the government, which was a novelty for Somaliland and also gave Egal leverage over the 315 conference delegates, roughly half of whom he ultimately handpicked. Second, Egal offered political spoils to opposition members, including Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud Silanyo, the current president of Somaliland. Third, by arguing that the civil wars had constituted *political* rather than *clan* conflicts, he limited the involvement and influence of the traditional authorities, positioning himself at the center of all negotiations instead.

The summit took place in Hargeisa between October 1996 and February 1997. Although having previously announced that he would not run for president, it quickly became clear that the conference was designed to consolidate Egal’s power. Egal eventually beat his eleven competitors by a landslide, winning 223 out of 315 votes. Foul play was strongly suspected given that Egal had forfeited much of his support prior to the summit. In the words of one analyst, “everyone in Hargeisa believes that he owed his re-election as president . . . to simply buying votes.”²⁰ Delegates allegedly received between \$1,500 and \$5,000 per person for their electoral loyalty to the incumbent president. With Egal having won the election, the government’s tenure in office was extended for the third time, by a period of four years, resulting in Egal’s presidency extending to a total of eight years.

Even though Egal won the election, the opposition compelled him to adopt a draft constitution, a process he had delayed since the 1993 Boroma symposium. Reluctantly, Egal bowed to the pressure, but it took another four years until its final version was put to a referendum, partly because the Parliament and the president disagreed over its content.²¹ Eventually, the competing versions they had both produced were combined into one document in order to break the stalemate. While the opposition was angered by “there [being] no public and opposition consultation as promised before putting the constitution for popular endorsement,”²² the constitutional referendum took place on May 31, 2001, almost exactly one decade after the unilateral declaration of independence. In order to guarantee passage of the document, Egal

²⁰ Indian Ocean Newsletter, “Egal Resigns?,” *Indian Ocean Newsletter* 792 (December 20, 1997).

²¹ Unsurprisingly, Parliament had favored a strong legislative branch, whereas Egal wanted to assign greater powers to the executive.

²² Mansor H. Ibrahim, “Somaliland’s Elections: Transition without Transformation,” in *Somalia: Diaspora and State Reconstitution in the Horn of Africa*, ed. A. Osman Farah, Mammo Muchie, and Joakim Gundel (London: Adonis & Abbey Publishers Ltd., 2007), 222–32.

ingeniously tied the vote to an unrelated vote affirming Somaliland's status of independence, thereby assuring its approval by 97.9 percent of participants.²³

Egal's decision to push for a constitution and multiparty elections was motivated by his political survival being at risk. The president calculated that elections were more likely to assure his power than another clan conference that the opposition was pushing for. Declaring that the international community would not recognize Somaliland's independence "unless it installed a constitutionally based, appropriately elected and authentically democratic government,"²⁴ Egal portrayed himself as a modernizer and stern reformer dedicated to introducing democracy. Having been postponed by about one year, local council elections finally took place in December 2002. While Egal did not live to see them, as he died unexpectedly on March 3, 2002, while undergoing surgery in South Africa, his calculations proved correct and his party, the United People's Democratic Party (UDUB), won the election.

Taking a Step Back: Tenets of State Building in Somaliland

Somaliland's state-building trajectory has differed markedly from internationally devised norms and paradigms on how to supposedly fix fragile states²⁵ in general, as well as past and current roadmaps sketched out for Somalia in particular. For these reasons, it might be worth taking a closer look at the less conventional avenue taken by Somaliland. A number of broad insights clearly emerge.

First, Somaliland's state-building effort was endogenous. Domestic institutions and structures took the lead, such as the traditional authorities and inter-clan peace and reconciliation proceedings. By contrast, the international community was largely uninvolved. These observations, while important, can lead to problematic conclusions. For one, it is not the absence or presence of the international community per se that determines the success or failure of state-building projects. For another, excessive focus on specific, context-dependent institutions risks missing the fundamental underlying point: Namely, that the importance of endogenous development lies less with particular institutions than with the process itself. In the case of Somaliland, this process was innovative, and to a great extent haphazard, rather than preset and rule-conforming. The fact that the Somali National Movement had no ready-made plans for postwar rule, and that lawmakers copied the proceedings of President Bill Clinton's impeachment process when attempting to remove their own president from office, are examples of the improvised nature of their approach.²⁶ Rather than following a rule book, Somaliland's state builders had room to experiment. While this approach carried risks, it enabled the "rules of the game" to evolve gradually and change over time.

