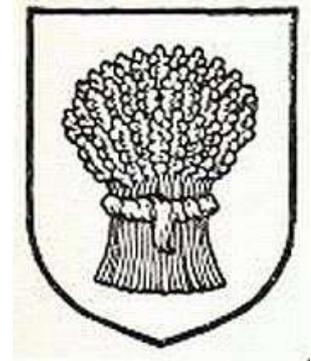


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# HALLGARTEN + COMPANY

**Regional Coverage**

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## Somaliland & Puntland

### A New Region to Conjure With

## March 2026

# Somaliland & Puntland

## A New Region to Conjure With

- + Somaliland (formerly British Somaliland) has waited patiently for decades for recognition as a model state in a continent filled with less than model states
- + Recognition has finally come from a quarter that is less than a ringing endorsement
- + Perversely there are now good reasons for other countries to recognize Somaliland to counter the effect of the first endorsement
- + The country's administration is vigorously pro-mining despite little work having been done in modern times
- + The indications from historic studies, particularly under British rule (pre-1960) would signal significant potential in a swathe of metals
- + Most work in the past was done before modern methods were invented giving potential to uncover greater, varied and deeper deposits "remains open" as promoters love to say
- × Mining companies and their investors are usually wary of unrecognized territories
- × No (known) Rare Earths, folks
- × That Israel was the first state to provide recognition was a major negative due to its pariah status in the wake of the Gazan genocide
- × The war in the Gulf has so far had no discernable impact for Somaliland, though it may remove its sole "benefactor"

### Mining in the Horn of Africa

It is interesting to watch a new "mining province" emerge from what had been previously unexploited territory. It's not that the potential was not known, but it's certainly true that little to no work has been done in the actual and putative states of Somaliland and Puntland (and maybe Jubaland) in the Horn of Africa since the 1950s. These represent the "roads not travelled" in mining in the African continent.

Do developments in recent times presage an opening to the mining community?

Is there any "there" there that is worth pursuing?

After a long quiescence the pot is coming to a boil from an unfortunate quarter, so can the Somalilanders in particular, exploit this moment then eschew their "liberators" and not be seen as patsies?

In this review we look at the diplomatic, mining and, bizarrely, clan/ethnic background to the mosh pit

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that is politics in this increasingly hot spot on the world map.

### **What is it?**

The government of Somaliland regards itself as the successor state to the British colony of Somaliland. The country is located on the southern coast of the Gulf of Aden and bordered by Djibouti to the northwest, Ethiopia to the south and west, and Somalia to the east. Its claimed territory has an area of 176,120 kms<sup>2</sup> (68,000 square miles), with approximately 6.2 million people as of 2024. The capital and largest city is Hargeisa.

### **What created Somaliland?**

In the late 19th century, the United Kingdom signed agreements with various clans in the area, establishing the Somaliland Protectorate which was formally granted independence by the United Kingdom as the State of Somaliland on 26 June 1960. Some 35 countries (one of which being Israel) recognised the State of Somaliland's brief independence in 1960.

Five days later, the State of Somaliland voluntarily united with the Trust Territory of Somaliland (the former Italian Somalia) to form the Somali Republic.

The union of the two states proved problematic early on, and in response to the harsh policies enacted by the regime of Siad Barre, Somalia's president against the main clan family in Somaliland, the Isaaq, shortly after the conclusion of the disastrous Ogaden War (which we shall deal with anon), a 10-year war of independence concluded with the declaration of Somaliland's independence in 1991.

The clampdown by the Barre regime against the Hargeisa-based Somali National Movement targeted the Isaaq clan, to which most members of the SNM belonged. They refer to the clampdown as the Isaaq Genocide or "Hargeisa Holocaust". A United Nations investigation concluded that the crime of genocide was "conceived, planned and perpetrated by the Somali Government against the Isaaq people".

The number of civilian casualties is estimated to be between 50,000 and 100,000 according to various sources, while some reports estimate the total civilian deaths to be upwards of 200,000 members of the Isaaq clan. Along with the deaths, the Barre regime bombarded and razed the second and third largest cities in Somalia, Hargeisa and Burao, respectively. This displaced an estimated 400,000 local residents to Hart Sheik in Ethiopia and another 400,000 individuals were also internally displaced.

The Barre regime collapsed in January 1991. Thereafter, as the political situation in Somaliland stabilised, the displaced people returned to their homes, the militias were demobilised or incorporated into the army,

### **The Economy**

As a result, the government relies mainly upon tax receipts and remittances from the large Somali diaspora, which contribute significantly to the Somaliland economy. Remittances come to Somaliland

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through money transfer companies, the largest of which is Dahabshiil, one of the few Somali money transfer companies that conform to modern money-transfer regulations. The World Bank estimates that remittances worth approximately US\$1 billion reach Somalia annually from émigrés working in the Gulf states, Europe and the United States. Analysts say that Dahabshiil may handle around two-thirds of that figure and as much as half of it reaches Somaliland alone.

### **The Ogaden War**

Those who forget history are destined to repeat it, or so the saying goes. In which case, one should not forget the Ogaden War, also known as the Ethio-Somali War. This was a military conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia fought from July 1977 to March 1978 over control of the sovereignty of the Ogaden region. This region is a vast plateau that is overwhelmingly inhabited by Somali people. It represents the westernmost region inhabited by the Somalis in the Horn of Africa and is located to the south and southeast of the Ethiopian Highlands.

Following the end of the Second Italo-Ethiopian War in 1937, and the outbreak of World War II, the Ogaden was united under a single administration with the British and Italian Somaliland's. After the defeat of Italy, power transferred to the British military administration.[44] The British Foreign Secretary proposed to keep the Somalis territories unified after the war, but was rejected by the Ethiopians and France (then controlling French Somaliland) who wanted a return to the pre-war status quo.[44] On 31 January 1942, Ethiopia and the United Kingdom signed the second "Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement", ending British military occupation in most of Ethiopia except Ogaden.[45]

The last remaining British controlled parts of the region were transferred to Ethiopia in 1955. The population of the Ogaden did not perceive themselves to be Ethiopians and were deeply tied to Somalis in neighboring states. Somalis widely considered Ethiopian rule in the Ogaden to be a case of African colonial subjugation.

After Italy lost control of Italian Somaliland during the Second World War, these regions came under British military administration. It was during this period that Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie expressed a keen interest in the territory, which his government deemed as a lost province of the empire. He laid claim to them openly, asserting that the ancient Somali coastal region of Banaadir (which encompasses Mogadishu) as well as the adjacent Indian Ocean coastline, rightfully belonged to Ethiopia.

