

‘Assessing the extent to which state collapse in Somalia has led to a shift in the status of Somali Women.’

Word count: 10,000

Submitted by

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Dissertation in Politics and International Relations

BA (Hons) International Relations and Development Studies

2020-21

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Dedication	4
Introduction	5
Methodology	8
Chapter One: State Collapse	10
Chapter two : Conflict and Violence	15
Chapter three : Influence of Religious Conservatism	23
Chapter four: Migration and Gendered Opportunities	28
Conclusion	31
Bibliography	34

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my lovely supervisor Sahar for her continued support and guidance, and I would like to thank my family who have been extremely supportive and loving.

Dedication

For my late grandmother Ceebla Qalbi Noor

And Somali Women everywhere

Introduction

Somalia made international headlines in 1992 when a civil war broke out and the world's media focused on the horrifying images of children and women starving to death. In 1991, the Somali state had formally dissolved, President Siad Barre's military government had been deposed, and fighting had broken out in the capital Mogadishu between warring factions and the state. After 30 years of independence from both the British and Italians, Somalia had proven unsuccessful in functioning as a free state.

Somalia became a free for all, violence, destruction, rape, genocide, torture, and kidnappings were all rampant and rife within the country. It became the face of instability in the west, with a slew of non-governmental organisations vying for control over the country's governance, stability, and security. Thousands of people died in the war, society had changed, lawlessness and crime were rampant, liberties had been curtailed, and Somalia had changed in ways that no one could have ever predicted. The violence disproportionately affected women and children.

Gender identities and positions in Somalia have changed dramatically since the 1960s, inspired by modern political regimes, women's movements, civil war, religious transformations, and migration. Women's social, economic, and political status and role in Somali society had changed dramatically over the last 20 years. The overthrow of Siad Barre's regime in January 1991, as well as the subsequent socio-political unrest, has resulted in tremendous misery, notably among Somali women.

Women's position in Somalia had drastically changed, in all parts of society women were left helpless and vulnerable, the war shook the very foundations of society it left women with no choice but to give up their positions in return for protection. Women suffered the most alongside their children they were exposed to violence of all kinds. Many women were attacked, beaten, sexually assaulted, and violently raped by waging militias and gangs. The violence that women endured has been prevalent throughout much of the early 2000s and can still be seen today.

Prior to the war women enjoyed various rights, during colonial times women were key players in the fight for independence, they were members of the resistance. Women were active members of the pastoral economies, helping to herd livestock and manufacture and build nomadic homes. During Somalia's socialist post-colonial years women held positions in office and were important figures in both public and private sectors, women took up spaces in government, in the army, in business and in healthcare. Somalia's national heroes feature both Hawo Tako and Caraweelo who were fierce warrior women who fought for the preservation of an independent Somalia. Women were praised and adored for their efforts towards providing peace and stability to the nation.

This paper aims to investigate and assess the impact of state collapse on women in Somalia since 1991, evaluating the extent to which a breakdown in state services, legislature and law and order have all impacted the lives of Somali women. This paper examines Somali women's positions before and after the conflict, highlighting the changes women have had to respond to as well as the brutality and systemic abuse they have endured. This paper analyses the role political regimes, conflict, religion, and migration have all impacted the status of Somali women both in and outside of Somalia. This paper examines the gender disparities in the effects of war, drawing on gender-related theories to explain the diminishing status of Somali women.

In order to understand the impact of state collapse on the status of Somali women, this paper is divided into four sections. The first section examines the status of Somali women before and after the collapse of the state and explores the different roles they played in all aspects of society, it touches on colonial and post-colonial administrations attitudes towards women. It explores the shift in the status of women under the Siad Barre government and examines the difficulty that prevailed after the collapse of the Barre government.

The second section focuses on conflict and the Somali civil war, it assesses the impact of anarchy on women and the collapse of the state that once protected them. It explores the gendered nature of war drawing on the roles women played during the war as fighters, victims, and peacemakers. It explores how the conflict made women vulnerable to horrific violence and the physiological impact of widespread sexual violence and rape. This section assesses how the war was the beginning of a harrowing reality for many Somali women.

The third section analyses the impact of religion and its influence on the status of Somali women. It investigates how the religious right has managed to exploit the absence of a state to enforce strict dress codes and rigid gender roles to limit the freedoms of women. It examines the ways in which the religious right has further threatened the status of women in Somalia using religion to assert control over women's bodies and rights.

Finally, the fourth section explores the way migration has offered new opportunities to Somali women, the ability to work and be financially independent with the security of a functioning state. It examines how Somali women's newfound freedom in the west was met with heavy criticism from their male counterparts and their community. This section explores how Somali women have managed to establish a name for themselves as independent women, turning their back on patriarchal customs and assesses the challenges they face as refugees in foreign lands.

Methodology

This study centres on the experiences of Somali women from a gender studies perspective. It draws upon gender theories of war, conflict, and peace to aid our explanation for the changing position of women in Somalia. In our understanding of the impact of state collapse on the status of Somali women, it is essential to draw on women's studies in aspects of conflict, peacebuilding, religion, and migration. The research of this paper consists of secondary resources, written by both Somali women and men and non-Somalis.

The international, political, and economic implications of the Somali conflict have received a lot of attention. However, there have not been many studies specifically focused on women and their positions during the civil war. (Bryden and Steiner 1998) There has also not been a study that has sought to bring together the compilation of factors that are considered the most significant when assessing the status of Somali women in the aftermath of state collapse.

The two major explanations are that, first, Somali studies, in general, are gender-blind; much research has centred on male-dominated power politics, and male prejudices have been all too readily accepted by Somali and non-Somali observers. (Ahmed 1996) Second, even when looking for female positions in culture, economy, and politics, one must take into consideration the fact that women in Somali society are often present 'behind the scenes,' which makes assessing their roles more challenging. This is similar to a lot of other African conflict situations. (Ali 2007)

The specific research questions that guide this study are Q1. How have political regimes impacted Somali women? Q2. How violence in the aftermath of state collapse has affected women? Q3. How religious conservatism has impacted women both physically and mentally? Q4. How has migration made it possible for Somali women to become financially independent and free?

