

The Consequences of Somaliland's International Recognition

* By Unionists from Northern Somalia
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This paper is prepared by a group of unionists hailing from the NW region of Somalia (former British Somaliland). It is a critique of a discussion paper, titled "*AFRICAN Game Changer? The Consequences of Somaliland's International (Non) Recognition*", which was presented to The Brenthurst Foundation in South Africa on May 2011 by a group of academics following their "fact-finding" mission to "Somaliland"¹.

I. The Backdrop to the Authors' Mission

The authors' mission to Somaliland is only the latest of others of this type to the enclave with which it shares many similarities. This mission therefore can not be seen in isolation from this wider prevailing picture if their report is to be seen in it's right perspective. Needless to say, Somaliland has been resourceful and successful in winning foreign supporters by fair or foul means. No means has been excluded in the past in achieving that end. Financial inducements when required, lavish hospitality and local entertainment have been some of the chosen modalities for winning the hearts and minds of visiting foreign non-governmental missions. Almost all these missions have been confined to the secessionist enclave, rarely ever going to other unionist regions in the north or the rest of Somalia.

Given the manner of their selection and reception, the reports of these missions have been without exception favourable to the enclave's secession. Based on this established track record of these foreign missions, there is a widely held perception among Somalis that foreign missions that come to Hargeisa are by choice wilfully partisan, whose objective is not conflict resolution, aimed at restoring peace and unity to Somalia but the very dismemberment of the country. The authors' mission reinforces that mindset and with good reason.

Looking at the composition of the authors' mission - even before reading their report - is enough to prepare one for what is to come. As to be expected, they include well-known partisans, some of them household names for their strident support for the secessionists. That specifically goes for Prof. Peter Pham, an unabashed lobbyist for the enclave, a die-hard neo- conservative in the USA

¹ The report does not say who sponsored or funded this mission but merely expresses it's gratitude, in an inconspicuous corner at the beginning, "for the insights of several anonymous reviewers". This immediately raises the question as to what were the insights of these reviewers and why did they chose to be anonymous? And how much of the many questionable things about this mission report can be attributed to them?

political spectrum, and a member of the evangelical Christian right wing who, as some suspect, may see the undoing or demise of Muslim countries in the region, such as Sudan and Somalia, as a religious duty.

Two key stances held by the authors sum up their unmistakable aversion to Somali unity at whatever level. The first is their explicit unquestioning acceptance that Somaliland is an **"Isaaq state at its core ... [whereby Isaaq] accounts for well over half of its population, occupies the central area of Somaliland, and is found nowhere else in the Somali-inhabited zone"** - no doubt fed to them by their secessionist interlocutors - and once you accept that erroneous premise, the mission is rendered redundant and its outcome becomes a foregone conclusion. This explains why they did not bother to go beyond Hargeisa, the capital of the enclave and the secessionists' citadel, sending the unambiguous message that only the considerations and concerns of that "dominant" clan matter for the purposes of their mission and the rest of the clans count for little.

The second stance, revealing their hidden anti Somalia agenda, is their claim that **"[Somaliland's] recognition would ensure that the ambitions of a five-star Somali nation, incorporating Djibouti, Somaliland, Ethiopia's Region Five, and the north-east of Kenya along with south-central Somalia, would be even less likely"**. This clearly unmasks the real objective of their mission which is to use the break-up of Somalia as a stepping stone for the ultimate demise of Greater Somalia dream for the benefit of neighbouring countries but more importantly for the interest of the west for whom a separate Somaliland will be a puppet protégé in hock to its western backers.

These two references are merely a foretaste of a report that is blatantly one-sided, and brazenly championing the enclave's recognition. Underpinning their presentation is the claim that Somalia's demise as a state is irreversible and therefore it is unjust that Somaliland, portrayed as a functioning democratic country, having a distinct history of its own and all the hallmarks of a State, be held "hostage" to the revival of a defunct entity. A host of flawed justifications are built around this basic premise.