²³ However, it needs to be pointed out that the referendum was boycotted in parts of the regions of Sanaag, Sool, and Awdal.

²⁴ Berouk Mesfin, "The Political Development of Somaliland and Its Conflict with Puntland," ISS Paper 200, Institute for Security Studies, September 2009, <http://www.issafrica.org/uploads/P200.PDF>.

²⁵ Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

²⁶ Parliament tabled a vote of no-confidence in the president, when the management of port revenues, which had been set up in such a way that the revenues went directly to the president's office, and the government's handling of a contract given to the French oil company Total Mer Rouge, came under parliamentary scrutiny. Egal survived this motion of impeachment by just one vote.

Second, and related, Somaliland's development process was not linear and there were setbacks along the way. While it has, at times, been suggested that Somaliland's trajectory could be neatly divided into different phases of peace building and state building, with the former preceding the latter,²⁷ it was much less linear in reality. This point is illustrated by the recurrent bouts of large-scale violence in 1992 and 1994–1995, the National Demobilization Commission being unacceptable in Somaliland's eastern regions in the late 1990s, and the extended nature of the peace and reconciliation meetings that stretched from 1990 to 1997. Somaliland's state-building process took place in the absence of complete stability and peace, and even upset the latter. As is to be expected, the process of state building is inherently conflictual, not least because it implies, by definition, a change in particular “rules of the game,” thus altering the distribution of power. Hence, Somaliland's state-building progress oscillated significantly, and was marked by many setbacks.

A third observation from the Somaliland case is that state building remains a largely elite-driven process, which may frequently display undemocratic traits. While decentralized and bottom-up mechanisms certainly played their role in reconstructing Somaliland, particularly with regard to local reconciliation, state building was propelled by a political elite at the state's center. This is demonstrated by President Egal's repeated defiance of the Peace Charter agreed upon at the 1993 Boroma Conference, his increasingly centralized control over the state, and his creeping authoritarianism.²⁸ Democratization was deferred by a decade, and was embraced only when it constituted the political leadership's best chance of staying in power. These observations are not meant to suggest that grassroots actors and democratic governance have no place in state building; rather, they challenge the widely held proposition that bottom-up approaches and democratic governance are necessary building blocks of success.

Fourth, Somaliland's story demonstrates that state-building projects take time. When compared to other efforts around the globe, Somaliland's state building was actually quick; nevertheless, it took several years to establish a basic administration and gain the buy-in of most, if not all, communities. Furthermore, it took Somaliland 10 years to adopt a constitution, and more than a decade to hold its first elections. Today, well over two decades after the unilateral proclamation of independence, Somaliland is yet to conduct elections to the Upper House and continues to struggle with many state-building tasks. While greater financial means might have accelerated these processes, it seems unlikely that Somaliland could have performed its state-building project significantly more quickly. After all, states are the outcome of complex processes, such as power negotiations and rule enforcement, which need time to evolve.

Overall, it can be concluded that in Somaliland's state-building endeavor, not all good things have gone together. This is not to disparage Somaliland's achievements, rather to demonstrate that state building is not a clean and straightforward process, but one that requires setting priorities and making tough choices. The political continuity

²⁷ See, for example, Interpeace, “Peace in Somaliland: An Indigenous Approach to State-Building” (Nairobi, Kenya: Interpeace, 2008), http://www.apd-somaliland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Interpeace_APD_Statebuilding_EN.pdf.

²⁸ See, for example, Ahmed Hashi, *The Implication of Traditional Leadership, “Guurti” and other Non-State Actors in Local Governance in Somaliland* (Hargeisa, Somalia: World Bank, June 2005), <http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/153068/somaliafinal.pdf>.

Somaliland experienced under President Egal came at the cost of popular participation and transparent financial management, for example. However, even though Somaliland's version of state building came with its own set of problems, it has produced a reasonably functioning state, quite in contrast to the numerous state-building attempts in Somalia. This raises the question: How can the Somaliland case inspire state building in Somalia?