This paper also aims to provide an explanation for these questions answering why these events have influenced the status of Somali women after the state collapse, it draws upon findings from fieldwork studies carried out by Somalis and non-Somali observers. The process of obtaining sources for this study was rather difficult, as a culmination of sources cannot be found within one research paper it requires a rather extensive search for sources for each section. However, as the resources consisted of primarily secondary sources for much of the other sections there was empirical research readily available.

Chapter 1 - State collapse

It is important to provide a background on the situation of women in Somalia preceding 1991, in order to determine what kind of changes civil war and state breakdown have brought about in terms of their position and powers in social, economic, and political affairs. Pre-colonial and colonial Somali society, according to Lidwien Kapteijns, (1994) was highly patriarchal in that the exercise of power and authority was primarily a male domain, as was the accumulation of wealth. Even so, in a society where a woman was related to her father's clan by patrilineal ties but married into another clan according to clan exogamy laws, women's relationships were politically significant. As a result, 'each married woman became a major bearer of social capital in that she embodied the rights and responsibilities of mutual sharing to both cultures.' (Raeymaekers 2008, 217)

Women played an important role in the pastoral economy. Women in the countryside contributed to agriculture by herding sheep and goats, loading camels, harvesting the primary products of the pastoral nomadic economy, including milk, meat, and skins, and weaving the grass-mats that covered the nomadic shelter. Following the development of urban centres in the Somali territories during the colonial era, middle-class women in towns adopted a lifestyle that was much less economically active. They placed a greater emphasis on raising their children and obtaining higher education, many women attended universities in cities all over Somalia. Women from the lower classes were reliant on their own labour and were at the bottom of society. Urban middle-class women, like their country sisters, were overwhelmingly reliant on their male relatives and husbands for political and legal representation as well as economic development.

In the post-colonial era, Somali nationalist leaders, all of whom were men, worked to eliminate customs that they saw as antiquated and "backward." According to Abdurahman Baadiyow, Somali women gained more influence and benefits as a result of the modernist approach, including equality in citizenship, voting rights, equal opportunities in social services and employment, and paid maternity leave. (Abdurahman 2010)

In October 1969, Mohamed Siad Barre and his supporters staged a coup d'état in Somalia, ushering in a new rhetoric aimed at raising women's official status. Somalia became a "socialist" state from then on. Women's increased engagement in society and gender equality was required. The president declared the creation of the Somali Women's Democratic Organization (SWDO) in 1971. It was about mass mobilisation and raising consciousness among Somali women. The socialist Somali state established and looked to Somali women as a powerful support base, mobilising them as *hooyooyinka kacaanka* ("mothers of the revolution"). (Christiane Timmerman, 2000) The president took sweeping measures to promote gender equality in a bid to prove to the international community that Somalia was progressing rather than regressing. On International women's day (March 8, 1972) he formally declared that women "should attain full emancipation in all aspects of life," and that the "revolution guarantees such rights and decrees laws to this effect." (Cindy Horst, 2017,393)

Women's healthcare and education were prioritised by the government. Several laws were enacted to improve the status of women in society. Maternity leave with pay, a strong state focus on girls' education, and free healthcare were all important changes. "Women's access to education, paid jobs, social benefits, and political participation increased during this period" (Hamdi Mohamed, 2006,109) Unemployed young people were given employment at orientation centres, which often served as community centres where women could meet and participate in significant national and social projects. Other notable gender-neutral reforms include free compulsory primary education, the literacy drive of 1974-1975, and the writing of the Somali language, which aided literacy in Somalia. Under Siad Barre, more girls attended schools than ever before. (Iman A Mohamed, 2015) The practise of FGM was also outlawed by the state.

The Family Law of 1975, which went into effect in 1978, was the most significant of these acts. Marriage was described in this law as a "contract between a man and a woman who are equal in rights and duties; its foundation is mutual understanding and respect..." (Touati, 1997, 145) In the eyes of the law and the state, women and men were on equal footing, and women were able to divorce their husbands in court without the assistance of a male guardian or religious scholar.

Despite these progressive laws to improve the status of Somali women, many criticised Siad Barre's state feminism, claiming that women were merely pawns in a power grab.

Irrespective of the nature of its philosophical origins, Siad Barre's state feminism became a source of clan-based and class-based clientage limited to a small group of women, according to Kapteijns. As a result, during the Barre regime, some women were able to ascend the social ladder built by men, but they were not allowed to go very far. (Kapteijns, 1994)

The large number of Somali women and their loyalty towards Mohamed Siad Barre's government until 1991 was all but ground-breaking. Women were occasionally used in propaganda campaigns, but there were no women in the Politbureau; there was only one woman in the Central Committee out of 76 members; there were only two female vice-ministers in the 51-member council of ministers, and only about 6% of the parliament was female. (Bryden and Steiner, 1998) Modernization and socialism, as well as the social and economic transformations associated with urbanisation, were unable to completely eradicate gender inequality and women's subordination in Somalia. Politics and the economy were the two spaces dominated solely by men.

Civil War

Civil wars are filthy affairs. They harm societies, disrupt their very foundations, damage vital structures of understanding and people's sense of truth, wreak havoc on social institutions and infrastructure, and jeopardise identities based on place and community. (Turshen, 1998) This inevitably contributed to the fall of Siad Barre, along with the disintegration of the state and much of the social fabric. (Ingiriis, 2012)

Siad Barre's collapse began in December 1990, when a coalition of three militant resistance groups launched an assault on the capital led by General Mohamed Farah Aideed of the United Somali Congress (USC). (Gardner and El Bushra 2004) With the fall of government institutions, the loose alliance of powers that had ousted Siad Barre disintegrated. The nation was divided into warlord-controlled regions with strongly armed clan militias. General Mohamed Farah Aideed and Ali Mahdi led the USC into two power blocs. Both men, fighting on clan lines for resources, territory, and control of the country, launched a full-fledged war, killing thousands of Somalis and inflicting utter mayhem and destruction.

