



A Somaliland Police Force Special Protection Unit officer provides personal security near Dacarbudhuq, April 2010. © Dominik Balthasar

# Between State and Non-state

## SOMALILAND'S EMERGING SECURITY ORDER

### INTRODUCTION

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Just a few years after declaring independence in 1991, Somaliland experienced large-scale armed conflict. Yet, in contrast to south-central Somalia, security in Somaliland was relatively stable in 2011. How has the de facto state managed to achieve a comparatively high level of security despite its recent history of violent conflict and the widespread civilian possession of military firearms?

Some analysts claim that the home-grown disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) processes of the early to mid-1990s facilitated improvements in Somaliland's security (Bulhan, 2004, p. 5; Bryden and Brickhill, 2010). Others suggest that the application of traditional systems of governance is the key factor in the post-war decrease in violence (Bradbury, 1997, 2008; Jhazbhay, 2008; Walls, 2009).

This chapter points to other factors and processes that appear to have contributed to improvements in Somaliland's security, distinguishing among different types of violence in the territory and focusing on the changing roles of armed actors in contesting or supporting state authority. In exploring such conflict-related factors, from the national to the local levels, the authors draw on a review of secondary sources, recent survey results, and their own field research in Somaliland. Key findings include the following:

- The overall security situation in Somaliland has improved despite the widespread presence of firearms, including military firearms, in private hands.
- Since the mid-1990s, the resolution of major armed conflicts and the corresponding enhancement of state authority have helped to contain large-scale armed violence in central and western Somaliland and facilitate the establishment of a police force within the territory.
- At the local level, neighbourhood watch groups, working with and under the authority of Somaliland police, are improving security in locations such as Hargeisa and Burao.
- Communal tensions in the form of clan-based violence remain a serious threat to safety and security in Somaliland. Their resolution continues to depend on the integration of all relevant clan groups into the state.

The chapter's first section sketches out Somaliland's recent history, including armed conflicts, and provides a snapshot of security and firearm availability in the territory two decades after its declaration of independence (see Maps 5.1 and 5.2). The following sections examine political, criminal, and communal violence in Somaliland, including factors and processes that appear associated with reductions in violence over the past two decades. The analysis focuses in particular on the historically important city and district of Burao, a location with a turbulent past at the geographical heart of Somaliland. A conclusion recaps the chapter's key arguments.

## SETTING THE STAGE: SMALL ARMS AND (IN)SECURITY IN SOMALILAND

In contrast to conflict-ridden south-central Somalia, the northern breakaway Republic of Somaliland is often considered ‘an island of relative peace’ (Mengisteab, 2009, p. 189) with ‘one of the most stable polities in the Horn’ (Bradbury, 2008, p. 1).<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Somaliland’s history has been far from peaceful. The Somaliland state has its roots in a decade-long civil war between the Somali National Movement (SNM) and the regime of Gen. Mohamed Siad Barre. And even in the years following its declaration of independence, Somaliland suffered several bouts of violent conflict.

Following the defeat of Somalia’s armed forces in the 1977–78 Ogaden war with Ethiopia, Somalia’s military regime became increasingly repressive, leading to the formation of several resistance groups. The SNM, which was among the first armed opposition movements of the early 1980s (see Box 5.1), grew to become a principal challenger to Barre’s rule. Towards the end of the decade the guerrilla organization became a mass movement engaged in a fierce civil war with the Somali National Army (SNA). The civil war not only contributed to the removal of the military dictatorship, but also informed the establishment of the Somaliland state, its institutions and identity.<sup>2</sup>

An alliance of clan-based militias, which included the SNM, Somali Salvation Democratic Front, and United Somali Congress, overthrew Barre in January 1991. Four months later, north-western Somalia unilaterally declared independence as the sovereign Republic of Somaliland. In subsequent years, the territory saw numerous rounds of violent conflict

Map 5.1 Somalia

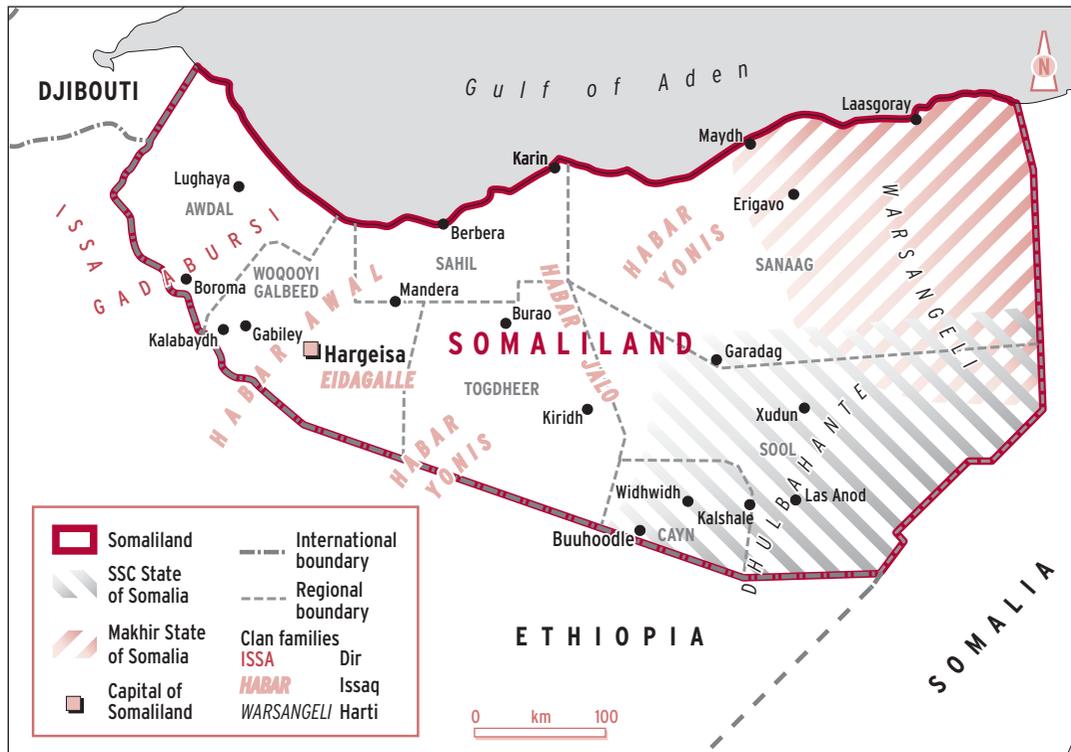


between competing political factions largely mobilized along (sub-)clan lines. Yet since the late 1990s Somaliland has followed a trajectory that has diverged sharply from that observed in other parts of the former Somali Republic. Not only has it progressively managed to put major violent conflict behind it, but Somaliland has also built a central administration, including a nascent security apparatus.

### Awash in arms

With the declaration of independence, the SNM transferred its powers to a two-year transitional government under the leadership of Abdirahman Ahmed Ali ‘Tuur’ (‘hunchback’). Initially, the government’s authority hardly reached beyond the capital of Hargeisa (Gilkes, 1993; Spears, 2010, p. 155); as a result, kinship-based militias and *deydey* groups<sup>3</sup> mushroomed. Although they provided security to their own communities, they frequently demanded safe passage fees at provisional roadblocks, contributing to

Map 5.2 Somaliland



insecurity and political fragmentation in the territory (Bradbury, 2008, p. 88).<sup>4</sup> In order to weaken armed rivals and establish government control, Tuur and his successor conducted several DDR programmes.<sup>5</sup> Yet whereas President Tuur failed to demobilize the militias in the early 1990s, his successor Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal was more successful. Shortly after his inauguration in 1993, Egal persuaded most clan militias to surrender their heavy weapons and join the newly formed army (Bradbury, 2008, p. 113).<sup>6</sup> While demobilization was extensive in many areas, the first component of the DDR initiative—disarmament—was only partially implemented. Thus, although DDR successfully took many gunmen off the streets, firearms remained in widespread circulation (Brickhill, 1994; Forberg and Terlinden, 1999).

A recent survey on small arms availability in Somaliland indicates that some 74 per cent of households own small arms, about 73 per cent of which are Kalashnikov-pattern assault rifles (Hughes and Lynge, 2010, p. VIII).<sup>7</sup> Thus, although the possession of heavier weapons is now largely the prerogative of state security forces,<sup>8</sup> assault rifles remain at the disposal of at least every second household in Somaliland. While the public display of guns is not tolerated and is rarely seen in urban areas (Brickhill, 1994, p. 5), and although a gun registration system started in 2006 (Hughes and Lynge, 2010, pp. 43–44), it appears that Somaliland society continues to be heavily armed.