This response in defence of Somalia's unity will cover the origin of the concept of "Somaliland", the British colony of that name, its independence and unity with Italian Somaliland, the opposition of the unionists to the secession, and the consequences of both non-recognition and recognition of Somaliland. Only then can an informed judgement on the secession and recognition be made - something the authors of the report have conveniently ignored.

II. The Secessionists' Basic Case

The secessionists' claim for an independent country separate from Somalia, echoed by the authors of the report, rests on three cornerstones: firstly, that they have a country by the name of "Somaliland", fathered by the British and hence distinct from other Somali territories; secondly, that the people in the territory are bound by special bonds (Somalilanders) and as such are a distinct people from other Somalis; and thirdly, that the secession has the support of all the clans in the territory.

i) The Fallacy of a Distinct Somaliland Territory

The first point of departure revolves around the ownership of the name "**Somaliland**" which the secessionists had laid exclusive claim. Needless to say, the name "Somaliland" is the historical appellation of the Somali homeland in the Horn and means exactly what it says: the land of the Somalis. And unless the Somalis are confined to the secessionist clan's enclave and no where else, "Somaliland" is the historical name of all the Somali-inhabited territories and never that of specific territory of a particular clan or group of clans, claiming exclusive relations setting them apart from other clans elsewhere in the Horn. It is for this reason that, that each of the various colonised Somali territories was called "Somaliland", preceded by the name of the colonial power.

In their quest for more distinguishing name from other Somalis, the secessionists have disingenuously come up with the name "Somalilander" a corrupted substitute for "Somali". One rarely hear them say they are "Somalis" but they would say ad nauseam that they are "Somalilanders" This English-oriented appellation does not make sense to ordinary Somalis, including most of those in the secessionist enclave. All the same, it serves its purpose as long as it distinguishes them from other Somalis and at the same is friendly to Anglo-Saxon ears.

But the name "Somalilander", meant to indicate the one from Somaliland, will also apply equally to every Somali, from every other "Somaliland" territory. Where does that leave the secessionists if "Somalilander" is also accepted as a common name? For the authors, the issue is simple. Somaliland in their judgement is an "**Isaaq State**", or put differently "**Isaaqland**". Only with that name can the secessionists have the exclusive name which they crave so much. There was thus no distinct Somaliland territory but only a colonial construct curved out of the Somali homeland.

ii) The Fallacy of a Distinct Somaliland People

In the era under colonial rule, the clan membership of the Somalis, derived from patrilineal descent, was the dominant social order since time immemorial to the present among the predominantly nomadic people. While any two neighbouring but patrilineally different clans in the former British colony may share links through intermarriage, these ties are trumped by the blood bonds each clan has and maintains with its fellow clan(s) elsewhere in the wider Somali homeland. In this regard, the clans of former British Somaliland have more affinity with other clans across the old colonial border than with themselves. For better or worse, clan relationships constitute the foundations of Somali society. The colonial power has maintained and sometimes deepened these clan separateness.

A notable feature of the Somalis prior to the partition of their homeland was that, notwithstanding their clan divide, no borders existed amongst themselves. Nor did they respect those imposed upon them by the occupying colonial powers. If the colonialists did not manage to keep the Somalis apart through artificial borders, how else can the secessionists of today succeed where others more powerful than them have failed? The answer is obvious.

iii) Britain Ruled Over Disparate Clans but Not Forged a Nation

The separate ways that Britain secured its rule over each clan in its acquired colony speaks volumes about how autonomous they were of each other. Thus, whereas Britain entered into separate treaties with each of the other clans, the Dhulbahante clan in the regions of Sool, Sanaag and Cayn (SSC) was the only one to reject Britain's rule, and instead embarked on a liberation-cum-holly war against them (1901-1921). Even when British rule was imposed over the whole territory, the clans continued to live their separate ways. That was bound to continue unless the clans agreed on a different course of action after Britain's departure.

