

# Searching for an Identity: Examining the Somaliland Quest for Recognition

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**ABSTRACT** – *The breakup of the Soviet Union and the emergence of many new states represent as one of the major political developments in post-Cold War era. Subsequently, the emergence of the new world order has changed both the character and the practice of the international law and has been regarded as one of the major if not the sole source of the contemporary international conflicts in a changing world. In the Horn of Africa, Somaliland unilaterally declared its separation from the rest of Somalia claiming the boundaries it inherited from its colonial master, the United Kingdom of Great Britain in 1960 before it voluntarily merged with the Italian colony in the south in the same year as part of Greater Somalia Ambition. This study argues that though the political rebuilding of Somaliland has for the most part been an internal outcome, it has no international legal status, and the international community has not yet responded the de jure recognition it demands. The conclusion that emerges from this study questions why Somaliland is not yet to be recognized by the international community, while both regional and international bodies has failed to take the opportunity to engage as a neutral third party and respond the recognition it demands.*

**Keywords** – recognition, *de facto*, *de jure*, parent state, sovereignty, territorial integrity

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

British Somaliland Protectorate was officially founded in July 1887, after signing so-called “protection treaties” with various northern Somali [land] clans. However, it was briefly independent for five days in 1960 after the British withdrawal, before throwing in its lot with the formerly Italian south, a decision which its people have regretted ever since (Douglas, 1961; Mesfin, 1977; Hussein, 2002; Michael, 2004; Mark, 2008). During this brief period, over 34 countries, including Egypt, Israel, and the five Permanent Members of the Security Council, recognized Somaliland diplomatically; and interestingly Israel was the first to do so (Charles, 2009).

Somaliland contends that it is a legal anomaly whose recognition would set no precedent relevant to the rest of Africa. Somaliland did exist as an independent state in 1960, albeit only for a matter of days, before voluntarily merged with the Italian Somalia. Since Somaliland currently exists within the old colonial boundaries of the British Somaliland (ICG, 2006; HRW, 2009). It argues that it is simply returning to its previous status as an independent state and that its existence in no way threatens the inviolability of inherited colonial boundaries. One of the most commonly articulated concerns about the idea of Somaliland’s independence is that it would set a dangerous precedent by sanctioning a redrawing of the African map. It is important to note that African states and some Western governments have treated the inviolability of Africa’s colonial boundaries as a core principle for the sake of preserving stability<sup>1</sup>.

Similarly, proponents of Somaliland independence must also confront the objections of many Somalis who definitely reject the prospect of formally dismantling the larger Somali state regarding Somaliland as a secessionist state. However, pro-independence Somalilanders often rely on moral and historical grounds and believe that this case is exceptional and it is not secession but it emerged from the ashes of a failed union and the bigger project that failed and as a consequence of that union it suffered more than it ever did at the hands of Britain (HRW, 2009; Kinfe, 2002).

Indeed, Somaliland stands out as an island of peace and stability adjacent to an ocean mired in lawlessness, chaos, and strife. From the very beginning to its recent history, Somaliland had interactions with both regional governments and the countries too far beyond the boundaries of the region that were unbroken and intensive (Nasir, 2013). These

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch Report in 2009 on Somaliland titled: ‘Hostage to Peace’- Threats to Human Rights and Democracy in Somaliland.

interactions ranged from bilateral relations to multilateral cooperation and covered a range of issues include: economics, politics, culture, trade and others with the absence of an official recognition.

This study examines why Somaliland despite demonstrating stability and development in a region of strife and conflict failed to win the consent of any country or intergovernmental organization those declined to recognize it as a legal person in the international system. Moreover it tries to understand the challenges not only from the regional and international but also domestic factors those in another way round against its recognition. It assesses the future prospects that could help Somaliland to attain *de jure* recognition.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The findings of this study are based on a literature review and a personal field work that have been carried out in Somaliland. The work is aimed to evaluate why Somaliland has failed to acquire *de jure* recognition from the international community over the past twenty plus years, and to scrutinize three separate but interrelated factors that challenge Somaliland's quest for *de jure* recognition: local, regional and international. The study mainly relied on primary and secondary data. In primary sources individual interviews mainly from statesmen, and academia, among others were conducted, while secondary sources covered relevant literatures written by both Somali and non-Somali scholars in the field.