The general picture of weapons holdings in Somaliland is exemplified locally by the case of Burao district, home to Somaliland's second-largest city of the same name. Here, too, it appears that about 80 per cent of all households reportedly own a gun<sup>9</sup> and more than two-thirds of the small arms in private ownership are assault rifles (OCVP, forthcoming a, p. 34). In the city's arms market in June 2011, prices for AK-47s and AKMs ranged between USD 500 and USD 900, while a single 7.62 mm round cost between USD 0.50 and USD 1.00.<sup>10</sup> Yet market prices reflect frequent

### Box 5.1 The Somali National Movement

One year after its founding by Somalilanders living in London in 1981, the SNM transferred its headquarters to the Ethiopian border region next to north-western Somalia, from where it launched guerrilla attacks on government installations within Somalia. While the rebel movement initially had very limited military capacity, the SNM turned into a popular mass movement in the late 1980s. Crucial to this transformation was the 1988 decision of dictator Barre to bomb the northern cities of Hargeisa and Burao to rubble in retaliation against members of the Isaaq clan, who comprised the majority of the populations in those cities, because of their alleged support for the SNM. As a consequence, SNM manpower increased massively, transforming its approximately 1,200-strong force into a movement of as many as 50,000 fighters (Flint, 1994, p. 36).<sup>11</sup>

When, in 1988, Barre and Ethiopian leader Mengistu Haile Mariam signed a joint communiqué in which they agreed to cease supporting insurgents operating in each other's territories, the SNM lost its Ethiopian sanctuary. Yet within a month, the SNM managed to establish a presence in rural north-western Somalia. By the time of Barre's overthrow in January 1991, it controlled large swaths of the territory of the former British Somaliland protectorate; it emerged from the civil war as the dominant military force in that part of the crumbling state (Bradbury, 2008, p. 79; Walls, 2009, p. 378).<sup>12</sup>

Despite certain similarities with other Somali rebel movements, the SNM differed significantly from them in numerous respects. First, it was largely self-financed. Rather than receiving massive financial backing from other states or other third parties, the SNM financed most of its activities through donations from the Isaaq community in and beyond Somaliland.<sup>13</sup> Second, the movement's leadership was institutionalized, rather than personalized. Whereas other rebel movements, such as the United Somali Congress or Somali Salvation Democratic Front, were strongly associated with specific individuals—Gen. Mohamed Ali Farah Aideed and Gen. Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, respectively—the SNM changed its leadership six times during the course of its decade-long existence (Adam, 1995, p. 76; Bryden, 1999, p. 9). A third difference was that by the time the other Somali rebel movements established themselves in southern Somalia as political organizations in the early 1990s, the SNM was already in the process of handing control over to a transitional civil administration.



fluctuations in the supply of weapons and the demand for them (see Box 5.2). Recent investigations conducted by the Hargeisa-based Observatory of Conflict and Violence Prevention (OCVP) suggest that the availability of firearms within the district of Burao increased between 2009 and 2010 (OCVP, forthcoming a, p. 33).

Evidence shows that the majority of Somaliland's population perceives small arms as a threat to security (Bulhan, 2004, p. 17; Hughes and Lynge, 2010, p. IX). For this reason, the Danish Demining Group (DDG) argues that the private ownership of small arms and light weapons 'will remain one of the big threats to community safety in Somaliland' and that it must be addressed by awareness raising and enhanced gun registration (Hughes and Lynge, 2010, p. 67). Civilian attitudes to guns are complex, however, as suggested by the DDG finding that more than 50



A fighter jet that was used to bomb Hargeisa during the civil war stands as a memorial in the centre of the city. © Andrew McConnell/Panos Pictures

per cent of gun owners report that they hold guns to protect themselves (Hughes and Lyngø, 2010, p. 56). In Burao, 38 per cent of respondents claimed to hold a gun for protection (OCVP, forthcoming a, p. 34).

### **Armed violence and (in)security in Somaliland**

Drawing a comprehensive picture of the level and trends of armed violence in Somaliland—classically measured by violent deaths (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2011, p. 4)—is virtually impossible due to a lack of data. The first problem is that data for Somaliland is combined with the rest of Somalia in almost all major systematic accounts of armed violence. This is true for direct conflict deaths<sup>14</sup> as well as for homicides.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, even the data available on Somalia

### Box 5.2 Small arms in Somaliland<sup>16</sup>

The vast majority of weapons circulating in Somaliland are decades old Kalashnikov-pattern assault rifles, as the import of weapons into the territory is sporadic and modest in comparison to arms deliveries to Puntland and southern Somalia. Small fishing vessels, or *dhow*s, intermittently transport arms from Yemen to small ports between Berbera and Bosasso on Somaliland's 800-km northern coastline on the Gulf of Aden. Once weapons are unloaded, arms brokers can easily exploit the mostly ungoverned border between Somaliland and Puntland as a corridor to transport weapons to south-central Somalia, where demand is routinely high due to ongoing conflict.

The regional arms trade does not flow exclusively in one direction, however. At Somaliland's porous and unregulated border with Ethiopia, small numbers of weapons flow in and out. Moreover, arms dealers in Somaliland occasionally purchase arms and ammunition from brokers in Mogadishu, where prices are comparatively low. In February 2011, for instance, at the time that fighting erupted between the Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn (SSC) militia and Somaliland forces, ammunition prices in Mogadishu were exceptionally low due to high rates of diversion from the Transitional Federal Government and affiliated militias to local markets. At USD 0.29 per round by February 2011, 7.62 x 39 mm ammunition was selling for far less in Mogadishu's Bakaara market than in Hargeisa (UNSC, 2011, pp. 42-43).<sup>17</sup> Individuals close to the arms trade in Mogadishu reported that dealers in Somaliland purchased large quantities of ammunition from Mogadishu during that period to meet the spike in demand caused by the fighting.<sup>18</sup>

Somaliland has seen a particular increase in the import of pistols, which have become the weapon of choice for petty criminals despite the fact that, along with their ammunition, they are generally more expensive than military firearms. In late 2010, weathered models of a Czech VZOR 70 and a Chinese Type 54 pistol (copy of the Soviet Tokarev TT-33) were selling in Hargeisa for USD 800 and USD 900, respectively, with their requisite ammunition going for USD 5 per round, more than five times the price of the readily available 7.62 x 39 mm ammunition for Kalashnikov-pattern weapons. A Soviet-produced AKM assault rifle manufactured in 1972 was selling for only USD 550. An arms dealer in Hargeisa explained that the higher price for handguns and their ammunition reflected their scarcity.<sup>19</sup> The Somaliland authorities have intercepted several deliveries of pistols in the past few years. The most recent seizure took place in March 2011, when two Somalilanders were arrested on suspicion of smuggling 37 new Czech pistols from Taiz, Yemen, to Lughaya, a small port west of Berbera.<sup>20</sup>

Demand for weapons in Somaliland changes frequently, primarily in response to fluctuations in criminality—notably armed robbery—and inter-clan disputes in the Sool region. Although state-building and reconciliation efforts have stemmed inter-clan disputes for the most part, clans cling strongly to their weapons out of fear that they may become targets should current inter-clan harmony break down. The unavailability of certain types of ammunition has greatly limited the kinds of weapons that are sold in Somaliland. For instance, since 5.56 x 45 mm ammunition does not circulate widely in East Africa, M-16 rifles, which were once common in Somalia, are rare and, if for sale at all, sell for as little as USD 200.<sup>21</sup>

Somaliland's firearm legislation was amended in 2010 with the adoption of Law No. 39/2010, which requires civilians to obtain a permit to purchase weapons and to register their firearms.<sup>22</sup> With the support of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the Somaliland Ministry of Interior conducted a large-scale firearm registration campaign across the region between 2006 and 2008, during which some 10,000 weapons were registered. The ministry suspended the exercise prematurely, because of budgetary restraints. Despite these initiatives, the population—particularly in rural areas—does not abide by formal firearm laws, but rather follows traditional customs, which are extremely tolerant of firearm purchase and possession. Moreover, the government does not have the capacity to publicize the new law or provide accessible registration centres to large portions of the population.<sup>23</sup>

A 1992 UN arms embargo prevents the government of Somaliland from legally procuring weapons from beyond its borders. As a result, the government often requires soldiers to bring their own firearms when entering military service. Consequently, the majority of weapons held in state forces closely resemble those in civilian possession. The Somaliland Armed Forces also hold aging high-calibre weapons and tanks left over from the civil war. Unsubstantiated allegations hold that the government of Ethiopia provides weapons to Somaliland on an ad hoc basis as part of a security arrangement that allows Ethiopia unfettered access to Berbera port.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, as Somaliland's relationship with Puntland has grown increasingly antagonistic, both sides have found ways to augment their military arsenals in contravention of UN sanctions.

The emergence of the SSC represents another factor driving demand for weapons in the eastern Sool region of Somaliland. An SSC propaganda video posted on YouTube in July 2011 showed a handful of anti-aircraft guns mounted on 'technicals' (Toyota pick-up trucks with weapon-mounting capabilities), but this does not appear representative of their actual holdings. During the height of fighting in Kalshale in late 2010, for example, the SSC primarily provided fuel and ammunition from a rear base to the feuding clans, as reported by the UN Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group (UNSC, 2011, p. 133).





Pistols and assault rifles for sale at the central weapons market in Burao, June 2011.  
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as a whole, especially for homicides, is sketchy, incomplete, often based on estimates, and of questionable reliability.<sup>25</sup> That leaves accounts from field researchers, press articles, and occasional survey results, which, even if imperfect, provide at least a glimpse at patterns of armed violence in Somaliland.

### **The long-term decrease in conflict-related violence**

While disaggregated data regarding conflict deaths is not available for Somaliland, some rough annual estimates can be obtained for Somalia as a whole. In combination with qualitative accounts of individual outbreaks of large-scale violence in Somaliland, this data helps to draw a rough picture of the armed confrontations that occurred in Somaliland and consequent casualties over the course of the past two decades.