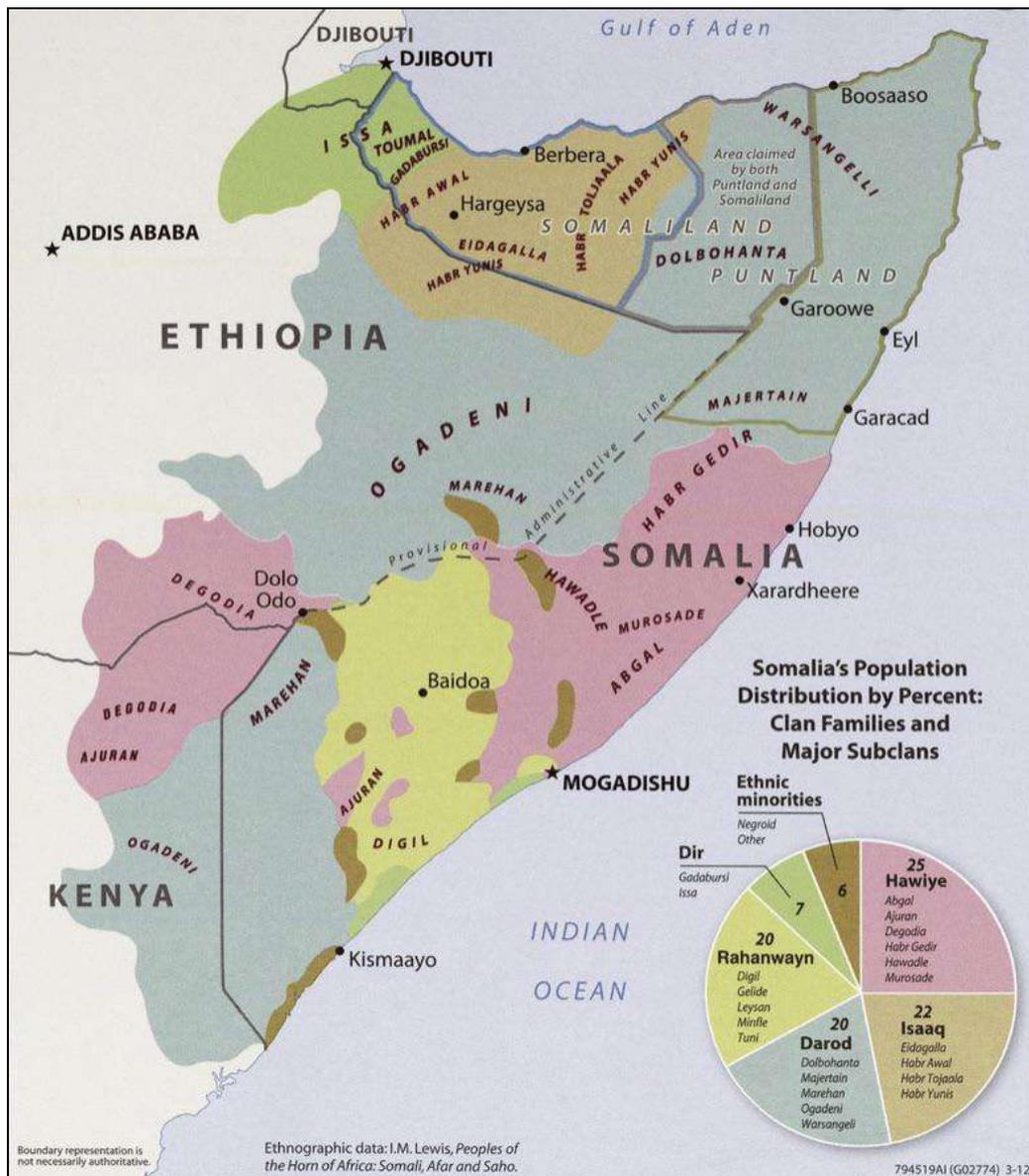
Somalia launched an invasion in support of the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) insurgency, triggering a broader inter-state war. The intervention drew the disapproval of the Soviet Union, which subsequently withdrew its support for Somalia and backed Ethiopia instead.

Ethiopia was saved from defeat and permanent loss of territory through a massive airlift of military supplies worth \$1 billion, the arrival of more than 12,000 Cuban soldiers and airmen and 1,500 Soviet advisors. In late January of 1978, Cuban armored brigades inflicted the worst losses the Somali forces had ever taken in a single action since the start of the war.

### All in the Family

As noted, Puntland and Somaliland have declared self-governance (Somaliland as an independent country and Puntland as a state) based on clan lines, with Somaliland mainly being Isaaq and Puntland mainly being Darod, specifically Darod who make up the Harti Darod Confederation.

The map below covers the main major clans and their geographical extent across the Horn of Africa:



Within each clan's areas can be seen the sub-clans that make up the bigger units. As can be seen in the pie in the bottom right corner.

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The major pastoral nomadic clans are the Darod Clan, Hawiye Clan, Isaaq Clan and Dir Clan. All four of these clans can be further divided into sub-clans.

Rahanweyn are the major sedentary clans, with the Mirifle Clan and Digil Clan forming most of this group. These clans are further divided into sub-clans like their nomadic counterparts.

Somalia also has minority low caste clans which are often looked down upon. These include the Madhiban, Yibir and Tomal.

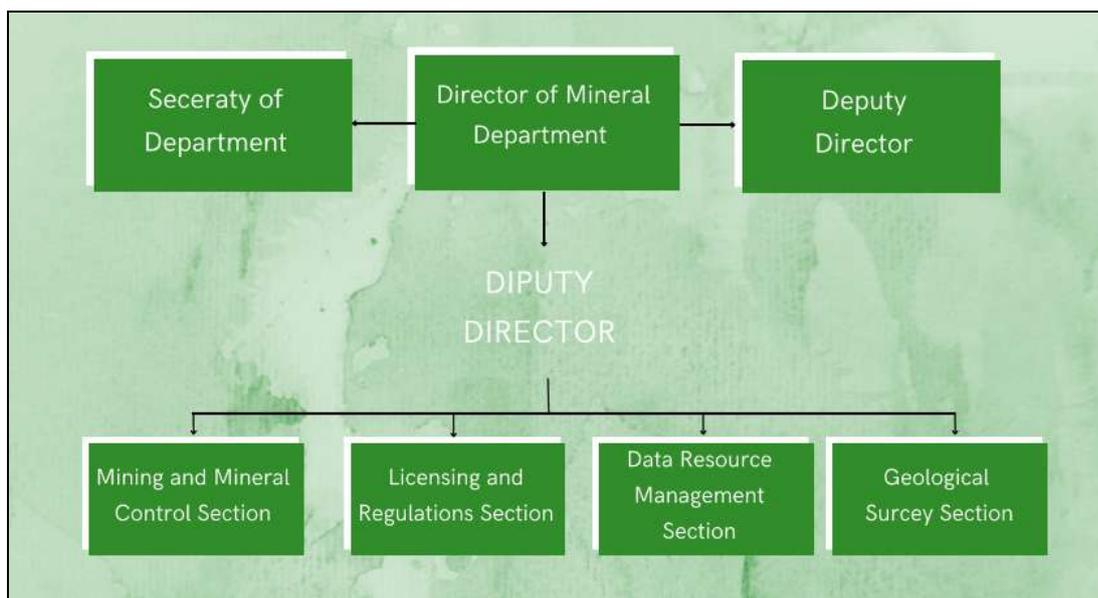
Benadiri are lightskinned Somalis, they live in coastal cities and have Arabic ancestry. There are many Benadiri clans mainly in the cities Mogadishu, Merca and Barawa. The clans in each city come together to form confederations, being the Reer Xamar (city of Mogadishu/Xamar), Reer Marka (city of Merca/Marka) and Reer Baraawe (city of Barawa/Baraawe). Some clans have people in all three cities and are part of all three confederations.