As part of Britain's colonial policy of divide and rule, clan identity was encouraged and national consciousness discouraged. Britain never promoted a common overriding Somali identity among the clans but dealt with them on separate competing basis. Passports given to the selected few would only mention their names, tribes, and being British subjects from Somaliland Protectorate. "Somalilanders" and "Somaliland" as distinct identities are only a creation of the secessionists to suit their separatist purposes but otherwise have no roots in the colonial, or pre-colonial, history of the area.

III. Independence from Britain

The promise of independence to Italian Somaliland in 1949 had unleashed a powerful wind of pan-Somali nationalism in the British colony. Union with Italian Somaliland after its independence was the only common aspiration among the people, from every clan, region or their political parties. Britain acceded to this request on condition that those clans who signed treaties with the British first renounce them. It was on this basis alone that the colony became independent on June 26, 1960.

When the Union Jack was lowered for the last time, it was the flag of the Somali Republic and not that of Somaliland since it had none, which was hoisted. On that occasion, there was no Somaliland president or Prime Minister, but only the caretaker Legislative Council to hold power until July 1, when the four-days old Somaliland joined Italian Somaliland to form the Somali Republic. This was a watershed in Somali history when the artificial colonial division of a people who are otherwise indivisible came to an end.

Just for the record, not a single country recognized Somaliland's four-days old independence contrary to the claim of the authors who clearly have imbibed what their secessionist hosts fed them. There would not have been much point to recognise a country whose independence would only last 5 days and thereafter cease to exist as a separate country. The Act of Union was duly ratified by Parliament and signed contrary to the secessionists' mantra that it was never enacted, a claim again blithely recycled by the authors. In June 1961, Somalia adopted its national constitution in a countrywide referendum which received the overwhelmingly support of the voters.

Historical revisionists among the secessionists have come up with all sorts of bizarre claims in support of their secession: that Somaliland was recognized by 35 countries (sometimes the figure 50 is given); that it was admitted to the United Nations through a General Assembly resolution; that its borders are still valid and recognized by the African Union. The weirdest claim in the report though is that Somaliland passport is recognised by South Africa, Kenya, Djibouti, and Ethiopia. What is amazing is that these baseless concocted tales have won credence among the least expected quarters including the authors of the report.

IV. The One Clan Secession

Secessions have faced African countries since the 1960s and were defeated. Katanga in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Biafra in Nigeria come to mind. The only two countries which succeeded to secede are Eritrea and South Sudan. And that because it was the result of mutual agreement between the parties concerned and subsequently recognised by the international community. Neither Eritrea nor South Sudan voluntarily joined Ethiopia and Sudan respectively in the first place. That was decided over their heads by colonial powers and Ethiopia.

In contrast, Somaliland's one-clan secession did not come about through an agreement with the rest of Somalia or a referendum held in former British Somaliland. It was born at the barrel of a gun when an extremist fringe of the clan's militia, the Somali National Movement (SNM), forced a reconciliation conference among the clans in Burco in May 1991 to declare the secession of the area from Somalia. This criminal unconstitutional act is the basis for the enclave's breakaway. The delegates from the SSC regions repudiated this declaration of secession on their return. Somaliland still uses the signatures obtained under duress as binding the SSC to the secession - a mind-boggling logic.

The secession is driven by the desire to put the clock back, and revive the old defunct Somaliland territory where the clan is assured dominance over others and feel free from playing second fiddle to southern hegemony as they see it. Other than this unspoken desire, the only justification given is that they suffered atrocities under the ousted government of President Mohamed Siyad Barre.

But even if they were not the only people to have suffered under the former regime, most Somalis nonetheless, irrespective of their region or clan, have expressed their sympathy for them in words and deeds but find it difficult to comprehend why they should be held scapegoats for the crimes of a regime served by Somalis from every clan and region, including them, or why Somalia's unity should be sacrificed for it.