During the war, women were subjected to physical horrors as aggressive warlords and their militias clashed and preyed on society's most helpless in their clashes for influence and economic capital. (Elmi et al, 2000) It is worth noting that the civil war affected women in urban areas more directly than it did in rural areas, especially in highly populated areas like Mogadishu, Kismayo, and Galkayo. The more systemic effects of state breakdown, such as a lack of stability, jobs, and infrastructure, were felt everywhere; however, women who were socialised in the countryside, which had always been a marginal space where survival was tied to farming or livestock farming, may have been better equipped for these circumstances. Aside from the widespread devastation, the Somali civil war, like many other African conflicts, had distinct gendered dimensions. (Cockburn, 1998)

Aside from the visible effects on women, the war has had some indirect and systemic effects. Matt Bryden and Martina Steiner argue that the war has exacerbated what they term the "feminization of poverty," claiming that "many women live alone or without family to help them, and a large number of women in Somalia are the family's sole breadwinner." As a result, feminization of poverty is on the rise.' (Bryden and Steiner 1998, 39) Women's roles and positions in the economic sphere dramatically changed since the war broke out. In the midst of the armed struggle and turmoil, all state institutions collapsed. This resulted in a significant disruption of economic, social, and political life, as well as an unanticipated humanitarian catastrophe. (Koskenmaki 2004) Many men died, were wounded, lost their minds, or lost interest in their families, or left, essentially relinquishing their position as family breadwinners. The spread of the habit of qaat-chewing among Somali men in Somalia exacerbated the effects of civil war and state collapse. (Ezekiel 2010)

As a result, many Somali women were forced to work in the informal economy to support their families as street vendors selling vegetables, snacks, or household items. Women filled the role of breadwinners as many men simply no longer could live up to the role. (Abdi 2006a) Women do the majority of the trade in many refugee camps, while men are often considered useless; a lack of adequate means of earning a living in the camps leads to most men wasting their days sitting under trees debating politics, while women sell sugar or tomatoes to earn a few shillings for their children, things that men consider beneath them. (Abdi 2006a)

Due to the burden of providing food for their families, many women turned to less profitable types of petty trade, such as firewood and charcoal sales. (Little 2003) Women had lost significant social benefits that were once greatly enjoyed prior to the war, they no longer had access to state welfare, income protection, paid maternity leave and social insurance. Women were having to be providers and look after their children; feminists coined the term 'double burden' to explain the struggle women face when dealing with family life and earning a paid income. (Bratberg, Dahl, Risa 2002) Women were earning lower wages in the informal economy and with no social protection making them more vulnerable. Formal employment was extremely important to women before the war and the sudden move to the informal sector with a lack of state protection was dreadful. As men were being replaced as primary breadwinners women were put under an arduous amount of pressure socially to provide for their families, the constant pressure and worry caused them to have a poorer quality of life.

Chapter 2 - Conflict and Violence

Women's Involvement

Following the outbreak of the war, many women took up arms and became warriors and combatants, fighting alongside men for their clans. As more women actively participated in the conflict, the war posed a threat to conventional gender roles. During the war, women used a variety of tactics contributing to the violent conflict. Women were not just victims they were also perpetrators. There has been growing acknowledgement in recent years of the various roles women can perform during and after violent conflict and war. Women are not solely just victims, in the event of war or fragility, both men and women can become fighters, civilians, victims, rulers and caretakers. Women can become active members of the conflict either directly through warfare, indirectly financing the war or pushing male relatives to commit cruel acts against people. (M. Haeri and N. Puechguirbal 2010)

In the book 'Somalia Between Peace and War,' Bryden and Steiner (1998) feature a young Somali woman who describes her reason for fighting in the conflict and recounts her experiences during the early 1990s conflicts in the south. She said that she joined the battle in the hopes of seeking "justice and freedom," and that her rage was fuelled by her contempt for Siad Barre's dictatorial regime, where she had been treated unfairly. She joined the United Somali Congress (USC), a coalition of anti-government rebels, and helped to depose former President Siad Barre, as well as fighting American forces battling warlords in Mogadishu. She explains how she fought even when pregnant, despite being wounded seven times.

Despite the fact that the number of women participating in physical combat was limited, many women contributed in other ways. The majority of women performed household duties for the militia, such as cooking and cleaning for them. Women also persuaded their male relatives to protect their clan's status in future political arrangements. (Gardner and

Bushra 2004) Virgina Luling's fieldwork thesis in the 1990s debunked the idea that women are literally a "force of peace." She pointed out that they are no less partisan than men and argued that 'women have egged their menfolk on their traditional role in Somali warfare'. Women's acts had negative repercussions, placing thousands of people in danger, and perpetuating the belief that violence was the only choice. (Virgina Luling 1997)

Oral communication through poetry has an extremely important place in Somali society giving it the title 'nation of poets. Poets are adored, and praised, both men and women. (B. W. Andrzejewski, I. M. Lewis 1964) Kapteijns (2010) analysed Somali poetry and its ability to mediate conflicts, she states 'virulent and incendiary poetry, often produced in the heat of the moment, in which men and women praise their own families/clans, vilify enemy clans, and jeer at the violence and abuse inflicted upon the latter.' A video clip shot in Kismayo, southern Somalia, in the early 1990s at the height of the clan wars, exemplifies this. A Somali poetess named Halima Sofe is seen in this video exhorting two infamous warlords, General Mohamed Said Morgan and General Gabyow, to fight for the clan's honour. ¹

Somali women engaging as active motivators or fighters in times of war has long been tradition, in spite of the stereotypical idea of women as wives and mothers in patriarchal Somali society, that are confined to carrying out domestic work, tending to sheep and caring for children, and otherwise being passive individuals. One of Somalia's most notable heroines is Hawo Tako named a courageous female warrior who stood up against the colonial rulers. (Ingriis 2004) Despite this, many Somali women today refuse to recognise their share of blame for the war. While the Somali fighting was gendered in nature, and women and children made up a significant portion of the casualties of war, Somali women were just as instrumental in promoting the Somali tragedy as men. (Bryden Steiner 1998)