Jareerweyn is the name given to Somalis of Bantu-origin, who often have ancestry from places such as Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, etc.

Awdal in Somaliland attempted to break away as Awdalland due to being Dir. Both Puntland and Somaliland claim the area between them inhabited by Dhulabhante, which is a Darod sub-clan part of the Harti Darod Confederation.

### The Mining Ministry

The structure of the ministry is as per the organogram (excusing typos) below:



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## **The Mining Code**

Over the last decade, Somaliland has been actively developing a modernized mining law to attract international investors for strategic minerals, address governance gaps like blind licensing, and improve revenue collection, building upon policies from its Ministry of Energy & Minerals.

Somaliland's mining sector is governed by laws like the Mining Code (2000) and related Regulations, requiring permits for prospecting/mining, covering fees/royalties and defining terms like building minerals/gemstones.

The (draft) Mining Act of 2018 is here:

<https://es.scribd.com/document/651106027/2020-08-11-08-36-02-6572-1597134962>

The latest version of the proposed mining code is here:

[http://www.somalilandlaw.com/Proposed\\_Mining\\_Code.pdf](http://www.somalilandlaw.com/Proposed_Mining_Code.pdf)

## **Types of Licenses**

There are, as in many countries a variety of levels of license. At the moment these are:

1. Artisanal Mining permit
2. Dealership license
3. Reconnaissance license
4. Exploration license
5. Small scale mining license
6. Mining license/Lease
7. Retention license
8. Quarry permits

Their coverage is quite self-evident.

## **The Mineral Endowment**

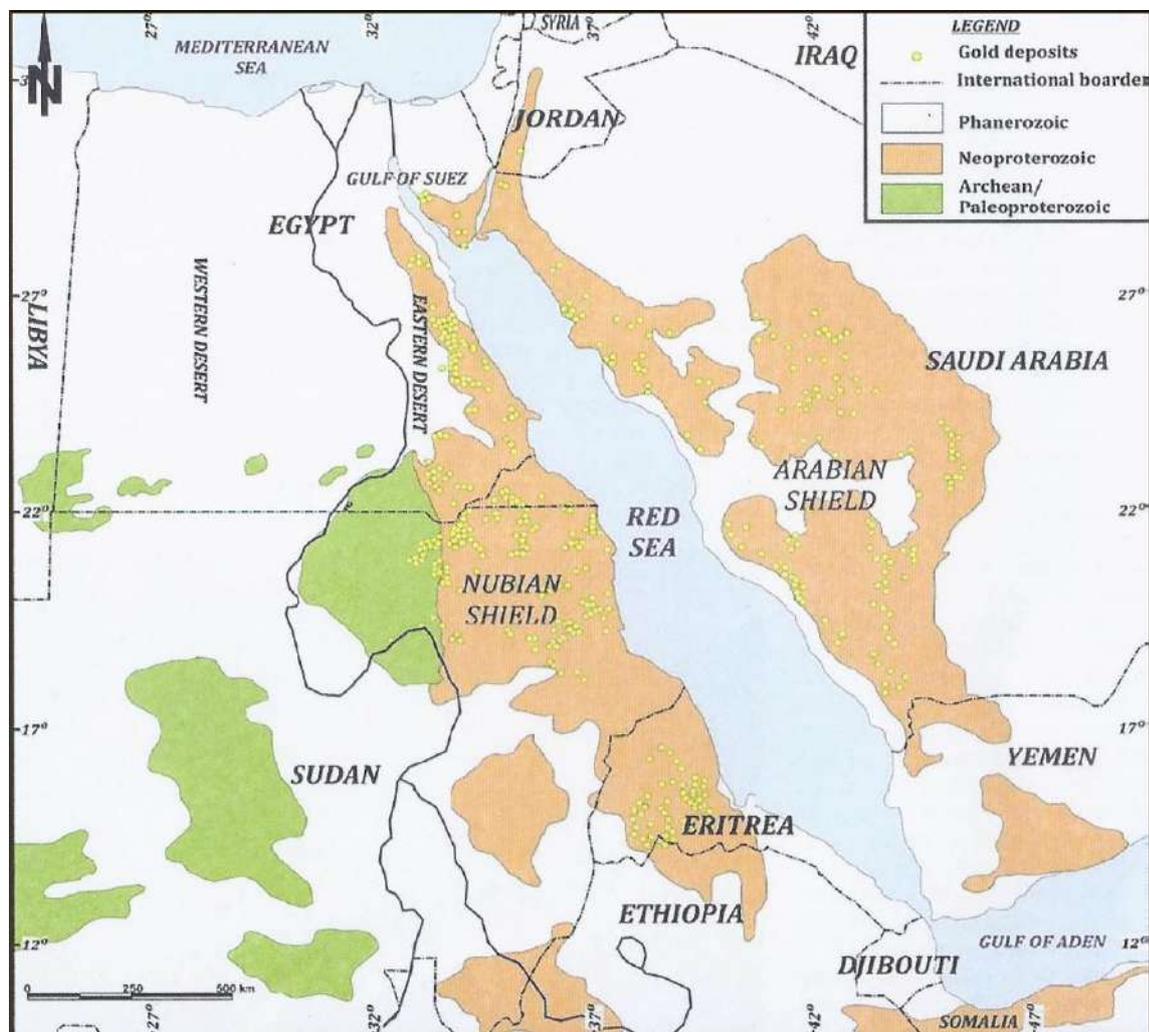
Geologic and mineral deposit studies have been conducted in Somalia chiefly by British and Italian geologists prior to independence in 1960. The principal recent mineral evaluations of the country in English are by Holmes (1954) and the United Nations Development Programme (U.N.D.P.) in 1970.

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Neither of these reports was widely distributed, but we got our hands on the Holmes report (and others that the USGS was not aware of). A major review of mineral deposits of Ethiopia and Somalia by Usoni (1956) is in Italian.