A Guide Rather Than a Master Plan

The preceding sections have illustrated that Somaliland's trajectory diverged significantly from the one currently envisioned for Somalia. This is not to suggest that Somalia should follow in the footsteps of Somaliland. For a number of reasons, the case of Somaliland does not lend itself to teaching lessons that could be readily extrapolated to "fix" Somalia.

First, Somaliland's "success story" needs to be qualified. Although it has made remarkable progress in establishing a considerable degree of peace and stability, Somaliland's state-building project is hardly a full-blown triumph. One of the key determinants of statehood, namely international recognition, remains elusive. Hence, Somaliland largely lacks the "capacity to enter into relations with other states," as set out in the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States. In addition, social indicators significantly lag behind regional and continental counterparts²⁹; its political landscape is in disarray³⁰; and Somaliland fares worse than most other low-income states in terms of resource mobilization.³¹ Finally, Somaliland's eastern communities remain unconvinced by what they see as an Isaaq-dominated Somaliland project, and seek alternative political arrangements instead. This has led to repeated outbreaks of large-scale violence, and calls into question Somaliland's territorial integrity, one of a state's defining criteria as established by the Montevideo Convention.³²

Second, there is considerable ambiguity about why Somaliland has been able to secure its particular achievements. Although traditional leaders and processes of peaceful reconciliation played their part, Somaliland's state-building project was shaped by elite politics and fierce, at times violent, competition over political and economic power. Indeed, this is a common feature of state-building projects around

²⁹ For example, there are approximately 1,200 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births (Somaliland Health Sector Strategic Plan, 2013–2016; World Development Indicators 2013), compared to 350 in neighboring Ethiopia and 200 in Djibouti. Similarly, the latest available data suggest that only 50 percent of 6- to 13-year-olds go to primary school in Somaliland, which is in stark contrast to 87 percent in Ethiopia and 77 percent for the sub-Saharan African average (World Bank report, forthcoming).

³⁰ Political parties remain feeble and rather blunt vehicles for accessing power and resources; the local elections of November 2012 were less orderly than past polls; parliamentary polls, initially envisioned for 2010, are already four years overdue; and elections to the legislature's upper house, known as the *Guurti*, still remain to be conducted. And in the absence of viable political parties with genuine party programs, a creeping return to clan-ism as the dominant basis for voter mobilization can be observed.

³¹ In 2012, for example, Somaliland's domestic revenue as a proportion of GDP was approximately 8 percent, significantly lower than 10.6 percent for Ethiopia, 22.3 percent for Kenya, and 23.5 percent for the sub-Saharan African average (World Development Indicators 2013).

³² See, for example, the proclamation of the Warsangeli-dominated Makhir State of Somalia in Somaliland's northwest in 2007, or the declaration of the Dhulbahante-dominated Khatumo State of Somalia in the polity's southwest in 2010.

the world.³³ Thus, a degree of caution is required when trying to identify those elements that have supposedly contributed toward Somaliland’s state-building “success,” particularly if those “lessons learned” are used to inform other ongoing state-building projects like the one in Somalia.

Third, taking lessons from Somaliland’s state-building exercise and applying them to Somalia is tricky, as the two cases are distinct. Somaliland’s starting position, international influences, and policy options were quite different from those that present themselves to Somalia more than two decades later. Hargeisa has never been as highly prized as Mogadishu, and the military and socioeconomic preconditions for state building have been distinct for Somaliland and Somalia. While the military dominance of the Isaaq clan family provided a fruitful environment to forge peace and reconciliation in Somaliland, the multiplicity of (armed) actors and prevailing economic structures have worked against efforts to overcome instability in Somalia. In addition, the engagement of the international community has differed between Somaliland and Somalia and has been shaped in the latter by the post-2001 global war on terror.

Consequently, Somaliland should not be seen to provide a *master plan* for state building in Somalia. Rather, it expands the range of possible approaches to state reconstruction, offering a broader set of policy options.

Applying Insights from Somaliland

Somaliland’s experience raises numerous questions about Somalia’s ongoing attempts to build a functioning state. These include the overarching consideration of whether it is beneficial for Somalia’s state-building endeavor to prioritize the trilogy of constitution writing, federalization, and elections over the president’s original Six Pillar policy; the question of whether the concentration of energy on the constitution-writing process is well-invested; and the question of whether pushing for early elections in 2016 might jeopardize, rather than strengthen, Somalia’s development.