The conflict data provided by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute suggests that the high level of conflict deaths reported for Somalia in both the 1990s and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is mainly associated with confrontations in south-central Somalia; it does not indicate any major incidents of armed violence in Somaliland since 1991.<sup>26</sup> The data thus misses the large-scale violence in the territory in 1992 and 1994–95, for which casualties of 1,000 and 2,000–4,000 have been reported, respectively (Bradbury, 2008, pp. 87, 119; IRBC, 1995). Assuming a rather low total figure of 3,000 conflict deaths between 1992 and 1995, the annual average conflict death rate for Somaliland in this period would be 25 per 100,000.<sup>27</sup>

Press articles and research papers also report particular episodes of armed conflict

for the years 2003–11. While the terrorist attacks conducted by Al-Shabaab, a radical Islamist militia based in south-central Somalia, reportedly killed 28 people in Hargeisa in 2008 (Somalia Report, 2011), a series of armed confrontations in Kalshale during 2010 and 2011 claimed the lives of between 50 and 100 persons (OCVP, forthcoming e, 2011; UNSC, 2011, p. 130). In Sool region, further clashes between Somaliland and Puntland forces, as well as allied (sub-)clan factions, are not likely to have caused more than 100 deaths since 2007. Even if one assumes a rather high figure of 100 deaths *per year* between 2003 and 2011,<sup>28</sup> the conflict death rate would be no more than 3.3 per 100,000.<sup>29</sup> This points to a significant drop in conflict-related violence from the mid-1990s to the late 2000s.

### Recent security trends

Despite the absence of reliable national data, the World Health Organization estimates that the homicide rate in Somalia was 3.3 per 100,000 in 2004 and 1.5 per 100,000 in 2008. While the 2011 edition of the *Global Burden of Armed Violence* is not able to identify any other international sources for homicide rates for Somalia, it does cast doubt on the accuracy of those estimates (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2011, p. 57). Meanwhile, the Somaliland administration's efforts to gather crime data have yielded only tentative figures.<sup>30</sup>

Given that 'hard' data on homicide is lacking, household survey data is an important supplement. Several OCVP surveys conducted in numerous Somali districts between 2009 and 2010 as well as the DDG report cited above provide recent data on security perceptions, firearm availability, and certain patterns of armed violence (OCVP, forthcoming a–d; Hughes and Lynge, 2010). Additional data is provided by a recent public opinion survey conducted by the International Republican Institute in Hargeisa (IRI, 2011). While the data does not allow for an in-depth assess-



A signpost declares a 'gun-free space' on the road approaching Burao, July 2007. © Andrew McConnell/Panos Pictures

**Table 5.1 Firearm availability and perceptions of safety in Somaliland and Somalia, 2009-10**

	Burao (Somaliland)	Las Anod (Somaliland)	Galkayo (Puntland)		Mogadishu (South-central Somalia)
Perceived improvements in the security situation	Become safer: men: 100%, women: 99% (n=676) <sup>31</sup>	Become safer: men: 75%, women: 68% (n=788) <sup>32</sup>	Become safer: men: 67%, women: 57% (n=662) <sup>33</sup>		Become safer: men: 17%, women: 26% (n=1,382) <sup>34</sup>
Perceived firearm availability trends	More: 73% Same: 16% Fewer: 11% (n=620) <sup>35</sup>	More: 22% Same: 39% Fewer: 39% (n=760) <sup>36</sup>	North: More: 2% Same: 8% Fewer: 91%	South: More: 73% Same: 14% Fewer: 13% (n=536) <sup>37</sup>	More: 65% Same: 26% Fewer: 8% (n=1,336) <sup>38</sup>

Source: OCVP (forthcoming a-d)

ment of the security situation in Somaliland,<sup>39</sup> it does provide some insight into the region's recent security dynamics. Although limited to a 'snapshot' of the security situation between 2009 and 2010,<sup>40</sup> OCVP data from different districts in Somalia allows for comparisons across the central Somaliland district of Burao and districts in other parts of Somalia, such as Galkayo and Mogadishu, and the town of Las Anod in eastern Somaliland (see Table 5.1).

In Burao, nearly all survey respondents reported an improvement in perceived safety between 2009 and 2010 (OCVP, forthcoming a, p. 16).<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the survey conducted by the International Republican Institute in Hargeisa finds that 99 per cent of respondents judged their neighbourhood either 'somewhat safe' (4 per cent) or 'very safe' (95 per cent) (IRI, 2011, p. 11). Findings for Somaliland as a whole are similarly positive. According to the DDG report, more than 50 per cent of all Somalilanders surveyed between August 2008 and August 2009 perceived an increase in security over the previous 12 months (Hughes and Lynge, 2010, p. 13).<sup>42</sup> Another survey, undertaken in 2004, finds that 77 per cent of respondents across Somaliland reported a recent improvement in security at that time (Bulhan, 2004, p. 15).

It has been suggested, however, that perceptions of enhanced safety in the 2000s might be exaggerated due to violent episodes in Somaliland during the 1990s—a circumstance that particularly applies to Burao (Hughes and Lynge, 2010, p. 66; OVCP, forthcoming a, p. 16). Yet, if the civil wars between 1992 and 1995 left a deeper imprint on the public consciousness than more recent events, this further indicates that armed violence has been much less pronounced in the 2000s than it was in the 1990s.

Additional survey results suggest that Burao residents experience significantly higher levels of security than people in all other Somali districts surveyed (see Table 5.2). The OCVP asked respondents to report any knowledge of 'homicides'—which here include both conflict deaths and murder<sup>43</sup>—committed in the past 12 months and about their perception of how often guns were used in attacks. In terms of both violent killings and the use of firearms in attacks, Burao fares significantly better than Las Anod,<sup>44</sup> Galkayo, or Mogadishu. While the homicide rate is unlikely to be zero, as suggested by the results of the OCVP survey presented in Table 5.2, it does seem likely that Burao experienced the least number of murders among the districts surveyed.<sup>45</sup> Further, respondents reported that firearms were only rarely used—in an estimated three per cent of all assaults in Burao—while they are reportedly used in the majority of all attacks in Galkayo and Mogadishu (see Table 5.2). These findings suggest a lower proportion of lethal outcomes in violent assaults in Burao.<sup>46</sup>

**Table 5.2 Public perceptions of homicides and firearm use in attacks in Somalia and Somaliland, 2009-10**

	Burao (Somaliland)	Las Anod (Somaliland)	Galkayo (Puntland)	Mogadishu (South-central Somalia)
Perceived homicide rate	0% (n=800) <sup>47</sup>	1% (n=800) <sup>48</sup>	6% (n=701) <sup>49</sup>	4% (n=1,588) <sup>50</sup>
Perceived rate of firearms and explosives used in assaults <sup>51</sup>	3% (n=62) <sup>52</sup>	33% (n=98) <sup>53</sup>	57% (n=72) <sup>54</sup>	83% (n=127) <sup>55</sup>

Source: OCVP (forthcoming a-d)

While data on security perceptions and armed violence, including homicides and conflict deaths, is limited, a preliminary analysis supports two tentative conclusions. First, the available accounts suggest that the number of conflict deaths in Somaliland dropped significantly from the mid-1990s to the 2000s. Second, while the data is not sufficient to conclude that all types of lethal violence have decreased in Somaliland over the past 15 years, security in the district of Burao appears relatively stable compared to other Somali districts. Possible explanations for the drop in conflict deaths and the relative security of Burao are discussed below.

The following sections also attempt to explain Somaliland's distinct security environment by distinguishing among *political*, *criminal*, and *communal* violence in the territory. Although these three forms of violence are often hard to separate in practice, they are analytically distinct. For example, political conflict, understood as an armed challenge to the state, including civil war, generally has a communal dimension in Somaliland's clan-based society, but most local conflicts between sub-clans or lineages do not lead to political mobilization. Likewise, acts of criminal violence such as robbery or murder *can* trigger communal violence between kin groups, but do not necessarily do so. In addition to looking at these distinctions in greater depth, the following sections highlight the security linkages between the national and local levels, including the impact of political conflict resolution on responses to criminal and communal violence. A central focus of this enquiry is the local security situation in Burao.

## POLITICAL VIOLENCE

The gradual decline in large-scale political violence is probably the single most important factor in perceived improvements in Somaliland's security. Shortly after its declaration of independence, Somaliland experienced several episodes of large-scale, politically motivated violence. Not unlike in south-central Somalia, these outbursts of civil strife claimed the lives of thousands of people<sup>56</sup> and generated huge numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons.<sup>57</sup> Some 15 years later, political violence is not only far less intense than in the mid-1990s, but it also poses less of a threat to the Somaliland state. The following sections explore some of the factors that contributed to this decline in political violence.

### The post-war years

Numerous factors appear to account for the decline in large-scale political violence in post-war Somaliland. One of the key reasons for the divergent trajectories in political violence of Somaliland and south-central Somalia concerns

the way the civil war was concluded in each region. In contrast to south-central Somalia, Somaliland experienced one clear military victor. Following the SNM's triumph over the SNA in north-western Somalia, it held a position of military hegemony within the territory it claimed—though not a monopoly, as other clan militias remained active (Bradbury, 2008, p. 79; Walls, 2009, p. 378). While this hegemony was central in suppressing inter-clan violence, it could not prevent major *intra*-clan conflicts, some of which escalated into civil wars.