## 3. SOMALILAND: FROM BRITISH PROTECTORATE TO INDEPENDENT ENTITY

The citizens of the vast continent of Africa – the second largest continent in the world after Asia – have suffered the oppression of European colonizers since the beginning of the twentieth century (Vladimir, 1986). The imperialist powers completed the division of Africa among themselves at the turn of the century. Essentially, with the exception of Ethiopia and Liberia, no independent state remained in Africa. The African continent became the property of the imperialist colonial powers (Ibid). The British imperialists were one of the European powers took part the division of the African continent, and it created numerous colonial empires in Africa, controlling an area of nine million square kilometers on this continent, more than 30 times the size of the Great Britain. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were already just about fifty million people living in the British colonies in Africa<sup>2</sup>.

As a result of this scramble, Somaliland became one of the British colonies in Africa. Its genesis as a political entity from the establishment as the British Somaliland Protectorate dates back to 1884. Except for a brief of Italian occupation (1940–1941), the territory remained under British control until 26 June 1960, when it received its independence as the State of Somaliland. Notification of that independence was accurately registered with the UN and over 34 governments including the five veto powers of the UN Security Council (UNSC) reportedly recognized the new state (ICG, 2006; Charles, 2009). On 1 July, the same year, the UN Trusteeship administered by Italy also achieved its independence and united with the State of Somaliland to form the Somali Republic (Paolo, 1969; Lewis, 2002; Martin, 2006). Although the unification had been under discussion with the leaders of the two newly independent regions, the merger and the unification were poorly prepared, and the two parliaments approved different Acts of Union (Paolo, 1969; Mesfin, 1977). However, this hasty unification one may regard it as the midwife of the future troubled relations between the two regions with three painful decades of an injustice union. While the two decades of Somalia's agony and tragedy in post-state collapse considered to be an outcome of that illusion union, autocratic rule and a bloody military interlude, which made Somalia to enter what is claimed to be an era of state collapse, civil war and internal strife, albeit several weak UN-backed governments standing on the feet of foreign troops, in particular the south–central regions.

Consequently, early dissatisfaction with the arrangements negotiated by Somaliland leaders led the Northern voters to reject the unitary Constitution in a June 1961 referendum (Hussein, 2002; Mark, 2008). In October 1962, Northern ministers resigned from the government and several days later Northern representatives walked out of the National Assembly and threatened to boycott it (Lewis, 2002). With the existence of accumulated grievances in the early days of the unification, the situation has changed when the civil-elected administration of the Republic was ended by military officers who managed to overthrow the civilian government. The established military government continued the centralization of the state authority under the leadership of the late General Mohamed Siad Barre (Dani, 2000; Nasir, 2013). It worth to mention that the political attitude of the military junta was to reunite the Somali regions in the Horn of Africa and to bring under the rule of the Somali state. Nonetheless, Somalia's expansionist ambitions ended with its catastrophic defeat by Ethiopia and its allies in the 1977–78 Ogaden War.

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<sup>2</sup> By Vladimir Alexandrov, *A Contemporary World History 1917-1945* (1986), pp. 423

After that defeat, Somalia's central authority with the command of the late General Mohamed Siad Barre started to suppress its own citizens. This act and others prompted waves of armed movements against the Mogadishu regime, particularly, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) and the Somali National Movement (SNM), from the northeastern and northwestern regions of the Somali state respectively (Michael, 2004; Martin, 2006; Bulhan, 2008). In May 1988, the SNM launched its military offensive against the military garrisons in the North. This conflict caused waves of refugees to the neighbouring countries, particularly, Ethiopia which hosted hundreds of thousands of refugees from the North to the Ethiopian territory along Ethio-Somali border (HRW, 2009). In early 1991, the Somali state came to an end and its institutions has collapsed.