It is worthwhile recalling that at no time during the worse repressive years of the military regime did the SNM and its followers ever advocated secession. It is odd that they should adopt it after the dictatorship was ousted and the cause of their grievance was ended. Somalia as a whole could have followed a different happier path had they not contributed to its demise.

V. The Opposition to Somaliland's Occupation and Secession

The authors exaggerate the extent of Somaliland's control over the former British territory. Other than the town of Lascanod, the capital of Sool region, which they captured from Puntland in October 2007, and a few defensive garrisons around it, the rest of the Dhulbahante territory in the SSC is in their hands.

The mass fleeing from the city and the frequent uprisings by the remaining residents, and the recent bloody clashes in Kalshaale in the Cayn region, are symptomatic of the widespread opposition in the SSC regions to the occupation and Somaliland's secession. Their armed liberation struggle is gathering momentum. In the face of this determined struggle for liberation, Somaliland's occupation of the area is unsustainable and sooner or later its occupation militia are bound to be forced to withdraw to whence they came from.

The Warsangeli clan, far from being content with Somaliland as the authors asserted, have established their Makhir Land State of Somalia, in their areas in Sanaag region, where they are beyond the reach or writ of Hargeisa. In the case of the western region of Awdal, its people have been restive for a while, and demonstrations against the occupying Somaliland administration taking place frequently in Borama, the region's capital. It is a mark to the widening opposition to Somaliland and its imposed rule over the area that the Awdal Diaspora recently established the Awdal State of Somalia

In short, the authors statement about Somaliland that **“there is no realistic way of persuading them to rejoin Somalia short of launching a war – which produces even greater instability”** applies more so to northern unionist clans than secessionists. For there is no way, including launching a war and occupying their land which is what Somaliland has done already, to persuade unionist clans to endorse the secession and dismemberment of Somalia.

The false picture of a people of "Somaliland" united in their common cause of separation from Somalia, for years pursued and perpetrated by the secessionists, and echoed by their foreign supporters, is belied by the glaring reality where the clan-based administration is pitted against opposing unionist regions. This is a replay of the bad old colonial days.

VI. Authors' Flawed Reasoning for the Secession and Recognition

The authors of the report have advanced flawed reasoning for the secession and recognition of "Somaliland". The response will rebut some of the false justifications presented, though the list is not exhaustive:

i) The Northerners are Hostages to the Southern Majority

One of the tendentious presentations of the authors is their presentation of the claim to secession as one in which "five million southern/central Somalis are holding the aspirations of 3.5 million

Somalilanders hostage" as if Somalis and Somalilanders are different peoples. Indeed, the reverse is the case in which one clan of around a million is imposing its secession on the rest of the people of Somalia, north and south.

It is one thing to secede as a clan which, as it is, is bad enough. It is another thing when the clan occupies and forces unionist clans in the region to succumb to its will and join the secession. This can not be justified on any ground and the rest of Somalia are only exercising their right to oppose it.

ii) The Right of the Isaaq Majority in Somaliland Should Prevail Over Others

Another partisan statement from the authors justifying the secession is that the Isaaq clan constitutes the majority of the population in former British Somaliland and therefore the will of the majority should prevail. Needless to say, there is the equally valid counter claim by the unionist clans that they are the majority. Certainly, in terms of land, the areas of the unionists amount to at least 70 percent of the territory, representing by far the most productive and habitable areas. In the absence of reliable census, which has never been conducted, no one can say for certain who is a majority and who the minorities are.

But assuming the Isaaq are the majority, what does it mean? What the authors are advocating is that the inalienable rights of what they consider the "minority" unionist regions and clans to be part of Somalia be sacrificed in order to enable the "majority" clan to gain recognition. This is contrary to all norms of international law and human rights.

It is also contrary to the authors' negation of the perceived injustice resulting from the majority southern/central Somalis holding secessionist Somalilanders hostage. For if it is wrong for a majority to block a minority group's aspirations and hold it hostage, then by all means it is wrong for secession advocates - whom the authors claim to be a dominant clan and a majority in the north - to hold hostage the "minority" clans who aspirations to remain within Somalia.