Shortly after the two-year transitional government of Abdurahman Ahmed Ali Tuur had been inaugurated, it was challenged by opposing factions from within the SNM. Between 1991 and 1993 a number of armed conflicts broke out and nearly led to the military overthrow of the young administration, taking Somaliland to the brink of all-out civil war (Bradbury, 2008, pp. 87–90, 93). In early 1993, in the town of Boroma, Somaliland politicians and traditional authorities held a reconciliation conference that resulted in an agreement on a National Peace Charter. The charter established principles for the preservation of peace and security in Somaliland, such as the decision to establish integrated national security forces and curtail the military powers of the clan militias.<sup>58</sup> While these decisions were contentious, the charter partly helped Tuur's successor, Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal, to enhance the state's monopoly over the use of force.<sup>59</sup> The adoption of the charter is thus a second key reason for the abatement of political violence over the medium term.

A third important reason for the decline in political violence was Egal's ability to consolidate political power and strengthen the institutions of the Somaliland state as a result of the armed conflicts of the mid-1990s.<sup>60</sup> The conflicts left the Garhajis sub-clan,<sup>61</sup> which had challenged Egal's rule, politically isolated, partly because Egal successfully portrayed them as opponents of a sovereign Somaliland state.<sup>62</sup> The conflicts also led to the discrediting of certain SNM militia leaders who had tried to restrict and control Egal's policies from within the new government. As Egal stripped important SNM figures, such as Col. Ibrahim Abdillahi 'Dhegaweyne' or Muse Behi Abdi, of military and political power, he integrated several political opponents, such as former SNM chairman Mohamed Mohamoud 'Silanyo', into the government, thus gaining some measure of control over them and, moreover, capturing their popular support base. Egal's consolidation of political power went hand in hand with the fortification of the Somaliland state, including the strengthening of its monopoly over the legitimate use of force. Once the state administration had consolidated its military and political hegemony within the territory it claimed, large-scale political violence diminished—and when it resurfaced, with the conflict involving the SSC, it did so on a much smaller scale.

**Egal's consolidation of political power went hand in hand with the fortification of the Somaliland state.**

### **The simmering pot**

Although violent challenges to the state have declined in number and intensity since President Egal consolidated his rule and strengthened state institutions, they have not ended. One recent challenge was the proclamation of the Makhir State of Somalia in Somaliland's north-eastern Sanaag region by members of the Warsangeli clan, who belong to the Harti clan confederation. This aspiring political entity declared in 2007 that it was not part of the Republic of Somaliland but sought an autonomous status within a federal Somalia. The movement did not establish a significant militia, let alone a standing army, and it collapsed roughly one year after its formation.

A more serious challenge to the Somaliland state occurred with the proclamation of the Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn State of Somalia by members of the Dhulbahante clan, who also belong to the Harti clan confederation, in October 2009.<sup>63</sup> In contrast to the Makhir State of Somalia, the SSC managed to establish a military force that has succeeded in challenging state authority in the southern Sool and Cayn regions. Based on the Dhulbahante's political grievances, and fuelled by a long-standing land dispute in the village of Kalshale, the SSC leadership managed to rally some of

their kin to their cause.<sup>64</sup> Largely financed by the Dhulbahante diaspora, the SSC militia clashed with the Somaliland Armed Forces in several ambushes and skirmishes. But as of mid-2011 the rebellion seemed to be drawing to an end after Puntland withdrew political support and the group suffered an internal split, including the defection of its deputy leader to the Somaliland administration (Somaliland Press, 2011d). In June 2011, peace talks between SSC cadres and Somaliland officials in Widhwidh provided further evidence that the conflict might be reaching a peaceful end, although a renewal of violence could not be ruled out (Somaliland Press, 2011c).

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine the causes of the recent conflicts in detail, but it appears they arose largely because some of the conditions that led to the end of major armed conflict in the rest of Somaliland, in the mid-1990s, were not met equally throughout the territory. In particular, national state administration has been largely absent from the easternmost areas; the increasing encroachment of the state challenges the Dhulbahante. A second factor in the recent conflicts is the deep-seated feeling of marginalization that the communities of the Harti clan confederation—the Warsangali and Dhulbahante—have felt from the Somaliland state. Their grievances are nurtured by the almost complete absence of basic services in the regions they inhabit and a lack of Harti representation in the government.



Soldiers of the Somaliland Armed Forces patrol the territory of Las Anod, October 2007. © Sergey Vasilyev/WPN

While the recent developments with the SSC show that bargaining among the political elite and the integration of opposition figures into the Somaliland government are still useful in resolving conflict, the state has also increased its coercive capacities. The Somaliland Armed Forces—made up of an estimated 11,000 soldiers, 6,000 of whom are considered active (Menkhaus, 2010, p. 362)—have prevailed, together with local allies, against forces from Puntland and local clans in the conflict over Las Anod.<sup>65</sup> Armed opposition from marginalized groups has thus become an increasingly unpromising endeavour since the mid-1990s, except for group leaders who profit financially from it.<sup>66</sup>

## CRIMINAL VIOLENCE AND LOCAL (IN)SECURITY

The decline in large-scale political violence over the past two decades allows criminal violence to come into sharper analytical focus as a distinct phenomenon. As noted above, towns in central Somaliland, notably Buraq, have experienced much lower levels of lethal violence than other districts in Somalia. This discrepancy does not appear related to significant differences in firearm availability, which remains relatively high in all parts of Somalia and Somaliland, even though light weapons are also fielded by non-state groups and militias in south-central Somalia. Rather, there are significant variations in the organizational capacities of the perpetrators and in their use of guns in attacks. The absence of organized armed groups and comparatively low levels of criminal violence in western and central Somaliland is mainly due to the relative strength of the Somaliland state and the establishment of a Somaliland Police Force (SLPF). Together with self-organized neighbourhood watch groups, the SLPF has come to play a role in local security provision (see Box 5.3). The following section examines the main perpetrators of criminal violence in Somaliland today, along with the state and non-state actors seeking to combat it.

**Organized armed groups carried out only about three per cent of all attacks.**

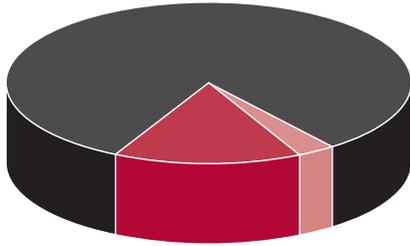
### Perpetrators of criminal violence

In Somaliland's history, criminal violence has frequently been perpetrated by gangs such as the *deydey* groups that robbed civilians in the years following the declaration of independence (Bradbury, 2008, p. 88). Today criminal youth groups are still regarded as threats to local security, committing offences that range from petty crimes, such as mobile phone snatching, to serious assaults, including rape. Yet, as explained below, criminal violence in contemporary Somaliland appears to owe little to gang activity.

Young men appear to be the main perpetrators of criminal violence in urban centres of contemporary Somaliland.<sup>67</sup> The local District Safety Committee (DSC) in Buraq considers young criminals a product of rural–urban migration, unemployment, and *qaat*<sup>68</sup> addiction (OCVP, forthcoming a, p. 24).<sup>69</sup> While criminal youths come from a wide variety of backgrounds, they are often school drop-outs with no stable income and poor employment prospects. With *qaat* addiction having become a serious and widespread socio-economic problem in Somaliland (Hansen, 2009), these youths frequently revert to muggings and robberies as a means to finance their *qaat* consumption, reportedly under the umbrella of small gangs in many cases.<sup>70</sup> It has also been suggested that Somaliland youths are prone to mobilization into clan militias in case of communal conflict, and that they represent a pool of easy recruits for other armed groups (OCVP, forthcoming a, p. 24).

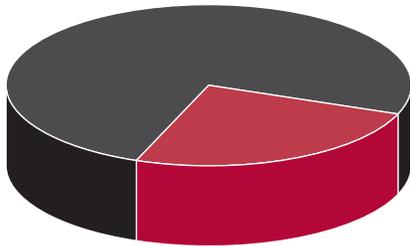
However, there is little evidence that gangs or organized groups are the primary perpetrators of youth violence. According to the OCVP district report for Buraq, assaults carried out by organized armed groups represent only about three per cent of all attacks and no more than 15 per cent when clan groups are included. In contrast, about 39 per cent of violent attacks are conducted by individuals (OCVP, forthcoming a, p. 22).