Privileging the “Trilogy” over the “Six Pillars”?

Roughly a year into his tenure, Somali President Mohamud abandoned his Six Pillar strategy in favor of a policy trilogy, comprising the completion of the constitution, the development of a federal system, and the organization of credible elections by 2016. Bearing the fingerprints of the international community, the policy shift was motivated by the feeling that “[a]lthough the components of the Six Pillar strategy are all worthy long-term objectives, the government’s progress—or otherwise—toward achieving them will be largely irrelevant if its inescapable duty to bring Somalia’s ‘perpetual transition’ to an end is not realized.”³⁴ Although the international community’s push for establishing stronger rules and more state legitimacy is

³³ See, for example, Asteris Huliaras, “The Viability of Somaliland: Internal Constraints and Regional Geopolitics,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 20, no. 2 (2002): 157–82; Ian Spears, “Reflections on Somaliland and Africa’s Territorial Order,” in *War Destroys: Peace Nurtures—Somali Reconciliation and Development*, ed. Richard Ford, Hussein Adam, and Edna Ismail (Asmara, Eritrea: The Red Sea Press), 179–92; and Balthasar, “Somaliland’s Best Kept Secret: Shrewd Politics and War Projects as Means of State-Making.”

³⁴ Bryden, *Somalia Redux?*, 7.

understandable, it is questionable whether such prioritization truly enables Somalia's development. As outlined previously, the turn toward more formal and legalistic issues of governance has added to the complexity and aggravated political infighting.

By contrast, Somaliland seems to have fared reasonably well by treading the reverse path. Rather than focusing its energies on progress in the *de jure* realm, it kick-started its state-building project by tackling particular *de facto* challenges that directly affected its population's livelihoods, such as demobilizing fighters, creating employment, and increasing the state's administrative capacity. The underlying rationale behind Somaliland's approach turns the argument made for Somalia on its head: A transition in the institutional framework will come about only if substantial progress is made in delivering tangible benefits to citizens. The key question is whether a focus on externally engineering a country's overarching rules of the game is likely to help or hinder a ruling elite to effect a tangible transformation in the livelihoods of its people.

The international community's prioritization of procedural issues arguably contributed to the FGS's inward-looking focus, not least because it triggered the inherent political conflict that comes with drafting a constitution, setting up federalism, and organizing elections. Moreover, in the context of scarce resources, this focus has affected the government's ability to deliver on outcome-oriented tasks such as the setting up of an (effective) administration, the provision of basic economic opportunities, and the forging of some sort of national unity. While the need to establish the basic rules of the game is important, it is doubtful whether the decision to prioritize the trilogy at the expense of the more tangible Six Pillar policy has been beneficial.

Kick-starting State Building with Constitution Writing?

Somalia's international backers have emphasized the need to ratify a constitution as a first step toward the country's reconstruction, as, for example, seen by UN Security Council resolution 2067(2012) of September 2012.³⁵ However, the process of drafting a comprehensive, unambiguous, and broadly acceptable constitution has seemingly held back rather than facilitated Somalia's progress. The push to resolve the politically contentious ambiguities inherent in Somalia's draft constitution has eliminated many gray zones. While this reduces (institutional) uncertainty, it also limits the room for political maneuver. According to the provisional constitution, the president, for example, has no role in making government policy, which remains the prerogative of the Council of Ministers, headed by the prime minister.³⁶ The opening of a constitutional debate forced the president and prime minister to revisit this arrangement and inevitably put them on a collision course. It also put the FGS at

³⁵ The resolution stresses, among others, the importance of holding a national referendum on the provisional constitution within the (four-year) term of the current Parliament.