The real issue is not one of numbers, and whether the Isaaqs are the majority in the territory. That is beside the point. The relevant issue is whether one part of Somalia has the constitutional right not only to secede but also to use brute force in order to impose its secession on unionist clans. The answer clearly is no.

iii) Somaliland's Democracy Should be Rewarded

Another justification by the authors is that Somaliland should be rewarded for its democracy, relative peace and semblance of governance. But these are mostly cosmetic appearances, and mainly conducted for the consumption of the international community in order to win supporters. In reality, Somaliland's cultivated glittering public image coexists with appalling human rights record in its own enclave and worse in the areas it occupies and controls in the unionist regions.

Somaliland's administrations like to draw to the attention of outsiders, and claim credit for, the relative peace and stability enjoyed by the north compared to the war ravaged and famine plagued south-central Somalia. While it is true that the north has been, by and large, peaceful nonetheless it has not been free from frequent clashes between Isaaq clans themselves, Isaaq clans and Somaliland militia, Isaaq clans and other clans and finally between Somaliland militia and SSC clans.

The most serious of those clashes took place between the Somaliland militia and Habar Awal (Issa Muse) in Berbera in 1992, Isaaq clans of Habar Yoonis and Habar Jalo in Burco in early 1994, Somaliland militia and Isaaq clans of Habar Yoonis and Ida Gale on one side in 1994 and more recently between Somaliland militia and SSC clans in Kalshaale, near Buhodle in 2011. Those clashes took thousands of lives and displaced hundreds of thousands of people inside and outside Somalia. Therefore attributing credit for the relative peace in the north to Somaliland administrations could not be further from the truth.

Successive Somaliland administrations and militia have been a destabilising factor and frequent participants, often an instigator, of armed conflict and instability in the region. In fact the relative peace in the north is the result of two major peace conferences held by northern Somali clans in Burco in May 1991 - soon after the collapse of the Somali central government - and in Borama in 1993. In those conferences northern Somali clans – Isaaqs and non Isaaqs – agreed to maintain peace and stability in their regions, to live and co-exist side-by-side peacefully and to resolve their differences through dialogue – something that did not happen in south-central Somalia.

What the authors have overlooked is that other clan-based regional administrations could use Somaliland's precedent and claim to be peaceful and democratic in their own right (e.g. Puntland) and ask for recognition. To refuse that request will be tantamount to double standard and to concede it is bound to open a Pandora box within Somalia and beyond, destabilising other countries, a real possibility that does not weigh with the authors.

The real fear from "Balkanisation" of Somalia most probably explains why the international community in general and particularly Somalia's neighbouring countries with sizeable Somali populations have withheld recognition from "Somaliland" for over 20 years and would probably continue to do so in the future. Contrary to the flawed reasoning of the authors, for countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya the demise of the Greater Somalia dream has far less significance than the negative consequences of an independent "Somaliland" - that is the real possibility of their Somali regions and populations emulating their "Somaliland" cousins and demanding independence. It will then be nearly impossible for those countries to deny their Somali regions what they have just granted "Somaliland".

iv) Satisfying the Montevideo Criteria for Recognition

Another claim by the authors in support of "Somaliland's" recognition is that it has fulfilled the Montevideo criteria for statehood, namely "a permanent population, defined territory, government, and the capacity to defend and represent itself". If Somaliland is to mean Isaaqland, as

the authors pronounced, then they have defined clan territory inside Somalia. But it has no permanent population. The clan is not "unique to Somaliland" as the authors assert since a large part of its nomadic people are now settled in the eastern part of the Ogaden (Region Five) or seasonally on the move seeking grazing in other clans' territory or across the Ethiopian border.

A referendum held in 2001 in which some 97 percent of the population are claimed to have supported the independence of Somaliland and its constitution is cited by the authors as the legal basis for secession.