### What it is Not

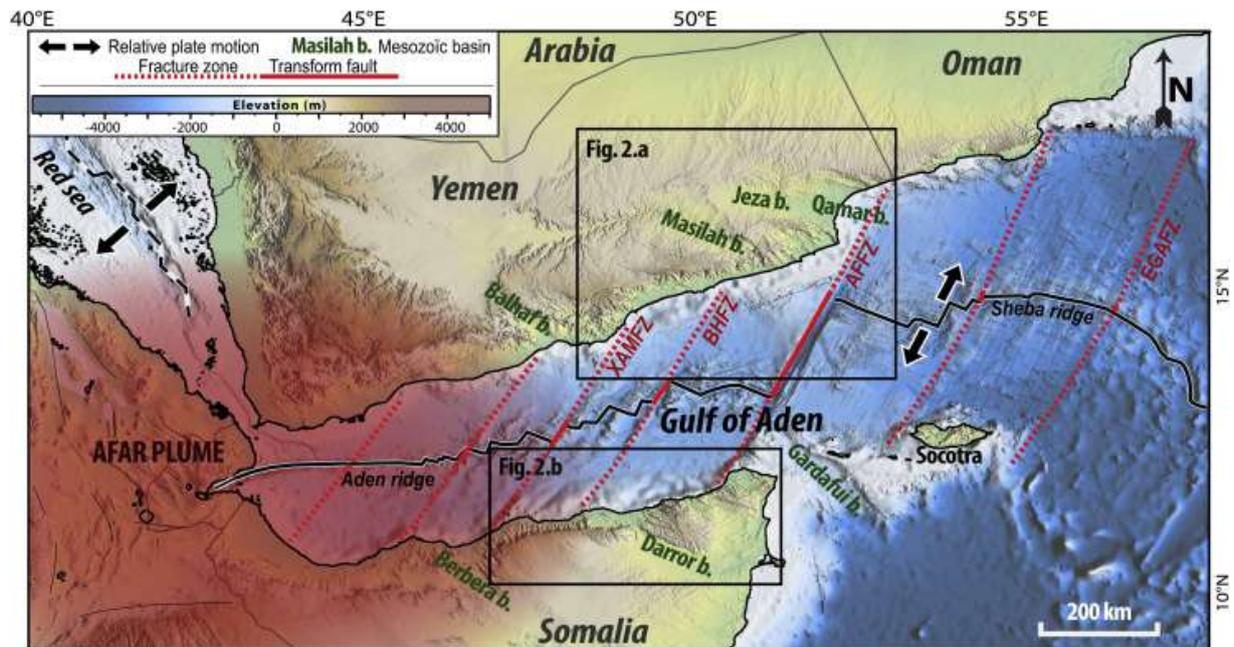
There is a temptation for those that have not looked at the region closely to imagine that the dominant geological feature is the much-vaunted Arabian Nubian Shield, which many imagine stretches only as far south as Eritrea. However, as one can see that the Neoproterozoic mineralisation is present in Somaliland, and thus an outlier of the Arabian-Nubian Shield.



Beginning roughly 30 million years ago, a chasm opened between Africa and Arabia as their continental plates split apart. Water from the Indian Ocean spilled into the breach. The widening rift down the Red Sea's spine forms an abyssal trench nearly two miles deep at its lowest point with

magma tubes that heat the surrounding water to temperatures in excess of 160 degrees F.

More relevant for our purposes is the Yemen-Somalia geological rift, which refers to the separation of the Arabian and Somali plates, creating the Gulf of Aden beginning around 30 million years ago (Oligocene). Below can be seen a topographic and bathymetric map of the Gulf of Aden.



Source: modified from Nonn et al., 2017

This divergent boundary, linked to the Afar triple junction, features oblique seafloor spreading, transforming continental crust into an oceanic basin. Key structures include the Bosaso Graben (Somalia) and Hami Graben (Yemen).

### Work by the British

The history of studies related to Somaliland Protectorate began when R. A. Farquharson was appointed Government Geologist in 1923 and made a "First Report on the Geology and Mineral Resources of British Somaliland" in 1924.

Geologists attached to Water Supply Schemes, Boundary Surveys, and the General Survey of 1943–1950 mapped some areas, and oil company geologists surveyed most of the sedimentary rock areas between 1922 and 1948. The Government Geological Survey of the Somaliland Protectorate started in April of 1952, with only one geologist, but grew to number a Chief Geologist, and three geologists, and there were plans to add a fourth geologist.

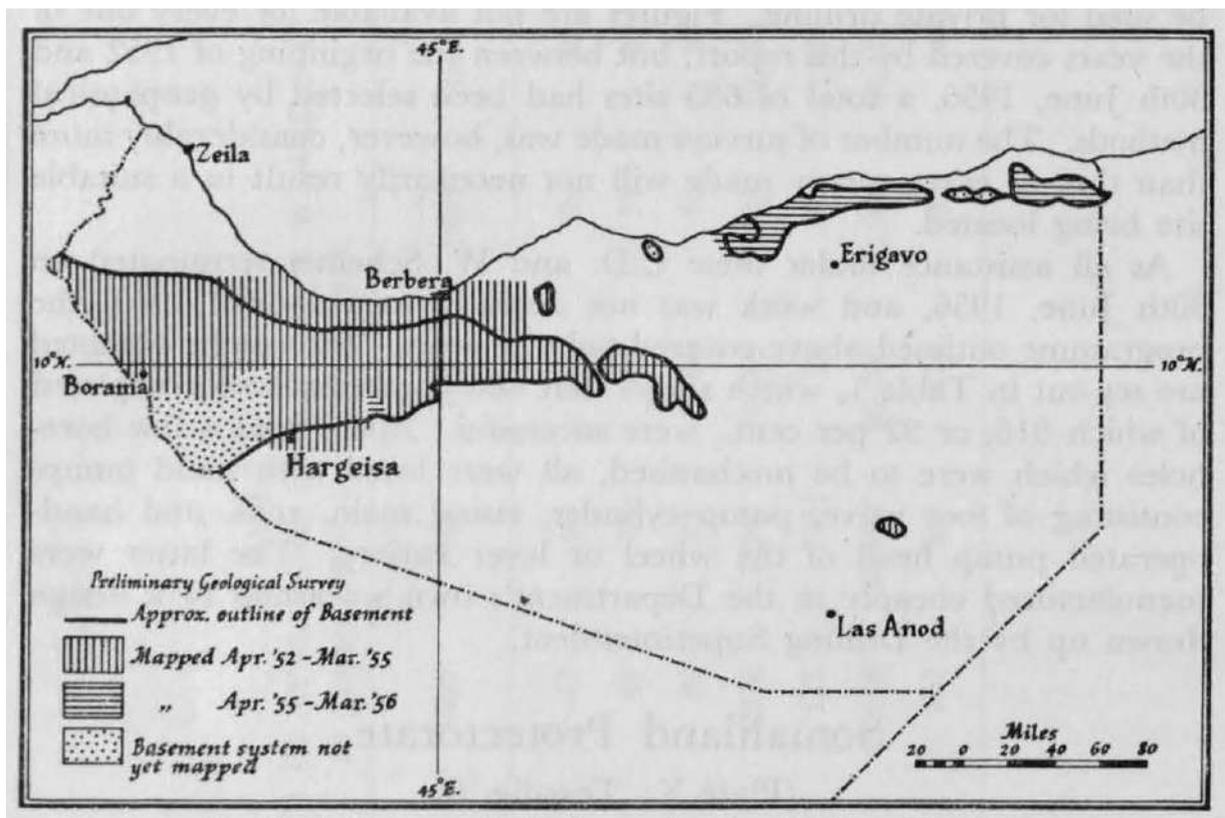
The primary object of this Survey has been the mapping of the 8,000 sq. miles of Basement Rocks of

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the Protectorate, followed by more detailed work where minerals of economic importance are found. General geological assistance was also given to the government and the general public.

Except for the outline of its outcrop, the Basement Complex of Somaliland was practically unknown in 1952. A preliminary account of the whole Complex of the Protectorate revealed that the Complex appeared to consist of metamorphic rocks, the lowest exposed cores being usually preponderantly granitised psammites. These grade through migmatized zones into pelitic and psammitic gneisses, schists, and granulites, with some associated volcanics, and some older granitic intrusions. Gabbros and dolerites were intruded into these severely folded and metamorphosed rocks.