Figure 5.1 **Perpetrators of violent attacks in districts in Somalia and Somaliland, 2009-10**



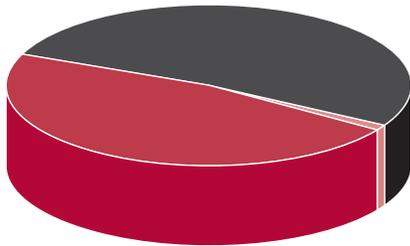
**BURAO**

■ Attacks by armed groups (15) ■ Attacks by individual and intimate actors (82) ■ Unclear (3)



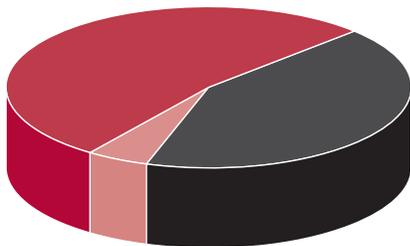
**LAS ANOD**

■ Attacks by armed groups (25) ■ Attacks by individual and intimate actors (75) ■ Unclear (0)



**GALKAYO**

■ Attacks by armed groups (47) ■ Attacks by individual and intimate actors (52) ■ Unclear (1)



**MOGADISHU**

■ Attacks by armed groups (53) ■ Attacks by individual and intimate actors (42) ■ Unclear (5)

Sources: OCVF (forthcoming a-d)<sup>71</sup>

One way to evaluate the relative significance of violence by armed actors in Burao, including by gangs and clan groups, is to draw comparisons with other districts in Somalia using OCVF data. If the various organized armed actors are aggregated into one category ('armed groups') and distinguished from individual criminals, friends, relatives, and neighbours ('individual and intimate actors'), the difference between Burao and districts in Puntland and south-central Somalia becomes apparent (see Figure 5.1).

While the vast majority of all attacks in the Somaliland towns of Burao and, for that matter, Las Anod are perpetrated by criminal individuals or persons close to the victim, in Galkayo almost half and in Mogadishu just over half of all assaults are conducted by armed groups. Given Somaliland's recent history of state consolidation and militia demobilization, the relatively low rate of attacks by armed groups is not surprising.<sup>72</sup>



The relative contribution of armed groups to violence correlates with the evidence presented earlier about firearm use. The greater the incidence of attacks by armed groups, the more often firearms are reportedly used in attacks. In Burao, where armed groups appear to commit a relatively limited number of attacks, residents rarely report the use of firearms in attacks. Thus, even though weapons are abundantly present, virtually no non-state groups or individuals use them in attacks, in stark contrast to other districts in Somalia (see Figure 5.2).<sup>73</sup>

Against this background, it appears as though gang violence in Somaliland were exaggerated. DDG's research suggests as much, emphasizing that:

*traditional leaders in 15 of the grouped interviews in the 130 communities surveyed [in Somaliland] did say they had a problem with gangs but could not list a single incident occurring in the previous twelve months that had involved them* (Hughes and Lynge, 2010, p. 22).

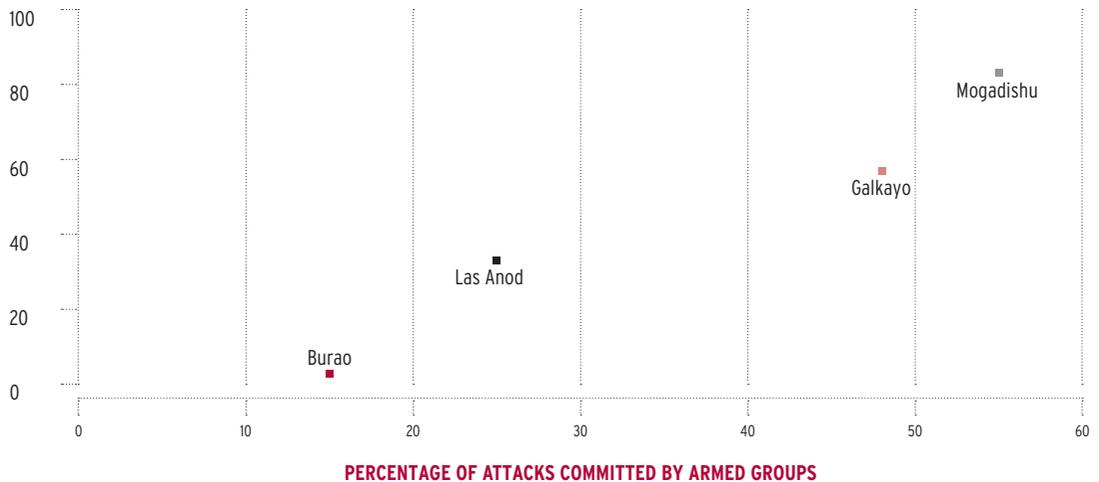
These comparisons should not lead us to underestimate the gravity of criminal violence in Burao. Assaults against women, especially, constitute a serious form of criminal violence in the city and across Somaliland. In fact, women typically report that domestic violence, sexual abuse, and rape are their chief security concerns.<sup>74</sup> According to focus group interviews conducted by the OCVP, sexual assaults take place most often 'in poorly lit areas such as river



Female police officers stand in front of the MaanSoor Hotel, Hargeisa, April 2010. © Dominik Balthasar

Figure 5.2 **Percentage of attacks committed by armed groups and of attacks in which firearms were used, Somalia, 2009–10**

**PERCENTAGE OF ATTACKS COMMITTED WITH FIREARMS**



Source: OCVP (forthcoming a-d)<sup>75</sup>

banks and dark alleys' (OCVP, forthcoming a, p. 25). Cases of rape with known perpetrators are often resolved between the elders of the respective families or sub-clans, but women's organizations complain that these agreements are generally to the victims' disadvantage, do not invoke the penal code, and sometimes force a victim to marry her rapist.<sup>76</sup> This practice has, in fact, contributed to a culture of impunity around rape, which some men appear to commit when they cannot afford the costs of marriage.<sup>77</sup>

For these reasons, rape victims tend to turn to the police rather than traditional authorities to report an assault,<sup>78</sup> even though overall satisfaction with police responses to reports of sexual violence is mixed.<sup>79</sup> A Somaliland-based women's organization says the police is not always effective in resolving rape cases but does ask the police, not family or clan elders, to take responsibility for protecting women.<sup>80</sup> Recently, female police officers have been trained to encourage rape victims to report their cases and help to prosecute perpetrators more successfully.

Property crimes, especially theft and burglaries, are another concern shared by many social groups in Burao. In more than a third of property crime cases recorded by the OCVP, victims reported being injured. Like sexual assaults, property crimes are commonly committed at night in poorly lit areas of town.<sup>81</sup> The next section discusses local responses to insecurity on the streets of Burao.

### **Local security providers**

In the wake of its consolidation process and in order to counter criminal activities and provide local safety, the Somaliland state has established a national police force (see Box 5.3). Due to limited state resources, however, other security actors have come to the forefront in the urban centres of central Somaliland, a phenomenon likewise observed in many African states, such as Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda (Marks and Bonnin, 2010; Baker, 2002; 2008, pp. 101–30). In the near absence of a state, alternative security providers have also become prominent in south-central Somalia (Menkhaus, 2007). However, as Baker shows, the extent to which non-state groups are authorized by

or cooperate with the state varies from case to case. In Uganda, for example, close collaboration developed largely under state supervision (Baker, 2008, pp. 129–30). Yet in south-eastern Nigeria, the vigilantes known as the Bakassi Boys became a genuine alternative to the police and regularly evaded attempts by the state to gain control over their activities (Baker, 2002).

In Somaliland, attempts by businesspeople and local communities to provide private protection in Hargeisa and Burao have not led to a competition with state security services. Instead, various patterns of cooperation have emerged, with the state generally assuming a dominant role despite its institutional weakness.

Burglaries and thefts have been identified as the most common forms of property crimes committed in Burao.<sup>82</sup> Large companies have begun to rely on non-state security actors, while also seeking a close relationship with the nascent state authorities. Two cases in point are Dahabshiil, Somaliland's largest money transfer company, and Omar, one of the biggest importers in Somaliland, which delivers imported goods to an increasing number of towns across Somaliland. Dahabshiil's branch in Burao is protected by police forces during the day and private guards at night. Of the 24 armed guards who secure the bank building, nine are local police who earn an extra USD 100 to 150 per month for their service to the company, a significant surplus to their regular monthly salary of USD 60 (see Box 5.3).<sup>83</sup> According to the chief salesman of Omar in Burao, the security situation in Somaliland has dramatically improved since 2000 and now allows the company to reach markets in more remote areas of the territory. Security on the roads and at the company's branches is critical for the business and Omar regularly donates money to Somaliland's police and military to sustain their efforts.<sup>84</sup>

**NWGs are mostly providers of, rather than threats to, security.**

In recent years, Somaliland has also seen the evolution of neighbourhood watch groups (NWGs) in major cities such as Hargeisa and Burao; these have largely formed as a means of protecting small businesses and private households against burglaries and theft. Based on sub-clan lineages, they are added testimony to the fact that the state's police force is still not wholly effective.<sup>85</sup> Although NWGs in Somaliland are non-state actors, they hardly qualify as 'armed groups'; their members do not typically carry guns but are more frequently equipped with sticks and knives.<sup>86</sup> At night they patrol their communities as well as public marketplaces, where small-scale businesspeople store their goods.<sup>87</sup> Usually standing guard in groups of three to five persons, some NWGs have an overall strength of up to 50 people, divided up and deployed to different streets and areas. Some of the larger groups have clear internal command structures with a chairman, a deputy chairman, and sub-commanders for distinct units.<sup>88</sup> Through a process of confrontation and negotiation between rival NWGs, different groups often divide up the areas they patrol.<sup>89</sup>

Interestingly, some of these groups refer to other NWGs as 'criminal gangs' while seeing themselves as watch groups,<sup>90</sup> an indication of the ambiguous roles some of these groups have taken on. In fact, several local researchers and civil society organizations report that NWGs often include former thieves who have found a more stable income by protecting households and businesses against other thieves.<sup>91</sup> As the NWGs usually charge individual households SOS 500 to 1,000 per night (about USD 5 per month),<sup>92</sup> the financial interest in such work appears clear. They have also attacked non-paying households to coerce them into paying the protection fee.<sup>93</sup> Despite such questionable aspects, many local researchers and NGOs emphasize that NWGs are mostly providers of, rather than threats to, security.