This referendum and the 97 percent figure mean very little since the unionist regions would have nothing to do with it and the outcome of a vote confined to the secessionist hand was predictable. It was for this reason that the United Nations, OAU (now the AU), the Arab League, among others, have declined to send any observers. And that is why the European Union refused to provide any funding for elections in the SSC regions, fully aware their opposition to the secession

If a similar referendum on maintaining Somalia's unity was held in the unionist northern regions, (or southern Somalia), there is little doubt that close to 100 per cent would have voted for it. What the authors are advocating is that the wish of one clan for secession (and to force others to follow it) as born by the referendum be allowed to override other clans' wishes and Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

v) Recognition gives incentives to others

Another bizarre reason for recognizing Somaliland is that it offers "a means to positively change the incentives for better governance" in south-central Somalia. To think that a Somalia that has not been receptive to all the peace conferences and countless foreign advice over the last 20 years will somehow be encouraged - by Somaliland's recognition and its purported good governance record - to espouse good governance is wishful thinking.

On the contrary, Somaliland's recognition far from bringing positive change in the rest of Somalia will make matters worse. In the north, it will intensify the on-going conflict between the occupied unionist clans and the ruling secessionist clan. In the rest of Somalia (and elsewhere in Africa), it will open the very Pandora box the authors blithely claim will not arise.

VII. The Real Agenda for Recognising Somaliland

Somaliland's recognition per se is not the only objective the authors envision in advocating Somalia's break-up. The wider benefits that the west and neighbouring countries will draw from it are the overriding objectives uppermost in their minds. As they argue, "the debate over Somaliland's recognition is an issue in which the international community [code word for the West]

itself has a substantial stake" which transcends" the likely costs and benefits to Somaliland themselves".

As the authors articulated, a recognised Somaliland will put the final nail on Greater Somalia's coffin for the benefit of neighbouring countries friendly to the west. A separate independent Somaliland will also be at the disposal of the west in their fight against terrorism, piracy, people trafficking, financial crime, etc. The enclave has gone out of its way to attract western countries in the unfettered services it can offer them in return for recognition. Many Somalis will see this as the return of neo-colonialism through the back door.

VIII. The Consequences of Somaliland's International (Non) Recognition

The consequences that could follow Somaliland's non recognition given by the authors amount to possible frustrations and radicalisation that could lead to Islamic terrorism and piracy. This is what their hosts told them but these awesome repercussions are unlikely to materialise.

Somaliland has lived without recognition for 20 years. Expectations might have been high in the early years of the secession but the refusal of the international community to grant them recognition over these long years had sunk in and internalised. Other issues that touch their daily life, like bread and butter, matter more to the people and preoccupy their minds. Fear-mongering about likely Islamic terror if recognition is denied is being whipped up by the authors to prise recognition from the west. It is to the credit of the west and wider international community that they see things differently.

IX. The Consequences of Somaliland's International Recognition

It is the recognition of Somaliland, rather than its non recognition as the authors would have us believe, that would usher incalculable dangers to the region and beyond. It will add fuel to the fires of the on-going struggle between the unionist regions and the ruling secessionist clan. It is bound to galvanise the determination of the SSC people and Awdalites to free themselves. Once the flames of the conflict have been fanned, it will not be confined to the warring parties. Somalis in the rest of Somalia would get sucked in for one reason or another- clan loyalties, religious duty or patriotic reasons.

The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) may be a paper tiger for now, but a future stronger Somali government can not be discounted as the authors are only too keen to entertain. The TFG may also not be fully recognised by the USA and the UK as the authors claim but the sovereign state of Republic of Somalia is still internationally recognised and can not be in the quagmire for ever as its enemies reckon. Sooner or later it will emerge from its doldrums, strengthened by the experience of its decades of civil strife. When that happens, it is bound to do its duty to defend or restore the unity of the country which is its sovereign right.

Outsiders who have a stake in Somalia's unity will not remain indifferent to attempts to dismember it. For the Arab League and its members, Somalia's unity is inviolable not only because Somalia is a member State of the League but because for their own self interest. Rather than be passive spectators, they are likely to respond robustly to defend their interests, at least diplomatically and financially.