In 1991, after the downfall of the Barre's regime and the total collapse of the Somali state, the SNM without prior notice declared Somaliland's independence within the borders of the former State of Somaliland (Nicholas, 2010). Since then, it has established a condition of peace and security, and held democratic local, parliamentary and presidential elections in one hand (IRI 2005; ICG 2006). While it fulfilled the criteria for recognition as a state; such as population, a defined territory, a functioning government and capacity to enter into relations with other states in the international forums for the other. Its achievements have won widespread praise and acknowledgement at regional, continental and international, and seen its recognition has been favourably assessed by the African Union Commission, Conflict Prevention Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), in particular, the International Crisis Group (ICG). Despite Somaliland's success stories, the international community hesitates to recognize it as an independent state. For this to happen, there are local, regional and international actors that are after their interests and other factors that have contributed their part for the denial of recognition in relation to Somaliland.

In this respect, the major challenge comes from the southern Somalia which remained in chaos since 1991, where there are many Somalis who definitely reject the prospect of formally dismantling the larger Somali state by regarding Somaliland as a secessionist state. Despite the claims that Somaliland was part of the Somali Republic created in the second half of the twentieth century, on the other hand, the leaders of the southern Somalia have failed to acknowledge or even to remember that Somaliland was a separate entity remained under different colonial power with different traditional and administrative way of doing businesses before its merger with the south<sup>3</sup>.

Indeed, when the idea that Somaliland was a separate polity before 1960 is added to the argument that it was part of the Somali state system until its total collapse in 1991, it would seem impossible to avoid the conclusion that Somaliland was not only outside the social and political system of Somalia, but also ill-disposed towards creating a Somali state for all (Nasir, 2013). In this situation, one may argue that the people of Somaliland were not only alien, but also hostile to Somalia rules, institutions, and ways of conducting state affairs.

Without a doubt, Somalia's argument has no legal ground and even it is contrary to the OAU Charter which clearly underlines that the boundaries inherited from the colonial powers are intact. In this regard, one may confuse to understand Somalia's argument since Somaliland's independence would not a dangerous precedent for redrawing of the African map. Somaliland has existed for over 76 years as a distinct British protectorate before it gained independence on 26 June 1960.

#### **4. SEARCHING FOR AN IDENTITY: IDENTIFYING THE KEY CHALLENGES AND THE WAYS FORWARD**

##### **4.1 Local challenges**

It seems obvious that Somaliland has fulfilled the criteria of statehood; but, there are multidimensional challenges which undermine the efforts of Somaliland to obtain an official recognition. These include: the abuse of the principles of democracy, lack of effective governance at local, regional, and at national, widespread corruption, which remain the major factors challenging Somaliland to acquire *de jure* recognition<sup>4</sup>. For instance, the collapse of the Hargeisa Airport runway reconstruction project, the Genel Energy issue, an international oil-drilling company based in London, irrational recruitment practices in the public sector and nepotism as a major driver, among others are the outcome of dysfunctional state policies and institutions responsible for monitoring officials' acts. However, this kind of practice among the Government officials which are overt in the country at the moment increased public fears and anxieties and have negative implications for the state interests<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Nasir M. Ali (2013), 'Overcoming Diplomatic Isolation: Forging a New Somaliland Approach', published by the *Social Research and Development Institute (SORADI)* as a policy paper

<sup>4</sup> Interview with one of the former foreign affairs ministers, Hargeisa, Somaliland

<sup>5</sup> There is a public anger against the current regime practices in regards to his injustice employment and nomination in government offices

In this respect, there are scholars who argue that the recognition comes from the way of governance of that 'state' striving to obtain an international personality in the international system. In their view, there are factors which crippled the state's goal to reach that target, such as, widespread corruption, maladministration, etc. As one of the most renowned living intellectuals argued: "There is no society on earth claiming as an independent state at the same time aspiring to attain international recognition and not willing to work hard rather working less than three hours in the public offices"<sup>6</sup>.