War crimes against women and girls

Despite women's involvement in the war, women and children suffered at a much higher rate, women, and girls, in particular, were subjected to sexual violence at unprecedented rates. The systemic use of rape and sexual violence during war is nothing new, from the ancient Romans to the Vietnam war, the use of rape and sexual violence on women and girls

¹ Between min 2:45 and 5:50, Halima recites a poem for General Morgan and militiamen to fight against the armies of the United Somali Congress.

has been a means to defeat the enemy. (Tamara L. Tompkins 1995) In the cases of Bosnia and Rwanda, the United Nations Security Council established an international war crimes tribunal and listed rape as a crime against humanity and that the tribunal is authorised to prosecute offenders. On the 23rd of February 2001, three Bosnian Serbs were sentenced to 28 years for the atrocious sexual violence and rape acts that they committed against Muslim women. In contrast, however, the world is unaware of the abuse of thousands of Somali women and girls during the country's civil war between 1991 and 1994, which was still going on a decade later in some parts of the country. (African rights 1995)

Individuals and armed groups committed atrocities against women and girls in Somalia between 1991 and 1992, which were unparalleled in Somali history. Women and girls suffer from violent conflict at a disproportionate rate, they suffer from by-products of war and are victims of rape and sexual violence. Rape and sexual violence have been recognised as instruments of war that are designed to destroy the social fabric of communities and society and weaken the family structure. Fragility as a result of conflict impacts many groups in society including women, there is a lack of justice and physical security. (Ward, J. and Marsh, M. 2006) Feuding and disputes were historically bounded by codes and social norms in Somali pastoral society. (Mark Bradbury 1998) Women and children were safe from attack, as were the elderly and sick. That is not to suggest that women were never targeted, but there were laws in place for retaliation and compensation if they ever were. However as inter-clan war broke out from 1991 onwards these traditional laws were disregarded and had little impact and women, children and civilians were targeted with impunity by warring factions.

The 'rape camps', notably in Mogadishu in the early 1990s were among the worst of the atrocities. Many women were kidnapped and imprisoned in villas, where they were repeatedly raped and subjected to other types of sexual assault. (Hussein M. Adam & Richard Ford 1997) Although all women were at risk, rapists sought to target female members of opposing clans or those with poor clan affiliations and thus little clan defence. Women from minority groups, especially the coastal populations of Mogadishu, Merca, Brava and Kismayo suffered the most. Thousands of Somalis including women and children left the country between 1991 and 1993, some by boat to Yemen and others overland to the Kenyan border. By October 1993, women and children made up about 80% of the estimated

300,000 people who had found refuge in Kenya. They had fled Kenya to escape the brutal Somali civil war, however many of them faced sexual abuse at the hands of militiamen and security forces. (Fowzia Musse) In 'the nightmare continues', one refugee quotes 'We ran away from the lion, but we just find a hyena' (African rights 1993)

The magnitude of sexual abuse perpetrated against Somali female refugees was horrific, the precise number of Somali women who were raped in Kenya's North Eastern Province after arriving as refugees is unknown because women had no incentive to come forward and reveal what had happened to them until the UNHCR intervened in 1993. Many women were reluctant to speak afraid of reprisal attacks from their assailants. The overall number of women raped in the camps is estimated to have been in the hundreds, if not thousands, based on recorded cases. Women stated that their perpetrators were generally people they knew. (Tomkins 1995) They were well-armed and attacked in gangs. When militiamen threatened to burn down their homes while their children were locked inside, some women had no other choice but to surrender. Some women were raped in their own homes in front of their husbands, who were forced to watch at gunpoint. Many victims were raped in front of their children and family. The UNHCR listed the cases of sixteen rape survivors who said they were raped over the body of their deceased spouse, infant, sibling, or other relatives. Almost every attack was carried out by several attackers. A gang rape may involve up to ten men at a time. The attackers would often be armed with rifles, bombs, daggers, bayonets, clubs, and walking sticks.

At night, the attackers would use a flashlight to blind their victims. They used physical aggression toward their victims, including hitting them in the upper body and legs with rifle butts; unrelenting fist hits to the head; striking the woman aggressively when she would be lying on the ground; and removing the 'external virginity' or infibulation of women and girls who had never had sexual intercourse with razor blades, daggers, or bayonets, frequently causing serious injuries. (Raqiya Haji Dualeh Abdalla 1982) Women who were suspected to have money were tortured to disclose the whereabouts of their wealth, with their attackers cutting parts of their bodies with daggers or bayonets. Before being assaulted, some women claimed they were blindfolded and had their hands bound. If they attempted to resist, they were hurled to the ground by a group of attackers.

Women as Peacekeepers

As the war became more deadly and society started to devolve, many women took it upon themselves to work towards preserving peace. Some women became genuine peace advocates after they realised the tragedy that had befallen their communities and aspired to end the fighting and change their communities. Mariam Hussein Awreeye is one of the Somali women who has devoted her life to fighting for human rights. She is the widow of Ismail Jimale Ossoble, a well-known human rights lawyer. Soon after the fall of Mohammed Siyad Barre's government, Mariam founded the Ismail Jimale Centre for Human Rights in war-torn Mogadishu to track and document human rights abuses so that perpetrators could be brought to justice once legal institutions were in place.