One reflection of NWGs' protective role is that many of them now appear to collaborate closely with the SLPF. Some of the groups include serving police officers, who participate in the patrols or can be reached during the night. Further, the known groups in Burao and Hargeisa are under police supervision;<sup>94</sup> the local police stations in Burao have lists of official NWGs, their members, control areas, and equipment.<sup>95</sup> The NWGs also use their ties to the police to involve them quickly in cases of violent encounters with criminals.<sup>96</sup> In these ways the distinctions between

### Box 5.3 The Somaliland Police Force

When the newly formed Republic of Somaliland experienced a significant deterioration in security in the immediate post-conflict era, state authority was too weak and political power too contested to allow for the creation of a national police force. Consequently, the major clans and their militias sporadically formed nominal 'police units' in Boroma, Gabiley, Hargeisa, and elsewhere in order to ensure public safety (Bradbury, 2008, p. 97).<sup>97</sup> While this decentralized approach to security provision was approved in the National Peace Charter of 1993, regional administrations turned out to be unable or unwilling to raise sufficient revenue to finance their security forces. Hence, President Egal negotiated the establishment of a national and centrally controlled police force (Somaliland, 1994).

The establishment of the SLPF on 2 November 1993 not only laid the foundation for the creation of a national security apparatus, but also advanced demobilization and disarmament. The SLPF officers were largely recruited from the SNM militia (WSP, 1999, p. 70),<sup>98</sup> which represented the most powerful and potentially threatening group of fighters. Every new recruit was required to use his own gun in the service—an entry condition that contributed to the country's DDR efforts (Bulhan, 2004, p. 32); this situation still holds nearly two decades later.<sup>99</sup> This entry requirement is partly responsible for the wide array of small arms in the police arsenal (AK-47s, G3s, and M16s, among many others).

At the same time, the clan composition of the SLPF is relatively skewed. While they are recruited from every clan and region, police officers overwhelmingly hail from the Isaaq clan of the Hargeisa region.<sup>100</sup> The national police force under President Tuur counted 320 members in 1992, but its ranks swelled to some 4,000 by the mid-1990s, 4,300 by 2005,<sup>101</sup> and roughly 6,000 members in recent years.<sup>102</sup> About 1,800 police officers have graduated from the police academy in Mandera (UNDP, 2011).

The SLPF's effectiveness does not seem to have improved with its growth. According to UNDP, which has made a significant contribution to the expansion of the SLPF (Foineau, 2006), the police force is '[h]ampered by old and dysfunctional infrastructure, equipment and poor training and deployment' and faces 'challenges in winning respect from the citizenry' (UNDP, 2010). An estimated 30 to 40 per cent of the police force is illiterate.<sup>103</sup> Although salaries have increased over time from an average of USD 10 per month in the early 2000s (Foineau, 2006) to some USD 60 by the end of that decade,<sup>104</sup> they have been insufficient to allow for the transfer of police officers to posts away from their families.

The uneven presence of the police throughout the territory and lack of enforcement capacity has meant that the population continues to conduct its own policing.<sup>105</sup> As a high-ranking official of the regional administration announced at a local meeting: 'We have the responsibility of protecting you, but we cannot do it without you—it is you [who] protect yourselves.'<sup>106</sup>





A policeman on patrol in Hargeisa, October 2007. © Sergey Vasilyev/WPN

criminal activity and publicly sanctioned protection business have become more clear-cut. The close cooperation between local watch groups and the police also helps explain the NWGs' low level of armament. While the police do not have the means to protect urban areas from theft, burglaries, and violent robberies at night, and therefore 'delegate' this service to private security groups, the NWGs, in turn, cannot enforce the law and rely on the police if they encounter criminal gangs or witness a serious crime such as murder. Police and NWGs thus complement each other in the provision of local security.

Overall, this arrangement is providing a viable, if still fragile, security architecture in the urban centres of Somaliland. With the SLPF now fairly well established in western and central Somaliland's cities, serious crimes occurring there are frequently punished and prison sentences enforced.<sup>107</sup> In fact, the contemporary SLPF is the most effective police force Somaliland has seen in the last two decades. Local NWGs fill in where SLPF capacities are exceeded, but, for the most part, the police also regulate and control their protection activities. Another indirect effect of this consolidation of state authority is that organized armed groups that contest the state have virtually disappeared from Burao.

Burao still struggles with common forms of criminal violence, whether committed by individuals or loosely organized gangs. But although impoverished youths remain a potential pool for the mobilization of militias, the kind of systematic violence committed by organized armed groups is absent. In contrast to most other parts of Somalia, Somaliland's state-private partnership has fostered a peaceful environment in most towns. Yet the arrangement remains dependent on political compromises underlying the Somaliland state. Indeed, the potential for deep social divides and the quick mobilization of large militias remains high, as discussed in the next section.

**Communal disputes  
pose a challenge to  
peace and security  
in Somaliland.**

## COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

While political conflict has been a defining characteristic of Somaliland's violent process of state building, another important driver of conflict involves disputes over access to and ownership of land and real estate. According to a study undertaken by the Somaliland Academy for Peace and Development, land disputes have constituted an important source of violent conflict in Somaliland over the past two decades (APD, 2007, p. 3). Although these disputes generally occur at the local level, they can escalate into wider, inter-clan conflicts. As discussed above, communal and political violence were deeply interwoven during the civil wars of the 1990s. Although widespread collective violence has not occurred since then, violent confrontations in Kalshale and associated SSC activity in recent years have shown that communal disputes can still lead to political conflict. Consequently, communal disputes pose a challenge to peace and security in Somaliland, particularly as most of them have not yet been resolved decisively (APD, 2009, pp. 27–30).

### Land disputes in a clan-based society

Just as Somaliland remains equipped with the 'hardware' (weapons) for warfare, it has also maintained its most powerful 'software' for the mobilization of armed groups—a social system based on clans. Quite in contrast to earlier Somali governments, the self-styled republic's administration has safeguarded rather than challenged the clan structure. In fact, the clan system and its traditional authorities came to form a key pillar of the young state. For one, the National Peace Charter of 1993 established a *beel* (clan or community) system of governance that recognizes kinship as the 'organizing principle' of Somali society. In principle, governance came to be exercised through a power-sharing coalition of Somaliland's main clans (Bradbury, Abokor, and Yusuf, 2003, pp. 460–61). Furthermore, traditional

authorities came to be institutionalized and empowered in the form of the *Guurti*, the upper house of parliament. And two decades into Somaliland's existence the importance of the clan for society as well as for politics remains unbroken, as exemplified by the presidential elections of 26 June 2010, in which clans often voted nearly unanimously for 'their' candidate.<sup>108</sup>

Particularly volatile sources of communal violence in Somaliland are disputes over land and real estate that are rooted in recent history. Competing claims to water resources as well as unclear and illegal ownership records are one part of the story, the breakdown of traditional user rights and overlapping claims to land following the numerous civil conflicts, another. Overall, increased competition for economic resources in a resource-scarce environment has frequently resulted in communal conflicts. Examples include disputes in the environs of Gabiley (Awdal) and Erigavo (Sanaag), where members of the militarily victorious Isaaq clan laid claim to areas and assets that had formerly been controlled by other communities. The opposing claims have been violently contested over the course of the past two decades, during which whole sub-clans were mobilized to defend assets.

The abovementioned Kalshale conflict began as a land dispute, when members of the Garhajis–Habar Yonis sub-clan built a new water point in an area claimed by local Harti–Dhulbahante. About 50–100 individuals lost their lives in violent clashes between the sub-clans, while the SSC tried to recruit disaffected Dhulbahante against the intervening Somaliland army (OCVP, forthcoming e; UNSC, 2011, p. 130). Land disputes over water points and grazing lands, as well as cycles of revenge killings, have the potential to escalate. Thus, while the political integration of major (sub-) clans into the Somaliland state has prevented larger political conflict over the past 15 years, the basic ingredients for communal violence are still present and can reinforce clan identities and be used to mobilize affiliated militia. Further, critics of the *Guurti* allege that the body has lost its reputation for neutrality, hence leaving the polity with 'no strong cross-cutting institution in Somaliland that can hold a crisis',<sup>109</sup> such observations act as a reminder that the strength of the Somaliland state itself still depends on inter-clan harmony. Communal tensions therefore remain a serious potential threat to safety and security in Somaliland.

Increased competition for economic resources has frequently resulted in communal conflicts.