The fact remains, however, as a clear dividing-line, since the 1991; the international organizations working in Somaliland came to Somaliland with the name of Somalia, putting aside the name of Somaliland. Some argue that when the leaders of the Somaliland do not question that; it implies that Somaliland is not serious to acquire international recognition. Contrary to the earlier statement, the successive authorities failed to extend their authority all over the state territory<sup>7</sup>, particularly, the remote eastern regions of Somaliland. Therefore, by looking into these factors, some argue that Somaliland does not deserve to obtain an international recognition. Because such domestic practices do not encourage the international community.

Overall, it is possible to argue that the little awareness of the society at the grassroots level regarding the magnitude of the issue (recognition), and denying the role of Somalia, remains one of the main challenges for Somaliland to acquire *de jure* recognition from the international community<sup>8</sup>.

#### 4.2 Regional challenges

After the collapse of the Somali state in 1991, Somaliland unilaterally proclaimed its separation from the rest of Somalia. For realization of Somaliland's dream, the major regional challenge comes from the southern part of Somalia, which is the parent state of Somaliland that remained in an enigmatic and hectic situation since 1991. In this regard, authorities in Somalia have consistently opposed any formal dismantling of the larger Somali state (HRW, 2009). Despite this, there are divisions among Somalis regarding clan factor and among others. Moreover, Somalia has been poorly positioned to engage in talks regarding either independence or significant autonomy for Somaliland, as it lacked any form of authority that may control the territory of the southern Somalia (ICG, 2006). For the attainment of *de jure* recognition, Somalia is remaining the major challenge in Somaliland as it claims that Somaliland is a part and parcel of its territory<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, dealing with matters in a practical point of view, it is possible to argue that the contradicting and confusing stories of this issue (recognition), it is difficult to reach a sustainable agreement among the concerned Somali parties.

Since Somalia has no legal ground helping its claims over the Somaliland territory except the anxiety of the international community that stems from such factors as fear of being involved in the legal breakup of the Somali state which has no ground. On the other hand, its claims could be linked to a foreign fabricated claim in particular from some dominant Arab countries approach aimed at creating a strong central government in Somalia with an anti-Ethiopian posture (Medhane, 2002). This may be understandable, given that Egypt who remains one of the main actors and its major concern is the issue of Nile, this is therefore, Egypt does not interested to see divided and disintegrated Somalia<sup>10</sup>. While Saudis role is believed to be for strategic matters and remains a key regional obstacle to Somaliland's withdrawal from the union, which not only objects to the secular, democratic model promoted by Somaliland, but is a strong ally of Somalia, which is a member of the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (Charles, 2009; HRW, 2009). As part of its agenda instrument, Saudi Arabia supports the Federal Government of Somalia financially and politically to enhance its interest; while Qatar is an emerging and active actor in post-Arab revolutions. Therefore, Qatar has extended financial support to the Somalia's Government as a part of its engagement to fuel the already conflagrating situation of the region. As various sources had unveiled, this financial package was intended to import weapons, munitions, ammunitions and armaments from Egypt which is an arc foe and a traditional enemy of Ethiopia over the Nile.

Correspondingly, the African Union (AU) appreciated Somaliland's achievements and progress, however, it hesitated to recognize fearing that it could encourage other secessionist waves which may hit all over the continent if Somaliland were allowed to join the international community. In addition, the Charter of the Organization of the African Unity (OAU), were mentioned respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State and for its inalienable right to independent existence (Adam, 1994). Therefore, the African Union has maintained many features of its predecessor (OAU), including its commitment to the unity and territorial integrity of member states such as Somalia which is a

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with one of the founding fathers of the SNM, Hargeisa, Somaliland

<sup>7</sup> One of the state physical elements is in crisis and the Somaliland authority is not entirely control that territory