Dr Hawa Abdi, a soviet-educated gynaecologist was another notable female philanthropist, along with her two daughters, Russian educated medical practitioners they assisted women and children in Mogadishu and its surrounding areas for more than two decades of misery. Dr Hawa Abdi was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize 2012 for her work. During the more than a decade long war many women who helped to promote peace and empower women in the country had lost their lives. Among these brave women were Starlin Abdi Arush, an Italian educated intellectual and community leader, Mana Abdirahman Suldan, who ran an orphanage, and Verena Karrer, a Swiss relief worker all of whom devoted their lives to providing aid, education and shelter to women and children in Merka, in southern Somalia during the worst days of the conflict. Hundreds of women's movements some very local, others with a broader outreach emerged alongside these individuals and many others to actively engage in making a difference in the high-risk, war-torn climate of southern Somalia (Graney 2011)

Many women's reasons for participating in peacebuilding rather than fighting were focused on survival, morale, and the sheer terror they had seen during the fighting. Luling states 'experience of the sufferings of war has turned women's minds to this peace-making function, while at the same time they have acquired new roles in organised groups. (Luling 1997) Women used a variety of peace-building techniques, some of which were conventional and others which were more creative. Acting as messengers between feuding

clans was one tactic. In Somali society, the logic of patrilineal descent and clan exogamy creates this position. As poetry is embedded within Somali society, it has had a significant impact on promoting peace. Many women turned to poetry, it provided them an avenue to narrate their experiences but most importantly call for an end to the fighting and encourage people to put down their weapons and work towards building peace. Several Somali proverbs about peace, such as 'nabad haddii aysan jirin hurdo ma jirto' (Where there is no peace, there is no sleep) and 'nabad wixii lagu waayo, dagaal laguma helo' (What can't be obtained through peace, can't be obtained through war) resonate well with this strand of poetry. (Warsame 2006)

Along with the poetry, a more collective approach was employed, which included holding peaceful protests and chanting slogans such as "Somali women need peace, not war." Women recited their own poetry (buraambur) at demonstrations, either individually or collectively, though poetry does have the opposite effect and can instead ignite war as mentioned earlier on, it can also help cultivate peace and community cohesion. Sometimes after hearing such recitations, warring militiamen were often not only humbled but also compelled to embrace the message transmitted by female poetry, which was to put an end to the war and animosity. (Ingiriis 2013)

Another tactic Somali women used to promote peace and community development was to pool their resources together and create non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This was a revolutionary idea in a culture where women's roles were generally limited to caring for children, serving their husbands, and tending sheep and goats. Despite its revolutionary potential, women's self-organization was not possible during the military regime (1969-1991), which only permitted government-controlled associations. Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC) is one of the NGOs founded to give women's issues a voice. SSWC was one of the first cross-clan women movements formed during the height of the civil war, founded in 1992 by Asha Haji Elmi, a women's rights activist along with fellow other women's rights activists.

SSWC only brought together members of the so-called "majority clans," as appealing as the cross-clan idea was, it was not representative at all, minority groups such as the Bravenese, Banadiri, and Bantu were excluded. The Women Development Organization was established in Merka in the early 1990s. It provided assistance to internally displaced people and

worked to disarm local militias. (Jama 2010) In Mogadishu, the Coalition for Grassroots Women Organizations (COGWO) was established in 1996. It brought together many like-minded civil society organisations (CSOs) and acted as a peace-building forum that brought women's voices and efforts together. Despite women's notable efforts for peacebuilding, women were still left out of official meetings regarding the peace and future of Somalia. International peace efforts to put an end to the fighting had no mention of female voices despite them being vocal on the ground. Women are disregarded in peace discussions and negotiations due to a strict division of labour whereby men are accountable for the reconstruction process and women are confined to traditional roles of caring. (Puechguirbal, N. 2012)

Peace is not solely the absence of war for women. As women are not deemed to be central actors within their own communities, they are not empowered on the international stage and their participation and affiliation to the state and society are often disregarded or poorly addressed in efforts towards peacebuilding and state-building. This is a consequence of a lack of political motivation and little knowledge regarding gender issues and how to incorporate them into policymaking. It is also due to the belief that gender is a nonpriority concern to confront in the aftermath of war and violent conflict. Women's "social power" has evidently increased as a result of these gender-based organisations. At least in some areas and to some extent, they were accepted as peacemakers and community builders. However, the more outspoken women were, the more they clashed with powerful men in their own clans who wanted to suppress women's advancement and silence them. (Ali 2007)

Somali women continue to be dismissed in peace talks and their ideas for security, education and peace are constantly overlooked. The absence of women's voices in peacebuilding is dangerous, women's input or ideas on national security, peace and conflict resolution are dismissed and are not paramount to the political and peace discussions on rebuilding the future of their nation in the aftermath of war. Despite women being the backbones of their families, communities, and societies they are loathed by men on the international, national, and regional stage where they are deemed weak and insignificant. In patriarchal societies, women are left with no choice but to leave their fate in the hands of the men in their family, tribe, or community.

'The masculinisation of the protector leads to the feminisation of the protected' (C. Enloe 2007) This a widely prevalent rhetoric that is perpetuated throughout society by international organisations and governments, the protector (male) versus the (female) protected. This rhetoric upholds the idea that women are defenceless and places women in the category of victims, thus hindering their ability to participate or voice their ideas in the crucial decision-making process in the aftermath of a conflict. War does not make women helpless or weak per se, women are made to feel more vulnerable and defenceless due to the existing gender inequalities and discrimination they face in peaceful societies that are reinforced by gendered power hierarchies. (N. Puechguirbal, 2010-2017)

Chapter 3 – Influence of Religious Conservatism

The gendered implications of this war go far beyond physical and psychological violence alone, but there are also insidious practises and invented traditions that further consolidate patriarchy and exasperate women's social subordination. (Abdi 2006a, 2006b) Women were made a depository of culture as a result of the conflict. (Yuval-Davis 1997), leading to a project of inscribing an authentic Islam on their bodies. This understanding of Islam advocates new guidelines for women's everyday activities in society, limiting what they can and cannot do and enforcing a strict dress code. The cultural significance of recent drastic changes in women's modes of dress, such as the introduction of veiling practises that are typical of conservative Islam but alien to traditional Somali society, and the complex dimensions of gender transition.

Many people in the Western world envision the quintessential Muslim woman, who is often depicted wearing a veil. In reality, Muslim women in many different parts of the world combine local or indigenous practises with Islamic tenets to convey their "Muslimness." (El-Solh and Mabro 1994; Bodman and Tohidi 1998) Prior to the civil war in the late 1980s, the largely nomadic way of life dictated Islamic traditions in both urban and rural Somalia. Women play an important role in nomadic life, and they need clothing that makes their job easier while also allowing them to carry out their responsibilities. Somali women's traditional dress, like that of women in rural areas around the world, was light, reflecting their need for mobility and work. It was made up of a long piece of fabric knotted over one leg, equivalent to an Indian sari.