³⁶ Somaliland solved this challenge of rivalry between the president and prime minister by establishing a presidential democracy at the Boroma Conference in 1993. The resulting strong executive has at times been a blessing, at times a curse.

loggerheads with regional administrations because of their differing interpretations of how regional entities are to be formed.³⁷

Although there are, in principle, many reasons to dispense with constitutional ambiguities and adopt a binding constitution, it is questionable whether this is one of the first steps that should be performed in a state-building process. Somaliland took a different course, adopting a constitution only after a decade of delay. While Somaliland's experience should not be used to argue against the timely passing of a constitution, it shows that state building does not hinge on the passage of a fundamental law. Similarly, Somaliland challenges the popular pluralist proposition that "state building and constitution-making are best accomplished on the basis of a broad national consensus, not inflicted by one political unit upon all others."³⁸ Somaliland oversaw a rather exclusionary constitution-writing process and there was no public consultation on a draft before popular endorsement was sought.³⁹ In this regard, it is no exception. Most of the world's constitutions have been the work of few, and have generally been sold to the respective populace only *after* they had been ratified.⁴⁰

Looking back over the past two years, the FGS's progress in ratifying a constitution has been halting. This is unsurprising, as the process throws up clear conflicts of interest. As was the case in Somaliland, tasking a sitting parliament consisting of unelected clan representatives with the responsibility of drafting a framework of rules under which elections are to be held is "akin to requiring that members of parliament draft their own 'death warrant.'"⁴¹ Given that constitutions should ideally institutionalize *functioning* practices of governance, there is a case to be made that the current provisional framework is good enough for the time being, and the finalization of the constitution should be postponed until suitable governance practices as well as stability have been established.

Elections by 2016: Realistic, Necessary, Beneficial?

Another immediate task on Somalia's plate is the conducting of elections by September 2016. These elections are meant to mark the country's graduation from a state of transition to one characterized by permanent, representative, and democratic institutions of governance. As in other contexts, these elections are designed to lend

³⁷ For example, while article 49(6) rules that "based on a voluntary decision, two or more regions may merge to form a Federal Member State," Article 49(1-5) tasks the Federal Parliament with "determining the number and boundaries of Federal Member States."

³⁸ Bryden, *Somalia Redux?*, 25.

³⁹ Ibrahim, "Somaliland's Elections: Transition without Transformation," 223f; International Crisis Group (ICG), *Somaliland: Democratization and Its Discontents* (Washington, DC: ICG, 2003), 30, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/horn-of-africa/somalia/Somaliland%20Democratisation%20and%20Its%20Discontents.pdf>.

⁴⁰ See Matt Qvortrup, "The Courts and Multi-Level Governance: Some comparative perspectives on the emerging jurisprudence of the UK Supreme Court," *Public Money and Management* 35, no. 1 (2015): 57–62. Apart from pointing toward this practice of "constitutional patriotism," Qvortrup also argues that the increase of popular participation in the constitution-writing process raises the likelihood of the respective constitution breaking down within the first five years, thus cautioning against the perceived need for broad-based popular consultations prior to the ratification of a constitution.

⁴¹ International Republican Institute (IRI), *Somaliland, September 29, 2005, Parliamentary Election Assessment Report* (Washington, DC: IRI, September 2005), 9, http://www.somalilandlaw.com/IRI_Parlection_2005.pdf.

legitimacy to the government and provide for political stability. Yet, as has been the case for the constitution-writing process, elections may not be the best tool to achieve these objectives, as they are not beneficial to state building per se. Puntland's drawn-out process of completing presidential elections, for example, suggests that the electoral process can lead to enhanced clan tensions and violence.⁴² Taking into consideration the reality that Somalia-wide elections by 2016 are not entirely realistic—not least because they require a minimum level of security, an administrative infrastructure, and the existence of genuine political parties—and reflecting on the numerous challenges and risks they carry, it is worth asking whether it is imperative for Somalia to stick to the existing, ambitious election schedule.

A glance at Somaliland suggests that different trajectories are possible. Somaliland waited more than 10 years after its declaration of independence to hold its first elections. While this approach was not without its own set of problems, the postponement of electoral competition came with benefits. First, Somaliland avoided adding yet another layer of political competition to an already-strained environment. Second, in the absence of elections, political jockeying was limited, which allowed the political leadership to focus on pressing tasks, such as demobilization, introducing its own currency, creating livelihood opportunities, and providing basic public services. Third, it allowed for a degree of political continuity. Hence, the principal underlying question raised by the case of Somaliland is whether the best guarantee of stability in postwar fragile states is to delay political competition.