<sup>8</sup> Interview with one of the key figures both Somalia and Somaliland Governments, Hargeisa, Somaliland

<sup>9</sup> Interview with one of the key scholars of Somaliland, Hargeisa, Somaliland

<sup>10</sup> This could be observed from the current practices of Egypt in regards to the Somalia politics and the current hot debate between the Ethiopian Government and the Egyptian Authority over the construction of the Renaissance Dam in the northern Ethiopia

member of the African Union. In this regard, Professor Ali Mazrui (Dr) argues that the African Union should serve as a kind of court, providing Somaliland with an opportunity for a fair hearing of its case<sup>11</sup>.

Of all of these theses, it is not a surprise to argue that Somaliland's withdrawal from the illegitimate union with the Italian Somaliland neither invalidates nor ruling out the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Charter and even its successor, the African Union (AU) in particular the article which makes intact and sacred the boundaries that the African countries has inherited from the imperial powers. This article has been adopted by the African Heads of States at their summit in Cairo in 1964. Nevertheless, the content of the article upholds Somaliland's argument as a legal entity within the boundaries it inherited from its colonial master, the British.

Again, it is a surprise that the African Union and even its predecessor had collectively failed to understand that Somaliland has never been an Italian colony, while it has internationally demarcated boundaries that it inherited from the British Government on 26 June 1960. In this regard, this article is valid to the other regions established their own autonomous administrations and may opt to secede from their parent state of Somalia, for instance, the northeastern Puntland State of Somalia exactly qualifies the article. Therefore, failing to understand who is the Somaliland and Somalia from such grand institution clearly shows the African Union's irrational thinking and lack of concrete way forward policies<sup>12</sup>.

Given Somaliland's strong claim for recognition under international law, one must briefly consider the possible objections to such recognition. For example, dismemberment of an existing state violates the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) and its successor policies, the African Union (AU), of adherence to colonial boundaries for recognition may trigger a Balkanization which would completely upset the existing boundary arrangements. Such a fear, however, is unfounded for many reasons. First, the OAU/AU doctrine seeks to preserve colonial boundaries; the 1960 Somaliland colonial boundaries do coincide with the boundaries of Somaliland as it exists today (Anthony & B. Rajagopal, 1993). Second, the OAU/AU doctrine concerns itself with the preservation of boundaries and not with units of self-determination. In other words, as long as there is no threat to interstate peace, OAU/AU policy remains irrelevant to the discussion. Third, even if the colonial boundary policy is relevant, Somalia had rejected this OAU/AU doctrine by its irredentist policies regarding the French Territory of Djibouti, the Somali Region in Ethiopia and the North Eastern region of Kenya.

It seems obvious that Somaliland's emergence conforms with the OAU/AU policies and could contribute to much needed regional stability, cooperation and economic development. Some experts argue that the recognition of Somaliland may violate the territorial integrity of Somalia, an act that international law prohibits. Such an objection also seems to have no basis (Ibid). First, the question of whether recognition will violate territorial integrity is necessarily bound with the issue of whether such recognition will be premature. Second, when claims of territorial integrity clash with those of self-determination, United Nations practice allows the latter to trump the former. This means that in self-determination situations, the wishes of the people concerned are the only relevant factor. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the international community to recognize Somaliland. Any effort to deny or delay would not only put the international community at the risk of ignoring the most stable region in the Horn, it would impose untold hardship upon the people of Somaliland due to the denial of foreign assistance that recognition entails.

### **4.3 International challenges**

With the existence of both local and regional challenges against Somaliland's quest to acquire official recognition, there are also international challenges which deserve to be mentioned. At the international level, both law and state interests confer a powerful advantage to the existing states. The recent collapse of communism has allowed Western states to break this state sovereignty taboo in an enthusiastic rush to recognize the dismemberment of the USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. Other parts of the world, especially Africa where the OAU code continues to exert its influence, have not been treated by the same standards (Adam, 1994). Prior to recent events, Bangladesh provided a rare case of a secession that won international recognition. This was due to geography – East Pakistan (Bangladesh) separated by Indian territory from West Pakistan – as well as the decisive intervention of the Indian army and India's diplomatic offensive<sup>13</sup>.