The chest is covered, but the sides, shoulders, and a portion of the back are exposed. There are full-length gowns that reach the knees. Originally made of plain white or red cotton, the guntiino (also known as guntiimo or garays) was later adopted by urban women to have more costly and intricate multicoloured versions. In any place, Somali women wearing the guntiino without a shawl was a popular sight, running vegetable stands, selling milk, or even

breastfeeding babies. Following urbanisation, women adopted the dirac, a very lightweight cotton or polyester voile dress worn over a full-length half-slip and a brassiere. Women often wore the thin dirac without bras or shawls around their homes and neighbourhoods. Breasts were not considered sexual due to this dress norm. Unlike the veil, which masks everything but the face, the dirac was described as being "slightly coquette" (Helander 1999, 48). Despite this, the outfit was never deemed deviant, and women were not blamed for exposing too much skin. Light scarves were often worn over the hair, tied at the nape, leaving the ears, collar, and shoulders exposed. Scarves worn by married women distinguished them from single women who did not cover their hair in the nomadic Somali culture. Girls and young, unmarried women braided their hair to show that they were single. School-aged girls wore headscarves in a variety of ways, with some never covering their hair and some doing so.

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood, which had its origins in Egypt and was established in 1928, had infiltrated Somali urban centres. (Ahmed 1992) A small group of Somali women wearing the full chador with face-covering emerged in the streets of Mogadishu for the first time. In Somalia, this was a recent development, indicating the internationalisation of more conservative Islamic interpretations. (Helander 1999) They consisted of young unemployed men who were dissatisfied with Siad Barre's government sighting it as anti-Islamic and communist. (Ahmed 1999) They were rendered illegal by the state for their views. During the war and after the state's defeat, they resurfaced and gained strength. Prior to the conflict, most Somali women's self-representation and way of life remained unchanged until the late 1980s. Most women, as well as Somali society as a whole, saw the emerging conservatism as a threat to their freedom of movement, participation, and fashion, as well as the autonomy that women had acquired from their nomadic community and transplanted to cities. Most women in Mogadishu started covering their hair with traditional headdresses that shielded the neck and shoulders for the first time. Those who objected to the current movement were subjected to verbal and physical abuse. It was no longer up to women to decide whether or not to veil.

The war spurred a significant shift in Somali women's public self-representation and Islamic identity. Women in refugee camps often felt violated and were particularly vulnerable to sexual assault and rape. Many of these women resorted to the veil for protection, covering

their body with long black jilbabs and wearing heavy fabric underneath. They felt that by wearing the veil, they would be seen as "pious" and "god-fearing" and that men would be less likely to rape them. The radical changes in clothing represent ideological trends affecting women's status in society and the conventions that dictate what is acceptable. It's difficult to say whether this reform was imposed outright on women or was imposed indirectly by the civil war's violence—rapes, threats, and so on. What is undeniable is that the civil war created circumstances that made women more vulnerable. The new conservative wear of Somali women is closely related to their insecurity as a result of the civil war and refugeeism. The veil serves as a "response to their vulnerability" for these women, encouraging them to "retreat into the protective certainties of religious conservatism" (Kandiyoti 1991a, 18). This occurrence exemplifies Mernissi's analogy between the veil and terrorism since it is neither an option nor a clear imposition (Mernissi 1996, xi).

Since Somali women are more afraid of crime, they dress more conservatively, presenting themselves as religious women who draw less attention and therefore less harassment as they leave their homes. As radical interpretations of Islamic ideology have found fertile ground, the recent rise in veiling has been followed, for the first time in Somali culture, by extreme forms of repression of women's conduct. Women who fail to comply face harassment from both sexes, as well as social pressure to veil. Similarly, considering the tumultuous world of the civil war and refugee camps, where many of them may have been exposed to rape and torture, the reverence and protection that Somali women attach to accepting the Jalaabiib are immeasurable. Many Somali women, it is argued, could only survive the unspoken physical and psychological abuse they have faced since the fall of the state by adopting religion: attaining purity in a world that denied them their fundamental human and Islamic rights.

The religious right's extreme interpretation of Islam has not only culminated a newly invented practice for women's dress codes, but it has also introduced the concept of a newly imagined Somali woman. Female circumcision is a very taboo topic and has widely been practised, however under the Siad Barre administration the practise was made illegal, and people were educated on the dangers. After the war and state collapse, the practise has made a mass return imposing horror on young girls. In many refugee camps such as Dadaab

in Kenya, cases of FGM have increased. (Imam 2000, 133) Many religious scholars have preached that FGM is a fundamental part of being a Muslim woman and that female circumcision should proceed urging many impressionable parents to inflict harm on their daughters in the name of religion. A prominent religious scholar at the Dadaab refugee camp gave a sermon on FGM he declared “to reject and resist the infidel’s message to discontinue female circumcision.” (Abdi 2007, 200) He claims that anti-female circumcision movements allow women to stray from the road of righteousness and that Kenyan and expatriate NGO staff providing education on the topic encourage women to engage in unlawful behaviour.

It is essential to mention that not all religious scholars support FGM; many are opposed to the practise and are influential in bringing about reform in mindsets and cultures. The religious community is crucial in any future progress towards the abolition of this very un-Islamic practise. However often ideas that are beneficial to the society are condemned under the new Islamic ideology as contra- Islam and rejected on the grounds of being foreign, imported and undermining cultural and religious freedom.