Somalia's social fragmentation and lack of genuine political parties with broad and wide-ranging grassroots support means that the preparation and conduct of elections is likely to lead to renewed mobilization of constituencies along age-old clan lines. Moves in this direction could already be observed in the recent formation of federal member states in south-central Somalia. Yet, elections along clan lines would be deeply problematic, in part because they would render the outcome unacceptable to a large section of society, and exacerbate clan divisions and local tensions. It must therefore be asked whether Somalia is really ready for elections. Instead, the country might benefit from being given the breathing space to adopt a more incremental, evolutionary approach.

Recommendations

While ongoing attempts by national and international actors to reestablish the Somali state have clearly not delivered, viable alternative plans remain to be developed. Therefore, taking the case of Somaliland into account is instructive. Not only does it offer up a broader spectrum of potential policies, it also provides insights that could act as possible starting points in the search for tangible and viable solutions to conflict and fragility in Somalia.

One insight that emerges is that the FGS may need to be granted more latitude in its approach to state building. Although international partners have helped the FGS in some ways, they have also constricted its policy space and redirected its priorities. For

⁴² For a detailed account on Puntland's elections, see International Crisis Group, "Somalia: Puntland's Punted Polls," Africa Briefing No. 97, Nairobi/Brussels, December 19, 2013, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/horn-of-africa/somalia/b097-somalia-puntlands-punted-polls.pdf>.

example, the international community's calls for greater fiscal transparency, democratic development, and rule of law, while understandable, have limited the FGS's policy options. Somalia's international partners should consider reviewing their approach and granting the FGS greater liberty to set its own agenda. In part, this could be achieved by taking the fundamental tenets of the "New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States" framework to heart. Viable context-specific solutions to conflict and instability can best emerge through country-led and country-owned approaches, even if this heightens the perceived unpredictability of state-building outcomes.

Another, related insight that the Somaliland case illustrates is that Somali stakeholders and their international partners need to accept that not all good things necessarily go together when it comes to state building, a process that is erratic and conflictual. While, for example, peace building and state building may go hand in hand at times, they might well turn out to be antithetical to others. This has important implications for the way we conceive of state building in Somalia, not least because the New Deal departs from the premise that peace building and state building are mutually reinforcing processes. Rather than aiming to implement preconceived, linear, and all-encompassing approaches to state reconstruction, the international community should be prepared to be more flexible and pragmatic in its approach. Instead of trying to tackle all challenges at once, the international donor community should—in consultation with the FGS—set clear priorities that are geared toward the long-term development of the Somali state and its population. Invariably, tough choices will need to be made, but in the absence of abundant financial resources, a targeted approach seems inevitable.

In more tangible terms, Somali actors and the international donor community should consider the following recommendations in pursuit of fulfilling Vision 2016 and supporting Somalia's state-building endeavor:

First, if the objective is to hold legitimate and peaceful country-wide elections by September 2016, significant efforts must be made to establish genuine political parties that transcend clan lines. Political jockeying ahead of the 2016 elections has already begun from Mogadishu to Minneapolis. But as long as political mobilization continues to follow age-old kinship lines, in the absence of viable alternative constituencies, the upcoming elections are likely to spur social fragmentation and enhance the risk of renewed violent conflict. This would not only undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process and play into the hands of Al-Shabaab, it would also risk jeopardizing Somalia's state-building project at large. Thus, building genuine political parties with diverse membership that develop clear policy platforms is critical, not only for establishing the foundations of democratic governance, but for enhancing accountability and advancing national dialogue on issues of national relevance.

Second, the FGS and international community should place greater emphasis on establishing a productive economy. These efforts must go beyond tapping into Somalia's hydrocarbon potential, whose exploration and exploitation come with delicate challenges.⁴³ Boosting agricultural productivity and manufacturing, for example, are necessary steps toward enhancing economic productivity, spurring

⁴³ Dominik Balthasar, *Oil in Somalia: Adding fuel to the fire?* (Mogadishu, Somalia: Heritage Institute for Policy Studies, 2014), http://www.heritageinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/HIPS-Oil_in_Somalia-ENGLISH.pdf.

cross-sectional development, and overcoming regional fragmentation. Somalia's inter-riverine area has vast agricultural potential, and rehabilitating the public flood levees and irrigation systems in the Shabelle and Juba Valleys could significantly contribute to its realization. At the same time, the European Union's naval operation "Atalanta," which has deterred piracy attacks off the Somali coast since late 2008, could provide the conditions for a fisheries industry to grow by clamping down on illegal fishing. The establishment of a productive economy is foundational for nurturing an educated and politically engaged citizenry in particular and a prosperous state more generally.