In the N.E. of the Protectorate the less metamorphosed Inda Ad Series was laid down on an eroded surface of Basement gneisses and schists. The whole complex was then folded and intruded by Younger Granites, and later pegmatites and other acid intrusions. Some late basalts often cut the Basement and Younger Granites, usually in long arcuate fissure intrusions, and late quartz veins cut both the Basement and the Inda Ad Series.



The whole Basement Complex, together with the Inda Ad Series and Younger Granites, was then eroded, probably to a peneplain, before the Adigrat Sandstone was laid down (maybe in the Triassic). The peneplain surface of the Basement was faulted and folded with the overlying

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sedimentary rocks. Most of the mineralisation so far found seems to be associated with the Younger Granites, although the gabbro masses had not been investigated in detail.

In the overlying sedimentary rocks considerable argillaceous bands have been found in the Nubian Sandstone (Cretaceous), lending further support to the disputed Nubian age of the Shabel Beds of the Dagahh Shabel oil seep area. Other important work in connection with the potential oil and water-bearing sedimentary rocks is the proving of the pre-Cretaceous age of the Shilemadu syenites in the Nogal, and the mapping of gentle folding of Older Boulder Beds (maybe in the Miocene) in the West Central part of the Somaliland Plateau area.

Further occurrences of minerals previously known to exist in Somaliland have been found, namely, beryl, galena, manganese silicates, mica, molybdenite, and rutile. Columbite has been found with beryl and mica in the later pegmatite dykes, and a considerable area has been mapped with frequent, but so far uneconomic, occurrences of galena.

#### **Elements Present**

Times have obviously changed in what minerals are hot and what is not. When the colonial administration was surveying the territory, it did note that, in the north-east of the Protectorate, a small vein rich in cassiterite has been discovered. Samples of samarskite, allanite and monazite have also been brought in by prospectors from the mineralised pegmatite areas of the Central Protectorate. The beryl and columbite were in the 1950s being worked in pegmatite outcrops by a small mining company, but no alluvials had been found.

Thus, in summary, the minerals identified in the colonial era were:

- Allanite
- Anhydrite
- Beryl
- Columbite
- Gypsum
- Lead and lead ores
- Manganese
- Mica
- Molybdenite

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- Monazite
- Rutile
- Samarskite
- Tin and tin ores

The most hopeful prospect of mineral production, in the opinion of the colonial geologists, apart from oil, lay in the Gypsum-Anhydrite Series. The report highlighted that “scores of millions of tons” of gypsum and anhydrite are exposed between 9 and 25 miles of Berbera harbour, but at that time no mineral loading facilities were available.

Mention of monazite though might imply the presence of Rare Earths, which were not of much interest in the early 1950s.

### **The USGS Coverage**

Then there is the report from the USGS. This dates back to 1984. Its central finding was:

“Additional exploration in Somalia is warranted for a wide variety of metallic and nonmetallic deposits.

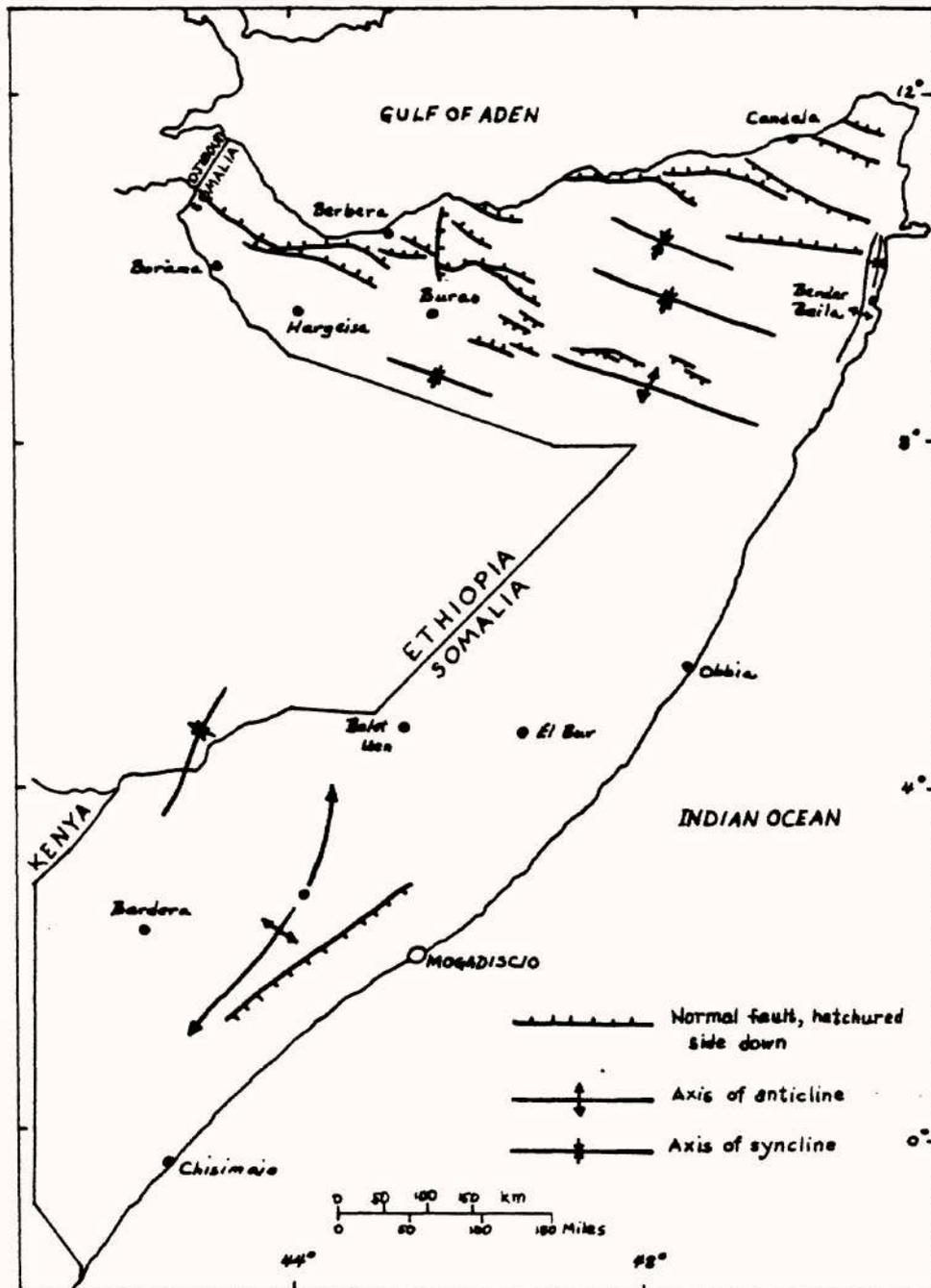
In Precambrian rocks, deposit types favorable for exploration include: a banded iron formation; platinum-bearing mafic-ultramafic complexes; tin-bearing quartz veins; phosphorite; stratabound base-metal deposits; uranium associated with Precambrian(?) syenite; apatite, molybdenum, and alumina in alkalic rocks; Jurassic and Cretaceous black shales; possible bedded-barite and massive base- and precious metal sulfide deposits; vein barite in Tertiary rocks in fault zones; sepiolite and bentonite for drilling muds and other industrial uses; celestite; possible Tertiary zeolite; and uranium deposits.