In an attempt to legitimise the conservative Islamic movement in Somalia many Somalis argue that Allah's wrath has fallen on Somalia and Somalis as a result of their deviation from true Islam, in order to legitimise the current Islamic insurgency. This failure is said to have resulted in the country's total devastation, the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians, and the continued absence of law and order. As in other parts of the world, prominent feminist scholars have stated how women's disobedience to the laws is blamed for any ill that befalls the nation. (El-Saadawi 1980; Mernissi 1995) A Somali proverb proclaims “wixii xunba Xaawaa leh” (All evil originates from Hawa/Eve). As a result, it is claimed that repentance for this deviation must begin with women in order to reverse the calamity that has befallen the nation. Therefore, the control of women's identity and social status is legitimised as a vital foundation for the salvation of the entire community's souls.

In Somaliland, as in Somalia, powerful forces used religion as a justification for keeping women out of politics. Women were commonly excluded from any decision making and were told their exclusion in political and economic decision making was because it was not in the correct Islamic interests for a woman to be involved. Despite the fact that women play an important role as breadwinners in the public domain, their influence at home is

limited by cultural and social inequalities (Abdi 2006a). Increased religiosity and the prevalence of exclusive conceptions of Islam reinforce this prejudice by limiting Somali gender practises, which previously allowed women great mobility and autonomy. "Women strategize within a set of concrete constraints," Kandiyoti claims, and she refers to this as the "patriarchal bargain" (1988, 275). She claims that when the patriarchal bargain falls apart, such as during a crisis, many women who have to work for a living in this situation can react by intensifying conventional modesty symbols, such as veiling. Support from Somali women for new activities that were uncommon in their cultures prior to the war. One may argue that Somali women support the new dress code because it allows them to remain economic agents in their homes, which has become increasingly important since the war began. Women strategizing to make the most of tough situations that exert extraordinary influence over their autonomy have been recorded in other areas, such as Iran after the 1979 Islamic revolution. Young women embrace the veil not out of choice, but as a survival tool, according to Farah Azari (1983).

The continuing social transition of the Somali community worldwide is inextricably linked to the country's state collapse which led to a civil war, that devastated the country and left most of its population economically and politically helpless. This insecurity has aided and continues to aid the religious right's rise to power, as well as its continuing project of reislamizing Somali women. Religious leaders are enacting sharia and enforcing stringent laws in an effort to keep women at bay in the void created by the fall of the state.

Chapter 4 - Migration and Gendered opportunities

The complete dissolution of the Somali state in 1991 resulted in widespread migration to the US, Europe, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Many Somalis have migrated to neighbouring Yemen, Kenya, and Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia. This migration continues to occur today. Tens of thousands of Somali refugees with insufficient resources fled from overcrowded refugee camps in north-eastern Africa in the 1990s and early 2000s, similar to the Southeast Asian refugee migration of the 1970s and 1980s; many left their close family members behind. (Abdi et al., 2006; Horst et al., 2006)

As a result of displacement and migration, gender roles almost always change (Pedraza 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997). These shifts, on the other hand, are never straightforward; rather, they are the result of a dynamic web of compromises that can both motivate and disempower women in comparison to men. In urban environments, Somali women have replaced their famous tolerance for adversity in nomadic life with blatant challenges to tradition. In comparison to the past, when they deferred to men in all situations, their disdain for gender hierarchy is striking.

Despite there being significant evidence that women helped contribute to family incomes in Somalia and have continued to play prominent roles in family life since the collapse of the Somali state (Kapteijns 1995; Abdi 2006), men depict the ideal family structure of the breadwinner husband and the vulnerable wife—which is difficult to maintain in countries such as the United States, where there are relatively high levels of poverty among the Somali refugee community. (US Census Bureau 2009, 2) Since migrating to a Western metropolis, Somali men often warn of women's increased transgressions or *kibir* (stubbornness). They blame government-provided welfare as the prime perpetrator of these wrongdoings. Many believe that the new settlement's financial resources for women, as well as the widespread provision of other social resources such as courts and public departments, will contribute to the Somali family's destruction in America.

Women's increased freedom and economic independence in many western countries is a cause for concern amongst men. Many immigrant Somali women have found a sense of

voice and power in western states, a voice that women have been stripped of due to the war. Somali refugee women often partake in menial labour jobs working as cleaners, caretakers, and babysitting. Despite their low skilled work, they have found a new sense of purpose and the ability to properly support themselves and their children. Many refugee women are often supported by the state in their respective new home countries, government welfare alongside their low skilled labour work is often what helps to keep the family finances afloat. Conditions in the United States are described by Somali men as "castrating" (xiniinyo bixis). They identify a deterioration of their authority's cultural and material foundations, and therefore a threat to their gender values. Men's religiously approved status as household leaders is undercut by women's access to independent incomes by government services. (Abdi 2014) The fact that Somali women handle and attain their own income coupled with the fact that public assistance checks are written in women's names, is a huge source of anxiety for men who thus feel estranged by state welfare agencies.

Many of the countries where Somali refugees have found protection mandate that they work or attend school in order to obtain money, which helps to avoid certain gendered demands that were traditionally acceptable in Somali culture. As a result, recent structural policies such as the allocation of money or food stamps to migrants by the state welfare regime have a significant impact on family and household structures. Gender bargains are driven by institutional imperatives, supplying Somali women with spaces of opposition to patriarchy. Women's contributions to household finances with incomes from traditional jobs, government assistance, or both are challenging the previously dominant male breadwinner position. (Kaptejins, 1999) Younger Somali women applaud what they see as women's growing influence in household decision-making in places such as the United States. Many grew up in the United States, and their knowledge of Somali gender dynamics is focused on both their own family's structures and stories. Somali cultural traditions have harmed women and they believe that migration has improved women's bargaining power over men. (Abdi 2014)

Along with financial independence, many Somali women are taking advantage of their rights in their respective countries to initiate divorces and flee violence. Women feel safe recognising that they have the right to sue abusers and escape environments that are

harmful to them because of the protection provided by a state and institutions like the police. In America, the divorce rate among Somalis has risen dramatically. Many people blame this rise on women breaking their social and cultural responsibilities by involving the police in family conflicts. (Abdi 2014) Elderly men also say that women are more vocal about their need to obtain a divorce at mediation sessions. These elders contend that in America, women's access to public assistance leads to a growing disdain for marriage. In America, women are freely able to obtain a divorce while in Somalia, divorce was considered taboo and frowned upon. Despite this, many Somali refugee communities continue to be governed by conservative and Islamic practises that are harsh on divorce. Even though they have reasonable grounds, women are at the mercy of men when it comes to getting a divorce.