### **Resolving communal conflict? From traditional mediation to state interventions**

Particularly during the early years of the Somaliland Republic, when its central administration and law enforcement capacity were still very weak, the resolution of land conflicts was left to local and largely traditional authorities. Although Somaliland society's traditional and 'bottom-up' mechanisms of conflict resolution and reconciliation have frequently been praised, this system has not been able to bring about a durable settlement of many of these conflicts (APD, 2007, p. 3).<sup>110</sup>

Central state authorities have become increasingly involved in the resolution of these conflicts. In early 2011, for example, the Somaliland government announced the start of negotiations aimed at resolving a long-lasting land dispute between the Dir and Isaaq sub-clans in Ceel Bardaleh in western Somaliland. For this land dispute to be settled, President Ahmed Mahamoud 'Silanyo' appointed a mediation committee consisting of the ministers of interior, justice, foreign affairs, defence, and aviation (Waaheen Media Group, 2011). The involvement of state authorities has not yet brought about a solution to the conflict, partly because not a single important representative of the Dhulbahante clan participated in the meeting.<sup>111</sup>

In Burao, local authorities emphasize the mitigating impact of police interventions on cycles of revenge killings within the city as one of their major achievements.<sup>112</sup> According to Burao's police commander, the SLPF arrest two to three persons per month for a serious crime in the district, thereby preventing members of the victim's family from

taking revenge.<sup>113</sup> However, the grip of the police remains limited. The OCVP finds that the majority of men would, in the event of being attacked, still turn to their community elders rather than the police (OCVP, forthcoming a, p. 40). In the end, police interventions to prevent revenge killings remain dependent on the collaboration of the local clans.<sup>114</sup> They continue to be somewhat less successful in rural areas, where the SLPF's presence is more limited.<sup>115</sup>

## CONCLUSION

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This chapter has explored the decrease in widespread political armed violence and improvements in security in Somaliland since the mid-1990s. It argues that, while DDR efforts and traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution have had a positive impact, they are not the most important factors. First, small arms, especially Kalashnikov-pattern assault rifles, remain ubiquitous in Somaliland society. Second, traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution, reconciliation, and governance have, in fact, been eclipsed by the institutions of the Somaliland state in responding to insecurity and violence.

Similarly, the effectiveness of Somaliland's collaborative security arrangement results from the state's increasing power. Only once the state had achieved an end to political conflict could it compel local groups to participate in a collaborative form of policing; that form has since brought important security gains to the population—most notably in urban areas such as Burao and Hargeisa. While local security is often provided by private NWGs, the dominant role of the police appears to have curbed the predatory behaviour documented in other contexts.

This chapter has thus emphasized the importance of the central administration's establishment of politico-military hegemony in reducing large-scale political violence and setting the scene for effective policing of criminal violence in Somaliland. This hegemony has been built on the creation of state institutions that have increasingly monopolized control over gunmen and heavy weapons, sidelined political competitors, and incorporated other political elites from most of the clan and sub-clan groups. Recently, the strength of the armed forces has also allowed the state to coerce some opponents and deter others. On the basis of political bargains, Somaliland has achieved significant security gains over the past 20 years. Yet its ability to maintain those gains appears to rest, to a large extent, on the continued integration of all relevant clan groups into the state. ■

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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DDG	Danish Demining Group
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DSC	District Safety Committee
NWG	Neighbourhood watch group
OCVP	Observatory of Conflict and Violence Prevention
SNA	Somali National Army
SNM	Somali National Movement
SLPF	Somaliland Police Force
SSC	Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn
SOS	Somali shilling
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNITA	United Togdheer Association

## ENDNOTES

- 1 See also ICG (2003, p. 6) and World Bank (2005, p. 19).
- 2 Bradbury (2008, p. 50); Compagnon (1993, p. 19); Helling (2010); Hoehne (2011); Huliaras (2002, p. 174); Spears (2004, p. 185).
- 3 *Deydey* is the common name for gangs that made a living through robbery and extortion (Bradbury, 2008, p. 88).
- 4 Author interview with member of SOOYAAL, the association for SNM war veterans, Hargeisa, 25 July 2008.
- 5 See NDC (1994); Brickhill (1994); Nyathi (1995).
- 6 An analysis of the DDR processes undertaken by President Egal—at the heart of which lay shrewd political manoeuvres—is beyond the scope of this study.
- 7 See also DDG (2007).
- 8 The most notable exception is the Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn rebel group in the area of Buuhoodle. In addition, a small number of private households appear to dispose of medium or heavy machine guns (Hughes and Lynge, 2010, p. 56).
- 9 This figure applies to the whole Togdheer region, of which Burao is the biggest city and regional capital (Hughes and Lynge, 2010, p. 54).
- 10 Author interviews with arms brokers, Burao, 21 June 2011, and correspondence with Jonah Leff, 22 November 2011. The price ranges for AK-47s quoted here echo those of the Hargeisa arms market (Somalia Report, 2011).
- 11 Author interview with an official of Somaliland's National Demobilization Commission, Hargeisa, 20 October 2011.
- 12 Author interview with a member of the Academy for Peace and Development, Hargeisa, 22 July 2008.
- 13 See, for example, Compagnon (1998, p. 79) and Cliffe (1999, p. 91).
- 14 See UCDP (2011) and SIPRI (2007; 2008; 2009). While the Uppsala Conflict Data Program does report on different actors and conflicts within one country, the data regarding northern Somalia or Somaliland is restricted to the armed confrontation between the SNM and the SNA until 1991, after which no armed conflict in Somaliland is reported (UCDP, 2011). The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's list of major armed conflicts also fails to mention the massive outburst of political violence that took place in Somaliland at that time; see SIPRI (1995, p. 34; 1996, p. 29).
- 15 See WHO (n.d.).
- 16 Unless noted otherwise, information in this box is drawn from Leff (2011).
- 17 This price level was reported prior to an offensive of the African Union Mission in Somalia that began on 22 February 2011. In early March that year, the price rose to USD 0.40 per round (UNSC, 2011, p. 42).
- 18 Interview by Jonah Leff with confidential sources close to the arms trade in Mogadishu, Somalia, February 2011.
- 19 Interview by Jonah Leff with an arms dealer, Hargeisa, 16 October 2010.
- 20 Interview by Jonah Leff with the chief of Military Intelligence of Somaliland, Hargeisa, Somaliland, 11 May 2011.
- 21 Interview by Jonah Leff with an arms dealer, Hargeisa, 16 October 2010, and confidential interviews with sources close to the arms trade, October 2011.
- 22 Prior to this, firearm ownership, sale, and trade were regulated by the Public Order Law of 1963, enacted by the Mogadishu-based government.
- 23 Correspondence between Jonah Leff and a UNDP official, 18 October 2011.
- 24 Confidential interviews by Jonah Leff with sources close to the arms trade, October 2011.
- 25 See Geneva Declaration Secretariat (2011, p. 57).
- 26 See UCDP (2011) and SIPRI (1995, p. 34; 1996, p. 29; 2007, pp. 72–78; 2008, p. 80; 2009, pp. 46–52).
- 27 The population of Somaliland is estimated to be between 2 and 3.5 million people (UNOCHA Somalia, 2005; Somaliland Embassy, n.d.). Based on a population estimate of three million people, the annual average conflict-related death toll of 750 people leads to an annual conflict death rate of 25 per 100,000.
- 28 Press-reported casualties are lower than the estimate of 100 deaths per year since 2007. See Hoehne (2007, p. 1) and Somaliland Press (2010; 2011a; 2011b; n.d.).
- 29 Based on a population estimate of three million people, the annual average of 100 deaths means an annual conflict death rate of 3.33 per 100,000.
- 30 The Somaliland Police Force (SLPF) in Hargeisa registers on average two murders per year since 2003 for Togdheer region, whose capital is Burao. It is unclear whether this includes manslaughter. The Burao police record two to three serious crimes, including murder, each month in Burao (author interview with the police commander of Burao, Burao, 21 June 2011).
- 31 OCVF (forthcoming a, p. 16). Note that responses for 'became a little safer' and 'became a lot safer', as well as for 'became a little unsafe' and 'became very unsafe', were combined in each case. On average, each household was composed of 7.8 people: 4.1 male and 3.7 female (OCVP, forthcoming a, p. 7). In Table 5.1, all figures are rounded to the nearest per cent point.
- 32 Of the respondents, 498 were women and 288 were men (OCVP, forthcoming c, p. 18).
- 33 Of the respondents, 357 were women and 305 were men (OCVP, forthcoming b, pp. 21–22).
- 34 Of the respondents, 774 were women and 608 were men (OCVP, forthcoming d, p. 26).
- 35 OCVF (forthcoming a, p. 33).
- 36 OCVF (forthcoming c, p. 37).
- 37 The distribution of respondents from North and South Galkayo is not specified in the survey (OCVP, forthcoming c, p. 48).
- 38 OCVF (forthcoming d, p. 46).
- 39 Differing survey methodologies and a lack of time series data prevent a more thorough analysis. Despite these and other limitations, the surveys constitute the best data source currently available.