Several of these deposit types could be jointly developed and integrated into domestic industries; for example, phosphate and gypsum, or bentonite for palletized iron from the banded iron deposits. Other deposits such as barite and sepiolite are of value because of their proximity to major drilling operations in the Arabian Gulf.

Still other deposits, such as alumina and banded iron, might be marketable because of proximity to aluminum and iron-refining industries now being constructed in Saudi Arabia. Some deposits, such as celestite, can be developed with little capital investment; others, such as the iron deposits, would require large capital commitments”.

As one can see from the map lifted from the USGS’s report one can see a lot more geological “noise” in Somaliland and Puntland than in the rump of the former Italian Somaliland that matches

the current Somalia.



### Investment Thesis

Ironically, before the “decolonization” era, the whole was called Somaliland and yet now reversion

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to that name is seen as an aberrant action. Then to add to the irony, the current Somaliland harks back to the colonial entity as its legal foundation.

The other "new" breakaway state in recent times has been South Sudan which can rightly be viewed as a basket case, ironically, because of the negative intervention of some of the players that are (self-interestedly) positive forces in the Somaliland situation. The comparison between the two countries' trajectories could hardly be more poignant with Somaliland as a paragon of organization/democracy compared to a vast swathe of African states that have been in turmoil for decades. The West's failure to recognize and reward good behaviour is why the West keeps making bets on countries and leaders that are proven and guaranteed failures not to mention genocidal states. We might dare mention that the tribes of Somaliland were picked out for genocide themselves by the Barre government in Mogadishu, hence propelling Somaliland out of the camp. That its recognition should come from a quarter that is no slouch itself in the genocide game, is yet another irony piled upon irony.

But the subject of this note is ostensibly the mining potential. When it comes down to it the territory of Somaliland has substantial mineral potential, and that judgement is based, mainly, on work done many decades ago and moreover from colonial times.

Usually, these country reviews have names to conjure with on the investment and yet we have seen no listed (nor unlisted) country from the West reported to be undertaking operations/exploration in Somaliland. The field would seem to be wide open and to use that well-worn term, open for business.

We can see why Somalia has received little interest from miners as most reports indicate that it is one of the least prospective places in Africa, geologically and in so many other ways. However, Somaliland is a functioning non-threatening entity and Somalia is a failed state that, as such, represents a threatening malevolent entity.

Now what is needed is for some of those countries that are relevant in the mining space, e.g. Canada, Australia, Great Britain or even the US, to come out and recognize it and then it would be recognition *de jure* of a *de facto* entity. Let the scramble begin.

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# Appendix I:

## Puntland & Jubaland

### Lands that Time Forgot

#### **On Puntland**

The Land of Punt was a legendary (and yet much mentioned historically) ancient kingdom that was a prominent trading partner of ancient Egypt. It was known for exporting gold, ebony, ivory, exotic animals, and most famously, aromatic resins (incense) for temples and mummification.

It's exact location was likely located around the Horn of Africa (modern-day Somalia/Eritrea) or the Arabian Peninsula's Red Sea coast, though its precise siting remains debated. Egyptians considered it the "Divine Land," a source of riches and spiritual goods, with famous expeditions chronicled under Pharaohs like Hatshepsut.

It was bundled in with Somalia when that ill-begotten state was cobbled together.

Puntland, a federal member state of Somalia, disputes the Harti-inhabited territory in the former British Somaliland protectorate based on kinship. In 1998, the northern Darod clans established the state, and the Dhulbahante and Warsangali clans wholly participated in its foundation.

Tensions between Puntland and Somaliland escalated into violence several times between 2002 and 2009.

#### **On Jubaland**

The territory known as Jubaland or Jubbaland is ostensibly a federal member state in southern Somalia.

Jubaland has a total area of 110,293 km<sup>2</sup> (42,584 sq mi) and its eastern border lies no more than 100 km (60 mi) east of the Jubba River, stretching from Dolow to the Indian Ocean, while its western side flanks the North Eastern Province in Kenya, which was carved out of Jubaland during the colonial period.

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As of 2005, it had a total population of 953,045 inhabitants. The largest city is Kismayo, which is situated on the coast. Bardhere, Luuq, and Beled Haawo are the region's other principal settlements. Other cities such as Jamame and Jilib are currently occupied by Al-Shabaab.

The background to this area is that, during the Middle Ages, the Somali Ajuran Sultanate held sway over the territory, followed in turn by the Geledi Sultanate. They were later incorporated into British East Africa. In 1925, Jubaland was ceded to Italy, forming a part of Italian Somaliland.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1960, the region, along with the rest of Italian Somaliland and British Somaliland, became part of the Somali Republic.

Jubaland, supposedly, has a total population of around 2.5 million inhabitants, with the majority hailing from the Somali people.

We won't go into the minutiae of recent decades in this territory, but it is shown in many maps as independent (or breakaway) from Somalia.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2024, Jubaland's President Madobe was elected to a third term in regional elections. A few days later, Somalia claimed that the regional election had been held without federal involvement. Somalia and Jubaland issued warrants accusing each other's presidents of treason, and Jubaland suspended relations with the federal government. On 12 December, Somalia pulled its troops out of Jubaland after clashes with local forces, in which Jubaland claimed victory. This sounds like independence to us.

### **Summary**

Jubaland has more in common with Puntland than with "rump" Somalia. It seems there is little love lost between the Darod tribe and the bulk of Somalia's ethnic mix. It is, however, a largely unresourced irrelevancy, but that can change.

Puntland, on the other hand, is both an uninspiring piece of real estate and yet one of the world's most strategically located "nations". Puntland is, for all events and purposes, the Horn of Africa, and thus a major strategic prize. It is arguably as good a position on which to perch overlooking Red Sea traffic as is Djibouti. For the Chinese, in particular, better than the former French colony as it is not such a crowded phone booth of competing international interests. It is essentially a potential state that, if afforded Chinese recognition, could become a massively strategic foothold in Africa and on the major maritime sea route. Watch this space....

# Appendix II: The Players

## Many & Various

### **Semantics**

Usually, when we title an appendix “the players” it refers to the listed and unlisted companies in a country or metal. However, in this context we are talking of the political players, or rather the interested foreign “powers” and then approach to its evolution (and recognition).

### **Events, Dear Boy, Events**

The famous utterance of Harold MacMillan on what can throw the best laid plans awry is pertinent here. Most of this review was written before the outbreak of the current so-called *Weekend War*. Now ten days into it, the comments below should be seen in the context of those more pacific (we jest) times, pre-February 28<sup>th</sup>.

The one player in the current conflagration that didn’t figure then and still doesn’t figure now, is Iran. Israel and the UAE have had the stuffing knocked out of them, Saudi Arabia has been shown to be largely ineffectual and noncommittal, the Houthis have largely confined themselves to jawboning and the European powers have proven to be powerless onlookers. The US has suffered physically the least and yet has had its prestige and reputation in the region ground in the dust.