It is essential to note however that though many Somali women often in western democratic countries enjoyed freedoms that allowed them to obtain a divorce, gain an education and work. These privileges were not accessible to women who migrated to non-democratic states such as Yemen and Saudi Arabia. These women were governed by Islamic laws and patriarchal societies that made it near impossible for them to gain economic freedom let alone obtain a divorce or escape abuse. These societies enforced strict gender roles similar to Somalia, women are passive individuals tied to their husbands and with an absence of adequate state welfare scheme for refugees, women were left hopeless. If these women do find work it is often as domestic workers, working for richer Arab families as maids. This comes at a cost, often they are subjected to abuse, violence, and a withdrawal of their salary from their employers. With a lack of adequate rights and support systems for refugees or domestic workers Somali women in places such as Yemen and Saudi Arabia suffer. (Marina de Regt 2010)

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to contribute to the discussion of Somali women's status and shifting role in society as a result of the fall of the state. This paper has taken into account a series of factors that it deems as having the most significant impact on Somali women and are all interconnected born out of a loss of a state and the protection it serves. The related gender theories that assist us in understanding the condition of Somali women, their positions in public and private life, and attitudes against women perpetuated by rigid gender roles and patriarchal ideologies have been illustrated in this paper.

The first insight about women's life in pre-colonial and colonial contexts is significant in our understanding to help paint a picture of Somali women before the breakdown of the state and the consequent violence and anarchy that prevailed. Women had a wide range of rights and liberties, and they played important roles in the economy, military, schooling, and health care. The ideological change from women being simply silent performers to being more heavily engaged and respected for their efforts was aided by the socialist advancement of women. For Somali women, the lack of such liberty was unthinkable. The degree to which a loss of state resources and security would force Somali women to become primary breadwinners for their families or resort to menial labour to supplement their income in the informal economy was a stark contrast to their previous situation.

The dramatic shift in gender roles depicted in this paper reflects the reality of the civil war and lack of state protection: for the first time, women were forced to depend solely on themselves to care for their children and families. Women found themselves in precarious situations as a result of the collapse of the social system and the lack of state-provided insurance and were forced to defy cultural values and customs in order to survive and feed their children.

The civil war was a dirty one, and the roles women performed as combatants, victims, and peacemakers are fundamental to the change in positions Somali women were expected to respond to. Women's agency to participate in the fighting, both specifically and implicitly, to protect their families, clan, and men have had far-reaching repercussions and have

contributed to the country's further destabilisation. Somali women bore the brunt of the Somali tragedy and were probably one of the most marginalised groups in the middle of the violence.

The systematic abuse and sexual harassment perpetrated in Somalia during the civil war was shocking, but the pain and suffering that thousands of women were forced to suffer is still a subject that needs to be thoroughly addressed both in Somalia and internationally. Rape has become an endemic problem that re-emerged after the war and with the fall of the regime, as depicted in this paper's vivid descriptions of torture and brutality experienced by Somali women. Women's contributions to peacebuilding have been critical both during and after decades of conflict. Women have taken it upon themselves to save and assist other women and their children. They have been able to create organisations devoted to delivering aid and assistance to women who have been unable to bear the brunt of the conflict; these organisations are carrying out work that the government may have historically assisted in creating.

The impact of extreme societal transformations on women's status in society is shown in this case study. Women are the first casualties of crises and civil wars. "Gender politics can be particularly powerful in patriarchal cultures experiencing development and social change," writes Valentine Moghadam. "Gender becomes politicised during periods of transition and restructuring, when social groups and values clash" (1992, 49)

Women have been severely affected by the dramatic societal changes that came with the rise of radical Islam in Somalia, as discussed in this paper. The religious right was obsessed with banning and limiting women, and what better way to do so than to impose a mandatory dress code, stripping these women of their cultural attire, customs, and rituals and replacing them with a rigid, new conservative style of dress? Women's bodies and economic activities were considered "unlawful" and "unIslamic" by the religious right, effectively regulating women in the name of religion. This harmful philosophy has penetrated Somali communities around the world.

While Islam remains fundamental to many Somali women's lives and has provided relief in the face of adversity, the Islam they refer to is the one they have learned their whole lives; it is not extreme or restrictive of thinking or expression. Nonetheless, it's worth considering:

What does increased control of Somali women's attitudes and bodies mean over the next decade? Can this newly developed custom of mandatory veiling last into the future? Will there be a discussion over the conservative phenomenon's recent emergence? Will women be stoned if they want to dress as they did before the Civil War? Will they be guilty of behaving in an un-Islamic manner?

There are intriguing, yet troubling, concerns that emerge from the discussions of this paper. Since Somalia lacks a legitimate central government, the religious right will undoubtedly use its prominence to advance its patriarchal agenda for Somali women.

Migration has given women new gendered opportunities, allowing them to flee persecution and resettle in order to have a better life for themselves and their families. Women have achieved economic independence, and with the presence of a functioning state in many western nations, they are secure and feel much safer. The findings of this paper further reinforce the theory that migration heightens women's knowledge of their subordination. The paper highlights how refugees interactions with new societies in their new home initiate a 'patriarchal bargain'. Going back to the original question, this dissertation can conclude that a culmination of factors that are interlinked have been born out of the collapse of the state in 1991, the subsequent tragedy that followed has led to the shift in the status of Somali women.

The collapse of the state has impacted Somali women in ways beyond belief and the consequences of this breakdown have drastically changed women's positions from all walks of life in Somalia. The Somali women's experience is one that is not bound by class, wealth, or age. The breakdown of the Siad Barre government was the catapult that shook the very foundations of Somali civilisation. The lawlessness, conflict, brutality, extremism, and mass migration have replaced the foundations of a functioning state and have equally contributed to the emotional decline of the status of Somali women.

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