Contrary to the above-indicated views, there are numerous resolutions against Somaliland, issued by global and regional bodies, such as the UN, AU and the Arab League, which emphasize the sovereignty and unity of Somalia. These bodies attempt to persuade the parties concerned particularly (Somalia & Somaliland) to discuss and solve their

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<sup>11</sup> By ICG, "Somaliland: Time for African Union Leadership", (2006), pp. 12

<sup>12</sup> Observed from the practices not only the African Union, but also other institutions, such as the IGAD, the Arab League, and the UN

<sup>13</sup> By Hussein M. Adam, "Formation and Recognition of New States: Somaliland in Contrast to Eritrea" (1994), pp.36

differences. So far, there are no signs showing the restoration of the Somali state<sup>14</sup>. Thus, the UN, and other regional bodies have been reluctant to provide Somaliland with the assistance its problems deserve.

The above-mentioned regional and international actors' interests and influences could be a possible explanation as to why the international community failed to recognize Somaliland. In this regard, many people attribute this case to different issues; some scholars argue that it is the failure of the international community to accept the independence of Somaliland<sup>15</sup>. Others argue that the collapse of the Berlin Wall which ended the Cold War undermined Somalia's strategic location and Somaliland as well<sup>16</sup>.

However, international reluctance to come to terms with Somaliland begins in Africa. The UN and various Western donors have indicated at one time or another that Somaliland's broader prospects for international recognition hinge upon the attitude of the African Union. David Shinn, a former U.S. ambassador to Ethiopia and a close observer of Somaliland has noted that:

*There is considerable sympathy for what Somaliland has achieved by way of internal stability, free elections, and the initiation of a democratic system of government. But the U.S. and Western countries tend to defer to the African Union when issues concerning boundary change or sovereignty arise in Africa. It is highly unlikely that the U.S. would move to recognize Somaliland before the African Union did so or, at a minimum, several key African states opted to do so<sup>17</sup>.*

## 5. THE WAYS FORWARD

As far as the issue of recognition is concerned, it is difficult to address it effectively because of the involvement of many issues and actors. However, as some might argue that if Somaliland continues to manage to establish effective democratic governance while respecting human rights, democratic values, and to lead the 'state' into democratization path. Somaliland can attract good friends and allies<sup>18</sup>. It is possible to argue that, adopting good and effective governance, as well as reforming the state structure may lead the international community to glance back the issue of Somaliland and offer *de jure* recognition<sup>19</sup>.

In the same manner, some people argue that adopting concrete foreign policy, like involving authorities in the southern part of Somalia, to discuss the interests of the two sides (Somaliland & Somalia) including the right to secede from the rest of Somalia as the current engagement attests, remain one of the main factors which could help to amicably resolve their problems and could lead Somaliland to attain legal recognition from the international community<sup>20</sup>.

Since charity begins at home, some scholars argue that Somaliland has to work hard in order to acquire *de jure* recognition by extending their authorities over Somaliland territory, particularly, to the remote eastern regions. Overcoming these indicated factors may end up Somaliland's diplomatic isolation from the international community<sup>21</sup>.

On the other hand, as one of the Somaliland scholars indicates that it could be the benefit of the international community to recognize Somaliland as an independent state as Somaliland is strategically important in fighting terrorism, piracy, etc. Some security analysts argue that these are precisely the reasons why Somaliland merits international recognition and support (ICG, 2006). In many regards, Somaliland by virtue of its strategic location at the intersection of Africa and Asia, notably facing Yemen, plays a pivotal role in the post-cold war system of states in the Horn region.