Ergo, our musings below must be seen in this context. All bets are off.

### **The Ethiopia Factor**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2024, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Ethiopia and Somaliland, where Ethiopia will lease the port of Berbera on the Gulf of Aden, and a 20-kilometre stretch of the Gulf of Aden coastline, for 20 years, in exchange for eventual recognition of Somaliland as an independent state and a stake in Ethiopian Airlines.

If this agreement is honoured, Ethiopia would become the second United Nations member state to

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recognise the breakaway nation.

### **The Eritrea Factor**

This country is the height of hypocrisy when it comes to recognition, or no recognition, of Somaliland considering that it was the most recent country in the region to be excised out of another (Ethiopia). The simplistic view held by the Eritreans that they have Ethiopia over a barrel dies the death if Ethiopia recognizes Somaliland and makes it a competing entity to Eritrea.

### **The Djibouti Factor**

Self interest is a valid economic excuse for actions a government takes but in the case of Djibouti what is really lurking (barely disguised) in the background is that an independent Somaliland spells bad news for Djibouti as Ethiopia's main point of access to the maritime trade routes. Djibouti has touted its wares as a base for all and sundry. France has its traditional relationship with this ex-colonial outpost (reportedly still with a Foreign Legion presence) and thus would be a last-mover rather than a first mover in recognition of Somaliland and is probably a hidden hand in slowing EU states in recognizing the new entity. Djibouti otherwise is fairly best described as a under resourced god-forsaken hellhole that only has position/position/position going for it.

The French have several bases in-country and gave up their Camp Lemonnier base there which was later leased to the United States Central Command in September 2002. The lease was renewed in 2014 for another 20 years. The Italian National Support Military Base is also located in Djibouti. The country also hosts the only overseas Japanese military base and Chinese support base.

The Chinese base makes the power in the East a footdragger when it comes to recognition of Somaliland to not put Djibouti's nose out of joint.

And..... our tribal map on page 6 shows that the south of Djibouti and the north of Somaliland are dominated by the same tribe. There is/was a better case for the British and French Somalilands to have merged (as happened in Cameroon) than for the British and Italian Somalilands to have indulged in their misbegotten nuptials.

### **The Yemeni Factor**

It is firstly worth noting that many Yemenis live in the country, the largest group of Yemeni in the country is the Mehri.

When looking at the Yemeni factor we might dare to ask "which of the Yemens?" as there three entities at the moment. There is that controlled by the Houthis, that showing obeisance to Saudi Arabia and the secessionist Southern Transition Council, until recently backed by the UAE (and probably still enmeshed therewith).

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The Houthis are probably least happy with the Israeli *rapprochement* with Somaliland as it provides a nearer base for Israelis to strike back at the Houthis. This bizarrely suits the Saudis also despite the UAE being seen as closer to the Israelis than the Saudis.

### **The UAE Factor**

We were not intending on mentioning the UAE as it seemed more relevant to the situation in Yemen (and tensions with the KSA). However, the more one scratches the surface there is the (not-so) hidden hand of the UAE. Merely from the business point of view the long reach of DP Ports, the maritime services giant (largely made up of the ex-P & O) has positioned itself in Somaliland thru the DP World Berbera New Port in the city of Berbera, representing its only branch in Republic of Somaliland.

The backstory of this is that, in May 2016, DP World signed a US\$442mn agreement with the government of Somaliland, to operate and exercise a regional trade and logistics hub at the Port of Berbera. The project also involved the setting up of a free zone.

The shareholder makeup is fascinating (and telling). In March of 2018, Ethiopia became a major shareholder following an agreement with DP World and the Somaliland Port Authority. DP World holds a 51% stake in the project, Somaliland 30% and Ethiopia the remaining 19%.

Then, in July of 2021, the new container terminal in Berbera Port was officially inaugurated by Muse Bihi Abdi, President of Somaliland.

The Times of India reported that “After Israel’s recognition of Somaliland, evidence now suggests the United Arab Emirates has also quietly followed suit — without making any public announcement”. Somaliland passports are now accepted on the UAE’s official visa platform, while travelers holding Somali passports are barred. At the same time, Abu Dhabi declined to join a joint Arab-Islamic statement condemning Israel’s move, setting itself apart from most of the region. The long-standing Emirati military and strategic interests in Somaliland include a base in Berbera overlooking key Red Sea shipping lanes. The Times of India cited analysts saying that silence may be the UAE’s chosen strategy, one that could reshape regional alliances and spark new diplomatic tensions.

Now it is being reported that Somalia is making life difficult for the UAE with tit-for-tat measures so there seems little reason for the transactional Gulf States to not cut the cord on the failed state and cast their vote for the one where their economic interests lie.

### **The Kenya Factor**

It has been said in certain circles that Kenya might be one of the first movers in recognizing

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Somaliland. As to why this might happen is rarely stated. However, anything that weakens Somalia is a plus for Kenya.

A brief historical aside is that, in 2011, Kenya Defence Forces invaded southern Somalia in Operation Linda Nchi (Swahili: Linda Nchi = "Protect the Country"). The Kenyan government declared the operation completed in March 2012, but its forces then joined African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in Somalia.

The rationale behind this incursion was that the Kenyan government aimed to create a buffer zone between Al-Shabaab and instability in southern Somalia, and the Kenyan homeland.

As the clan map on page 5 shows, the Somali Darod clan overlaps into northeastern Kenya giving a rationale for not wanting a strong, possibly irredentist Somalia on the country's northern borders.

However, one might also note that the Jubaland construct appears to be very Darod-focused entity. As can be seen on the clan map the Darod dominate Puntland, wrap around the Ogaden and then dominate in the Jubaland "area".

### **The US Factor**

One doesn't need to have seen any more than the film "Blackhawk Down" to know that Somalia has been a headache (and debacle) for the US across various administrations. Then we might mention the piracy issue.

Bringing the matter even closer to home there is the sizeable population of Somalis in the US (and the recent and on-going controversy about that).

There is no love lost between the Trump Administration and the Somali government as the President's very vocal lambasting of the country, in unrepeatably terms, made evident.

A decision to recognize should be made on the basis that Somaliland is a functioning non-threatening entity while Somalia is a failed state that, as such, represents a threatening malevolent entity. It would be the recognition *de jure* of a *de facto* entity.

If the diplomatic logic fails, then the *realpolitik* approach would be the US backing up its "ally" Israel and not leaving it as even more of an outlier than it already is. There are large number of Western states (e.g. the UK) that would follow suit, not necessarily in a "follow the leader" mode, but because they have long wanted to push the recognition button and didn't want to be first sheep thru the gate.