- 40 See OCVP (forthcoming a, p. 4).
- 41 While 98.0 per cent of the respondents said that safety had increased 'slightly', 0.8 per cent reported that they perceived a 'strong' increase in safety (OCVP, forthcoming a, p. 16).
- 42 At the same time, less than three per cent of the population surveyed proclaimed a worsening of the security situation (Hughes and Lynge, 2010, p. 13).
- 43 For the purpose of its victimization survey, the OCVP defined 'homicide' as 'murder or a death as a result of violence or crime' (OCVP, forthcoming b, p. 25).
- 44 Although the district of Las Anod that borders Puntland has been part of Somaliland since the violent takeover in 2007, it is something of an exception. In contrast to districts in western and central Somaliland, Las Anod experienced armed confrontations during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in particular between Somaliland, Puntland, and SSC militia forces, as discussed below.
- 45 The head of the SLPF in Burao claims that there are two to three serious crimes, including homicide, per month (author interview with head of SLPF Burao, Burao, 21 June 2011).
- 46 Cukier and Sidel (2006, p. 53) highlight the relative lethality of firearms compared to other weapons in attacks.
- 47 OCVP (forthcoming a, pp. 7, 19).
- 48 OCVP (forthcoming c, pp. 7, 24).
- 49 OCVP (forthcoming b, pp. 7, 25).
- 50 OCVP (forthcoming d, pp. 13, 31).
- 51 This category includes attacks with small arms and light weapons but also bombs, hand grenades, and other explosive devices. No attacks with explosives were reported in Burao, suggesting a different type of conflict than in Las Anod, Galkayo, and Mogadishu, where bombs and other explosive devices are regularly used in attacks; that is, in 5.2%, 10.0%, and 10.2% of cases, respectively.
- 52 OCVP (forthcoming a, p. 21).
- 53 OCVP (forthcoming c, p. 26).
- 54 OCVP (forthcoming b, p. 28).
- 55 OCVP (forthcoming d, p. 34).
- 56 Bradbury estimates that the civil war in Burao left about 4,000 dead, while the one in Berbera resulted in more than 1,000 deaths (Bradbury, 2008, pp. 87, 116).
- 57 According to Bradbury (2008, p. 116), the civil strife in Burao alone resulted in the displacement of some 180,000 people.
- 58 Author interview with a former SNM and National Demobilization Commission official, Hargeisa, 25 July 2008.
- 59 In the aftermath of the war against Barre, there were some 32 heavily armed clan militias in Somaliland; by the end of 1996, only three were left, all from the eastern regions of Sool and Sanaag (author interview with a former SNM and National Demobilization Commission official, Hargeisa, 25 July 2008).
- 60 Author interview with a member of parliament, Hargeisa, 3 July 2011.
- 61 The Garhajis are made up of the Isaaq sub-clans of the Idagalle and Habar Yonis.
- 62 Egal's portrayal of the opposition as being pro-unionist gained credence when their leader, Tuur, and some of his entourage accepted positions in the Mogadishu-based government of Gen. Abdi Farah Aidid.
- 63 See Wars in the World (2012). As an armed group, the SSC had already been formed in November 2007 by the Northern Somali Unionist Movement; see NSUM (n.d.).
- 64 The UN Monitoring Group report characterizes the SSC as an 'opportunistic and arguably mercenary militia force that has successfully appropriated legitimate local grievances and exploited radical diaspora sentiment for its own political and financial gain' (UNSC, 2011, p. 32).
- 65 See UNSC (2011, p. 130) and Hoehne (2007, p. 1).
- 66 Some leaders of the SSC have reportedly profited directly from the financial support the group received (UNSC, 2011, p. 131).
- 67 See OCVP (forthcoming a, p. 23; forthcoming c, p. 25).
- 68 *Catha edulis*, a green leaf rich in an amphetamine-like substance, is chewed as a stimulant and mood enhancer. *Qaat* has a long history of cultivation and customary use throughout the Horn of Africa and the Arabian peninsula, where millions of people use it on a daily basis.
- 69 Author interview with DSC members, Burao, 20 June 2011.
- 70 Author interviews with DSC members, Burao, 20 June 2011, and with the executive manager of the local NGO Havoyoko, Burao, 21 June 2011. See also OCVP (forthcoming a, p. 24).
- 71 See OCVP (forthcoming a, p. 23; forthcoming b, p. 30; forthcoming c, p. 29; forthcoming d, p. 36).
- 72 Regarding the percentage of attacks conducted by armed groups, Las Anod—where the SSC was reportedly active in 2010 (OCVP forthcoming c, pp. 10, 18)—takes a position between Burao, on the one hand, and districts in Puntland and south-central Somalia, on the other hand.
- 73 In Burao, only 3 per cent out of the 15 per cent of attacks by any type of armed group are conducted by what the OCVP refers to as 'organized armed groups'; 12 per cent of the attacks are perpetrated by 'clan groups' (OCVP, forthcoming a, p. 23). In all other districts, the categories of 'organized armed groups', 'foreign troops', and 'government forces' dominate the armed group category. See OCVP (forthcoming b, p. 30; forthcoming c, p. 29; forthcoming d, p. 36).
- 74 OCVP (forthcoming a, p. 19); author interview with members of the United Togdheer Association (UNITA), Burao, 20 June 2011. One exception is Las Anod, where women reported that land disputes were their primary concern (OCVP, forthcoming c, p. 21).
- 75 See OCVP (forthcoming a, pp. 21, 23; forthcoming b, pp. 28, 30; forthcoming c, pp. 26, 29; forthcoming d, pp. 34, 36).
- 76 Author interview with members of UNITA, Burao, 20 June 2011.

- 77 OCVF (forthcoming a, p. 32).
- 78 OCVF (forthcoming a, p. 39).
- 79 OCVF (forthcoming a, pp. 43, 45).
- 80 Author interview with members of UNITA, Burao, 20 June 2011.
- 81 See OCVF (forthcoming a, pp. 27–29).
- 82 See OCVF (forthcoming a, p. 27).
- 83 Author interview with an official of the Dahabshiil branch, Burao, 21 June 2011.
- 84 Author interview with the head of the Burao branch of Omar, Burao, 20 June 2011.
- 85 Author correspondence with Roda Ali, former research director at the OCVF, 5 December 2011.
- 86 Author interview with a journalist of Jamhuuriya, Hargeisa, 18 June 2011.
- 87 Author interview with members of an NWG, Hargeisa, 23 June 2011.
- 88 Author interview with members of an NWG, Hargeisa, 23 June 2011.
- 89 Author interview with members of an NWG, Hargeisa, 23 June 2011.
- 90 Author interview with members of an NWG, Hargeisa, 23 June 2011.
- 91 Author interviews with members of UNITA, Burao, 20 June 2011, and with the OCVF director, Hargeisa, 12 June 2011.
- 92 See, for example, author interview with members of a NWG, Hargeisa, 23 June 2011.
- 93 Author interviews with the OCVF director, Hargeisa, 12 June 2011, and with members of UNITA, Burao, 20 June 2011.
- 94 Author interviews with the police commander of Burao, Burao, 21 June 2011, with the governor of Togdheer region, Burao, 20 June 2011, and with the OCVF director, Hargeisa, 12 June 2011.
- 95 Author interview with the police commander of Burao, Burao, 21 June 2011.
- 96 This is reported by the District Safety Committee in Burao as well as the police commander of the city (author interviews with the DSC members, Burao, 21 June 2011, and with the police commander of Burao, Burao, 21 June 2011). Members of an NWG in Hargeisa also reported on their general arrangement with the local police (author interview with members of an NWG, Hargeisa, 23 June 2011).
- 97 Author interview with an SNM veteran, Hargeisa, 21 July 2011.
- 98 Author interview with a senior official of the SLPF, Hargeisa, 22 March 2009.
- 99 Author interview with the SLPF head of training, Hargeisa, 25 March 2009.
- 100 Author interview with a senior official of the SLPF, Hargeisa, 22 March 2009.
- 101 Author interview with a researcher of the Academy for Peace and Development, Hargeisa, 22 July 2008.
- 102 Author interview with UNDP Rule of Law and Security personnel, Hargeisa, 9 August 2008.
- 103 Author interview with a UNDP official, Hargeisa, 9 August 2008.
- 104 Author interview with the police commander of Burao, Burao, 21 June 2011.
- 105 Author interviews with officials of the SLPF, Hargeisa, 17 March 2009, and with a UNDP official, Hargeisa, 26 July 2011.
- 106 Author interview with a UNDP official, Hargeisa, 26 July 2008.
- 107 The prison system in Somaliland is maintained by a custodial guard of 1,540 men (Menkhaus, 2010, p. 362).
- 108 Author interview with a former journalist from Somaliland, Hargeisa, 4 July 2011.
- 109 Author interview with researcher of the Academy for Peace and Development, Hargeisa, 22 July 2008.
- 110 In the case of Erigavo it is estimated that some 90 per cent of all unrightfully occupied land was returned to the rightful owner by 1996 (author interview with a political analyst, Hargeisa, 4 August 2011).
- 111 Author interview with a member of parliament, Hargeisa, 3 July 2011.
- 112 Author interviews with the mayor of Burao, Burao, 20 June 2011, and with the police commander of Burao, Burao, 21 June 2011.
- 113 Author interview with the police commander of Burao, Burao, 21 June 2011.
- 114 Author interview with members of the DSC, Burao, 20 June 2011.
- 115 While revenge killings are the top concern of local communities in rural areas around Burao, they are much less important for urban populations (OCVP, forthcoming a, p. 19).

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