On the religious aspects of the conflict, there is clearly a strong correlation between the secession and Islamic radicalisation and/or terrorism, something the authors have given a passing desultory attention. It is the secession itself rather than the denial of recognition which nourishes Islamist radicalisation.

For Al Shabaab, whose leader and many of its veterans hail from Hargeisa, Somaliland's recognition will be like a red rag to a bull. They are bound to give a religious spin to the conflict and use the north as a new theatre to recoup its recent military reverses in the south. It has already widespread support in the enclave. The bombings in Hargeisa in October 2008 by Al Shabaab suicide bombers are a reminder of outfits reach and terror.

All in all, the consequences of recognition could plunge the region into a disastrous conflagration that is easy to start but not that simple to control. Those who recommend recognition but ignore its consequences are playing with fire at the cost of Somalis and the region.

X. Concluding Remarks

The justifications the authors have provided for the recognition of Somaliland are either that it deserves it on flawed, misinformed or biased reasoning, or because it serves the interests of western or neighbouring countries. Irrespective of their justifications, the consequences of their negative prescription entailing the break-up of Somalia is bound to plunge the north and wider Somalia in new conflagration.

If an entity by the name of Somaliland ever emerges from this turmoil, it will be one confined to the clan and its enclave, for the unionist clans and regions will never accept to be part of it and will use all legitimate means at their disposal to oppose it and defend their inalienable right to remain in Somalia in conformity with international law. It is difficult to believe that the west will be so misguided as to recognise such a puny, barren and unsustainable enclave which can only open the flood gates to the Balkanisation of Somalia with a host of other clan-based "Somalilands" likely to mushroom all over the country. That is the road to more conflict and instability, to say nothing of the Pandora box domino it is bound to trigger elsewhere in Africa.

Much of the authors' case for Somaliland's recognition rests on the assumption that the peace, democracy and the rule of law that flourish in the rebel enclave are due to Somaliland administration's good governance; are inherently alien to southern Somalia; and for this reason their absence make Somalia's collapse irreversible. Only those who would wish Somalia's demise can only write off its eventual salvation. What the authors have failed to recall, for their own

reasons, is that Somalia for a long while, from 1960 to 1969, was the paragon of democracy in Africa until the military take-over in October 1969. There is no reason why Somalia should not ultimately return to its peaceful democratic past.

The authors have exaggerated out of all proportions the problem between the secessionist clan and the rest of Somalia which has no comparisons with those in Sudan, or for that matter Cyprus, Kosovo, or elsewhere in the world where what divides peoples in each of these countries far outweigh what unites them. Somalia, on the other hand, is considered internationally as the most homogenous people in Africa, in terms of origin, religion, language, and the ones, who were undivided before colonisation, and the only ones to unite after independence.

The problem facing Somalia is one clan opting for secession, driven not by irreconcilable religion, racial, language and cultural divide with the rest of Somalia but the misguided belief that they will be better off on their own as a separate country and towards this end want to force recalcitrant unionist clans in the region to join their secession. But without continued foreign assistance, this barren impoverished enclave is unsustainable and therefore they are better off to be part of Somalia than to rely exclusively on the vagaries of international handouts.

The secession could have been ended long ago if the international community, and in particular the former colonial power, Great Britain, used their considerable economic and financial leverage over the rebels. From Somalia's perspective, unconditional foreign aid to the enclave amounts to giving an incentive and indirect support to the secession and hence to the continuation of the problem with all its attendant dangers.

What Somalia needs is the support of the international community to regain its statehood as a united, peaceful and democratic country. The authors of the report, rather than engage in positive conflict resolution that ends the secession for the good of all of Somalia, Africa and the international community, have instead opted for the opposite: namely conflict promotion with all its negative consequences. All patriotic Somalis are determined and united to counter their ill intentions.

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