So it seems obvious that those in charge of Somaliland refer the case of Eritrea as a typical example. Eritrea has a clear advantage over Somaliland with regards to international recognition. In May 1993, Eritrea translated *a de facto* into *de jure* statehood. In this regard, Eritrea's and to a lesser extent Somaliland's claim to self-determination is grounded on a historical consciousness of oppression, surviving military annihilation perpetuated by indigenous systems of oppression (Adam, 1994). Unlike Biafra and Katanga, Eritrea and Somaliland also have stronger juridical claims: each had existed for eighty years or more as a distinct colonial territory.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Coming to the final analysis, as the study unveils the case of Somaliland is exceptional and different from secession in one way or another. But more or less it can be regarded as dissolution of a failed union. According to the international law and other evidences related to this case, Somaliland was separate, recognized state before its unification with the

<sup>14</sup> Interview with one of the key figures both Somalia and Somaliland Governments, Hargeisa, Somaliland

<sup>15</sup> Interview with one of the former foreign affairs ministers, Hargeisa, Somaliland

<sup>16</sup> Interview with one of the Parliamentarians, Lower House (MPs), Hargeisa, Somaliland

<sup>17</sup> By ICG, "Somaliland: Time for African Union Leadership", (2006), pp. 13

<sup>18</sup> Interview with one of the key figures both Somalia and Somaliland Governments, Hargeisa, Somaliland

<sup>19</sup> Interview with one of the Lower House (MPs), Hargeisa, Somaliland

<sup>20</sup> Interview with one of the Somaliland scholars, Hargeisa, Somaliland

<sup>21</sup> Interview with one of the Lower House (MPs), Hargeisa, Somaliland

southern part of Somalia, aiming to form “the Greater Somalia”. However, this dysfunctional unity as the Somalilanders claim caused the collapse of the Somali ambition to form “Greater Somalia” in the Horn of Africa, and precipitated the collapse of the Somali state and the dismantle of its institutions in 1991. It is not a surprise to say that the case of Somaliland is not different from the similar cases happened in Africa, such as the unification of Senegal with Mali Federation, Egypt with Syria, and separation of Eritrea from the rest of Ethiopia.

In relation to the question of recognition, there are domestic, regional and international factors challenging Somaliland’s quest for international recognition. Hence, as the charity begins at home, domestic challenges need to be addressed before petitioning to any country or organization to recognize: *Firstly*, both the elites and society at the grassroots level has to work hard and strengthen the established state institutions. *Secondly*, improving infrastructures, establishing effective governance free from corruption and nepotism are also important. *Thirdly*, the lack of special consideration to the internal affairs of the state, rather looking for only international recognition also has its impact on the Somaliland’s quest for recognition. *Fourth*, the lack of effectiveness in the form of policies and programs from the Somaliland side since the recognition does not come easy is another factor that could be addressed to reach the dream. *Fifth*, the lack of international lobbyist groups – think tank groups in the USA or from somewhere else, scholars<sup>22</sup> and retired diplomats<sup>23</sup> – also is another challenge to the issue. *Sixth*, the absence of international interests, such as military power or identified natural resources, also have their own negative impact on Somaliland’s quest for attaining international personality.

Therefore, these factors remain the major challenges against Somaliland’s quest to acquire *de jure* recognition. In conclusion, though Somaliland fulfilled the criteria of statehood to attain *de jure* recognition, there are many factors challenging Somaliland’s quest for *de jure* recognition. Even though, there are international factors which challenge Somaliland’s recognition, the major is its partner, Somalia, which plunged into civil conflict and unrest for more than 22 years. Therefore, attaining *de jure* recognition is subject how Somaliland would overcome both these internal and external factors which remain the major challenges crippling Somaliland’s quest for international recognition remains to be seen.

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<sup>22</sup> Independent scholars such as Ali Mazrui (Dr), I.M.Lewis and International Human Rights activists like Louis Arbor and others

<sup>23</sup> Such as David Shinn, a former US ambassador to Ethiopia and a close observer of Somaliland

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