### **Al-Shabaab**

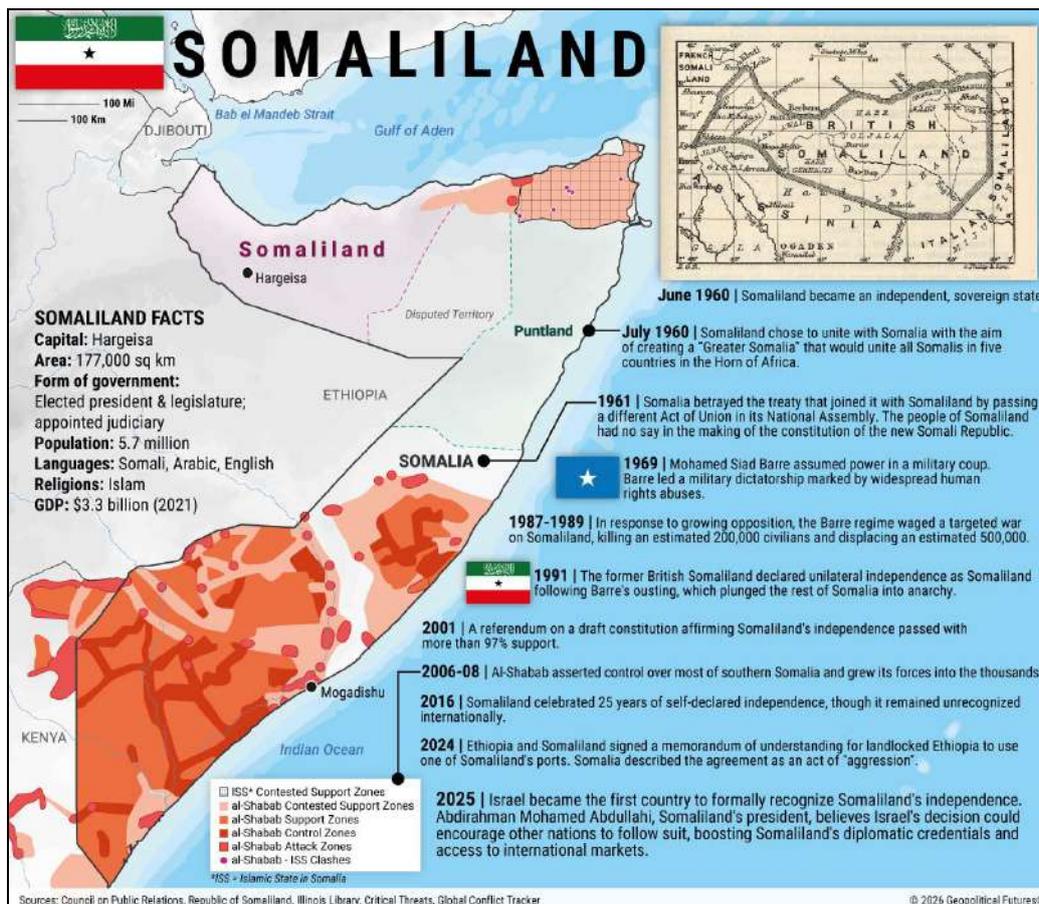
The Harakat Shabaab al-Mujahidin, commonly known as al-Shabaab, was the militant wing of the

Somali Council of Islamic Courts that took over most of southern Somalia in the second half of 2006. Despite the group's defeat by Somali and Ethiopian forces in 2007, al-Shabaab—a clan-based insurgent and terrorist group—has continued its violent insurgency in southern and central Somalia.

The National Counterterrorism Center gives a useful summation of this organization noting that the group has exerted temporary and, at times, sustained control over strategic locations in those areas by recruiting, sometimes forcibly, regional sub-clans and their militias, using guerrilla warfare and terrorist tactics against the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), AMISOM peacekeepers, and nongovernmental aid organizations.

Since 2011, however, pressure from AMISOM and Ethiopian forces has largely degraded al-Shabaab's control, especially in Mogadishu but also in other key regions of the country, and conflict among senior leaders has exacerbated fractures within the group. In 2013 al-Shabaab rivalries culminated in a major purge of opponents of now-deceased group leader Ahmed Abdi Aw-Mohamed.

The extent of the group's reach is shown on the map below:



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As evidenced by the constant levels of infighting among leadership, al-Shabaab is not centralized or monolithic in its agenda or goals. Its rank-and-file members come from disparate clans, and the group is susceptible to clan politics, internal divisions, and shifting alliances. Most of its fighters are predominantly interested in the nationalistic battle against the FGS and not supportive of global *jihad*.

Al-Shabaab's senior leaders remain affiliated with al-Qa'ida. The merger of the two groups was publicly announced in February 2012 by the amir of al-Shabaab and Ayman al-Zawahiri, leader of al-Qa'ida. The group, however, has lost four senior figures—including Abdi—since September 2014, which may have hampered its communications with al-Qa'ida leadership.

Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for many bombings, including various types of suicide attacks, in Mogadishu and in central and northern Somalia, typically targeting Somali government officials, AMISOM, and perceived allies of the FGS. Since 2013 al-Shabaab has launched high-profile operations in neighboring countries, most notably the September 2013 Westgate mall attack in Nairobi. The Westgate attack killed 67 Kenyan and non-Kenyan nationals, and a siege continued at the mall for several days.

Other attacks have included the May 2014 attack against a restaurant in Djibouti popular with Westerners, and the April 2015 massacre of university students in Garissa, Kenya. The Garissa attack killed some 150 mainly Christian students.

Al-Shabaab is responsible for the assassination of Somali peace activists, international aid workers, numerous civil society figures, and journalists, and for blocking the delivery of aid from some Western relief agencies during the 2011 famine that killed tens of thousands of Somalis. In 2008, the US government designated al-Shabaab as a Foreign Terrorist Organization under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (as amended) and as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity under Section 1(b) of Executive Order 13224 (as amended). In 2012, the Rewards for Justice program added several al-Shabaab leaders to its site, offering large rewards for information leading to their capture.

### **The Israel Factor**

This is the only “factor” being written after the *Weekend War* began. Beforehand we thought that others would follow Israel “in” to Somaliland. We wanted it to counterbalance the Israelis, others might have wanted it to legitimize and support the Israeli action. A subtheme to all this was Israel having a base to attack the Houthis.

As things have turned out, the US & Israel effort is failing miserably. There is even a feeling that the Houthis are the reserve shock troops. At the time of writing the Houthis have not been “mobilized” except into verbalizing threats to the Bab al-Mandeb. The Hezbollah forces arrived late on the scene

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and, initially, this was viewed as a weakness but in fact they were kept in reserve for a time when the much-vaunted *Iron Dome* had failed and fail, it has. Now all eyes are on the Houthis. The Straits of Hormuz are closed off and the Houthis have rattled some sabres but not fired anything. Indeed, in some ways it has been easier in the past for Houthis to strike at, for example, Ben Gurion airport than it was for Iranian missiles. Now the skies are open over Israel and the “turkey shoot” can begin in earnest.

That leaves open the question whether Somaliland can escape becoming collateral damage in this fight which it, sort of, bought into by accepting Israeli recognition. Whether recognition can be accepted or rejected is a moot question. With Israel naked to the onslaught of Iranian and Hezbollah missiles, then one would suppose that Israel might recall missiles (if ever there were any) that they might have stationed in Somaliland.

The way things are going, Somaliland might need a country to be the first to recognize it if the previous first is eliminated as a country. How is that for irony?

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