Third, political actors in Somalia need to become much more accountable toward their constituencies and assume the responsibilities they have been mandated. Given that short political time horizons contribute to squabbles over the division of spoils and lend themselves to unaccountable behavior, Somali actors and their international partners may need to build longer time horizons into the political schedule. In light of the scale of the state-building challenges, it seems questionable whether a four-year election timetable for the legislative and executive branches—common in highly developed Western states—is the best fit for fragile states such as Somalia. State building probably has a better chance of success if the institutional framework and the political leadership are protected from continual change. Predictability is an important ingredient in institution building. Clearly, a delicate balance must be struck to avoid authoritarian governance and neopatrimonialism taking root, but the pursuit of the status quo may carry similarly grave risks to peace, stability, and development.

Fourth, the international community should reconsider its heavily militarized approach to state building in Somalia. Over the past several years, the fight against Al-Shabaab has taken center stage in Somalia's state-building effort. However, this approach risks locking the international community into a predominantly military mindset where countering violent extremism is confused with state building. Al-Shabaab is a symptom rather than a cause of fragility, and while it may be the most immediate and obvious challenge to peace and security in Somalia, it is by no means the most important one. A much greater challenge is the continued fragmentation of the Somali people.

Fifth, and finally, the FGS and its international partners must do more to enhance social cohesion and national unity. Age-old kinship and regional cleavages have historically been exploited by political entrepreneurs. While identities based on clan affiliation and regional disposition serve important functions, national-level unity needs to be restored in order to offset social fragility. There are no ready-made instructions on how to foster greater social cohesion and build national identity, but options exist. They range from prohibiting the establishment of clan-based political parties to popularizing national symbols. The collective celebration of national holidays and the forging of a national history or common narrative could help develop a consciousness that draws citizens together despite their differences.

Conclusion

Little more than two years after its new government took office, Somalia's efforts to rebuild a peaceful, functioning state appear to have ground to a halt. Although the FGS constitutes the most promising leadership in years and has made some headway in steering Somalia toward calmer waters, limited progress has been made in

addressing the underlying dynamics that drive conflict and fragility. International approaches to reestablish peace and a viable Somali state have had a similarly modest impact. However, rather than giving up in frustration, the ongoing challenges Somalia faces should encourage national and international leaders to reconsider conventional approaches to state building and embolden them to seek seemingly unorthodox solutions. Somalia needs, first and foremost, to consider a broader array of policy options.

An examination of Somaliland's state-building effort reveals alternative options, as well as providing a source of inspiration. Among the insights revealed by Somaliland's experience is that when it comes to state building, not all good things necessarily go together. Somaliland's process was elite-driven, top-down, and occasionally violent. Democratic development was not a priority at first and was promoted only when it became politically expedient to do so. Nevertheless, Somaliland has made significant strides in building a state, despite its failure to gain international recognition. The story of its eventful journey since 1991 suggests that the state-building effort demands decisiveness, flexibility, pragmatism, and—frequently—the sacrificing of ideals. As Somali policymakers and their international partners confront a challenging moment in their own state-building endeavor and consider the best way forward, they should take time to examine Somaliland's efforts and draw comfort and inspiration from its successes and failures.

There are signs that Somalis may be poised to adopt a more fruitful strategy. Somalia's "New Deal" compact marks a step in the right direction because it is designed to give the Somali leadership greater flexibility to make its own policy decisions. As a result, it may provide an opportunity for the FGS, supported by its international partners, to depart from previous, unsuccessful approaches in favor of innovative solutions. However, the Somali leadership not only needs a "New Deal" with the international donor community, it also urgently needs to enter into a "New Compact" with its own society. The FGS must prioritize efforts to forge a social contract with its people if it genuinely wishes to deliver real, sustainable progress. In part, this will entail greater effort to deliver economic opportunities, security, and other public services to its long-suffering citizens. But even these efforts will be insufficient unless they are accompanied by a concerted, committed effort to foster social cohesion and national unity. Only then will Somalia be able to lay the foundations for lasting peace, a functioning state, and an end to the threat of violent extremism.

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